

McGregor Museum Department of Archaeology



Report on a Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment at Waterfall near Ritchie, Northern Cape

DME NC 30/5/1/3/3/2/1/1541 EM
SAHRA 9/2/0/049/0001

David Morris
January 2009

Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment at Waterfall near Ritchie, Northern Cape.

David Morris
McGregor Museum, Kimberley. January 2009

Introduction

The author was contacted by Mr Henry van Rooyen (0847562960, 974 Zeppe St, Ikageng, Ritchie 8701) to undertake an archaeological impact assessment at his claim on the farm Waterfall 133 adjacent to the Riet River downstream from Ritchie in the Northern Cape.

The farm was visited on 6 January 2009. Observations made and recommendations are given in this report.

Legislation

The National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999) (NHRA) provides protection for archaeological resources.

It is an offence to destroy, damage, excavate, alter, or remove from its original position, or collect, any archaeological material or object (defined in the Act), without a permit issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA).

Section 35 of the Act protects all archaeological and palaeontological sites and requires that anyone wishing to disturb a site must have a permit from the relevant heritage resources authority. Section 36 protects human remains older than 60 years. In order for the authority to assess whether approval may be given for any form of disturbance, a specialist report is required. No mining, prospecting or development may take place without heritage assessment and approval.

SAHRA at national level acts on an agency basis for the Provincial Heritage Resources Agency (PHRA) in the Northern Cape, where archaeological sites are concerned. Permit applications should be made to the SAHRA office in Cape Town.

Methods and limitations

A background literature/museum database search provides indications of what might be expected in the region.

During the site investigation, the area of proposed mining was inspected.

In this environment sediments of archaeological significance are frequently well below the surface. Old diggings or quarries do provide sections that may be inspected, and dumps of gravel give an opportunity to assess the potential archaeological content of underlying sediment.

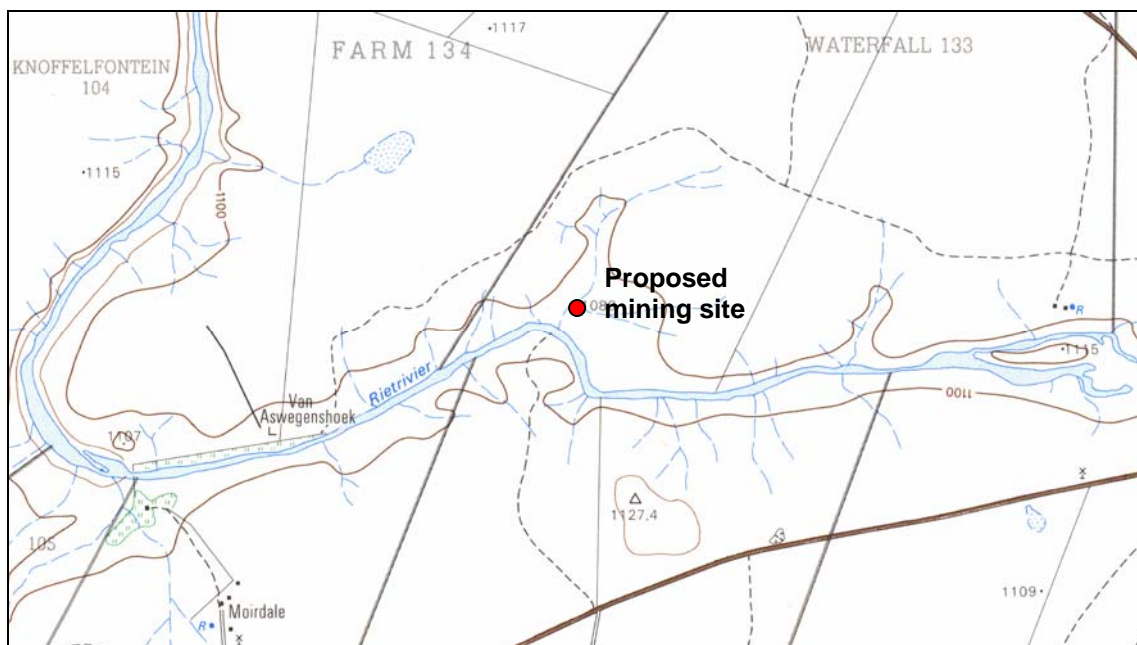
In this particular instance the gravel of interest to Mr van Rooyen consists of gravel previously extracted from the nearby Riet River channel and left to overlie Holocene

age silts on the bank of the river. There is also an adjacent 'Rooikoppie' gravel unit or slope-wash unit which he may be interested to prospect in at a later date.

Background: archaeological resources in the region

The Northern Cape has a wealth of archaeological sites (Beaumont & Morris 1990, Morris & Beaumont 2004), with locales along and adjacent to the major river systems being of particular note (see also Burkitt 1928; Goodwin & van Riet Lowe 1929).

Stone Age material found in this area spans the Earlier, Middle and Later Stone Ages through Pleistocene and Holocene times. Of particular interest are Pleistocene sites along the Vaal River, and similar material is known to occur along the Riet River. Late Holocene material with pottery is known to occur on the river banks, while rock engravings are richly distributed in the region, the site of Driekopseiland being of particular renown (Wilman 1933; Morris 1988; Morris 2002). Rock engravings are known to occur on the farm Moirdale, opposite Waterfall.



Extract from 1:50 000 sheet 2924 BA

Observations

It was found that the area to be mined, just under 1.5 ha in extent, within the area 29°04037'S 24°53824'E; 29°04080'S 24°53932'E; 29°04186'S 24°53910'E; 29°04129'S 24°53781'E consists of gravel recently derived by a previous miner from within the channel of the Riet River and dumped over a silted area adjacent to a non-perennial watercourse flowing southwards to the Riet. The dump was closely inspected for artefacts (it was anticipated it may contain Acheulean), but none was found.

The underlying silt may however contain Later Stone Age material. On a nearby surface, at 29°04140'S 24°53865'E, a low to medium density scatter of Later Stone Age material was noted comprising hornfels flakes and cores and including two

scrapers, illustrated in the photograph below. There was also a probably displaced lower grindstone.



Dump material from the river, overlying silt.



Scrapers and broken trimmed blade



Lower grindstone

Slightly upslope from here a 'Rooikoppie' slope-washed sediment overlying shale is exposed in the side of a donga, with virtually no artefacts within it except one large of Acheulean flake, featured in the photograph below.



Recommendations

No significant archaeological traces were noted in the dump of gravel which is intended to be mined.

It should yet be noted that sub-surface archaeological sites/traces/features may occur, particularly if mining extends below the dump into the underlying silt. This softer silt may in places contain Later Stone Age burials, such as have been found at Weltevrede and Driekopseiland, downstream along the Riet River. In the event of such materials/features being found during mining, work should be halted and SAHRA in Cape Town should be consulted immediately (Mrs Mary Leslie, 021-4624502).

Acknowledgements

I thank Mr Henry van Rooyen who guided me to the sites of proposed mining.

References

- Beaumont, P.B. & Morris, D. 1990. *Guide to archaeological sites in the Northern Cape*. Kimberley: McGregor Museum.
- Burkitt, M.C. 1928. *South Africa's past in stone and paint*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goodwin, A.J.H. & van Riet Lowe, C. 1929. The stone age cultures of South Africa. *Annals of the South African Museum* 27:1-289.

Helgren, D.M. 1979. *Rivers of diamonds: an alluvial history of the lower Vaal Basin, South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Department of Geography. Research Paper 185.

Morris, D. 1988. Engraved in place and time: a review of variability in the rock art of the Northern Cape and Karoo. *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 43:109-121.

Morris, D. & Beaumont, P. 2004. *Archaeology in the Northern Cape: some key sites*. Kimberley: McGregor Museum.

Wilman, M. 1933. *Rock engravings of Griqualand West and British Bechuanaland, South Africa*. Cambridge: Deighton Bell.