

92/05/11

PROPOSED KABOEGA DAM – PHASE 1 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Prepared by:

Dr Lita Webley
Albany Museum
Somerset Street
Grahamstown
6139

Tel: (046) 6222312 Fax: (046) 6222398 Email: L.Webley@ru.ac.za

26 November 2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed dam on the upper reaches of the Kabouga River, which will flood some 15 ha of the farm De Plat, threatens a cemetery containing approximately 14 unmarked and two marked graves. The graves are clearly older than 60 years and they fall outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority. They are therefore protected by the National Heritage Resources Act (Section 36(3b)).

The marked graves belong to the families Keevy and Watson. A second cemetery, several hundred metres to the north of the first cemetery, will apparently not be affected by the dam. This seems to be the cemetery of the farm workers and contains some 20 graves, all of which are unmarked.

In terms of the Act, every effort must be made to identify and consult with the descendants of the persons buried in the cemetery. Contact has already been made with the Keevy family who have indicated that they do not want the grave of Judith Keevy exhumed but would be interested in re-locating the marked headstone, either to their family graveyard at Vaaldraai (in the same district) or alternatively, higher up against the hill on the farm De Plat so that it will not be flooded. The owner of Kaboega Farming is currently contacting the Watson family to ascertain their requirements with regard to the grave of John Watson.

It is recommended that every effort be made to contact the descendants of the Keevy and Watson families to determine whether they are amenable to the flooding of their family cemetery. It is not clear whether the unmarked graves also relate to the same families and it is suggested that a notice be placed in a local newspaper (Somerset East) asking for interested parties to come forward. From an archaeological perspective, exhumation is not recommended since the preservation of human remains is likely to be very poor (because of soil conditions). It is noted that the relocation of Judith Keevy's headstone will be difficult as the cement capping is very fragile. The marble headstone of John Watson is broken, but will be easier to move. Once permission has been obtained from the families to flood the cemetery, a permit has to be obtained from the SAHRA (South African Heritage Resources Agency).

INTRODUCTION

An environmental impact assessment on the farm De Plat 334 on the northern slopes of the Saurberg Mountains (Somerset East District) revealed the presence of a small cemetery which would be flooded with the construction of a dam on the upper reaches of the Kabouga River. It is the intention of the owner to flood some 15ha of the valley in order to create a dam for recreational purposes on a private game reserve called Kaboega.

An archaeologist (the author) as well as the local representative of SAHRA in the Eastern Cape, Mr Charles January, visited the site on the 21 November 2002.

DESCRIPTION

The affected cemetery is located above the Kabouga River on map sheet 3325AD (Kirkwood) and the GPS co-ordinates are:

S 33° 15'13,2
E 25° 25'14,0

The cemetery is not enclosed and is some 20m by 10m in extent. It is extremely overgrown and difficult to identify all the graves. The approximate number appears to be 16 although this could be an under-estimate. One grave has a large tree growing out of it. The majority of graves consist of a stone cairn with an upright rectangular stone headstone on the western end (Fig. 1). These headstones are some 30cm to 50cm in height and 20cm in width and are of natural stone. They are all unmarked.

There are two unusual pyramid shaped graves. The pyramids are made of red brick covered in a thin capping of cement. They are some 2,1m and 2,5m in length and 1m in width and project above the ground to a height of 1m. They are also orientated in an east-west direction. The most westerly pyramid grave has been broken open and both ends have collapsed. No human remains are visible (Fig. 2). The other grave is complete and in good condition (Fig 3). It contains an inscription (lettering in the cement) on the western end of the pyramid. The bottom part of the inscription is covered by soil and although an attempt was made to open this with a trowel, the cement inscription is very fragile and further attempts at cleaning was abandoned.

The only marble headstone was discovered in the northern part of the cemetery and the headstone has cracked and collapsed due to a tree growing out of it (Fig 4). This grave has been partially excavated by the actions of an aardvark, but no human remains are visible.

There is a second cemetery some several hundred metres to the north of the family cemetery. According to Mr Ritchie (Manager of Kaboega Farming) this cemetery will not be affected by the dam as it is located slightly higher than the first cemetery. Its position is:

S 33° 15' 10.0
E 25° 25' 12.6

This cemetery consists of around 20 graves and is also unfenced. The graves appear to be more recent than the first and are all covered by large stone cairns. One cairn contains a marine shell and the other an empty Consol jar. One grave has a headstone comprising a wooden tongue-and-groove plank engraved with the words 'Rus in vrede broer kom Jan se familie'. The nature of the cemetery suggests that it contains the graves of the farm workers.

INSCRIPTIONS ON THE HEADSTONES

The inscription on the pyramid grave reads as follows:

Herinnering tergedag.....
Van myn onverteedene eehgte.....
Judith Susara Keevy ...
Geboren Bosch ontslapen ...
In den Heeren om den ...
Augusten 1855 en den ...
Ouderdom van 23 jaar en ...
5 dagen Rustplaats
...dooden

The inscription on the marble headstone reads as follows:

In loving memory of our dear
Husband and father
John Martin Watson
Born 4.12.1869
Died 4.09.1919
At peace with God

DISCUSSION

Both the Keevy and Watson families have lived in this area for many generations. Mr I Ritchie, the care-taker of the property, has investigated the origins of the Keevy grave. He has obtained genealogical information from Mr Philip Keevy of the farm Vaaldraai. Mr Keevy is also the owner of the farm Boschfontein.

Judith Susara Keevy

According to the records obtained from Mr Philip Keevy, Judith Susara Bosch was born on the 29 July 1832. She married John Keevy (date of marriage unknown). John was born on 27th July 1822, and appears to have been the son of an 1820 Settler of Irish

descent. Judith died on the 3rd August 1855, at the age of 23, reportedly in childbirth. Her headstone refers to Rustplaats, and it is not clear if this was the original name of De Plaats.

She had a son, Michael Coemraad Johannes Keevy, who was reared by his maternal grandparents. John Keevy subsequently remarried on 28 August 1859 to Christina Johanna Elizabeth Bouver (she was born on the 12 March 1839 and died on the 18th March 1926). This marriage produced a number of descendants and John Keevy became a well known farmer in the Somerset East district.

John Martin Watson

Nothing is known at present about John Watson and Mr Ritchie is at present investigating this family with a view to contacting them about the grave.

Other affected graves

The remaining 14 plus graves are unmarked and there is no information regarding their origins. It is possible (although not certain) that they also relate to the Keevy and Watson families. In view of the age of these graves (at least 100 to 150 years old) it may be impossible to trace descendants who are interested in conserving the graves.

LEGISLATION

In terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999), a cemetery which is older than 60 years and which is outside the area administered by a local authority, is protected by Section 36(3b)) of the Act. No person shall damage, destroy, alter or exhume any graves without a permit from SAHRA. Before issuing a permit, SAHRA must be satisfied that the applicant has made a concerted effort to contact and consult with communities and individuals who have an interest in the graves. The applicant must have reached an agreement with these communities or individuals regarding the future of the graves and the applicant must have made satisfactory arrangements for exhumation or re-interment (if this is required). This should be at the cost of the applicant.

Consultation may include archival and documentary research as well as advertising in the local press. The applicant should keep a record of such actions, including the names and contact details of all persons and organizations contacted and a copy of such records must be submitted to the provincial heritage resources agency with the application.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Unless the descendants of the Watson and Keevy families are insistent, I would not recommend exhumation of the remains. The nature of the soil (extremely hard and dry) suggests that bone preservation will be poor.

I would recommend that contact is made with both Watson and Keevy families and that written permission is obtained to flood the cemetery. It will be possible to move the marble headstone to higher ground but the inscription on the pyramid shaped grave is very fragile and unlikely to withstand re-location.

With regard the unmarked graves, it is recommended that a notice be placed in the local newspaper (Somerset East) asking for interested parties to come forward.

The second cemetery is not currently threatened but should the dam be enlarged at some future date then contact will have to be made with interested and affected parties.

REFERENCES

National Heritage Resources Act (Act No 25 of 1999)
SAHRA. 2000. What to do when graves are uncovered accidentally.

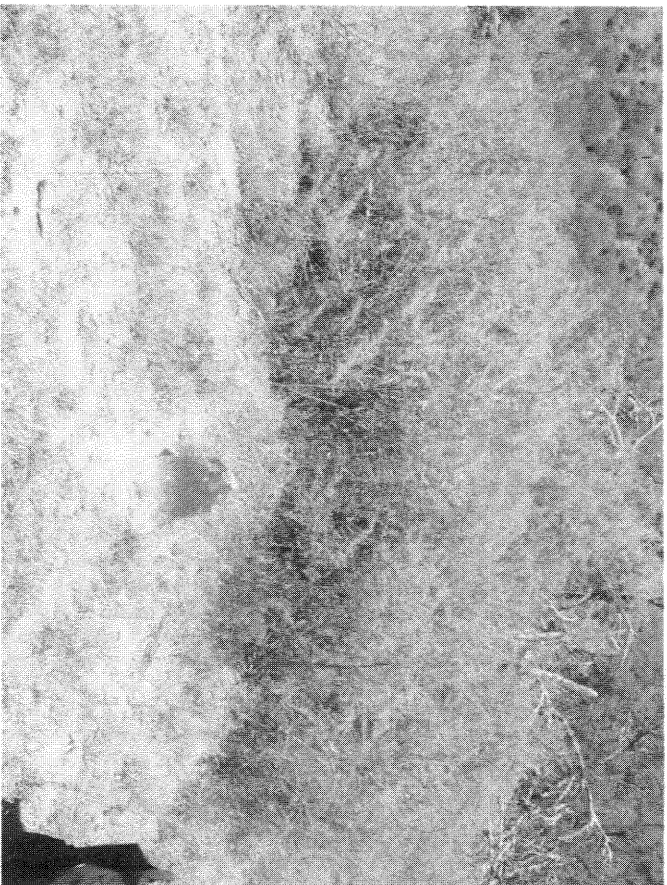


Figure 1: An unmarked grave.

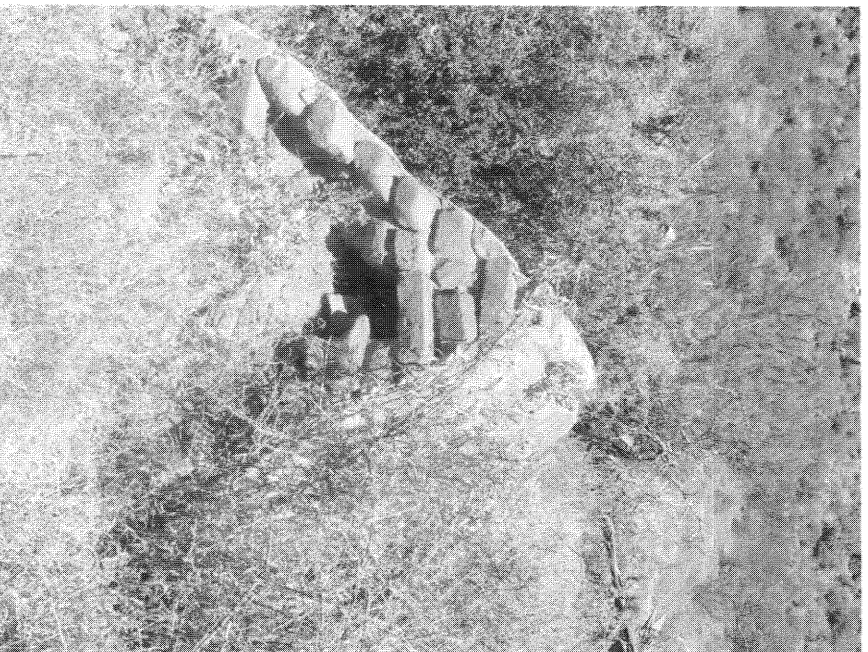


Figure 2: Broken pyramid-style grave showing interior bricks and thin cement capping.

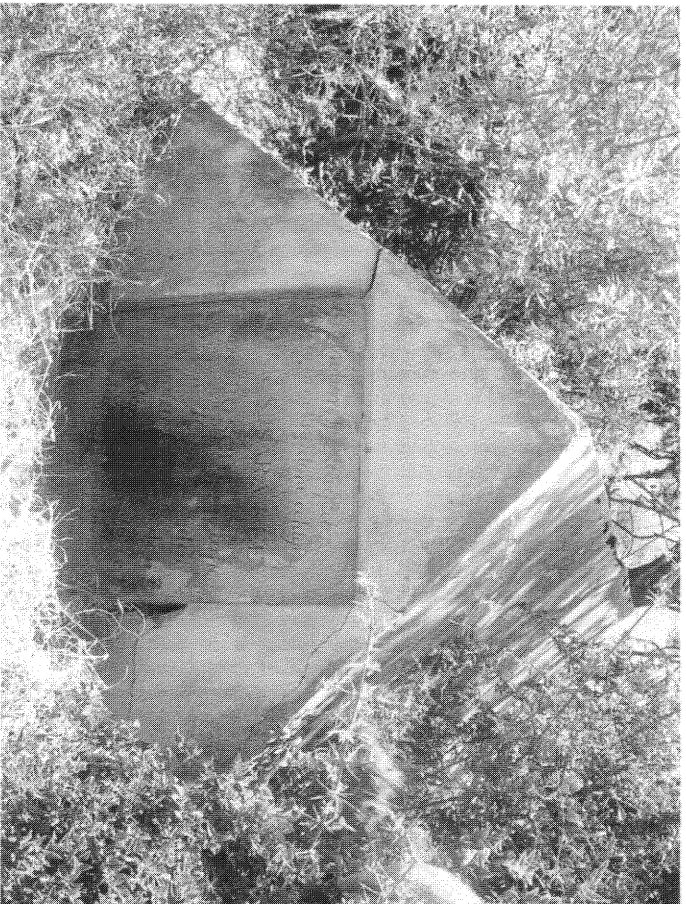


Figure 3: Complete pyramid-style grave with inscription for Judith Keey.



Figure 4: Marble headstone on John Waton's grave.