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PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL
IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Of two agricultural fields on the farm Alyth 118 MS

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ADDENDUM A (Photographs)

ADDENDUM B (Guidelines for the handling of graves)

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

- Photo 1:** Poorly defined stone walls
- Photo 2:** Cement pond
- Photo 3 & 4:** Two possible graves
- Photo 5:** Stone tools

PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF TWO AGRICULTURAL FIELDS ON THE FARM ALYTH 118MS

1. Introduction

A Preliminary Archaeological Impact Assessment (P.A.I.A.) was performed by Archaeo-Info for Developlan Pietersburg on a portion of the farm Alyth 118 MS. The study was undertaken to evaluate areas of archaeological significance, which might occur on the proposed agricultural development areas. The P.A.I.A. formed part of the Preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment (P.E.I.A.) and was conducted in accordance with Act 28 of 1969.

2. Aim

The aim of the P.A.I.A. was to determine the archaeological potential of the study area and how the proposed development will affect it. The investigators surveyed the proposed areas within the given parameters to establish the viability of the placement of the agricultural fields from an archaeological point of view.

3. Fieldwork

Archaeo-Info met with the client on the March 30, 2000 at the Alldays Hotel. After orientation of the sites to be investigated two fieldworkers and a principal investigator commenced the survey. Two areas were surveyed. Area 1 consisted of a triangular stretch of bush of approximately 160 hectares with a dry riverbed demarcating its eastern boundary. Area 2 is situated along the Weipe access road and runs north/south covering approximately 21 hectares. The second area had a similar ecology to the first with slightly denser plant-growth. The area was surveyed in transects, by foot and vehicle, to cover as much ground as possible. A meeting was also held with the owner's son during the course of the investigations. Two locals who have been resident on the farm for the past 40+

years were also interviewed to determine if any graves were present in the study area.

4. Geographical/Environmental Setting

The first proposed agricultural development area is situated along the Limpopo river valley system in typical bushveld growth (Fig. 1). Much of the area is still covered in natural growth and is characterized by expanses of alluvial sand with dense grass growth and large stretches of Mopane tree growth. The second area has slightly denser plant-growth than the first and is situated further south from the riverbed. In both areas lots of bird activity and game such as kudu and impala was sighted. A variety of reptiles were also encountered in both areas. Due to the heavy rains there was also a myriad of insects. The annual rainfall of the area is calculated to be approximately 200mm although they have received over 1100 mm for this season.

5. Previous Archaeological investigations

The area alongside the Limpopo river valley has been investigated archaeologically for the past 80 years and many important sites have been documented in this time. No previous surveys were however conducted on the farm Alyth. The closest known sites are found on the farm Sentinal in Zimbabwe as well as on the farm Schroda to the west. These reports and other relevant anthropological studies were consulted during the investigations.

6. Methodology

The study area was surveyed using standard archaeological surveying methods. The area was covered by foot and the investigators were on the lookout for surface finds, plant growth anomalies and other indicators for archaeological evidence. Test probes were done at intervals to determine sub-surface occurrence of archaeological material. Standard archaeological documentation formats were employed in the description of sites. Using standard site documentation forms as comparable medium, it enabled the surveyors to evaluate the relative importance

of the sites found. Furthermore, GPS (Global Positioning System) readings of all finds and sites were taken. This information was then plotted using a *Magellan 2000 XL* GPS. All archaeological artifacts, if any were found, were photographically documented (100 ASA colour prints).

The importance of sites were assessed by comparisons with published information as well as comparative collections. All sites or possible sites found were classified using a hierarchical system wherein sites are assessed using a scale of one to five on the basis of their importance. These categories are as follows;

Category 1. Sites in this category are of such great international and/or national importance in terms of cultural heritage that they can not be disturbed or altered at any cost. No development will be allowed in such an area. It should be noted that sites in this category are very rare - e.g. - *Great Zimbabwe, Swarthrans, Mapungubwe*

Category 2. Although these sites are not unique in terms of their culture they are of such archaeological value that any decision concerning their destruction can only be taken after full scale excavations have been undertaken - e.g. - *Thulamela*

Category 3. These sites are of lesser importance than the first two categories, but should be fully documented before they are destroyed. This documentation would entail the excavation of certain parts of the site - e.g. - *Masorini*

Category 4. Sites in this category consist of scattered evidence of archaeological occupation. Sometimes dilapidated stone walling can occur. Surface scatters of cultural material are evident. A limited number of test trenches should be excavated in order that the cultural affinity and importance of the site can be established.

Category 5. Areas that consist only of a very loose scattering of cultural material on the surface. No structures are visible and little archaeological deposits are evident. The occurrence of cultural material could, for example, be due to erosion. Apart from the surface collection of cultural material, no further work needs be done on such sites.

NB: It is important that any archaeological sites should be monitored during construction.

Category 6: Graves. The only archaeological aspect that could still be encountered during construction is the exposure of unmarked graves.

It should be noted that graves are subjects of great sensitivity and should be treated as such. Prompt and correct procedures will eliminate possible embarrassing situations for the developer

Locals were also questioned and especially information on the identification of graves was required.

7. Site Descriptions

All sites are discussed in the following section. Sites were attributed a reference code which consisted of an abbreviation (ie. ALY for the farm Alyth) and a numerical indicator which was attributed randomly. G.P.S. (Global Positioning System) coordinates were given for each site as well as a short description.

7.1. Area 1

7.1.1. ALY 001

G.P.S. 22° 11' 23" S

29° 36' 23" E

Description:

This site is situated near the present bush camp and slaughterhouse. A few poorly defined stone walls were found (photo 1). These walls were however so low and

dilapidated that they could also have been the result of bush clearing for the construction of the camp. There are indications of earlier settlement in this area and an engraving on a cement pond near the river gives a date of 15/12/64 (photo 2). The stonewalling identified, formed part of the natural rock formations. Loose concentrations of magnetite were also encountered in this area. Local informants indicated that this might have been the site of the bush camp of the previous owner of the farm.

7.1.2. ALY 002

G.P.S. 22° 11' 18" S

29° 36' 29" E

Description:

Two possible graves were found near the dry riverbed (photo 3, 4). One grave consisted of a rectangular stone structure of approximately 1.5 m x 1m. A single elongated rock at the eastern side of the formation might have served as a tombstone. The second possible grave consisted of an irregular oval shaped stone mound to the south of the first grave. No local information could be found on these graves.

7.1.3. ALY 003

G.P.S. 22° 11' 37" S

29° 35' 56" E

Description:

This site consisted of a few potsherds found on the southern boundary of the proposed agricultural development. A few test probes were dug to ascertain if any archaeological deposit was present but none was found. No surface features were found and the material retrieved was not enough to constitute an archaeological site. A small donga was found further to the west and these potsherds might have eroded from there. The sherds could also have been the result of intrusions caused by the road construction.

7.2. Area 2

7.2.1. ALY 004

G.P.S. 22° 11' 44" S

29° 34' 00" E

Description:

A medium dense scattering of Middle Stone Age (MSA) and Late Stone Age (LSA) stone tools were encountered. These tools included cores, scrapers, backed blades, hammers stones and flakes (photo 5). The site is situated on the eastern boundary of Area 2. A small access track was eroded here and this exposed the stone tools. The densest concentration of tools was approximately six tools per square meter. The total area containing these tools was approximately 30m x 4m with a central concentration of tools becoming more scattered to the outside of the site. Concentrations of stone tools were found alongside exposed quartzite and gravel outcrops. The sub-surface deposit nowhere extended more than 10 cm underneath the surface.

8. Recommendations

Recommendations were given for each of the sites as outlined in the site descriptions. Each of the sites were attributed a category as described in the section on methodology and descriptions of the work to be done were given.

8.1 Site 1

8.1.1. ALY 001

Category 5

This site has no archaeological or historical value and no further work is needed on it. Due to the history of the farm it might have some curiosity value for the owners.

8.1.2. ALY 002

Category 6

The handling of graves are discussed in Addendum B. Should these possible graves be in danger of damage further arrangements should be made to exhume them. The area where they are located should however not be suitable for development and the best action to be taken is to demarcate them with "danger tape" during bush clearing and to leave a safety are of 3m around them.

8.1.3. ALY 003

Category 5

The amount of cultural material retrieved from this site does not constitute an archaeological site. The site should however be monitored during construction in case any sub-surface deposits are exposed. No further work is necessary on this site.

8.2. Area 2

8.2.1. ALY 004

Category 5

The concentration of these stone tools is not dense enough to constitute a Stone Age occupational site. The visible lack of large quantities of stone flakes also eliminates the possibility of the site being a manufacturing site. Stone tools of this era are found over most of the areas along the Limpopo valley and this concentration is not deemed important enough for further investigation. No further work is recommended on this site.

9. Conclusion

The development and construction of the proposed agricultural fields can continue from an archaeological point of view. The possible graves should be handled as discussed in the recommendations and site ALY 003 should be monitored during construction and bush clearing