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An Archaeological Investigation on the Farms Buffelfontein 222KQ and Klein  
Buffelfontein 370 KQ, Vaalwater District, Northern Province

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## Executive Summary

No significant archaeological sites will be impacted upon by the construction of the proposed dam in Frikkie-se-loop, a perennial stream on the farms Buffelfontein 222 KO and Klein Buffelfontein 370 KO.

Please take note of the following:

A Later Stone Age assemblage consisting of a surface scatter of worked stone tools and a dilapidated pole and dagha structure will be submerged by the development. Due to the low importance rating allocated to these sites no further investigation or documentation is deemed necessary. No mitigation measures are proposed.

It should be kept in mind that archaeological deposits usually occur below ground level. Should artefacts or skeletal material be revealed during construction of the dam wall and access roads, a university or museum has to be notified in order for an investigation and evaluation of the find(s).

It is strongly recommended that an archaeological investigation of the whole farm be conducted, the results of which may contribute to produce an encompassing Integrated Environmental Management Plan. This will facilitate the proper future protection and management of this heritage resource.

## 1. Introduction

The Archaeology Contracts Unit (UNISA) has conducted an archaeological investigation of the farm Buffelfontein 222 KQ and Klein Buffelfontein 370 KQ, as requested by Van Riet and Louw Landscape Architects. This survey forms part of an Environmental Impact Assessment for the construction of a dam in Frikkie-se-loop, a perennial stream situated in the Mokolo (Mogol) River catchment area in the Waterberg Mountains. The aim of this investigation is to locate, identify and document visible archaeological artefacts, structures (including graves) and settlements of cultural significance within the proposed inundated area of 31 hectares and access roads.

## 2. Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of this survey are as follows:

- \* Compile a brief contextualisation of the area's ethnographic and colonial history
- \* Provide a detail description of all archaeological artefacts, structures (including graves) and settlements in the area
- \* Assess the significance of impact by the proposed development on the archaeological remains of the area
- \* Estimate the level of sensitivity/importance of the archaeological remains in the area under development
- \* Propose possible mitigation measures provided that such action is necessitated

## 3. Definitions and Approach

- Archaeological remains can be defined as human-made objects which reflect past ways of life deposited in or on the ground.

- All cultural material and structures older than 100 years are protected by the relevant legislation, in this case the **National Monuments Act (No 25 of 1999)**. According to the Act (Article 35) no archaeological artefact, assemblage or settlement (site) can be moved or destroyed without the necessary approval from the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA). Recommendations are made by taking full cognisance of this Act.

- As a result of the inundation of the area by the proposed dam all assessments of significance of impact will be rated high.

- It should be kept in mind that archaeological deposits usually occur below ground level. Should artefacts or skeletal material be revealed during construction of the dam wall and access roads, a university or museum has to be notified in order for an investigation and evaluation of the find(s).

- A copy of this report shall also be lodged with the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA).

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Literature Study

Archaeological and ethnographical research data are available due to the involvement of members of the Unit in research projects within the Waterberg area certain. These sources are listed at the end of the report.

#### 4.2 Maps, Aerial Photographs and Other Sources

The survey area was studied by using the 1:50 000 Topocadastral Map 2427BD and aerial photographs (provided by Van Riet and Louw Landscape Architects) of the farm. The orientation and location of sites were determined by using a Global Positioning System (GPS)<sup>1</sup> correlated with the geographic features (i.e. rivers, fields, topography etc.) of the survey area.

The Archaeological Data Recording Centre (ADRC) was consulted to determine whether archaeological settlements are listed for the area under development.

#### 4.3 Fieldwork

The site visit to the farms Buffelfontein and Klein Buffelfontein took place from 22 - 23 March 2000. The area to be inundated by the proposed dam, conveniently marked with tape, was extensively investigated on foot. Due to the varied landscape of the river basin, care was taken to cover all locations for evidence of possible sites. This resulted in a much wider search than the demarcated area. Access roads to the farm and new roads under construction on the spurs in the vicinity of the dam development, were also investigated for possible archaeological sites.

#### 5. Chronological Framework

PERIOD	APPROXIMATE DATE
Early Stone Age	c. 2 million years ago - c. 200 000 years ago
Middle Stone Age	c. 200 000 years ago - c. 25 000 years ago
Later Stone Age (Includes San Rock Art)	c. 25 000 years ago - c. AD 200 (up to historic times in certain areas)
Early Iron Age	c. AD 200 - c. AD 1000
Late Iron Age (Stonewalled sites)	c. AD 1000 - c. AD 1830 (c. AD 1600 - c. AD 1830)

#### 6. Area Description

<sup>1</sup> According to the manufacturer a standard deviation is to be expected when determining the location of sites. However care has been taken to correlate the reading with the topography and to obtaining a low dilution of precision (DOP) before plotting sites on a map.

The farm is characterized by pristine bushveld vegetation. Little, if any, impact associated with farming activities (agriculture and stock farming) could be discerned. The lowest part at the river is about 1220 metres above sea-level with surrounding spurs rising to about 1300 metres above sea-level.

The dam wall is to be constructed in the narrow part of a kloof. The proposed inundated area is 31 hectares. At present this area seems to be a natural floodplain, which is usually not associated with Iron Age settlements.

## 7. Archaeological and Ethnohistorical Context

In the Waterberg underlying Bushveld Complex crystalline basement rocks and Rooiberg felsic tufts provided fine-grained materials and felsite as raw materials for stone implements. Quartz veins were also extensively utilized for rock crystals. Haematite, specularite and ochre served as sources of pigments for body ornamentation and rock paintings.

Radiocarbon dates obtained for excavated sites in the Waterberg indicate Later Stone Age (LSA) occupation from at least 2000 BP up to historic times. LSA occupation of the Waterberg continued, in the face of overwhelming change, throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries.

At least three settlement phases have been distinguished for the **Early Iron Age (EIA)** in the Waterberg for prehistoric agropastoralist utilization of this area. The first phase of the Early Iron Age is known as **Happy Rest**, representative of the Western Stream of Bantu migrations, and dates to AD 400 - AD 600. The second phase known as **Diamant** is dated to AD 600 - AD 900. The third phase, characterized by herringbone-decorated pottery of the **Eiland** tradition, is regarded as the final expression of the Early Iron Age (EIA) and occurs in large parts of the Northern Province. This phase has been dated to about AD 900 - AD 1200.

The **Late Iron Age (LIA)** is marked by mountain-top sites in defensive locations and characterized by stonewalled enclosures and undecorated pottery. This occupation phase has been linked to the arrival of the Northern Ndebele (NguniBspeakers) in the region from the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries AD.

Sotho-Tswana settlements from the beginning of the 17th century onward often also occur on defensive hilltops. The terminal LIA is represented by late 18th/early 19th century settlements with multichrome Moloko pottery, commonly attributed to the Sotho-Tswana. This correlates with oral traditions about various people who sought refuge in the mountains during the processes of disruption in the interior caused during the so-called *difagane*. Maps indicating historic settlement of the Waterberg by agropastoralist groups are attached to this report.

Excavations at Iron Age sites indicate the presence of domestic animals such as cattle, ovicaprine (sheep) and dogs. However, relatively high quantities of faunal remains of a wide range of game animals indicate the importance of local resources in their subsistence base.

Anthropological research points to the random movement and convergence of various Sotho-Tswana and northern Ndebele-speaking groups within the Waterberg area. According to African and European oral traditions the Waterberg plateau had been under the control of Sotho-Tswana groups such as the Kgatla бага Kgafêla of Plianesberg and various Kwena of the North-Western Province, as well as Ndebele groups such as the Langa and Kekana (Map 1).

White pioneer settlements moved into the area during the colonial period - the first half of the 19th century. The Waterberg district was proclaimed in March 1866 bordering the Rustenburg district to the west and the Soutpansberg district to the east.

## 9. Site Descriptions

### 9.1 Stone Age Sites

No major archaeological sites were documented in the area to be submerged by the proposed development. Although scatters of stone tools occur widespread over the whole area, only one Later Stone Age (LSA) site (2427BD1) with a concentration of implements was documented (Figures 1-5). The cryptocrystalline (CCS) materials used in the manufacture of the stone tools include felsite, various mudstones, quartz and quartz crystals. Small scrapers (quartz), large scrapers (felsite) and a notched point with secondary retouch of felsite represent the only formal implements present in the assemblage. The remainder are flakes without any retouch as well as debris from stone tool knapping. Small quantities of haematite and quartz crystals were found in association with the foregoing.

The importance of the site is **low** and significance of impact **high** - it will be totally submerged upon completion of the dam.

### 9.2 Rock Art Site

In Erikkie-se-loop about a kilometre downstream from the proposed dam area a panel with rock paintings (2427BD2) was documented (Fig 6). It consists of two well-preserved figures in red ochre. Hunting equipment are also featured. The male figure on the right is particularly elongated - depicting a physical hallucination experienced during a state of trance (Fig 7). San (Bushmen) shamans describe this as a tingling feeling of potency in their stomachs which rises up the spine until they experience a sense of attenuation in their limbs and body. This pronounced elongation of human figures is a common feature of San rock art in all parts of South Africa. Lower down to the right are two more faint paintings in red, one of which is clearly human. On the opposite wall is a faint painting of a buck, also in red ochre.

Paintings of people in trance positions, dance scenes of men and women, men with hunting equipment, a large variety of antelope and other animals, imaginary rain-animals, hand prints and geometric designs form part of the contents of the San rock art of the Waterberg. Depictions of figures in trance posture attest to a long period of association of the Waterberg shelters with San shamanistic rituals such as trance dances and rainmaking. The physiological well-being generated by the trance or medicine dance makes this the most important San ritual. It is a feature of the cosmology of all San groups and has a long time-depth. The art of the hunter-gatherers

is mostly shamanistic and had important religious and ritual meanings which are impossible to interpret without an understanding of San culture and belief.

The importance of the site is **medium** and significance of impact **none** - it is situated about 1 kilometre below the dam wall.

### 9.3 Iron Age Sites

No Early or Late Iron Age sites were found in the inundated area of the proposed dam. An extensive survey of the access and service roads currently under construction on the farm also yielded no archaeological remains.

A large and particularly well-preserved Late Iron Age (c. AD 1600 - c. AD 1830) stonewalled site (2427BD3) was located on top of a hill on the adjacent property. The ascent is demarcated by stonewalled terraces which leads to a large number of enclosures, including animal pens (kraals) and scallops containing hut floors. Lower and upper grinding stones are present. A more detailed survey is necessary before an interpretation of the site is possible. Ethnohistorical research among local groups are recommended to contextualise the site. However, this site does confirm the possibility of I/A sites in the area.

### 9.4 Historic structure

The remains of a rectangular pole and dagha structure (2427BD4) was identified in the proposed dam area. Only part of one outside wall (about 2 metres in length) is still standing. From the Earth Building Technology (EBT) used in the construction thereof, it is evident that it dates to the recent historic period (1900s). The presence of a milk-can supports this inference. Midden-like deposits (containing pieces of glass and porcelain) surrounding the structure confirm a historic date. This type of structure is a common feature during the historic horizon of the Waterberg area.

The significance of impact of this structure is **high** - it will be totally submerged upon completion of the dam. Due to its **low** importance, no preservation measures and mitigation are recommended.

## 10. Conclusions and Recommendations

Although the Waterberg is especially rich in archaeological sites (including Rock Art) the proposed dam development will not impact on significant sites. This survey revealed only one Later Stone Age assemblage as well as the remains of one historic building in the inundated area. Due to the low importance rating allocated to these sites no further investigation or documentation is deemed necessary. No mitigation measures are proposed.

The location of a Rock Art site and a large Late Iron Age site in close proximity to the proposed development confirms the archaeological richness of the area. In this regard it is recommended that a complete archaeological survey of the farm be conducted to facilitate the proper future protection and management of this heritage resource.

The Developer has to apply for a permit at the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA) for destroying the archaeological sites (2427BD1 and 2427BD4). The Developer has to apply for the permit at least 60 days prior to the initiation of the project (Act No.25 of 1999 Article 28).



Summary of Sites

Site	Importance	Significance of Impact	Location
2427BD1 (Stone Age Site)	Low	High	24°20'02,3"S 27°57'34,7"E
2427BD2 (Rock Art Site)	Medium	None	24°18'34,4"S 27°57'40,9"E
2427BD3 (Iron Age Site)	Medium-High	None	24°17'37,2"S 27°55'24,6"E
2427BD4 (Historic structure)	Low	High	24°19'51,5"S 27°57'42,4"E

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