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22 December 2002

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED TOURIST ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES IN THE GOLDEN GATE HIGHLANDS NATIONAL PARK

INVESTIGATION

The proposed sites suggested for tourist accommodation development in the Golden Gate Highlands National Park, was inspected on 12 & 13 December 2002 in the company of Elbie Erasmus, Africa Wide Enviro Solutions, Bloemfontein and Koos Meyer of the Golden Gate Highlands National Park.

The different sites were examined for the possible bearing of archaeological material and to establish the potential impact on any cultural material. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is done under the Environmental Conservation Act, (73 of 1989).

The following observations were made.

LOCALITY

1. HIGHLANDS MOUNTAIN RETREAT

The proposed development of the tourist accommodation facilities is located along the ridge at Wodehouse Kop on the farm Diepkloof 4720.

The different sites situated on the following GPS co-ordinates, were selected and submitted by Parks personnel:

ALTERNATIVE SITE 1: WODEHOUSE KOP UPPER TERRACE

The site lies on the ridge near the top of the road to the radio mast (Fig.1).
Site not visited.

ALTERNATIVE SITE 2: WODEHOUSE KOP MIDDLE TERRACE

28°29'19"S. 28°38'34"E. Altitude 2240m (Fig.1)

- Preferred site.
- Located on slope facing north towards Kestell.
- Grass cover on surface.

ALTERNATIVE SITE 3: WODEHOUSE KOP LOWER TERRACE

28°29'50"S. 28°39'08"E. Altitude 2067m (Fig.1).

- Located on slope facing south.
- Thick grass-cover on surface.
- Marshy appearance.
- Allegedly old plough lands.
- Stones absent on surface.
- Single scattered sandstone blocks visible.

FINDS

All the sites have a varying degree of grass cover, hampering a clear inspection of the surface for cultural material. It seems unlikely, however, that human occupation has taken place on these high altitudes in extreme weather conditions during prehistoric times.

None of the sites inspected produced any archaeological material.

No stone tools or ceramics were recovered, neither were traces of rock art or graffiti of historical significance found at any of the sites.

The locality and altitude of these sites allows for an excellent panoramic view northwards to Kestell, east towards Platberg and Harrismith and also on the Centinal and the Devil's Tooth in the Drakensberg range. It is possible to place display boards to indicate and identify and quote to indigenous names and other interesting information about specific high points and prominent mountains and towns in the near vicinity and on the horizon.

2. QWAQWA REST CAMP

ALTERNATIVE SITE 1: Basotho Cultural Village

The preferred site for the proposed development is located on the farm Korfshoek 193, in the district of Kestell, GPS co-ordinates 28°29'16"S. 28°44'33"E., altitude 1819m. The site is situated adjacent to and below the existing Cultural Village (Fig.2).

Indigenous shrubs and sparse grass-cover are found on the surface (Fig.3).

The site had officially been investigated, prior to the building of the Qwaqwa Cultural Village (cf. Dreyer 1992; Brink & Holt 1992). Cultural material in the form of stone walls, ash heaps and potsherds have been found on the terrace during the initial investigation.

The finds indicated two different phases of human occupation. The earliest settlements could represent an occupation by black people on the site, predating the present occupation in Qwaqwa. According to lore the site could have been part of the occupation by the Kgolokwe, the people of Oetsi (Witsie) during the 19th century. The second occupation could date from a period either during or just after the Anglo-Boer War (Dreyer 1992).

ALTERNATIVE SITE 2: Klerkspruit Plains

Site not visited. From the discussion by the experts and from a tourism point of view, it seems worthy of further investigation for future development. It is unlikely that the wetland area would have contained any human occupation during prehistoric times, setting the area open for new development.

FINDS

The varying degree of grass cover on the site below the Qwaqwa Cultural Village did not prevent a clear inspection of the surface for cultural material (Fig.). It seems that the remains of human occupation, found during the previous archaeological investigation, did not extend much further down the slope into the area of proposed development.

During the present investigation the site did not produce any further archaeological material.

No ceramics or any other cultural material was recovered, neither were traces of rock art or graffiti of historical significance found at the site.

DISCUSSION

No obvious reasons could be found to delay the commencement of further planning. Care should, however, be taken to limit the disturbance of the immediate environment outside the road and proposed accommodation area.

After examination by the environmental consultants and the archaeologist, it has been agreed to recommend that the proposed developments may proceed.

It is stressed that in case of the discovery of any archaeological or historical material during the course of the work, all activities should temporarily be stopped in the specific area for inspection by the archaeologist or other specialists.

MITIGATION

Every archaeological and historical site is unique and should be treated as a non-renewable commodity. All efforts should be made to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or destruction.

Concerning the areas for the proposed developments, mitigation measures are not needed in any of the investigated cases.

3. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES

With a few exceptions, most of the National Parks in South Africa were proclaimed to protect specific natural resources. When looking at National Parks in general, we sometimes tend to forget that man has also left his imprints in many of these areas. Fortunately, the National Parks Board realised this phenomenon and started to preserve the cultural heritage inside the reserves under their jurisdiction almost thirty years ago. The first survey of the cultural heritage in the Kruger National Park had already been done during the early 1970s. This led to the ensuing archaeological excavations and restoration of Masorini, a Late Iron Age living site of the early black inhabitants of the area, for instance.

The July 1994 issue of the *Custos*, magazine of the National Parks Board, emphasises that the initiative to preserve the cultural heritage inside National Parks was not only limited to the Kruger Park. The publication gives a review of a wide variety of features in parks ranging from Thulamela in the Kruger National Park, Oudepost on the west Coast and certain places in the Karoo National Park, to name a few. In these cases the preserved objects include occurrences such as stonewalled sites representing prehistoric occupation by indigenous peoples, buildings and structures of European settler origin, San rock paintings, photographs and even the recording of oral traditions.

Incidentally Golden Gate is also mentioned in this journal. Cultural assets such as the farmsteads and buildings at Wilgenhof, Glen Reenen and Noord-Brabant are listed and stone tools and rock art sites are generally recorded. Attention is given to the foreign Poplar and Willow trees, which have actually become an integrated part of Golden Gate over the years. Furthermore, it is announced that several places where a large amount of Boer ammunition had been destroyed

during the Anglo-Boer War were discovered inside the Park (Fig.4). It is also mentioned that many of the cartridge cases had afterwards been collected and removed by the European inhabitants of the area to be used as a kind of mosaic covering for floors inside their houses. This claim should also be investigated.

During the examination for the present EIA, several sites of historical and cultural significance have come to our attention.

These sites can be classified to include:

- **EARLY BLACK HISTORY**

I was told that photographic material confirms the existence of certain early black living sites dating from the Late Iron Age in the area. These sites should be investigated against the background of our present archaeological knowledge on early human occupation of the Free State and adjacent regions.

Several references relating to the presence of cannibals in the Golden Gate and Qwaqwa area during the Difaqane (1822-30) should likewise be investigated.

- **EUROPEAN SETTLEMENTS**

The history and localities of white occupation on farms should be recorded and the sites and buildings preserved.

- **ANGLO-BOER WAR SITES**

Sites dating from the Anglo-Boer War with specific relation to the submission and destruction of Boer arms and ammunition at Surrender Hill and Golden Gate should be investigated and recorded.

Several prominent patches without any vegetation contain spoilt cartridge cases (Fig.5). From the records it seems that a total of at least three of these sites where Boer ammunition had been destroyed should be inside the Park.

4. OCCUPATION AND EXPLOITATION OF THE QWAQWA PARK BY STOCK FARMERS

A constantly varying number of people with several hundred head of stock occupy parts of the Qwaqwa National Park. Most of these people are the remnants and relatives of former farm workers who have remained in the area since the expropriation of white owned farm-land in the late 1980's. These occupants have no historical claim to the land.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above discussion and finds it is has become an urgent necessity that:

- A complete survey of the cultural and natural heritage of the Golden Gate-Qwaqwa National Park should be performed, prior to any further development.
- A total Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP) should be compiled and implemented.
- An archaeologist should be closely involved throughout the CRMP stage.
- With regards to conservation, heritage- and ethno-tourism, it is recommended that a tourist information plan and facilities should be created to educate the public on the conservation of the area.
- That all environmental issues should be taken into account in any new developments, including the new accommodation sites in the Reserve.
- The renovation of a number of farm-houses and other buildings that have been neglected and/or unofficially demolished should be a point of serious concern.
- Due to the abundance of fossils in the area, detailed studies will be required to make specific paleaontological, geological and geomorphological recommendations during the construction phases of the proposed developments.
- The situation where people are farming inside a National Park, as in this case, is unprecedented and unacceptable. SANParks should address the matter, with the specific aim to resettle the people and animals elsewhere. The assistance and guidance of a knowledgeable anthropologist could become a necessity in this regard.

It is therefore recommended that:

- The history of human occupation should be linked to the tourism potential of the Park.
- The cultural tourist potential should be investigated.
- The cultural heritage of the of Golden Gate Highlands National Park should be researched, recorded and preserved as part of the total environment management plan.

- The cultural heritage of the Park should, with consultation and serious consideration, be developed to benefit all the inhabitants of the country and to promote the image of the National Parks Board.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Elbie Erasmus of Africa Wide Enviro Solutions, Bloemfontein, took me to the site and supplied information on this investigation. I have also benefited from discussions with Johan Steyn, MVD Consulting Engineers, Bethlehem, Johan Taljaard and Koos Meyer of the Golden Gate Highlands National Park and with Coenie Erasmus of the Free State Department of Environmental Affairs.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:



Fig.1 General view of the ridge at Wodehouse Kop on the farm Diepkloof 4720, locality of the proposed tourist accommodation facilities.



Fig.2 Korfskop on the farm Korfshoek 193, Kestell. The existing Cultural Village lies below the hill, with the proposed development area in the foreground.



Fig 3 Sparse grass cover at the site below the Cultural Village. No cultural material was found on the soil surface.



Fig. 4 A view of the patches without any vegetation, where Boer ammunition had been destroyed during the Anglo-Boer War (1900).



Fig.5 The remains of ammunition destroyed after the Boer's surrender in the Brandwater Basin during the Anglo-Boer War (1900).