



COBUS DREYER

Pr. Archaeologist/Heritage Specialist

Tel: 051 - 444 1187
Fax: 051 - 401 2363
Cell: 083 - 357 7982

P.O. Box 12910
Brandhof
9324
dreyerc.HUM@mail.uovs.ac.za

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FIRST PHASE HERITAGE / ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED R30 TOLL PLAZA, BRANDFORT

INVESTIGATION

The site for the proposed developments of the toll plaza on the R30 road between Bloemfontein and Brandfort was visited and inspected on 3 February 2004. I was accompanied to the site by Mr Johan Loock, who is a former member of SAHRA, Anglo-Boer War expert and Geologist from the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein.

The area was examined for possible archaeological and historical material to establish the potential impact on any cultural material that might be present. The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is done in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), (25 of 1999) and under the Environmental Conservation Act, (73 of 1989).

The following observations were made.

LOCALITY

The sites were vaguely indicated on a copy of the 1:50 000 topographic map and described as to be more or less 18,9km and 20,1km from the R30 convergence with the N1 main road north of Bloemfontein. Specific indications or land-marks on the locality of the sites have not been given.

According to the map (2826CD Glen 1991) both alternative sites are located on the farms Doornspruit 833 west of the R30 and Enkeldoorn 1200 (Sunnyside) to the east of the road.

The following GPS coordinates were taken:

- Alternative A: Approximately 18,9km. Mile stone 19 (P55/1) west of road (28°49'42"S. 26°22'21"E. Altitude 1374m) (Fig.1).

- Alternative B: Approximately 20,1km east of road (28°49'07"S. 26°22'31"E. Altitude 1370m).

The area consists of a low-lying clay bed and is covered in planted pastures (Smuts Finger Grass) which could also be the remains of old plough lands.

HISTORICAL FINDS

Although it is known that several skirmishes that took place in the area during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) no remains from these times of strife could be found during the present investigation. Prior to the march by the British troops under the command of Lord Roberts on their way to Pretoria in April 1900, the Boer and British forces were occupied for some time in their alternative positions in the hills around Brandfort and Karee station, respectively (Pakenham 1997).

It is anticipated that the British forces marched along this road, but it seems unlikely that any remains from this march could be found in the area. It is possible, though, that the odd bullet or other remnants of military equipment could be found during the construction of the phase.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS

No indication of any archaeological or cultural material in the form of stone tools or ceramic ware was found on the inspected sites.

Together with the disturbances by ploughing mentioned above, it also seems unlikely that remains of any early human occupation could have survived in this area. The locality is likewise not close enough to the higher ground, the obvious living area for people during prehistoric times.

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

According to the geologist the area of the proposed toll plaza developments is situated in the low-lying plain consisting of mud-stone and sand stone, surrounded by dolerite outcrops. The weathering of dolerite produces swell-clay which is not favourable to foundations and building activities.

The thickness of the quaternary and recent beds of clay, consisting of calcrete and wind-blown sand is unknown. It is recommended, therefore, that test pits should be drilled down to bedrock to determine the depth of surficial deposits and to ascertain the exact nature and engineering properties of the sediment before any foundations and buildings are designed.

Due to the proximity of the dolerite outcrops to Alternative site B, resulting in a shallower sediment of clay and windblown sand, it can be expected that

alternative B could be a better site for building purposes (JC Loock, personal communication).

DISCUSSION

From previous research on the Anglo-Boer War history of the area of Brandfort and Karee station, both J.C. Loock and the author are well acquainted with the history, archaeology and geology of this specific area (cf. Dreyer 1991; Dreyer & Loock 1991).

RECOMMENDATIONS

No obvious reasons could be found during examination to delay the commencement of further planning and development of the site.

It is, therefore, recommended that the proposed developments may proceed.

MITIGATION

Concerning the area for the proposed development, no mitigation measures are needed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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