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31 JANUARY 2006

**FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE  
ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS AT THE  
STAFFORD HILL GOLF & POLO ESTATE,  
FICKSBURG, FREE STATE**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The new proposed residential developments will include the existing golf course at Ficksburg and adjacent land at the foot of Stafford's Hill.

The base of a circular stone-wall and a number of scattered Later Stone Age flakes in the streambed are the only occurrences that could be of importance in this regard.

The developers are very keen to preserve the remains of the stone-wall and to present this feature as an attraction and to popularise the early history of the peoples of the area.

The find of stone flakes are outside the planned developments and are of very low significance.

It is recommended that the developers should do the further planning of the site in close contact with the archaeologist and to prepare a brochure on the early history of the occupants of the area on the Lesotho border.

**INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION**

The vegetation of the area is described as cool moist afro mountain grassland.

The topography of the Ficksburg area is dominated by several prominent mountains. The hill to the west of town is called Imperani (Map 2), a name which is derived from the Sesotho word Mpharane (=flat topped). It is the site of a very

old mission station, described by Arbousset (Arbousset 1868) and by Dr Andrew Smith (Smith 1975) during their respective tours of 1836.

The mountain to the north of Ficksburg is named Stafford's Hill. According to the records, it is known as Makoatlane or Makoahlane in Sesotho (Webb 1950). Another Sesotho name of Mehopong was mentioned by a Ficksburg resident, but could not be verified yet.

Kristalkop or Crystal Kop, Thaba Khupa in Sesotho (Webb 1950:9,59), lies more to the north east behind Stafford's Hill (Map 2).

## **INVESTIGATION**

The site for the proposed residential developments at the Ficksburg golf course and adjacent land was visited on 12 January 2006. At the site, we spoke to Andy Wille and Dave Rufus of the Golf Estate. We also met with Ronnie Dusse and another official of the Setotso Municipality.

The area was examined for possible archaeological and historical material and to establish the potential impact on any cultural material that might be found. 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).

## **LOCALITY**

The proposed residential developments are planned on the existing golf course and surrounding area (portion 20 of Ficksburg Dorps Gronden 75 and an unnamed portion of ground between the old and the new northern entrance to town) along the R26/R70 road to Maputsoe and the Lesotho border post (Map 1).

The land is located at the foot of Stafford's Hill and lies to the north of the town of Ficksburg (Map 2) (Surveyor-General 1973).

The following GPS coordinates (Cape scale) were taken (2827DD):

Club house	28°51'48"S 027°52'53"E Altitude 1618m (Fig.3).
R26/70 (Polo field)	28°51'36"S 027°53'21"E Altitude 1610m (Fig.7).
Base of stone-wall	28°51'21"S 027°53'28"E Altitude 1636m (Figs.9-10).

Highest point along hill	28°51'24"S 027°53'29"E Altitude 1637m (Fig.11).
East (Forest)	28°51'38"S 027°53'38"E Altitude 1639m (Fig.8).
East (Next to R26)	28°51'45"S 027°53'31"E Altitude 1614m (Fig.7).

## RESULTS

The areas earmarked for developments at Ficksburg are limited to the existing golf course and an area at the foot of Stafford's Hill along the R26/R70 road to Maputsoe (Lesotho) (Map 3).

Cultural finds relate to Later Stone Age flakes scattered on the sandstone bed of the stream flowing through the golf course and to the remains of a stone-wall, which were found higher up against the slope of the mountain.

No further indication of any other archaeological or historical material was found.

## FINDS

### 1. LATER STONE AGE FLAKES

A scatter of Later Stone Age flakes (Fig.5) occur on the sandstone rock in the riverbed (Fig.6). The flakes clearly originate from the riverbank and are washed out by rainwater during thunderstorms.

### 2. STONE- WALL FOUNDATION

The remains of a stone-wall occur some way up the slope of the hill (Fig.8). The remains are in the form of an elaborate scatter of stones on the surface. Part of the foundation of a stone-wall is also visible (Figs. 9 & 10). The origin and purpose of the wall is not clear. No further investigations were done, but judging from the circular plan and the familiar building method of two double rows of stones, it could be speculated that this feature is the remains of a stock byre resembling Later Iron Age enclosures from elsewhere in the Free State and adjoining areas.

According to comparative radiocarbon dating the feature could date from about mid 17<sup>th</sup> century to early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Maggs 1976, Dreyer 1992).

## **ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT**

The impact on the cultural heritage remains of the proposed developments at the Ficksburg golf course will be of minor significance. In the case of the stone flakes, the only impact could be by rainwater during thunder showers.

In the case of the stone-walling, it seems that the walls had already been damaged by serious wall robbing in the distant past. The developers are very keen to preserve the remains of the walls and to present this feature as the remnants of the early inhabitants of the area adjacent to Lesotho,

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

I recommend that proposed developments at the Stafford's Hill Golf and Polo Estate at Ficksburg should proceed.

I also suggest that the necessary arrangements concerning the preservation and presentation of the stone-wall site as an historical feature should be made before any work is undertaken.

## **MITIGATION**

Concerning the area for the proposed developments, mitigation measures will be required in the case of the stone-walled site. The present archaeologist will be available for discussions on measures to preserve the feature. He is also prepared to provide the necessary information on the early occupants of similar sites in the Free State.

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

After examination by the archaeologist, it is recommended that the proposed developments may proceed.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I thank Dr Johan du Preez of MDA Environmental Consultants, Bloemfontein, for taking me to the site and to Andy Wille and Dave Rufus for information on the proposed developments.

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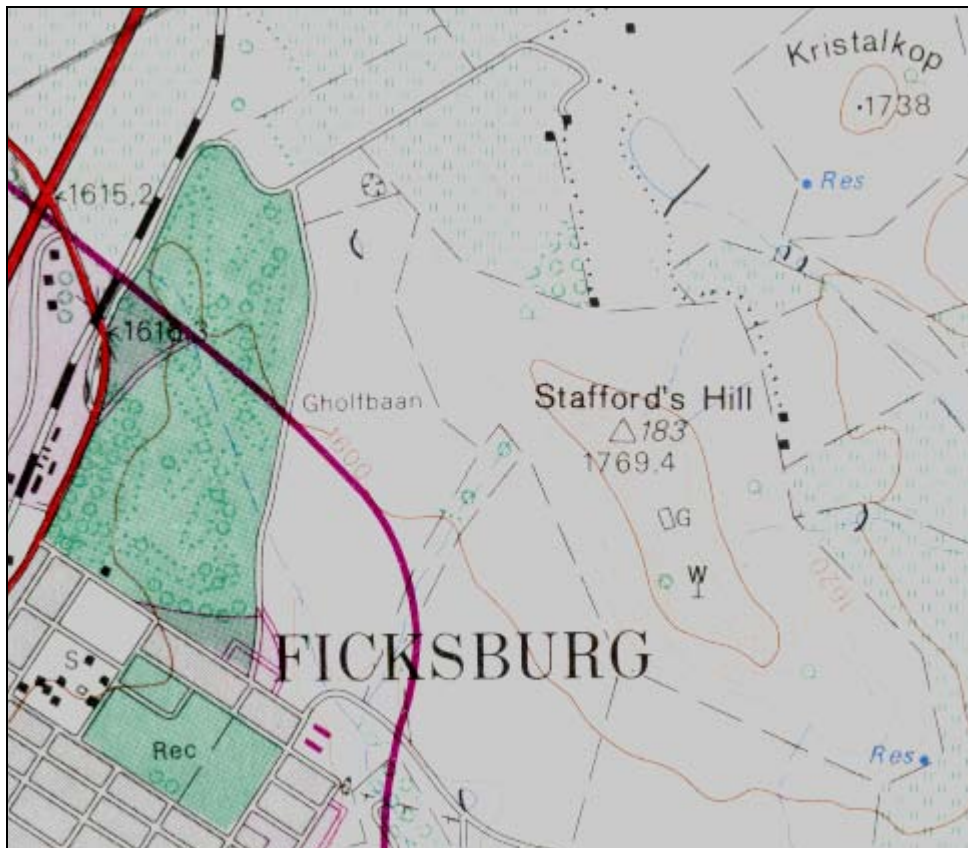
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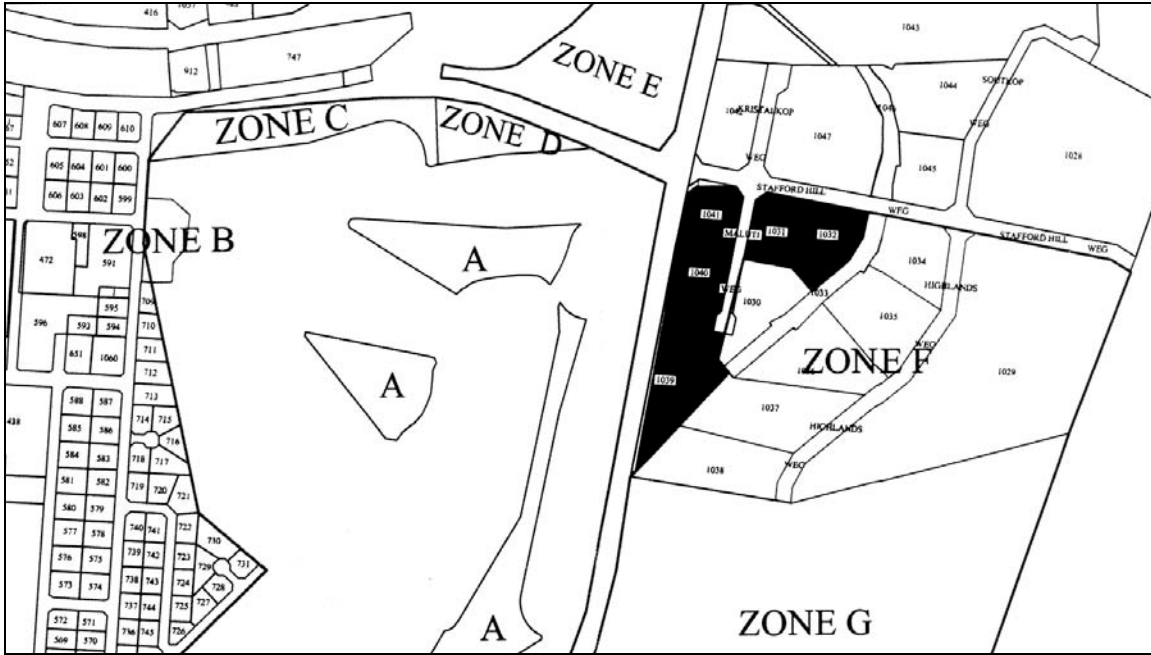
## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS



Map 1 Locality of Ficksburg in relation to Marquard, Clocolan, Fouriesburg and Lesotho.



Map 2 Locality of the existing golf course at Ficksburg. Note the position of Stafford's Hill (2827DD).



Map 3 Proposed development zones within Stafford Hill Golf & Polo Estate, Ficksburg.



Fig.1 Plan of the Stafford Hill Golf & Polo Estate at Ficksburg.



Fig.2 Proposed new developments at the Stafford Hill Golf & Polo Estate, Ficksburg.



Fig.3 The club house at the golf course.





Fig.4 View across the golf course with Stafford's Hill in the background.



Fig.5 Later Stone Age flakes and a piece of glass on the sandstone bedrock of the stream...



Fig.6 A view on the bare rock bottom of the streambed.



Fig.7 A view of the land at the foot of Stafford Hill, also proposed for development.



Fig.8 View of the mountain slope. Position of white cross indicated by arrow.



Fig.9 Foundation of stone-wall on surface.



Fig.10 More stone remains visible on surface.



Fig.11 View from the site towards Ficksburg. Imperani mountain in the rear.