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FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS AT THE FARM MIDDENSPRUIT 151, KROONSTAD, FREE STATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Residential developments are planned on part of the farm Middenspruit 151, Kroonstad. The farm contains several clusters of Late Iron Age stone-walls, which are of special significance to archaeologists and other students of history. To prevent any serious impact on the cultural and historical heritage resources at this farm, the new developments will have to be moved away from the stone-walls.

I recommend that further planning and development of the site could continue, provided that the stone-walled areas and ash heaps should be avoided and that all developments should be planned and executed in close consultation with the archaeologist. Care should be taken to avoid damage to any of the walls or to destroy ash heaps during the installation of services and the building of roads. The removal of stones from the walls should likewise be prohibited.

I also recommend that provision should be made in the planning to include at least two monitoring visits by the archaeologist to the site during the construction phase.

Potential buyers of the properties should be informed about the significance of the stone-walled structures.

Basic rules recommended for the protection of archaeological sites, which have been approved by the South African Association of Professional Archaeologists are enclosed herewith and should be implemented as guide lines for the management of the site.

INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Iron Age archaeology of the Free State is characterised by a wide distribution of stone-walled sites on the flat-topped ridges and hills. Studies have revealed detail and consistency in the arrangement and design of the structures. People's expression of culture has left its imprint on the material environment. Thus, recognised settlement patterns display human perceptions with regard to social clustering, economic system and political organisation. Patterns are indicated by the arrangement of huts, byres and ash heaps in a particular order and in relation to one another. Spatial organisation in general is characterised by the central position of stock byres and the placing of the main dwelling area on the perimeter of the settlement.

During the Later Iron Age, emphasis was not only on stone building, for additional structures of perishable materials, supplementing living space, have also been revealed. All the characteristics of settlement patterns allow the immediate recognition of specific groups of people populating the landscape.

A classification of settlement patterns produced a standardised archaeological framework for the arrangement of structures and sites characterised by connecting walls, surrounding walls and huts with bilobial courtyards respectively. Furthermore, the research indicated that the division of sites based on layout is confirmed by associated pottery assemblages with different decoration styles. Different settlement patterns also produced huts of different materials in different styles (Maggs 1976).

The classification of sites is based on the assumption that settlement layout is bound and prescribed by cultural perceptions. The identification of different ethnic groups is thus possible from the way in which these traditional peoples organised their different living places in terms of space and time. The result was directed by cultural preference (choice) and function. The importance of livestock, personal status, kinship, social organisation and the diverse roles of men, women and offspring have always been important in the understanding of prehistoric settlement patterns.

MIDDENSPRUIT SETTLEMENTS

These settlements are sparsely scattered over a relatively limited area not far from Doringberg (Maphororong) near Ventersburg and are also found at Sandrivierspoort (Mariba), adjacent to the main road between Winburg and Ventersburg, and to the north-west along the Vals River in the districts of

Kroonstad and Bothaville, including a few sites on the Renoster River, east of Viljoenskroon.

Hut remains normally show up as a ring of upright stones surrounding a paved floor. From this, it is concluded that these dwellings consisted of a cone on cylinder hut with stone-walled courtyards at both front and rear, forming a bilobial layout. These bilobial dwellings were arranged around a cluster of central cattle byres. Raw materials have been substituted at different localities, resulting in a variation in these settlements where clay walls replaced the stone-walling of the front lobe at Bothaville and at Middenspruit 151 on the Vals River, west of Kroonstad and near the Sand River in the Willem Pretorius Game Reserve near Ventersburg.

Cattle byres occupy the central area of the settlement with bilobial dwellings arranged in a rough circle on the periphery.

Pottery decorations associated with this settlement type are characterised by shallow line incisions in bands and triangles below the rim and on the shoulder, combined with straight or curved lines and areas of red ochre burnish on the body of the clay vessels.

The occupation of the sites with bilobial dwellings is ascribed to Batswana (Thlaping and Rolong) groups. It is also possible to link Kubung people to every known site of this kind.

According to radiocarbon dating and oral history, these sites were occupied from the 16th and 17th to early 19th century at Ventersburg, and 18th to early 19th century at Bothaville. A single bone sample from the farm Jansfontein in the Doringberg (Maphororong) produced a calibrated date of 1670, which is slightly later than the Ventersburg date.

INVESTIGATION

The sites for the proposed residential developments at the farm Middenspruit 151, Kroonstad, were visited on 3 April 2006, 16 and 31 May 2006 and 21 June 2006. At the farm we were accompanied by Dr. Francois Retief from Global Green Environmental Consultants, Potchefstroom, Jako Viviers from LMV Environmental Consultants, Kroonstad, Mr. Charles Booth from Kroonstad and Mr. Bernie Staal, one of the landowners.

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 farm Middenspruit 151, Kroonstad (Surveyor-General 1973) (Map 2). The land is part of an area with significant archaeological sites along the Vals River, west of Kroonstad. The farm is reached by a turnoff on to the S1107 secondary road from the N5 between Kroonstad and Viljoenskroon (Map 1).

The stands are placed on the ridge along the northern border of the farm and the layout is indicated on Maps 3-5.

The following GPS (Cape scale) coordinates were taken (2727CA) at the different spots indicated for development (Map 3):

51	27°35'33"S 027°07'54"E Altitude 1376m (Figs.11&12).
59	27°35'33"S 027°07'54"E Altitude 1376m.
62	27°35'29"S 027°07'41"E Altitude 1368m.
63	27°35'28"S 027°07'43"E Altitude 1373m.
65	27°35'29"S 027°07'44"E Altitude 1372m.
71	27°35'31"S 027°50'54"E Altitude 1362m.
77	27°35'35"S 027°07'58"E Altitude 1373m.
81	27°35'38"S 027°08'04"E Altitude 1372m.
90	27°35'33"S 027°07'54"E Altitude 1376m.
91	27°35'41"S 027°08'16"E Altitude 1370m.
92	27°35'41"S 027°08'18"E Altitude 1368m.
94	27°35'31"S 027°08'20"E Altitude 1370m.
95	27°35'42"S 027°08'22"E Altitude 1370m.
96	27°35'43"S 027°08'18"E Altitude 1353m.
102	27°35'43"S 027°08'11"E Altitude 1350m.

103	27°35'42"S 027°08'08"E Altitude 1348m.
105	27°35'37"S 027°07'57"E Altitude 1349m.
113	27°35'28"S 027°07'33"E Altitude 1341m.

RESULTS

FINDS

The area for the proposed developments at Middenspruit 151, Kroonstad, contains an elaborate number of Later Iron Age stone-walls (Figs.2-7). The walls are in a varying state of preservation and collapse, with some structures still in a very good condition (Figs.3&6), while others show evidence of heavy wall-robbing (Figs.4&5). A single lower grinding stone was found next to a wall at one of the sites (Fig.8).

Because of a dense grass cover, no ash heaps, potsherds or other cultural material could be found on the hill. Sites on the southern part of the land produced pottery, an upper grinding stone (Fig.9) and a copper object of unknown purpose (Fig.10).

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

The proposed residential developments will have a serious impact on the archaeological and cultural remains at Middenspruit 151, Kroonstad. To alleviate the impact on the cultural heritage remains, the proposed residential developments at the farm will have to be moved away from the areas of stone-walling.

In the case of Points 59, 77 and 81, the proposed developments are placed too close to the stone-walls (Maps 3-5). At Point 59, the house is already under construction, cannot be moved away from the walls, and will have an impact on the archaeological finds (Figs.11&12).

RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that further planning and development of the site could continue, provided that the stone-walled areas and ash heaps are avoided.

Care should also be taken to avoid damage to any of the walls or to destroy ash heaps during the installation of services and the building of roads. The removal of stones from the walls should likewise be prohibited.

All developments should be planned and executed in close consultation with the archaeologist. I also recommend that provision should be made in the planning to include at least two monitoring visits by the archaeologist to the site during the construction phase.

I recommend that the archaeologist should be engaged for a briefing at the site to communicate with the developers and planners to specify the different sites.

It will be essential to inform potential buyers about the significance of the structures. Certain rules, which are recommended by the archaeologists for the protection of cultural heritage sites should apply to the site at Middenspruit 151 during the construction phase and afterwards.

MITIGATION

Care should be taken not to damage any of the walls or destroy ash heaps during the installation of services and roads. The removal of stones from the walls should be prohibited.

The archaeologist must be consulted before and during the planning and building stages of the development.

Basic rules recommended for the protection of archaeological sites, which have been approved by the South African Association of Professional Archaeologists are enclosed herewith and should be implemented as guide lines for the management of the site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Dr. Francois Retief from Global Green Environmental Consultants, Potchefstroom, Jako Viviers from LMV Environmental Consultants, Kroonstad, Mr. Charles Booth from Kroonstad for assistance during the field work.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

The recommendations and guidelines for the utilization and preservation of the site are made in the knowledge that **all archaeological, historical and palaeontological finds are protected in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), (25 of 1999).**

The following minimum standards are approved by archaeologist and are prescribed for site museums or other places of interest open to the public. The guidelines are therefore strongly recommended as the basic rules at any archaeological site, and are applicable in the case of Middenspruit 151, Kroonstad.

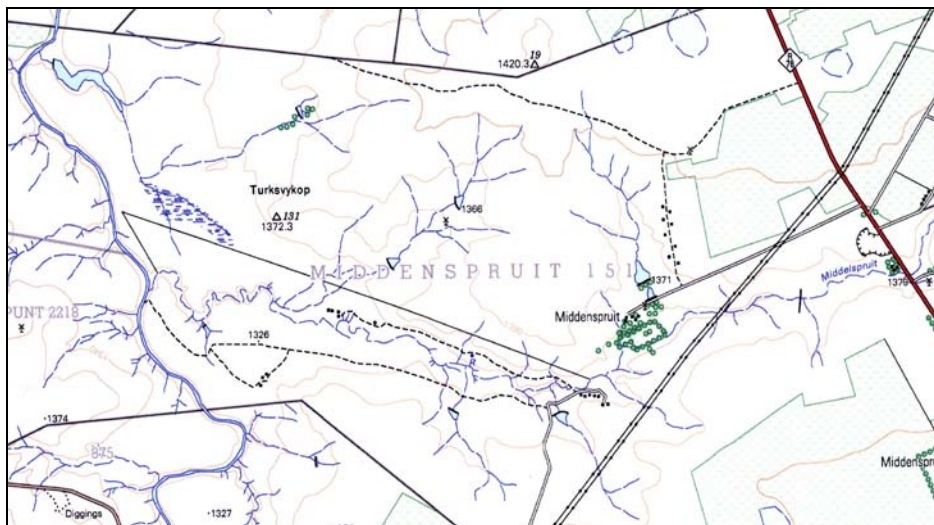
- Do not allow unauthorised visitors to the ruins;
- Always have a knowledgeable guide available to accompany visitors to the site;
- Allow visits to certain selected sites only;
- Educate the regular visitor about preserving the site;
- Prepare an explanatory brochure for the farm;
- Have a single access road to the site;
- Provide a clearly marked parking area at the site;
- Plan hiking routes where the site can not be damaged;
- Prevent people from climbing on to the walls;
- Control vegetation growth at the site;
- Consider a notice board explaining the sites;
- Do not **restore** the walls, leave them as they are;
- Do not remove any finds (e.g. stone tools, beads or potsherds);
- Provide a litter bin at the parking area or along the hiking trail;
- Visit sites regularly to check on litter, damage, vegetation etc;
- Involve a qualified archaeologist when planning any developments;

(SA3 Newsletter 37, 1992)

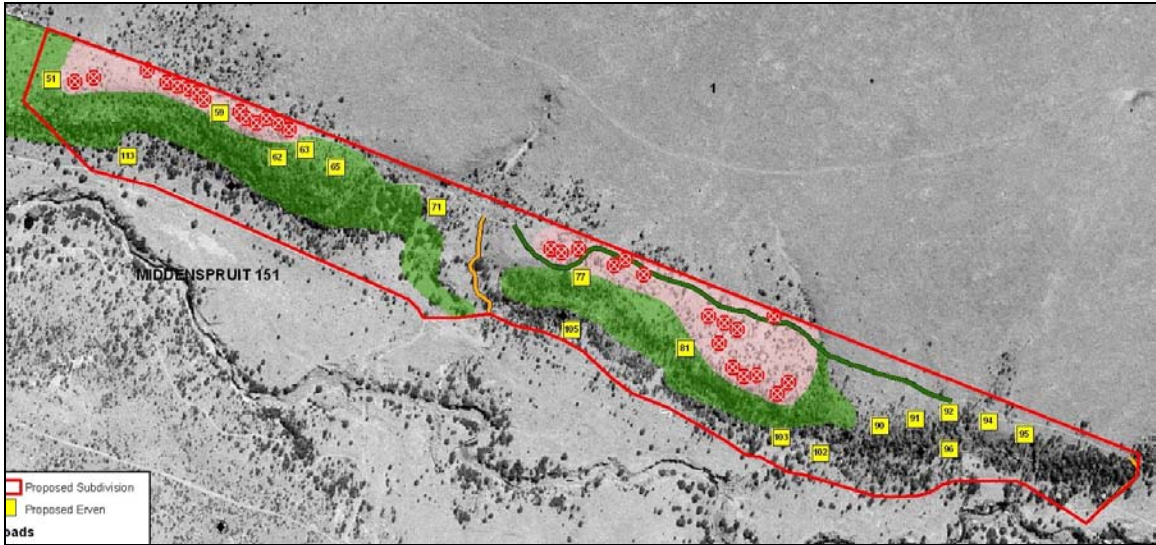
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS



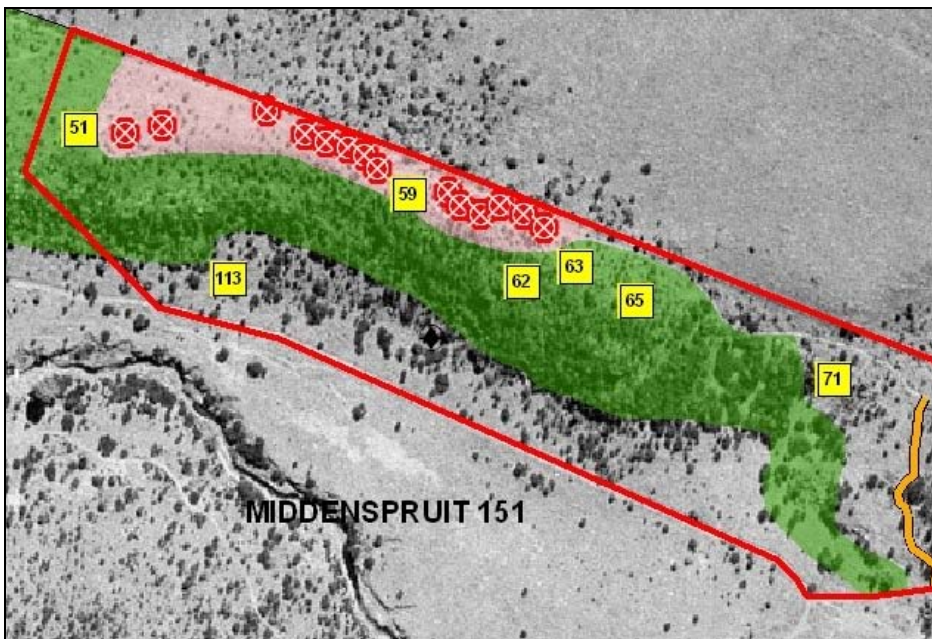
Map 1 Locality of Kroonstad and the Vals River in relation to Viljoenskroon.



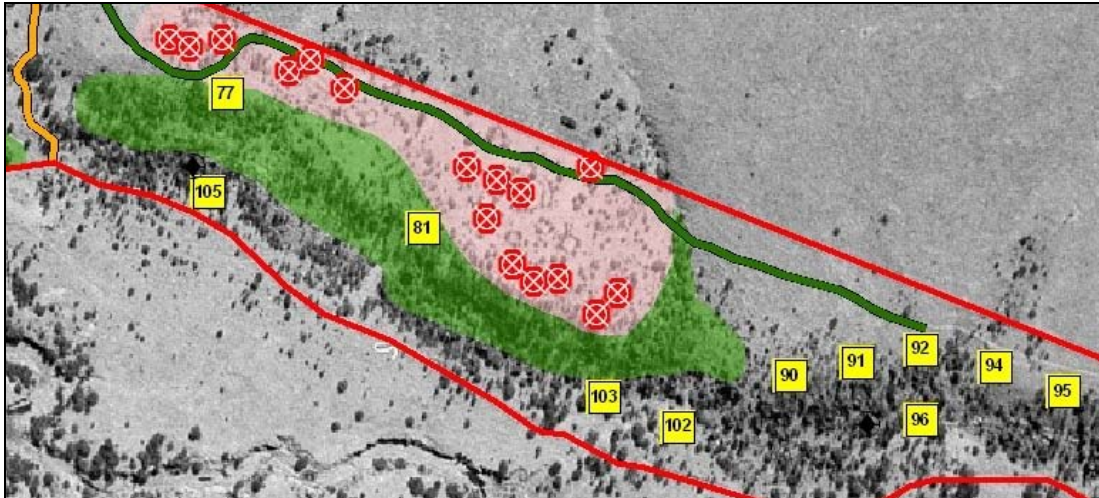
Map 2 Locality of the farm Middenspruit 151, Kroonstad (2727CA).



Map 3 Layout of the proposed developments at Middenspruit 151, Kroonstad.
 Red areas indicate the locality of the stone-walled sites.
 Green areas show position of the proposed residential developments and the numbers in yellow indicate the position of proposed stands.



Map 4 Layout indicating locality of Points 51-113 identified for development along the ridge.



Map 5 Locality of Points 77-105 on and below the ridge.



Fig.1 General view of the site facing south.



Fig.2 Remains of stone-walling on top the hill near Point 51.



Fig.3 Remains of stone-walling indicating the building method with two sides and inner filling.



Fig.4 Remains of stone-walling.



Fig.5 Some of the stone-walls are heavily robbed.



Fig.6 A well preserved stone-wall.



Fig.7 Stone half-circle forming the rear lobe of the typical bilobial settlement.



Fig.8 Lower grinding stone.



Fig.9 Potsherds and single upper grinding stone found on ash heaps damaged by road grading.



Fig.10 Angular cooper object found on an ash heap in a newly graded road.



Fig.11 Point 51 where a new house is being built.



Fig.12 The house at Point 51 near the western border of the farm.