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12 April 2006

**FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE  
INVESTIGATION OF THE PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL  
DEVELOPMENTS ON THE FARMS DENOON 808, MAARA 618,  
AASVOGELRAND 249, BERGPLAATS 240 & UNION 440,  
VREDEFORT, FREE STATE**

## **INVESTIGATION**

The sites for the proposed residential developments on the farms Denoon 808, Maara 618, Aasvogelrand 249 and Union 440, Vredefort, were visited on 19 November 2006. Dr Johann du Preez of MDA Environmental Consultants, Bloemfontein, and Jako Viviers from LMV Environmental Specialists, Kroonstad, took me to the farm. At the farm we were accompanied by Marius Erasmus, Dr. Dawie van der Merwe, A.D. Muller (Architect) and Johan de Lange.

The site was examined for any possible traces of cultural and historical remains to establish the potential impact of the developments on any archaeological and cultural historical material. 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 farms Denoon 808, Maara 618, Aasvogelrand 249 and Union 440, are located on the southern bank of the Vaal River about 15km to the east of Skandinavia Drift in the district of Vredefort (Maps 2&3) (Surveyor-General O.F.S. 1973). Union 440 has a short stream front on the Vaal River (Fig.16).

The farms are reached from the R501 road from Potchefstroom to Viljoenskroon and by travelling east on the S646 gravel road along the Vaal River (2627CD).

The area is characterised by Sourveld and Bushveld vegetation. The soil surface is very stony with a dense bush and tree cover (Fig.2).

The area was inspected on foot and all finds and features were plotted by GPS and recorded on camera.

The following GPS co-ordinates (Cape scale) were taken (2627CD):

- Old farmhouse (1) 26°53'57"S 027°18'20"E Altitude 1457m (Fig.1).
- Prospecting 26°53'59"S 027°18'39"E Altitude 1506m (Figs.4-5).
- Stone walls 26°54'00"S 027°18'40"E Altitude 1504m (Figs.8&9).
- Farm house (2) 26°53'49"S 027°18'46"E Altitude 1447m (Fig.6).
- Rectangular kraal 26°53'48"S 027°18'50"E Altitude 1453m (Fig.8).
- Circular kraal 26°53'46"S 027°18'51"E Altitude 1445m (Fig.9).
- Ruin (3) 26°53'22"S 027°18'33"E Altitude 1451m (Fig.6).
- Ruin (4) 26°53'28"S 027°18'41"E Altitude 1417m (Fig.11).
- View point (1) 26°54'01"S 027°19'01"E Altitude 1560m (Figs.).
- Neck 26°54'02"S 027°19'00"E Altitude 1557m (Figs.).
- View point (2) 26°54'15"S 027°18'00"E Altitude 1535m (Figs.).
- Stone-walling 26°53'49"S 027°18'01"E Altitude 1436m (Figs.).
- 26°53'48"S 027°18'48"E Altitude 1450m (Figs.).

## **FINDS**

The remains of several brick (Figs.1,6&15) and mud brick (Fig.12) living structures and other farm buildings occur at various places on the property. All the buildings are in a dilapidated state and are unsuitable for re-use without drastic and costly renovations. An ash heap near Ruin 3 produced a glass bottle and pieces of porcelain dating from about three or four decades ago (Fig.7).

Old diamond diggings in the form of holes (Fig.5) and heaps of rubble (Fig.4) are found at several places, but there are no cultural remains.

Stone-walls which represent the remains of stock enclosures and other farm buildings also clearly date from an era of European occupation (Figs.8,9&11).

The vague indications of a Late Iron Age settlement (1650-1810), are represented by stone-walls in the neck near the southern border of the farm (Fig.14).

## **DISCUSSION**

It is unlikely that the old farm buildings at Aasvogelrand and the other farms will have any effect on the proposed developments. The buildings are in any case in a very bad state of deterioration and will need extensive and costly renovations, to restore them to a functional condition.

The total area covered by the Vredefort Dome Conservancy is very rich in Later Iron Age (LIA) remains in the form of stone-walls dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The survey by Bakker et al. (2004) does not include detailed descriptions of all the sites and many individual stone enclosures and clusters representing prehistoric living areas will most certainly be discovered as the developments continue.

It is therefore, important to keep in mind that 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 of the features or the environment.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

No obvious reasons could be found to delay further planning and development of the site. It is recommended that the proposed developments at the selected sites may proceed, taking the stone-walled settlements into consideration.

It is stressed that in case of the discovery of any archaeological remains in the form of stone tools, stone-walling, pottery and other archaeological material of significance during the course of the work, all activities should temporarily be stopped for inspection by the archaeologist and other specialists from the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein.

## **MITIGATION**

Concerning the area for the proposed development, no mitigation measures are needed. I also recommend that the areas of stone-walling should be avoided in the planning of the residential developments.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I thank Dr Johan du Preez and Jako Viviers for taking me to the site.

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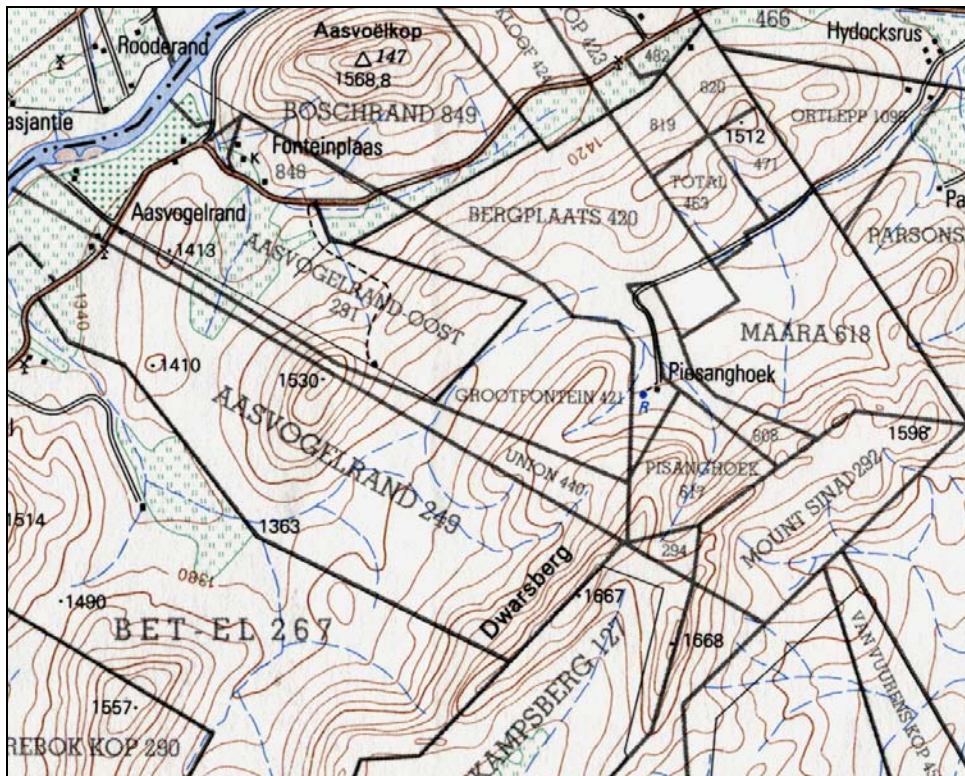
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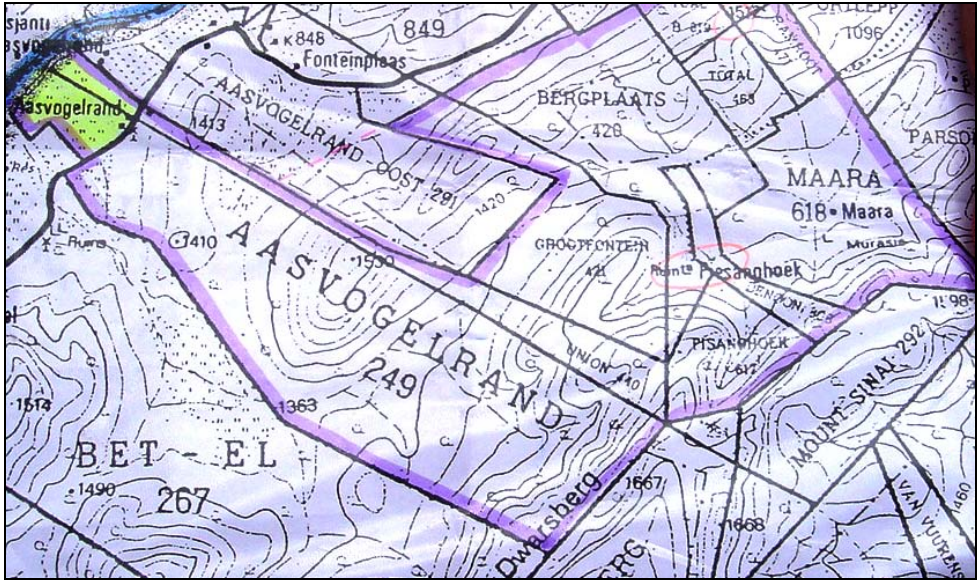
**LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:**



Map 1 Locality of the Vredefort Dome in relation to Potchefstroom, Parys, Venterkroon and Vredefort.



Map 2 Locality of the farms Aasvoelrand 249, Maara 618, Denoon 808 & Union on the Vaal River (2627CD).



Map 3 The boundaries of the farms Aasvogelrand 249, Maara 618, Denoon 808, Bergplaats 420 & Union 404 are indicated on the map.



Map 4 The extent of the proposed area of development along the Vaal River.





Fig.1 Old farmhouse at Aasvogelrand, Vredefort.



Fig.2 View facing away from the farmhouse.



Fig.3 General view of the hills around the farmhouse at Aasvogelrand, Vredefort.



Fig.4 Remains of prospecting diggings at the farm near Vredefort.



Fig.5 Prospecting diggings at Aasvogelrand, Vredefort.



Fig.6 Ruin 3 at Aasvogelrand, Vredefort.



Fig.7 Glass soft drink bottle found on the ash heap near Ruin 3.



Fig.8 Stone-walled remains of stock enclosures.



Fig.9 Stone-walled remains of stock enclosure at Aasvogelrand, Vredefort.



Fig.10 View across the valley at Aasvogelrand, Vredefort.



Fig.11 Stone-walled farm shed in the kloof at Aasvogelrand, Vredefort.



Fig.12 Unbaked clay brick wall of a pioneer house at Aasvogelrand, Vredefort



Fig.13 General view of the area from the hill on the southern border of the site at Aasvogelrand, Vredefort



Fig.14 Vague remains of the stone-walling of a Late Iron Age site on the hill.



Fig.15 Farmhouse next to the S646 gravel road along the river.  
The building is unoccupied and is deteriorating rapidly at present.



Fig.16 View of the river front at Union 440, Vredefort.





Fig.17 Remains of an ash heap near Ruin 3 at Aasvogelrand, Vredefort.