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FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF THE HERON BANKS GOLF AND RIVER ESTATE, SASOLBURG, FREE STATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The area identified for the development of the Heron Banks Golf and River Estate was visited and inspected for the remains of any cultural and historical material.

The only occurrence that could be of importance in this regard seems to be the graveyard containing deceased members of the Claassen-family.

There are two options open for the handling of this matter. The one is that all the graves should be exhumed for reburial elsewhere, and the other is to leave the graveyard in place to be planned and developed as part of the proposed developments.

During telephonic conversations with two members of the family, it became clear that the family will not be comfortable with the first option of exhumation of the graves. It was also clear that they are quite happy and satisfied with the idea that the graveyard will become part of the planning and layout of the golf course.

They are also very pleased with the idea that a display of family photographs and other memorabilia could possibly be included in the planning of the clubhouse or any other convenient placing.

INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

INVESTIGATION

The site for the proposed Heron Banks Golf and River Estate was visited on 26 January 2005. I was accompanied by other consultants and specialists from Cape Town and Pretoria.

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 golf and river estate is located on the farms Grootfontein 425 and De Rust 370, in the district of Sasolburg (Surveyor-General 1973). The land lies to the north of the town and is bordered by the Vaal River in the north and Minnaar Street to the south (2627DD 1995).

The first phase of the development will cover about 140ha of land, of which the golf course is planned to occupy between 65ha to 75ha.

The following GPS (Cape) coordinates were taken:

Minnaar Street	26°45'27"S. 027°50'44"E. Altitude 1463m
Flood plain	26°27'21"S. 027°44'16"E. Altitude 1451m
Eastern border	26°44'49"S. 027°50'50"E. Altitude 1436m

METHODOLOGY

1. Site visit.
2. Study of topo-cadstral maps.
3. Literature study.
4. Genealogical records.
4. Telephonic and personal interviews with family members.

RESULTS

The area earmarked for developments at Sasolburg is mostly located on previously developed farm land along the river. A portion of the land is also covered by a flood plain. The soil surface is densely covered by vegetation (Figs.1-4).

Road building and other industrial developments and the close proximity of the present residential and commercial areas caused further disturbances.

No remains of prehistoric human occupation or cultural material could be found in this area. No indication of any archaeological or historical material was found neither were any stone tools or ceramic ware found.

FINDS

1. CEMETERY

A graveyard (26°45'21"S. 027°50'02"E. Altitude 1444m), which contains 13 graves with gravestones, is located along the western border of the property (Figs.5&6). The cemetery had been fenced previously, but the fence on the eastern side had been removed during road building. The burial ground is otherwise in a good condition and no evidence of vandalism of any gravestones was obvious.

Scattered stones (Fig.15) outside the fence may indicate more graves in this area, while the bare space in the north-western corner most probably suggest other unmarked graves inside the limits of the graveyard.

GRAVE 1: The oldest gravestone is that of Nicolaas Claassen (Fig.7) who was born 16/10/1863 and died 9/5/1916 (Claassen & Claassen 2001:153,959, ref.1667).

GRAVE 2: The grave of Louis Hendrik Claassen, born 31/8/1841 (1840?) and died 10/1/1920 (Claassen & Claassen 2001:153,959,iii,iv, ref.1667) (Fig.9).

GRAVE 3: The grave (Fig.9) of his wife Judith Jacoba (Koba) Muller, born 2/9/1844 and died 12/12/1931. (Figs.16-19) (Claassen & Claassen 2001:294,iii,iv,v, ref.51696).

Their youngest son, Petrus Jacobus (Pietie) Claassen (*4/8/1887 – †8/11/1964) (Figs.18-21), formerly owned the farm Donkerhoek 323 in the Parys district where Sasolburg had been established (Surveyor-General 1973). It is alleged that, for many years until his death, he used the motor registration number **OIL 1** on his bakkie. He married Susanna Magdalena Muller (*16/7/1892 - †15/2/1946) and they had four children (Claassen & Claassen 2001:152,170,iv,v, ref.2078).

GRAVE 4: The grave of Louis Hendrik (Lewies) Claassen, born 16/10/1879 and died 17/11/1970. (Claassen & Claassen 2001:162,951, ref.1897).

GRAVE 5: The grave of Anna Sophia Elizabeth Claassen, born 28/4/1882 and deceased on 13/2/1933. Due to the fact that her maiden name is not mentioned on the gravestone, her particulars could not be traced in the genealogical records during the present investigation (Fig.13).

GRAVE 6: The grave of Antoni(e) Michael (Blokkies) Claassen. He was born 27/11/1922 and died 1/5/1935. (Claassen & Claassen 2001:164,918, ref.1933).

GRAVE 7: The grave of Johan Daniel (Danie) Claassen, born 11/7/1905, died 29/8/1935. (Claassen & Claassen 2001:162,943, ref.1898).

GRAVE 8: The grave (Fig.11) of Elsie Cathrina (Tool/Ellie) Muller, born Claassen on 3/3/1913 and died 3/4/1943. (Claassen & Claassen 2001:163,929, ref.1914).

GRAVE 9: The grave of Louis Hendrik (Hennie) Claassen, born 23/5/1904 and died 15/5/1958. (Claassen & Claassen 2001:162,951, ref.1898).

GRAVE 10: Grave of Nicolaas (Braam) Claassen, born 12/6/1907 and died 11/8/1959. (Claassen & Claassen 2001:163,960, ref.1901).

GRAVE 11: Grave (Fig.14) of Helgard Muller (Lop) Claassen, born 14/1/1920 and died 28/10/1979. (Claassen & Claassen 2001:164,935, ref.1928).

GRAVE 12: Double grave (Fig.8) of Petrus Jacobus (Ak) Claassen, born 8/11/1909 and died 6/4/1984. (Claassen & Claassen 2001:163,964, ref.1908).

GRAVE 13: Wife of the former Petrus Jacobus (Ak) Claassen, Georgina Frederika (Frikkie) Dannhauser, born 4/10/1907 and died 3/4/1998. (Claassen & Claassen 2001:163,222,1008, ref.3320).

2. DEMOLISHED FARM HOUSE AND OUT-BUILDINGS

I was unaware of the locality of any old buildings during the site visit, but according to the Claassen family the original farmhouse at Grootfontein 425, which contained Yellow wood beams and other valuable building material, had unlawfully been demolished by the Sasolburg Municipality some years ago.

Although the building cannot be replaced, a photograph of the house could also become part of a display in the Club house at the golf course.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

NATURE OF IMPACT

The impact of the cultural heritage remains on the proposed land for the development of the Heron Banks Golf and River Estate will be of minor impact. The unlawful demolition of the original farm house has been mentioned. A display of photographs of the farm buildings and owners of the land could be some form of compensation for the irreplaceable loss of the cultural material.

EXTENT

The impact of the cultural heritage remains on the proposed development of the Heron Banks Golf and River Estate will only be limited to the grave yard on the western boundary of the property.

DURATION

The grave yard will always be there, unless the developer would decide to remove the graves to another locality. This idea could be costly and will not get the consent of the Claassen family and is, therefore, not recommended.

INTENSITY

The impact will be limited to the grave yard against the western fence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The grave yard should be fenced and maintained and could be included into the lay-out of the golf course.

Discussions with two of the senior members of the Claassen-family, confirmed their satisfaction with this arrangement.

It could be possible that some of the family members will request to be buried in the cemetery. Provision for a number of graves should be accommodated in the planning. This possibility should be cleared during negotiations with the Claassen family.

It is further recommended that a display of photographs of the occupants of the land and a picture of the demolished farm house should be planned in the foyer of the Clubhouse at the golf course.

A number of photographs are already included in the book on the Claassen-family (Claassen & Claassen 2001).

Liaison with the family might produce more pictures of interest.

MITIGATION

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

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 the authors of the Claassen Family record for permission to reproduce photographs (Fig.16-19) in this report (Claassen & Claassen 2001:iii, iv&v).

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS



Fig.1 View along the road facing towards the Vaal River.



Fig.2 View across the flood plain facing east from the central road.



Fig.3 View across the flood plain facing south-east.



Fig.4 A view along the road which divides the land in two. Phase I of the present development is limited to the area to the right.



Fig.5 View of the Grave yard facing west. Note western boundary fence directly behind the graves.



Fig.6 View of the Grave yard facing north along the boundary fence.



Fig.7 The oldest grave is that of Nicolaas Claassen *16/10/1868 (1863) - †9/5/1916



Fig.8 The most recent burial is that of Petrus Jacobus (Ak) Claassen *8/11/1909 †6/4/1984 and his wife Georgina Frederika Dannhauser (*4/10/1907 - †3/4/1998).



Fig.9 The grave stone of Judith Jacoba (Koba) Muller (*2/9/1844 - †12/12/1931) buried next to her husband Louis Hendrik Claassen (*31/8/1841 (1840) - †10/1/1920).



Fig.10 Louis Hendrik (Hennie) Claassen (*23/5/1904 - †15/5/1958).

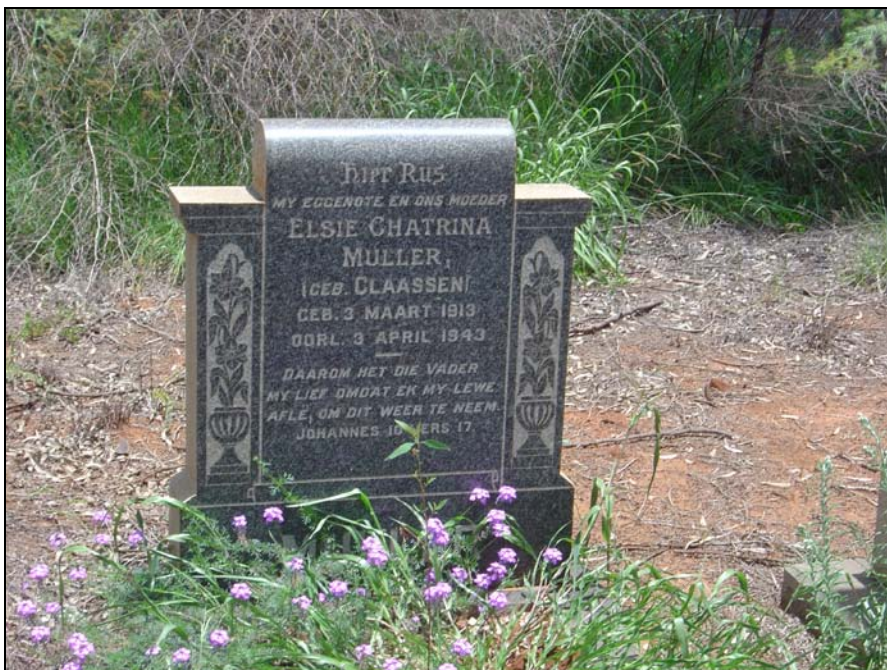


Fig.11 Elsie Cathrina Muller (Tool/Ellie) born Claassen *3/3/1913 - †3/4/1943.



Fig.12 Nicolaas Claassen *12/6/1907 - †11/8/1959.



Fig.13 The last resting place of Anna Sophia Elizabeth Claassen (*28/4/1882 - †13/2/1933).



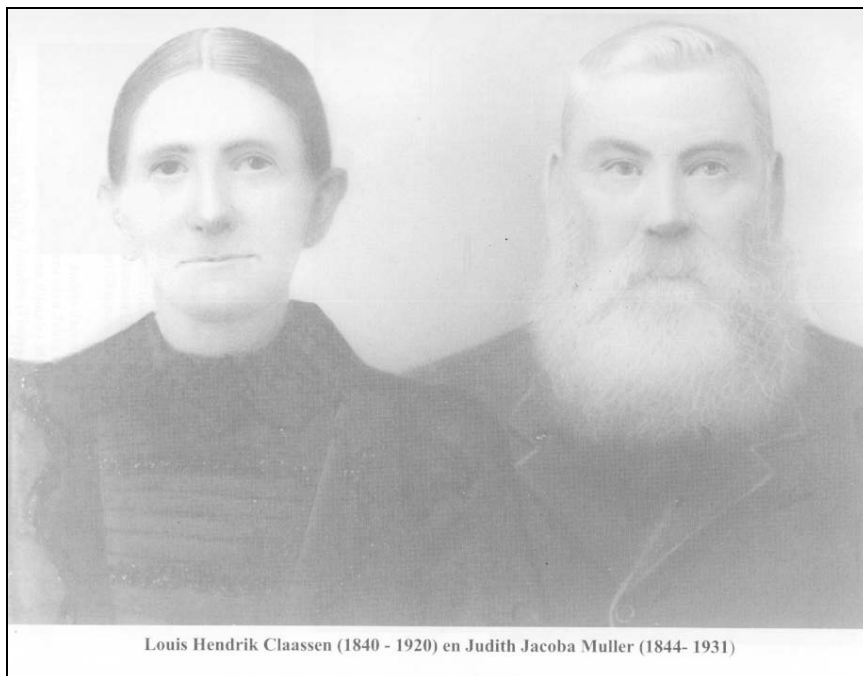
Fig.14 The grave of Helgard Muller (Lop) Claassen *14/1/1920 - †28/10/1979



Fig.15 Scattered stones outside the fence might indicate more graves in this area.



Fig.16 Judith Jacoba (Koba) Muller (*2/9/1844 - †12/12/1931) in her old age (Claassen & Claassen 2001:iv).



Louis Hendrik Claassen (1840 - 1920) en Judith Jacoba Muller (1844- 1931)

Fig.17 Louis Hendrik Claassen (31/8/1841 (1840) - †10/1/1920) with his wife Judith Jacoba (Koba) Muller (*2/9/1844 - †12/12/1931) (Claassen & Claassen 2001:iii).



Louis Hendrik Claassen (1840 - 1920)
en Judith Jacoba Muller (1844 - 1931)
met hul jongste seun
Petrus Jacobus (Pietie) (1887 - 1964)

Fig.18 Louis Hendrik Claassen (31/8/1841 (1840) - †10/1/1920), his wife Judith Jacoba (Koba) Muller (*2/9/1844 - †12/12/1931) and their youngest son Petrus Jacobus (Pietie) Claassen (*4/8/1887 – †8/11/1964) (Claassen & Claassen 2001:iii).



Fig.19 Judith Jacoba (Koba) Muller (*2/9/1844 - †12/12/1931) (left centre) with her son Petrus Jacobus (Pietie) Claassen (*4/8/1887 – †8/11/1964) and his wife Susanna Magdalena (Sannie) Muller (*16/7/1892 - †15/2/1946) (kneeling front centre), depicted on a photograph taken at the wedding of Dewald Johannes van der Merwe (1903-1952) and Maria Jacomina (Dolly) Claassen (1905-1989) on 2 September 1926 (Claassen & Claassen 2001:v).



Fig.20 Petrus Jacobus (Pietie) Claassen (*4/8/1887 – †8/11/1964) and his wife Susanna Magdalena (Sannie) Muller (*16/7/1892 - †15/2/1946) from the above photograph taken in 1926 (Claassen & Claassen 2001:v).



Fig.21 Petrus Jacobus (Pietie) Claassen (*4/8/1887 – †8/11/1964) the owner of the farm Donkerhoek 323 on which Sasolburg had been established. It is alleged that he used the motor registration number **OIL1** on his bakkie until his death (Claassen & Claassen 2001:v).