

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF BALGARTHAN COLLIERY

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SYNOPSIS

Nine sites were recorded in the Balgarthan Colliery area. One was the ruins of a European homestead that was probably built sometime between the 1860s and 1880s. Most others were the remains of Swazi homesteads of about the same period. One of these was associated with a small graveyard. All of these sites were outside of the proposed open cast mines, plant, effluent dam and waste dump areas. No sites of archaeological or historical interest were noted inside the endangered zone.

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INTRODUCTION

Steffen, Robertson & Kirsten (SRK), on behalf of the Kangra Group, commissioned Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to survey the proposed Balgarthan Colliery for archaeological and historical sites as part of an Environmental Management Programme Report.

The proposed colliery lies about 15km north of Dirkiesdorp in the Wakkerstroom District. It occupies various portions of the farms Naauwhoek 37 HT and Roodepoort 38 HT on the 1:50 000 map sheet 2730 AB Dirkiesdorp. Two ARM staff visited these farms on July 13, 1995. Sites were recorded on a 1:2500 map supplied by SRK.

OBSERVATIONS

Generally speaking, the geology of this area does not produce suitable stone for flaking, and there were therefore no Stone Age sites. There was, however, evidence for early Historic occupations (Figure 1).

Site 1. European Farm Complex.

An old oak tree and several stone walls marked the remains of a European farm Complex against a low ridge near the boundary of Naauwhoek 37 HT and Elandsfontein 36 HT. This site included a rectangular cattle kraal made out of

dolerite, the broken stone walls of a farmhouse, the remains of a mud-on-stone building and a few fruit trees. A stone-walled dip about 1.5km to the northwest was also part of the farm complex. This complex was probably built between the 1860s and 1880s.

Site 2, 4-9. Swazi Homesteads.

Several stone-walled cattle kraals were located along the rocky slopes that formed the western boundary of the endangered zone, and one was noted at the base of the low ridge at the southeast corner. These kraals were associated with pottery, grindstones, stone grainbin supports and cleared zones for houses. These features were the remains of Swazi homesteads.

Some kraals were circular (Sites 4B, 6-9) and others rectangular (Sites 4A and 5). The circular kraals may slightly predate the European homestead, while the rectangular kraals were probably contemporaneous with it.

Site 4 included examples of both types as well as a small cemetery. This cemetery contained about 9 graves, each with a headstone and each orientated east\west. The deceased may have been labourers on the European farm.

Site 3. Recent Homestead.

Various artefactual features such as metal, cloth, fruit trees, pottery, grindstones, house mounds and a modern pole-and-mud house marked the location of a recent African homestead in the proposed Open Cast Area A. The modern house had burnt down, and two graves from a small cemetery had been exhumed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recent homestead is not important, and consequently there are no sites of

archaeological or historical interest inside the zone demarcated for open cast mines, plants, dams and dumps. Most of the Swazi homesteads are well outside the endangered zone and require no mitigation measures. However, Sites 1 and 2, the European homestead and the Swazi homestead in the southeast corner, are closer to some of the proposed activities. If the activities extend beyond the proposed boundaries, these two sites will then be threatened. If the situation arises, the two sites should be mapped and photographed.

Figure 1. Sites located during the survey. G = graves