

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF BLESBOKLAAGTE,
WITBANK

A Phase-I Report prepared for GLOBECON

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INTRODUCTION

Portion 218 of the farm Blesboklaagte 296 JS (about 140 ha) is under consideration as the locality for a new township, Klarinet Extension 3. The coordinator for the Environmental Impact Assessment, GLOBECON, commissioned Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to conduct an archaeological survey of the project area and to examine a cemetery reported earlier.

METHOD

One ARM staff examined the project area on October 10. Ploughed fields were traversed on foot, and soil pits searched for stone tools. Sites were recorded on the 1:50 000 map 2529CC Witbank.

RESULTS

Ploughed fields covered most of the project area. Visibility was therefore good, even though agricultural practises may have destroyed some sites of previous human activity. Sites of two time periods were noted.

Stone Age

Ploughing exposed a rocky substratum of quartzite and ferruginous shale extending across the small vlei that divides the project area. The rocky section north of the vlei (25.49.45 S 29.12.28 E) contains a scatter of stone artefacts that probably dates to the beginning of the Middle Stone Age, about 200 000 to 100 000 years ago. Presumably, the Middle Stone Age people exploited the rocky area for the quartzites.

Historic Period

The Middle Stone Age quarry lies underneath a dump of coal cinder that marks one of several households of farm labourers that once clustered around the vlei. Some of these households are marked on the 1977 edition of the 1:50 000 map, remapped in 1974. Others were not on the map, for example along the southern boundary.

These households must have been associated with the graveyard on the edge of the ploughed field. The cemetery now includes two rows: six elongated graves in the first, and then three (two oval) in the next. Up to four graves may have been destroyed through agriculture activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Stone Age site has a low significance, while the households of the farm labourers have already been destroyed. Only the cemetery requires mitigation.

The cemetery can either be fenced and left in its present state, or the graves can be removed to another appropriate cemetery. If moved, then the relevant legal regulations must be followed.

Whatever mitigation measure is taken, there are no archaeological or historical obstacles to the development of a township on Portion 218 of Blesboklaagte.