

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE EAST AND WEST

DRIEFONTEIN MINES

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## SYNOPSIS

Eight sites were found on East Driefontein and eleven on West Driefontein. They ranged from Middle Stone Age through Iron Age to the recent Historic Period. One Iron Age stone-walled site (Site 7) was partially destroyed when the No. 9 Shaft on West Driefontein was erected. No sites require any immediate mitigation, but some Iron Age and Historic sites should be avoided if any further development takes place.

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	
OBSERVATIONS	
AREA 1: EAST DRIEFONTEIN	
Stone Age	
Iron Age	
Historic	
AREA 2: WEST DRIEFONTEIN	
Stone Age	
Iron Age	
Historic	
RECOMMENDATIONS	

## **INTRODUCTION**

Steffen, Robertson & Kirsten (SRK) contracted Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to survey the East and West Driefontein mines (Fig. 1) as part of the EMPR for Gold Fields Mining.

On January 18th ARM staff visited East Driefontein mine and on January 20th West Driefontein. We recorded sites on 1:10 000 maps provided by the mines, and these were subsequently given to SRK. The survey, however, was not intensive. As instructed, we did not examine ploughed fields or areas already heavily disturbed by mining activity. The survey encompassed portions of the farms Blyvooruizicht 116 1Q, Driefontein 113 1Q, Driefontein 355 1Q, Kraalkop 147 1Q, Leeuwpoort 356 1Q and Oog van Elansfontein 114. We present the results for each mine separately.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

### **AREA 1: EAST DRIEFONTEIN MINE**

#### **Stone Age**

Middle ( $\pm$  250 000 to 30 000 years ago) and Later ( $\pm$  30 000 to 1000 years ago) Stone Age artifacts were found on sandy terraces (Site 2) on the north side of the quartzite ridge near the water tanks. Some MSA artifacts were made from a red ironstone, now weathered, while the LSA artifacts were made from various fine grained cherts and chalcedonies. More Stone Age artifacts are probably buried here.

As a rule, quartzite does not produce good stone for flaking, and we did not find a Stone Age quarry. One MSA core, however, was noted at Site 1.

#### **Iron Age**

A large stone-walled complex (Site 6) about 200m across was found in the



Figure 1. Mining areas and sites included in this report.

southern section against the quartzite ridge near the No. 5 shaft. This complex includes two or more circular units, each comprising central cattle kraals surrounded by a residential zone with small stock enclosures. Scattered on the surface are potsherds and grindstones.

Sites 7 and 8 are smaller versions of Site 6 further east along the ridge. These sites all probably date to between AD 1650 and 1750.

### **Historic**

The east-west ridge immediately south of the mining offices contains a few stone-walled features. Loosely packed stones forming a low semi-circle 5m across was found tucked into a small ledge against the ridge (Site 1). There were no material remains visible on the surface. Presumably this site had been used as a cattle kraal.

Site 3 is a larger complex on top of the ridge. A wall about waist high was made with two courses at the head of a pathway up the ridge. There are a few small semi-circles against the ridge top with walling on both sides. The square stone foundation ( $\pm 2 \times 4$ m) of a building lies on the flat top behind this walling. These structures were probably built during the Anglo-Boer War to guard the path.

During this war, the British often erected low windbreaks - called sangas - at temporary camps. They were pursuing Generals De Wet and De la Rey in this area, and Site 5 was probably a sanga dating to this time. Site 4 consists of some walling and a small circle that may also date to the Anglo-Boer War.

## **AREA 2: WEST DRIEFONTEIN**

### **Stone Age**

Middle Stone Age flakes and flake blades made out of quartzite were found in the road quarry near the No. 9 shaft (Site 8). Similar material is probably buried elsewhere in this high valley between the two quartzite ridges.

The large dolomite hill in the centre of West Driefontein contains several chert outcrops, but most of this material is not suitable for flaking. We found only one MSA artifact on the hill (Site 3) made from this chert. A few other MSA flakes lay widely scattered between the reservoir and Site 5.

### **Iron Age**

A stone-walled complex at Site 7 is similar to the 17th century settlements on East Driefontein, and it was probably part of the same community. Unfortunately, part of this complex was destroyed when the electrical station was established for the No. 9 shaft.

### **Historic**

Several sites with historic walling occur on the large dolomite hill in the centre of West Driefontein.

Sites 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10 contain stone walls, made with two courses, that were built against natural rock features. These enclosures were probably used to kraal sheep and horses for early European settlers.

The kraal at Site 4 was about 9x12m across, while the two at Site 9 (near the Cave) measured 10x14m and 10x30m. A similar complex of kraals was found at Site 11 below the reservoir on the smaller hill to the south of the magazines. These kraal sites probably date to between AD 1850 and the Anglo-Boer War.

British-built sangas, that is low single course semi-circles, were recorded at Sites 1, 2 and 3 on the large hill. The sanga at Site 2 was built next to the sink hole, while Site 3 was located in a commanding position on the western end of the hill.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Stone Age sites are of little consequence, and no site appears to be in any immediate danger. No mitigation is therefore necessary. It is unfortunate,

however, that Site 7 on West Driefontein has already been damaged. It would have been a simple matter to map the walls and test excavate a few enclosures. It may have even been possible to avoid the site altogether. If future development threatens this or any other walled site, mitigation will be required. In most cases this mitigation will involve mapping visible features and a photographic record. In the case of the Late Iron Age villages some areas should also be excavated.