

ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE EYE OF AFRICA VALLEYS, GAUTENG

A Phase I report prepared for Seaton Thompson and Associates
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EXCECUTIVE SUMMARY

Archaeological sites were not found inside the first project area. Further investigation here is therefore not required. The second area to the south yielded two sites that require mitigation- an ESA site with small handaxes and an historic European farm complex with a small cemetery.

INTRODUCTION

Dr R. Graca, trading as Blue Rose Developments, intends to establish middle to upper income housing on portions of the Farms Hartsenbergfontein 332 IQ and Alewynspoort 145 IR in Gauteng. The proposed housing estate incorporates about 220 ha along the southern slopes of the prominent hill known as Platerg, south of Johannesburg. The environmental coordinators for the project, Seaton Thompson and Associates, commissioned Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to examine the area for sites of archaeological and historical value in terms of Sections 35 and 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 25 of 1999).

Later, the developer added a further 280 ha to the south on the slopes of a basaltic ridge. This second, southern section incorporates Portions 13, and 94 to 96 of Hartsenbergfontein (Figure 1).

BACKGROUND

In the larger district, Stone Age and Historic sites are on record in the Archaeological Survey files at the University of the Witwatersrand. For the Stone Age, Earlier Stone Age (ESA: about 1 million to 400 000 years ago) artefacts, such as handaxes, cleavers and other bifaces, occur in river gravels of the Vaal system, while Middle Stone Age (MSA: 400 000 to 40 000 years ago) points and blades are more frequent. Later Stone Age (LSA: 40 000 to 1000 years ago) sites cluster in areas, such as the Magaliesberg, where rock shelters are more common. The remains of a British blockhouse still stand next to the railway line a few kilometres east, between Kliprivier and Daleside.

The present project area lies immediately south of the Eye of Africa development, previously investigated by ARM (Huffman & Schoeman 2004) and Pistorius (2004), and north of the Mountain View project area (Huffman 2008). These investigations recorded both Stone Age and Historic sites.

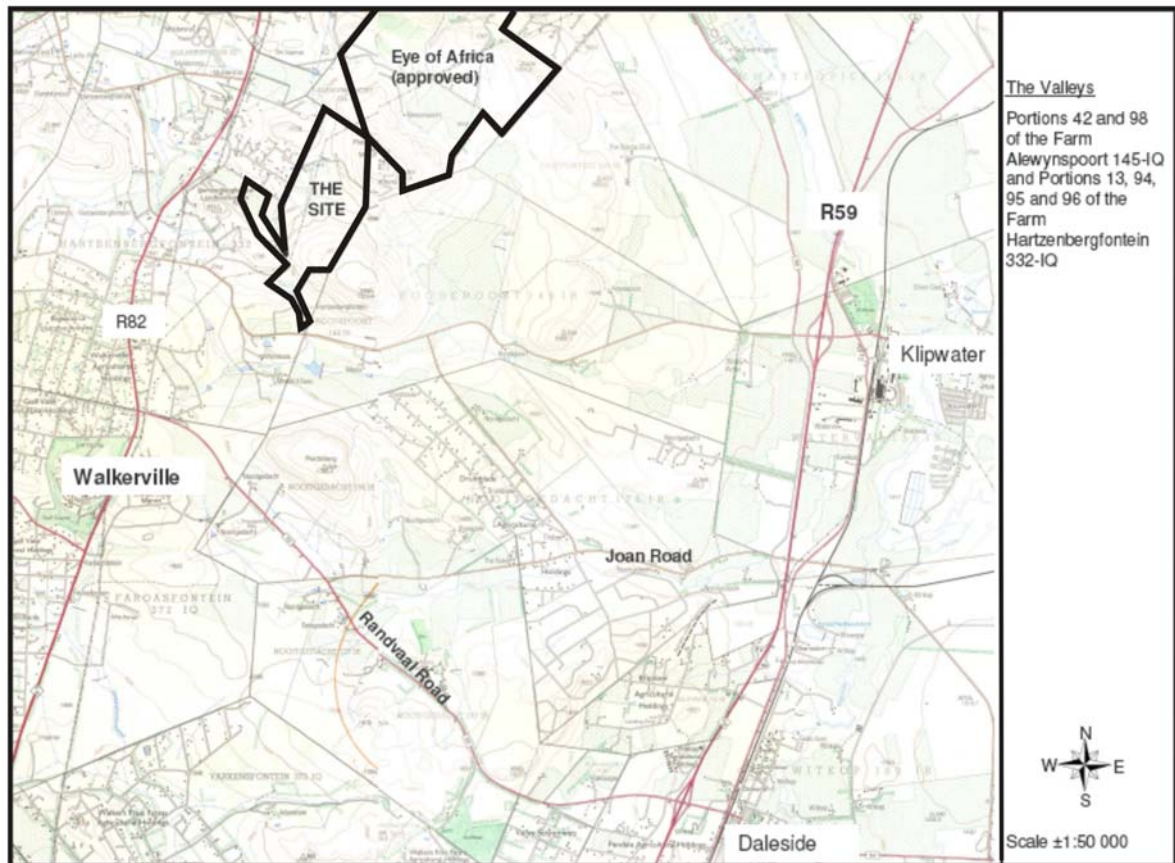


Figure 1. Location of project area number 1: The Valleys.

METHOD

Two ARM staff visited the first project area on 14 March 2007 and the second area on 13 August 2008. Both teams traversed the two areas on foot, examining likely places such as rocky outcrops and natural terraces. Sites were recorded with a hand-held GPS instrument calibrated to WGS 84, and then transferred to the 1: 50 000 map sheet 2627BD Lenasia (Figure 2).

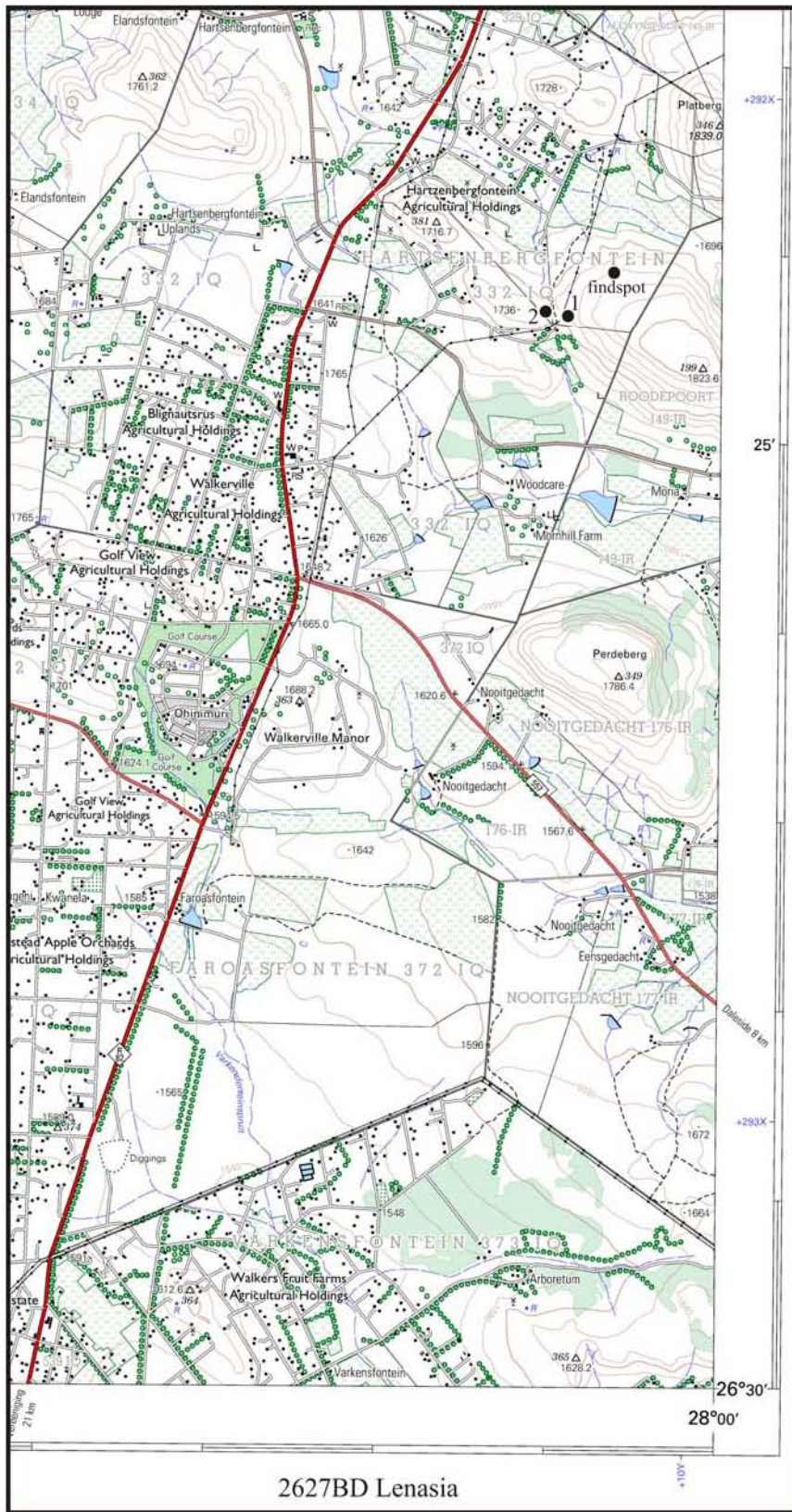


Figure 2. Location of sites.

Site significance was based on five main criteria: (1) primary versus secondary context; (2) amount of deposit; (3) number and variety of features; (4) uniqueness; and (5), potential to answer present research questions. Sites with no significance do not require mitigation, low to medium sites may require limited mitigation, and high significance requires extensive mitigation, while outstanding sites should not be disturbed at all. Recognizable graves have high social value regardless of their archaeological significance.

RESULTS

Vegetation was dense and ground visibility poor in both areas. Nevertheless, the team examined sufficient areas to know that no archaeological sites of significance lay within the first project area. The Platberg does not have suitable stone for flaking, and so there would have been little attraction for Stone Age people. Furthermore, the small valley below the hill has been cultivated in recent times, and the land thoroughly disturbed.

The second area, in contrast, was richer. First, an isolated handax (findspot 26 24 05.4S 27 59 25.5E) lay on a natural terrace on the basalt ridge. The handax was made from quartzite, a foreign material for the project area. This type of stone, however, occurs a few km to the south around the Perdeberg (Huffman 2008). Isolated handaxes are common, and they have *no significance* in terms of heritage value.

Smaller handaxes (Figure 3), also made from quartzite, occur on a large terrace (**Site 1**: 26 24 18.6S 27 59 09.2E) overlooking the saddle of the basalt ridge (Figure 4). These handaxes are characteristic of the transition between the ESA and MSA (about 400 000 years ago). Some five handaxes were noted in association with at least two scrapers, one core and several quartzite flakes in a relatively small area, 30m across. This kind of site is not common in the area, and **Site 1** has *high significance*.

MSA material lay scattered in the saddle, below Site 1, and around the remains of an African compound (**Site 2a**: 26 24 17.8S 27 59 01.6E). The compound includes the stone foundations (Figure 5) of a rectangular house (about 4x7m) and a midden of ash, coal cinder, metal and glass. This compound was probably abandoned by the 1960s, for it appears on the 1975 edition of the 1: 50 000 map (air survey in 1952), but not the 1997 edition.



Figure 3. **Site 1**: small handaxe.



Figure 4. **Site 1**: general view.



Figure 5. **Site 2a**: house remains.

The compound is part of a Historic European farm complex down slope to the south. The complex includes a farm house (**Site 2b**; Figure 6), at least two stonewalled kraals, stonewalled dams, outbuildings, an orchard, windmill and small cemetery (**Site 2c**: 26 24 21.5S 27 59 00.7E). The man in the graveyard, HJG Kamffer (Figure 7), was a member of the early family noted in the Mountain View report (Huffman 2008). **Site 2** provides a good example of an early 20th century farm with a number of features still intact. Site 2 therefore has *high significance*.



Figure 6. **Site 2b**: main house. Note stone kraal in foreground.

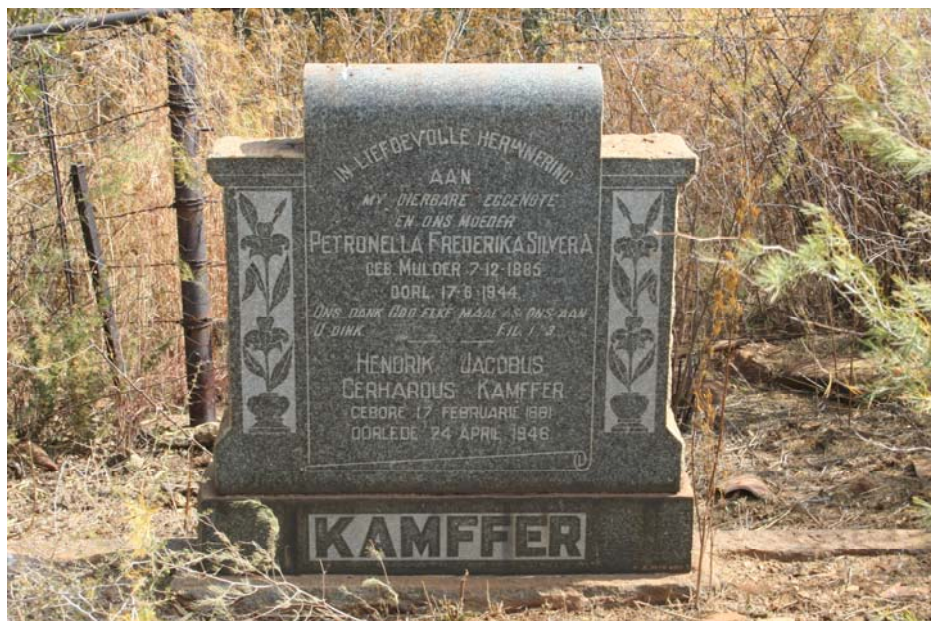


Figure 7. **Site 2c**: small graveyard behind main house.

The 1975 edition of the Lenasia map marks the compounds of several other African families in the northwest arm of the project area. These compounds have since been destroyed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The first project area is not archaeologically sensitive, and further work is not necessary.

Site 1 and **Site 2** in the second portion, however, require mitigation. Because of the rarity of Stone Age sites with small handaxes, archaeologists should excavate a few test pits in **Site 1**, and collect the surface material.

In addition, the farm complex of **Site 2** is worthy of extensive recording. All features should be mapped. In any case, if the Historic buildings are going to be destroyed, the developer must obtain a permit from the Gauteng office of the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA). They will require a full study of the farm complex by a recognized architectural historian.

Similarly, if the developer intends to move the grave at **Site 2c**, he will need a permit from SAHRA. Among other things, a recognized re-burial unit will need to trace living descendents. In all, it would be better to leave the cemetery undisturbed.

Once these mitigation measures are completed, there will be no archaeological reasons why the development should not proceed.

REFERENCES

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