

**HISTORIC CEMETERY AT FREEDOM SQUARE,  
KLIPTOWN**

A report prepared for the Johannesburg Development Agency

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## **HISTORIC CEMETERY AT FREEDOM SQUARE, KLIPTOWN**

### **INRODUCTION**

The Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) intends to build Freedom Square where the Freedom Charter was signed in 1955. Leaders had come from all over the country, and because of their large number, they met on the edge of Kliptown in an open field. The field had originally been part of a dairy farm started in the 1880s.

The development involves a considerable amount of landscaping, and some present-day homes will have to be removed. During discussions with members of the affected community, SAHRA Gauteng officials learned that some European graves were thought to lie behind a row of endangered houses. The tenants identified two spots near each other and identified both with the original Jewish owners of the farm. One spot was thought to have six to seven graves and the other only one.

Because of the need for a professional assessment, the JDA, through SAHRA Gauteng, commissioned Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to examine the grave spots and to recommend appropriate mitigation measures.

### **METHOD**

One ARM staff visited the project area on 14 April 2003, in the company Mr. V. Khumalo of SAHRA Gauteng. We examined both spots and then visited the Kliptown Community Centre to view aerial photographs of the area dating to 1938 and 1951.

### **RESULTS**

The first spot, with several graves, is located next to the cement foundations of a dip and various other buildings associated with the early dairy. No graves were visible.

The second spot is located in similar circumstances: near old house floors and the remains of other ruined structures associated with the farm. Once again, physical signs of a grave are not apparent.

These two spots do not represent the typical locations of farm graves, neither the owners (who should be buried with headstones in a formal cemetery some distance from the main house), nor labourers (who should be buried a short distance from their homes, often in a formal cemetery). Furthermore, formal cemeteries do not appear in this area on the aerial photographs.

For these reasons, it is my opinion that historic graves do not exist in either spot, or even in the near vicinity.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Although human bones are unlikely, other artefacts associated with the early farm may be uncovered. Consequently, a SAHRA official should be present when the ground is disturbed.