

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF STONE-WALLED
SETTLEMENTS ON THE MEYERSDAL NATURE ESTATE,
KLIPRIVIERSBERG, ALBERTON**

A report prepared for Africon Environmental Services

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INTRODUCTION

Home Talk Developments intends to create a residential complex on a portion of the remaining extent of Portion 2 of the farm Klippriviersberg, Alberton. The proposed residential site lies north of Michelle Avenue, between the N12 and R59 highways and between Meyersdal and the Bassonia Rock residential area.

Stone-walled settlements have been known in this area for some years (e.g. Mason 1962), and some have been test excavated (Huffman & Lathy 1997, Huffman & Murimbika 2001; Mason 1985). The settlements belong to what are called Group I and Group III built by BaFokeng, a division of the Sotho-Tswana. These people built in stone to mark external and internal boundaries. Typically, a rubble core filled the space between two good faces. Most were similar in that animal enclosures formed a circle around a central open space used for milking and other communal activities. Adult cattle stayed in the large central enclosures, and the number of cattle kraals reflects the number of cattle-owning families living in the homestead. Group I is characterized by a central cattle kraal surrounded by a smooth outer perimeter wall incorporating small stock enclosures. The area in between was the residential zone. These settlements followed a dispersed pattern: ordinary men and their extended families lived in separate homesteads, while a cluster of homestead units formed a headman or chief's capital. Group I sites date from AD 1500 to 1700, and the type developed into Group III. Group III has more central cattle enclosures, and the outer wall includes some embayments for houses, along with the typical small stock enclosures. This type dates from about AD 1700 to 1840.

Western Sotho-Tswana, such as Bakwena, built Group II found in the Suikerbostrand. Group II sites have multiple housing arcs in the back wall, and the back wall lacks the small stock enclosures. A variation of Group II built by BaRolong is on record at the southeastern end of the Nature Area (Mason 1986: 559).

The environmental coordinators for the project, Africon Environmental Services, commissioned Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to assess the condition of each site inside zoning areas 1A and 1B and the area in between. ARM must also consider the sites in terms of their potential role in the development.

METHOD

One ARM staff visited the project area on the 2nd and 4th May, 2002. Each settlement was examined on foot (except Site 12) photographed, and their locations recorded with a GPS instrument. The locations on the ground were then compared to those on the zoning map and 1:5000 base map supplied by Africon.

Archaeological significance was based on four main criteria: site integrity (secondary vs primary context), amount of deposit, diversity of features (middens, hut debris and stone walling) and potential to answer present research questions. Sites were ranked in terms of low significance (no mitigation required before destruction), medium (mitigation required), and high (sites should be preserved). Final recommendations for mitigation also considered the purpose of development (e.g. education or recreation components), flexibility in development zones (e.g. green areas) and the nature of destruction (e.g. intensity and concentration).

RESULTS

In many areas vegetation was thick and site visibility poor. In other areas a recent fire had exposed some of the walling. There are twelve site complexes.

Site 1 (26 17 14.5S 28 05 27E) and **Site 2** (26 17 12.6S 28 05 23E) are single homesteads about 5m apart that stand at the base of the hill below the reservoir (Figures 1 & 2). The walling is in good condition. These two sites are not marked on the zoning or base maps, but they are visible on the orthophoto. The boundary line for the proposed business area at the entrance cuts through the edge of both sites.

Site 3A (26 17 09S 28 05 04.5E) and **Site 3B** (26 17 08S 28 05 6.5E) stand on a small rocky rise in zone 1A (Figure 2). At least three middens (ancient rubbish dumps) surround 3A. Road construction activities have damaged the eastern side of Site 3B. Both walled areas

are more northerly than the position indicated on the base map.

Site 4A (26 17 18.4S 28 04 33.6E) and **Site 4B** (26 17 00.7S 28 04 47E) stand in a bushy thicket at the west end of zone 1A (Figure 3). Site 4A is a good example of Group III, while 4B may be an example of the earlier Group I. Site 4B is not marked on the development maps because thick grass concealed its presence during previous investigations.

Site 5 (26 16 51.2-50.7S 28 05 22.3-24.2E) lies to the north of the reservoir in the green area next to zone 1B (Figure 4). A small portion of the west side has been damaged, otherwise it is in good condition.

Site 6 (26 16 53.5S 28 05 21.5E) walling stands about 50m southwest from Site 5 (Figure 4). One thick midden lies outside the walling on the north side, and the walling is in good condition.

Site 7A (26 16 56.7S 28 05 15.5E) and **Site 7B** (26 16 58.2S 28 05 11.5E) walling covers the low rise 100m southwest of Site 6 (Figure 5). Site 7B extends downslope on the north side further than indicated on the planning map. Both components appear to be in good condition.

The locations of Sites 5, 6 and 7 need minor correction on the base map.

Site 8 (26 16 53.5S 28 04 57.1E) walling spreads along a natural terrace in zone 1B (Figure 5). It is located somewhat south of its position on the planning map. The walling is in good condition. Outer areas of walling on the west side suggest this site may be a variant of Group II associated with BaRolong. If true, this is unusual.

The **Site 9** cluster, at the west end of zone 1B, includes four individual residential units; A(26 16 56.5S 28 04 35.5E); B(26 16 57.1S 28 04 37.9E); C(26 16 58.4S 28 04 40.1E); and D (26 17 01S 28 04 41.7E). Sites A and B include good examples of stone platforms for grainbins (Figure 6), while A, B and D have visible middens.

What is C

Site 10A (26 16 51.6S 28 04 37.1E) and **Site 10B** (26 16 49.5S 28 04 38.4E) are two homesteads a few metres apart north of cluster 9 (Figure 7). A dirt road passes through 10A, and the interior has been used as a dump for building rubble. Otherwise, the walls of both 10A and 10B are in good condition.

Site 11 (26 16 40.3S 28 04 53.2E) is a single walled homestead in the green area immediately north of zone 1B (Figure 8). Previous investigations noted good midden deposits and burnt house remains in this site. The walling is in good condition.

Site 12 stands in a dense shrub and tree thicket, about 80m southwest of Site 11, up against a natural rocky ledge (Figure 8). Because of a large squatter community, further details were not noted.

DISCUSSION

On archaeological grounds, as well as practical considerations, some sites could be destroyed to make room for the residential development. Others, however, should not be damaged (Table 1).

First, the boundary at the entrance area should be shifted to avoid damaging Sites 1 and 2. They are in good condition, are good examples of Group III, and there are no overwhelming reasons why they must be destroyed.

Secondly, large complexes, such as Sites 9A-D, and walling in rocky areas, such as Sites 3A&B and 7A&B, are more difficult to record than open, single homesteads. For practical reasons, then, mitigation could be expensive.

Thirdly, some sites have special ecological or archaeological significance. For example, walling that supports dense thickets, such as Sites 3A&B, 4A, 5 and 12, are of ecological significance. Of importance archaeologically, Site 4 may have two types of settlements (Group I and III), while Site 8 may be an example of the BaKolong version of Group II. Site 11 has particularly good preservation and potential for future research.

Finally, Site 3B and 10A have already been damaged. Their archaeological and educational values are therefore less.

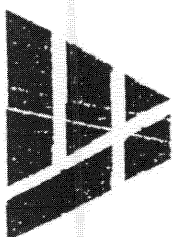
On the basis of these archaeological, ecological, and educational factors, certain sites should not be disturbed. Sites 1, 2, 4A&B, 7A&B, 8, 11 and 12. The other sites could be cleared, mapped and test excavated, but it would take several weeks. Most units require five days each for this work (Table 1). Rocky bush areas require more time, while Site 6 has already been examined and therefore needs less. After mitigation, the developers need a permit from SAHRA to destroy the sites. This process is fast, but SAHRA is unlikely to issue a permit without prior mitigation. Any site left undisturbed could be used as a node on a hiking trail.

REFERENCES

- Huffman, T.N. & Lathy, G. 1997. Archaeological investigations at Meyersdal Koppie, Alberton. Johannesburg: Archaeological Resources Management.
- Huffman, T.N. & Murimbika, M.T. 2001. Salvage excavations at Michelle Avenue, Alberton. Johannesburg: Archaeological Resources Management.
- Mason, R.J. 1962. Prehistory of the Transvaal: a record of human activity. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
- Mason, R.J. 1986. Origins of black people of Johannesburg and the southern western central Transvaal AD 350-1880. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Archaeological Research Unit, Occasional paper 16.

Table 1. Recommended Mitigation.

SITE	LOW	SIGNIFICANCE MEDIAN	HIGH	DURATION
	none	mitigation	preservation	
1			X	
2			X	
3 A&B		X		14 days
4 A&B			X	
5		X		5 days
6		X		2 days
7 A&B		X		14 days
8			X	
9 A to D		X		20 days
10 A&B		X		10 days
11			X	
12			X	

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		OUR REF NO	: 50814
DATE	: 30 July 2002	Pages (including this page)	2+3
SUBJECT	: Meyersdal Nature Estate – Minutes of meeting held on 17 July 2002		

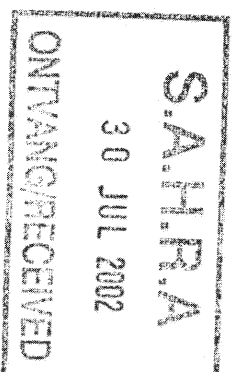
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Mr. V Khumtalo	SAHRA	011-482 8196
Jennifer Kitto	SAHRA	011-482 8196
Maureen Ansett	Ward Councillor	011-867 5553

Attached please find the minutes of the above-mentioned stakeholder meeting for your information.

Regards

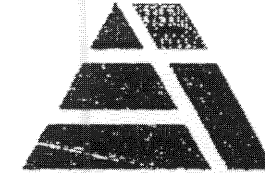
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MINUTES OF MEETING WITH STAKEHOLDERS OF THE MEYERSDAL NATURE AREA WITH REGARD TO THE PROPOSED MEYERSDAL NATURE ESTATE HELD AT R&D PROJECTS, MEYERSDAL ON 17 JULY 2002

ITEM	DISCUSSION	RESOLUTION	ACTION
1. Welcome	Mrs Marais welcomed all the representatives at the meeting and gave a general presentation to provide background on the Meyersdal Nature Area as well as the Meyersdal Nature Estate.		
2. Attendance	Mrs V Marais - Africon Mr D Claassen - Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Council Mr V Khumalo - SAHRA Ms J Kitto - SAHRA Mrs L Gardner - WESSA Mrs M Ansett - Ward Councillor Meyersdal		
3. Issues discussed 3.1 Management of the Nature Estate	Mrs Gardner wanted to know how the estate would be managed. Mr Claassen replied that it would most likely be a Trust or an Agenda 21 Company that would manage the site. This will only be possible as soon as the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Council has approved the feasibility of the Meyersdal Nature Area and an agreement could be reached between the different landowners.	A proper EMP would be compiled for the Nature Estate that would include the Nature Area. A responsible body would have to manage the Estate with the help of the EMP.	Africon
3.2 Destruction and damage to archaeological	Ms Kitto raised the concern that people are robbing the cultural site and that people making fires or removing rocks from the sites are damaging the sites irreparably. She	Mr Claassen proposed that an information session is held as soon as the approval from the Council has	Mr Claassen

sites	<p>enquired whether the reconstruction of the archaeological sites on Meyersdal koppie has taken place. Mrs Ansett and Mr Claassen stated that as far as their knowledge of the site, nothing has been reconstructed yet due to a lack of commitment and funding.</p> <p>Mrs Ansett reported that she is trying to expose the site to the general public through articles in the local newspapers and regular clean ups and that she is involving big sponsors. She stated that she is aware that Mr Mandla Sithole the Executive Director for the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Council would like to get involved with these types of projects.</p>	<p>been realised to inform residents regarding the special nature of the archaeological sites in the area. Ms Kitto would provide pamphlets for distribution, which concentrate on the care of these sites.</p> <p>She would also write a letter to the Council stating her concerns and why proper management of the cultural sites is essential.</p>	<p>Ms Kitto</p> <p>Ms Kitto</p>
3.3 introduction of game into the Nature Area	<p>Mrs Gardner asked about the types of game to be introduced into the Nature Area. Mr Claassen replied that the feasibility study for the Meyersdal Nature Area has investigated the carrying capacity of the Nature Area.</p> <p>Ms Ansett stated that she envisage the Nature Area as a tourism draw card for the area. She proposed that carnivores are used as draw cards and that they should be kept at the Rietvlei Zoo Farm.</p>	<p>It was proposed that domestic animals be excluded from the Nature Area and that Resident be advised from the start that they would not be allowed to keep domestic animals since they would interfere with the management of the game in the open spaces.</p>	<p>Africon to investigate this issue in detail.</p>
3.4 Environmental Education	<p>Ms Kitto proposed that it would be a good idea to get the local people involved with Cultural aspects through education at the Zoo Farm to preserve their living heritage. She also suggested that harvesting of medicinal plants and thatching grass should continue, but in a controlled way.</p>	<p>An area should be set aside at the Zoo farm to cultivate these medicinal plants for future use. Plants removed at residential erven should also be accommodated there. There are Cultural Resource Management Specialists that could be utilised for this development.</p>	<p>Ekurhuleni and Johannesburg Metropolitan Councils.</p> <p>Mrs Ansett</p>
4 General	<p>Mrs Gardner stressed that the ongoing management of the area is a critical issue for WESSA that should be handled in the EMP.</p> <p>Ms Kitto would discuss the cultural issue with Marie Lesley at their Headoffice.</p> <p>Mrs Ansett stressed that she is trying to involve sponsors with</p>	<p>It was decided that SAHRA would receive two extracts (of relevant sections) from the draft Scoping report. Ms Kitto as well as Marie Lesley at Head Office to receive a copy.</p>	<p>Africon</p>



MEYERSDAL NATURE ESTATE

2nd STAKEHOLDER MEETING

HELD ON 17 JULY 2002 AT MEYERSDAL

AFRICON
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

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