

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED ROAD LINKS BETWEEN THE OUTENIQUA PASS AND THE NATIONAL ROAD (N2) NEAR GEORGE

Prepared for

Gibb Africa

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Archaeology Contracts Office was requested to undertake an assessment of the proposed road links between the Outeniqua Pass and the N2 and was specifically asked to:

- a. identify the important archaeological features within each of the alignments
- b. assess the impacts of a future road on the archaeological features within the respective alignments
- c. recommend mitigation actions/measures to eliminate or reduce the effects of negative impacts and enhance the effects of positive impacts of a road within the respective alignments.

Some archaeological terminology is used during the report. A short explanation of the terms can be found in the glossary in Section 7.

2. METHOD

A broad approach was adopted in making the assessments. Rather than concentrating only on conventional archaeological sites, other sites having heritage significance were also considered. In addition to pre-colonial sites, buildings, graveyards, and interesting industrial or engineering features were also taken into account.

The primary method of location of such features is by field survey. When features are located they are assessed for significance and plotted on appropriate maps. Use of a GPS (Global Positioning System) makes it possible to assign latitude and longitude co-ordinates to sites. Test holes may be dug to assess the extent and content of *in situ* archaeological deposits where it is felt that mitigation will be necessary.

In the case of the present assessment, we were supplied with maps of the proposed routes lying within three corridors namely the Blanco, Gwaing and R404 corridors. An additional small link between the Gwaing and Blanco routes known as the Gwaing/Blanco alternative A was also examined. Part of one of the proposed routes in the Gwaing corridor would utilise an existing stretch of the R404 while the R404 route itself is entirely located on an existing road. Other routes lie across farmland or through developed areas (Fancourt golf course and the old aerodrome) and do not utilise existing roads.

The routes have been inspected using a combination of methods adapted for the prevailing conditions. Some of the proposed alignments such as the R404 could be driven along and potential site locations easily identified. Routes through farmland were inspected by either walking portions of the route or by driving along servitude roads and inspecting them from the road. Permissions were gained from land owners or lessees where it was necessary to walk portions of the route.

3. RESULTS

Before discussing specific features that have been located, it is necessary to briefly summarise the landscape.

The upper part of the Gwaing and Blanco corridors lie on the slopes of the Outeniqua Mountains, an area where bedrock or screes are either exposed on, or are very close to surface. The prevailing geology is sandstone and quartzite. The availability of rock outcrops was an important consideration for the pre-colonial occupants of the area when making stone artefacts and seeking shelter.

The middle portion of the investigation area, between the R404 and the mountain slopes, is characterised by more gentle gradients covered by deeper, fertile soils and incised by various watercourses. Bedrock is deeper resulting in virtually no bedrock exposures. It is only in the beds of

rivers that rock is visible in the form of cobbles and boulders. The lower part of the investigation area, between the R404 and the N2, is similar to the middle except that gradients are even more gentle.

We saw no possibility for the formation of caves and shelters anywhere along any of the routes and the absence of these and of any other rocky outcrops means that no occupation focus was available for pre-colonial groups. As a result of the fertile nature of the soils, routes which lie on farmland are all across heavily ploughed fields. While such activity can be detrimental to spatial patterning within sites, ploughing does often bring artefactual material to the surface thereby alerting one of the presence of buried archaeological sites. The good soils have resulted in much of the land being under cultivation of a variety of crops. This has left very little of the area in its natural state except on the steeper slopes along the base of the Outeniqua in the forestry areas.

3.1 Blanco Corridor

Between George and the R404 the route is almost exclusively across developed land except for small strips on either sides of the Malgas and Gwaing Rivers. The landscape is heavily modified and thus provides no chance of surface archaeology having survived. A small borrow pit on the old airfield revealed the presence of some stone artefactual material in the spoil heaps. The site has been called Blanco 1 (BCO1) and lies at co-ordinates 33°57.8304S and 22°25.3107E. The position is marked on Figure 1. The material is old and probably dates to the Middle or Early stone age. A section of edge of the pit showed that the most likely origin for the material was in a layer of gravels some 1-1.5 meters below present surface. Artefactual material was sparse and the occurrence is not considered to be important. It is likely that digging of borrow pits in the area would reveal more of the same material. Artefacts of this type are often widely broadcast as a result of being exposed to erosional and other depositional forces over many thousands of years.

A large service trench was being excavated alongside the southern side of the Malgas River at the time of the investigation. No similar material was observed in the spoil heaps or sections here. There is no chance of finding any *in situ* surface material in the area of Fancourt due to extensive landscaping.

North of the R404, the route passes through the developed outskirts of Blanco up into heavily ploughed farmland and then into the forestry area. No archaeology was observed along the balance of the proposed route.

3.2 Gwaing Corridor (Alternative B)

The lower part of the route lies along the existing R404. No archaeology was observed along this part of the route. Close to the smallholding "Tantivvey" the route joins with the Gwaing Corridor (alternative C) and continues up towards the Outeniqua mountains through what is mostly farmland. The route rises on to a prominent ridge at the farm "Modderrivier" and moves north towards the boundary with the forestry area. Artefactual material was located around the edge of a farm dam at co-ordinates 33°56.2455S and 22°23.72E. This site has been called Gwaing 1 (GWG1) and the location is shown on Figure 2. These quartzite artefacts resemble those at Blanco 1 and appear to be either ESA or MSA. Only a few items are represented and no specific forms are present which would allow a more accurate assessment of the age. The material was clearly brought up from below the surface when the dam was excavated, although the depth from the artefacts originate in this case could not be determined. It would appear that the dam lies slightly to the east of the proposed route but it is likely that material may be widely distributed in the area. No major impacts are likely to occur here as a result of construction.

Moving further up the ridge, occasional pieces of flaked quartzite were observed along the route of a small pipeline and the area of the scatter has been called Gwaing 2 (GWG2) and lies at co-ordinates 33°55.65S and 22°23.67E. The location is shown on Figure 2. The density of material is low notwithstanding the greater availability of raw material on the mountain slopes. A major factor predicating against the formations of sites is the lack of natural *foci* which would have attracted people to the area. One must remember that the forest would have been very much more extensive

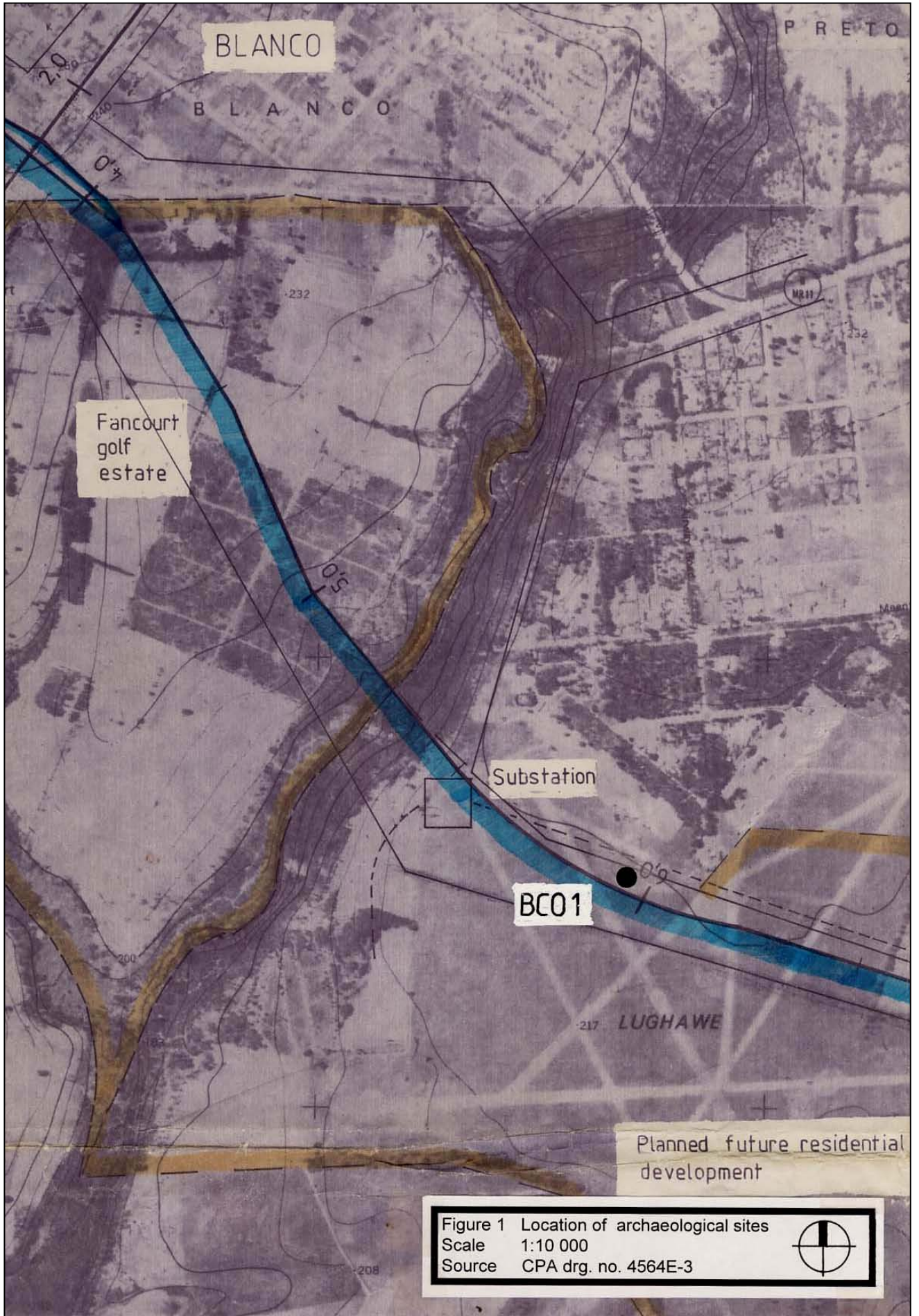
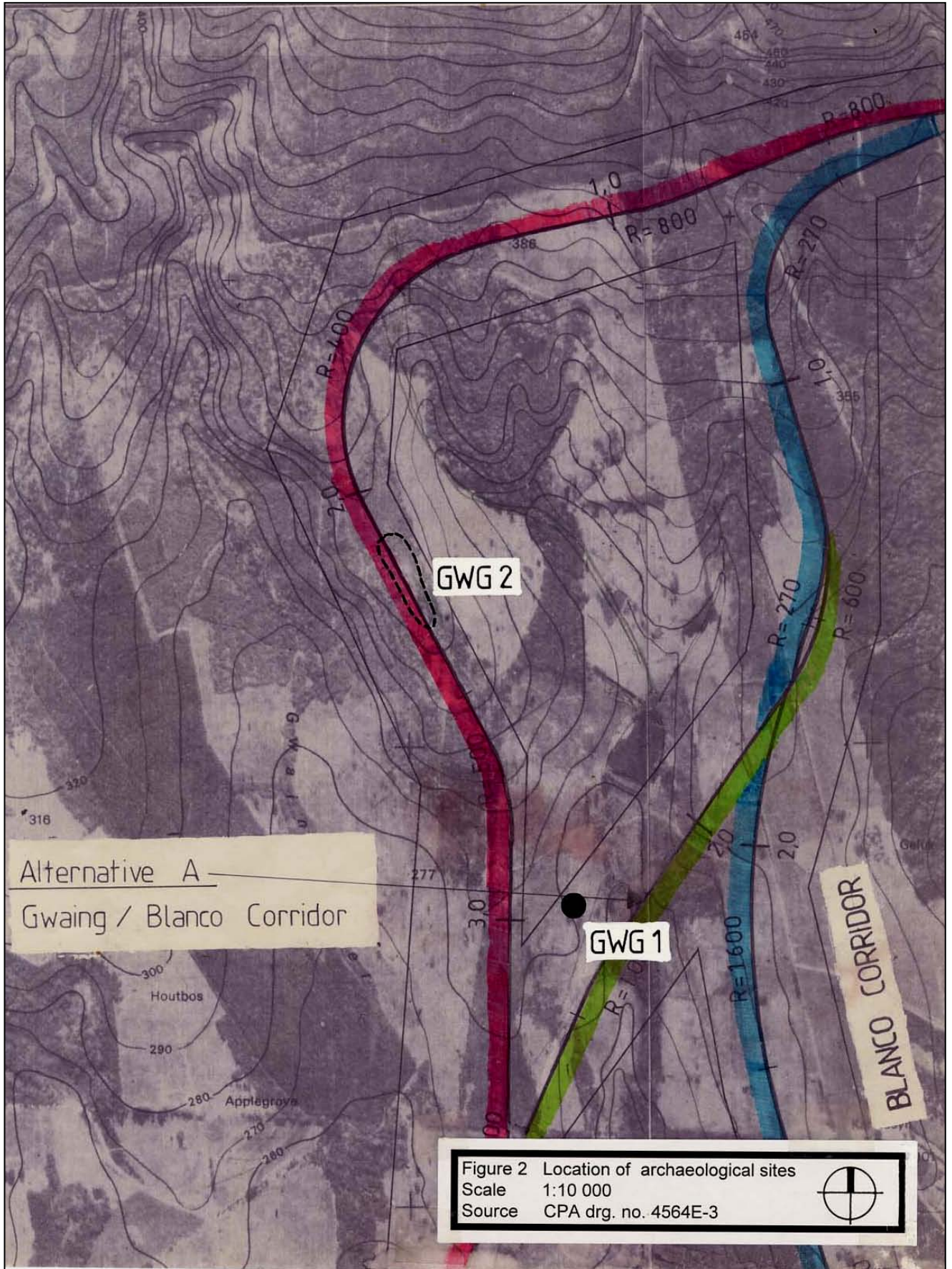


Figure 1 Location of archaeological sites
Scale 1:10 000
Source CPA drg. no. 4564E-3



at certain times than at present and that movement of people would probably have been restricted to game trails and other natural pathways.

From the top of the ridge the route turns to the east towards the existing Outeniqua Pass (R29). No material was observed along this part of the route. This is probably due to the steepness of the gradient at this point.

3.3 *Gwaing Corridor (Alternative C)*

Between the N2 and “Tantivvey”, the proposed route lies mostly through ploughed farmland. No archaeological material was observed along this stretch. A graveyard containing members of the Lamprecht family exists next to the dirt road at the north-west corner of “Groenweide”. This lies to the east of the proposed route as it is indicated on the aerial photo compilation issued for the study. Beyond “Tantivvey” the route joins with alternative B.

3.4 *Gwaing Corridor (Alternative A)*

This alternative would take the route from the farm “Modderrivier” towards the north-west to link up with the northern portion of the Blanco corridor. The initial portion is across farmland with the latter sections running up a ridge before turning east through forestry land towards the existing pass. No archaeological material was observed along this portion of the route.

3.5 *R404 Corridor*

This route lies entirely along an existing road. Potential impacts to historic buildings are envisaged where the road passes through the town of Blanco but the remainder of the route shows no traces of any archaeological material.

While many houses in Blanco have been heavily modified, some buildings along the main street have retained all or most of their original fabric. Houses which immediately are recognised as suitable for conservation are found at the following addresses: no's. 40, 28, 18/20 corner of R404 and Napier Street, 21 - The Copper Pot restaurant, 19 - Farmhouse B&B. Some examples of the buildings are shown in Plates 1-3. While most of the houses along the main street were probably built in this style (Victorian), many have been so modified in recent times that they are no longer worthy of conservation. It is not impossible that the original core structures still exist in whole or part within the modifications and could be restored if necessary. The National Monuments Act of 1969 (as amended) protects all buildings older than 50 years. Permission to alter or demolish will be required from the National Monuments Council in the event of this being necessary.

The town of Blanco sprang up towards the middle of the last century around the construction camp established for the building of the Montague Pass. This new pass begun in 1844, replaced the old Cradock Pass which had become unserviceable. Henry Fancourt White, an Australian engineer, was brought out to build the new pass by the then colonial secretary, John Montague, after whom the pass was named¹. After completion, White worked as road inspector until his retirement in 1860. He then purchased 180 acres of land of the farm “Modderrivier” and laid out a township which was at first called “Whites Villa” but later changed to Blanco. He built his own house here too which today functions as part of the facilities of the Fancourt Golf Estate. After completion of the pass, Blanco experienced a boom as a stop-over for travelers. The importance of Blanco diminished after the railroad to George was completed in 1907 and later in 1951 with the completion of the new national road which ran through George over the Outeniqua Pass².

¹ Burman, J. 1963. So high the road. Mountain passess of the western Cape. Cape Town: Human and Rossouw.

² Standard Encyclopedia of southern Africa. 1970. Vol 2. Nasou Ltd.



Plate 1: Number 49 - Opposite the Post Office



Plate 2: Number 28



Plate 3: Number 19 - Farmhouse Bed & Breakfast.

4. IMPACTS

The archaeological investigation has showed that little in the way of surface archaeology exists along any of the proposed routes. The material which has been located is sparse and in all likelihood in secondary context. Consequently we believe that utilising the routes along which this material was found will not result in any significant impacts. Summaries of the impacts are presented in Tables 1-4. In terms of historic sites, the R404 route through Blanco will potentially impact a number of historic dwellings along the main street. It may be that the buildings themselves will not be directly impacted depending on the eventual width of the road and shoulder. Mitigation may require a narrower road at this point if this is what it will take to avoid the buildings.

While many of the buildings along the R404 in Blanco are currently in residential use, it is not impossible that this use may change if the route is selected. While this may not necessarily be seen as a positive impact in itself, the buildings which reflect the historic facade of the town could be converted to commercial use such as farmstalls, craft outlets, restaurants etc. which could benefit from increased use of the road. This in a sense would renew a link with Blanco's past. A summary of the impact of the R404 route is presented in Table 5.

Rating Criteria	Impact On Archaeological/Historical Sites	
	<i>Gwaing Alt A</i>	
	with mitigation	without mitigation
extent duration intensity legal probability significance status confidence	local permanent low no improbable no significance neutral high	local permanent low no improbable no significance neutral high

Table 1

Rating Criteria	Impact On Archaeological/Historical Sites	
	<i>Gwaing Alt B</i>	
	with mitigation	without mitigation
extent duration intensity legal probability significance status confidence	local permanent low no improbable no significance neutral high	local permanent low no improbable no significance neutral high

Table 2

Rating Criteria	Impact On Archaeological/Historical Sites	
<i>Gwaing Alt C</i>	with mitigation	without mitigation
extent duration intensity legal probability significance status confidence	local permanent low no improbable no significance neutral high	local permanent low no improbable no significance neutral high

Table 3

Rating Criteria	Impact On Archaeological/Historical Sites	
<i>Blanco</i>	with mitigation	without mitigation
extent duration intensity legal probability significance status confidence	local permanent low no improbable no significance neutral high	local permanent low no improbable no significance neutral high

Table 4

Rating Criteria	Impact On Archaeological/Historical Sites	
<i>R404*</i>	with mitigation	without mitigation
extent duration intensity legal probability significance status confidence	local permanent low no highly probable moderate positive high	local permanent high yes highly probable high negative high

*impact only in Blanco

Table 5

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Some buildings along the main street in Blanco will be protected under National Monuments legislation. Should the R404 route be selected, it will be necessary to mitigate the impacts on these houses. Negotiation will have to be entered into with the NMC in regard to this matter to decide which houses are conservation-worthy.

6. INVESTIGATION TEAM

Fieldwork and report

Dave Halkett
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7. GLOSSARY

Artefact - items made from a variety of materials for use by humans.

Early Stone Age (ESA) - In southern Africa this period extends from approximately 1.6 million years to approximately 200 000 years before present. Characteristic artefacts of this period are handaxes, cleavers, various types of cores and flakes. Items are usually made on quartzite, but quartz and other fine grained materials are also used. Sites are most frequently encountered in open contexts. Because of the age, stone artefacts are seldom accompanied by organic materials.

Middle Stone Age (MSA) - In southern Africa this period extends from approximately 200 000 years to approximately 30 000 years before present. Stone artefact technology is more refined with large blades often being retouched bifacially (on both surfaces) into delicate points. While quartzites are used extensively, fine grained siliceous materials are more common. Sites of this age are found in caves as well as in the open and can be associated with organic materials if conditions for preservation are favourable.

Late Stone age (LSA) - The period from about 30 000 years until the arrival of European settlers. The cut off varies from place to place depending on the extent of the colonial impact but generally the indigenous groups whose artefactual remains are subsumed under this heading, were either decimated or had been assimilated into other cultures by 1800 AD. A wide range of sites date to this time. Sites occur both in the open and in caves and rockshelters. Marine resources were heavily exploited to supplement the diet. Stone artefacts are very small and specific shapes recur. Ostrich eggshell and other materials were used for personal adornment. Indigenous ceramics make an appearance about 2000 years ago at the same time as the appearance of Khoi herding groups in the Cape. Prior to this the landscape was inhabited by San hunter-gatherers.

Colonial Period - The period post-dating the establishment of a permanent Dutch settlement at the Cape.

in situ - in its original location or context.