

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY FOR THE ROSSOUW DAM,
MIDDLEBURG**

A Phase-1 report prepared for Strategic Environmental Focus

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INTRODUCTION

The Middleburg Mine (Ingwe Coal Corporation) intends to build a pollution control dam on the Rietfontein Farm 31 JS. In addition the project involves barrow areas in the dam basin, gravity pipelines in the stream bed and the rerouting of powerlines. The environmental coordinators for the project, Strategic Environmental Focus (SEF), commissioned Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to survey the impacted area for sites of archaeological and historical interest.

ARM was asked to pay special attention to graves and stone ruins previously noted on the ridge north of the dam.

METHOD

One ARM staff examined the area on November 24. The dam, barrow area and ridge were traversed on foot while other areas were spot checked. Sites were recorded on the 1:10 000 map of the project area supplied by SEF and then transferred to the 1:50 000 map 2529 CD Middleburg (Transvaal).

RESULTS

Several sites in the designated area range in date from the Stone Age to the Historic Period.

Stone Age

Site 1 Early Stone Age (about 1.7 million to 200 000 years ago) artefacts extend along the south side of the spruit (25.51.45S 29.24.05E). The artefacts are mixed among a stoney cobble stratum and include cores, handaxes, flakes and ~~arrowheads~~ *arrowheads, flakes,*

Site 2 More Early Stone Age artefacts occur on the northeast side of the Rietfontein Pan (25.53.46S 29.24.28E).

Middle Stone Age (200 000 to 25 000 years ago) artefacts cover most of the western slopes of the ridge above the proposed dam. At *Site 3* (25.51.23S 29.24.02E), cores, flakes and scrapers are highly concentrated next to some natural hollows, and this site may have been a home base.

The ridge itself is a mixture of metamorphic rocks, and several spots on the western end show signs of ancient quarrying.

Other Stone Age artefacts are exposed at the 1510m contour (25.51.30S 29.14.27E) in the road leading past Schoeman's Dam to the Mavela Colliery. The artefacts lie on a laterite stratum about 50cm below surface.

Historic Period

In addition to the Stone Age remains, two types of stone ruins stand on the ridge above the proposed dam. The first and oldest is represented by *Sites 4* (24.51.25 S 29.24.24E), 5 (25.51.30S 29.24.27E) and 6 (25.51.16S 29.24.58E). Typically, a large (+ 20x30m) rectangular walled-area enclosed houses, kitchens and grainbins, while cattle were kraaled at the front and small stock at the back.

The second type, represented by *Sites 7* (25.51.22S 29.24.07E) and 8 (25.51.40S 29.24.45E) lack cattle kraals and are more rectangular: rectangular houses face rectangular courtyards.

A few stone-walled households are scattered over the low western end of the ridge (one lies on top of *Site 3*). These walls appear to have been recently dismantled and used as fill in nearby farm dams. Consequently, it is not clear whether the sites belong to the first or second types.

Both types mark the homesteads of Southern Transvaal Ndebele who were farm labourers. The first type characterizes a time when the labourers were part of a system of indentured servants. They were allowed to graze their own cattle and grow their own crops as payment for their work. This period dates from about 1883 to the 1920s. The second type dates from about the 1920s.

The graveyard for some of these labourers is located at the bottom of the gumtree line, below the main house (25.51.42S 29.24.08E). The cemetery contains at least 21 graves, in three groups spread over a 45 metre area. Most are marked by an oblong stone pile oriented east/west. One prominent grave, however, was made with bricks and cement and has a headstone.

The original 19th century farmhouse is not located within the immediate project area. The foundations of one Rietfontein farmhouse (25.51.54S 29.24.10E), however, will be endangered. These foundations stand next to the present Rosouw house, and date to about the 1940s. A stone-walled shed nearby may be older.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The graveyard also lies inside the proposed dam basin, and the graves must be removed. The relevant legislation, among other things, requires that advanced notice of the removal appears in a local newspaper. Immediate descendants have the right to determine the new burial locality, otherwise the remains should be re-buried in a recognized cemetery.

The remaining sites require less intensive mitigation. *Site 8* will be inundated, and it needs to be recorded before construction begins.

The other stone ruins are not in danger unless the pylons for the new powerline route can not avoid them. In this unlikely case, the ruins must also be recorded.

The only Stone Age locality of significance is *Site 3*. If this site can not be avoided, then it should be test excavated beforehand.

All the archaeological and historical sites can be satisfactorily mitigated. Consequently, there is no archaeological or historical reason why the Roussov Dam project should not continue.

Some of the historical sites require mitigation. In accordance with the National Monuments Act (No. 119 of 1969), the 1940s foundation and associated shed need to be recorded, that is mapped and photographed, before construction begins.