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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY
OF WITHOEKSPRUIT, BRAKPAN

Prof TN Huffman
Ms HD van der Merwe

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
Archaeological Department
University of the Witwatersrand

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF WITHOEKSPRUIT, BRAKPAN

SYNOPSIS

Two Middle Stone Age sites were found along the edge of the vlei, but they will not be endangered by mining activity. An historic cemetery, however, stands next to a main access road, and it should be fenced.

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INTRODUCTION

Stefan, Robertson and Kirsten contracted ARM to examine the Withoekspruit vlei, down stream of the S.A. Land Extension Gold Mine (Sally's). The vlei will be dredged for alluvial gold as part of current recycling of mine dumps.

We met the mine manager of Benoni Gold Mine, Mr K Andrew on October 22nd, and he outlined the mining project. Basically, a deep trench will be dug on both sides of the spruit, defining the mining area, while the present road system will provide access.

We examined the project area on the same day, staying within 100m on either side of the spruit. We covered thoroughly the open areas immediately below the mine and at the southern end next to Rooikraal, and spot checked each crossing in between. Sites were recorded on the maps provided by SRK (Fig. 1).

OBSERVATIONS

Middle Stone Age (ca 250 000 to 30 000 years ago) artifacts were found in several places, and two appeared to be true concentrations (Sites 2 and 4). Site 2 is the rocky area on both sides of the spruit near the crossing at the No. 2 Ventilation Shaft. Flakes, cores and a triangular point were noted. Site 4 at the curve of the spruit on Withoek Estate is an extensive exposure of water worn rocks which had served as a Stone Age quarry. Cores were particularly abundant. Both these sites are above the projected trench line.

In addition to the Stone Age material, a few historic localities were recorded. The foundations and walls of a dairy (Site 3), dating to the early 20th century, still stand in Ptn 21 between the large slimes dam and vlei. This structure is well above the vlei, but it is worth noting in case of future development in that area.

The historic cemetery (Site 1) below the No. 2 Ventilation Shaft, on the other hand, is next to a main access road. This cemetery dates between 1884 and 1920 and contains the graves of the Kapp, Steyn, Maritz, Horn and Ackerman families, some of whom may have been on the Great Trek. Some of the Steyn graves are in the shape of a coffin, and there are other interesting details. Unfortunately, the cemetery has been damaged over the years, but it is still an important site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The historic cemetery is in a precarious situation next to the access road. This is one of the oldest recorded graveyards on the East Rand, and it should be protected. We have discussed the problem with Mr Andrew on site, and he has agreed to erect a fence to protect the cemetery against heavy traffic.

The two Middle Stone Age sites are not in danger and therefore do not require mitigation.

