An Archaeological Impact Assessment
Portion of Farm 251 Remainder, Vanrhynsdorp

Report prepared for Craig Donald,

Site Planning Consulting

P.O. Box 28, Strand, 7139

Tel: (021) 854 4260

Fax: (021) 854 4321

e-mail: craig@siteplan.co.za

by

ANDREW B. SMITH

Department of Archaeology

University of Cape Town

Rondebosch, 7700

Tel: 021 650 2354

Email: Andrew.smith@uct.ac.za

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Instructions were given by Craig Donald, Site Plan Consulting, to do an Archaeological Impact Assessment of Portion of Farm 251 Remainder, Vanrhysndorp in anticipation of gypsum mining by PPC (Pty) Ltd.

A site visit on 7th & 8th July 2011 showed a thin scatter of mostly quartz artefacts across the farm. In one area, however, a surface scatter in an open area contained flakes both in quartz and in other raw materials (Site A). This scatter was located on a rise with a fine view of the plains to the east.

Other open areas to the south, below this rise, had almost no stone pieces for about a kilometre. Further south than this, towards the Droerivier, open areas showed dense quartz scatters. On inspection, these quartz pieces were mixed with rolled pebbles, suggesting sheet run-off.

On the eastern side of the N7 highway, another scatter, some 50 metres long was also found on a rise with a good view of the plains below (Site B).

These locations on high points suggest that, although we cannot say how old the sites were, the positions overlooking the plains to the east were not accidental and chosen to give prehistoric hunters a commanding view of their game species.

The prehistoric heritage on the farm can be rated as low, and no further mitigation is deemed necessary.

1. INTRODUCTION

A proposed gypsum mining operation by PPC (Pty) Ltd led to instructions being given by Craig Donald of Site Planning Consulting for an Archaeological Impact Assessment to be done on Portion of Farm 251 Remainder, Vanrhysndorp, following an RoD from Heritage Western Cape (Unique ID 1335, Unique Case ID 1410, dated 23 May 2011). A site visit was duly performed on 7th and 8th July, 2011.

The southern boundary of the farm is 2 km north of Vanrhynsdorp, and the property is crossed by the N7 highway. Access was a further 2.5 km along the highway opposite the existing gate to current gypsum mining operations. The extent of the property is approximately 3 x 1.5 km in area. It has become heavily vegetated due to recent good rains with the onset of the flowering season.

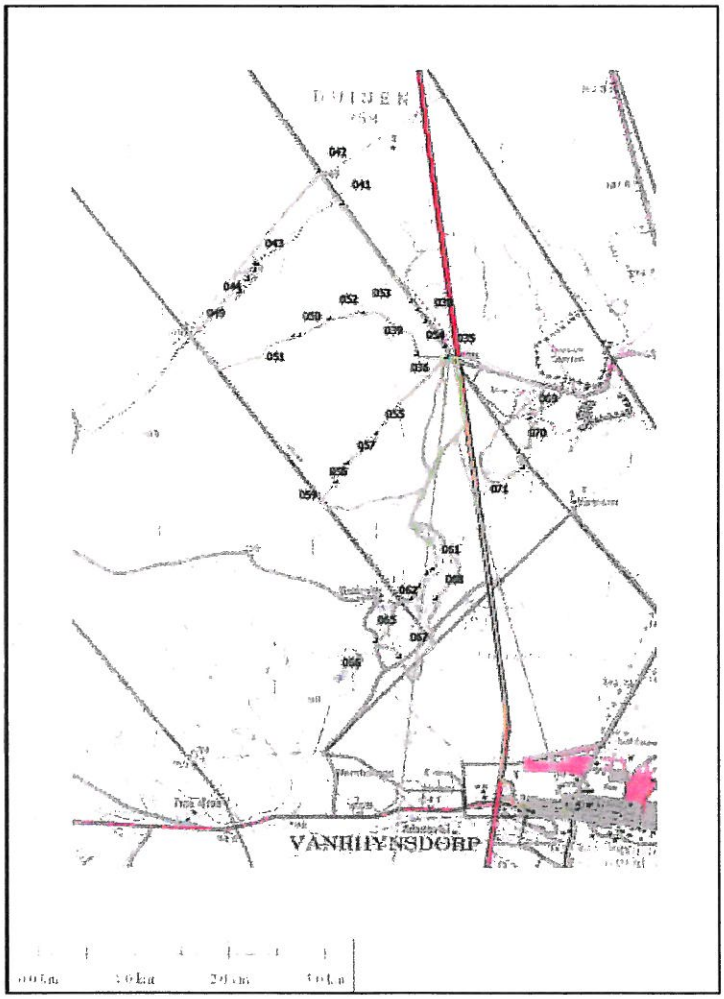

Figure 1: 1:50,000 Map 3118DA showing location of study area north of Vanrhynsdorp, with GPS track across property

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2. METHODOLOGY

Due to the dense vegetation, inspection was made of open areas where the surface was visible. This meant walking the access roads, and traversing the farm looking for areas clear of vegetation. A GPS track was made (Fig. 1) and any significant find(s) was marked and photographed. These cleared areas were readily seen, with the reddish sand contrasting against the green vegetation.

3. RESULTS

There is a thin scatter of quartz flakes across most of the farm. In addition, stone flakes of other raw materials, such as quartzite, silcrete, hornfels, were also noted:

At the northern end of the property is a low rise. A cleared area (Site A) (GPS 045)(18.70671976S: 31.55576762E) on top of the rise showed a number of flakes, including an MSA 'point', silcrete, quartzite, and the ubiquitous quartz. (Figs. 2 & 3). These flakes were distributed all around the top of the rise. This site had a splendid view of the plains to the east (Fig. 4).

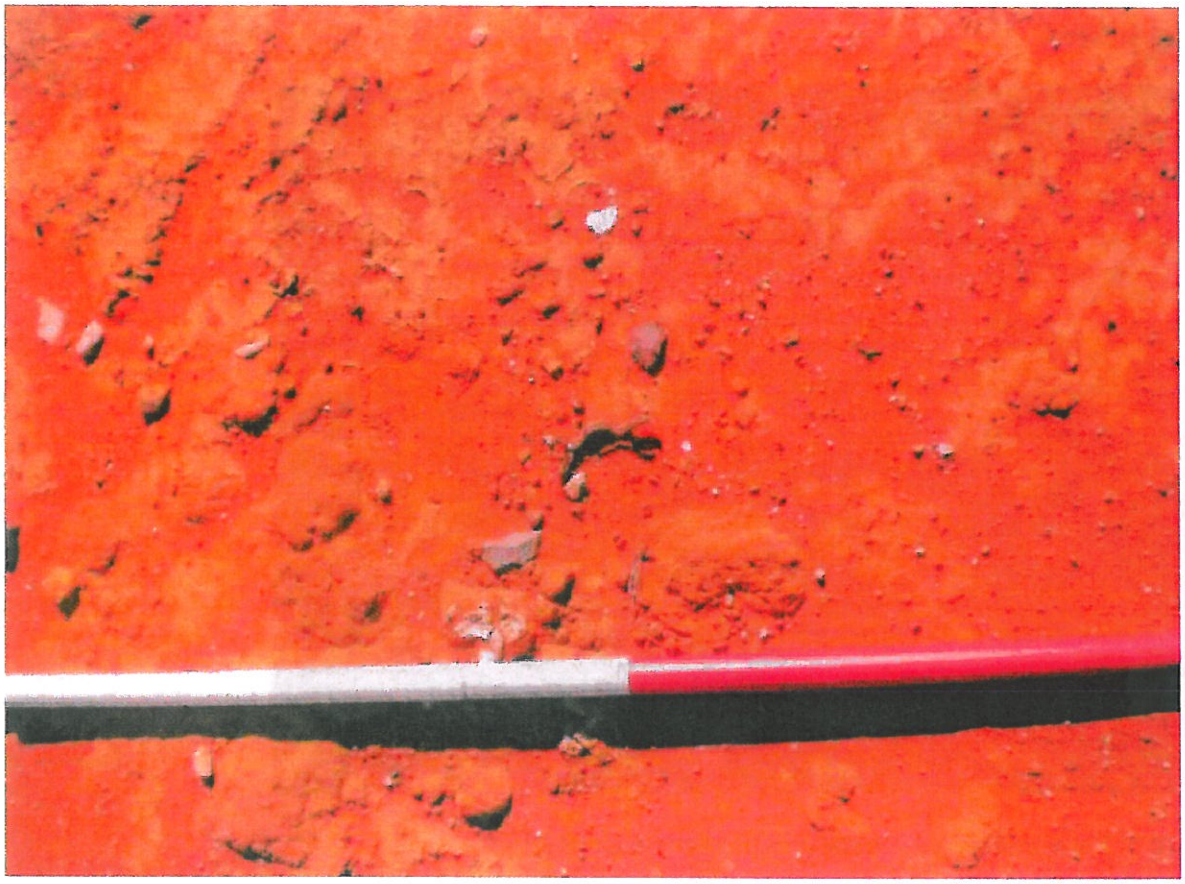


Figure 2: Surface of site A (GPS 045)

Figure 3: Site A

Figure 4: View towards the escarpment to the east of site A

On the southern slope of the rise the open areas had no stone. (Figs 5 & 6). This pattern continued for about a kilometre, where open areas once more showed dense quartz pieces, and few stone artifacts (Fig. 7) However, on closer inspection, these were mixed with significant numbers of rolled pebbles. This suggested that the surface indications were the result of sheet wash, a fact that was confirmed when one of these clearings showed where recent rains had washed across the landscape (Fig. 8). Other clearings in the area produced a dense cover of natural quartz pieces (Fig. 9).

Figure 5: Open area to the south of Site A (no stone pieces on surface)

Figure 6: Open area south of site A (no surface pieces)

Figure 7: Open area towards the Droerivier (quartz pieces on surface)

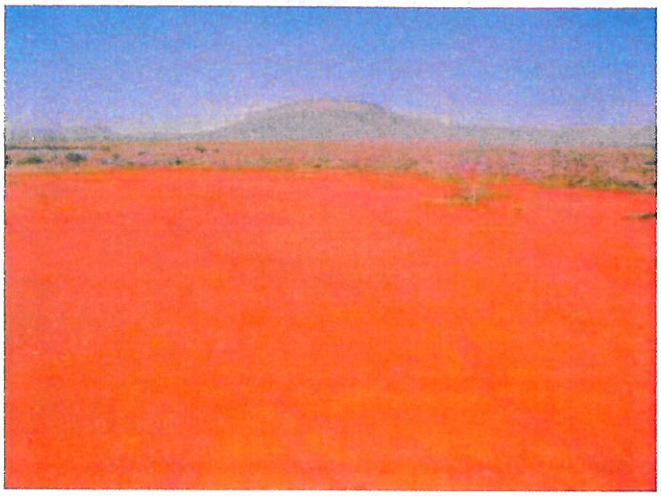


Figure 8: Open area towards the Droerivier showing sheet wash from recent rains

Figure 9: Surface quartz pieces (mixture of flakes and natural stone in sheet wash)

Inspection of sections created by bulldozer action, as well as the Droerivier cutting across the southern end of the property showed no artifacts (Fig. 10). In one section, a bed of quartz was noted about 15 cm below the surface (Fig. 11). This indicated a potential source for all the quartz being exposed by sheet wash.

Figure 10: Section exposed towards the south (no material seen)

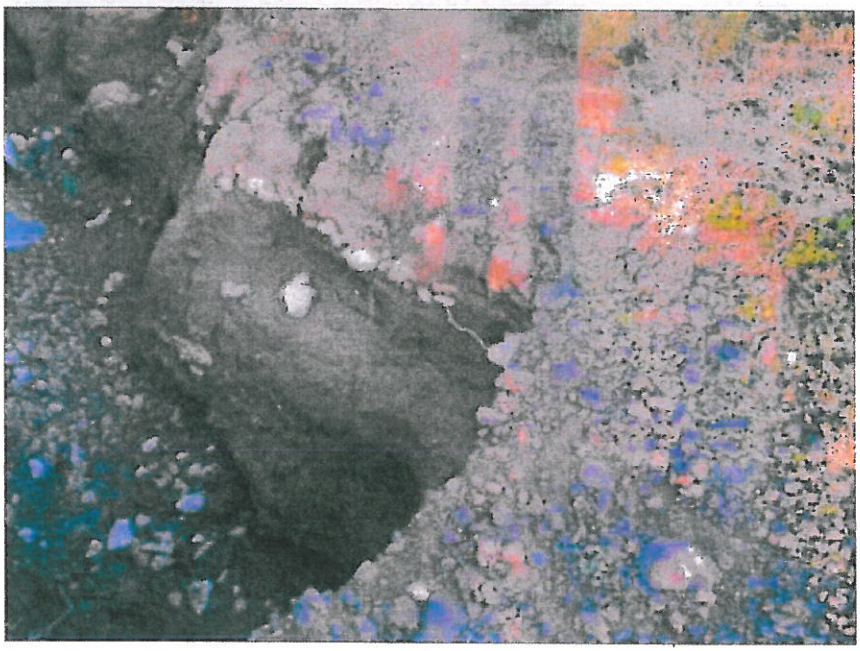


Figure 11: layer of quartz seen in section of donga along Droerivier

An area of geological interest was limestone bedrock on the northern side of the Droerivier, where the farmer had a rondedam (Fig. 12). This hinted at the former presence of a spring, and existing subsurface water.

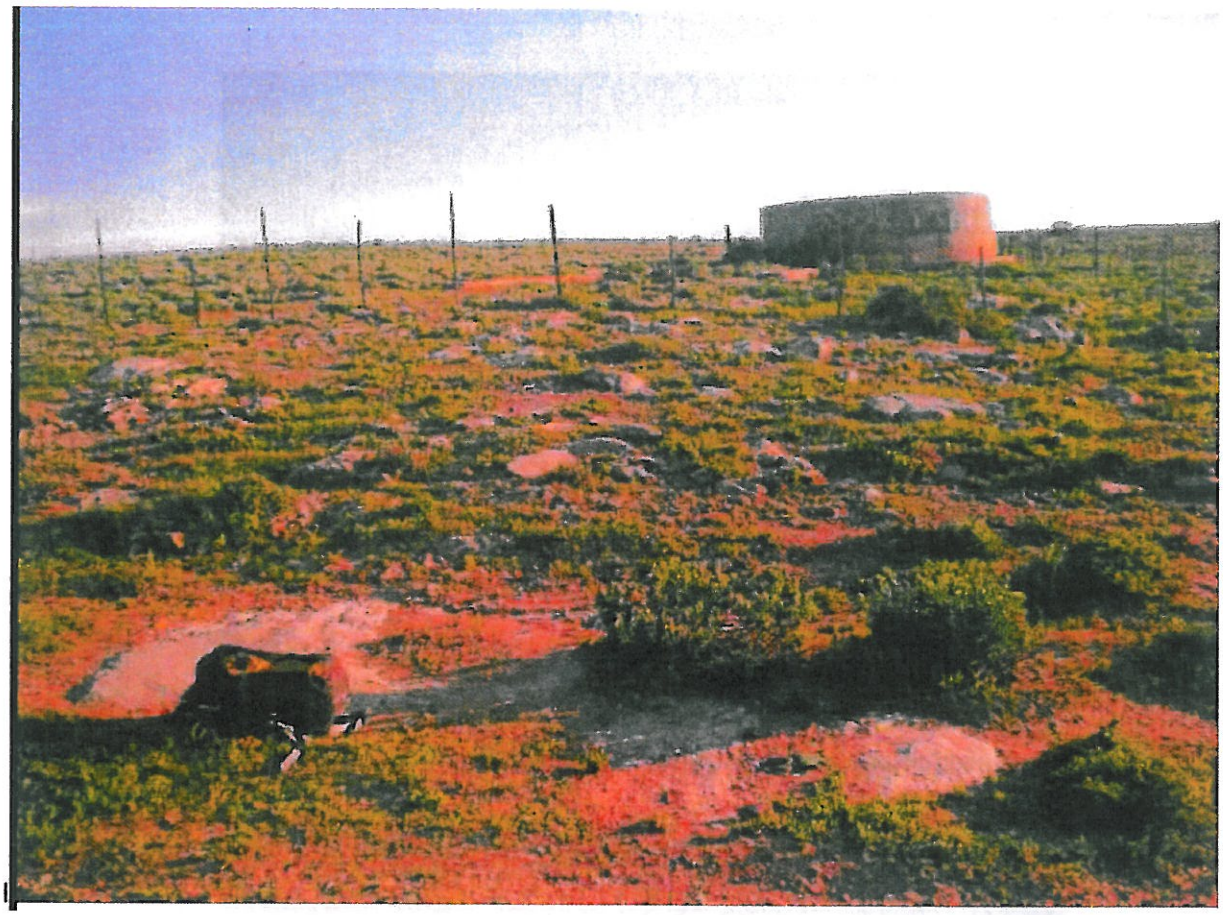


Figure 12: Exposure of limestone with rondedam

Inspection along the river banks did produce several MSA tools (flakes, cores, and one possible small broken handaxe).

The section of the farm on the other side of the highway was also inspected. An entry road for the existing mine was used to access the area. This proved to be fortuitous, as walking across the veld to the fence meant crossing already bulldozed mining operations to get onto a platform above. There another site (Site B)(GPS 069)(18.73264206S: 31.57092897E) of thinly scattered materials covering about 50 metres was noted. This site, like the one seen on the rise on the northern section of the property (Site A), had a fine view of the plains below.

Within the farm boundary of the subject survey area, along the fence, a cleared area showed a small scatter of quartz and other flakes. A similar pattern was seen on another area towards the highway.

4. CONCLUSIONS

While stone artifacts are thinly scattered across most of the farm, the most important findings, are not the incidence of lithics, but the location of the two sites with their excellent views of the plains to the east. The stone on these sites gives no indication that these were from a single period of occupation, or when this took place.

We can surmise that the locations noted could have given the former occupants visual knowledge of game movement on the plains. From the early historic records we know large game migrations took place across much of the northern Cape, and these sites on Farm 251 were well placed to give hunters real advantage.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Most stone artifacts seen were quartz chips and chunks, with some simple flakes in other materials and a few Middle Stone Age flaked artifacts. These constitute low heritage significance, and none of the locations where artifacts were seen had significant density to warrant further archaeological work.

This phase 1 archaeological impact assessment of Portion Farm 251 Remainder Vanrhynsdorp has identified no significant impacts to the prehistoric heritage of the farm that might need mitigation prior to the proposed mining activities.

6. GALLERY

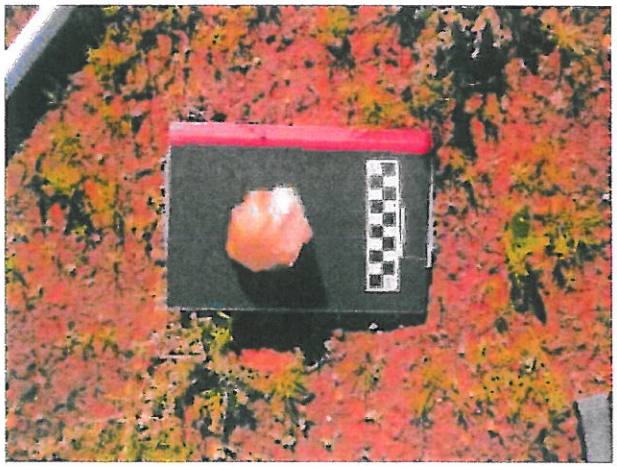
GPS 035

GPS 038

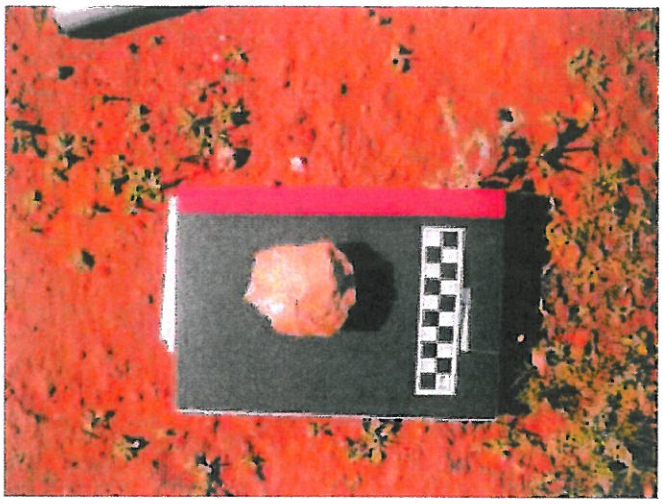
GPS 041

GPS 039

GPS 041



GPS 046

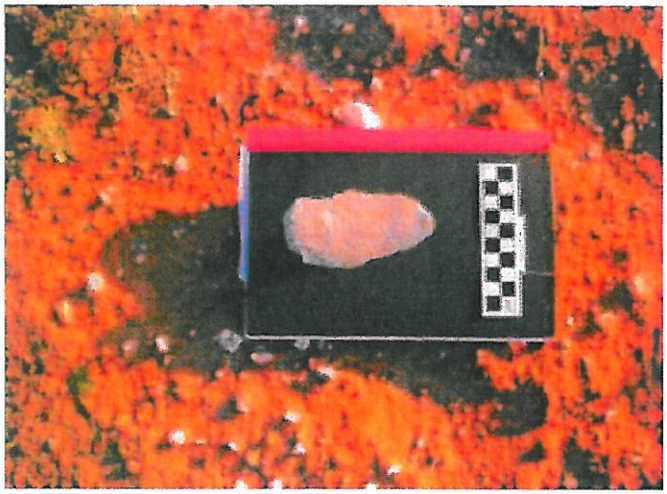


GPS 048

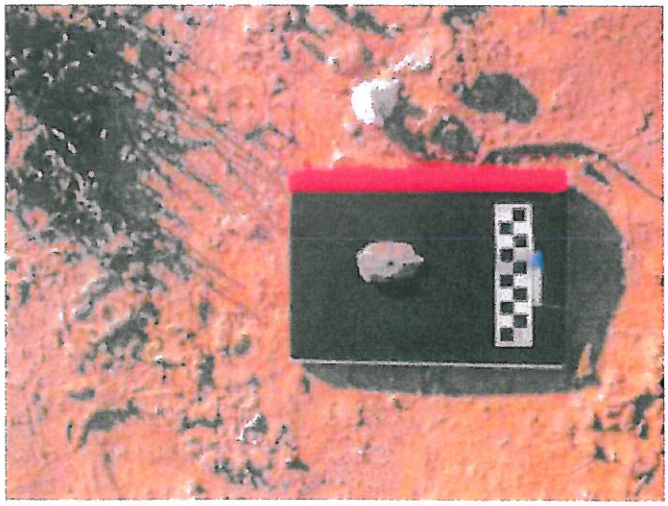
GPS 049

GPS 062

GPS 063



GPS 064



GPS 068