

PHASE 1 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT – PORTION 2 OF THE
FARM OSBOSCH 707, ST FRANCIS BAY

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National Heritage Resources Act (1999)

The National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 makes provision for a compulsory HIA when an area exceeding 5000 m² is being developed (National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999: page 55). This is to determine if the area contains heritage sites and to take the necessary steps to ensure that they are not damaged or destroyed during development.

With regard burial grounds and graves, Section 36 (3) of the Act clearly stipulates that no person may, without a permit issued by the relevant heritage authority or SAHRA, (a) destroy, damage or exhume the grave of the victim of conflict; (b) destroy, damage or exhume any grave or burial ground older than 60 years which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority.

Subject to the provision of any other law, any person who in the course of development discovers the location of a grave, the existence of which was previously unknown, must immediately cease such activity and report the discovery to the relevant heritage authority which must, in co-operation with the South African Police Service and in accordance with the regulations of the responsible heritage authority, carry out an investigation to determine whether the grave is protected in terms of the Act or is of significance to any community

Section 34 of the Act stipulates that no person may alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure, which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant provincial heritage resources authority. Section 38 of the Act clearly indicates that any person constructing a road or similar linear developments exceeding 300m in length or developing an area exceeding 5000 m² in extent is required to notify the responsible heritage resources authority or SAHRA. SAHRA will in turn advise whether an impact assessment report is needed before development can take place.

Living heritage (defined in the Act as including cultural tradition, oral history, performance, ritual, popular memory, skills and techniques, indigenous knowledge systems and the holistic approach to nature, society and social relationships) is also given protection under the Act. Section 24 of the Act makes provision for provincial heritage resources authorities to maintain a register of heritage resources and to set up management plans for their preservation.

Introduction and Terms of Reference

Dr Webley of the Albany Museum was approached by SRK Consulting and requested to undertake a first phase HIA assessment survey of Portion 2 of the Farm Osbosch 707, St Francis Bay (Fig. 1). The farm lies next to the main road from Humansdorp to St Francis Bay and is situated less than 1 km from the Kromme River. This Portion of the farm is approximately 171 ha in extent, and is presently zoned as agricultural land. About two-thirds of the land has been subject to agricultural development in the past. There are a number of small dams which have been built by previous owners to meet their agricultural requirements. Only about one-third of the area consists of natural vegetation. This portion includes a depressed area of marshy land or a

wetland (vlei) surrounded by Kromme Renosterveld. Dr Webley was requested to survey the land prior to its development. The farm will be divided into a mix of middle income residential housing, group housing, commercial and private open space. Her brief was to examine portion 2 of the farm Osbosch 707 for heritage sites.

It is important to mention that in terms of the built environment, there are no dwellings or other structures (such as sheds or kraals) on this portion of the farm. There is no evidence of historical settlement (such as farm houses or labourers houses) and there is no evidence of historical graves or cemeteries. Since the advent of the colonial period this section of the farm Osbosch has been used exclusively for agricultural purposes. Finally, there are no records of any Palaeontological finds from this part of the coastal area. This survey has therefore focused on evidence for prehistoric or archaeological evidence for the pre-colonial period.

Prehistory of the area

There are numerous archaeological shell middens (see terminology) all along the coast from Kabeljous River, Jeffrey's Bay and Aston Bay. Most of these middens consist of limpets and periwinkle shells. Many of the middens contain fragments of clay pots, and these are described in Rudner (1968). He claims to have examined the remains of 25 clay pots (five of them complete) in 1963. These shell middens date between 5000 and 300 year ago. Sites with pottery are linked to the occupation of Khoekhoen pastoralists who settled in the area around 2000 years ago. This area is particularly rich in archaeological sites and has contributed significantly to our knowledge of the Later Stone Age in the Eastern Cape.

During a 2002 survey of the northern banks of the Kromme River Mouth for SRK Consulting, a well preserved quartzite handaxe was found in the access roads close to the estuary (Webley 2002).

Survey method

A number of different areas were surveyed. This included the Wetland area and the adjoining Kromme Renosterveld, the Themeda grasslands area and the two areas of agricultural development (Fig. 2). While the survey concentrated on those areas of natural vegetation which had not been destroyed by agricultural practices, all the various areas were examined. I paid special attention to the raised areas around the vlei as these would have been ideal locations for prehistoric settlement. However I also walked across a number of agricultural lands to ensure that no archaeological or historical material had been ploughed up.

Field Report

The site was surveyed on 13 September 2006.

Locality 1: The farm road which traverses the western edge of the land, bordering on the wetlands and Themeda grassland area, is slightly raised. This road cuts through an approximately 15m broad band of soil which is littered with weathered quartzite cobbles (Fig. 3). A very large proportion of these cobbles (80%) have no flaking

scars. There are however, a small number of weathered quartzite cores and flakes which appear to have resulted from human action. This band of quartzite cobbles and stone artefacts appears to be located along the western edge of the property. Initially, it seemed as that this was an isolated ridge of cobbles. However, an inspection of the road which cuts through the property in a west-east direction to the mouth of the Kromme River, reveals that there are quartzite cobbles in this area. It appears that there may be a substrate of quartzite cobbles in this area.

Locality 1 refers to a concentration of stone tools close to the most northerly fence (Fig. 4).

S 34° 06' 28,8"

E 24° 48' 16,3"



Fig. 3: Quartzite cobbles



Fig 4: Flaked cobbles.

Locality 2:

A further concentration of flakes quartzite cobbles was found at locality 2. It is important to note that these flakes tools appear to merely an extension of the those reported for Locality 1, and therefore this division into different localities or areas is probably spurious.

S 34° 06' 29,4"

E 24° 48' 16,6"



Fig. 5: A possible ESA flaked stone tool or cleaver.

Locality 3:

Following the road, there is a further concentration of flaked stone tools at locality 3.

S 34° 06' 39,2"

E 24° 48' 14,4"



Fig. 6: A number of weathered, flaked cobbles and cores.

Locality 4

At the gate between the Wetland camp and the Themeda grassland camp, there is another concentration of flaked stone tools, lying on disturbed lands.

S 34° 06' 53,0"

E 24° 48' 12,5"



Fig. 7: Flaked stone artefacts.



Fig 8. The road to Kromme River mouth

Distribution of quartzite cobbles along the Kromme River road

Fig. 8 refers to the quartzite cobbles and flakes which are found along the Kromme River road. The figure above shows the presence of a large flaked quartzite core in the foreground. This suggests that the cobble layer, which includes flaked material, lies below the clay topsoil which is visible elsewhere on the farm.

The Developed and Degraded Agricultural Camps

Both these camps were surveyed and no archaeological material was discovered in them. These areas are particularly marshy and would not have been a good location for settlement.

Significance of Sites and Significance of Impacts

SAHRA is obliged in terms of Section 7 of the National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999) to establish a grading system for heritage sites. Grade 1 sites are considered to be heritage resources with such exceptional qualities that they are of national significance; Grade 2 sites are heritage resources which can be considered to have special qualities which make them significant in terms of the province or region; while Grade 3 sites are other heritage resources considered to be worthy of conservation (possibly on a local level).

There are no Palaeontological sites or sites of historical importance on the property. No evidence was found for any graves or cemeteries, and it would appear that this portion of land was not settled during the historical period. No shell middens or evidence for shell middens was observed and it would appear that the distance from the coast would make this unlikely. None of the distributions of Stone Age implements discovered or recorded during this survey can be described to be of Grade 1 or 2 significance. The stone tools appear to be of Early Stone Age origin (see terminology below). They do not appear to be of local interest (Grade 3) as the stone artefacts are distributed in a general zone of quartzite cobbles which is likely to be developed over quite an extensive area. For example, in 2002 a quartzite handaxe (relating to the Early Stone Age) was found in the gravel access road on the northern bank of the Kromme River, several kilometres from the present distribution. This suggests a very wide scatter of Early Stone Age material in the St Francis Bay area.

There is therefore no reason to insist on mitigation. However, it is possible that a site of significance could be buried under the surface of the soil. This might include stone artefacts in their original context, possibly in association with bone or wooden items. The presence of the vlei or wetland area would support good preservation of organic remains. For this reason care should be taken to report unusual concentrations of stone or bone during earth-moving.

The development of the area for housing will result in considerable earth-moving and landscaping of the terrain. If there are any significant archaeological sites, they are likely to be destroyed. It is important to remember that archaeological and historical sites are non-renewable. Once destroyed, they cannot be returned to their original state. For this reason every effort must be made to monitor the site during earth-moving development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

All archaeological sites are protected by the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999) and it is an offense to destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or disturb archaeological sites without a permit issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA).

No significant archaeological sites, historical structures or graves were discovered during the survey of Portion 2 of Osbosch 707.

There is a very sparse scatter of stone artefacts over a large area which would suggest that the stone artefacts are not in their original location, but may have been distributed in this fashion by past water action. This would suggest that this particular area was not a suitable location for stone age settlement despite the location of the nearby vlei.

However, it is possible that sites may be buried under the soil and grass surface. For this reason every care should be taken during the bulldozing of the area. Archaeological sites, including fossilized bone or human remains, should be reported to SAHRA and to the archaeologists at the Albany Museum, immediately.

I would recommend that development of the area can take place but that every care should be taken to avoid destroying archaeological sites which may be located beneath the soil surface. When leveling of the soil takes place, contractors should look for the following features:

1. Dense accumulations of marine shell – evidence of a prehistoric shell midden.
2. Concentrations of stone artifacts in association with bone or wood remains.
3. Concentrations of fossilized bone.
4. Human remains including burials.

If any of the above are discovered, development should stop immediately and an archaeologist should be called in.

TERMINOLOGY

The prehistory of South Africa is generally divided into 3 periods by archaeologists; namely the Early Stone Age, the Middle Stone Age and the Later Stone Age.

Early Stone Age: the earliest ESA assemblages date from 1,7 million years ago. By around 1,5 million years ago, distinctive stone tools called handaxes appear and this seems to coincide with the appearance of *Homo erectus* peoples. These tools appear to have been made to the same pattern until around 200 000 years ago.

Middle Stone Age: Stone tools from this period are often made on fine-grained stone and they reflect a more controlled use of the flaking properties. These tools date between 200 000 and 40 000 years ago. In some circumstances, fossil bones and marine shells have been found in association.

Later Stone Age: LSA peoples were ancestral to the San (Bushman) and lived in South Africa between 40 000 years ago and colonial times. During most of the Holocene (last 10 000 years) southern Africa was inhabited by small bands of mobile hunter-gatherer groups. Where these groups lived at the shore they generally exploited coastal resources such as marine shell and marine mammals. Sheep and pottery first occur in archaeological sites around 2000 years ago and they point to the arrival of a new economy in South Africa, that of pastoralism. These groups were probably the

ancestors of the colonial Khoekhoen. Later Stone Age tools are typically made on fine-grained cherts and chalcedonies, although quartz tools are also very common. They are generally microlithic in size and conform to certain designs, such as scraper, segments and adzes. They are easy to recognize and date.

Middens: are open-air shell accumulations, which have resulted from human occupation in the area. They may date between 60 000 years ago and 300 years ago. Middens may measure between 1 m and 20 m in diameter. Generally there is a correlation between the shellfish in the midden and what is available on the rocks of the seashore nearby. Binneman has found that many middens along the Eastern Cape coast contain limpets (*Patella* sp), mussels (*Perna* sp), periwinkles (*Oxystele* sp), alikreukel (*Turbo* sp) and perlemoen (*Haliotis* sp). However, in the absence of a rocky shore, early peoples also exploited the white sand mussel (*Donax serra*) as well as pencil bait (*Solen capensis*). Middens consist primarily of shellfish but may also contain bone remains and cultural artifacts. They are the most common type of archaeological site is found within 5 km from the coast.

Burials: Many middens also contain human burials. The human remains are often buried in a flexed position with a capping of stone. The human remains are frequently buried with ostrich eggshell bead necklaces and may sometimes also have associated clay pots, etc.

REFERENCES

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