

TEST EXCAVATIONS OF OLD KLIPTOWN ROAD, FOR THE WALTER SISULU SQUARE OF DEDICATION

A Phase-2 report prepared for the Johannesburg Development Agency

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INTRODUCTION

Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication commemorates the Congress of the People at which the Freedom Charter was adopted in June 1955. The area was declared as a temporary National Monument in 2002. This status is in the process of being renewed. The project's heritage advisor, Mr Herbert Prins, identified Old Kliptown road as a key boundary and landmark in historic Kliptown. Consequently, the road, or place where the road was, will be marked and commemorated in the square being built around it.

The developers are entering the final stages of construction of the square, which includes extending work to former road. The road and curbstones, however, are no longer visible. It is important to establish the exact location, condition and depth below the current surface for two reasons. The first is to avoid destroying the road, and the second is to inform decisions about the restoration, conservation and preservation of the road. In order to ensure that the road is not damaged in the process, the heritage consultant approached Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to undertake the test excavations.

It was ARM's task to establish: the condition of the road, locate the edge, establish whether the curb /edging stones were still intact and find the depth below the current surface of Old Kliptown Road. An excavation strategy was agreed on at an on-site meeting between Mr Prins (Heritage Consultant), Ms Schoeman (Archaeologist), Ms Makwe (Project Architect) and Mr McLoughlan (Contractor) on 25 April 2005. The meeting agreed on test excavations in three areas, spaced along the length of the road.

EXCAVATIONS

On 28 April 2005 an ARM team [Ms Schoeman (Principle Investigator), Ms Namono, Dr Cain and Ms Mokokwe (Field Directors)] conducted excavations (SAHRA Permit number 80/05/03/014/51) inside the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication (Figure 1). Three areas were excavated: Area I was located near the junction with Union Road; Area II was approximately in the middle of the square and Area III was adjacent to the monument.



Figure1. The location of the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication, indicated on the 1:50 000 map 2627BD Lenasia.

Area I

The Area I excavation cleared an area between the pre-cast cement curbs, where Old Kliptown road intersects with Union Road. The area was approximately 11.70m wide, whereas the excavation area was 6.60m wide. The curb was aligned 34° East of North. Little soil covered this area, as water had eroded the topsoil. Rubble and rubbish, however, had accumulated on the eastern side of the road (Figure 2). The excavation team in this area was lead by Ms Namono.



Figure 2. Photograph of Area I before excavation started, showing the rubble and rubbish, that had accumulated on the eastern side of the road.

Excavations revealed that most of the area was covered by tar (Figure 3). The road, however, has been damaged. A trench cut through the road from east to west. This trench existed when construction started and the contractors subsequently used it when laying a power cable (Figure 3:A). There are also potholes (Figure 3:B).



Figure 3. Photograph of Area I at the completion of excavation showing that potholes (A) and a trench (B) had disturbed the tarmac and substrate. Edge stones also protrude through the tar (C).

The current tar and cement curbstones are probably more recent additions to the junction. Towards the eastern side of the road the original edging stones seem to protrude through the tar surface. The most southerly stones are 98cm from the curb (Figure 4), whereas the most northerly is 1.66m away (Figures 3:C and 5).

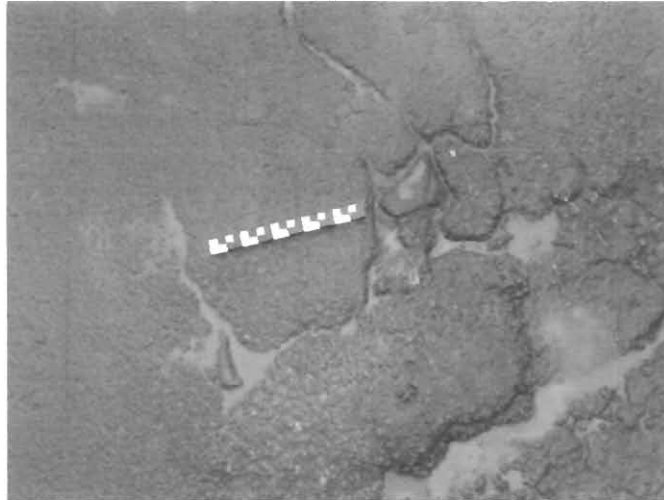


Figure 4. Southern edge stone visible through eroded tar.

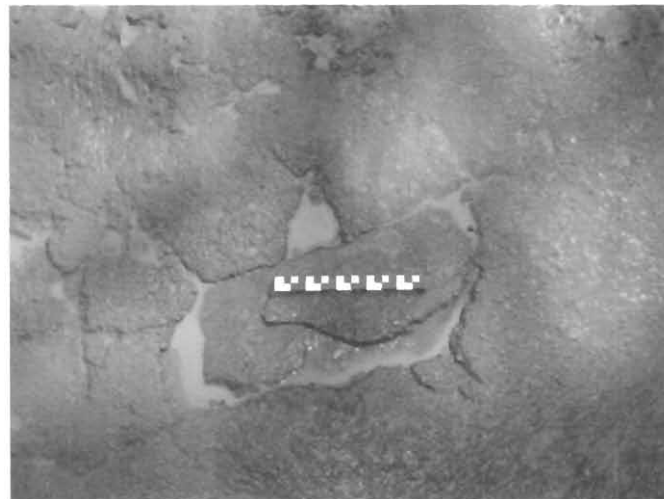


Figure 5. Northern edge stone visible through eroded tar.

Area II

Area II was dug approximately midway between the two parallel buildings, currently under construction. The trench was approximately 14.5m from the southern edge of the memorial. The Area II team was lead by Dr Cain.



Figure 6. Photograph showing Area II prior to excavation.

Initially a one meter wide test trench was excavated into Area II. It was aligned roughly parallel to the buildings under construction. This trench exposed both road edges and was approximately 8.5m long. On completion of the initial test trench two 2.5m wide areas were cleared on both sides of it (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Photograph of Area II at the completion of the excavation.

On the western edge the excavations exposed a concrete surface stretching towards the demolished building area. Moving east a tarred surface was found 0 to 5 cm below the current surface. A tarred curb slopes down for about 40cm after which the road flattens out. The preservation of the road varied. In some areas the tar was intact, in others the crusher stones were exposed (Figure 8) and backhoe marks scar the surface (Figure 9). The crusher stones were 3 - 8cm in diameter.

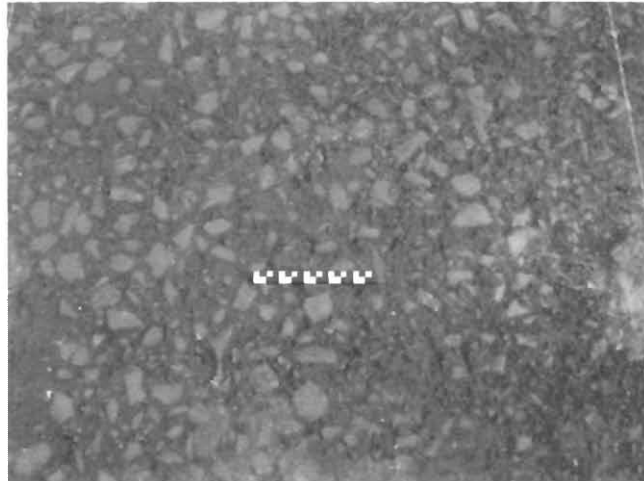


Figure 8. Photograph of the crusher stone where the tarmac has eroded.

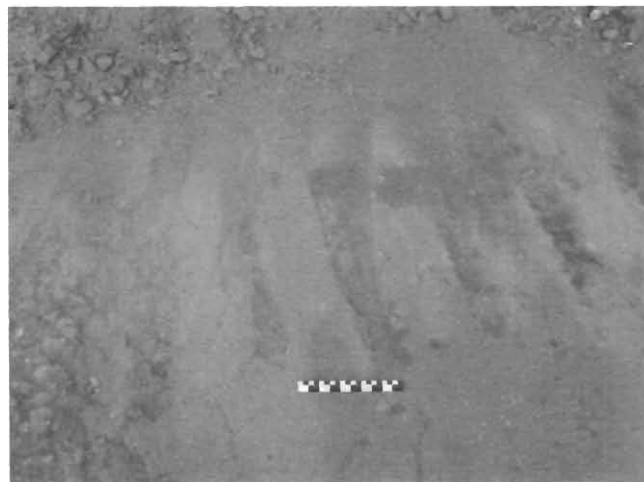


Figure 9. Photograph showing the backhoe disturbance of the surface in Area II.

The eastern edge of the road was marked with edging stones (Figure 10), 10 - 25cm in length (Figure 11). The edging stones were aligned 25° East of North. From the edging stones there is a small drop to a gravel level, which spread to 1.5m from the edge. The gravel was mixed with cultural debris (glass bottle fragments, drink tops, brass clothing fasteners, bone, and plastic fragments). Under the gravel was a more consolidated layer of gravel, soil and stones. This was not excavated.



Figure 10. Photograph showing the line of edging stones marking the eastern edge of the road in Area II in the foreground.

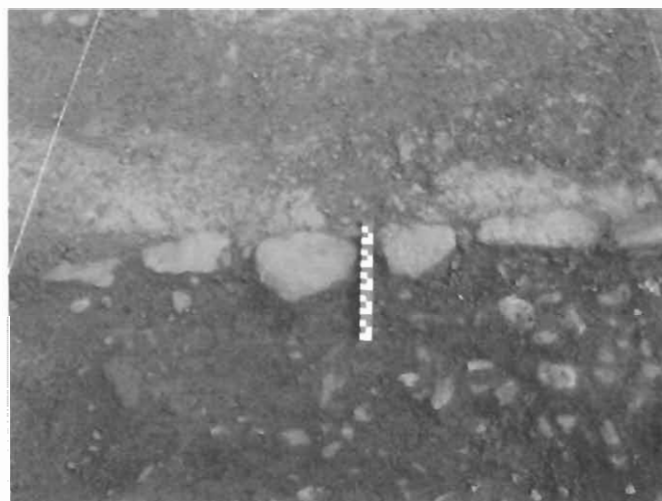


Figure 11. Photograph showing the edging stones, as well as their junctions with the tar and outside gravel.

Area III

Area III cut into the section exposed during the excavation for the construction of the memorial (Figure 12). The team was lead by Ms Mokokwe.



Figure 12. Photograph of the Area III section prior to excavation. The tar level is visible immediately below the scale.

The trench measured 1 x 7m and spanned the whole width of the road (Figure 13). It was aligned east-west. The trench exposed the original road surface. This surface was between 8 – 20cm below the current surface level.



Figure 13. Photograph showing Trench III, which spanned the whole width of the road. The eastern edging stones are in the foreground.

The Area III trench revealed a similar layout to the Area II excavation. At the western edge of the trench a forty centimeters wide area was covered with concrete and sand. Adjacent to it was a thirty centimeter wide raised cement area, probably part of a pavement. The cement sloped down to meet the tar road (Figure 14).



Figure 14. Photograph of the western raised curb.

The road was 5.9m wide. The tar was mostly intact on the western half of the road, however the crusher stones were exposed on the eastern half. The edge of the road was marked with edging stones, which ranged in size from 10 –25cm in length (Figure 15). A mixture of rubble and cobbles was found from the curb to the end of the trench.



Figure 15. Photograph of the eastern edge of the road, which is marked with edging stones.

Memorial Section

The section inside the memorial was photographed and the stratigraphy recorded. The surface soil on top of the tar was approximately 35cm deep (Figure 16:A). The tar level (Figure 16:B) was followed by a substrate of crusher stone (Figure 16:C), which was lying on pink compact earth (Figure 16:D). The pink compact soil rested on sandy natural ground (Figure 16:E). The compact earth and crusher stone, related to preparing the area for road construction, as they are not present in sections outside the road area.

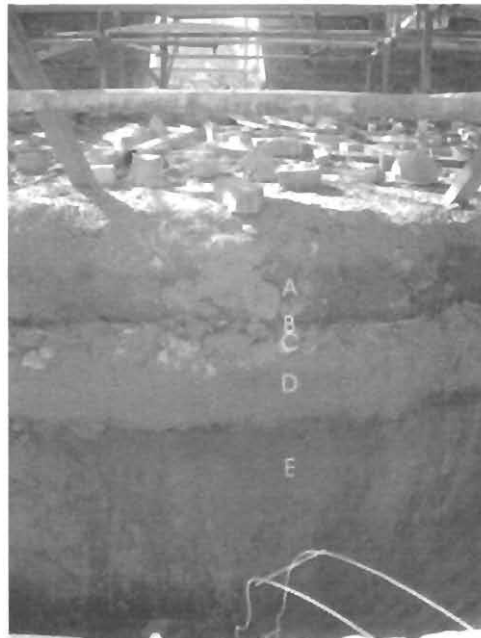


Figure 16. Photograph showing the stratigraphy of the column inside the memorial. The layers are: topsoil (A), tarmac (B), crusher stone (C), compact earth (D) and natural ground (E).

Discussion

The excavations revealed that the road structure is in a relatively good condition, except at the junction with Union road, where potholes and a trench have damaged the substrate. The sections on the northern side of Trench III and inside the memorial showed that the road was well prepared, and that tar was not just placed on unprepared soil. The road preparation layer, which consists of 30-40cm of compact earth and crusher stone, is still intact. The surfacing, however, is not intact and tarmac has been eroded in large areas and the crusher stone has become visible.

We also located the edges of the road and establish that the curb /edging stones were still in tact on the eastern side. The western edge seems to have been treated differently with a raised edge sloping up towards the pavement. The different edge treatments might be related to location of buildings on the western side.

The road is at various depths below the current surface. The over burden is deeper on the northern side adjacent to the memorial, whereas it has been washed away on the southern end.

The excavations found that the current road was constructed in stages. After the initial construction, the western edge was raised and re-tarred. Subsequently a concrete layer was added. It is impossible to establish the time-lapse between these stages with the current information available.

CONCLUSIONS

The simple mitigation measures were sufficient to recover useful data. We established the road alignment, edges, depth below surface and condition of the road. It seems that extensive preparation of the road substrate will not be necessary as the original is still in tact and that little road repairs would be needed, except at the junction with Union road. The road surface, however, does need to be stabilised as the original tarmac has been eroded.

We recommend that such treatment take into account to the edging stones on the eastern side, which seems to be a unique feature of the road.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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