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**FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HERITAGE ASSESSMENT  
OF THE HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS AT MELKSTROOM 563,  
UPINGTON, NORTHERN CAPE**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

A new low cost housing development consisting of about 167 stands is proposed for Portion 5 of Melkstroom 563 near Upington, in the Gordonia district, Northern Cape Province.

Archaeological material occurred in the form of a small scatter of worked stone flakes and core flakes concentrated in specific areas away from the river. The finds were made from lithic sources of chert and agate. No actual tools occurred and the flakes can only be identified as Later Stone Age. The flakes appear as a general occurrence over a small part of the area and are considered as of minor significance.

No other cultural or historical remains were found in the proposed area of development.

A cluster of about twenty-five human graves was found between the eastern border fence and the water pipeline. Most of the graves are overgrown and seem to be very old.

Caution is needed to avoid damage to the graves or any other human skeletal remains that could be found.

I recommend that the planning and development of the site may proceed, provided that the graves should be properly fenced and protected.

Mitigation measures will be needed in case of the human graves.

## INTRODUCTION & DESCRIPTION

### Scope and Limitations

The investigation provided an opportunity to examine the site proposed for housing developments. The area contains a short grass cover with scatters of shrubs and bushes on a surface. The soil changes from red sandy soil to calcrete scatters and alluvial sand near the river. No limitations were experienced during site visit.

### Methodology

Standard archaeological survey and recording methods were applied.

1. The site was inspected on foot.
2. GPS points were taken and the surroundings and features were recorded on camera.

## INVESTIGATION

The housing developments are proposed by the //Khara Hais Municipality for Portion 5 of the farm Melkstroom 563 outside Upington, in the Gordonias district, Northern Cape Province. The property measures 33ha, the development footprint will cover about 12ha, to include 167 residential and institutional erven as well as a stand for the existing graves. Service infrastructure and streets are included in the proposal. Alternative layout plans and the extent of the development formed part of the planning phase.

The site was visited on 5 July 2011. Dr Johan du Preez and Marguerite Cronjé from MDA Environmental Consultants, Bloemfontein, accompanied me and Mr Vivien McPherson from Stabilis Developments, Upington, took us to the site.

Not much is known about the history of the piece of land. The area along the river shows damage by farming activities and a water pipeline installation (Figs.2&3). A wide floodwater irrigation channel cuts through the land (Figs.4-6). Higher up and towards the N14 main road the surface is relatively untouched, but stony and bare (Fig.17). The area has a sterile red sandy soil cover (Fig.12) with calcrete outcrops here and there (Fig.17). The surface has a sparse grass covered with scatters of shrubs (Fig.16) and a few Kameeldoring Trees (*Acacia erioloba*) (Fig.7) and Mesquite bushes (*Prosopis species*) (Fig.18).

Rocky outcrops indicate that the top soil is very shallow with the result that the place has become a piece of wasteland. Farmers allowed some of their labourers to settle here over the years and others took advantage of the opportunity to build informal shelters and fences down near the river (Fig.7) and more recently, along the road near the entranceway (Fig.11). There is also a corrugated iron shed, referred to as “the Church” by the local people. The present development appears to be an endeavour by the Municipality to formalise the settlement.

The area was examined for possible archaeological and historical material and to establish the potential impact on any cultural material that might be found. The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is done in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), (25 of 1999) and under the Environmental Conservation Act, (73 of 1989).

The study aims to locate and evaluate the significance of cultural heritage sites, archaeological material, manmade structures older than 60 years, and sites associated with oral histories and graves that might be affected by the proposed developments.

## LOCALITY

The farm Melkstroom 563 is situated about 9km east of Upington along the N14 main road to Olifantshoek (Map 1&2).

The following GPS coordinates (Cape scale) were taken (Map 3) (2821).

<b>C</b>	28°25'16"S. 021°19'49"E Altitude 792m (Fig.1).
<b>V</b>	28°25'13"S. 021°19'49"E Altitude 791m (Figs.2&3).
<b>CK</b>	28°25'13"S. 021°19'49"E Altitude 787m (Figs.4&5).
<b>F</b>	28°25'23"S. 021°19'35"E Altitude 788m (Figs.6&7).
<b>Z</b>	28°25'04"S. 021°19'47"E Altitude 802m.
<b>A</b>	28°24'49"S. 021°19'39"E Altitude 813m (Figs.10&12).
<b>B</b>	28°24'41"S. 021°19'47"E Altitude 814m (Figs.13&14).
<b>Y</b>	28°24'35"S. 021°19'55"E Altitude 812m (Figs.15&16).
<b>G</b>	28°25'01"S. 021°19'50"E Altitude 815m (Figs.18-23).

## **RESULTS**

### **FINDS**

The soil surface has severely been damaged by agricultural activities (Figs.2&3) and informal housings has taken over a substantial part of the land (Figs.11&12).

Archaeological material occurs in the form of small scatters of worked stone flakes, concentrated in a specific area near Point Z (Figs.8&9). The artefacts were made from lithic sources of chert and agate, which had been imported from the riverbed. No actual tools occurred and the flakes can only be identified as Later Stone Age material.

A cluster of about twenty-five human graves (Figs.18-23) was found between the eastern border fence and the pipeline (Map 2). Most of the graves are grass-covered and unmarked and seem to be very old (Fig.22). Others are clearly from times that are more recent (Figs.19&20).

### **IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The stone flakes described above appear as a general occurrence over most of the area near the road. These finds are considered of minor significance.

The new housing developments will have no major impact on the archaeological or cultural remains at the site.

The cluster of graves should be avoided during the layout of the township. There is always the possibility that more graves may be found during excavations and building process. In this case, caution is needed to avoid damage to any human skeletal remains that could be found.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are no obvious reasons to delay further planning of the developments at the specific site.

I recommend that the planning of the proposed developments may proceed.

### **MITIGATION**

Mitigation measures will only be required in case of the grave cluster and the discovery of more human skeletal remains.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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