

**Archaeological investigations, done at Bakkiesfontein 568
IR, (Dipaliseng Local Municipality) Greylingstad
Mpumalanga**

Done by

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Summary

It can be argued that the African concentration camp was situated on the farm Bakkiesfontein 568 IR, Greylingstad, Mpumalanga, South Africa, due to the artefacts and graves found during the previous visits to the farm. Benneyworth also states that the African concentration camp was situated on Bakkiesfontein 568 IR, as he discovered another burial site belonging to the camp. These graves were very similar to the previous ones found during the earlier archaeological investigation, yet there are also many differences between them. This discovery between the graves indicate that at a certain time in history the British decided to move the old camp to a new location on the same farm. One reason for this move could have been due to the fact that the camp was overcrowded with internees. The findings also revealed that the stone walls were built by an Iron Age community. However, during the South African War, these stone walls could also have been used by the British as a fort and African internees as make-shift shelters. By, erecting a monument at Bakkiesfontein 568 IR, more people will want to protect their heritage. To protect the graves from damage, the owners can also fence the graves with strong barbed-wires.

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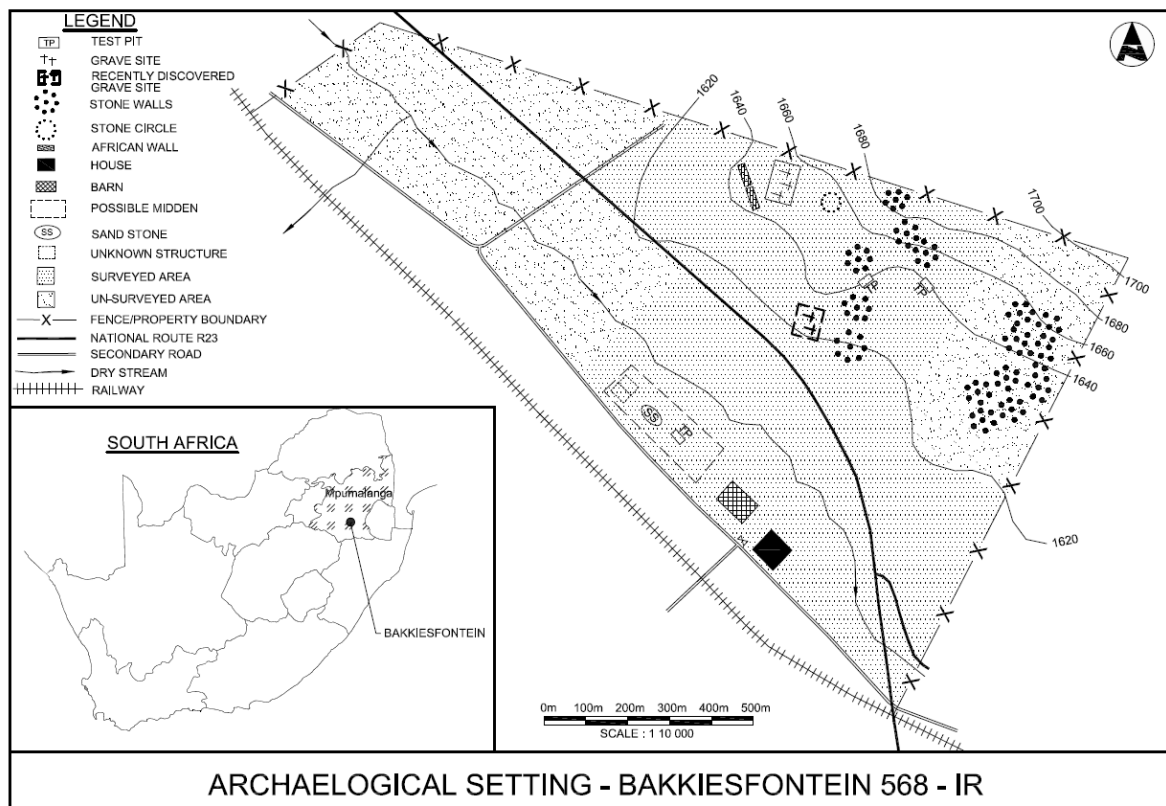
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Report on current status of research done at Bakkiesfontein 568 IR and visit

1. Introduction

The following report only shows the current status of the research done on Bakkiesfontein 568 IR, in Greylingstad, Mpumalanga, South Africa.¹ There were a few arguments over where the exact location of the African concentration camp, in Greylingstad, was situated. However, previous historical and archaeological research done on Bakkiesfontein 568 IR, has led the researcher to believe that the African concentration camp was situated on this farm. To also prove that this was the case, the researcher asked G Benneyworth, a lecturer at Sol Plaatjie University, in Kimberley, to visit Bakkiesfontein 56 IR. The visit took place on 29 April 2016. There was no archaeological fieldwork done during this visit, as it was only a visit. As a result of this, no new artefacts were discovered. However, new features were found by Benneyworth during the visit, namely, more graves. New information was also found, since the last report, namely, the possible builders of the stone walls.

Figure 1: Archaeological site map of Bakkiesfontein 568 IR, with new graves included



¹ A full report will be provided in the next field report.

2. New features and information

2.1. *The stone walls*

There are a few arguments on whether the stone walls, found during the second pedestrian survey conducted in October 2015, were built by the British as blockhouses or African internees from the concentration camp as makeshift-shelters (See Figure 1). According to Benneyworth (2016a), this was not the case since the British and Africans were not responsible for building the stone walls, as they predate the South African War. This means that they were most likely built during the Iron Age (BCE 200-1840). Both Marker and Evers (1976: 160) agree that the Iron Age is represented by stone wall settlements. It could be speculated that the circular shape stone walls date back to the late 18th or early 19th century (Huffman 2007: xi) (See Figure 2). The rectangular shape stone walls also date back to the Iron Age. However, they were most likely influenced by European civilisation (Maggs 1967: 24) (See Figure 3)

Figure 2: Circular stone wall situated on the hill at Bakkiesfontein 568 IR



Figure 3: Rectangular stone wall situated at the hill at Bakkiesfontein 568 IR



The stone walls could have been built by the Tswana, during the Iron Age, but what specific cluster is uncertain (Louw 1991: 12).² According to Huffman (2002: 7), the Tswana were sub-divided into four clusters, namely, Hurutshe, Kgatla, Rolong and Fokeng. Of these clusters it was most likely the following groups that were responsible for building the stone walls, as they lived in towns close to Greylingstad, such as, Standerton, Heidelberg and Johannesburg. These groups include: the Fokeng, Hurutshe, Kwena, Makhlokoe.

The Fokeng and Kwena migrated north of the Vaal to the Heidelberg district, known to them as *Tebang* (Breutz 1956: 168; Ellenberger 1912: 20; Maggs 1976: 309; Leggassick 1972: 102).³ Makhlokoe, on the other hand, settled in Standerton, in Mpumalanga, on a mountain known as *Thaba Kholokhoe* (Ellenberger 1912: 37). Lastly, the Hurutshe also occupied Heidelberg and Johannesburg, due to a drought (Smit 1958: 9). These towns were not far from Greylingstad. According to Raper (1987: 131), Johannesburg is situated 100km south-

² The Tswana's were one of the Sotho-Tswana clusters also known, as the Western Sotho. The other groups include the northern Sotho and Southern Sotho (Breutz 1965: 167).

³ African concentration camps in the Heidelberg district included Heidelberg, Nigel, Klippoortjie and Greylingstad (Pretorius 2007: 286, Pretorius & Pretorius 2011: 49).

east of Greylingstad, Heidelberg is situated 58km north-west of Greylingstad and Standerton is situated and 50km south-east of Greylingstad.

However, Benneyworth (2016a) notes that the African internees could have used the stone walls for shelter. African concentration camps had to be self-sufficient (Pretorius 2009: 103). As a result of this, Africans were expected to build their own shelter (Kessler 2012: 113, Weiss 2011: 27). Benneyworth (2016a) also notes that African internees could have used the stones from the walls for their graves and headstones. Hence, the reason why the stone walls below the hill are more preserved than the ones below it and the stone circle.

The British could also have reused the stone walls as blockhouses. The British may have preferred Greylingstad due to the fact that there were already people who lived in the area, as mentioned above (Van Vollenhoven 2014: 6). According to Benneyworth (2016a), the railway near Bakkiesfontein 568 IR would have been surrounded by three blockhouses, a mile apart from each other. These blockhouses were probably, Rice blockhouses.⁴ The reasons the British preferred to build Rice blockhouses were because they were easy to build and small in size (Gallow 2009: 9; Westby-Nunn 1988: 340). Unfortunately, many were destroyed to make way for expanding the city (Greyling 2000: 91).

2.2. *The newly discovered graves*

The new graves were discovered by accident during the visit at Bakkiesfontein 568 IR in 2016 (See Figure 1). These graves are different from the older ones, mentioned in the first report.⁵ Firstly, the newly discovered graves were more militaristic, meaning they were buried in a row compared with the previous ones that was scattered everywhere (Benneyworth 2016a) (See Figure 4). Secondly, the new graves were situated near the area where the farmworkers lived. This can explain why one of the graves was restored with a new modern gravestone and burial (See Figure 5). This indicates that the farmworkers connect themselves with the new graves. Thirdly, it is estimated that there were 228 graves, but there could be more. However, there are also some similarities. Firstly, as with the previous burials, these ones were also large, some even have two gravestones, indicating that there could be more than one person buried a grave (Westhuizen & Van der Westhuizen 2013: 172) (See Figure 6

⁴ The Rice blockhouses were named after S.R. Rice (Greyling 2000: 91).

⁵ The first graves were discovered on March 1999 on Bakkiesfontein 568 IR by B H Van Shalkwyk, former headmaster of Laerskool Greylingstad, and Gert and Erika van der Westhuizen (Marx 1999: 4).

& Figure 7). Benneyworth (2016b) also noted that this was possible. Secondly, these graves were also African internees from the African concentration camp in Greylingstad (Sapa 1999: 14). This is because many of the graves were stones placed on top of each other. Thirdly, the dates on some of the gravestones are 1901, the year when the camps first opened (Louw 1991: 54) (See Figure 7). This means that the new graves are far older than the previous ones, which dates back to 1902, the year when the war ended (Marx 1999: 4; Sapa 1999: 14; Van der Westhuizen & Van der Westhuizen 2013: 171). Benneyworth (2016a) provides a reason for this when he notes that at a certain time during the South African War, the British must have decided to relocate the African camp to the other side of Bakkiesfontein 568 IR. The reason why they moved the African concentration camp was due to the fact that during 1902, improvements were made in these camps. The first improvement was to split larger African camps smaller ones (Marais 1999: 231; Nasson 2013: 184). This move could also be due to the fact that the camp was becoming overcrowded with internees, which resulted in diseases spreading like wild fires (Pretorius 2009: 103; Scott 2007: 89).

Figure 4: Newly discovered graves buried in a row



Photograph courtesy of Benneyworth

Figure 5: The newly restored grave below the hill and farm workers



Figure 6: A newly discovered grave with two gravestones with initials and crosses



Figure 7: Another newly discovered grave with two gravestones with initials and date 1901



Photograph courtesy of Benneyworth

3. Recommendation

There are only two recommendations. Firstly, a monument should be erected on Bakkiesfontein 568 IR to commemorate all the African internees, who died in the camp. A monument on the farm could be advantageous as it will make more people aware of this camp and African experiences of the South African War and concentration camps. The monument could also prevent people from driving past the graves without knowing it. Secondly, is to protect the graves by fencing it with strong barbed-wires as these graves are older than 60 years.

4. Conclusion

Due to the reasons mentioned above it can be argued that the African concentration camp was definitely located at Bakkiesfontein 568 IR. However, with more archaeological and historical research it may lead to new information on the African concentration camp. Benneyworth (2016a) also notes that Bakkiesfontein 568 IR was a good place for a concentration camp due to the graves located on the farm and blockhouses near the railway station.

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