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FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HERITAGE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED 5HA ASPHALT PLANT AT PORTION 5, RIETFONTEIN 107, BLOEMSPRUIT, BLOEMFONTEIN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nare Sereto Environmental & Business Services, Bloemfontein, on behalf of Supa Asphalt from Bloemfontein, is planning extensions to the existing asphalt plant at Portion 5, Rietfontein 107, Bloemspruit. The proposed developments will cover about 5ha.

Although several heritage impact assessments had been done in this region in the past, little is known about the archaeology between the old Meadows Road and the R702/N8 route to Dewetsdorp, east of Bloemfontein.

Anglo-Boer War activities occurred at Boesmanskop, Springhaansnek, the pump station and waterworks on the Modder River and several koppies along the N8 road to Thaba Nchu and Ladybrand. A number of existing quarry pits, which have extensively been worked over time, is located on dolerite outcrops in the specific area. Fired British ,303-inch calibre rifle cartridge cases dating from the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) were found at these excavations near the road.

The present site is clearly part of old plough lands and no graves, archaeological, cultural or any other historical remains were found.

The new developments will have no impact on the cultural heritage and historical environment of the area.

I recommend that the proposed developments may proceed. Further planning of the proposed project may continue, and no mitigation measures will be needed.

INTRODUCTION & DESCRIPTION

Nare Sereto Environmental & Business Services, Bloemfontein, on behalf of Supa Asphalt from Bloemfontein, is planning new developments on Portion 5 of the farm Rietfontein 107, Bloemspruit, Bloemfontein.

The survey is based on a site visit, concentrating on the occurrence of archaeological, historical and other cultural material.

Scope and Limitations

The investigation provided the opportunity to examine the site along the old Meadows Road, west of Bloemfontein. The study area is characterised by a bare and disturbed piece of soil on old plough lands. A storm water ditch runs along the western border of the property from north to south down the slope.

No limitations were experienced during the site visit.

The investigation provided the opportunity to:

- Examine the total piece of land of about 5ha proposed for the developments.
- Document and plot all features of archaeological, historical and heritage value.
- Evaluate any potential impact on heritage resources caused by construction, operational and maintenance activities.
- Recommend mitigation measures preventing damage to areas of heritage importance.

Methodology

1. Standard archaeological survey and recording methods applied.
2. Survey of literature & previous HIA reports.
3. Site inspection on foot.
4. Layout of the land and features plotted by GPS.
5. Surroundings and features recorded on camera.
6. Preparation of maps & literature.
7. Research on the history, archaeology & heritage remains.
8. Prepare maps with coordinates transferred to Google Earth.

Previous experience include various heritage impact investigations (HIA) on residential developments at Maselspoort (Dreyer 2004), Grasslands (Dreyer 2004), Bloemspruit (Dreyer 2005), Bergkraal (Dreyer 2006, 2007), the Eastern Ring Road (2008), Bloemfontein Turf Club (Dreyer 2008), Douglas Valley (Dreyer

2008), Bloemfontein Air Port (Dreyer 2008), Estoire (Dreyer 2009), Shannon Valley (2010), Sunnyside near the Bloemfontein Air Port (2013) Bloemfontein Bulk Sewer Plant (Dreyer 2010), Sterkwater Sewer Plant (2010), the Grootvlei maximum security prison (Dreyer 2006) and the bypass water pipeline from Welbedacht Dam to Bloemfontein (Dreyer 2014).

The criteria used in the identification of features, are based on the mere presence of archaeological and/or cultural material. In the present case, it was expected that significant finds of Anglo-Boer War and other historical material would occur.

INVESTIGATION

The Supa Asphalt Plant Centre will include a variety of activities (See Map 5).

Rhoda Isaacs from Nare Sereto Consulting, Bloemfontein, gave directions to the site. The site visit took place on 29 April 2015. The layout of the land was plotted by GPS and photographs were taken to record the environment. The site 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 National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act. 108 of 1998).

The study aims to locate and evaluate the significance of cultural and heritage sites, archaeological material, manmade structures older than 60 years, and sites associated with oral histories and graves that could be affected by the proposed developments. Planted and self-sown trees and other types of vegetation determine a major part of the historical landscape of human settlement in villages and towns, on farmyards or even deserted places in the open veld, show evidence of human activity that should be recognised and taken into consideration during any cultural or historical investigation.

Anglo-Boer War (1900-1902) camping and skirmish sites occur in the Free State, where distinctive food cans and specific types and calibres of fired cartridge cases normally identify these places. Conflict sites between early White farmers and the traditional Black tribes in the region of Thaba Nchu should likewise be noted. From previous archaeological and heritage assessments at Thaba Nchu Mountain, we are aware that Anglo-Boer War material occurs on ash heaps at strategic places (cf. Dreyer 2006, Adelaide Farm, Thaba Nchu).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The archaeological environment of the Free State Province is rich and diverse, representing a long time span during the human past. Certain Later Iron Age sites elsewhere on the southern high veld have produced important archaeological information (Maggs 1976, Mason 1962, 1986, Evers 1988). These Iron Age sites date between 1660 AD and 1810 AD. The Later Iron Age phase brought people who cultivated crops, kept livestock, produced an abundance of pottery in a variety of shapes and sizes and smelted metals. Extensive stone walled enclosures characterise their permanent settlements. These living places are known from the Batlokwa settlements at Nkwe near Verkykerskop north of Harrismith, the prominent Sotho/Tswana settlements in the Vredefort Dome, Doringberg (Maphororong) near Ventersburg, Viervoet (Tihela) at Clocolan, Biddulphsberg (Kurutlele) at Senekal and Marabeng near Ficksburg. A number of Taaibos Korana and other Griqua groups, remnants of the Later Stone Age peoples, managed to survive the assimilation by Sotho/Tswana tribes in the region.

Dramatic climate changes during the early 19th century resulted in a rapid population growth along the east coast of South Africa. Increased pressure on natural resources, together with the control of trade caused the emergence of dominant leaders in the area. Subsequent power struggles resulted in a period of instability in the central parts of Southern Africa. This period of strife or wars of devastation, known as “difaqane” (Sotho/Tswana) or “Mfecane” (Nguni), affected many of the Black tribes in the interior. Attacks from east of the escarpment initiated by the AmaZulu impis of Chaka in about 1822, were sustained by the AmaNdebele of Mzilikazi and the AmaNgwane of Matiwane into the Free State, thus uprooting among others, the Batlokwa of Sekonyela and Mantatise and various smaller Sotho/Tswana tribes. On their turn, the Batlokwa drove off the Bafokeng of Sebetoane from Kurutlele (Biddulphsberg) near Senekal, who, in their effort to escape the pursuit by Mzilikazi’s AmaNdebele forces, eventually landed up in the Caprivi (Smith 1956, Dreyer & Kilby 2003). This period of unrest directly affected the peoples of the Free State, Northern Cape, Northwest Province and the southern parts of the land across the Vaal River, resulting in the displacement of scores of tribesmen, women and children. The stronger tribal groups, such as the AmaNdebele of Mzilikazi, assimilated many of these refugees.

Early European missionaries and travellers ventured into the interior of the country during the 19th century (Dreyer 2001). The Rev James Archbell established the missionary at Thaba Nchu by 1834, while several of the marauding hordes affected the lives of the Batswana people living at Dithakong near the mission station of Robert and Mary Moffat near Kuruman.

Ancient Batswana tribes take their 18th and 19th century roots back to the Setlagole area and in the Delareyville, Schweizer Reneke and Mafikeng districts of the North West Province (Bergh & Bergh 1984).

Despite the placing of Thaba Nchu within this potentially rich cultural region, Maggs' (1976) archaeological survey is limited to the north of the 30°S line, excluding the Bloemfontein, Thaba Nchu and Ladybrand areas. Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA) near Thaba Nchu (2005) and Thaba Nchu Mountain (Dreyer 2006) produced a variety of material of cultural and historical significance. In the immediate surroundings of Thaba Nchu, the research shows a lack of Later Iron Age sites (Dreyer 2005, 2008, 2009).

THE BAROLONG OF THABA NCHU

The Barolong is a particular group of Batswana people from the North West Province of South Africa. They live mainly at Mafikeng, Lotlhakane and in Thaba Nchu. The reason for this group of Batswana people at Thaba Nchu in the centre of a predominantly Basotho area lies in the troubled history of the Batswana during and after the turmoil of the Difaqane wars of the early 19th century. Different Tswana groups share the same origins and have strong cultural and linguistic similarities. Indications are that the Batswana peoples moved into their present territories by the 15th century. Extensive stone ruins on the southern Highveld dating from mid 17th to early 19th century are connected to these Sotho/Tswana migrants (Maggs 1976).

According to lore, Chief Morolong is accepted as the founder of the Barolong tribe. He was born near Zeerust on the Botswana border in about the 13th or 14th century. Sotho/Tswana lineages honour certain totems, for instance *tshipi* (iron) and *noto* (hammer), which imply that they were ironworkers and blacksmiths in bygone days (Ellenberger 1912).

Before 1760, the Rolong people formed a political unit under their great chief Tau. At his death, the tribe split into four main groups under the sons of Tau. Today the largest group is those of Ratshidi living at Mafikeng. People of Ratlou, based mainly south west of Mafikeng, are still considered as the senior group. The Rapulana live mostly south east of Mafikeng, while the Seleka or Moroka group is stationed at Thaba Nchu in the Free State.

Moroka II, chief of the Boo-Seleka (Thaba Nchu) section of the Barolong tribe, migrated here in 1833. The Wesleyan Missionary, Samuel Broadbent, first mentioned the Seleka Rolong in 1823. They lived at Thabeng under their Chief Sefunelo. Here they were dislodged by the Baphuting and moved to Makwassie, where the missionaries joined them. The following year the Bataung of Moletsane drove them out, and they joined the Tshidi and Ratlou sections of

Barolong at Phitshane. At some stage, they returned to Makwassie, but left again before Mzilikazi in 1827, to settle at Platberg-on-Vaal near Warrenton, where Moroka succeeded his father Sefunelo. On their turn, the Tshidi and Ratlou sections, fleeing from Mzilikazi's AmaNdebele hordes, joined Moroka at Platberg. The ensuing shortage of water and grazing, forced Moroka to reposition again and in May 1833, an exploration party, consisting of the missionaries and representatives of the different Rolong chiefs and of the Griqua and the Kora, investigated the area around the Modder, Caledon and Riet Rivers. Afterwards, Moshoeshe of the Basotho and Sekonyela of the Batlokwa allowed the Barolong to settle at Thaba Nchu, while the Coloured communities obtained permission to occupy the area further east at Thaba Patchoa, south east of Thaba Nchu and at the Platberg mission station (*Makudukameng*) in the Ladybrand district. The Seleka Rolong of Moroka settled at Thaba Nchu in December 1833. The Tshidi Rolong under Tawana and the Boo-Ratlou of Gontse accompanied the Seleka of Moroka to Thaba Nchu. Shortly after this, the Barapulana under Matlaba joined them, followed by the Griqua of Barend Barends, some Kora of Jan Kaptein and the "Newlanders" of Piet Baadjies, who settled to the east of Thaba Nchu.

The Ratshidi, Ratlou and Rapulana Rolong groups did not stay long at Thaba Nchu. Soon after Mzilikazi and his AmaNdebele was driven north by the Voortrekkers (early European migrants) in 1841, the Barolong started to move back to their old country north of the Vaal River. Later the Griqua moved away to Kokstad, while the "Newlanders" remained at Thaba Patchoa, where their descendants still live today. Disputes over succession had split the main Barolong tribe, but the different groups still recognised their relationship with each other and sought protection in times of trouble.

Moroka and the Barolong at Thaba Nchu accepted the Voortrekkers as their allies. The first Voortrekkers to stay here on their northward journeys were Louis Triegardt and Lang Hans van Rensburg. Thaba Nchu subsequently became a safe assembly place for other Voortrekker leaders such as Hendrik Potgieter, Piet Uys and Gerrit Maritz. After the Potgieter trek was attacked and plundered at Vegkop by the AmaNdebele of Mzilikazi, Moroka assisted them with draught oxen and a generous provision of supplies. The Boer party was also assisted in returning to a refugee camp at Thaba Nchu, named "Moroka's Hoek". The Boer leaders held a war council with the Barolong chiefs, Moroka and Tauana, where a Boer-Barolong-Griqua allegiance was formed to drive out Mzilikazi and his AmaNdebele (Stalz 1971, Cope 1977, Inskeep 1978, Lye & Murray 1980, Bishop 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, Murray 1992, Kinsman 1995).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

ANGLO-BOER WAR (1899-1902)

The incident at Sannaspos took place on 31 March 1900. The Anglo-Boer War saw five months into action and the battles of Magersfontein and Paardeberg were history. Bloemfontein was occupied on 13 March 1900, leaving the way open for Lord Roberts to prepare for the onslaught on Pretoria. The Boer forces were already war-weary after the fall of Bloemfontein and the burghers were allowed leave of commando duties until 25 March 1900.

Between 15 and 28 March 1900, nearly 40 000 British troops gathered around Bloemfontein, a situation which placed a further impact on the already overloaded infrastructure of the town. A young British officer with about 30 men was deployed to protect and guard the water pump station on the Modder River 34km east of Bloemfontein along the road to Thaba Nchu. At Boesmanskop, about 14km west of the pump station, a lookout post and heliograph station manned by a strong British force occupied the summit.

On 25 March 1900, Gen Christiaan de Wet led his newly assembled commando to Brandfort. As a first mission, he decided to attack and occupy the pump station on the Modder River to disrupt the water supply to Bloemfontein. On the evening of 28 March 1900, Gen De Wet left Brandfort and despite all the precautionary measures by the British military forces, De Wet and his men made straight for the waterworks on the Modder River. While riding by night and lying up by day, his scouts watched every movement of the British columns. On the evening of 30 March 1900, De Wet and his commando bivouacked some distance north of the waterworks. He ordered the burghers into positions north east and east of the Modder River, ready for an attack at dawn. By 04:00, De Wet crossed the Modder River with 400 men and occupied the drift in the natural ditch of the Koornspruit. The drift on the old wavy road at the base of the wide plain was out of sight from any of the lookout posts set up by the British forces.

THE BATTLE OF SANNASPOS

Waiting at the Koornspruit drift, Gen De Wet gave orders that gunfire should wait until he fired the first shot. This was not to be. At about 05:00, Maj. Gen H.E. Colville was preparing to move his troops from a camp near Bloemfontein towards Boesmanskop.

At about the same time, east of the waterworks, Gen Broadwood was planning his march to Bloemfontein. Suddenly the peace in camp was disturbed by exploding shells from Piet de Wet's guns at their artillery position at Likatlong. This and rapidly increasing fire from the east, forced Broadwood to advance to Klipkraal opposite the Koornspruit. Broadwood's baggage wagon train retained

some order and moved off with two gun batteries as their escort, with the main force following suit. Soon after 07:00, the baggage wagons reached Koornspruit where De Wet and his men were ready. As each wagon entered the drift, an armed Burgher jumped up next to the driver. Recognising the muzzle of the loaded Boer Mauzer rifle, the bewildered driver politely drove on as if nothing had happened. A congestion of wagons soon developed at the drift and soldiers sent forward to sort out the hold-up, were instantly “hands-upped” and disarmed. In this confusion, one British trooper was able to withdraw unnoticed and to raise the alarm. Broadwood reacted swiftly, but fearing that the Boers also took Boesmanskop, he ordered a general retreat to Bloemfontein.

By 11:00, De Wet and his force was rapidly evacuating the Koornspruit drift, taking with them booty of seven guns, 96 wagons with rations and ammunition and a column of about 480 prisoners (Breytenbach 1987, Loock 1996, Pakenham 1997, Wessels 2002).

SPRINGHAANSNEK

Springhaansnek is a pass about 20km south east of Thaba Nchu on the road to Ladybrand. In an effort to prevent Gen De Wet and his commando from breaking north, a line of British fortifications extended westwards from Thaba Patchoa to beyond Springhaansnek. On 14 December 1900, Commandant A.M. Prinsloo with the Bethlehem commando crossed the blockhouse line near Thaba Patchoa. In their attempt to pass through, heavy fire drove De Wet's advance guard back. The column had to redirect and in a clever manoeuvre, the commando, consisting of about 3000 burghers, raced through Springhaansnek, with the British forces too late to intervene (Jones & Jones 1999).

LOCALITY

The whole area to the south east of Bloemfontein (Maps 1&3) and west of Thaba Nchu appears to be part of a rapidly deteriorating zone. Border fences disappear and most of the farms are left unoccupied. Labourers manage the farms and tend to the livestock, while maintaining small vegetable gardens. Farmhouses and outbuildings show evidence of neglect and poor maintenance. At the farm Vadersgift on the way to Thaba Nchu for instance, the owners used to run a well-known and flourishing abattoir and butchery, from where they supplied fresh meat products of high quality to consumers in the Thaba Nchu, Bloemfontein and Ladybrand environs. This enterprise is no longer functioning and the buildings are deserted.

The Supa Asphalt site on Portion 5 of the farm Rietfontein 107 at Bloemspruit is located about 9km south of the Bloemfontein Air Port and about 6km south west of the Grootvlei Maximum Security Prison (Map 4).

The following GPS co-ordinates were taken (Cape scale) (2926AB) (Surveyor-General 1973): (Map 5).

- A** 29°11'17"S. 026°19'56"E. Altitude 1368m (Fig.1).
B 29°11'21"S. 026°20'00"E. Altitude 1379m (Fig.2).
C 29°11'23"S. 026°19'57"E. Altitude 1373m (Fig.3).
D 29°11'23"S. 026°19'53"E. Altitude 1369m (Fig.4).
E 29°11'20"S. 026°19'50"E. Altitude 1372m (Fig.5).

RESULTS

FINDS

The present site is clearly part of old plough lands, with no graves, archaeological, cultural or any other historical remains.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The potential impact by the new developments on the heritage resources of the site will be of no significance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that the proposed new developments may proceed. Further planning of the proposed care centre project may continue.

MITIGATION

No mitigation measures will be required.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr J.C. Loock (HC), geologist and Anglo-Boer War expert from Bloemfontein, commented on the geology and war history of the area.

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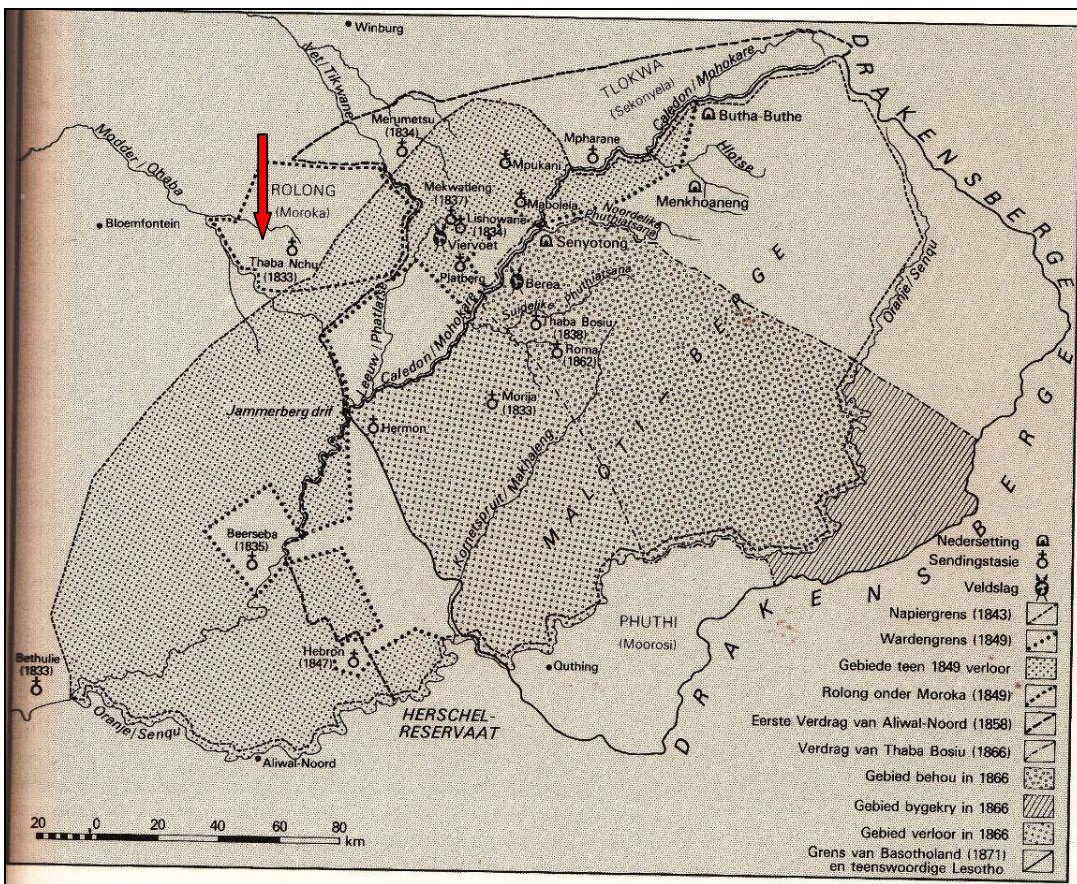
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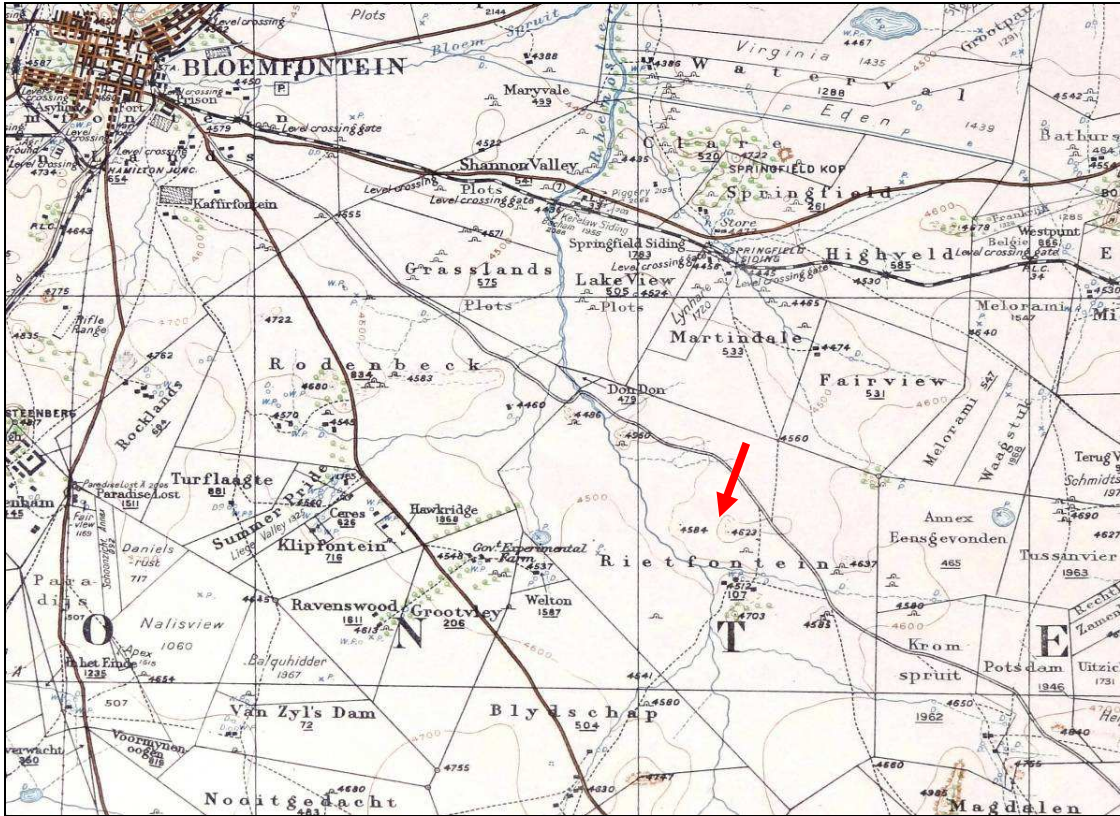
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS



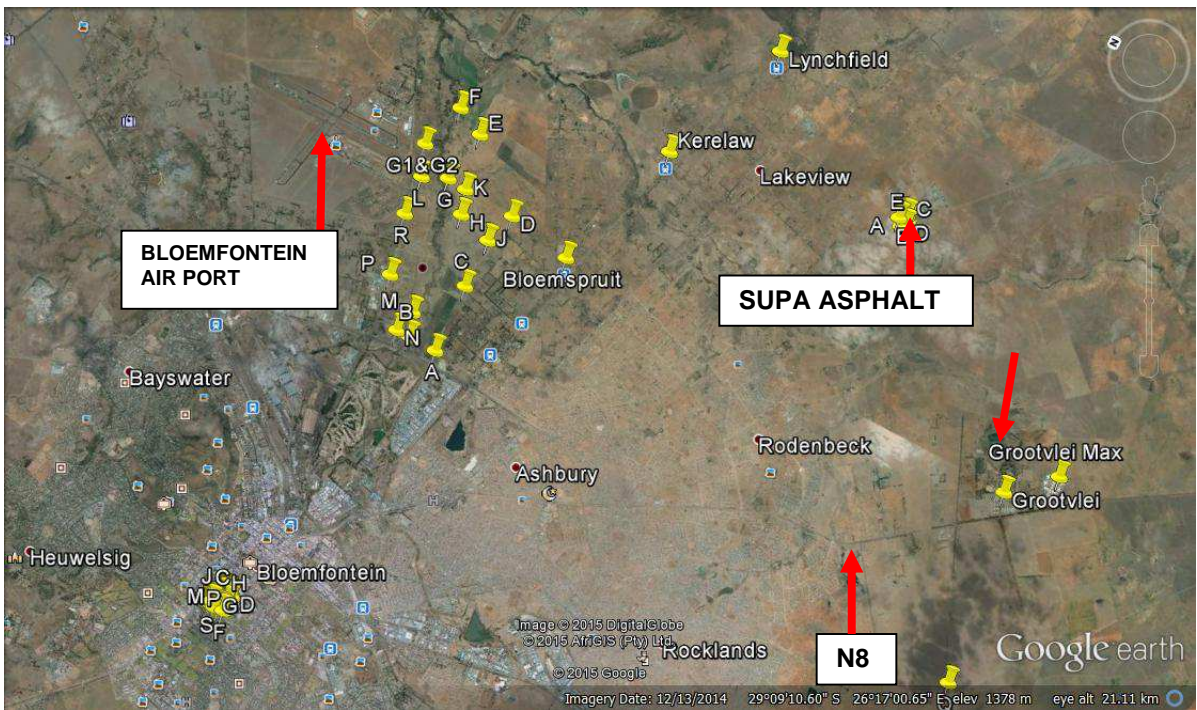
Map 1 Locality of Supa Asphalt along the Meadows Road.



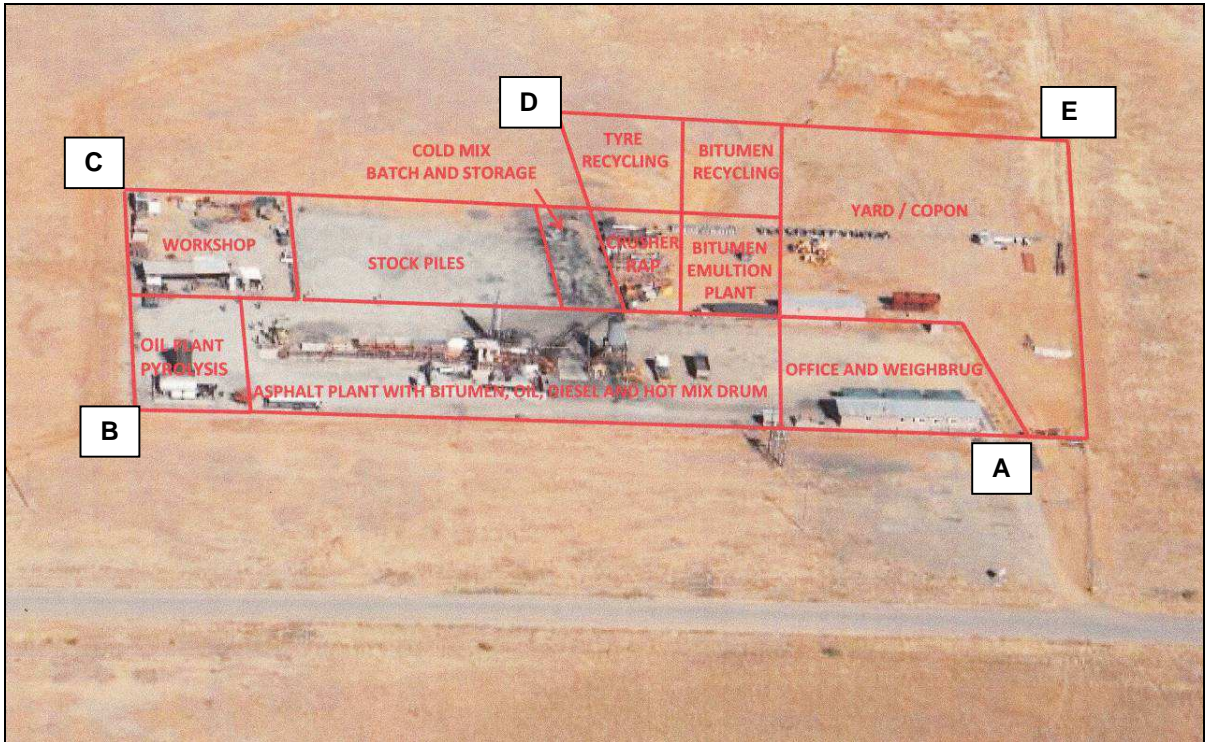
Map 2 Competition for land in the Eastern Free State between 1843 -1871.



Map 3 The farm Rietfontein 107 on Anglo-Boer War map.



Map 4 Locality of Supa Asphalt in relation to Bloemfontein Air Port and Grootvlei Prison (2926AB).



Map 5 Plan of the developments at Supa Asphalt. Coordinate points indicated.



Fig.1 Point A at the proposed Supa Asphalt site facing Point B.



Fig.2 Point B at the Supa Asphalt site facing Point C.



Fig.3 Point C at the Supa Asphalt site facing Point D.



Fig.4 Point D at the Supa Asphalt site facing Point E.



Fig.5 Point E at the Supa Asphalt site facing Point A.