

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SEEKOEIVLEI NATURE  
RESERVE, MEMEL**

A specialist study prepared for Ninham Shand Environmental Services

Professor T N Huffman

Archaeological Resources Management  
School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies  
University of the Witwatersrand  
Johannesburg

March 2002

# **ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SEEKOEIVLEI NATURE RESERVE, MEMEL**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Memel-Zamani Trust intends to establish tourist facilities at the Seekoeivlei Nature Reserve, 5 km north of Memel in the eastern Free State. The facilities will include cottages, restaurant and conference centre in an area near the wetlands, and a caravan park and information centre at the farmhouse.

To comply with the Environmental Conservation Act (No. 73 of 1989), the Trust appointed Ninham Shand to coordinate the Environmental Scoping Report. Ninham Shand in turn appointed Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to assess the two areas for sites of archaeological and historical significance.

## **METHOD**

One ARM staff visited the Reserve on 24 January 2002 as part of the environmental team coordinated by Ninham Shand. After a briefing in Memel, Reserve staff introduced the team to the project areas. Sites were first recorded with a GPS instrument, checked against an aerial photograph supplied by Ninham Shand and then transferred to the 1:50 000 map 2729DA Memel.

## **RESULTS**

Grass cover was high and ground visibility poor. It was nevertheless possible to assess the two areas.

### ***Chalet Complex***

Nothing was found in the proposed restaurant, conference centre and chalet area.

### ***Farm House Complex***

The existing farmhouse is fairly recent, but one of the outbuildings, converted into a garage, appears considerably older. Wall foundations behind the garage are also old, and there may be more early remains covered by thick grass. Some of the original orchard has also survived.

The visible remains probably date to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to reserve staff, the farm was originally owned by General Kroeg, a principal figure in the area during the Anglo Boer War.

Stone-walled stock enclosures associated with the farmhouse stand dotted along the ridge to the south. One (27 36 56.1S 29 35 44.3E) is funnel-shaped. All appear on the aerial photograph.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

There is no archaeological reason why development should not proceed in the chalet complex. Further investigation, however, is necessary in the farmhouse area. The extent of the older remains first need to be investigated. If possible, the caravan park should avoid all old buildings. If this is not possible, the remains should be mapped and some buildings excavated.

In any case the Reserve Trust should consider recording the original farmhouse complex. They could then display the results in the information centre. Historical research would establish the list of owners and their status in the local community. Even if the owners were not particularly important, the farmhouse complex is still worthy of further investigation.