

Archaeological Site Report	SiteNo	15/K/Spr/2
	Site Name	Van der Stel's Copper Mine, Carolusberg,
	Date	Namaqualand District
	Project	
	CaseNID	
	Coords	-29.646839, 17.945462
Page No: 1	SiteAutoID: 12	

Site Category: Place

Directions:

Turn-off on R64, just over 7km outside Springbok. Take Carolusberg turn-off and then the site is indicated by signboards from there.

SiteComments:

Archive Import History: Simon van der Stel's little copper mine is situated high up on the slope of the Copper Mountains, about 11 kilometres east of Springbok, on the road to Aggeneis and Pofadder. In 1681 a group of Namaquas brought pieces of copper ore to the Cape. The Company immediately took a great interest in discovering the 'copper mountains'. Exploratory expeditions under Ensign Oloff Bergh were sent out in 1682 and again in 1683, but without success. In 1685 Commissioner-General Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Drakenstein gave Simon van der Stel permission to lead an expedition himself in search of the Copper Mountains. The party left the Castle on 25th August, 1685, and succeeded in reaching the Copper Mountains on 21st October. Van der Stel's mining expert and miners prospected there for two weeks and, indeed, found and smelted copper ore. The return to the Cape commenced on 5th November. Nearly eighty years later, in the 'Journal kept on the journey through the Little and Great Namaquas under the command of Captain of the Burgher Cavalry Sr. Hendrik Hop', the keeper of the journal, C. F. Brink, recorded under the date 13th September, 1761: 'We passed the Kloof of the Copper Mountains and at the bottom of it we found the copper mountain which the Honourable Simon van der Stel had worked in 1685. . . we saw various holes dug in it, the deepest about the length of a man; to the right of the road the aforementioned date 1685 was carved out . . . Almost a century after Brink's entry in the journal, the Eastern Province Monthly Magazine of 1st August, 1857, published a report by Dr. Guybon Atherstone to the Grahamstown Prospecting Company on investigations he had undertaken in Namaqualand in 1854. It states, inter alia, 'On my return to Springbok, we rode over to examine Van der Stel's mine, 'Koperberg', interesting inscriptions had been discovered a short time before my visit, which I copied, proving the identity of the spot which has so many rival competitors for the honour, and the date of Van der Stel's visit in 1685'. Unfortunately Dr. Atherstone's copies of the engravings were not reproduced in the Eastern Province Monthly Magazine, and it is not known whether they still exist. Many years later, about 1925, Dr. E. E. Mossop made tracings of the engravings and reproduced them in his book Old Cape Highways. In 1936 Mr. Blignaut, a Government mining engineer, described them in detail in a report to the Historical Monuments Commission. After 250 years some of the engravings were badly weathered and difficult to read or trace. Mr. Blignaut's interpretation differs from Dr. Mossop's in certain minor respects. In 1956 a member of the Historical Monuments Commission again copied the engravings as accurately as possible. What he found on the rock above the opening of the shaft corresponds exactly with Dr. Mossop's tracings except that the marks between the 8 and 4 N 0 in the third line were too weathered to be interpreted with any degree of certainty. The engraving on the rock face inside the shaft was still exactly as it was traced by Dr. Mossop, except that the first of the four large marks was no longer visible. After Simon van der Stel's discovery of the Copper Mountains, a hundred and eighty years passed before people began to exploit copper in the vicinity. The fact that the Governor and his experts sank their shafts at places where the copper ore was not rich enough for economic exploitation ensured the preservation of the little mine. Van der Stel's mine is today situated on the property of the O'Okiep Copper Company. The Company recognises the great historical value of the shaft that Van der Stel sank and of the engravings on the rocks above and inside

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Page No: 2 **SiteAutoID:** 12

the mine. They not only co-operated cordially in having the mine proclaimed as an historical monument, but generously fenced the area at considerable expense and provided convenient access to the monument high up the slope of the mountain. Proclaimed 1959" Visual Description: Colours: Site Features: Condition: Construction Date: Materials: Catalogue: , No: , Significance Category:

Damage Types: