

Archival Review and Interpretation Report

EVALUATION OF THE HERITAGE SENSITIVITY OF TWO
SITES IDENTIFIED DURING A ROUTINE HIA ON THE
FARM ARMOEDE 823 LR, MOKOPANE, LIMPOPO
PROVINCE.

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Statement of Independence

As the duly appointed representative of G&A Heritage, I Stephan Gaigher, hereby confirm my independence as a specialist and declare that neither I nor G&A Heritage have any interests, be it business or otherwise, in any proposed activity, application or appeal in respect of which the Environmental Consultant was appointed as Environmental Assessment Practitioner, other than fair remuneration for work performed on this project.

SIGNED OFF BY: STEPHAN GAIGHER



MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Site name and location: Proposed Solar Development on the Farm Armoede 823 LR, Mokopane, Limpopo Province.

Municipal Area: Mogalakwena Local Municipality, Limpopo Province.

Developer: TBD.

Consultant: G&A Heritage, PO Box 522, Louis Trichardt, 0920, South Africa.
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Date of Report: 30 December 2022

The purpose of the management summary is to distil the information contained in the report into a format that can be used to give specific results quickly and facilitate management decisions. It is not the purpose of the management summary to repeat in shortened format all the information contained in the report, but rather to give a statement of results for decision making purposes.

This study focuses the expanded investigations of the heritage significance of two sites identified during previous HIA surveys and how they relate to claims made by interested and affected parties in terms of the project.

Scope of Work

- Analysis of existing information and reports
- Evaluation of the findings of the existing HIA report
- Interpretation of the heritage significance of the indicated sites as they relate to the available archival information.

Findings & Recommendations

Very little useful archival information could be found. Recommendations are based on the interpretation and re-evaluation of the existing HIA findings.

It is our professional opinion that the current claims by Mr Nico Molekana is most likely opportunistic although there is very little information that could be used to contradict his claims.

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HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

AS SUBMITTED BY PGS ON 10 JUNE 2022

FINDINGS

For ease of reference the two sites under discussion (as documented by PGS) will be listed here as found in the original HIA report. Since this report is available to read with this report, we will not be duplicating any other information that is not relevant to this discussion.

Further sources that were consulted were.

- Surveyor Generals Office
- South African National Archives and Records Service
- Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
- Municipal Demarcation Board
- South African Heritage Information Service (SAHRIS)
- South African Cemeteries Association
- www.sahistory.org.za
- Department of Traditional Affairs

MGSP 3

Other Site Numbers: MGSP 8 & MGSP 35 GPS Coordinates:

S 23.99077

E 28.96346

Type: Grave

Description:

During the fieldwork undertaken for the Heritage Screening Assessment (Birkholtz, 2019), an oval, loosely packed stone-lined feature was identified and included in that report as site **MGSP 3**. The site was defined as a possible grave. During the fieldwork undertaken for the Heritage Scoping Assessment (Birkholtz & De Bruyn, 2020), no evidence for the stone feature identified the previous year could be found. However, a formal grave with a granite dressing and headstone was identified in close proximity to the place where the stone feature had been observed in 2019. As such, it seems likely that the family of the deceased replaced the stone feature with a formal grave dressing in the period between the fieldwork trips of 2019 and 2020. The grave was included in the Heritage Scoping Assessment as site **MGSP 8**. The site was again recorded during the fieldwork undertaken for the Heritage Impact Assessment. It was given the site number **MGSP 35**.

Significance:

All graves have high levels of emotional, religious and in some cases historical significance. As such the site is of **Generally Protected A (GP. A)** or **High/Medium Significance**.

Site Extent:

The site is approximately 10m x 10m in extent.

Impact Assessment and Mitigation:

See **Chapter 8** for impact assessment calculations and **Chapter 9** for required mitigation measures.



Figure 22 – The stone-lined feature identified as a possible grave in 2019. The scale is in 10cm increments.



Figure 23 - View of the grave that was identified in close proximity to the previous stone feature in 2020. This grave was given the site number MGSP 8. The scale is in 10cm increments.

MGSP 5

Other Site Numbers: MGSP 22 GPS Coordinates:

S 23.99025

E 28.96573

Type: Historic Structure

Description:

The site comprises the remains of a historic farm dwelling that appears to have been built and used at a time when the farm was still utilise as a farm. This would have been before the establishment of the settlement of Armoede. From the tangible remains still evident on site, it seems that the farmhouse was originally comprised a rondavel, which over time was extended by adding a second rondavel and finally by linking the two rondavels into one dwelling.

The exact age of the structure is not presently known. It is also not depicted on any of the available historic maps. As it is not depicted on the topographic maps that were surveyed from 1970 onwards, it would appear that the structure is likely older than the surveying of these maps. However, it is not certain whether the structure is in fact older than 60 years.

Significance:

The site is poorly preserved and doubt exists as to whether it is older than 60 years or not. As a result, based on information that is presently available, the site is deemed to be of **Generally Protected C (GP. C)** or **Low Significance**. This significance level may change should further information come to light indicating that the structure is older than 60 years.

Site Extent:

The site is 40m x 40m in extent.

Impact Assessment and Mitigation:

See **Chapter 8** for impact assessment calculations and **Chapter 9** for required mitigation measures.



Figure 26 – General view of the structure at site MGSP 5 (MGSP 22). The scale is in 10cm increments.



Figure 27 – This heap of bricks and collapsed walling was observed on the surface of the structure. The Scale is in 10cm increments.

ADDITIONAL ARCHIVAL INFORMATION

G&A Heritage was appointed by Zutari (Pty) Ltd. to undertake an archival study of the heritage significance of two sites previously identified on the Farm Armoede 823 LR.

Very little information could be derived about these specific sites since they both represent isolated, small heritage finds in an underdeveloped area. Written records of such sites are rarely kept. This makes investigations into these sites extremely difficult, and the results are often of very low resolution. The most significant information comes from the re-interpretation of the existing HIA as provided by PGS to the client.

RE-EVALUATION OF THE EXISTING HIA FINDINGS

Background and Baseline Data

The HIA report reproduces a large amount of general historic information on this geographic area. Although this does supply the reader with a wide background to the general history of the area it does not however address any of the identified sites in themselves and their subsequent heritage significance. This is often the result of reporting on sites with very little available information where the author feels that they need to supply more. These wide historic scopes add nothing of relevance to the evaluation process of the identified sites and their significance rating and in this case, it can be argued that it detracts from the focus rather than adds to it.

The author lists several previous studies in the area but also does not indicate how they relate to these sites if at all.

When the identified sites are viewed in isolation the following observations can be made (based solely on information contained in the report).

Site MGSP 003

The original stone circle photographed during the site scoping has several characteristics that makes the likelihood of it being a grave less. The packed stone circle seems of recent origin as can be seen from the lack of subsiding of the rocks into the ground as well as the limited plant and insect activity around them. When these circles indicate a grave, they are usually packed around a mound of earth and as time goes by this mound subsides to the top level of the stones. It seems likely that this stone circle was recently packed to indicate the possible location of a lost grave or merely to look like a grave until further steps could be taken. This circle can therefore be seen as a temporary marker to indicate a possible location of a lost grave. The sudden occurrence of the new granite grave dressing in the same area corroborates this idea especially since it is illegal without the correct permits to bury a person anywhere outside of a registered municipal cemetery and therefore it is unlikely that it would represent a new burial.

There is further uncertainty caused by the site size description in the HIA report. It gives the site size as 10m x 10m. One hundred square metres is a very unlikely size for a single grave.

Site MGSP 005

Again, this site is an isolated find with no known written records. The original surveyors' diagrams often indicated known structures such as homesteads, however none were indicated on the Armoede 832 LD diagram.

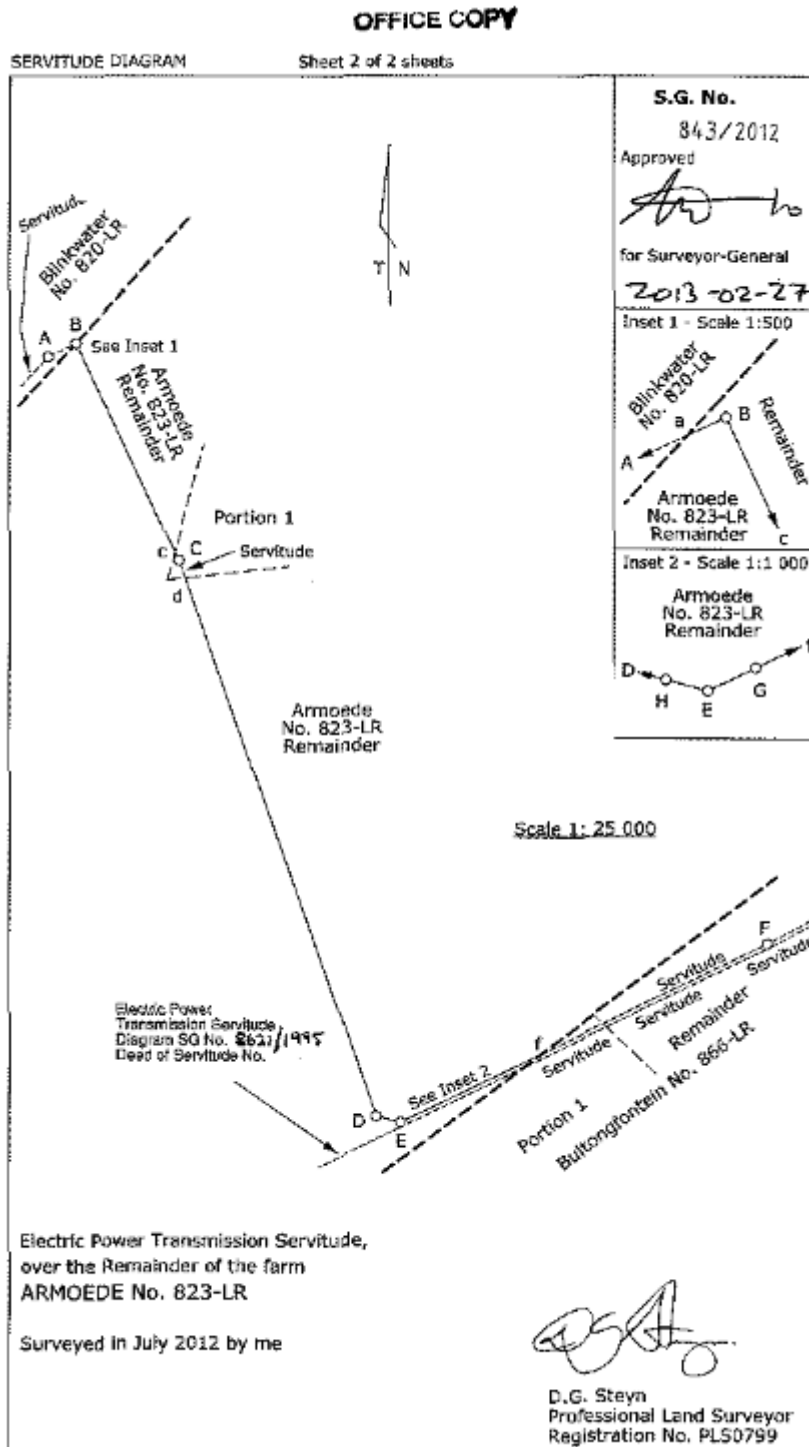


Figure 1. Armoede 823 LR Surveyors diagram

Although this survey was dated as 2013 they are usually redrawn from the original survey diagrams.

The Surveyor General's GIS database also does not indicate any homestead here.

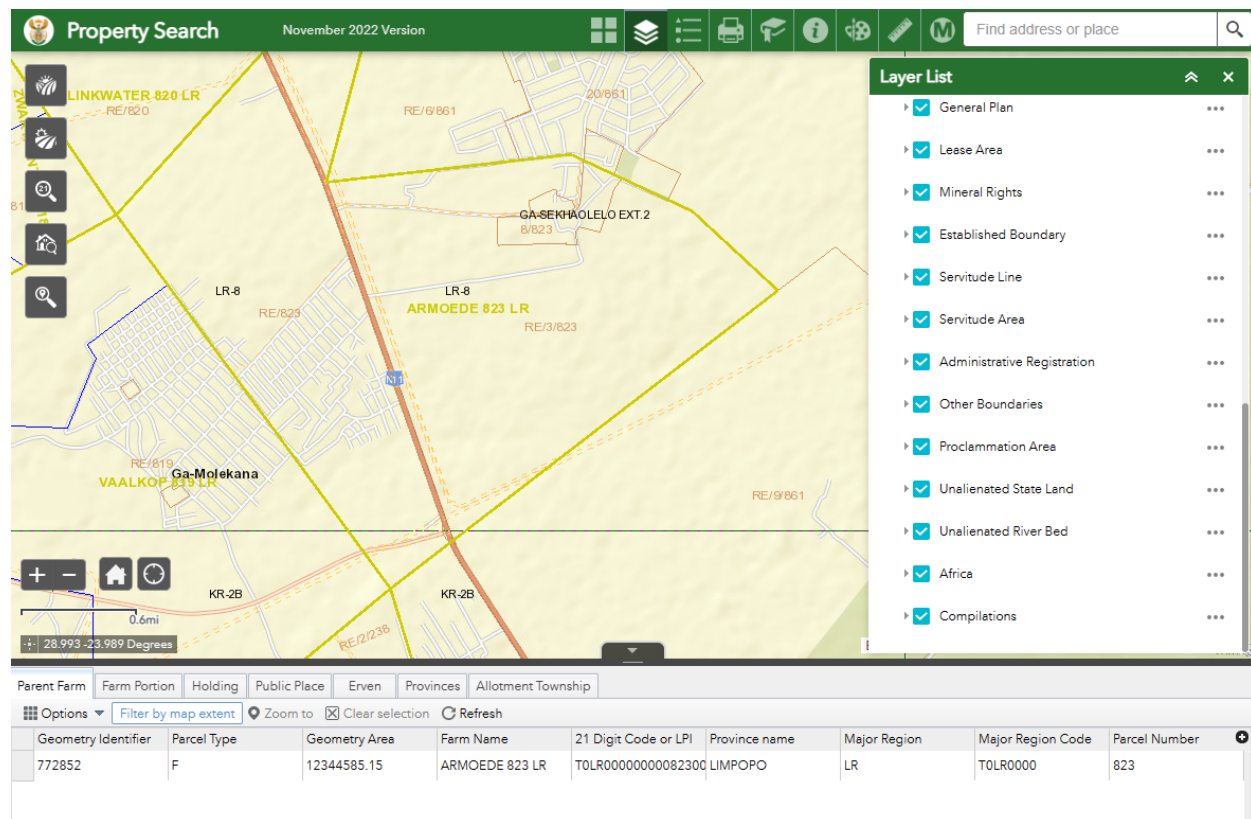


Figure 2. Surveyor General's Database for Armoede 823 LR

When the site photographs are analyzed further other questions start to emerge.

The author suggests that the circular structure/s was in fact a bungalow or hut, however these structures are rarely constructed from reinforced concrete with stone foundations. Where rural people have started to adopt these superior building materials they have reverted to more western styled square or elongated structures. Rondawel huts were almost exclusively built in this area using mud-bricks or lattice and mud construction and would not have left any significant remains, at the most a slightly elevated soil mound.

As indicated in the following section on historic maps, there were also no indications of a homestead on this section of the farm Armoede 823 LR. One structure that is however often encountered on these historic maps are concrete water reservoirs. When the structures at MGSP 5 is reevaluated with this background knowledge it becomes very likely that these remains are that of concrete reservoir/s rather than dwellings. Even modern rural houses are not constructed using reinforced concrete and stone foundations. When you look at the floor of the structure it is obviously a floated concrete floor that was meant to be waterproof. The "interconnecting structures" could well be water troughs although there are no photographs of these supplied in the HIA report.

The above can however not be confirmed without an onsite re-evaluation of the structures.



Figure 3. Wall foundations that are common in water reservoirs

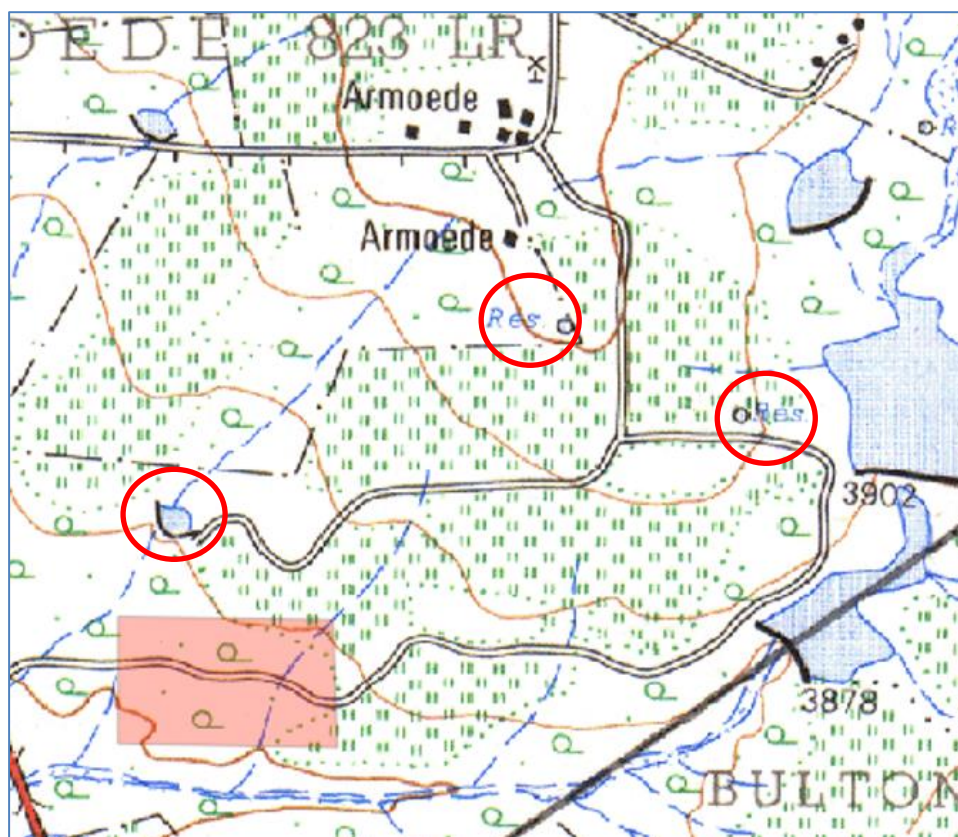


Figure 4. 1970 Map indicating several circular reservoirs within the general area

HISTORIC TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS

The following topographic maps were available for this area;

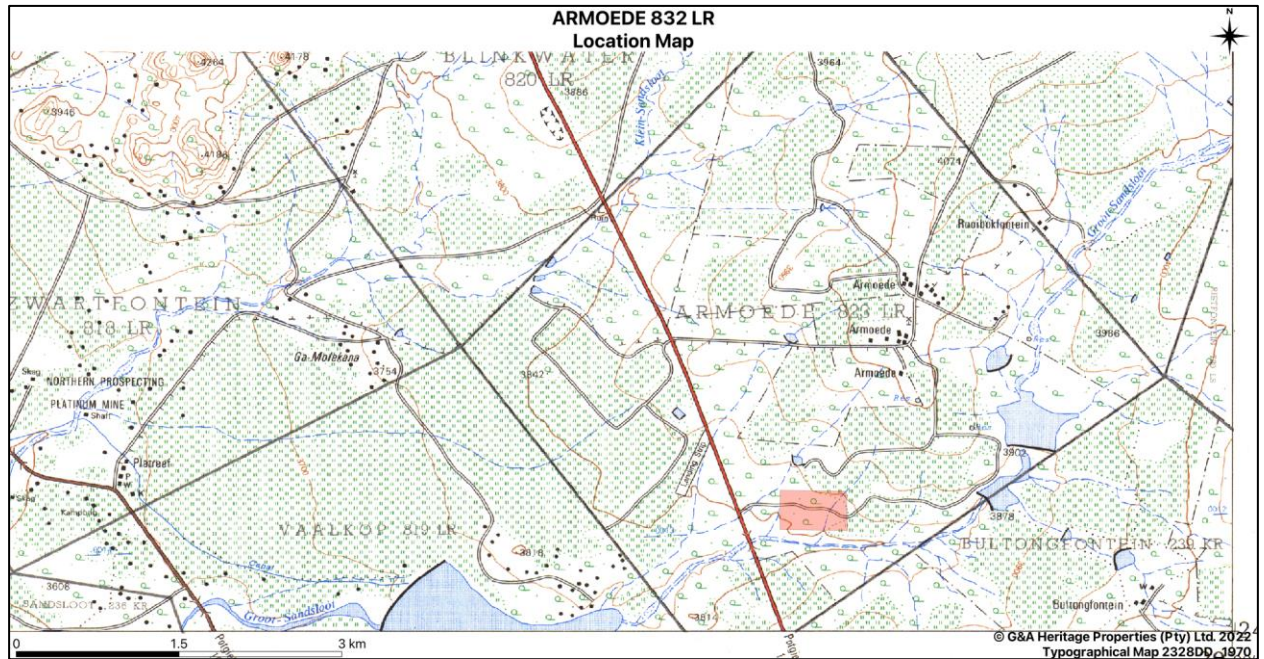


Figure 5. 1970's

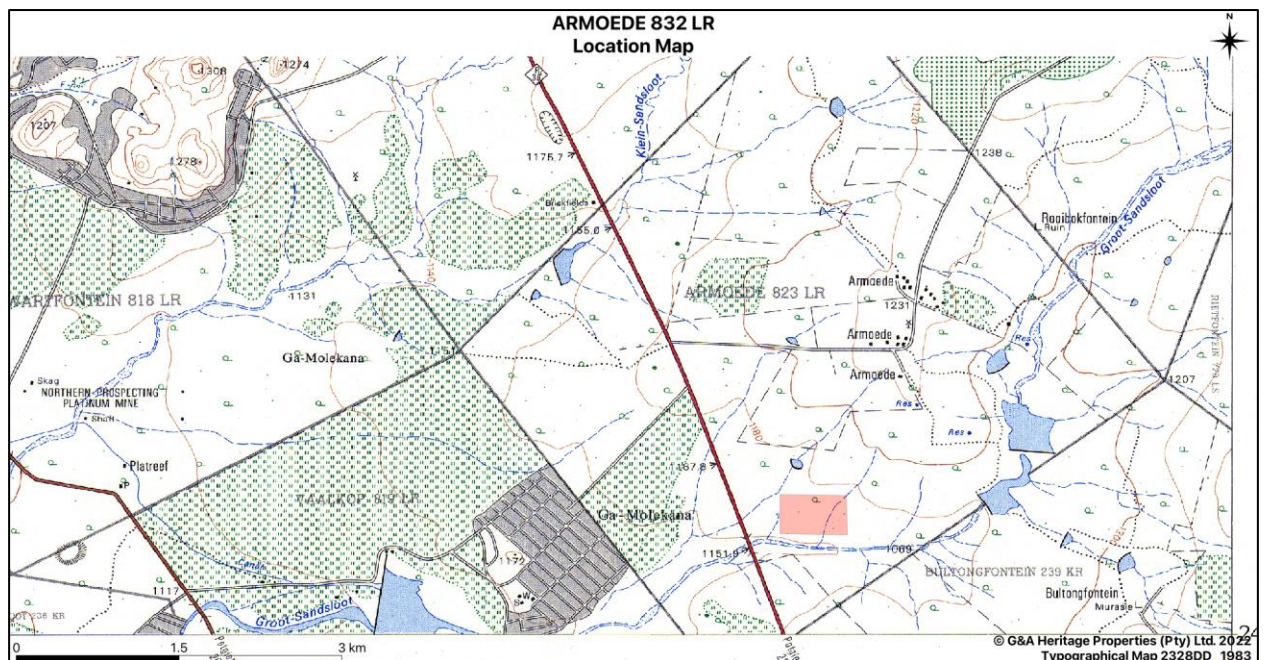


Figure 6. 1983

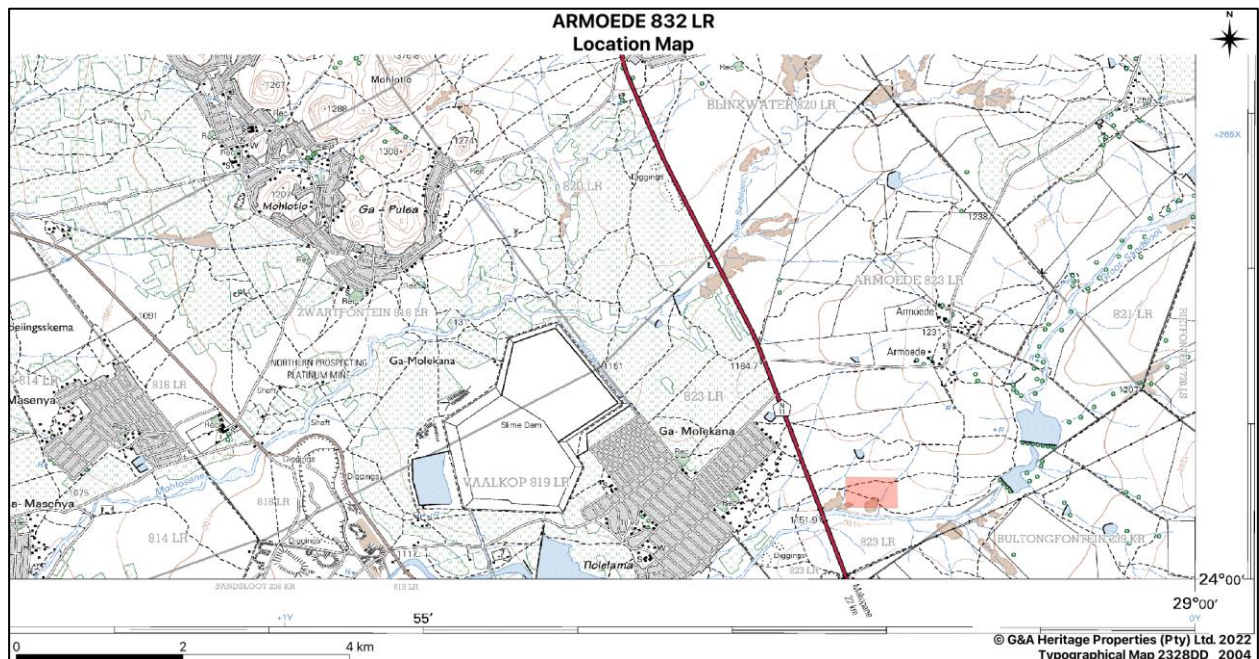


Figure 7. 2004

None of the above maps indicate either the burial site or a formal homestead structure.

PREVIOUS RE-ZONING STUDIES

It is interesting that a re-zoning application was submitted for the Armoede 823 LR property in April 2021 but no objections from previous inhabitants were received and no mention is made of graves or homesteads.

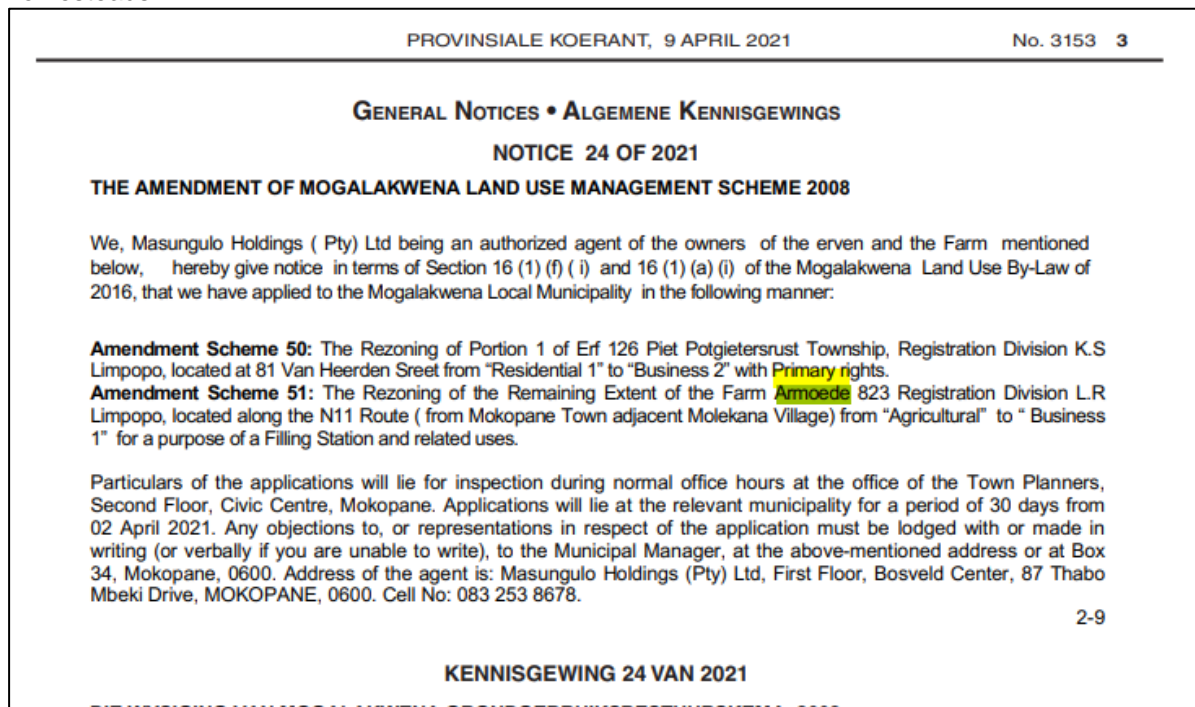


Figure 8. Re-Zoning General Notice

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

MGSP 003

The site variously attributed the number MGSP 003 as well as MGSP 008 should be treated as a burial site even though there are uncertainties as to its origin. Since the placement of the new grave dressing was done recently it is obvious that there are motivations behind this that is not yet clear at this stage. Legally the onus is with the developer to prove that it is not a grave and not for the family to prove the opposite. Until further investigations the sites therefore need to be regarded as having high heritage significance.

MGSP 005

This site is more contentious and from the small amount of information available it is suggested that this could rather be the remains of a concrete water reservoir than a homestead as suggested by the original HIA report. Once again this will need to be verified on the ground and the archival study cannot confirm this.

If it can be proven that the site is in fact the remains of a reservoir rather than a homestead the claims from Mr. Molekana can be refuted and the site can be downgraded to insignificant. This can only be done after obtaining more information from Mr. Molekana regarding their claimed homestead, such as what was used to construct it, how old was it etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

MGSP 003

It is recommended that the claimant, Mr. Molekana be contacted by a social liaison officer to discuss the origin of the grave site. Since the site was recently upgraded it is fair to assume that the family have close ties to the deceased and they would therefore be in possession of a death certificate and could direct the investigators to other more senior members of the family who could corroborate the claim. It would be worthwhile (even if it is refused) to request permission from the family to perform a ground penetrating radar investigation into the likelihood of this being a grave. This is a non-intrusive investigation and refusal will give an indication of the legitimacy of the claim.

It should further be made clear to the family that a comprehensive public participation process will also be part of the management of the grave.

MGSP 005

It is recommended that this site undergoes a second phase of field-investigation since the original HIA findings were not conclusive enough. Based on these findings the claims from Mr. Molekana can be measured against the information he supplies about the building. This can go a long way towards determining legitimacy.

WORD OF CAUTION

G&A Heritage Properties (Pty) Ltd has been involved in the Mokopane area for several decades with heritage and grave relocation work. The area has proved to be a hot bed of political action, infighting and large-scale fraud, bribery, and intimidation. We have become aware of a group of professionals who follow the SAHRIS publication of any new proposed developments. This group will then claim historic involvement through ancestral relations and through this demand compensation. This is often accompanied with the intimidation of locals into going along with these claims.

At the risk of sounding melodramatic, this is not a situation to be taken lightly. In October this year two community leaders that we were working with on a project was murdered by such a pressure group and the project was hijacked in the process. We have also had to extract our community liaison officers from the area due to death threats.

The current situation with your project sounds painfully familiar. We recently had the same occur with a shopping center project in the same area. The HIA was published on SAHRA and two weeks later two sites with "possible graves" had been replaced with formal grave dressings and a brick perimeter fence and a totally new pressure group claiming to represent the community involved made their appearance. Interestingly enough the same spokesman had led a similar action on one of our Bronkhorstpruit projects, claiming the same historic involvement even though it was a different province and ethnic community...

I am not confirming that this is in fact the situation with your project, but I would be very cautious regarding these claims.

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