

**PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT  
VERVELDPARK RURAL RESORT  
PIKETBERG**

Prepared for

**EnviroAfrica**

By

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## Executive summary

EnviroAfrica requested that the Agency for Cultural Resource Management (ACRM) undertake a specialist Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) of the proposed Versveldpark Rural Resort in Piketberg, in the Western Cape Province.

The proposed rezoning and subdivision of the property (Portion 64 of the Farm Mouton's Valley No. 79) provides for the development of the following activities:

- A vineyard estate comprising 20 single residential units.
- A chapel
- A conference facility with 24 chalets
- A private nature reserve with hiking trails

The property is currently zoned Agricultural Zone 1.

The extent of the proposed development (about 54 ha) falls within the requirements for an archaeological impact assessment as required by Section 38 of the South Africa Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 25 of 1999).

ACRM has, however, only been instructed to assess the proposed vineyard estate, chapel and conference facility.

The footprint for the above, proposed activities is about 4 ha.

The remainder of the property (i.e. the proposed nature reserve) was not subjected to a Phase 1 AIA by the archaeologist.

The aim of the study is to locate and map archaeological heritage sites that may be negatively impacted by the planning, construction and implementation of the proposed project, to assess the significance of the potential impacts and to propose measures to mitigate against the impacts.

Heritage Consultant Ms Margaret Neethling has been appointed to undertake Heritage Scoping of the proposed project.

The following findings were made:

- Relatively well preserved San/Bushman paintings were located on the affected property, also known as Stawelklip.
- A few Stone Age tools were located during the study, but are very thinly dispersed over the surrounding property.

The following essential mitigation measures are required:

- The rock painting site and artwork on Stawelklip must be documented in detail.
- A qualified specialist must remove graffiti from the wall of the rock shelter.
- The development of any proposed public rock art viewing site is subject to the implementation of a Conservation of Heritage Management Plan (HMP), as required in terms of Section 47 (3) of the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999).
- The opening of any rock art site to the public must be undertaken in consultation with Heritage Western Cape, the delegated provincial heritage authority.
- The HMP must be submitted to Heritage Western Cape for their approval.
- A HMP must form part of the detailed Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for both the Construction and Operational Phase of the proposed project.

Other recommendations are:

- The proposed private nature reserve with hiking trails; picnic areas, etc. on the remainder of the property, must be searched by a professional archaeologist. There are a number of rock outcrops and kopjes on the remainder of the property that very likely contain protected rock paintings and caves with archaeological deposit.

The presence of additional rock painting sites on the property may potentially be exploited to form part of a rock art hiking trail which would 'add value' to the proposed development. This would constitute a positive project impact.

**Note:** An application to rezone the remainder of the property (i.e. Portion 64 of the Farm Mouton's Valley No. 79) from Agriculture to Open Space III for the purpose of developing a Private Nature Reserve will be made by the developers at a later stage.

The development of a Private Nature Reserve (and associated activities such as nature trails, etc) is, according to the National Heritage Resources Acts (No. 25 of 1999), subject to a Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background and brief**

EnviroAfrica requested the Agency for Cultural Resource Management to undertake a specialist Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment of the proposed Versveldpark Rural Resort in Piketberg, in the Western Cape Province<sup>1</sup>.

The proposed rezoning and subdivision of the property provides for the development of the following activities:

- A vineyard estate comprising 20 single residential units.
- A chapel
- A conference facility with 24 chalets
- A private nature reserve with hiking trails

The extent of the proposed development (about 54 ha) falls within the requirements for an archaeological impact assessment as required by Section 38 of the South Africa Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 25 of 1999).

ACRM has, however, only been instructed to assess the proposed vineyard estate, chapel and conference facility.

The footprint for the above, proposed activities is about 4 ha.

The remainder of the property (i.e. the proposed nature reserve) was not subjected to a Phase 1 AIA by the archaeologist.

The aim of the study is to locate and map archaeological sites that may be negatively impacted by the planning, construction and implementation of the proposed project, to assess the significance of the potential impacts and to propose measures to mitigate against the impacts.

## **2. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The terms of reference for the specialist study were:

- to determine whether there are likely to be any archaeological sites of significance within the proposed 4 ha site;
- to identify and map any sites of archaeological significance within the proposed site;
- to indicate the sensitivity and conservation significance of archaeological sites potentially affected by the proposed development;
- to assess the status and significance of any impacts resulting from the proposed development, and
- to identify mitigatory measures to protect and maintain any valuable archaeological sites that may exist within the proposed site, and
- to propose actions for inclusion in the Construction and Operational Environmental Management Plan for the proposed project.

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<sup>1</sup> An archaeological study of Versveld Park, Piketberg was undertaken by the Agency for Cultural Resource Management in 1998. This report was submitted to the National Monuments Council (NMC). See NMC letter dated 27 August 1998. Ref. No. 9/2/072/23.

### **3. THE STUDY SITE**

Versveldpark (or Portion 64 of the Farm Moutons Valley No. 79) is situated on the Piketberg Mountains (above Versveld Pass) and is located about 17 km from the town of Piketberg in the Western Cape Province (Figure 1). The prominent rocky outcrop on the property is also known as the Stawelklip.

The property is vacant and is currently zoned Agricultural Zone 1. The property was historically farmed. Currently, medicinal Buchu is produced on a small portion of the property.

A proposed conceptual development plan is illustrated in Figure 2.

The development footprint is characterised by an elevated plateau overlooking the valley (Figure 3) and the remainder of the farm northwards.

The footprint comprises a mix of mainly old agricultural fields in the central portion of the site, and indigenous Fynbos on the margins.

### **4. STUDY APPROACH**

The approach used in the study entailed a detailed foot survey of the  $\pm 4$  ha site.

Archaeological sites were recorded using a Garmin Gecko 201 GPS set on map datum WGS 84.

A desk-top study was also undertaken.

### **5. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **5.1 The National Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 25 of 1999)**

...any development or other activity which will change the character of a site exceeding 5 000m<sup>2</sup>, or the rezoning or change of land use of a site exceeding 10 000 m<sup>2</sup>, requires an archaeological impact assessment in terms of Section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999).

##### **5.1.1 Structures (Section 34 (1))**

No person may alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by Heritage Western Cape (HWC), the responsible provincial resources authority.

##### **5.1.2 Archaeology (Section 35 (4))**

No person may, without a permit issued by HWC, destroy, damage, excavate, alter or remove from its original position, or collect, any archaeological material or object.

##### **5.1.3 Burial grounds and graves (Section 36 (3))**

No person may, without a permit issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position or otherwise disturb any grave or burial ground older than 60 years, which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority.

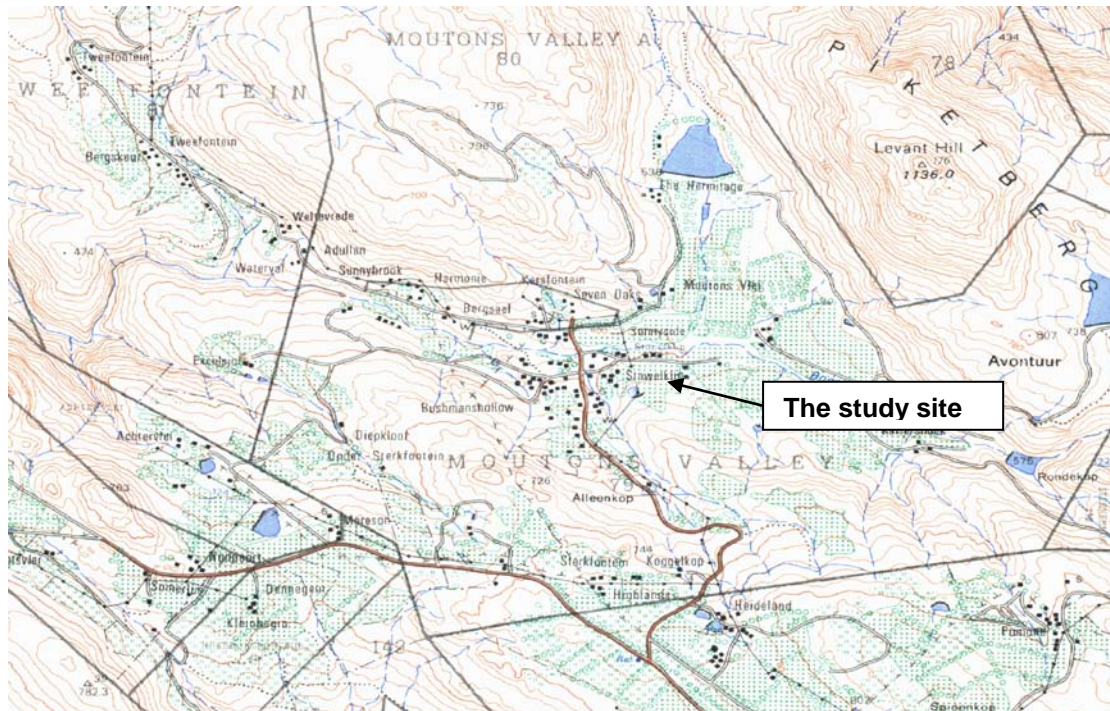


Figure 1. 1:50 000 site locality map (3218 DC Monrovia).



Figure 3. View of the site (elevated plateau) facing west. Note the old agricultural lands in the background.

## 6. LIMITATIONS

There were no limitations associated with the proposed project.

## 7. RESULTS OF THE DESK TOP STUDY

According to the records of the South African Museum Archaeological Data Recording Centre (ADRC), one rock art site comprising a single faded handprint was recorded on the Stawelklip in the early 1940's.

At least seven other rock art sites occur on farms close to Stawelklip; two at Bushman's Hollow on the farm Akerdraai, two at Rheebofsfontein, one at Tweefontein and three on the farm Langberg (Van der Riet & Bleek 1940).

The archaeologist has also viewed a number of rock painting sites on several farms on Bo Piketberg. The rocky, mountainous and broken terrain of the area lends itself to the formation of overhangs and the high probability of rock art sites being located.

The Bushman's River and Bushman's Hollow, place names close to Stawelklip, suggests that San hunter-gatherers were present in the area during historic times. According to Dr Graham Avery of Iziko: SA Museum (pers. comm. 1998), San were recorded at the bottom of the Piekerneerskloof in the mid 1700s, not far from Piketberg.

Bushman/San rock paintings are found throughout southern Africa and are a threatened, non-renewable cultural and historical resource. The art is closely associated with the religious activities performed by San shamans or medicine people, and records in a unique manner the history of southern Africa's indigenous people over at least the last 25 000 years.

Recent interpretations also link the paintings with Bushman/San mythology and to beliefs about the spirits of the dead. The art was still practiced as recently as a century ago in the Natal Drakensberg. These traditions were lost in the process of colonialism.

## 8. FINDINGS

### VP 1 (GPS reading S 32° 47 837 E 18° 42 911)

The site was first recorded in 1998 during an archaeological study of a proposed development at Versveld Park/Stawelklip (Kaplan 1998).

The site comprises a solitary sandstone outcrop, partially obscured by wild Olive trees, located on the southern boundary of the property (refer to Figure 2 & Figures 4 & 5). Facing north, the site measures about 25 m across and about 3-4 m deep.

A large fire has burnt the surrounding veld since the site was first recorded. A wide track has also recently been constructed very close to VP 1, which has impacted negatively on the site and the 'sense of place'. Two pieces of pottery and several stone flakes were found in the track, which may have formed part of an 'activity area' outside the shelter.





Figure 4. View of the site obscured by wild Olive trees. Note the wide track directly in front of the shelter.

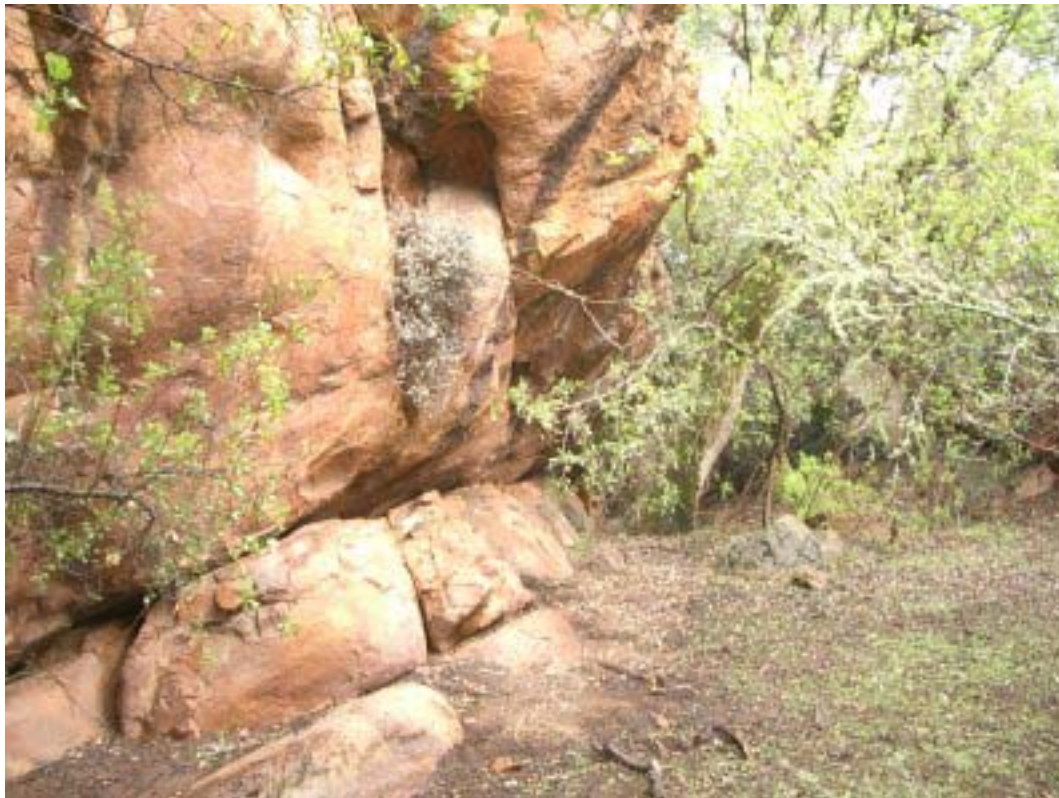


Figure 5. View inside the shelter.

Several pieces of thin walled blackened pottery, including a red-ochered rim sherd, as well as several quartz flakes and one shale stone flake, were also found inside the shelter. Large amounts of charcoal are present on the floor of the shelter, testament to the recent fire in the area. Although it appears as if a large portion of the archaeological deposit has been washed out, some deposit does still occur within the shelter.

Several stone flakes, one core and a piece of pottery were recorded in a rain wash/drip line behind the shelter in 1998, but these no longer occur.

The main panel (refer to Figure 5) of the shelter comprises several relatively well preserved images. These include one indeterminate kneeling human figure and immediately beneath this, another standing figure (Figure 6). A line of thick red paint resembling a serpent, with a splayed 'tail', occurs beneath the two figures (Figure 7). The paintings are in dark red ochre.

Several other images occur on the main panel, including a bending over human figure painted in a lighter orange pigment.

Some graffiti, in black charcoal, occurs on the rock face, to the left of the main panel of paintings, affecting some very faded indistinguishable images. The words 'Jon was here' and an indeterminate date have been scrawled across some of the images.

Exfoliation of some of the rock face (perhaps caused by the heat from the recent fire), as well as percolation of natural salts from behind the wall of the shelter, also occurs. These natural processes appear not to have impacted on the art, but may in the future.

In a darkened low overhang or recess, to the right of the main panel, several more, relatively well preserved, paintings occur. The images, only visible once photographed with a flashgun, appear on the low ceiling of the overhang.

The paintings comprise several (at least 3) indeterminate antelope, two human figures (one covered in soot) and several finger marks/smudges and a palette (refer to Figures 8 & 9). The paintings are all in dark red ochre, and relatively well preserved. Percolation of natural salts from behind the wall of the shelter has already impacted negatively on some of the images.

The rock art site (VP 1) has been graded high local significance.

**Suggested mitigation: The site and artwork must be documented in detail and included in a Conservation or Heritage Management Plan (HMP) for the proposed project.**

**A trained rock art specialist should also remove the graffiti.**





Figure 6. Indeterminate human figures. Scale is in cm.



Figure 7. 'Serpent' with splayed tail. Scale is in cm.





Figure 8. View of the main panel. Scale is in cm. Note the percolation of natural salts.

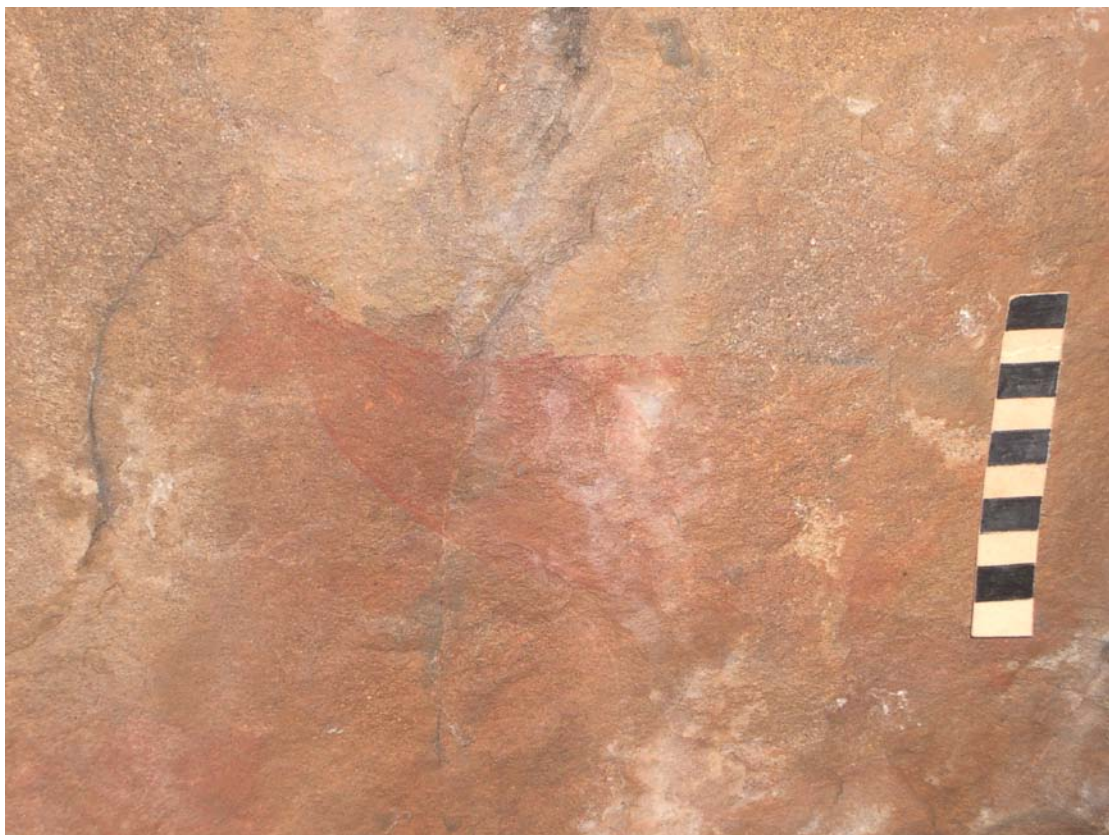


Figure 9. Indeterminate antelope. Scale is in cm.

### **8.1 Other finds**

Several large, Early Stone Age flakes and a chunk in quartzite, were also located in the old agricultural lands, in a disturbed context.

The above archaeological finds have been graded low local significance and no mitigation is required.

Some indistinguishable very faded paintings/smudges (VP 2) in red ochre were located in a south-facing shelter about midway down the Stawelklip during the 1998 study. This may be the ADRC site recorded in the 1940's. This site was not relocated by the archaeologist during the current study, but has been graded low local significance.

## **9. PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE PROPOSED VERSVELDPARK PARK RURAL RESORT**

Development of any archaeological site open to the public is subject to the implementation of a Conservation or Heritage Management Plan (HMP), and is a requirement in terms of Section 47 (3) of the National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999).

A HMP for Versveldpark is intended principally to help guide the development and management of rock painting sites to be opened to the public.

The aim of a HMP is to retain the significance of the heritage resources, and ensure the effective protection and sustainable development of rock art resources on the property. This would include the (unsearched) remainder of the property as well.

A HMP may also form the basis for a Heritage Agreement required in terms of Section 42 of the National Heritage Resources Act and the presentation of protected archaeological resources.

The development of any rock art site to be opened to visitors will also need to be undertaken in close consultation with Heritage Western Cape, the delegated provincial heritage authority, who will also need to approve the HMP.

Rock art is a non-renewable resource and therefore requires specialised planning and management (Deacon 1993). The responsibility ultimately rests with the landowner to ensure protection and conservation of rock art sites, which are considered a priceless national resource. Archaeological sites, especially those with rock paintings are especially vulnerable to damage.

The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) has proposed minimum standards for archaeological sites to be opened to the public. The core of these standards provides for the production of a HMP.

Some of the minimum standards proposed by SAHRA when developing a rock art site for public viewing include the following:

- A Heritage Management Plan must be developed, which must include a complete and detailed documentation of the site and the artwork. The purpose of the management plan is to conserve the significance of the site by controlling the impact of visitors.
- A permit is required for any disturbance at an archaeological site, including the erection of notice boards, board walks, fences, etc.
- A Heritage Agreement is required in terms of Section 42 of the National Heritage Resources Act.
- Access and numbers of visitors to the site should be controlled and managed.
- If appropriate, facilities such as litter bins, toilets, etc should be provided.
- Specially trained guides from the local community may be provided so that the meaning of the rock art is interpreted, so as to enhance the experience of the visitor.
- Appropriate measures used to protect rock art sites must be effective. For example, a barrier may be set up between the visitor and the rock art, or a boardwalk built. A cover could also be put on the floor of the site to prevent dust being kicked up and damaging the art.
- If appropriate, efforts should be made to remove graffiti, for which a permit is also required.
- Arrangements should be made for a long-term monitoring and maintenance programme.

These and other measures must be considered when developing a HMP for visitor viewing sites.

## 10. MITIGATION MEASURES

With regard to the proposed Versveldpark Rural Resort in Piketberg, the following essential mitigation measures are required:

- The rock art site (VP 1) must be recorded in detail.
- A qualified specialist must remove the graffiti.
- The development of a proposed public rock art viewing site(s) is subject to the implementation of a Heritage Management Plan (HMP), as required in terms of Section 47 (3) of the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999).

The opening of any rock art site to the public must be undertaken in close consultation with Heritage Western Cape, the delegated provincial heritage authority.

- A HMP must be submitted to Heritage Western Cape for their approval.
- A HMP must form part of the detailed Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for both the Construction and Operational Phase of the proposed project.

Other recommendations are:

- The remainder of the property (i.e. the proposed private nature reserve with hiking trails, picnic area, etc.) must also be searched by a professional archaeologist. There are a number of rock outcrops and kopjes on the remainder of the property that very likely contain protected rock paintings and caves with archaeological deposit.

The presence of additional rock painting sites on the property may potentially be exploited to form part of a rock art hiking trail which would also 'add value' to the proposed development. This would constitute a positive project impact.

**Note:** An application to rezone the remainder of the property (i.e. Portion 64 of the Farm Mouton's Valley No. 79) from Agriculture to Open Space III for the purpose of developing a Private Nature Reserve will be made by the developers at a later stage.

The development of a Private Nature Reserve (and associated activities such as nature trails, etc) is, according to the National Heritage Resources Acts (No. 25 of 1999), subject to a Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment.

## 11. REFERENCES

Deacon, J. 1993. Management guidelines for rock art sites in nature conservation areas and forestry reserves in the Western Cape. Report prepared for the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. Department of Archaeology, University of Stellenbosch.

Kaplan, J. 1998. Archaeological study Versveld Park. Report prepared for EnviroAfrica. Agency for Cultural Resource Management.

Van der Riet, J.M. & Bleek, D.F. 1940. More rock paintings in South Africa from the coastal belt between Albany and Piquitberg. Methuen & Company Limited. London.