

Senior camp documentation

**DOCUMENTATION OF A HISTORICAL SITE ON THE
FARM SURBITON, IN THE TWICKENHAM-PASCHASKRAAL-
HACKNEY MINING AREA, SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT,
LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

For:

NALEDI DEVELOPMENT

PO Box 15283
SINOVILLE
Pretoria
0129

Survey conducted and report prepared by the:

NATIONAL CULTURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

PO Box 28088
SUNNYSIDE
0132

Telephone - (012) 324 6082
Telefax - (012) 328 5173

REPORT: 2002KH38

Date of survey: November 2002 Date of report: November 2002



NASIONALE KULTUURHISTORIESE MUSEUM
NATIONAL CULTURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

SUMMARY

Documentation of a historical site on the farm Surbiton in the Twickenham-Paschakraal-Hackney mining area, Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province

It is believed that the site under discussion, not only because of its own inherent attributes, but also the time period it dates to, is important and it should be conserved. The best way to do that is to totally avoid it. That does not mean that development cannot take place close to it. It is recommended that the site be incorporated into the landscaping of the proposed development and that the following aspects are specifically addressed:

- It should be policy and brought to the attention of staff and visitors not to pick up and remove any of the stone tools found in the area.
- The remaining grave should be left in place.
- The stone walls should be retained.
- The area of the site, containing the deposit and remains of structures and other features should not be disturbed.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY	1
CONTENTS	2
1. AIMS OF THE PROJECT	3
2. METHODOLOGY	3
3. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA	3
4. THE SITES	5
5. DISCUSSION	8
6. MANAGEMENT PLAN	9
7. REFERENCES	10
8. PROJECT TEAM	10

DOCUMENTATION OF A HISTORICAL SITE ON THE FARM SURBITON IN THE TWICKENHAM-PASCHASKRAAL- HACKNEY MINING AREA, SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT LIMPOPO PROVINCE

1. AIMS OF THE PROJECT

During a survey to locate, identify and evaluate sites of cultural significance in the Twickenham-Paschakraal-Hackney mining area, a number of archaeological sites were identified (see Van Schalkwyk 2002). It was determined that these sites have cultural and historical significance and that mitigation measures would have to be implemented, as the proposed development would impact negatively on them.

The National Cultural History Museum was contracted by **Naledi Development** to do the mitigation. This consists of recording the sites to such an extent that sufficient information would be available for future research on settlement patterns in the area, as well as making recommendation that should be written into a management plan for the cultural remains on the site.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed was first to survey the site by means of a theodolite, and from this to produce scale drawings. This is supported by a number of photographs that were taken of the various interesting and distinctive elements on the site.

At the same time, a survey was also done of surface material. Although no artefacts were removed, this gave a good indication of what happened on the site.

Lastly, interviews were also conducted with a number of people still living in the area.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The area in which the identified sites are located, is on the edge of a low hill (Fig. 1) on the farm Surbiton 115KT, in the Sekhukhuneland district of Limpopo Province (Fig. 2). The hill in actual fact forms the edge of a small plateau that stretches to the west of the site. So, while the eastern slope is quit steep, the western approach is quit gradual and not as high.

The original vegetation of the area consisted of Mixed Bushveld and Sourish Mixed Bushveld. However, agricultural activities – ploughing and grazing – and harvesting of wood, has turned it largely into scrub veldt.



Figure 1. Location of the site on top of a low hill.

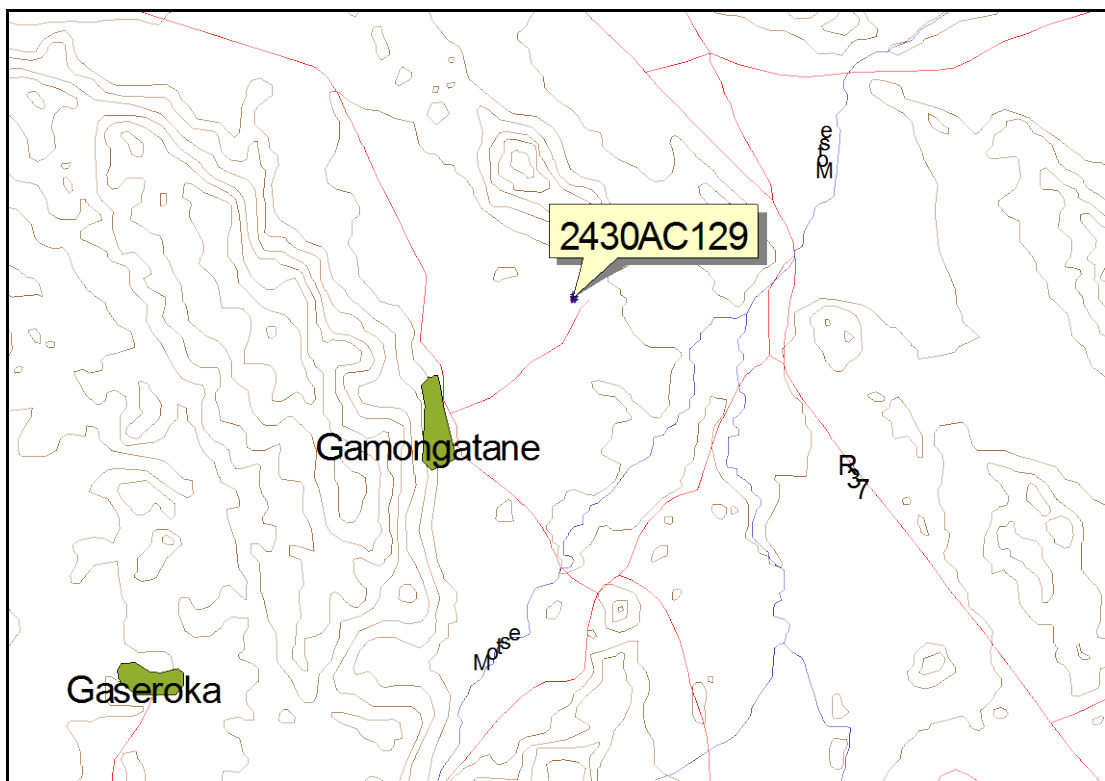


Figure 2. Location of the documented site.

The geology of the area is gabbro, with a band of norite found to the east of this, both belonging to the Bushveld Igneous system. The banded ironstone, quartz, quartzite, chert and hornfels found on the site, and which was used for making of stone tools, was probably imported as it does not occur naturally in the gabbro.

4. THE SITES

The area under discussion is rich in Stone Age archaeology, with flakes and tools, particularly dating to the Middle Stone Age, and to a lesser degree the Late Stone Age, found in abundance on the site (see Fig. 3).

All this material is found on the surface, and is therefore not in a primary context anymore. However, it still has some research value in the sense of identifying different types, as well as possibly activity areas. Therefore, this material should not be disturbed or removed.



Figure 3. Examples of stone tools and flakes found on the site.

In the original report, a number of graves were identified on the site. Since then all but one have been relocated. This last grave was probably missed as it is located outside the stone wall, on the eastern edge of the site (see Fig. 5). It has a cement slab as marker, but no inscription.

The most important archaeological site documented here, is the extensive stone walled site (see Fig. 5). Coded as 2430AC129, the site centres around the following coordinates: S 24E24'39.9"; E 30E01'55.6".

According to local informants, the people of Sekwale used to stay here. After the death of the patriarch, approximately 60 years ago, his descendents moved to an area just south of the original one (this latter site has also been abandoned in the mean time).

All agreed that the commanding position the site occupies have nothing to do with defences, but rather with the view over the valley. This is confirmed by the fact that the site was apparently only occupied in the early 20th century when the need for defensive positions was not needed anymore.

It is possible to distinguish between two categories of stone walling. The first category consists of walls measuring approximately 1 m in height and 1 m in width (Fig. 4). The second category is much lower, ranging from 30 cm to 50 cm in height, and the same in width. This difference seems rather to be functional than temporal, as the bigger walls occur mostly on the perimeter of the site.



Figure 4. Some of the outer stone walls of the site with a view over the valley to the east.

Sisal and aloes are found growing on some sections of the walls (see Fig. 4). Although this might be a natural occurrence, it is also known that in many cases such plants were deliberately planted on settlement walls in order to make them higher and more impenetrable (Loubser 1991).

The large outer walls are constructed by stacking two parallel rows of stone, with the intervening space then filled in with smaller stones and soil (Fig. 6). The second category of smaller walls simply consists of stones stack upon each other, without the filling found in the first category of walls.

The main settlement area was in the middle of the site, as it is possible to distinguish the remains of different structures here. At least one rectangular and two circular structures can be identified. Doorways can be distinguished and the floors of the structures consists of a grey, coarse grained material, smoothed over with clay, which was then covered with what is now a yellowish material, in all probability a layer of dung.

A cattle kraal is located on the south-western side of the site, with a *kgoro* or gathering place for men next to that. Other features that can also be distinguished on the site include fire-places and ash middens (see Fig. 5).

The artefacts found on the site all date to the recent past and include the remains of tins, bottles and potsherds.

The tins range from bully beef and canned fruit type of tins, to paint and paraffin type of tins. Most are rusted beyond further identification.

Some of the bottles have date stamps on the bottom (beer bottles - 1951, 1950), whereas others show the typical scar made by the pontil on the bottom of the bottle, dating it to the early part of the 20th century (soft drinks) (Lastovica 1982).

The potsherds, although very fragmented, are typical of contemporary Sotho pottery, showing incisions in bands on the shoulder of the pot, alternately coloured red and black.

5. DISCUSSION

Sites such as the one described are rare in the area, although the use of stone walling is not. It occurs on large scale on Mosego, the old tribal capital of the Pedi, some kilometres to the south-east and is also found at a few other residences close by. In the latter case, it is used largely for cattle kraals.

The site documented here dates to a period just before large-scale changes in settlement pattern started to take place in the area.

During the 1950s, as a result of government policy, people were forced to abandon their homes and villages and to resettle in planned villages, set out according to a grid system. This process was colloquially known as “betterment”. The end result, however, was that much of the traditional way of settlement was destroyed. This site therefore represents an era of settlement that belongs to the past and of which little remains for future study.



Figure 5. Construction method of the walls.

Currently, a second type of forced resettlement is taking place, as many people have to move due to mining activities, not only here, but in the larger area as well. The end result is that more and more structures and settlement patterns are being destroyed on a daily basis.

6. MANAGEMENT PLAN

It is believed that the site under discussion, not only because of its inherent attributes, but also the time period it dates to, is important and it should be conserved. The best way to do that is to totally avoid it. If development is to take place close to the site, it is recommended that the archaeological site be incorporated into the landscaping of the proposed development and that the following aspects specifically are addressed:

- It should be policy and brought to the attention of staff and visitors not to pick up and remove any of the stone tools found in the area.

- The remaining grave should be left in place.
- The stone walls should be retained.
- The area of the site, containing the deposit and remains of structures and other features should not be disturbed. In other words, no gardening activities are to take place as this would impact on the archaeological deposit.

7. REFERENCES

7.1 Books, Journals and Reports

Lastovica, E. & Lastovica, A. 1982. *Bottles and Bygones*. Cape Town: Don Nelson.

Loubser, J.H.N. 1991. The Ethnoarchaeology of Venda-speakers in Southern Africa. *Navorsinge van die Nasionale Museum, Bloemfontein*. 7(8):145-464.

Monnig, H.O. 1967. *The Pedi*. Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik.

Mason, R.J. 1962. *Prehistory of the Transvaal*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

Van Schalkwyk, J.A. 2002. *A survey of cultural resources for the Senior Construction Camp, Twickenham-Paschaskraal-Hackney mining development, Sekhukhune district, Limpopo Province*. Unpublished report no. 2002KH22. Pretoria: National Cultural History Museum.

7.2 Maps

1: 50 000 Topocadastral maps - 2430AC

8. PROJECT TEAM

J van Schalkwyk
S Moifatswane