

# HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## SKOONGELEGEN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT TZANEEN: Ga-Kgapane LIMPOPO

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**FOR:** Polygon Architects  
P O Box 1935  
Tzaneen, 0850

**Frans Roodt**  
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Tel: (015) 2257075  
083 770 2131  
Fax: 086 670 9130  
E-Mail: hr19@mweb.co.za



PO Box 1600  
POLOKWANE  
0 7 0 0

# CONTENTS

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3	<b>1. Introduction and terms of reference</b>
4	<b>2. Method</b>
	2.1 Sources of information
	2.2 Limitations
	2.3 Categories of significance
5	2.4 Terminology
6	<b>3. Background information</b>
6	<b>4. Archaeological and Historical Remains in the project area</b>
	4.1 Stone Age Remains
	4.2 Iron Age Remains
7	4.3 Historical Remains
7	4.4 Graves
7	<b>5. Management and Mitigation measures</b>
7	<b>6. Recommendations</b>
8	<b>7. References</b>
	<b>List of figures</b>
9	Fig 1.
9	Fig 2.
10	Fig 3.
10	Fig 4.

## **1. INTRODUCTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

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The application constitutes an activity, which may potentially be harmful to heritage resources that may occur in the demarcated area. The National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA - Act No. 25 of 1999) protects all structures and features older than 60 years (section 34), archaeological sites and material (section 35) and graves and burial sites (section 36). In order to comply with the legislation, the Applicant requires information on the heritage resources, and their significance that may occur in the demarcated area. This will enable the Applicant to take pro-active measures to limit the adverse effects that the development could have on such heritage resources.

In terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (1999) the following is of relevance:

### **Historical remains**

**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 the relevant provincial heritage resources authority.

### **Archaeological remains**

**Section 35(4)** No person may, without a permit issued by the responsible heritage resources authority-

(a) destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface, or otherwise disturb any archaeological or palaeontological site or any meteorite

### **Burial grounds and graves**

**Section 36 (3)(a)** No person may, without a permit issued by SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority-

(c) destroy, damage, alter, exhume, 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; or

(b) bring onto or use at a burial ground or grave referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) any excavation equipment, or any equipment which assists in detection or recovery of metals.

### **Culture resource management**

**Section 38(1)** Subject to the provisions of subsection (7), (8) and (9), any person who intends to undertake a development\* ...

must at the very earliest stages of initiating such development notify the responsible heritage resources authority and furnish it with details regarding the location, nature, and extent of the proposed development.

\*‘**development**’ means any physical intervention, excavation, or action, other than those caused by natural forces, which may in the opinion of the heritage authority in any way result in a change to the nature, appearance or physical nature of a place, or influence its stability and future well-being, including-

(a) construction, alteration, demolition, removal or change of use of a place or a structure at a place;

- (b) carry out any works on or over or under a place\*;
- (e) any change to the natural or existing condition or topography of land, and
- (f) any removal or destruction of trees, or removal of vegetation or topsoil;

\*"place means a site, area or region, a building or other structure\* ..."

\*"structure means any building, works, device or other facility made by people and which is fixed to the ground, ..."

The author was contracted to undertake a heritage scoping survey of the farm Skoongelegen 432 LT (Refer to map, South Africa 1:50 000 2330 CA). The aim was to determine the presence or not of heritage resources such as archaeological and historical sites and features, graves and places of religious and cultural significance, and to submit appropriate recommendations with regard to the cultural resources management measures that may be required at affected sites / features.

The report thus provides an overview of the heritage resources, which may occur in the demarcated area where development is intended. The significance of the heritage resources was assessed in terms of criteria defined in the methodology section. The impact of the proposed development on these resources is indicated and the report recommends mitigation measures that should be implemented to minimize the adverse impact of the proposed development on these heritage resources.

## 2. METHOD

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### 2.1 Sources of information

The major source of information was the field survey of the area, done on foot, using standard methods of archaeological observation.

### 2.2 Limitations

There were no major limitations; visibility was relatively good with most areas having only moderate vegetation cover in the form of maize and other crops. However due to the nature of the archaeological deposit, there is always a small possibility that something could have been missed.

### 2.3 Categories of significance

The significance of archaeological sites is ranked into the following categories.

No significance: sites that do not require mitigation.
Low significance: sites that <i>may</i> require mitigation.
Medium significance: sites that require mitigation.
High significance: sites that must not be disturbed at all.

The significance of an archaeological site is based on the amount of deposit, the integrity of the context, the kind of deposit and the potential to help answer present research questions. Historical structures are defined by Section 34 of the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999, while other historical and cultural significant sites, places and features, are generally determined by community preferences.

*A crucial aspect in determining the significance and protection status of a heritage resource is often whether or not the sustainable social and economic benefits of a proposed development outweigh the conservation issues at stake. There are many aspects that must be taken into consideration when determining significance, such as rarity, national significance, scientific importance, cultural and religious significance, and not least, community preferences. When, for whatever reason the protection of a heritage site is not deemed necessary or practical, its research potential must be assessed and mitigated in order to gain data / information which would otherwise be lost. Such sites must be adequately recorded and sampled before being destroyed. These are generally sites graded as of low or medium significance.*

## **2.4 Terminology**

Early Stone Age:	Predominantly the Acheulean hand axe industry complex dating to $\pm$ 1 Myr – 250 000 yrs. before present.
Middle Stone Age:	Various lithic industries in SA dating from $\pm$ 250 000 yrs. - 30 000 yrs. before present.
Late Stone Age:	The period from $\pm$ 30 000 yrs. to contact period with either Iron Age farmers or European colonists.
Early Iron Age:	Most of the first millennium AD.
Middle Iron Age:	10 <sup>th</sup> to 13 <sup>th</sup> centuries AD.
Late Iron Age:	14 <sup>th</sup> century to colonial period. <i>The entire Iron Age represents the spread of Bantu speaking peoples.</i>
Historical:	Mainly cultural remains of western influence and settlement from AD 1652 onwards – mostly structures older than 60 years in terms of Section 34 of the NHRA.
Phase 1 assessments:	Scoping surveys to establish the presence of and to evaluate heritage resources in a given area.
Phase 2 assessments:	In depth culture resources management studies which could include major archaeological excavations, detailed site surveys and mapping / plans of sites, including historical / architectural structures and features. Alternatively, the sampling of sites by collecting material, small test pit excavations or auger sampling.
Sensitive:	Often refers to graves and burial sites although not necessarily a heritage place, as well as ideologically significant sites such as ritual / religious places. <i>Sensitive</i> may also refer to an entire landscape / area known for its significant heritage remains.

### **3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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The escarpment and Lowveld areas of the Limpopo Province are rich in archaeological sites. Notably here are the sites at Silver Leaves about 12 km south of Tzaneen, the Eiland Resort in the Hans Merensky Nature Reserve and the mineral rich Murchison mountain range at Gravelotte. Silver Leaves is of particular interest as it falls in a similar environment in the foothills of the Transvaal Drakensberg. The Type-site, Silver Leaves represents the earliest cultural expression of the first black farmers that moved into South Africa. They belonged to the Uruwe Tradition from East Africa and migrated southwards as part of the Kwale Branch, i.e., the eastern stream of migration and settled in the Tzaneen area in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. From the 5<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the western stream of migration, namely the Kalundu Tradition from the Congo/Angola regions reached the area. The Happy Rest Branch represents this stream and has been found at Mooketsi not far to the northwest of the demarcated area. A Later facies that developed out of the western stream named Eiland (Type site – Eiland Resort) dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD also occurs in the general area – including at the Silver Leaves site.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD a second eastern stream migrated into this area of South Africa, namely the Kalambo Branch of Uruwe in East Africa. They are represented by the Moloko pottery phase that is the ancestors of today's Sotho-Tswana population. Lastly, the area had been influenced by the Venda that are descendants of the Mapungubwe/Zimbabwe culture that merged with the Icon facies of the Moloko Sotho-Tswana phase. This pottery facies is known Letaba style.

### **4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL REMAINS**

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#### **4.1 Stone Age Remains**

No Stone Age remains of significance were noted on the site.

#### **4.2 Iron Age Remains**

A low concentration of pottery fragments was noted on the site. These were found in small clusters scattered around the area, mostly in maize fields, and other disturbed areas. An archaeological Iron Age period floor was also noted in a road track next to one of the maize fields.

1. *S23° 40' 07.2" E30° 14' 35.3"*

Cluster of undecorated pottery fragments.

2. *S23° 40' 28.5" E30° 14' 11.6"*

Cluster of undecorated pottery fragments.

#### **Discussion**

An unidentified archaeological site was detected in the demarcated area. It consists of an exposed Iron Age Hut floor and scatterings of non-diagnostic pottery fragments. Due to the absence of identifiable material it is not at this stage possible to determine the origin of the floor or of the pottery fragments.

### **4.3 Recent Historical Remains**

No recent historical remains were noted.

### **4.4 Graves**

No formal graves were observed. However, the possibility of subsurface unmarked graves at the archaeological site cannot be ruled out.

## **5. MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

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### **Archaeological site**

The terrain has already been severely impacted on by recent human activities. The proposed development will finally destroy all the archaeological evidence and will thus have a further negative impact on the heritage remains. With reference to the above-mentioned background information and the lack of diagnostic material, a phase 2 assessment of the archaeological site is required. The site is already damaged and is thus not worth protecting, but is regarded as scientifically significant. The data will shed light on the cultural sequence of the immediate area, migratory patterns and demographics of the past.

A destruction permit must be applied for from SAHRA before development may commence.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

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In view of the above it is recommended that a phase 2 assessment be conducted on the unidentified archaeological site. It will consist of trench excavations and the recording and mapping of all archaeological finds. This will be a prerequisite for the application of a destruction permit.

*From a heritage resources management point of view we have no objection with regard to the development on condition that the management measures mentioned above are implemented.*

## 7. REFERENCES

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**FRANS ROODT** (BA Hons, MA Archaeology, Post Grad Dip. in Museology; UP)  
Principal Investigator for R & R Cultural Resource Consultants.





Fig 1. Maize field and general view of the area.



Fig 2. Undecorated pottery fragments.



Fig 3. Remains of the Hut floor



Fig 4. Road track where hut floor was recorded.