

**A SURVEY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL
RESOURCES AT BANK COLLIERY ON THE FARM
BLESBOKVLAKTE 24 IS, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**

For:

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SUMMARY

A survey of archaeological and cultural resources at Bank colliery on the farm Blesbokvlakte 24 IS, Mpumalanga province

A survey to establish the nature, extent and significance of cultural resources was made at the Bank colliery. Two areas were investigated, namely the SW1 area and the proposed route where a conveyor belt is to be erected.

Only one cultural resource was identified. As the proposed development will have a low impact on this site it is recommended that the erection of the conveyor belt and the mining activities can continue. It is also recommended that if, during any part of the proposed work, sites or artefacts of cultural importance are found, the Museum be contacted to undertake proper scientific investigation of the finds.

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A SURVEY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES AT BANK COLLIERY ON THE FARM BLESBOKVLAKTE 24 IS, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

1. AIMS OF THE SURVEY

The National Cultural History Museum was requested by **Amcoal Environmental Services** to survey an area at the Bank colliery on the farm Blesbokfontein 24 IS in the Mpumalanga province. It is planned to expand their mining operations into the so called SW1 area and to erect a conveyer belt for the moving of the coal to the processing plant. The aim of the survey was to locate, identify, evaluate and document possible sites, objects and structures of cultural importance within the boundaries of the area of proposed development.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The **Terms of Reference** for the study were to:

- 2.1 Identify all objects, sites, occurrences and structures of an archaeological or historical nature (cultural resources) located in the area of the proposed development.
- 2.2 Assess the significance of the cultural resources in terms of their historical, social, religious, aesthetic and scientific value.
- 2.3 Describe the possible impact of the proposed development on these cultural remains, according to a standard set of conventions.
- 2.4 Propose suitable mitigation measures to minimize possible negative impacts on the cultural resources.
- 2.5 Review applicable legislative requirements.

The survey was to be confined to the area mentioned above, as indicated by the client.

3. CONDITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The following aspects have a direct bearing on the survey and the resulting report:

- **Cultural resources** are all nonphysical and physical human-made occurrences, as well as natural occurrences that are associated with human activity. These include all sites, structures and artifacts of importance, either individually or in groups, in the history, architecture and archaeology of human (cultural) development.
- The **significance** of the sites and artifacts are determined by means of their historical, social, aesthetic, technological and scientific value in relation to their uniqueness, condition of preservation and research potential. It must be kept in mind that the various aspects are not mutually exclusive, and that the evaluation of any site is done with reference to any number of these.

- Significance is site-specific and relates to the content and context of the site. Sites regarded as having low significance have already been recorded in full and require no further mitigation. Sites with medium to high significance require furthermitigation.
- The latitude and longitude of an archaeological site is to be treated as sensitive information by the developer, and should not be disclosed to members of the public.
- All recommendations are made with full cognisance of the relevant legislation, in this case the National Monuments Act (Act 28 of 1969).

4. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Aspects concerning the conservation of cultural resources are dealt with mainly in two acts. These are the National Monuments Act (Act 28 of 1969) and the Environmental Conservation Act (Act 73 of 1989). It is however important to note that new legislation is being prepared and this might come into effect before the end of 1998.

4.1 National Monuments Act

According to this Act the following cultural resources are protected:

- a. Meteorites and fossils
- b. Prehistoric rock art
- c. Prehistoric tools, ornaments and structures
- d. The Anthropological and archaeological contents of graves, rock shelters, caves, middens etc.
- e. Historical sites and archaeological finds, material or artifacts
- f. Declared national monuments
- g. Cemeteries and graves with headstones older than 50 years

The above mentioned may only be disturbed or moved by an archaeologist, after receiving a permit to do so from the National Monuments Council.

4.2 Environmental Conservation Act

This act states that a survey and an evaluation of cultural resources should be undertaken in areas where development, which will change the face of the environment, is to be made. The impact of the development on the cultural resources should also be determined and proposals to mitigate this impact is to be formulated.

4.3 The White Paper on Heritage Resources

The white paper is currently being discussed by parliament and is destined to be promulgated before the end of 1998. It will replace the current National Monuments Act. The types of sites protected by this act will be more or less the same than that covered by the National Monuments Act, but provides more strict measures of protection. One of the changes to the current act is that all graves, cemeteries and structures older than 60 years will be protected, moving away from the

50 year clause.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Field survey

A thorough and complete survey of the SW1 area at the Bank colliery was undertaken as well as on the possible routes the conveyor belt, which is planned to be erected, will follow.

5.2 Literary and other research

A search in the relevant literary sources was also carried out, as well as in the Archaeological Data Recording Centre (ADRC) of the National Cultural History Museum.

5.3 Documentation

All sites, objects and structures identified were documented according to the general minimum standards accepted by the archaeological profession. Coordinates of individual localities were determined by means of the **Global Positioning System (GPS)** and plotted on a map. The information was added to the description in order to facilitate the identification of each locality.

5.4 Presentation of the information

In discussing the results of the survey, a chronological rather than a geographical approach was followed in the presentation of an overview of human occupation and land use in the area. This helps the reader to better understand and facilitate the potential impact of the development. Information on the individual objects, sites, occurrences and structures are presented in Appendix 2 and summarised in Table 1.

6. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA SURVEYED

The topography of the area is flat with only small parts seeming to still show the original vegetation. This vegetation consists of sour grassveld with few trees (Acocks 1975:10). The area is mostly used for agricultural purposes and mealies and sunflower are the main crops. A small part of the land is also used for grazing. Apart of the area is also being mined for coal.

7. DISCUSSION

One cultural resource was identified during the survey. This was found next to the road alongside the planned route for the conveyor belt. No cultural resource was found on the SW1 area. The literary and Database search also provided no evidence of sites of cultural importance in the area.

The site that was found dates to the 20th century, therefore being a historical site. It is a large cemetery, which could still be in use as some of the dates on gravestones are as recent as 1993. The oldest date is 1975, but a large number of unmarked graves, packed with brick or stone are found.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As no cultural resources were found in the area of the proposed mining activities (the SW1 area), it is recommended that this can continue. The site found next to the road will probably not be impacted upon by the building of the conveyor belt, as it lies on the opposite side of the road. It is therefore recommended that this development can continue. It is also recommended that if, during any part of the mining and development, sites or artefacts of cultural importance are found, the National Cultural History Museum be contacted to undertake proper scientific investigation of the finds.

TABLE 1

No.	Type of impact	Significance	Certainty of prediction	Status of impact	Recommended management action
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1	Historic	Low	Definite	Neutral	(5)-preserve site at all costs
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9. REFERENCES

Acocks, J.P.H. 1975. **Veld Types of South Africa**. Memoirs of the Botanical Survey of South Africa, No. 40. Pretoria: Botanical Research Institute.

Archaeological Data Recording Centre - National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria.

Maps supplied by the client.

10. PROJECT TEAM

Dr. J.A. van Schalkwyk - Principal Investigator

A.C. van Vollenhoven - Investigator

APPENDIX 2: SURVEY RESULTS

(See Appendix 1 for explanation of the conventions used in assessing of the cultural remains)

1. Site number: 1

Description: Cemetary

Location: 25° 59' 55,4"S; 29° 26'58,7"E

Discussion: Probably still in use

Significance of impact: Low

Certainty of prediction: Definite

Status of impact: Neutral

Recommended management action: (5)-Preserve site at all costs