

**A SURVEY OF CULTURAL RESOURCES IN FIVE
LOCATIONS OF THE STEELPOORT AREA OF
SEKHUKHUNELAND, NORTHERN PROVINCE**

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SUMMARY



A survey of cultural resources in five locations of the Steelpoort area of Sekhukhuneland, Northern Province

The aim of the survey was to locate, identify, evaluate and document sites, objects and structures of cultural importance found within the boundaries of the areas in which it is proposed to develop an electricity substation.

Although some Stone Age material was identified on one of the five locations (D1) (Appendix 2), this is judged not to be of cultural or historical significance and that it will not require the project design to be modified. Based on what was found and its evaluation, it is recommended that the proposed development can continue on each of the selected areas.

However, the developers should be notified that archaeological sites might be exposed during the construction work. If anything is noticed, it should immediately be reported to a museum, preferably one at which an archaeologist is available, so that an investigation and evaluation of the finds can be made.

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**A SURVEY OF CULTURAL RESOURCES IN FIVE
LOCATIONS OF THE STEELPOORT AREA OF
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1. AIMS OF THE SURVEY

The National Cultural History Museum was requested by **Democritus** to survey five sites for the possible development of electricity substations in the Sekhukhuneland district of Northern Province. The aim of the survey was to locate, identify, evaluate and document sites, objects and structures of cultural importance found within the boundaries of the areas that is to be impacted by the proposed developed.

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 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 Determine the possible impacts on the known and potential cultural resources in the area of interest.
- 2.4 Develop mitigation or control measures for impact minimization and cultural resources preservation.
- 2.5 Develop procedures to be implemented if previously unidentified cultural resources are uncovered during the construction.

3. DEFINITIONS 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.
- 1 Sites regarded as having low significance have already been recorded in full and require no further mitigation. Sites with medium to high significance require further mitigation.
- The latitude and longitude of archaeological sites are to be treated as sensitive information by the developer and should not be disclosed to members of the public.

4. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Aspects concerning the conservation of cultural resources are mainly dealt within two acts. These are the South Africa Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) and the Environmental Conservation Act (Act 73 of 1989).

4.1 South African Heritage Resources Act

Archaeology, palaeontology and meteorites

Section 35(4) of this act states that 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;
- (b) destroy, damage, excavate, remove from its original position, collect or own any archaeological or palaeontological material or object or any meteorite;
- (c) trade in, sell for private gain, export or attempt to export from the Republic any category of archaeological or palaeontological material or object, or any meteorite; or
- (d) bring onto or use at an archaeological or palaeontological site any excavation equipment or any equipment which assists in the detection or recovery of metals or archaeological and palaeontological material or objects, or use such equipment for the recovery of meteorites.

The above mentioned may only be disturbed or moved by an archaeologist, after receiving a permit from the South African Heritage Resources Agency.

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.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Preliminary investigation

5.1.1 Survey of the literature

A survey of the relevant literature was conducted with the aim of reviewing the previous research done and determining the potential of the area. In this regard, various anthropological, archaeological and historical sources were consulted - see the list of references below.

5.1.2 Data bases

The **Archaeological Data Recording Centre** (ADRC), housed at the National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria, was consulted. The **Environmental Potential Atlas** was also consulted.

5.1.3 Other sources

The topocadastral and other maps were also studied - see the list of references below.

5.2 Field survey

The field survey was done according to generally accepted archaeological practices, and was aimed at locating all possible sites, objects and structures. The areas that had to be investigated were indicated on maps that was supplied by Dr Madams of Democritus. The areas were investigated by walking across it in a grid pattern. Special attention was given to unnatural topographical occurrences such as trenches and holes and stream beds and clusters of trees were investigated.

As no information regarding access roads, borrow pits or other potential infra-structural development was supplied, the search was extended to include areas outside the main areas of development.

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)**¹ and confirmed by plotting on a map. This information was added to the description in order to facilitate the identification of each locality (Appendix 2).

6. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

Five small areas were investigated. These are identified and located as follows:

- D1: Zeekoegat 421KS - S 24°17'30"; E 29°50'40"
- D2: Forest Hill 117KT - S 24°26'40"; E 30°05'29"
- D3: Clapham 118KT - S 24°28'15"; E 30°06'09"
- D4: Twyfelaar 119KT - S 24°30'10"; E 30°07'59"
- D5: Groothoek 256KT - S 24°31'05"; E 30°08'59"

All are located near the R37 main road where it passes through the Steelpoort area of Sekhukhuneland district. D2-D5 are all located on alluvial soil close to one of a number of smaller rivers. Most of these areas have been or still are used for agricultural activities. This creates the problem that archaeological finds are destroyed or hidden by these activities.

7. DISCUSSION

The larger geographical area is quite rich in cultural resources. Sites containing Stone Age tools, especially MSA material, are found all over. Examples are on the farms Hackney, Blaaubloometjes Kloof, Grootdraai and Zeekoegat. Iron Age sites are known to occur on the farm Jachtlus, while others are much further afield, eg. Plaats, Rostok and Scheiding.

A structure of historical significance is the old Lutheran Church on the farm Mecklenburg. Contemporary cemeteries are found for example on the farms Zeekoegat, Croyden, Mecklenburg and Mooihoek, all located quite close to the main road.

¹ According to the manufacturer a certain deviation may be expected for each reading. Care was, however, taken to obtain as accurate a reading as possible, and then correlate it with reference to the physical environment before plotting it on the map.

Two sites, formerly declared as National Monuments sites, are the Battle of Sekhukhuneland (1879) and the site where Alexander Merensky first identified the platinum group of metals.

Except for D1, no material of cultural significance was found on any site. In the case of D1, a few Middle Stone Age tools, flakes and cores were identified. These are very similar to material found on other known sites in the larger geographical area. Furthermore, the artifacts are found as surface material, in other words, not in a primary context.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of the survey was to locate, identify, evaluate and document sites, objects and structures of cultural importance found within the boundaries of the areas in which it is proposed to develop an electricity substation.

Although some Stone Age material was identify on one of the five locations (D1) (Appendix 2), this is judged not to be of cultural or historical significance and that it will not require the project design to be modified. Based on what was found and its evaluation, it is recommended that the proposed development can continue on each of the selected areas.

However, the developers should be notified that archaeological sites might be exposed during the construction work. If anything is noticed, it should immediately be reported to a museum, preferably one at which an archaeologist is available, so that an investigation and evaluation of the finds can be made.

9. REFERENCES

9.1 Unpublished sources

9.1.1 Data base

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

Environmental Potential Atlas, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

9.2 Published sources

9.2.1 Books and journals

Holm, S.E. 1966. *Bibliography of South African Pre- and Protohistoric archaeology*. Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik.

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

Van Riet Lowe, C. n.d. *The distribution of Prehistoric rock engravings and paintings in South Africa*. Archaeological Survey, Archaeological Series No. 7.

Van Schalkwyk, J.A. 1998. *A survey of cultural resources in the proposed Rooipoort dam, Olifants River, Northern Province*. Unpublished report 98KH22. Pretoria: National Cultural History Museum.

Van Warmelo, N.J. 1977. *Anthropology of Southern Africa in Periodicals to 1950*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

9.2.2 Maps

1: 50 000 Topocadastral maps - 2429DB, 2430AC, 2430CA

10. PROJECT TEAM

J van Schalkwyk

APPENDIX 1: STANDARDIZED SET OF CONVENTIONS USED TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF PROJECTS ON CULTURAL RESOURCES

Significance of impact:

- low where the impact will not have an influence on or require to be significantly accommodated in the project design
- medium where the impact could have an influence which will require modification of the project design or alternative mitigation
- high where it would have a “no-go” implication on the project regardless of any mitigation

Certainty of prediction:

- Definite: More than 90% sure of a particular fact. Substantial supportive data to verify assessment
- Probable: More than 70% sure of a particular fact, or of the likelihood of that impact occurring
- Possible: Only more than 40% sure of a particular fact, or of the likelihood of an impact occurring
- Unsure: Less than 40% sure of a particular fact, or the likelihood of an impact occurring

Recommended management action:

For each impact, the recommended practically attainable mitigation actions which would result in a measurable reduction of the impact, must be identified. This is expressed according to the following:

- 1 = no further investigation/action necessary
- 2 = controlled sampling and/or mapping of the site necessary
- 3 = preserve site if possible, otherwise extensive salvage excavation and/or mapping necessary
- 4 = preserve site at all costs

Legal requirements:

Identify and list the specific legislation and permit requirements which potentially could be infringed upon by the proposed project, if mitigation is necessary.

APPENDIX 2: SURVEY RESULTS²

[Previous site numbers relate to other known sites on a particular ¼ degree sheet already documented in the ADRC, and does not necessarily refer to sites occurring on or close to the specific area of development.]

1. Site number: 2429BD25

Location: Zeekoegat 421KS - S 24°17'30"; E 29°50'40"

Description: Surface scattering of MSA tool, flakes and cores.

Discussion: These artifacts are not in primary context any more. The number of artifacts visible is increased as compaction takes place due to erosion.

Significance of impact: Low

Certainty of prediction: Definite

Recommended management action: None

Legal requirements: None

² See Appendix 1 for an explanation of the conventions used in assessing the cultural remains.

APPENDIX 3: GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

This section is included to give the reader some necessary background. It must be kept in mind, however, that these dates are all relative and serve only to give a very broad framework for interpretation.

STONE AGE

Early Stone Age (ESA)	2 000 000 - 150 000 Before Present
Middle Stone Age (MSA)	150 000 - 30 000 BP
Late Stone Age (LSA)	30 000 - until c. AD 200

IRON AGE

Early Iron Age (EIA)	AD 200 - AD 1000
Late Iron Age (LIA)	AD 1000 - AD 1830

HISTORICAL PERIOD

Since the arrival of the white settlers - c. AD 1840 in this part of the country

ADRC - Archaeological Data Recording Centre

core - a piece of stone from which flakes were removed to be used or made into tools

SAHRA - South African Heritage Resources Agency