

**A SURVEY OF CULTURAL RESOURCES IN THE
PROPOSED COAL MINING AREAS**

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SUMMARY

A survey of cultural resources in the proposed coal mining areas

The National Cultural History Museum was contracted by Kriel Colliery to identify and assess the archaeological and historical remains on portions of the farm Onverwacht 70 IS in the Standerton district (Mpumalanga). This area will be mined (open cast) for coal. Most of the study area is presently used for maize cultivation.

No visual evidence of sites, objects or features of archaeological significance was discovered.

Thirteen buildings, some dating back to 1902, of the former Kriel police station are located on the site. They are currently used as residential units by black people working in the vicinity. This portion of land belongs to the Department of Works and is not under direct threat of the mining operations. As most of the buildings at the police station are protected by the National Monuments Act. They should be scientifically documented prior to blasting as there is a possibility of flying rubble damaging them during blasting operations.

The remains of a farm school and residence across the road from the police station were also investigated. The school site is of local historic significance as the original and oldest buildings have been demolished. These buildings will not be in any danger of being damaged as they are located too far away from the actual blasting sites. It is therefore recommended that mining may commence.

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A SURVEY OF CULTURAL RESOURCES IN THE PROPOSED COAL MINING AREAS

1. AIMS OF THE SURVEY

This survey aimed to locate, identify, evaluate and document the sites, objects and structures of archaeological, historical and cultural significance within the borders of two 'mini-pits', which are to be mined at some time in the future (see Figure 1). The assignment was carried out on the request of **Kriel Colliery**.

2. CONDITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

- It is not the aim of the study to write a history of the farm Onverwacht, the school or the police station.
- Some of the buildings in the study area are older than 50 years and are therefore protected under the National Monuments Act (Act 28 of 1969 as amended).
- The Museum is not responsible for not identifying cultural remains that are normally invisible from the surface and may be exposed by future excavations, blasting or natural erosion.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Preliminary investigation

3.1.1 Survey of the literature

A survey of all 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 list of references.

The Archives of the South African Police at KOMPOL Building in Pretoria were consulted for information on the history of the Kriel Police Station.

The Archives at the Transvaal Education Department's Museum in Pretoria were consulted for information on the farm school on the farm Onverwacht 70 IS.

3.1.2 Sources

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

3.1.3 Other sources

In addition, the relevant topocadastral and other maps were studied.

3.2 Field survey

The survey was conducted according to generally accepted archaeological practices, and was aimed at locating all possible sites and occurrences. The study area was divided into blocks, using natural and artificial topographical elements. Within each block, all areas considered to have potential for human use were investigated.

3.3 Documentation

All identified sites, occurrences and structures were documented according to the general standards accepted by the profession. The coordinates of the locality were determined by means of the **Global Positioning System (GPS)**¹ and plotted on a map. This information was added to the ADRC.

The sites of the police station and school were inspected on foot, and photographs were taken of the remaining buildings for report purposes.

4. STUDY AREA

The area under investigation (Figure 1) is in the form of two blocks of land, divided by a road running through it. Generally speaking, this is gently rolling highveld, with the most important geographical features being the rivers. No hills, rocky outcrops or caves are present. It is assumed that any possible habitation of the area in the past would have taken place close to the water, but in this particular case these areas can be classified as wetland, which is not suitable for human habitation. Most of the rest of the area under consideration is subjected to intensive agricultural activities, with the result that any archaeological indicators visible on the surface would have been destroyed or disturbed out of context.

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 to correlate this with reference to the physical environment before plotting it on the map.

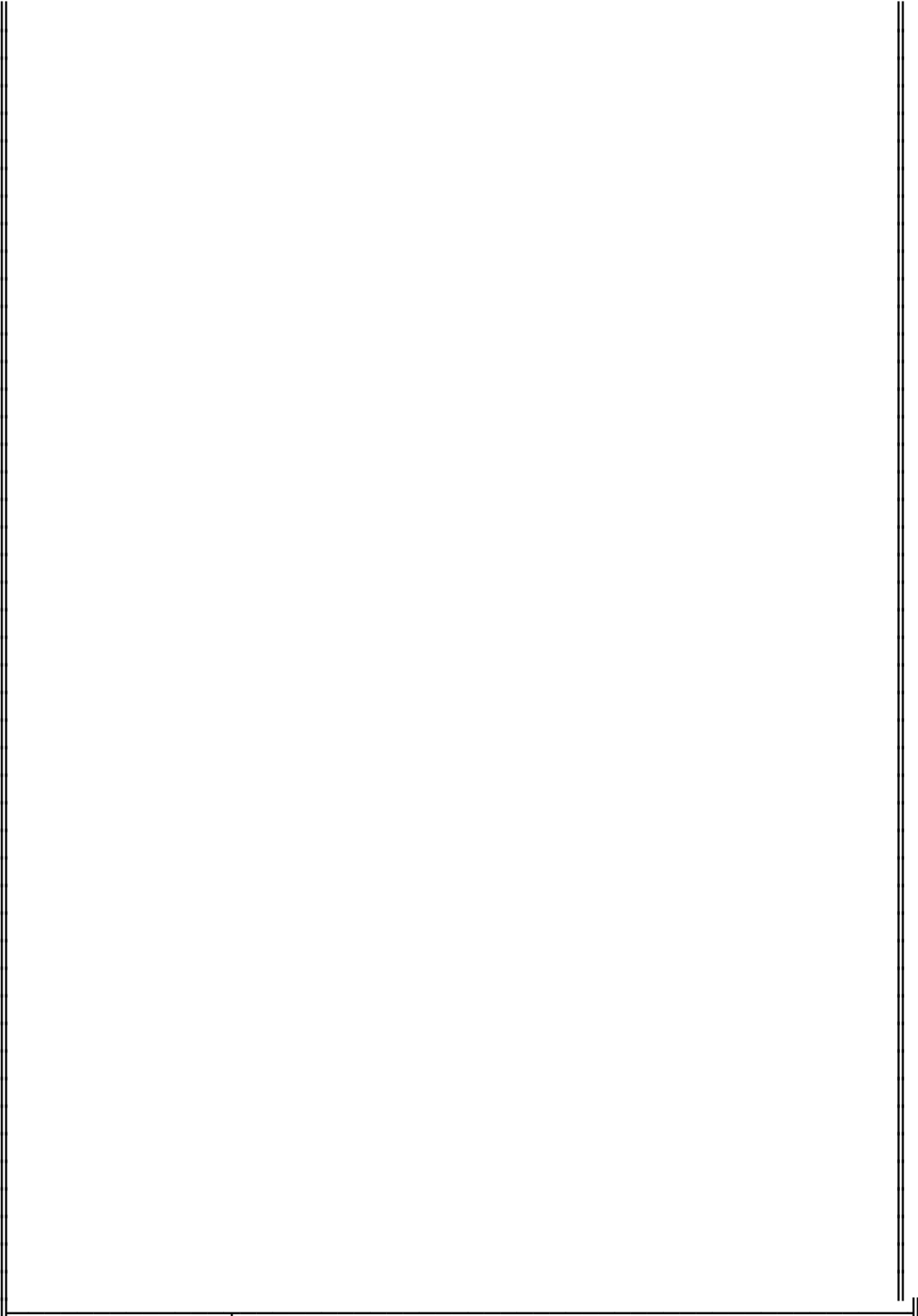


Figure 1: Map showing the location of the area investigated

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5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

During the time the survey was done, the area of the two proposed mini-pits was covered by maize fields, making the identification of any site, object or feature of archaeological significance very difficult. Conversely, any such sites, objects or features, at least to the depth of about 0,75m, would either be destroyed, disturbed or moved out of their original context by ploughing. Spot checks were done in the maize fields, but no Archaeological remains were found.

6. HISTORICAL SITES

6.1 Police station

Location

The police station is situated approximately 3 km from the town of Kriel on the farm Onverwacht 70 IS. It is not part of the farmstead and is isolated from any other buildings or settlements. The nearest other buildings are the old farm school and house about a kilometre away.

(GPS: 26° 16' 05" S; 29° 14' 14.4" E)

Site description (Fig 2)

The complex currently consists of thirteen buildings. According to the documentary evidence, some of these date back to 1902 and the others were erected since then. They differ in style and building material (from Victorian wood-and-iron to typical government designed red brick vernacular buildings erected during the 1960's). The settlement is currently used for residential purposes and all police related activities have ceased to exist on site. The buildings are the only links to the site's former use.

Thirteen buildings and structures were identified on the site (23/04/1996):

- 1 - residential unit of brick and clay
- 2 - structure of steel posts and chicken mesh, used as a chicken run
- 3 - wood and iron building used for residential purposes, but formerly used as a store room
- 4 - galvanised sheet iron IBR-profile toilet
- 5 - galvanised sheet iron S-profile toilet
- 6 - wood and iron dwelling (ca 1902) still in use
- 7 - water tanks on steel pedestal
- 8 - wood and iron residential unit, formerly used as a store room
- 9 - wood and iron residential unit, originally used as charge offices (ca 1902)
- 10 - wood and iron residential unit, originally used as a cell
- 11 - wood and iron residential unit, originally used as a cell
- 12 - face brick residential unit, originally used as a court room (ca 1965)

13 - plastered brick residential unit

Residents and users

The land belongs to the Department of Works and the buildings were originally the responsibility of the South African Police Services.

The buildings are currently inhabited by black people who work on neighbouring farms and at the nearby power station.

At the time of the 1991 report (of the South African Police Services), the buildings were inhabited by married members of the Police. They finally vacated the site at the end of August 1991.

Short history

1896-1902 Period of origin of the oldest buildings (wood and iron)

1911 Police Post's name changes from "Onverwacht Police Post" to "Kriel Police Station"

1948 Settlement consists of 12 buildings

- 1 - married quarters
- 2 - store room next to house (see 1)
- 3 - outbuilding for petrol storage
- 4 - charge office
- 5 - single cell
- 6 - two single cells
- 7 - garage and storeroom
- 8 - motor cycle garage
- 9 - single quarters
- 10 - "native" toilet
- 11 - "european" toilet
- 12 - Male quarters toilet

1948 Addition of kitchen and messroom for single constables to the charge office

1952 Another store room for petrol was erected

1958 Proposal to erect another garage and a rondavel behind the married quarters

1966 Letter from the Sectional Commissioner of Police Middelburg to the Commissioner of Police to have the Kriel Police station closed.

1972 Letter to the Quarter Master of the SAP in Pretoria saying that the Department of Works has inspected the police station and that the buildings were in no condition to be renovated

1991 Letter from the Office of the District Commissioner to the Regional Commissioner suggesting that the Station should become a museum

1991 Decision not to develop the site into a museum

1996 The National Cultural History Museum was asked by AMCOAL to assess the buildings as part of the client's Environmental Management Programme

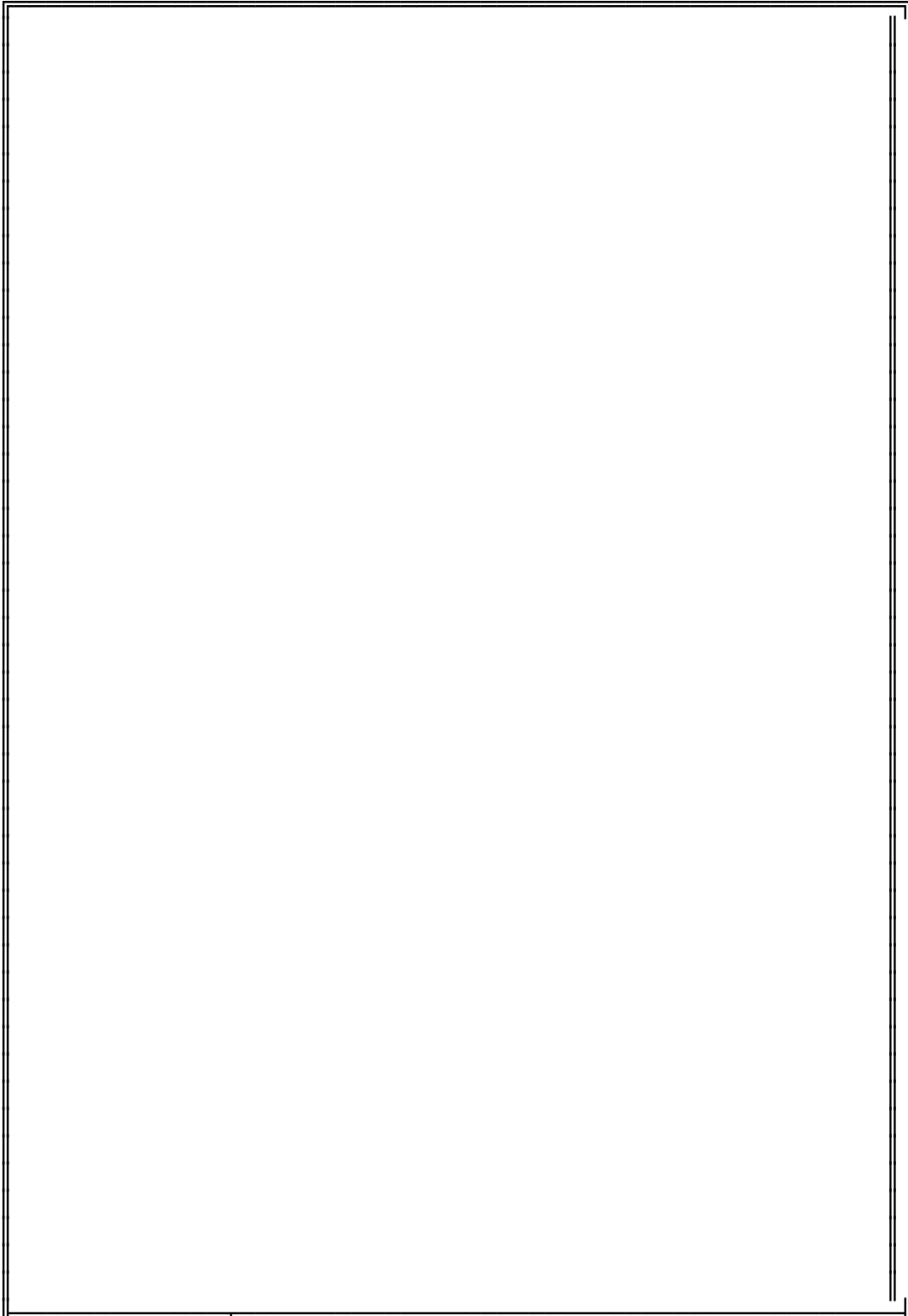


Figure 2: Map showing the layout of the buildings at the old police station

Assessment

The site and buildings are of historic value. The architectural value of the buildings also add to the site's significance. Although the site cannot be associated with a particular historic person or group, it has been the only Police Post in the region since the turn of the century and must have been a landmark at the time and played an important role in keeping the peace in the region. Adding to its regional importance is the fact that most of the buildings are older than 50 years and are therefore protected by the National Monuments Act.

The wood-and-iron buildings are the only examples of their kind, according to the knowledge of the Museum, associated with police posts dating as far back as the turn of the century still to be found in the south eastern Transvaal. These buildings are of architectural significance due to their age, their building materials, the way they have been constructed and their architectural integrity.

The buildings are of little economic value to the landowner but of high economic value to the people using the facilities for accommodation. It is therefore necessary to make these people part of the decisionmaking process.

6.2 School

Location

The site also occurs on the farm Onverwacht 70 IS and is located across the road and about a kilometre away from the Police Station.

(GPS: 26° 16' 08" S; 29° 14' 00" E)

Site description

The site is not well-demarcated with fences, gates and entrances and only two of the buildings remained: a residential dwelling and a school building. The gardens have been untended for an unknown number of years, and grass has covered the flower beds and foot paths.

Although the dwelling is in usable structural condition (no major structural cracks) it has been empty for some time (exact period unknown) and has been systematically vandalised since it was deserted. Doors, windows, wash basins, shelves and other fixtures have been removed. The house will only be habitable after a great deal of renovation work. The roof is still intact which suggests that the house is sometimes used as a temporary overnight facility.

The school building is in fairly good condition and it seems as if it is also occasionally used for an unknown purpose. This has ensured that it has not been vandalised and that

the roof has been left intact.

Short history

Although it is not the aim of this report to write a complete history of the site it is necessary to reflect some of the highlights of the school's history, found in the available documents, as these will give an indication of the types of features associated with the history of the site.

- 1903 Construction of a wood and iron school-dwelling house and a hostel (a second building) on the farm Onverwacht.
- 1915 Demolition of the hostel
- 1918 Trees were planted on the school grounds
- 1927 The existence of a wood and iron outdoor toilet was mentioned and the inspector of schools proposed the construction of another two, one for boys and one for girls. The construction of a windmill (windpomp) was mentioned.
- 1928 Budget for the construction of a new school building was approved.
- 1930 New school building was erected
- 1935 Willow trees were planted
- 1942 Record of the buildings on the site: one school building consisting of two rooms, a separate wood and iron building formerly used as school and a separate teachers dwelling. Pine and 33 fruit trees were planted.
- 1945 50 fruit trees were planted. A new cement water reservoir was built and tanks installed under the gutters.
- 1948 The construction of a new teachers' dwelling was started, and the construction of a new office and storeroom in the next year (1949) was approved. 120 fruit trees, 50 roses and 250 dahlia bulbs are planted.
- 1958 Tennis courts were laid out
- 1959 Athletics track was laid out
- 1963 Prefabricated classroom was erected to be used as a library

Assessment

The site and buildings are of some historic significance. Although the school was not of international, national or provincial importance, it played an important role in the lives of the rural people who attended this school. As the era of farm schools has long passed, the site with its remains is the only evidence of a bygone era and may have a great deal of emotional value for some of the older farmers in the district. None of the buildings are older than 50 years, and they are therefore not protected by the National Monuments Act.

The buildings are of little architectural value as they do not represent an important building type, style, period or the work of a major architect or builder. They also cannot be described as prototypes displaying fine architectural details or workmanship.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

None of the sites will be directly affected by the proposed mining but, because the buildings of the Police Station are protected by the National Monuments Act, it is recommended that they be scientifically recorded prior to blasting activities. This is so that, in the case of an accident or mishap, the buildings may be repaired afterwards.

The recording of the sites (location, layout and planted vegetation) and individual buildings according to scientific standards encompasses the following:

- * The sites and buildings be surveyed and measured.
- * Plans, elevations, sections and details of the buildings be drawn to scale.
- * Buildings and details be photographed (with a scale bar) on slides.
- * The sites, buildings, elevations, sections and details be described in architectural terms
- * All the records be bound into a report.
- * Copies of the report be sent to all the major stakeholders to be preserved in their official archives.
- * The buildings be left on site.

8. CONCLUSION

The police station and farm school site is of historical significance, while the police station site has buildings that are of architectural value. The National Cultural History Museum is of the opinion that mining may commence on the condition that the buildings on the police station site be recorded according to scientific standards prior to blasting.

9. REFERENCES

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9.2 Unpublished documents

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TEDM, Inspection report 1918

"	"	1927
"	"	1928
"	"	1930
"	"	1933
"	"	1935
"	"	1936
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"	"	1961
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Police station

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SAPSM, 1/1/3/(1): Col Labuscagne to Major HS Pienaar, 29 August 1991.

Plans

SAPSM, Site Plan, 1948 (June)

SAPSM, Plan Building, 1949 (November)

SAPSM, Site Plan, 1952

SAPSM, Site Plan, 1958 (November)

SAPSM, Plan Building, 1960 (November)

SAPSM, Site Plan, 1965

SAPSM, Site Plan, 1970

10. RESEARCH TEAM

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