

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE BURNSTONE GOLD
MINE, MPUMALANGA**

A Phase I report prepared for Knight Presold

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Burnstone Project area, including the shaft, mine complex and tailings dam, was examined for archaeological sites. Although there were some Middle Stone Age artefacts, the Project area does not have sites of archaeological significance. The only area of interest is an African cemetery near the plant. The cemetery is still used and therefore has high social significance. Rather than reburial, the cemetery should be protected and left undisturbed.

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INTRODUCTION

Southgold Pty (Ltd) intends to develop a gold mine on the farm Brakfontein 513 IR, just east of Balfour. Known as the Burnstone Project, the development includes a shaft and plant complex in one zone and a tailings dam in another zone. In keeping with the National Heritage Resources Act (Act, No. 25 of 1999), the environmental coordinators for the project, Knight Priesold, commissioned Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to examine the two project zones for graves and archaeological sites.

METHOD

One ARM staff visited Burnstone on 21 May 2005 in the company of Ms Joanna Goeller from Knight Piesold. Ms Delme van den Berg, also of Knight Piesold, showed the team the preferred areas for the plant complex and tailings dam. The team traversed on foot the two designated areas. For the tailings dam, the team followed existing farm roads, while the route across the plant complex was random. Sites were recorded with a hand-held GPS instrument and then transferred to the 1 : 50 000 map 2628 DA Balfour (Figure 1).

For this project, five criteria determine site significance: integrity of deposit (primary versus secondary context), depth of deposit, number and variety of features, uniqueness and potential to answer present research questions. Following these criteria, sites with no significance do not require further consideration, low significance may require mitigation, sites with medium significance will require mitigation while sites with high significance should not be disturbed at all. Historic graves automatically have medium significance in this scheme and high social significance.

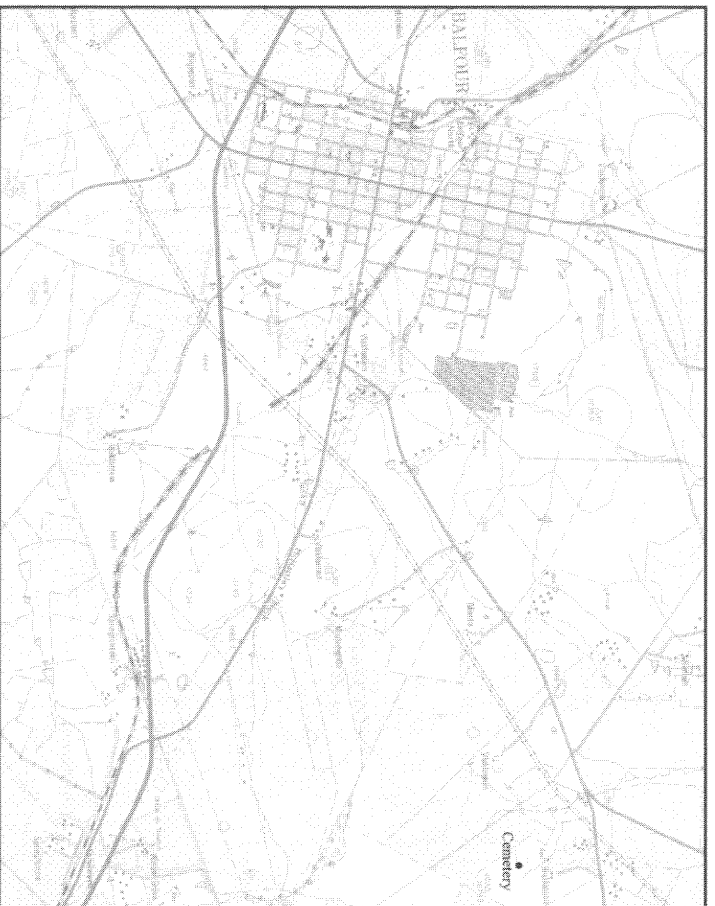


Figure 1. Location of historic cemetery.

BASELINE ASSESSMENT

Throughout the area vegetation was thick and ground visibility therefore low. Some Middle Stone Age (ca. 250 000 to 25 000 years ago) artefacts lay on the surface near the trig beacon (403) in the proposed plant area. They were made out of a grey quartzite that probably originated from the pebbly conglomerate forming the bedrock there. These artefacts have *no significance*.

A large (about 40 x 45 m) African cemetery (26 38 56.5S 28 40 05.2E) stands down slope, northwest of the trig beacon. It contains some 100 graves: at least 10 have inscribed headstones, representing among others the Moshini, Sibanyoni, Skhosana and Simelane families. They date from 1933 to 2001 and thus are protected under Section 36 of the National Heritage Resources Act. Freshly cut grass shows that the cemetery is still visited. It has *high social significance*.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Section 36 of the National Heritage resources Act prevents the destruction of the cemetery, but it may be moved. Although physically possible, reburial will be difficult, and it will be of great concern to descendent communities. In terms of the relevant legislation, descendants must be found (some should still be in the area), they must agree to the removal and they must select the site of reburial. Furthermore, reburial will be costly. Among other costs, each grave with a headstone should have its own hearse and its own new grave plot (Unmarked remains can be reburied in a mass grave).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of the difficulties and costs, we recommend that the cemetery is fenced and left undisturbed. The Mine should also allow right of access at reasonable times to the descendants.

SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPACTS

If the cemetery is destroyed, the consequences would be huge: the impact would be severe, irreversible, permanent, and of national concern. If, on the other hand, the cemetery was fenced and access allowed, then there would be no impact at all (Table 1.).

Table 1. Significance assessment.

Potential impact	Project Activity	Significance before			Significance after										
		Mitigation			Mitigation										
		M	R	D	S	P	Total	SP	M	R	D	S	P	Total	SP
		Pre-construction													
Cemetery removal	Plant area	5	5	5	1	5	90	high	0	0	0	0	0	0	none
		Construction													
Cemetery removal	Plant area	5	5	5	1	5	90	high	0	0	0	0	0	0	none
		Operational													
Cemetery removal	Plant area	5	5	5	1	5	90	high	0	0	0	0	0	0	none
		Closure													
Cemetery removal	Plant area	5	5	5	1	5	90	high	0	0	0	0	0	0	none

CONCLUSION

The cemetery is the only site of archaeological or historical interest in the Burnstone Project area. With its mitigation, there are no heritage reasons why the development should not proceed.