

**A SURVEY OF CULTURAL RESOURCES IN THE
MAQUASA COAL MINE AREA, EASTERN TRANSVAAL**

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REPORT: 95KH03

Date of survey: May 1995

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SUMMARY

A survey of cultural resources in the Maquasa Coal Mine area, Eastern Transvaal

A survey of the Maquasa mine area, in the Eastern Transvaal, was undertaken with the aim of identifying all objects, features and structures of archaeological, historical and cultural importance.

Although a number of features were identified, none of these were deemed to be of cultural historical importance and they therefore present no problem to the proposed development. However, conflict might arise if there are burials associated with any of the contemporary settlements in the area.

OPSOMMING

'n Opname van kultuurhulpbronne in die Maquasa Steenkoolmyng gebied, Oos-Transvaal

'n Opname van die gebied van die Maquasa mynprojek in die Oos-Transvaal is gedoen met die doel om alle voorwerpe, verskynsels en strukture van argeologiese en kultuurhistoriese belang te identifiseer.

Alhoewel 'n aantal verskynsels in die omgewing geïdentifiseer is, word nie een daarvan as van kultuurhistoriese belang geag nie en skep dit dus nie 'n probleem vir die beplande ontwikkeling nie. Konflik mag egter ontstaan as dit blyk dat daar grafte is wat met enige van die nedersettings wat tans in die gebied voorkom, geassosieer kan word.

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A SURVEY OF CULTURAL RESOURCES IN THE MAQUASA COAL MINE AREA, EASTERN TRANSVAAL

1. AIMS OF THE SURVEY

This survey aimed to locate, identify, evaluate and document the sites, objects and structures of cultural importance within the borders of the **Maquasa Mining Project** area in the Eastern Transvaal. The assignment was carried out on the request of **Walmsley Environmental Consultants**.

2. CONDITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

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

- For this survey **cultural resources** are taken to include all physical manmade as well as natural occurrences, that are associated with human activity. This includes 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 site and artifacts are determined by means of their historical, social, aesthetic and scientific values in relation to their uniqueness, condition of preservation and research potential. It must be kept in mind that these various aspects are not mutually exclusive and that the evaluation of any site is done with reference to any number of these.
- Following on the former, it is not the purpose of this report to write a history of the area, based on the results of the survey, but purely to **list** and **evaluate** what was found.
- All recommendations are made with reference to the **National Monuments Act, Act 28 of 1969**, as amended.

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 below.

3.1.2 Data sources

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

3.1.3 Other sources

The relevant topocadastral and other maps were also studied.

3.2 Field survey

The next step was to visit the area to be surveyed. The survey team was orientated on site by Mr Attie Fourie of Savmore Colliery, in relation to the mining plan, beacons and borders of the survey area (see Figure 1), security, etc.

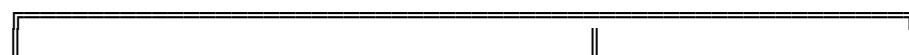
The survey was conducted according to generally accepted archaeological practices, and was aimed at locating all possible sites, objects and structures. This was done by dividing the whole area into blocks, making use of natural and manmade topographical elements. Within each block, all areas considered to have a potential for human use were investigated. Special attention was given to outcrops, cliffs were inspected for rock shelters, while stream beds and unnatural topographical occurrences such as trenches, holes and clusters of exotic (and indigenous) trees were investigated.

3.3 Documentation

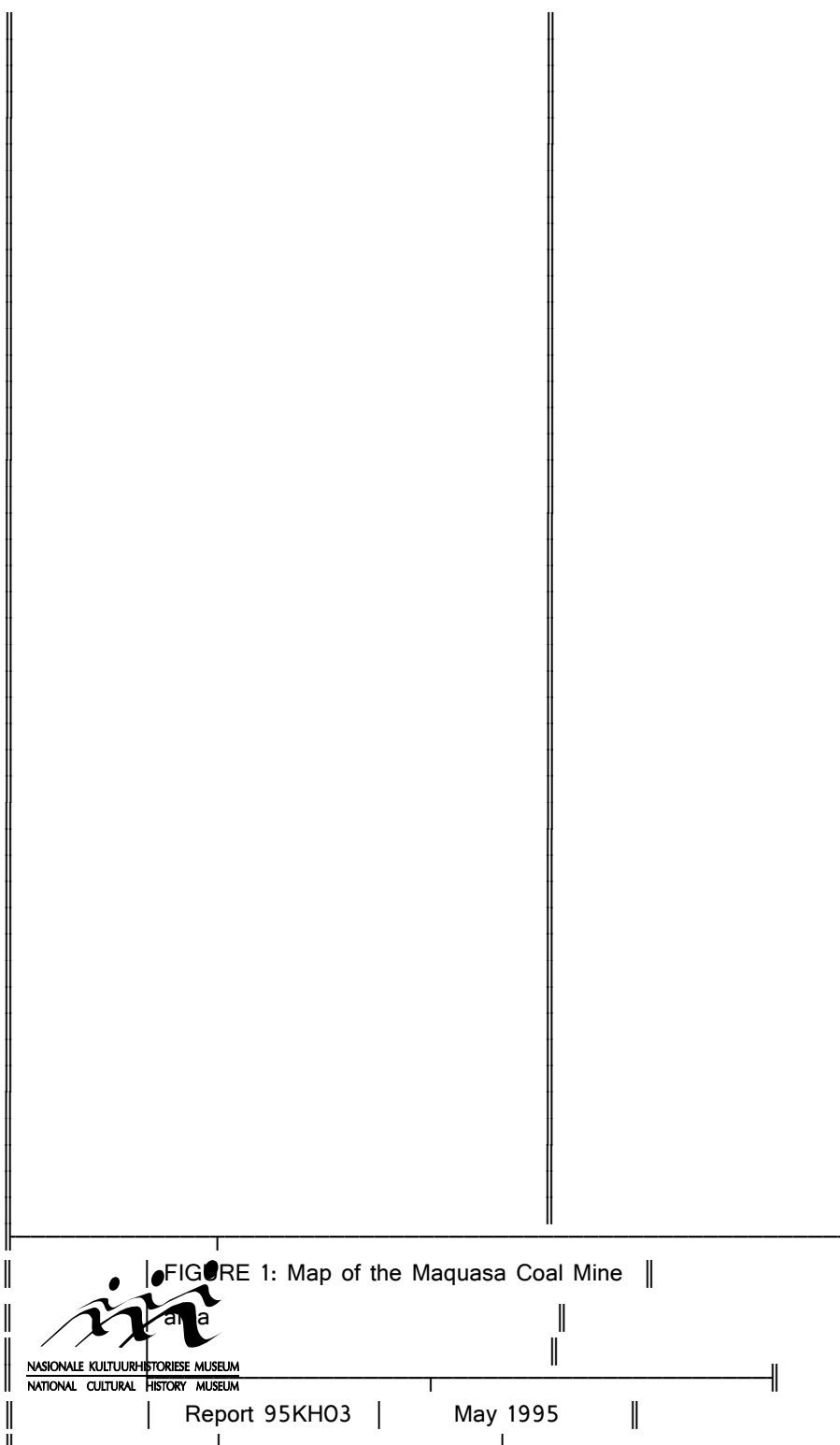
All sites, objects and structures identified were documented according to the general standard accepted by the profession. The specific coordinates of the locality were determined by means of the **Global Positioning System (GPS)**¹ and plotted on a map. This information was added to the information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

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA SURVEYED

The site surveyed is located on part of the farm Rooikop 18HT (up to the Gude River), part of Rhoodekraal 21HT and the whole of Maquasa 19HT, in the



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.



Wakkerstroom district of Eastern Transvaal Province (Figure 1).

5. DISCUSSION

From a cultural historical point of view, very little was found in the area surveyed. The findings can be summarised as follows:

- A number of rock shelters were identified (eg Figure 1, no. 1 & 2; Appendix A:1 & 2). None of these, however, show any sign of prolonged human habitation.
- A few potsherds, probably dating to the Late Iron Age, were found in an outcrop of dolerite (Figure 1, no. 5; Appendix A:5), but are judged to be too few to be of any significance.
- Two old farmsteads were identified (Figure 1, no 3 & 4; Appendix A: 3 & 4), but are not considered to be of cultural historical importance.

Apart from the foregoing, a number of settlements occupied by Swazi-speaking farm labourers were identified in the area. A few, recently abandoned, were also found. These settlements are judged to be similar to those still found over much of the general Piet Retief area, and are therefore not deemed to be unique or of much cultural significance.

Judging from the large number of Swazi-speaking people living here, and the length of occupation of some of the sites, the question of whether there are any graves associated with these settlements arises. In the past, it was common practice to bury the dead in the cattle byre. No graves were noticed during the survey, but this factor should be kept in mind when mining takes place.² Fortunately, none of these settlements occur in the area that is to be strip-mined and therefore should not cause any problems.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following from the above, it can be concluded that there are no known sites, objects or structures of archaeological, historical or cultural importance within the borders of the mining project area that will prevent mining activities from taking place.

It must be kept in mind that archaeological material usually occurs below ground, making its detection very difficult. We suggest that, should the development continue, the developers be alerted to this fact. If any indication of archaeological material is found, the relevant authorities (i.e. a museum or the National Monuments Council) should be contacted immediately.

² It is very difficult to establish the existence of such graves, as the fear of witchcraft always plays a part when this topic is investigated by outsiders.

7. REFERENCES

7.1 Unpublished sources

7.1.1 Data base:

Archaeological Data Recording Centre, (former) Tvl section, National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria.

7.2 Published sources

7.2.1 Books and journals

Holm, S.E. 1966. Bibliography of South African Pre- and Protohistoric

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Van Warmelo, N.J. 1977. Anthropology of Southern Africa in Periodicals to

1950.
Pretoria:
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7.2.2 Maps

1:50 000 Topocadastral maps - 2630CD Panbult, 2730AB Dirkiesdorp

8. PROJECT TEAM

J A van Schalkwyk - survey and report

M Naude - survey and report

S Smith - language editing

APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESULTS

List of sites referred to in the text and indicated on the map (Figure 1)

1. Rock shelter

Description: A small rock shelter in a sandstone cliff. In one corner of the shelter, there are signs of pecking by means of a claw hammer on the rock face, covering an area of approximately 40 cm x 20 cm.

Location: Maquasa 19HT

GPS: S 27° 01' 35.3" (X 2990482.785)
E 30° 21' 41.6" (Y 63356.560)

Discussion: The impression created by the markings in this shelter is that something was deliberately removed from the rock face. As the sandstone here does not differ from that found over the rest of the survey area, it is doubtful that this took place purely by chance. The reason it is mentioned in the report is that it once might have contained something of cultural significance (eg. rock paintings), but no longer. No other indication of human habitation was identified in the shelter.

2. Rock shelter

Description: A very large shelter, with a foot path leading through it.

Location: Maquasa 19HT

GPS: S 27° 02' 00.1" (X 2991245.207)
E 30° 21' 47.9" (Y 63179.038)

Discussion: One of a number of similar shelters in the area. What led us to refer to this one particularly, is the footpath going through it. It was thought that it might be used for initiation or similar rituals, but no further indication of human use of the shelter could be found.

3. Farmstead

Description: Remains of a farm house, outbuildings and garden.

Location: Rooikop 18HT

GPS: S 27° 00' 45.8" (X 2988947.711)
E 30° 21' 58.3" (Y 62903.907)

Discussion: This is in all probability the remains of the old Rooikop farmstead. From our briefing, we are led to believe that this site actually falls outside of the area to be mined. From a cultural historical perspective, however, it is evaluated to

have no cultural significance.

4. Farmstead

Description: A number of large bluegum trees, together with fruit trees. Amongst the trees remains of stone walling of recent origin, is located.

Location: Maquasa 19HT

GPS: S 27° 02' 50.8" (X 2992803.361)
E 30° 22' 04.5" (Y 62713.640)

Discussion: This may also have been part of a farmstead. It is evaluated as having no cultural significance.

5. Pottery

Description: Six pieces of pottery, probably representing a single vessel, located amongst an outcrop of dolomite.

Location: Maquasa 19HT

GPS: S 27° 03' 32.6" (X 2994077.334)
E 30° 23' 37.2" (Y 60152.538)

Discussion: No other feature, such as stone walling or middens was found in the area. Furthermore, as no diagnostic features such as decorations or lip sherds were found, these are judged to be of very little significance and can be disregarded.