

Recommendation  
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Issue l.o.p. i.to. S.35.

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## Agency for Cultural Resource Management

Specialists in Archaeological Studies and Heritage Resource Management

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03 March, 2008

**Att:** Ms Antionet van Wyk  
General Manager: Infrastructure & Special Projects  
Parks Division  
South African National Parks  
PO Box 787  
Pretoria  
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Dear Ms van Wyk

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT PROPOSED UPGRADING AND RENOVATION OF RHENOSTERKOP AND RIETFONTEIN SE LANGHUIS HERITAGE BUILDINGS AGULHAS NATIONAL PARK WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE

#### 1. Introduction and brief

South African National Parks (SANParks)<sup>1</sup>, requested that the Agency for Cultural Resource Management conduct an archaeological impact assessment for the proposed upgrading and renovation of the Rhenosterkop and Rietfontein se Langhuis heritage buildings in the Agulhas National Park in the Overberg region of the southern Cape.

SANParks intends upgrading and renovating the existing Rhenosterkop buildings into three tourism accommodation units, while Rietfontein se Langhuis buildings will be renovated to provide six bed tourism accommodations. Services for the proposed project include water, sewerage and power. Existing access roads on both properties will also be upgraded.

Heritage Western Cape (Belcom) has already given approval for the proposed upgrading, restoration and renovation of the Rhenosterkop and Rietfontein se Langhuis heritage buildings, by Gawie Fagan Architects.

The aim of this study is to locate any pre-colonial and historical archaeological remains that may be negatively impacted by the proposed project, to assess the significance of the potential impacts and to propose measures to mitigate against the impacts.

<sup>1</sup> SANParks is represented by Ms Antionet van Wyk Fax: (012) 426 5446



## **2. Terms of reference**

The Terms of Reference for the archaeological assessment were to:

- Identify any pre-colonial archaeological remains within the proposed sites;
- Determine the importance of any pre-colonial archaeological remains within the proposed sites;
- Determine and assess the potential impacts of the proposed project on the pre-colonial archaeological remains, and
- Recommend mitigation measures to minimise impacts associated with the proposed project.

## **3. Approach to the study**

The archaeologists brief was to search an area within a 200 m radius of the affected farm werf, including the main access roads to the two properties.

The archaeologist also searched for any historical middens that might occur with the affected farm werf.

The site visit and assessment took place on 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2008.

## **4. The study site**

### **4.1 Rhenosterkop (S 34° 45 356 E 19° 55 820 on map datum WGS 84)**

The heritage buildings on the farm Rhenosterkop were declared a National Monument in 1977. They comprise a collection of pioneer houses, dating back to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Built from limestone, thatch and burnt shells to make lime-wash, the buildings are currently unoccupied, and except for a small barn are still in a fairly good condition (Figures 3-8). The immediate surrounding environment comprises extensive areas covered with Buffalo grass and old wheat fields. There are no significant landscape features on the property.

The totally ruined remains of the original Rhenosterkop farmhouse were located under a large Milkwood tree alongside the main house (Figure 8). According to Ms Emmerentia De Kock of Agulhas National Park (pers. comm.), the original farm building was demolished by the previous owners of the property and the material used to build another house at Springfontein Estate, nearby.

### **4.2 Rietfontein se Langhuis (S 34° 43 950 E 19° 47 182 on map datum WGS 84)**

Dated to about 1755, the thatched farm house and large thatched barn on the Farm Rietfontein were destroyed by a fire in 2004 (Figures 9-12). The farm's buitewerf is still largely in tact, as are the remains of a small kraal built of undressed limestone. The vegetable garden in front of the main house has been overtaken by Buffalo grass. According to Ms De Kock (pers. comm.), several Christian graves occur on the property. These graves will not be affected by the proposed development. The receiving environment comprises extensive areas covered with indigenous Buffalo and Kweek grass. There are no significant landscape features on the property.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Rhenosterkop

No pre-colonial archaeological heritage remains were found during a search of the site and the surrounding environment, including the access road to the farm werf.

No historical middens were located within the farm werf, either.

### 5.2 Rietfontein se Langhuis

Some shellfish fragments, two pieces of bone, several quartz chunks and one shale flake were found in an area between the main house and the barn. The archaeological material is associated with dune mole rat dumps, suggesting that more archaeological remains may be buried under the grass. It is unlikely that these finds represent the remains of an in-situ shell midden. A more likely and plausible explanation is that shell was brought onto the site from the nearby coast, and burnt and used for making lime for lime wash.

No historical middens were located within the farm werf. However, several pieces of white ceramics were found lying around, between the main house and barn. Fragments of marine shell and a few pieces of undecorated ceramics were also found in the old vegetable garden. No decorated ceramics were found, however.

## 6. Impact statement

The impact of the proposed upgrading and renovation of heritage buildings at Rhenosterkop and Rietfontein se Langhuis on important pre-colonial archaeological remains is likely to be **low**.

## 7. Conclusion

The Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment has identified no significant impacts to pre-colonial and historical archaeological material that would need to be mitigated prior to proposed construction activities.

The proposed development should be allowed to proceed as planned.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Kaplan

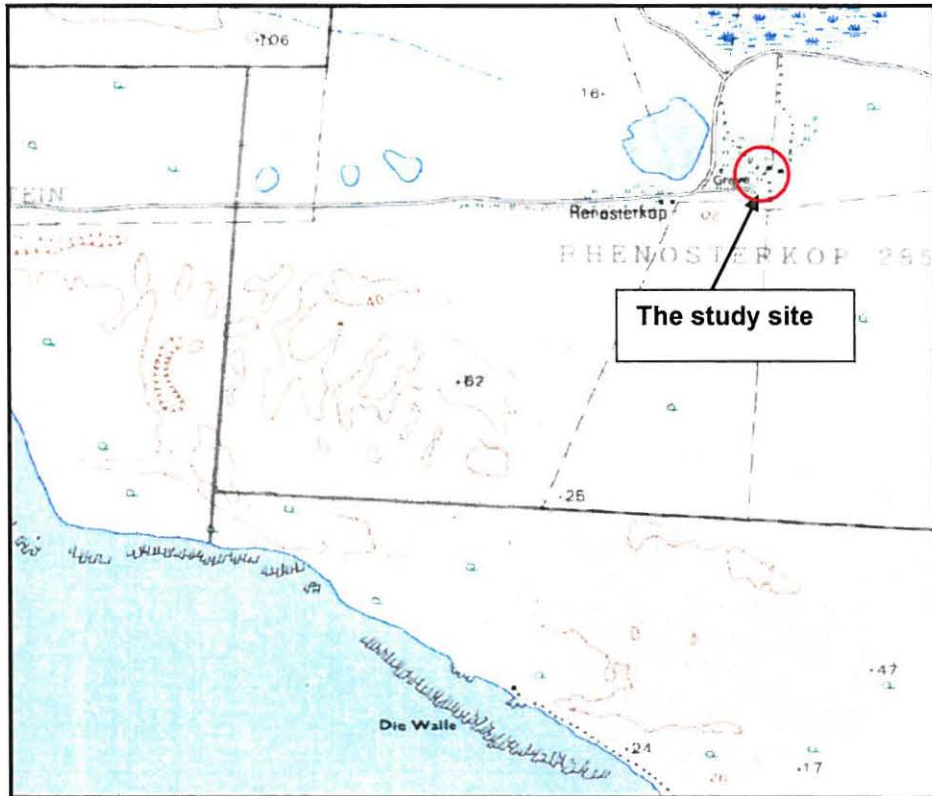


Figure 2. Locality map (3419 DB Elim)

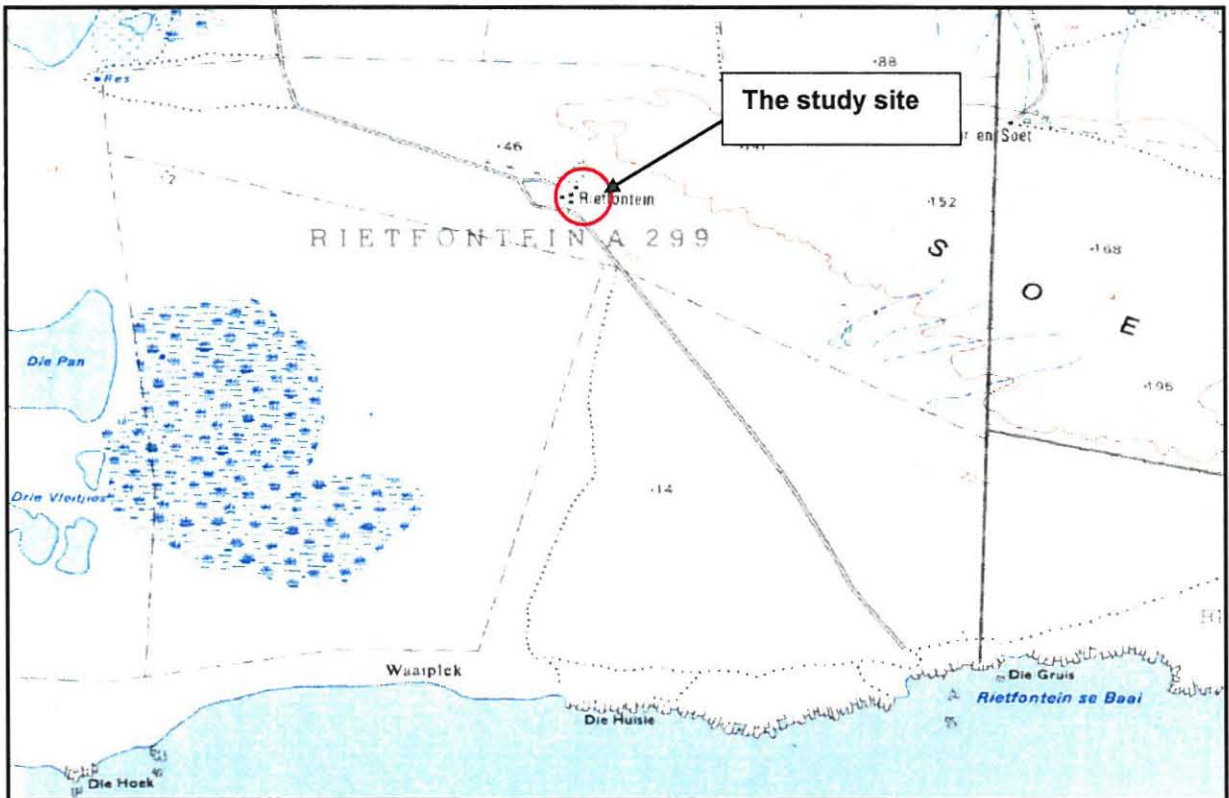


Figure 2. Locality map (3419 DB Elim)



**Figure 3. Rhenosterkop. Main house**



**Figure 6. Rhenosterkop. Receiving environment**



**Figure 4. Rhenosterkop. Shepherd's hut**



**Figure 7. Rhenosterkop. Receiving environment**



**Figure 5. Rhenosterkop. Receiving environment**



**Figure 8. Rhenosterkop. View of main house. Arrow indicates location of ruins of original farmhouse**



**Figure 9. Rietfontein se Langhuis. Burnt out farm building**



**Figure 11. Rietfontein se Langhuis. Access road leading to farm werf**



**Figure 10. Rietfontein se Langhuis. Burnt out barn**



**Figure 12. Rietfontein se Langhuis. Receiving environment**