

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY FOR
SAVEMORE COLLIERY

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY FOR
SAVEMORE COLLIERY**

SYNOPSIS

Six sites were found on Grootlaagte and St Helena farms southwest of Piet Retief. They ranged from Middle Stone Age through Late Iron Age to the recent Historic period. For various reasons none require mitigation now although some should be avoided.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY FOR SAVEMORE COLLIERY

INTRODUCTION

SAVEMORE Colliery, part of the Trans-Natal Coal Corporation, intends to establish a new shaft complex on Grootlaagte (70HT) and St Helena (67HT) farms near Dirkiesdorp, southwest of Piet Retief. This complex will include the shaft and associated buildings, and an access road to the existing SAVEMORE Colliery via the Volksrust/Piet Retief highway. Although the precise route is as yet unknown, it will run northeast of the wetland zone.

On May 5 we met mine personnel at the colliery offices. Mr K Smith and A Smithen outlined the project and took us to the proposed shaft site. During the same day, we examined the shaft area and a 200 metre radius around it, as well as a likely route for the access road. We used maps supplied by the colliery to orient ourselves and then recorded all sites on the 1:50 000 map sheet 2730 AB DIRKIESDORP (Fig. 1). the grass was exceedingly high and thick in some places, but we believe we recorded a representative sample of archaeological sites in the endangered areas.

OBSERVATIONS

A few Middle Stone Age (ca 30 000 to 100 000 years ago) flakes are eroding out of the soil along the stream bank and around a natural sponge just above it. This is the only stone age site we saw, but there could be a few more buried in the area.

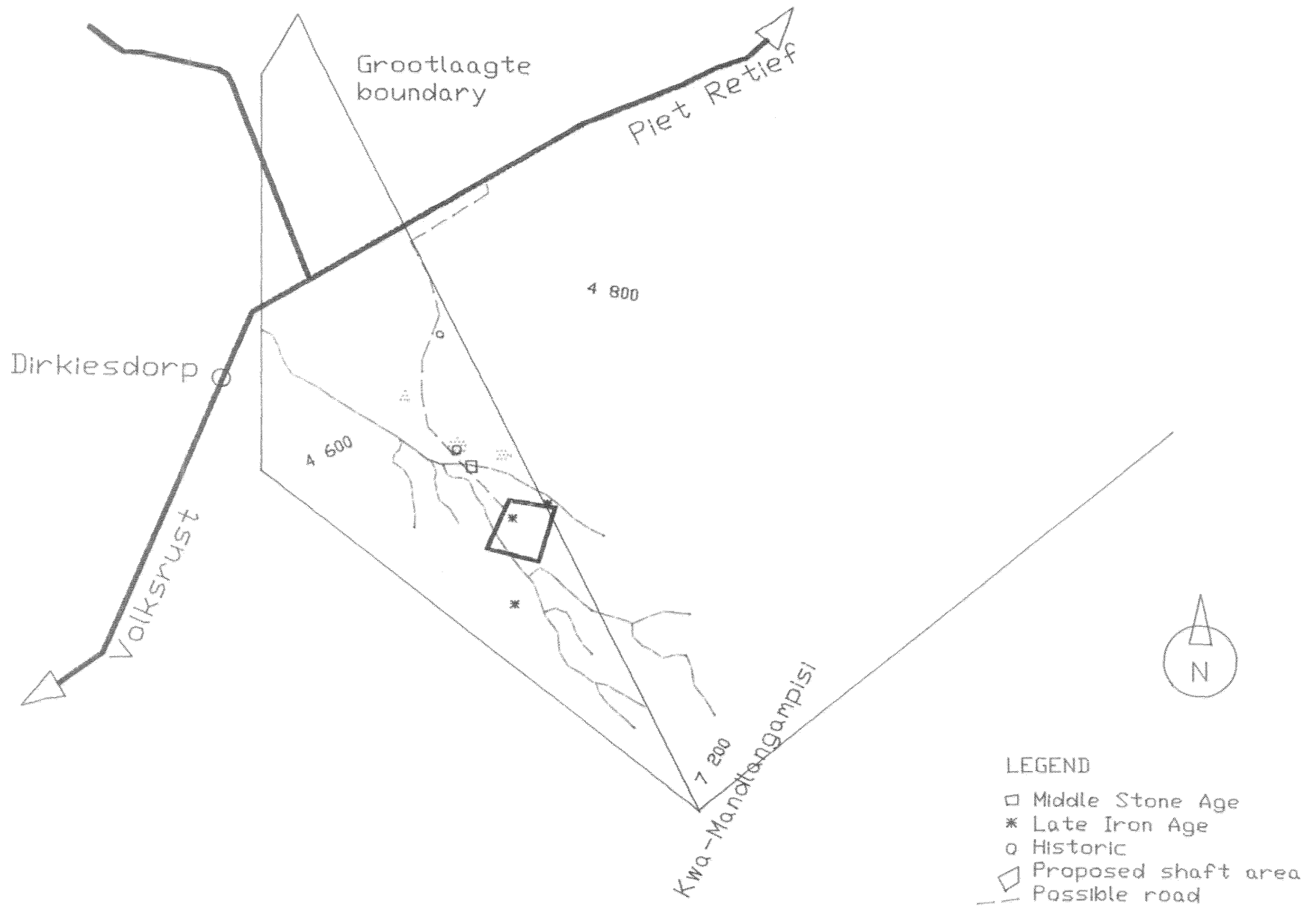


Figure 1. Archaeological sites found in the survey.

Late Iron Age pottery (c 16th to 19th centuries AD) is scattered on the hill slope inside the shaft area. Associated with it are three stone piles that probably served as grainbin foundations in a village. More pottery occurs about 200 metres east and 400 metres south. The latter locality also includes several stone foundations and low kraal walls. Fortunately, this better site is outside the endangered zone.

According to local traditions (passed on by the mine geologist), a Swazi chief called Mandlangampisi had his capital on the neighbouring farm (Kafferkraal) part way down the mountain named after him. He is supposed to have been there from about 1780 to 1840. The pottery scatters and settlement features probably date to this period.

The stone foundations of Historic structures stand in the middle grove of trees along the potential access route (Fig. 1). One structure is rectangular, but only the straight wall of another now remains. A low rectangular kraal, presumably for sheep, stands at the top of the pasture near the boundary of the two principal farms. Exotic weeds mark two areas nearby that must have been associated

RECOMMENDATIONS

These historic sites are not significant, but they have not been properly investigated. Therefore the simplest course of action is to avoid them. Regardless of the route of the access road, the Middle Stone Age scatter is of no consequence.

The Iron Age site in the proposed shaft area is likewise unimportant - especially compared to the better example to the south. Since this better site is outside the endangered zone, it can be preserved as an example of the Swazi settlements. If this better site becomes endangered, it should be fenced. Otherwise, no site requires mitigation.