

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE
WESTERN DEEP LEVELS AND ELANDSRAND MINES**

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SYNOPSIS

Stone Age, Iron Age and Historic sites occur in various areas of the two mine properties. Although Middle Stone Age material is widespread, the concentrated scatters are in Area 1. Iron Age sites are virtually restricted to Area 3, while Historic walling occurs on the ridges of Areas 1, 2 and 4. Some historic buildings stand outside these areas near the southern boundary of Western Deep Levels. The Coetzee homestead requires immediate mitigation, and the Zeederberg Coach stable should be recorded in the near future. Iron Age settlements in Area 3 will be endangered if the Wedella residential area expands to the south.

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INTRODUCTION

Anglo American Corporation requested an archaeological survey of their Western Deep Levels and Elandsrand gold mine properties as part of their Environmental Management Report.

On March 11th Dr Smuts from Anglo introduced staff to the mines. Over a period of five days two to three staff examined four main areas (Fig. 1): 1) Kraalkop Nature Reserve, 2) Unfenced Area, 3) Askop, behind Wedella and 4) Elandsrand Nature Reserve (also called Buffeldoord). Sites were recorded on a 1:15 000 aerial photograph (Fig. 2) provided by Dr Smuts. Long grass prevented a complete coverage, but we were nevertheless able to record a representative archaeological sequence

OBSERVATIONS

AREA 1. KRAALKOP NATURE RESERVE

Stone Age

The road in the south section crosses a low hill capped by indurated shale (Site 12). Scattered within this shale are Middle Stone Age (30 000 to 250 000 years old) flakes and cores. Since formal tools are scarce, this was probably a factory site.

Another MSA factory site (Site 1) is eroding out of an old dirt road next to the modern Johannesburg - Potchefstroom highway. The flakes appear fresher here, but formal tools are also missing. A third site (Site 2) on the south eastern boundary contains a few characteristic blades. (This site also includes a small enigmatic stone circle). Other MSA artifacts occur together with Late Stone Age (c. 1000 to 10 000 years old) material between some historic structures at Site 9.

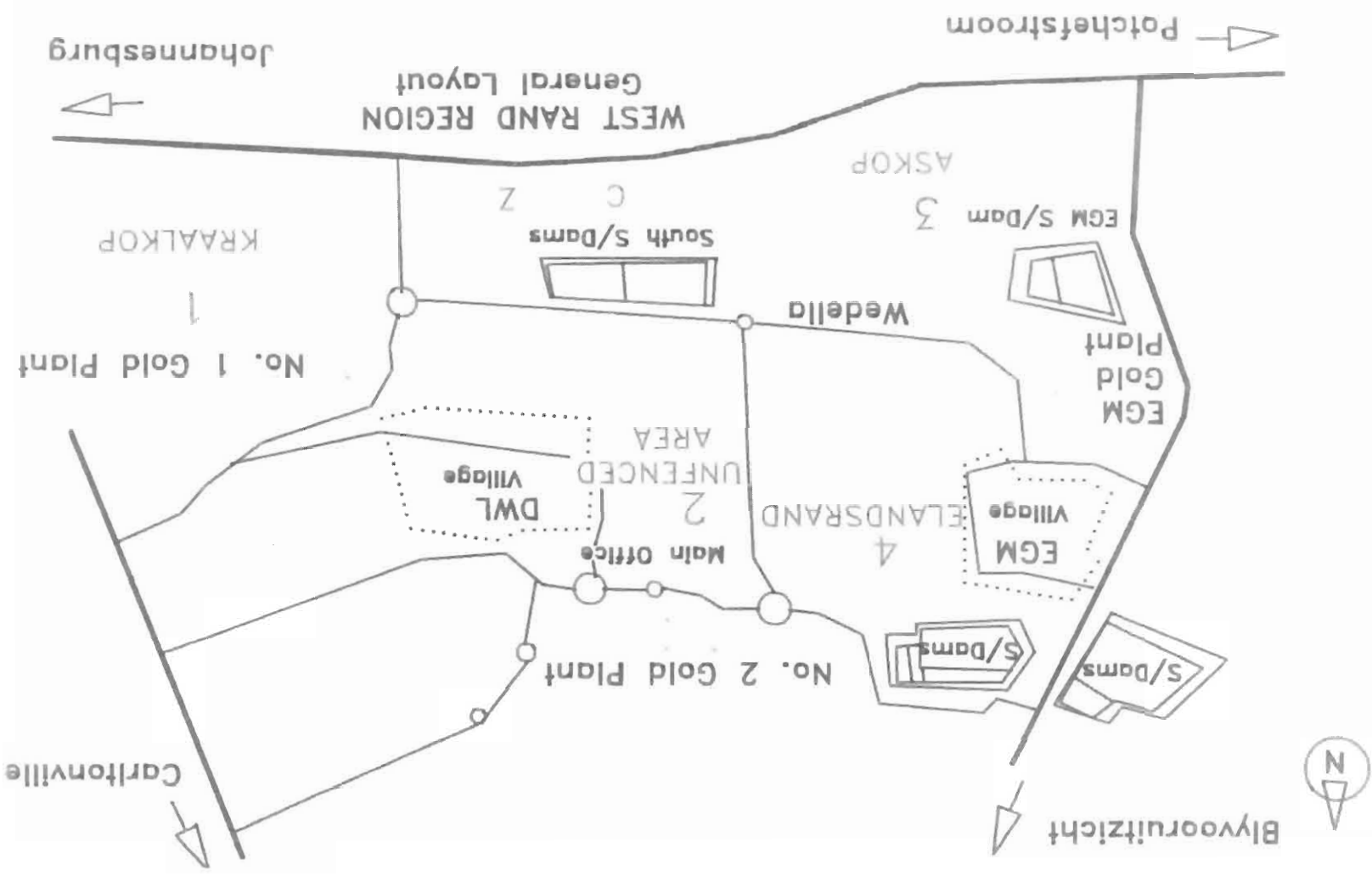


Figure 1. The four main survey areas. (C = Coetzee, Z = Zeederberg)

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OBSERVATIONS

AREA 1. KRAALKOP NATURE RESERVE

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Historic

Site 9 is part of a complex including a graveyard (Site 8), a length of stone walling (Site 10) and two rectangular stone foundations (5x7m and 5x9m). The foundations supported houses made from sun-dried bricks. The largest is divided into three rooms with thick mud floors, and it also possesses a patio. Nearby is an ash mound containing blue glass, thick white glass, blue and white banded porcelain and rusted metal. This material probably dates to the first quarter of this century.

About 150 metres south lies a graveyard (Site 8) that is probably associated with the two houses. Seven graves have headstones, and five others are contained within a rectangular cement frame with a cement headstone. Dates range from 1925 to 1960. Other graves are merely marked by stone piles. All are aligned East/West and are therefore Christian. Presumably, all were farm labours.

Other small and similar graveyards exist at Sites 3, 14 and 1. In the first two all the graves are marked by stone piles and orientated East/West. The arrangement at Site 1, however, is more haphazard. We presume farm labourers were also buried in these cemeteries.

Another historic site (Site 13) is located about 300 metres south of Site 8. It contains the stone foundations of eight rectangular houses made with sun-dried bricks and mud floors. Porcelain fragments suggest this site was contemporaneous with Site 9.

Besides the historic graveyards and house foundations, there are stone kraals in the Reserve. Most are situated on ridge tops, or next to rock outcrops, and incorporate natural rock features in the walls (Sites 4 to 7 and 11). Some of the higher-lying kraals (e.g. Sites 4 and 7) contain rectangular structures with high walls (1.5 - 2m). These rectangular structures were probably built to protect horses against disease. The others probably enclosed sheep and cattle. These other kraals could date back as early as the 1860s and the horse kraals to somewhat later, perhaps during the Anglo-Boer War or when the Zeederberg Coach operated in the area.

AREA 2: UNFENCED AREA

Historic

More historic kraals are present in Area 2. Sites 1 to 6 are marked by low walls

among rock outcrops. Some, such as Site 4, have rectangular shapes, and most are only ten to twenty metres across.

Sites 9 to 11 immediately north of Area 2 also contain rectangular walling or small circular kraals.

Two more historic sites exist immediately south of Area 2 next to Phatakhale. Site 8 contains a rectangular kraal for horses, while Site 7 appears to be a recent reuse of a much older Iron Age settlement.

Dense undergrowth throughout this area made it difficult to determine the full sequence of occupations.

AREA 3: ASKOP

Iron Age

This area behind Wedella is covered with numerous stone-walled settlements dating to the last 500 years. They are all variations of what is called the 'Central Cattle Pattern'; that is, central cattle enclosures are surrounded by a ring of houses and grainbins. The layout of these settlements show that they were occupied by Sotho/Tswana-speaking people.

The earliest type (c. AD 1450 to 1600) is characterised by two low concentric circles: a single central kraal and an outer wall surrounding the entire residential

unit. Site 10, below the survey beacon, includes one good example, and there are probably more in the immediate area.

This type was made by the first black farmers to inhabit the sourveld of the southern Transvaal. Black farmers lived in other parts of South Africa much earlier, but this area was not attractive until the 15th and 16th centuries. Independent climatic data (Tyson & Lindsay 1992) shows that it became wetter and warmer throughout Southern Africa then, and traditional farming was feasible.

Type 2 (c. AD 1650 to 1700) is distinguished by higher walls, several central kraals and small kraals behind the residential zone, against the outer wall. These small kraals probably enclosed sheep and goats. One of these lay on top of the earlier Type 1 at Site 10 and another is nearby (Site 11). A third and larger example is situated about 200 metres southeast (Site 9), and Site 8 may be another example.

The third Type (c. AD 1800) is different from the others in that the outer wall is formed by a series of scallops. Each scallop demarcates the back courtyard of individual households. Four such settlements (Sites 1 to 4) form a line along the ridge with the survey beacon. We noted in situ hut remains and pottery at Site 1, next to the beacon. A cattle lane formed by parallel walls leads up from the southeast to Site 3. Site 4, the largest, appears to have a double arc of scallops. Site 5 below is either an example of this type or Type 2. Otherwise, Type 3 settlements were normally built on ridge tops in defensive positions. This location

was chosen because of the military tension throughout the Transvaal at the beginning of the 19th century.

Historic

A stone-walled site in the valley below (Site 6) had been re used by Europeans and substantially altered. A large rectangular kraal, house mounds and a midden containing glass bottles, metal and coal lie on top of older deposits. The remains of a labourer's house stands to the side. The historic occupation may have lasted for some 50 years, ending in the 1960s.

Site 8 also contains an historic alteration, and there may be more. other stone-walled sites are visible on the aerial photograph, and Area 3 was heavily occupied by black farmers.

A possible Boer War gun emplacement (Site 12) stands on a hill on the northeast boundary overlooking the Wedella residential area.

AREA 4: ELANDSRAND NATURE RESERVE

Historic

The hilly parts of this reserve contain a number of historic stone walls (Sites 1 to 5, 8 to 15). Most are near ridge tops and the walling incorporates natural rock features like the historic sites in Areas 1 and 2. Site 9 is a particularly large

complex. Oval and rectangular kraals cover the ridge, and rusted farm implements are scattered aroundl.

Sites 6 and 7 are sink holes.

OTHER AREAS

The dilapidated remains of the farm owned by Mr Coetzee stand on the south edge of the South Slimes Dam (marked C on Fig. 2). Mr Coetzee left the property in 1984, but the homestead dates back several decades. The stone foundations and thick original walls of the main farm house contrast with a recent addition and suggest the house dates to at least the 1920s. Of the three outside buildings, one was used as a stable: a cobble floor and wooden feeding trough with iron tether rings still exist.

A somewhat earlier building stands near the No. 1 Shaft (marked Z on Fig. 2). As is well known, the Zeederberg Coach line maintained a staging post there 100 years ago. The coach line delivered mail between Johannesburg and Potchefstroom before the railroad was established and every so often kept stables to change horses. The stable near the No. 1 shaft was made with brick under tin. It is possible that the horse kraals on the surrounding ridge date to this period.

These staging posts became focal points for such activities as hotels and

blacksmith shops. The hotel associated with this stable burnt down, and the mines later built a house on its stone foundations.

The groundsmen for Western Deep, Mr Morgan Zeederberg (a grandson of the famous coachman), discovered an early European cemetery to the south of the stables near the Johannesburg - Potchefstroom highway. Headstones bear dates as early as 1904, 1917 and 1918.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Monuments Act (No. 28 of 1969, as amended) extends legal protection to all buildings 50 years or older. In essence the national Monuments Council requires a record of the building before it is destroyed.

The Coetzee homestead will soon be destroyed by the spread of the South Slimes Dams, and it should be recorded. The record should include photographs and ground plans.

The Zeederberg stable is also covered by the Monuments Act, and it is of particular historical significance. The technology exists to restore this mud and brick building, but the cost would be high and probably prohibitive. Consequently the stable should be properly recorded before it collapses completely.

Historic sites in the Kraalkop (Area 1) and Elandsrand (Area 4) nature reserves, are automatically protected, but they should be recorded if they are ever threatened by development. This recommendation also applies to the sites in Area 2.

The Iron Age settlements in Area 3 will be endangered by any major expansion of the Wedella residential area. They should therefore be recorded before any expansion takes place. In this case, archaeologists need to map them and test excavate an example of each type.

None of the Stone Age sites are important. If, however, the MSA factory (site in the Kraalkop Reserve) was ever going to be destroyed, it will be necessary to make a comprehensive surface collection.

All gravestones 50 years or older are also protected by Monuments legislation, and the remaining unmarked graves fall under Common Law. If graves need to be removed to another cemetery, they will also require archaeological mitigation beforehand.