

**REPORT to the SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE RESOURCES
AGENCY**

Reference No. 9/2/00/022/0024
Permit No. 80/02/01/002/44 & 80/02/01/003/51

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Purpose: The removal of charcoal graffiti on rock surfaces around the paintings and the cleaning up of modern braai debris.

Site: Groot Patrysvlei GP 1 (also known as Desecration Shelter)

Site Location: Coordinates: 32 09 06, 18 51 35
Map Sheet: 3218BB Clanwilliam

Owners: John and Sue Berg
Groot Patrysvlei
Clanwilliam District
Western Cape Province

BACKGROUND & HISTORY of SITE

The site is located close to the road which leads from Clanwilliam to the Pakhuis Pass. It is approximately 9 km from Clanwilliam by road and has been known for a long time as a rock art location. It was recorded by the Spatial Archaeology Research Unit at UCT in 1997 under the designation Groot Patrysvlei GP 1. It is also known as Desecration Shelter, a name which reflects its frequent use as a braai centre and as a place which has attracted graffiti.

The site contains a large number of rock paintings with more than 100 individual images. Most of the paintings consist of lines of human figures and arrays of hand prints as well as a few representations of animals. There is an extensive scatter of Later Stone Age artefacts on the terrace fronting the site. There are numerous flakes and chunks of quartz, quartzite, silcrete, crypto-crystalline silicate and hornfels. Formal tools include scrapers and adzes. Other cultural material at the site include pottery, ostrich eggshell fragments, ochre, bone and marine shell.

Unfortunately the site has suffered a long history of abuse. This is probably due to its close proximity to the road and the ease with which it can be reached by car from Clanwilliam. Despite efforts by the owners to prevent access the site is frequently used as a braai spot. At the time of the clean up there were several modern fireplaces and the area in front of the site was strewn with bottles, broken glass, plastic and other litter. The back wall of the site, where the paintings are located, was covered with graffiti consisting mainly of names drawn in charcoal. An unusual feature is the well known depiction of a purple ostrich, made with acrylic paints and placed high on the back wall of the shelter. This was executed at least 25 years ago and the origin and purpose of this carefully produced exhibit are unknown.

The site was previously cleaned up by Janette Deacon, assisted by volunteers from the National Monuments Council and other helpers, on 13 November 1999. The permit holder was present on this occasion and assisted with the clean up. All the new graffiti and rubbish has, therefore, accumulated in a period of a little over two years.

METHODS USED TO REMOVE GRAFFITI AND RUBBISH

The site was cleaned up during a three day period between 14 January and 16 January 2002. The work was carried out by the permit holder and Colette Scheermeyer, also from UCT, assisted by twenty trainees from the Clanwilliam Living Landscape Project. All the trainees are local people of post-school age. The purpose of the exercise was twofold. The first was to remove the charcoal graffiti from the vicinity of the rock art and to remove all modern debris from the area. The second was educational and consisted communicating the value of archaeological remains to the trainees, demonstrating the negative impact of graffiti on a prehistoric site and explaining the basic tenets of heritage resource management. We are also developing an approach of trying to prevent the abuse occurring again which is dealt with later in the report.

The first day was spent in surveying the site and recording all the graffiti. A map of the site was made using tape survey and dumpy level. A base line and datum point were established. A plan of the site was completed showing the back wall of the shelter and the position of the modern hearths in front of the shelter. A copy of the plan is included with this report.

To establish the position of all existing graffiti the back wall of the site was divided into nine panels. The position of the panels are shown on the site plan. A full written record of all the graffiti was made for each of the nine panels. A complete photographic record was made for each panel using colour slides and digital imagery.

The second day was devoted to the removal of the graffiti. Before the trainees were allowed to touch the site they received instruction on how to remove charcoal graffiti. The method used followed the now standard procedure of carefully removing the charcoal using cotton wool wrapped around chopsticks dipped into water and squeezed out. Before removing the graffiti from the painted area the trainees practised the technique on graffiti well away from the paintings. Prior to removing the charcoal, any dust was brushed off using soft paint brushes. The charcoal came off quite easily,

probably because it had all been applied very recently. The only graffiti now remaining, apart from the purple ostrich, are two small areas marked with Koki pens. The site was re-photographed after the removal of the graffiti using the same system of nine panels.

The third day was devoted to the cleaning up of the modern debris at the site. The recent fireplaces were dismantled and the stones removed from the vicinity of the shelter. The accumulated braai debris, consisting of bottles, bottle tops, cans, broken glass, plastic and paper, was collected and placed in black refuse bags. The area surrounding the site was also cleaned up so that very little trace remained of the modern debris. The refuse bags were collected and disposed of by the owners of the property who were very supportive of our efforts to clean up the site.

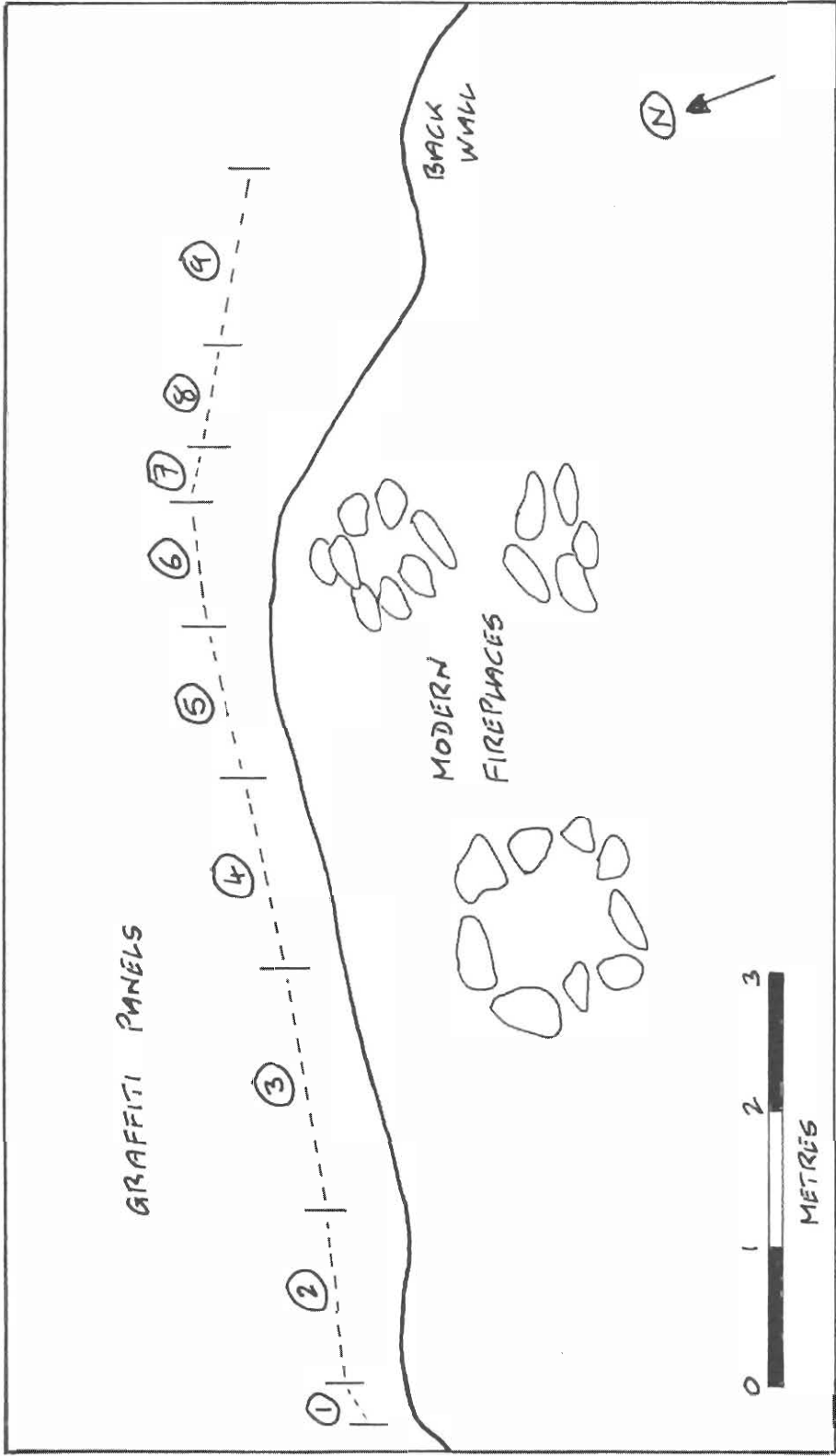
A reporter from the local paper, *Ons Kontrei*, was present during the last day. A report of the clean up was published two days later. A copy of the article is included with this report.

THE FUTURE OF THE SITE

If the situation remains as it is, it would seem inevitable that new graffiti and braai debris will appear fairly rapidly at the site. During the period of just over two years since the last clean up the build up of names written in charcoal and associated rubbish was very conspicuous. Our discussions with local people suggest that this kind of abuse is not malicious but simply due to a lack of knowledge. It would seem, therefore, that education and the dissemination of information are the keys to preventing this kind of mistreatment of our national heritage. To this end we have initiated a programme whereby the local community can be made more aware of their heritage and its value. The first step was to conduct a survey, carried out by the twenty Clanwilliam Living Landscape trainees, to find out the attitudes towards rock art held by people living in Clanwilliam. This will be followed up by presentations at schools, community centres etc., poster displays and further collaborations with the local press. Clanwilliam has a population of about 6000 people so it is certainly feasible to initiate a public campaign that will promote a more beneficial attitude towards the conservation of rock art.

Included with this report:

- Selected colour prints of panels before and after the clean up
- A site plan showing the position of the panels and the fireplaces
- The written record of the charcoal graffiti on each of the nine panels
- A copy of article published in the local newspaper



GP 1 - SITE PLAN WITH LOCATION OF GRAFFITI PANELS