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K2 REHABILITATION PROJECT
PROGRESS REPORT
2001

A report prepared for the ATG, SANParks, VUKA and SAHRA

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INTRODUCTION

SANParks appointed an Archaeological Task Group (ATG) to help them coordinate research and other heritage matters in the new Vhembe\Dongola National Park. Among other issues, the ATG has been instrumental in the nomination of the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape for World Heritage listing. As part of this process, the ATG proposed various rehabilitation measures for Schroda, K2, Mapungubwe and a K2-period homestead on Den Staat. The rehabilitation would be part of a Poverty Relief Fund Project administered by VUKA Environmental Management Services on behalf of SANParks.

Archaeological Resources Management(ARM) agreed to supervise the rehabilitation of Den Staat, Schroda and K2. McEdward Murimbika would be the archaeologist on site, Professor Huffman would visit monthly and Gustaf Kruger would manage the Poverty Relief workers.

The work at K2 would concentrate on areas excavated in the 1930s (Fouche 1937; Gardner 1963). These excavations were left open, the sides were not stabilized and most sections were not satisfactorily recorded. Hanisch (1980) had stabilized his trenches, but some areas needed to be refilled, and a road through the site was eroding deposit. Another road through the Den Staat site had also become an erosion gully, exposing a midden and at least one burnt granbin. ARM's task was to mitigate these problems.

METHOD

K2. As part of rehabilitation, the ATG wanted the old sections recorded. Besides the scientific value, it is necessary to know the nature of the deposits for monitoring purposes. The original sections would therefore be exposed, recorded and then covered with sand bags and soil to an acceptable angle. The soil would come from old archaeological dumps after it had been sifted. The artefacts in turn would be later used for display purposes. Gabions would be placed in the small stream cutting through the site.

Schroda. Hanisch's dumps had already been sifted, and so the trenches would be simply refilled. Gabions would be used to stop the erosion caused by the road.

Den Staat. Professor Meyer had mapped the site and partially excavated the exposed grain bin. Only gabions would therefore be necessary.

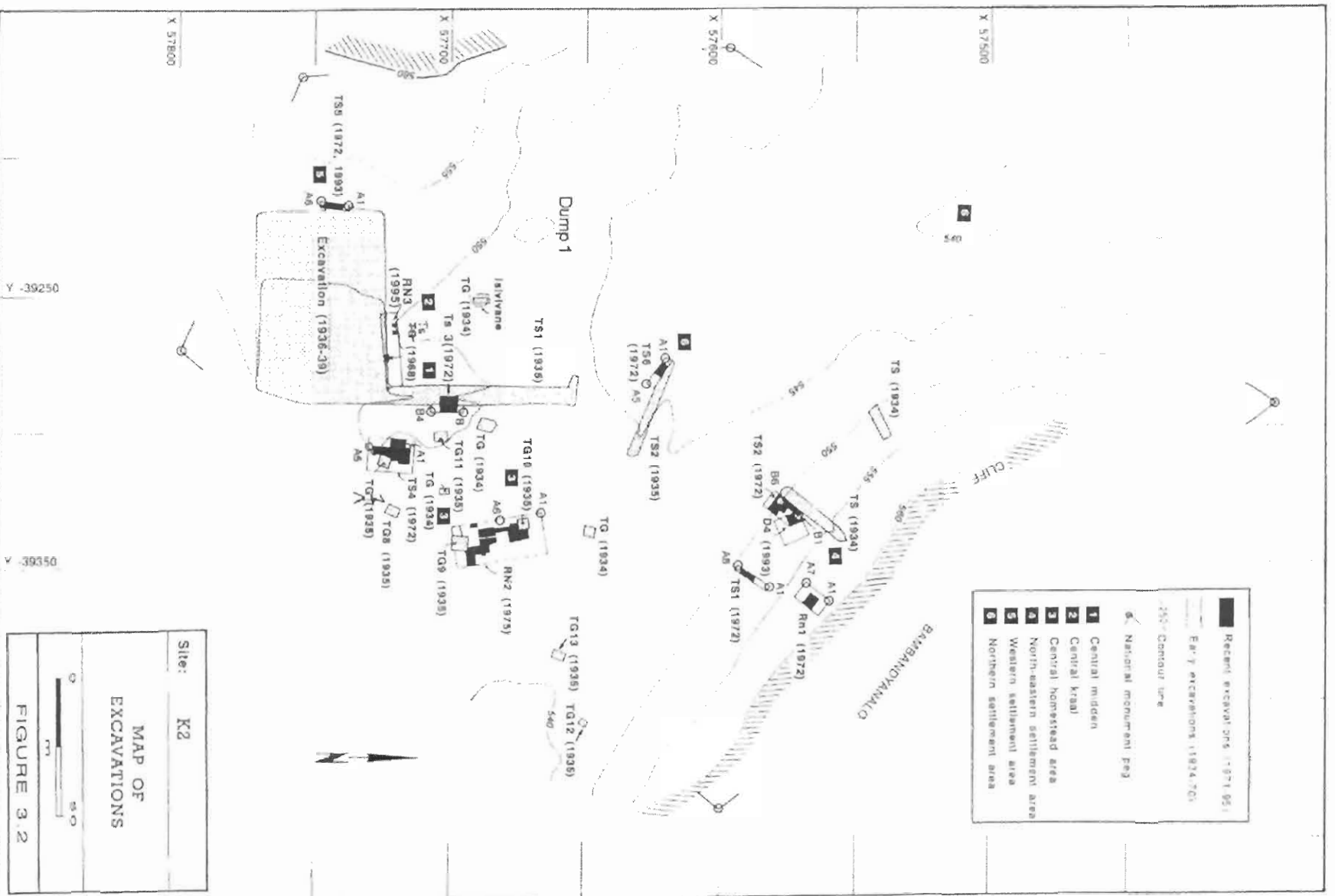


Figure 1. Site plan of K2. From Meyer 1998.

RESULTS

Rehabilitation began in July and continued until the end of November. During this time, all the initial tasks were completed.

At K2, the team sifted Gardner's large dump (Figure 1:1) and sorted the material for later analysis and display (Figure 2). In addition to a large ceramic collection, artefacts included figurine fragments, garden roller beads and bead moulds, grinding stones and a considerable amount of domestic animal bone.

The soil was used to stabilize the sides of Gardner's large block excavation (Figures 3 - 5). The northern section had been recorded by the Anatomy Department, UP, and so the ARM team concentrated on the remaining three sides. The east section exposed the remains of the central cattle kraal under the large central midden, as well as a series of superimposed hut floors near a pit (Figure 6). ARM staff made a rubberized "peel" of this area for future display. The south end mostly exposed midden deposit, marking the edge of the residential zone in this area. Some of the artefacts from the residential zone, both in the sections and midden, show that copper was smelted there.

The long trench north of the central midden (Figure 1:6) yielded clumps of carbonised sorghum at the east end in association with a collapsed grainbin. The west end of the trench had cut through an *in situ* midden. The team filled the trench with sieved soil from the associated archaeological dump. Another dump nearby was used to fill the smaller trenches on the east side of the large central midden.

In November, after Hanisch had clarified details, the team completed the work at Schroda (Figure 7).

The gabions were also installed at Den Staat (Figure 8). This site, however, will need more mitigation in the future.



Figure 2. Processing material from the archaeological dumps at K2.



Figure 3. Stabilisation at K2: sandbagging the south wall.

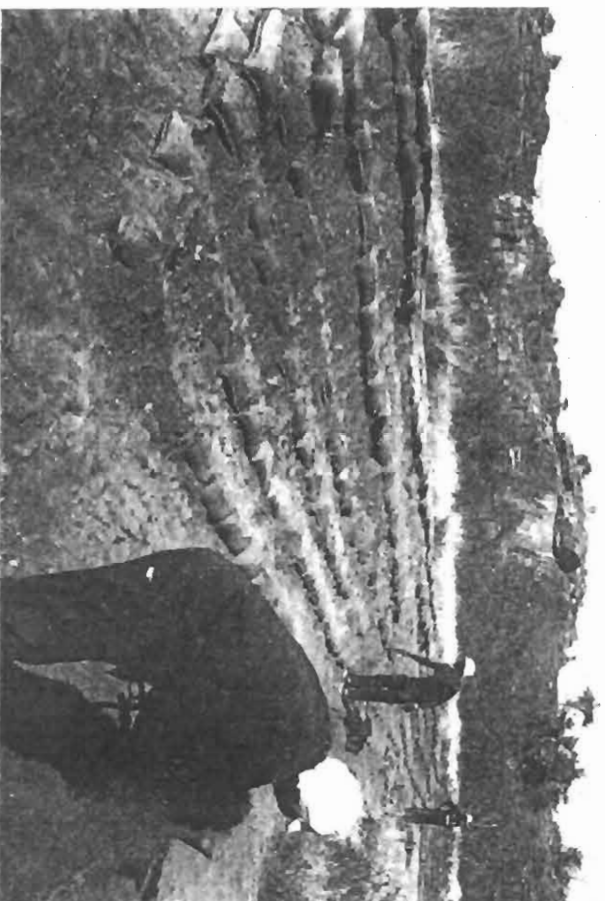
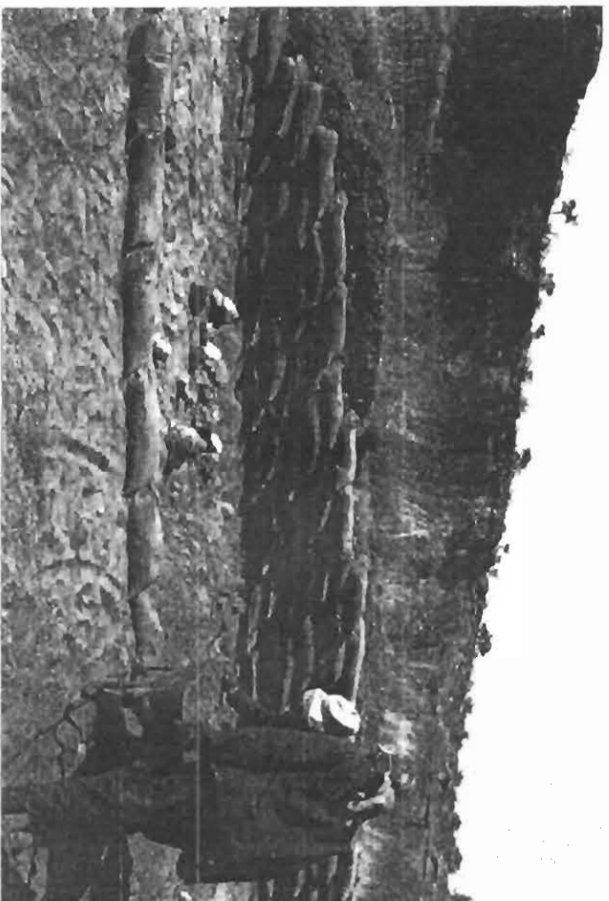


Figure 4. Stabilisation at K2: (top) preparing a sandbag frame, (bottom) placing sandbags on top of the soil slope.

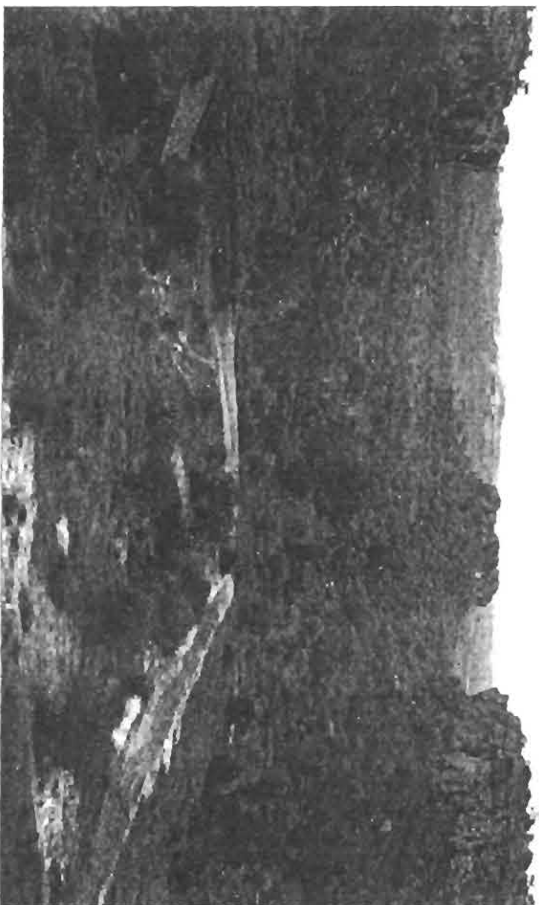
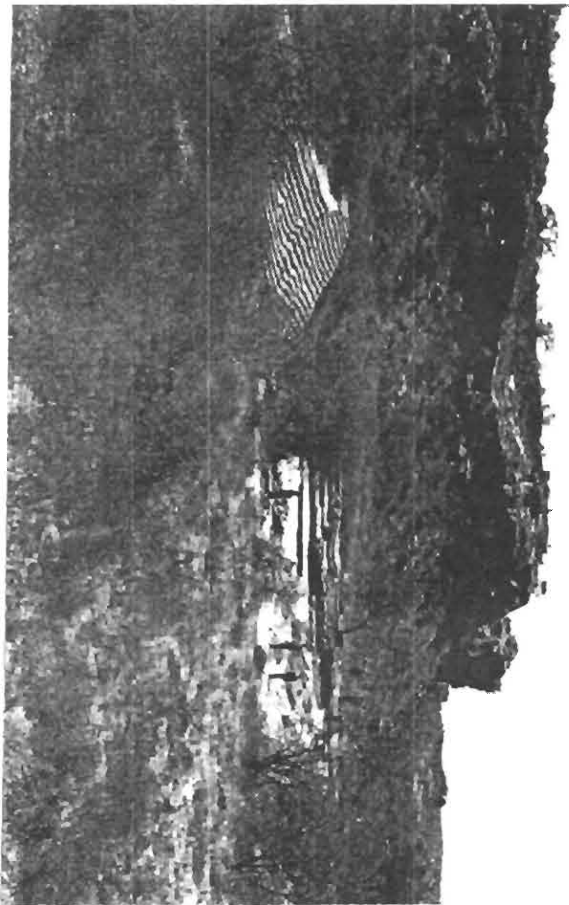


Figure 5. Stabilisation at K2: nearing completion.

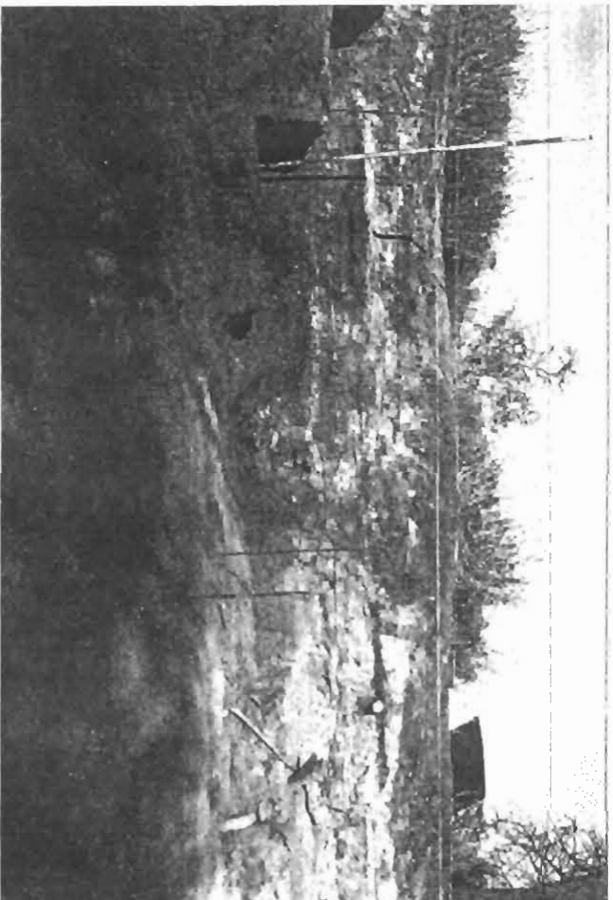
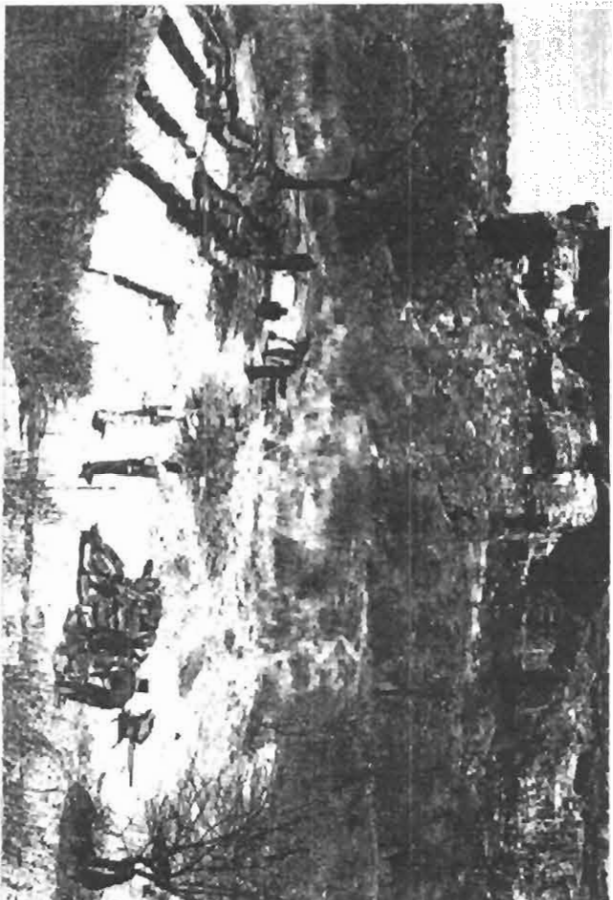


Figure 6. K2: east section exposing the central kraal, hut floors and pit.

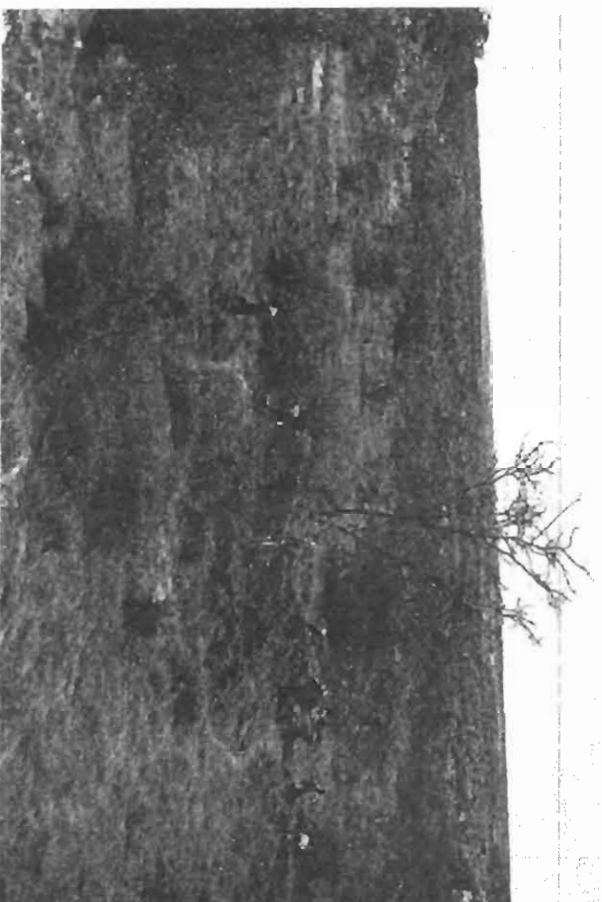
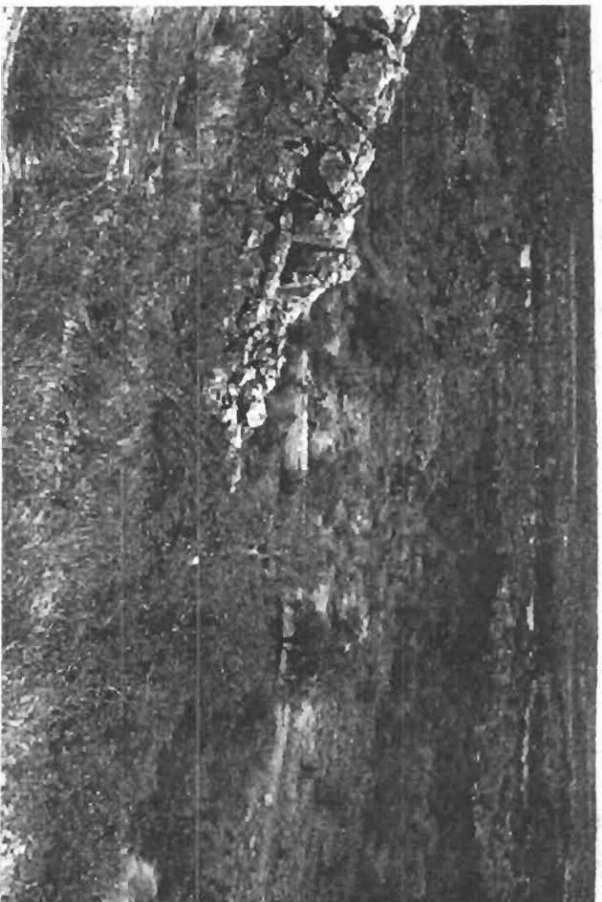


Figure 7. Schroda: (top) road repair, (bottom) refilling.

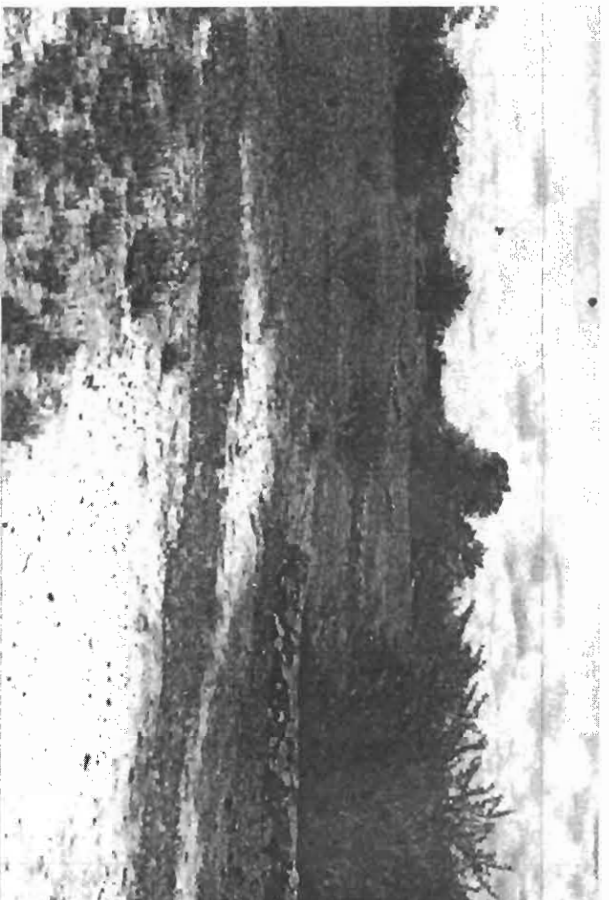
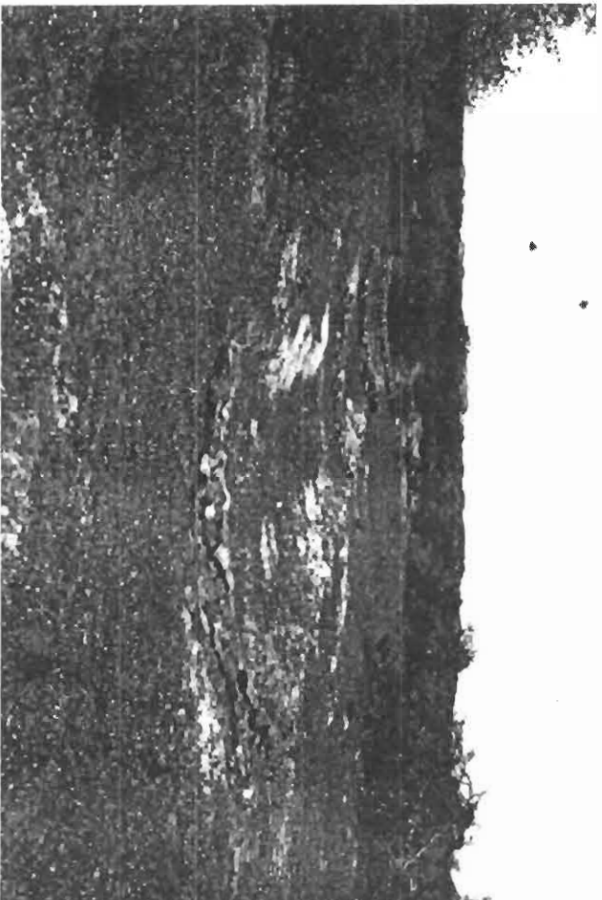


Figure 8. Den Staat gabions: (top) looking downslope, (bottom) looking up slope to the site.

FUTURE WORK

According to professional ecologists and soil scientists (Dr Bob Scholes - CSIR and Professor Mary Scholes - Wits), the road through the Den Staat site has become a watercourse, causing "pipe" erosion. This type of erosion is characteristic of sodic soils everywhere. To address the problem fully, rainwater needs to be diverted off the road well above the site. Ultimately, the road should be closed, and another built along the edge of the mopani, away from the sodic soils. This issue will need to be considered in future planning.

Both Schroda and K2 need to be monitored to insure that the rehabilitation was successful. Grass is already growing on the rehabilitated slopes at K2, and the old sections are now well protected. Future mitigation at K2 needs to concentrate on the large central midden.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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