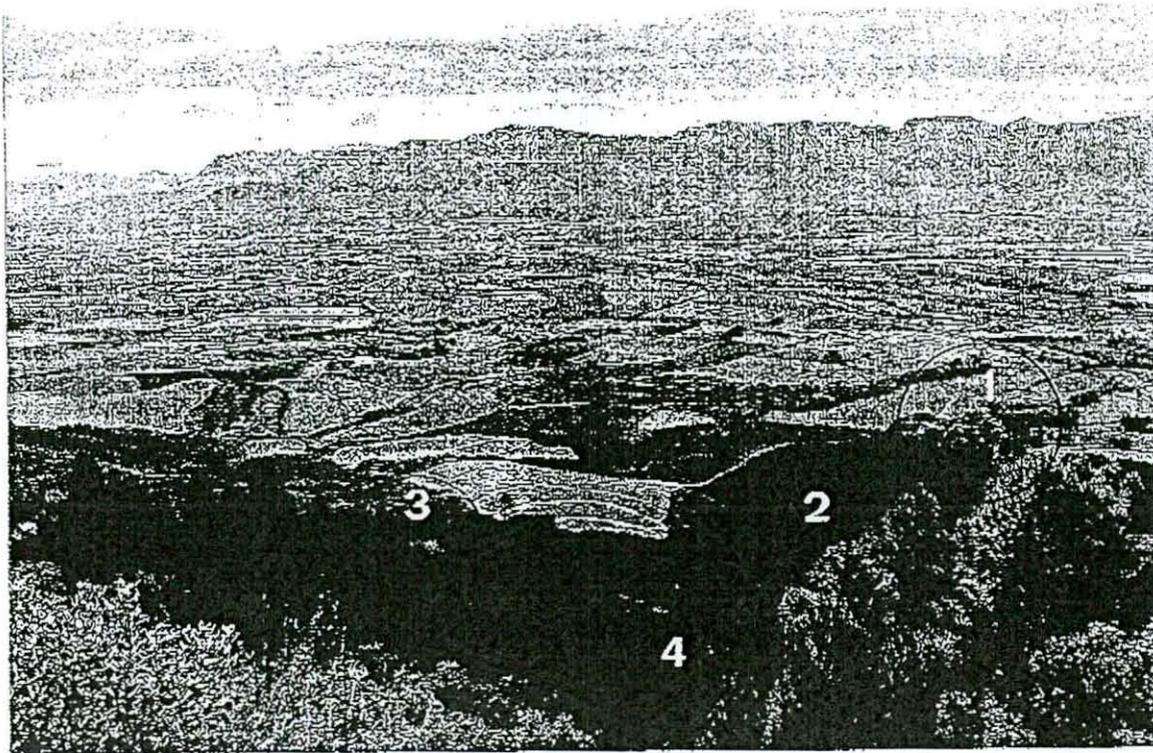


# ZILVERMYN AT SIMONSBERG

## GROOT DRAKENSTEIN

### FIRST PHASE: GENERAL VISUAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SILVER MINE INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

OCTOBER 2004



1. De Goede Hoop werf
2. Rondekop passage
3. Muller's house & ruins
4. Lower mine passage

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Within the *Dwars River Valley Development Framework Report* (Winter, et al 1999), there is also a "**Heritage Conservation Component**", which addresses in a general, preliminary way the heritage resources of the area (1999:1). Unfortunately the *Zilvermyn*, its various passages and shafts, nor the numerous ruins, are addressed. It is due to the *archaeological and historical investigations* of Dr Gavin Lucas and Jaline de Villiers, that these sites have been elucidated (Lucas, De Villiers, Miller & Klose 2001; Lucas 2000, 2001, 2003). I have used their plans to elucidate the survey (FIG.1).

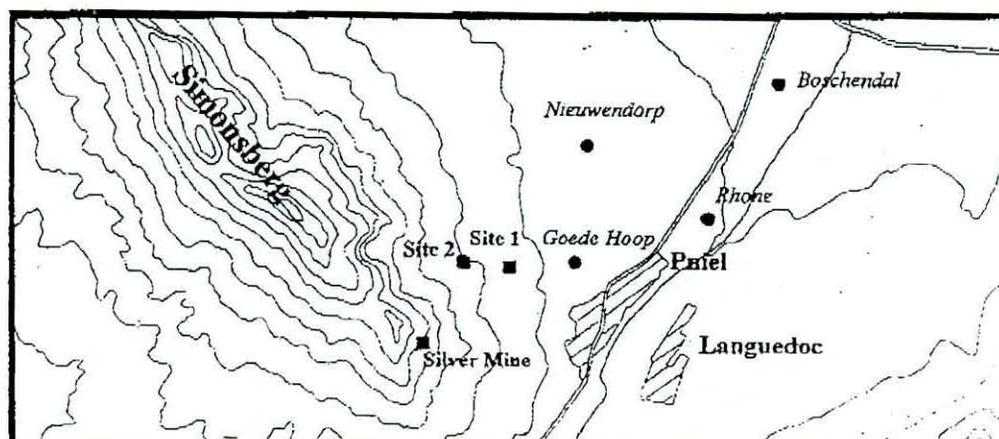
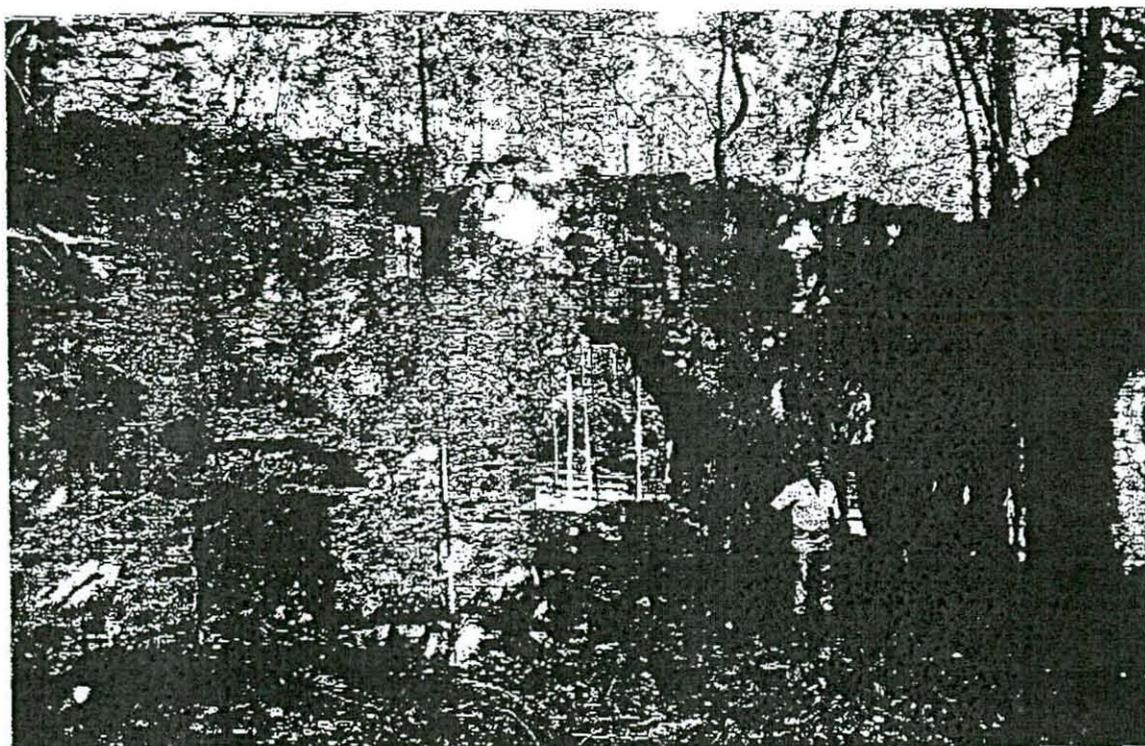


FIG.1 Plan of the area showing the positions of the sites under discussion (Lucas 2000:4).



1. Exterior view of the western side facing Simonsberg. A tree demolished the section marked in black (Oct. 2000).



2. Interior of the western side; the left side was demolished recently (April 1992).

On 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2004, Marianne Gertenbach, curatrix and conservation officer of Boschendal Estate, organised a walkabout with the client and various interested parties, to familiarise them with the ruins and mine activities.

Early in 2001 a devastating fire consumed the vegetation of the foothills of Simonsberg, exposing new ruins for investigation. The after-effects were unfortunately more disastrous, as the carbonised trees and vegetation provided the potash and nutrients for tens of thousands of exotics. Particularly acacia, sprang up like a dense forest and covered all areas, with the trees now up to 3-6 metres tall.

For the past year or three miss Gill Sutton, a school teacher from Cape Town, and with the help of local school children, have been clearing these invasive acacias around and within some of the ruins. Due to the spurtive growth of these invasives, this is actually a lost cause, unless more-long-term measures, like cutting and poisoning, are applied in a co-ordinated, strategic plan. These unsolicited, voluntary efforts are nonetheless praiseworthy and of great educational value, and reflect an integral part of the community voicing their concern.

## **2 STRUCTURAL SITES**

### **2.1 THE WASH-HOUSE or MILL (site 1)**

The building is completely overgrown, inside and outside, with dense acacias, indigenous trees and oaks. Consequently it was impossible to photograph its ruinous state. A tree collapsed over a significant portion of a 5 metre tall stonewall, and on the opposite side a large portion of wall collapsed as well. In 1992 and 2001 I took some photographs, when it was in a much better condition (see Lucas 2000) (**FIG.2**).

#### **2.2.1 Recommendations**

##### **Short term:**

1. Clearance of inside and about a 20 metre surround.
2. Cutting and pruning of large trees (exotic + indigenous).

##### **Long term:**

1. Stabilisation of ruins to prevent further collapse (plastering, some supportive struts and even minor reconstruction).
2. Excavation and clearance of fill to expose building.
3. Accurate documentation of mill and associated structures.
4. Reconstruction towards stabilisation of the complete structures.
5. Possible restoration of structures.