



NEW PREMISES?

16 - 18 JULY 1992

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND
HISTORY WORKSHOP

Archaeological Sites as National
Monuments

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'AFRICANA'

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AS NATIONAL MONUMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA: A REVIEW OF SITES DECLARED SINCE 1936

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ABSTRACT

Archaeological sites form a significant part of the cultural heritage of South Africa in that they record the history of human evolution and cultural change over the past two million years. Although the tendency in the past has been to make a distinction between 'prehistory' and history, this is a false division that needs to be eliminated if we are to overcome the legacy of colonial bias and adapt to the changing interests of the South African public. Archaeology can help in bridging this gap.

Sites are protected in two ways by the National Monuments Act: through the permit system which requires that a permit be obtained to excavate or collect material from any archaeological site, and through the declaration of sites as national monuments. This paper will address the latter option by reviewing the past history of declarations to see what can be learned about the management of archaeological sites in general.

INTRODUCTION

Archaeology in its broadest sense is often thought of as 'the study of the past', but it is more specifically the study of places where people lived in the past. It contrasts in this respect with palaeontology which is the study of fossil plants and animals and generally does not include people. Archaeology is more accurately the method used to reconstruct the human past. The subjects which archaeology amplifies include Colonial Archaeology, Iron Age Archaeology, Stone Age Archaeology, Classical Archaeology, Environmental Archaeology, and so on, and the method most commonly employed is the careful excavation of buried deposits. When we talk about the 'archaeological record', then, we usually mean the buried remains of human occupation that could include anything from a 50 year-old shipwreck to a 100 000 year-old Stone Age camp. When discussing archaeological sites in this paper, I refer specifically to sites that were occupied by people who lived in southern Africa before Europeans settled here and that continued to be used by them after the beginning of the colonial era. At one time they were considered to be 'prehistoric' in the sense that they were occupied before the time

of written history, but archaeologists in South Africa generally prefer not to make the distinction between written and unwritten history because the methods we use are independent of the written record and may be used for sites of any age. The fact that sites were occupied before or after written records in southern Africa is largely irrelevant to their place in the history of people in the sub-continent.

All places that retain traces of human settlement carry information about the people who inhabited it and are therefore potentially conservation worthy, but we have to have a policy that will assist us to select some of these sites for particular attention. This policy will inevitably change over time as public perceptions about what is important to society change. This is part of the reason why the National Monuments Act and its predecessors have been modified since the first cultural conservation legislation was promulgated in 1911. It arose from public outrage at the uncontrolled export of San or Bushman rock paintings and engravings which were being sent to museums in Europe. The first legislation in 1911¹ therefore provided only for permits for the export of rock art, and not for removal or damage per se. It was not until 1923 when the Natural and Historical Monuments Act (Act No 6 of 1923)² was promulgated that power was given to a commission consisting of seven members to draw up a register of monuments and to preserve them. A 'monument' included "areas of land having distinctive or beautiful scenery, areas with a distinctive, beautiful or interesting content of flora or fauna, and objects (whether natural or constructed by human agency) of aesthetic, historical or scientific value, or interest, and also specifically includes in any event and without limiting the generality of the previous portion of this definition, waterfalls, caves, Bushmen paintings, avenues of trees, old trees and old buildings".³ This admirably broad definition endorses the current movement and the sentiments of the Environment Conservation Act to treat the environment holistically. If one is interested in the historical context, it is interesting to note that the next Act promulgated that year, Act No. 7 of 1923, was to enable women to be admitted as legal practitioners in any province of the Union.

The first legislation that enabled sites to be 'declared' or 'proclaimed' national monuments was the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments, Relics and Antiques Act (Act No 4 of 1934), which was amended by Acts No 9 of 1937 and No 13 of 1967.⁴ It, too placed clear emphasis on sites of natural beauty, and incorporated rock art and pre-colonial sites. It was repealed in 1969 and replaced by the National Monuments Act (Act No 28 of 1969) with amendments in 1979, 1981 and 1986.⁵ The new Act and the subsequent amendments broadened the range of sites protected in terms of Section 12 to include historical sites older than 50 years, as well as movable items of colonial origin in the form of antiques and cultural treasures and shipwrecks.

The National Monuments Act protects sites in two ways. The first is the 'blanket' coverage of all archaeological, palaeontological or historical sites, which requires that a permit be applied for to destroy, damage, remove from its original site or export from the Republic any of these sites or objects. If anyone is convicted of an offence in terms of this section of the Act, there is a fine of up to R10 000 or two years' imprisonment, or both. The second is by declaration of a site as a national monument. Such declarations do not change the ownership of the property and the NMC is not necessarily responsible for upkeep. Significant places can also be included in a Register of Conservation-worthy Property. However, the fact that there are several hundred thousand Stone Age and Iron Age sites in South Africa, that many have been picked over at one time or another by amateur collectors or have been destroyed in the

Transvaal	Limeworks Potgietersrus District	Human origins	1976
	Kromdraai Krugersdorp District	Human origins	1946
Orange Free State	Stone huts Winburg District	Iron Age	1962
	Stowlands-on-Vaal Boshof District	Rock engravings	1936
	Schaapplaats Bethlehem District	Rock paintings	1937
	Modderpoort Ladybrand District	Rock paintings	1936
	Ventershock Wepener District	Rock paintings	1936
	Tandjesberg Clocolan District	Rock paintings	1992
	Cape Province	Kalkoenkraans Aliwal North District	Rock paintings
Driekopseiland Herbert District		Rock engravings	1943
Nooltgedacht Kimberley District		Rock engravings	1936
Matjes River Cave Kaysna District		Later Stone Age	1960
Wonderwerk Cave Kuruman District		Stone Age	1991
Klasies River Caves Humansdorp District		Stone Age	1990
Herolds Bay Cave George District		Middle Stone Age	1979
Canteen Kopje Barkly West District		Earlier Stone Age	1948
Doornlaagte Kimberley District		Earlier Stone Age	1965
Krom River Stellenbosch District		Earlier Stone Age	1961
Natal	Mpongweni Cave Underberg District	Rock paintings	1979

course of construction, and that there have been no convictions ever for illegal collecting of artefacts and only two for damage to rock art in the past 60 years, suggests that the first part of the legislation is hardly an effective deterrent to damage.

As far as archaeological sites as national monuments are concerned, the public perception in South Africa is that the practice of declaration enhances the importance of the buildings of the colonial period but ignores the culture of the indigenous people and their descendants for ideological reasons. There may be some truth in this, but nevertheless the National Monuments Act provides for the declaration of any site of historical, aesthetic, scientific or cultural significance, and is not exclusive to European heritage. The choice of sites for declaration has been undoubtedly influenced by the interests of the Councillors and HMC/NMC personnel, as well as by interested members of the public. The relatively high number of archaeological sites declared in the 1930s and early 1940s can be traced to the fact that the Secretary, Professor van Riet Lowe, was an Archaeologist. Whereas in 1991 only about 2% of the national monuments related to the pre-colonial occupation of South Africa, in 1948 pre-colonial sites accounted for 14%.

The details of National Monuments Council policy on declarations will be addressed by Andrew Hall and Ashley Lillie in another paper at this conference, and Simon Hall will be emphasizing the need to bridge the gap between precolonial and colonial history. I will therefore be considering case histories of some of the declared national monuments that relate to the history of the country before about AD 1500. The purpose is two-fold: first, to review the reasons why the declarations were made, and secondly to learn from the management history of these examples to see what works and what does not. To investigate what has happened to archaeological national monuments over the past 50 years, I have selected as examples the following: Nooitgedacht,⁶ Driekopseiland,⁷ Stowlands-on-Vaal,⁸ Modderpoort,⁹ Schaapplaats¹⁰ and Ventershoek¹¹ (all with rock art), Doornlaagte¹² Earlier Stone Age site, Makapan Caves¹³ which comprise several sites ranging in age from several million years to the last century, and Dzata¹⁴ and Verdun ruins,¹⁵ both relating to the Iron Age.

Does declaration of a site as a national monument prevent it from deterioration and damage? Probably not, unless a local authority or a section of the community takes responsibility for regular maintenance of the site. It is not declaration that seals the fate of a site, it is the subsequent management policy. Unless there is a purpose behind declaration and conservation, it will not be sustained.

CASE HISTORIES

Rock art sites

South Africa has well over 15 000 sites with rock paintings and rock engravings yet only ten have been declared national monuments. The majority of these (seven) were declared between 1936 and 1943, six having been identified as worthy of declaration at the time of promulgation of the new Act in 1934 (Bosworth,¹⁶ Schaapplaats, Stowlands-on-Vaal, Modderpoort, Ventershoek and Nooitgedacht) and one when it was in danger of being flooded by a dam (Driekopseiland). The motivation was essentially the same for all six and was

expressed in one of the cases as follows: "Such proclamation strengthens us by providing legal safeguards against destruction, vandalism and encroachment".¹⁷ In the case of Nootgedacht, the battle to have the site protected had been going on since 1928 when Maria Wilman, Director of the McGregor Museum in Kimberley, had alerted the Historical Monuments Commission (HMC) to the fact that the site was being used by diamond diggers. Her frustration at the protective attitude towards the diggers whose activities may have caused irreversible damage to the glacial pavement and engravings is clear in the following passage from her letter to the HMC Secretary:¹⁸ "I am more than disgusted with the govt. ... Fauresmith, mind you, has its nature reserve ... Please go on wringing. The diggers are sending in a fresh application for the farm to be proclaimed [as a mining concession area]. That would be fatal." The three rock art sites declared subsequently in 1969, 1979 and 1990 were either in danger of being damaged or destroyed (Kalkoenkrans¹⁹) or were visited by the public, were considered to be particularly good examples of rock paintings and were properly managed (Mpongweni²⁰ and Tandjesberg²¹).

By the 1950s, however, after the first flush of enthusiasm of the Secretary of the Commission, the policy was to avoid declaring sites as national monuments. It is not clear whether the change in policy was in response to any particular incidents, but in the case of Peers' Cave, for example, B D Malan pointed out²² that all rock art sites are protected by law and may not be disturbed without a permit from the Commission: "For this reason the Peers Cave was not specifically and separately proclaimed - such proclamation would add little to the legal protection which it enjoys in common with other caves - and the Commission contented itself with the erection of a notice."

A more recent example of a rock art site declared as a national monument is Mpongweni Cave in the Mzimkhulu Wilderness Area under the control of the Department of Forestry in Natal. The motivation, timed for the opening of the Wilderness Area in 1979, was that it "would emphasise the importance currently placed on the preservation of the Drakensberg rock art and the place that the art plays in providing the particular atmosphere and character of the Drakensberg".²³ During a programme by the National Building Research Institute of the CSIR to investigate ways of conserving rock art, a drip line was installed at Mpongweni during 1984 to lead water running down the rock face away from the painted area,²⁴ but there has been no follow-up to see how well this worked. The site is not fenced, but a bronze plaque was erected.

It is not possible to analyse the amount of damage and weathering of declared rock art sites relative to those that were not declared because no detailed records were taken of the sites at the time of declaration. There are reports of vandalism in the files on Ventershoek, Modderpoort, Stowlands-on-Vaal, Bosworth, Kalkoenkrans and Nootgedacht, but not in the files on Schaapplaats and Driekopseiland. The most frequently reported act of vandalism is not to the rock art itself, but to the fencing erected on behalf of the HMC at the time of declaration. It is replacement of fences that generates the most correspondence. It is noteworthy that of the two sites at which vandalism was not reported, one was fenced and the other was not. There seems to be no correlation, then, between fencing and inhibition of vandalism in the long term, possibly because when the fences and gates are broken, there is in effect no protection afforded.

Three sites, Nootgedacht, Mpongweni and the newly-declared Tandjesberg are given

DECLARED NATIONAL MONUMENTS: PRE-COLONIAL

PROVINCE	SITE	TYPE	YEAR DECLARED
Transvaal	Blaauboschkraal Belfast District	Iron Age	1975
	Broederstroom Brits District	Iron Age	1980
	Gatstrand Oberholzer District	Iron Age	1966
	Mellville Koppies Johannesburg District	Iron Age	1968
	Phalaborwa Letaba District	Iron Age	1970
	Kgopolwe Letaba District	Iron Age	1970
	Sealeng Letaba District	Iron Age	1970
	Greefswald Messina District	Iron Age	1983
	Mapungubwe Messina District	Iron Age	1984
	Mapoch Caves Middelburg District	Ndebele	1968
	Verdun ruins Soutpansberg District	Venda	1938
	Dzata ruins Soutpansberg District	Venda	1938
	Machentma ruins Soutpansberg District	Venda	1965
	Makapan Valley caves Potgietersrus District	Stone Age Iron Age	1938
Bosworth Klerksdorp District	Rock engravings	1940	
Duncanville Vereeniging District	Earlier Stone Age	1944	
Klip River quarry Vereeniging District	Earlier Stone Age	1943	
Sterkfontein Krugersdorp District	Human origins Earlier Stone Age	1945	

40. NMC file 16/K/Pot/1 letter dated 5.10.43.
41. NMC file 16/T/Pot/1 letter dated 30.12.43.
42. HMC Minute dated 23.9.46.
43. Secretary for the Interior *in litt.* to HMC dated 17.2.47, and in undated letter of c. 1948/49, NMC file 16/T/Pot/1.
44. HMC Minute dated 6.9.49, NMC file 16/T/Pot/1.
45. Letter dated 3.12.54, NMC file 16/T/Pot/1.
46. HMC Minute dated 15.4.63, NMC file 16/T/Pot/1.
47. *In litt.* dated 5.5.70, NMC file 16/T/Pot/1.
48. A I Thackeray, J Deacon, S Hall, A J B Humphreys and A G Morris, *The Early History of Southern Africa to AD 1500*, College Tutorial Press, Cape Town, 1990.

systematic maintenance, but the rest are subject to the interests of the landowners. At Nooitgedacht the McGregor Museum set up an on-site information centre and uses it regularly for educational purposes, particularly for schools. It has been used more often than any other archaeological site in the vicinity, but still attracts fewer than 1 000 visitors a year.²³

A Stone Age site

The Earlier Stone Age site at Doornlaagte in the Kimberley District²⁴ was declared a national monument in 1965 after artefacts had been exposed during quarrying for road gravel by the Provincial Roads Department in 1962. Once the site was recognized, the Roads Department fenced it off and excavations were undertaken in 1963 by Dr G Fock of the McGregor Museum in collaboration with Professor R J Mason of the University of the Witwatersrand. The landowner, after some resistance, eventually agreed to declaration in 1964. The motivation for the declaration was that the site was one of only a few in situ living sites dating to the Earlier Stone Age. Two small areas where excavations had been done were fenced in 1966 and notice boards on the road and at the site were erected in 1970. The farmer complained about people climbing over his fence to reach the sites and many artefacts were removed. In 1983, the NMC gave R2 000 to the McGregor Museum and a roofed display board was erected at the larger of the two excavations. At the same time a short passage was created between fences to guide visitors to the site without them having to climb the farmer's fence. By 1989, the notice board at the road side had been removed and the display was badly weathered. Vegetation was growing in the excavation and it was not very appealing for visitors.

Here again, it seems to have been the lack of long-term maintenance that led to the degradation of the site, which is in turn a function of the low esteem in which such a site is held, presumably because of lack of public interest.

Iron Age sites

Two stone walled settlements known as Dzata and Verdun were declared national monuments in the 1930s. Both are of similar type to the Zimbabwe ruins and were therefore seen as having historical and scientific interest.

Dzata²⁷ was considered to be "an object of national interest"²⁸ and "the most exceptional, valuable and interesting relic of the past in these parts, quite apart from the great reverence in which these ruins are held by the natives themselves".²⁹ After declaration as a national monument on 29.6.38, the main problem was ensuring that the fencing was maintained as cattle and goats were grazing there and breaking down the walls. After the first quotation for fencing materials was received from the Additional Native Commissioner in Louis Trichardt in a letter dated 14.10.32, reminders and reports went back and forth between him and the NMC until a letter dated 11.1.39 finally reported that the fencing had been satisfactorily completed. By 1945, the barbed wire had been stolen and in 1952 a further report said the fence was down in places and animals were grazing on the ruins. It was repaired, but in 1958 was down again. Weed-killer was used to eradicate growth on the walling and the fence was repaired in 1959.

During the 1960s, modern buildings were erected within the settlement for use during Dzata

Day celebrations on 1 February each year. The local Chief had responsibility for maintenance. By October 1966, however, the site was in "n erg vervalle toestand"³⁰ and fence repairs, a locked gate and a noticeboard were recommended. Despite numerous letters, recommendations, minutes and meetings, during the course of which a delegation met officials planning for the independence of Venda, promises were made by B J Grobbelaar to do the necessary restoration work and R1 000 was set aside by the NMC for the work. Despite reminders, nothing was done and the sum was eventually given to another project when Venda became an independent state on 13.9.79. At a meeting held in Venda on 30.7.80, four Venda cabinet ministers, the S A Ambassador to Venda and five delegates from the NMC met to discuss Dzata as it had been recognized and used as site of national importance. It was agreed that restoration was necessary, but no funds were available to do the work. In September 1981, a plaque commemorating the establishment of the settlement at Dzata 700 years previously was unveiled by Chief Mphephu, it was the first declared national monument in Venda and it became the place of the sacred drum of the Vendas.

E O M Hanisch, of the Department of Anthropology, University of Venda, reports³¹ that he was asked by the Venda Government to assist in the restoration of Dzata and a museum was built at the site in 1988. Further funding for development will be requested and the site is presently administered by the Venda Development Corporation's Tourism Division with a full-time guide/caretaker.

The Verdun Ruins³² are also in the northern Transvaal Soutpansberg District and also have architectural links with Great Zimbabwe.³³ The reasons for proclamation were:

"(1) The structural and architectural details of the walls show that these ruins provide a valuable link between the material cultures of the people who built Zimbabwe and those who built the walls at Dzata in the Soutpansberg. As Dzata is known to be of Venda origin and as the ruins there are still venerated by the Venda, this link is obviously not only of great archaeological and ethnological value, but also of great historic interest and significance. (2) Not only does the area recommended for proclamation contain remains of decorated and plain dry-stone walling, but also valuable archaeological deposits that would be exposed to the fossicking public if not protected by proclamation: (3) If we are to complete the history of our country, the time must come when these archaeological deposits must be systematically excavated and examined - and proclamation is our only hope of preserving what is left."³⁴

The initial impetus for declaration came from a letter from the Additional Native Commissioner in Louls Trichardt to the HMC in which it is said the ruins "have the appearance of an old fort ... not the work of any of the local natives."³⁵ It was subsequently established³⁶ that "They are known to the Bavenda natives as Tombone la Rasetoo (Stones of Rasetoo) who, I believe, was one of the ancestors of the Bavenda people."

After the initial agreement by the lessee of the property, Mr Bronkhorst, to fence the ruins on 3.4.33, it was not until his letter of 1.3.37 that confirmation of the work was received. As the land belonged to the Department of Lands, it was agreed that the 1 morgen property including the stone ruins be given to the Historical Monuments Commission and in a letter from the Department of Lands dated 24.7.37, it was confirmed that the land was registered in the name of the Commission by Deed of Grant No. 115/1937. Warning notices were

16. NMC file 16/T/Kle/1
17. Van Riet Lowe *in litt.* to S. van Aardt 7.6.35, NMC file 16/O/Wep/1.
18. Maria Wilman *in litt.* to HMC 3.4.29, NMC file 16/K/Kim/1.
19. NMC file 16/K/AH/1
20. NMC file 16/N/A/2
21. NMC file 9/2/308/1
22. B. D. Malan *in litt.* to H. S. Jager, July 1960, NMC file 13/K/Kaa/2
23. Motivation by Secretary of Forestry dated 23.4.79, NMC file 16/N/A/2.
24. Rudner, I. 1989. The conservation of rock art in South Africa. Cape Town: National Monuments Council, p. 14, 20, 22.
25. D Morris, personal communication.
26. NMC file 16/K/Kim/3.
27. NMC file 16/T/Dza/2
28. HMC Memo dated 14.4.35, NMC file 16/T/Dza/2.
29. Van Warmelo *in litt.* to HMC dated 22.12.31, NMC file 16/T/Dza/2.
30. Inspection report from J. F. Preller to NMC dated 3.10.66, NMC file 16/T/Dza/2.
31. Personal communication, 5 July 1992.
32. NMC file 16/T/Sou/1
33. Secretary of the Historical Monuments Commission *in litt.* to the Secretary for the Interior dated 21.9.37, NMC file 16/T/Sou/1.
34. *Ibid.*
35. NMC file 16/T/Dza/2
36. Additional Native Commissioner *in litt.* to the Secretary of the Historical Monuments Commission dated 17.11.32, NMC file 16/T/Sou/1.
37. Personal communication from E. O. M. Hanisch, 4 July 1992.
38. NMC file 16/T/Pot/1
39. Van Riet Lowe *in litt.* to the Minister for the Interior dated 2.6.38, NMC file 16/T/Pot/1

Public education must therefore go hand in hand with this process of promoting archaeological sites. There is a need to instil a conservation ethic as well as an holistic history both at primary school level and amongst adults. The papers presented at this Workshop show that there is a great deal of interest amongst educators in our early history. The Southern African Association of Archaeologists has taken the initiative in making educational policy-makers and authors of school text-books aware of the broader base of southern African history,⁴⁸ but historians need to be persuaded that there is something to be learned from the archaeological record. There is a rich heritage to be exploited and made more public through the promotion of archaeological sites that have the potential to advertise the fact that South Africa has the longest record of human endeavour outside East Africa, that rock paintings demonstrate a tradition of religious art that is 27 000 years old, and that people were keeping cattle and sheep and mining iron, gold, copper and tin a thousand years before Van Riebeeck set foot on the shores of Table Bay.

END NOTES

1. Union of South Africa Act No. 22 of 1911, The Bushman-Relic Protection Act: To provide for the protection of Bushman-relics.
2. Union of South Africa Act No 6 of 1923, To make provision for the preservation of natural and historical monuments of the Union and of objects of aesthetic, historical or scientific value or interest.
3. Ibid.
4. I Rudner, The conservation of rock art in South Africa. Cape Town, National Monuments Council, 1989, p. 3.
5. Statutes of the Republic of South Africa - Historical Monuments. National Monuments Act No 28 of 1969.
6. NMC file 16/K/Kim/1
7. NMC file 16/K/Herb/1
8. NMC file 16/O/Bos/1
9. NMC file 16/O/Lad/2
10. NMC file 16/O/Bet/2
11. NMC file 16/O/Wep/1
12. NMC file 16/K/Kim/3
13. NMC file 16/T/Pot/1
14. NMC file 16/T/Dza/2
15. NMC file 16/T/Sou/1

erected in 1938 and no further correspondence ensued until 28.2.86 when it was requested that the Transvaal Regional Representative visit the site and report. No visit was possible and there is no record of the state of the site.

Within the last five years the owner of the surrounding property built a dam below the hill. This has provided a pool of standing water that attracts game and the hilltop with the national monument is a convenient viewing spot. The non-resident landowner, who depends on tourism for part of his income, has made a road up the hillside and as the fencing around the site is in a poor state of repair, visitor access is uncontrolled. Baboons are reported to be damaging the small section of remaining sloping-block decorative walling in their search for food.³⁷

As with the rock art sites, it would seem that active conservation is successful only when the people on or near the site retain an interest in it and are prepared to care for it. Simply declaring it a national monument does not guarantee the kind of support needed.

Multiple Interest site: the Makapan Valley caves

Van Riet Lowe, Secretary of the Historical Monuments Commission, saw the Makapansgat site as a potential source of further australopithecine remains when he first visited there in 1937,³⁸ but he was also aware of the importance of the so-called 'historic cave' as well as the Cave of Hearths and Rainbow Cave. He motivated for declaration as follows:³⁹

"(i) it was in these caves that burghers of the Republic were led to victory under the leadership of Commandants General P. G. Potgieter and M. W. Pretorius against the Native Chief Makapan who in 1854 had been responsible for a series of massacres in the neighbourhood. Field-cornet Paul Kruger distinguished himself during the fighting that took place. (ii) Several of the caves in the vicinity of the great cave in which Makapan and his people took refuge contain a wealth of archaeological and palaeontological material which needs to be protected until such time as a thorough investigation can be carried out."

The sites were declared on 31.8.38. The so-called Limeworks site in the same valley was declared a national monument on 6.2.76 with the motivation that "At this site very valuable fossils were discovered and research was undertaken, which has cast light on the history of the Quaternary Period."

In a letter dated 6 July 1943, Van Riet Lowe motivated a request to the Secretary for the Interior that the state purchase the property on which the caves are situated and use it for a national or provincial park. The Prime Minister (General Smuts) agreed in principle to the proposal,⁴⁰ but the Minister of Finance was unable to approve the acquisition.⁴¹ The proposal was motivated again,⁴² but was again refused on two occasions,⁴³ but without success. A major obstacle to acquisition was that in terms of the will of the previous owner, the property was entailed in terms of servitudes and mining rights for three generations and consequently could not be acquired as a nature reserve.⁴⁴

The site was partly fenced and notice boards were erected, but because of pressure from the public, the farm owner and lessee restricted access and "only scientists with a definite reason

for their visit will be admitted to the Makapan's Caves".⁴⁵ In reaction to continued pressure, particularly from the Potgietersrus Town Clerk, the Secretary of the HMC gave the following reasons for restricting public access:⁴⁶

- (a) inconvenience to owner and lessee;
- (b) protection of scientific deposits;
- (c) protection of scientific material awaiting transportation;
- (d) danger from falling rock;
- (e) danger of visitors contracting histoplasmosis;
- (f) interference with scientific work;
- and (g) access can be arranged through the University of the Witwatersrand on a prescribed form.

Despite this, letters continued to be received from the Town Clerk of Potgietersrus asking that the valley be opened as a tourist attraction and various organizations submitted plans for a 'Grot Park'.

The University of the Witwatersrand research involvement began in the 1940s and continued through the 1960s. In 1970 the University became increasingly concerned about unauthorised visitors and the danger of falling rock, particularly at the palaeontological site. Vandalism was reported by Mr Preller, a member of the Council of the HMC.⁴⁷ He described the problems experienced by the farmer and the caretaker who were unable to stop the steady stream of unauthorized visitors. In the Cave of Hearths where a witness section had been left, covered by a roof and glass, someone had stood on the roof of the cave and dropped a large rock on the structure destroying it. With the threat posed by the possibility that the owner of the adjoining farm was going to establish a holiday resort, the Registrar of the University of the Witwatersrand met with the NMC in April 1971 and the University decided to obtain a 10-year lease of the scientific sites and exercise control over the site and visitors. The university put up a fence and employed a Watchman. It was at this time that the declaration of the Limestone component of the complex was motivated. A Minute from a meeting of the BPI Board of Control dated 16.8.72 noted that the agreement had been signed between the University and the owner, Mrs Bonamour, but that it would have to be re-negotiated in the event of her death until the generation of her great grandchild when the servitudes would fall away. The University did not re-appoint a Watchman after the retirement of the former employee in 1979. Ten years later when the site was inspected by the NMC's Transvaal Regional Representative (17.1.89), both the site and fencing were in good condition. Wording for a notice board and plaque were recommended.

Of the declared archaeological sites, only the Makapan Caves and Sterkfontein have been legally acquired by an academic institution, Sterkfontein through purchase and Makapan through a lease. The University of the Witwatersrand has taken this responsibility to manage the palaeontological and archaeological resources. The policy has been to exclude the general public although guided visits are permitted from time to time. Even at Makapan, however, material has been illegally removed, the most recent instance being that of the mummified body of a child from the historic cave.

CONCLUSIONS

Reviewing these 14 case studies and the longer list of 36 archaeological sites declared as national monuments, one is struck by the fact that not one is what one could call a 'household name' in South Africa. Does this mean that the policy of declaration has been unsuccessful?

The purpose of declaration in most cases has been to preserve the site from damage or destruction. While vandalism has occurred at most of the places, all are still recognizable in the landscape. Whether this would not be the case if they had not been declared we will never know, but at least in the case of Nooitgedacht where the diamond diggers were held off and at Makapan where the Potgietersrus Town Council was unsuccessful in setting up a 'Grot Park', the action taken by the NMC has assisted in preserving the integrity of the archaeological materials. The sad fact is that the lower the public profile, the more likely it is that the site will survive. But we need to ask ourselves whether this protective attitude is sufficient. We are accountable to the general public to make this part of our history accessible.

There are two factors which need to be kept in mind if we are to promote archaeological sites as 'living' monuments to which people can relate. The first is site management. Many colonial buildings have been 'renovated' since declaration and thereby achieve a certain status, particularly if they are used or lived in. In fact, the NMC's regional managers spend a great deal of their time arranging for the suitable use of declared properties so that they can be 'living' monuments. If a building is used, it can generate the funding for its own maintenance. Archaeological sites, however, are generally not as adaptable. For this reason, they have often simply been fenced and left to their own devices. If they are to generate revenue, the only other option open is that they be managed as attractions for local interest groups and tourists. In the past, even where a museum, often some distance away, has been involved in developing displays to explain the importance of the site, the amount of money allocated for maintenance has been exceedingly small or non-existent. Without maintenance, open-air displays cannot be expected to survive, but by the same token if the display does not attract people it will not generate the revenue needed to maintain it. We then enter a decaying cycle because if the managers do not show an interest, the public will perceive the site as not worthy of their interest either. In the present financial climate the government and the NMC cannot afford to fund the promotion of our cultural heritage unless we adopt the principle that the 'user pays'. We have the goods, we have few competitors, but we need to convince our customers that our product is worth having.

This brings us to the second factor, namely accountability to the public. The community of European descent in South Africa can relate relatively easily to colonial buildings and events that took place within the last 350 years. Unfortunately the history of conflict has destroyed many of the traditions of the indigenous people and their descendants are unaware of the wealth of archaeological information about their past. In the case of stone-walled settlements like Dzata and Verdun, and of historic cave at Makapan, this evidence is easy to see and Dzata has been well adapted for ceremonial occasions. A great deal has been said over the past decade about the 'relevance' of museums both in South Africa and in other colonial countries, not the least because the emphasis has been on the recent past and on the European colonists rather than on the full historical spectrum. Here, as elsewhere, it will be necessary to consult with the descendants of the people who lived at places like Makapan's historic cave and Verdun before action is taken to develop them for the general public. Where descendants of the original inhabitants cannot be found, site development should be done as sensitively as possible so that the landowner or other people living in the vicinity are aware of the importance of the site and are willing to assist in its maintenance and promotion. If this interest is lacking, it is economically disastrous to embark on a development programme.