

Ignorance, Once Again The Undoing Of JCPZ..... Article Written

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The Sotho-Tswana ruins, Boer war ruins and Farm house ruins located in the Klipriviersberg nature reserve are a vital link to the cultural heritage of the greater Johannesburg area.

The Sotho-Tswana ruins date from around the 18th century and are part of a large Sotho-Tswana community that encompassed the whole of the Johannesburg area. The Sotho-Tswana ruins in the Nature reserve are all in fairly good condition, as with all central cattle pattern settlements, the ruins in the reserve are also considered burial grounds as the Sotho-Tswana peoples like all people from the central cattle pattern group buried their dead in and around the cattle Kraal in the centre of the settlement, because of this the ruins in the reserve are considered unmarked burial ground much like the graveyard near the farmstead in the valley running through the reserve.

Along with the Sotho -Tswana ruins there are Boer war emplacements in the hills of the reserve and the previously mentioned farmstead; one of the oldest in the greater Johannesburg area. These structures are an integral part of the heritage of the area and should be treated with great respect.

Unfortunately this has not been the case, recently workers from Johannesburg city parks have taken it upon themselves to re-build some of the structures in the reserve. This re-building work though done in the spirit of fixing has done more harm than good. Without proper supervision from a trained heritage agent these workers may have damaged not only the walling of the ruins but any artefacts that may have been around those walls. The National heritage resources act of 1999 has a few lines about disturbing structures:

4) No person may, without a permit issued by the responsible heritage resources authority—

- a) destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or otherwise disturb any archaeological or palaeontological site or any meteorite;

It also has this to say about burial grounds;

3) No person may, without a permit issued by SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority—

- a) destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position or otherwise disturb the grave of a victim of conflict, or any burial ground or part thereof which contains such graves;
- b) destroy, damage, alter, exhume, remove from its original position or otherwise disturb any grave or burial ground older than 60 years which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority; or
- c) bring onto or use at a burial ground or grave referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) any excavation equipment, or any equipment which assists in the detection or recovery of metals.

4) SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority may not issue a permit for the destruction or damage of any burial ground or grave referred to in subsection (3)(a) unless it is satisfied that the applicant has made satisfactory arrangements for the exhumation and re-interment of the contents of such graves, at the cost of the applicant and in accordance with any regulations made by the responsible heritage resources authority.

5) SAHRA or a provincial

heritage resources authority may not issue a permit for any activity under subsection (3)(b) unless it is satisfied that the applicant has, in accordance with regulations made by the responsible heritage resources authority—

- a) made a concerted effort to contact and consult communities and individuals who by tradition have an interest in such grave or burial ground; and
- b) reached agreements with such communities and individuals regarding the future of such grave or burial ground.

As the Johannesburg's parks agency didn't apply for any of those permits or contact any of the communities around the reserve, the agency is in contravention of the act, something the Johannesburg city council should be worried about.

As to the ruins thankfully some of them are far from the meddling hands of the JCPZ workers, although for how long? The continued invasion by unneeded and unwanted city infrastructure is making the reserve a less peaceful place. Where it once was a place when you could reconnect with our natural and cultural heritage, it is fast becoming an area that JCPZ wants to transform into a commercialised theme park, one that will most likely fail and become like so many of Johannesburg's culturally relevant areas, a place where people fear to go.

Hopefully the city realises that the heritage they are destroying is their own, and once gone it cannot be replaced.

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