

REPORT ON DINGAAN'S KRAAL.

To the Chairman and Members of the Monuments Commission.

During my visit to Zululand in August, I took the opportunity of visiting the site of Dingaans Kraal, a part of the farm Mooiplaats No. 193 in the district of Vryheid, which has been transferred by the Government to the Commission. I was assisted in my work by the Surveyor-General's Office at Pietermaritzburg from whom I received the enclosed tracings of the outspan Dingaans Kraal and Uitsoek, the latter being the site of the grave of Piet Retief and his fellow burghers. I also received from the Surveyor-General's Office a degree sheet which indicates the position of the farm with reference to the town of Melmoth.

My time at the farm was limited and I was not able to trace the farm boundaries. The native who is in charge of the land was unfortunately absent and could not give me any assistance. The portion of the land which is to be transferred to the Commission is 104 acres in extent, and is roughly elliptical in shape, being about 1,200 yards long. The whole of the farm lies between two more or less parallel spruits.

At the upper end of the land is a small rocky eminence on which a large euphorbia tree "naboom" is still standing. Tradition states that this tree is the identical tree under which Dingaans sat. As far as I could ascertain this elevation and the tree were not included within the main kraal but I understand that it is usual for a Kaffir chief to have a spot outside the kraal where he spends his time, having his provisions brought to him.

Some 400 yards north of Dingaans tree and still on the water-shed between two streams is a smaller Euphorbia tree which has evidently sprung up since the destruction of the kraal.

In the vicinity of this tree are numerous indications of former huts. The floors and fire places of many of these are clearly visible. It would appear that the huts were arranged in several rows on the circumference of an ellipse and these floors

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which are to-day visible are the floors of the uppermost lines of huts. On other portions of the land indications may be observed of remains of other huts but the floors of many of the huts, particularly on the eastern side have been destroyed by ploughing.

At the lower end of the land to the west of the homestead was the old entrance to the kraal where Piet Retief and his men left their guns on the day of their murder. This entrance was originally marked by two immense euphorbias. One of these is still standing but the other has been destroyed and has fallen over. I found that both trees stood within cattle kraals presumably constructed by the former owner of the farm and now being used by native occupants. I do not know the characteristics of the euphorbia but it is suggested that the tree may have been killed as a result of the cattle being kraaled around it, so on my return to Eshowe, I immediately wired the Hon. Secretary suggesting that the Department of Lands be approached with a view to preventing the use of the area immediately around the trees for the purpose of kraaling the cattle.

With reference to the proposal by Parliament to enclose Dingaan's Kraal as the farm is now known, by a stone or wire fence, I had the honour to make the following suggestions.

First, that the whole area be enclosed by a substantial wire fence. That this fence should be so constructed as to have a main entrance to the land at the site of the old entrance to the kraal and that a feature be made of this entrance by the construction of two stone walls which will wholly or partly enclose the existing euphorbia tree and the site of the one that has destroyed. These stone walls might be of more or less semi-circular shape in plan, and the trees protected from the inside by a barbed wire fence to protect the enclosure, as indicated in the accompanying sketch A.

Secondly, I would suggest that the area around Dingaan's tree be enclosed by a stone wall with a turnstile. This wall which need not be very high should be roughly elliptical in plan with a major axis of about 120 feet and a minor axis of 90 feet

so placed that the tree will be about 36 feet from the southern boundary of the wall and 84 feet from the northern boundary at which place a turnstile should be provided as indicated in sketch B.

Thirdly, I would further suggest the construction of a low wall to enclose and protect the most clearly marked of the floors in the vicinity of the small Euphorbia tree mentioned above. The location of these floors is shown in sketch C. This wall should also be provided with a turnstile.

Fourthly, it would enhance the value of the site from an educative point of view if a number of monuments (say stone fence-posts) could be erected to indicate roughly the limits of the actual kraal. It is difficult to say how many of these would be required but perhaps one every 100 feet or so would suffice.

If the members of the Commission agree to these proposals I would suggest that the Public Works Department be asked to prepare an estimate for this work and it would be well perhaps if the local Native Commissioner could accompany the Engineer of the Department on his visit and discuss these suggestions with him. It is not unlikely that some very useful suggestions may be made by the Native Commissioner and I have no doubt that he would be of great assistance to the Engineer in tracing the remains of the huts, old floors, fire places, middens etc. He might perhaps suggest that points other than those noticed by me should be marked in some way or protected.

About a month or five weeks ago I called upon the Secretary for Lands in this connection and explained to him that action by the Commission was being delayed by my failure to submit a report, but that I had been prevented from submitting a report earlier and asked him to grant the Commission a little further time in replying to his letter in connection with the fencing of Dingaan's Kraal.

I am submitting herewith three tracings of diagrams and the district map given me by the Surveyor-General and also some photographs.

(Sgd.) R.J. VAN REENEN.

at PRETORIA.

22nd November 1927.