CHAPTER S. SHALE HILLS

Field Note S5g. Mines at Witdam-Muurkraal

Clay mine at Witdam.

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The clays in the Shale Hills were mined decades ago, in open-cast and underground mines. Some of the mines are marked on the geology map. All the mines have been abandoned. The clay mines are described from west to east (Field Notes S5a to S5d), then the white clay (kaolin) mines (Field Note S5e) and the salt mines on the south bank of the Breede River (Field Note S5f). Clay mines are also located in the north of the Study Area.

This Field Note is about the clay mines on Witdam and Muurkraal Farms, 1-4 km east of the R319, midway between Bredasdorp and Swellendam (Figure 1).

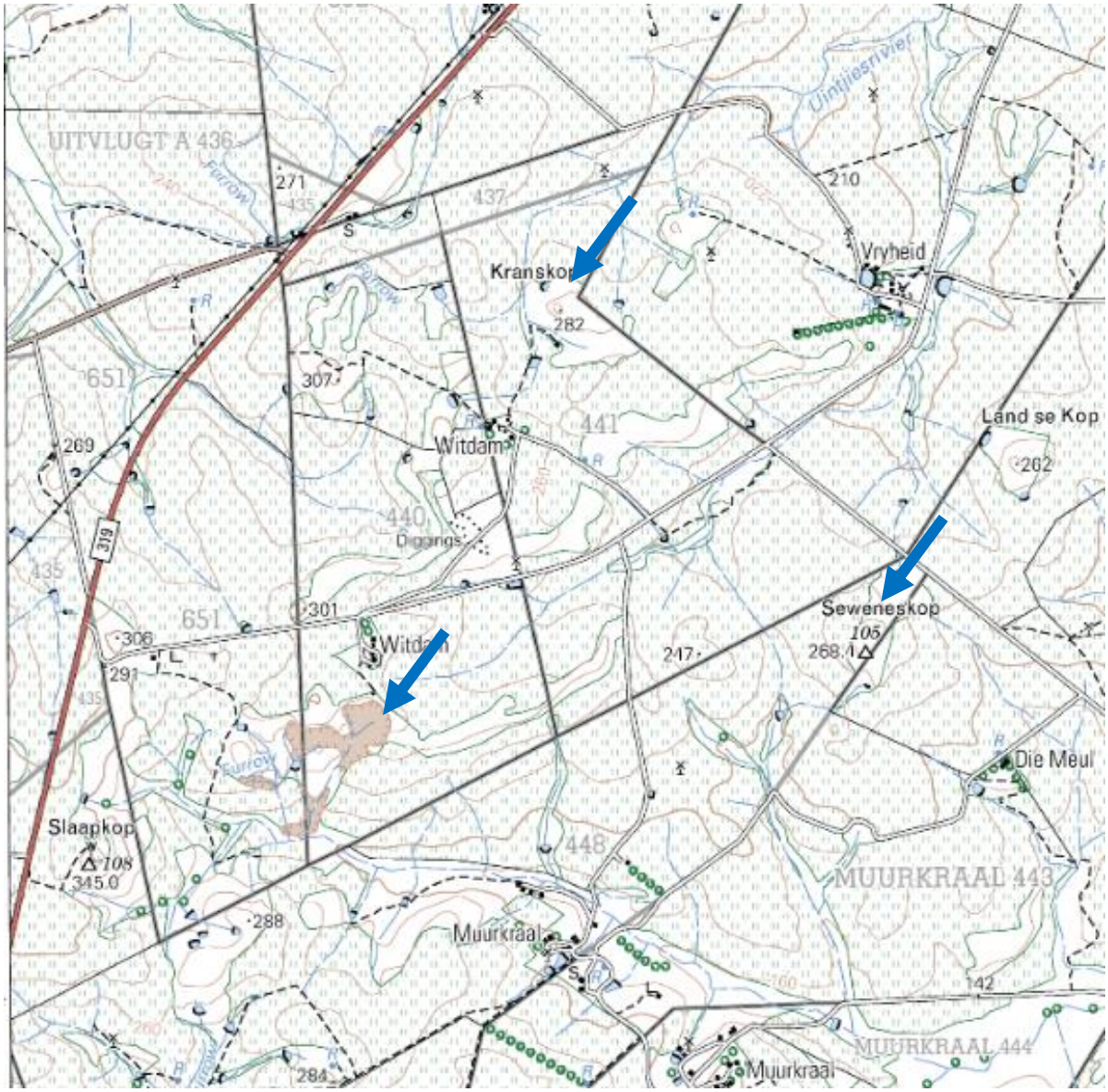

Figure 1. Topographical map of the Witdam and Muurkraal Farms area east of the R319, midway between Bredasdorp and Swellendam. The blue arrows point to the mines.

Red and ochre clay were mined for the paint industry. The “Ou Verf Myn” (Old Paint Mine) is the biggest of the three. The other two mines, not indicated on the geology map, are located on Kranskop and Seweneskop (Figure 2).

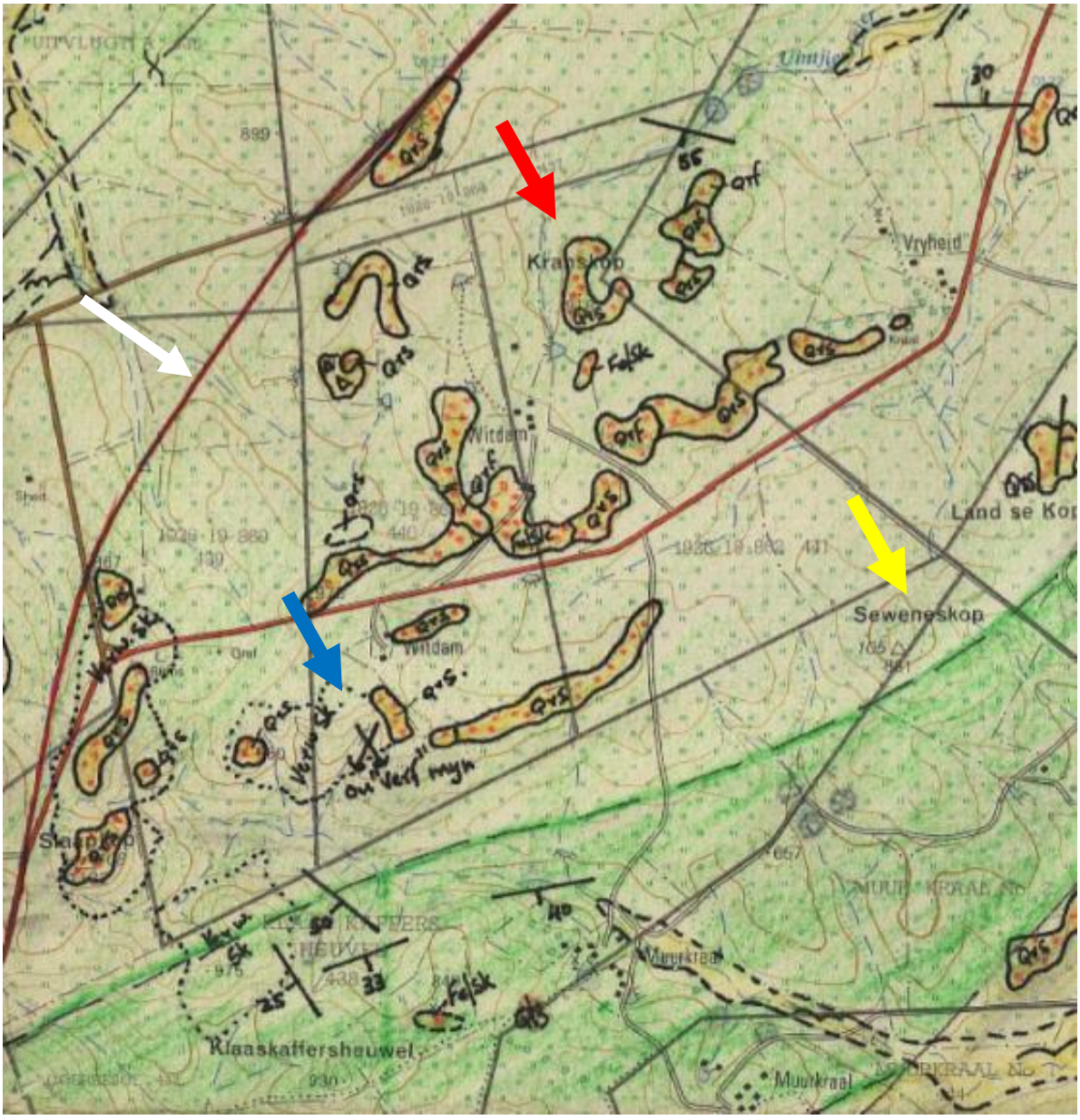

Figure 2. Geology map (south-west corner of the 3420AB Swellendam field sheet, 1:50,000, by HP Siegfried, 1984) of part of the Shale Hills some 40 km northeast of Bredasdorp showing the Witdam-Muurkraal mines locations: blue arrow – Old Paint Mine, red arrow – Kranskop Mine and yellow arrow – Seweneskop Mine (the silcrete on this hill was not marked on the map). The white arrow points to the R319. Note the mine symbol:

Mine not in production

The Old paint Mine is located on the east side of an erosional theatre (Figures 3 and 4).

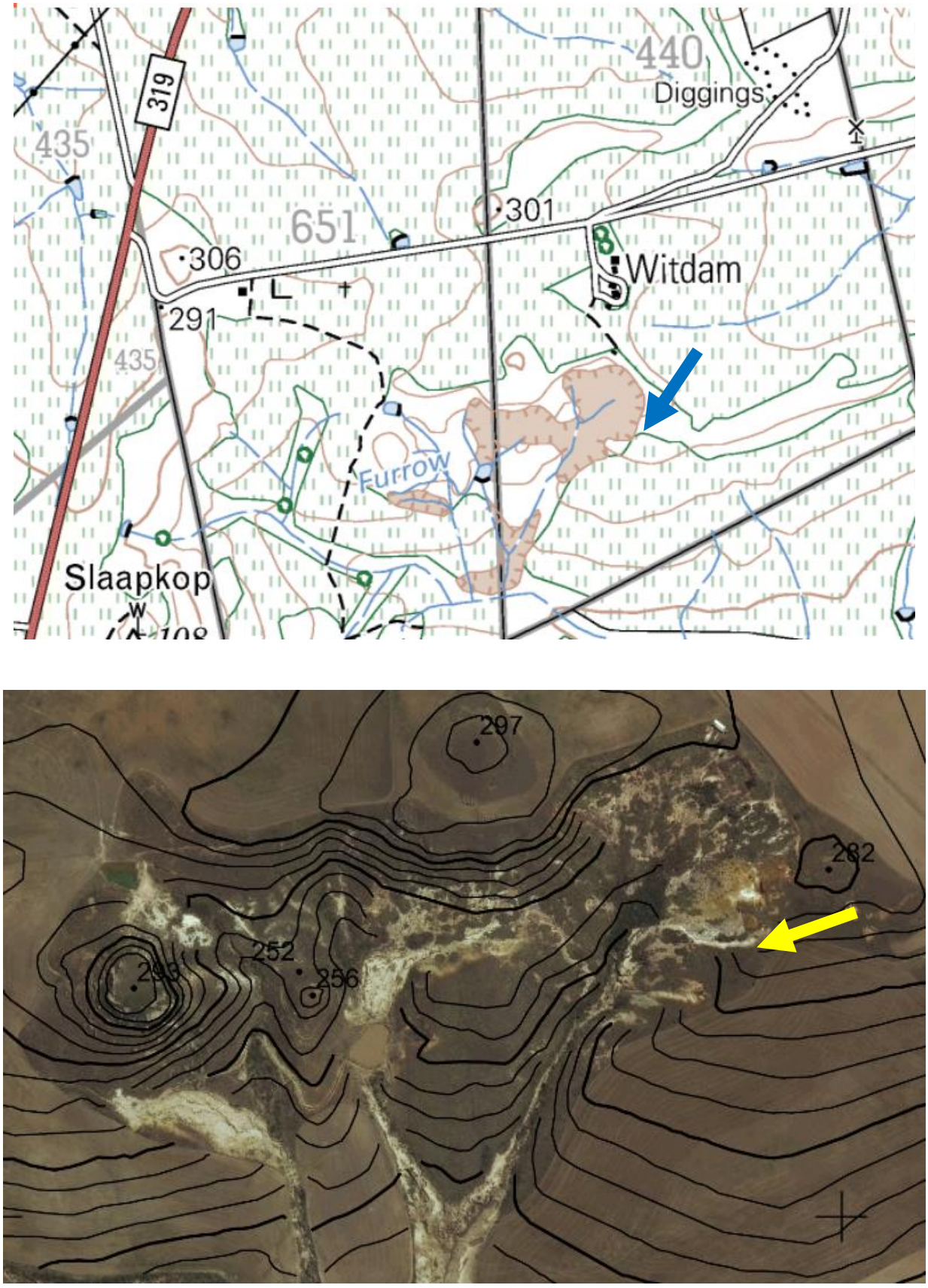

Figure 3. The erosional amphitheatre. Top – 1:50,000 map. Bottom – 1:10,000 map (incomplete contouring around the mine). Arrow points to the mine.

Figure 4. Satellite image of the Old Paint Mine on the east part of the amphitheatre (arrow).

Mining at the Old Paint Mine took place were the silcrete layer has disintegrated and huge blocks have rolled down the slope (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Top and bottom: views to the south on the mine. Note the large silcrete blocks, which rolled down the slope (encircled).

Red and ochre clays were mined in the Old Paint Mine (Figure 6).

Figure 6. The Old Paint Mine. Top – east side. Bottom – west side. The tunnels are ~2 m long.

The tailings are visible from a distance (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Top and bottom – tailings of the Old Paint Mine.

The Kranskop Mine is very small (Figure 8).

Figure 8. The Kranskop Mine (arrow). Top – satellite image. Bottom - topography map.

Red and ochre clays were mined in the Kranskop Mine (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Top and bottom – the Kranskop Mine.

The Seweneskop Mine is the smallest of the three mines (Figure 10).

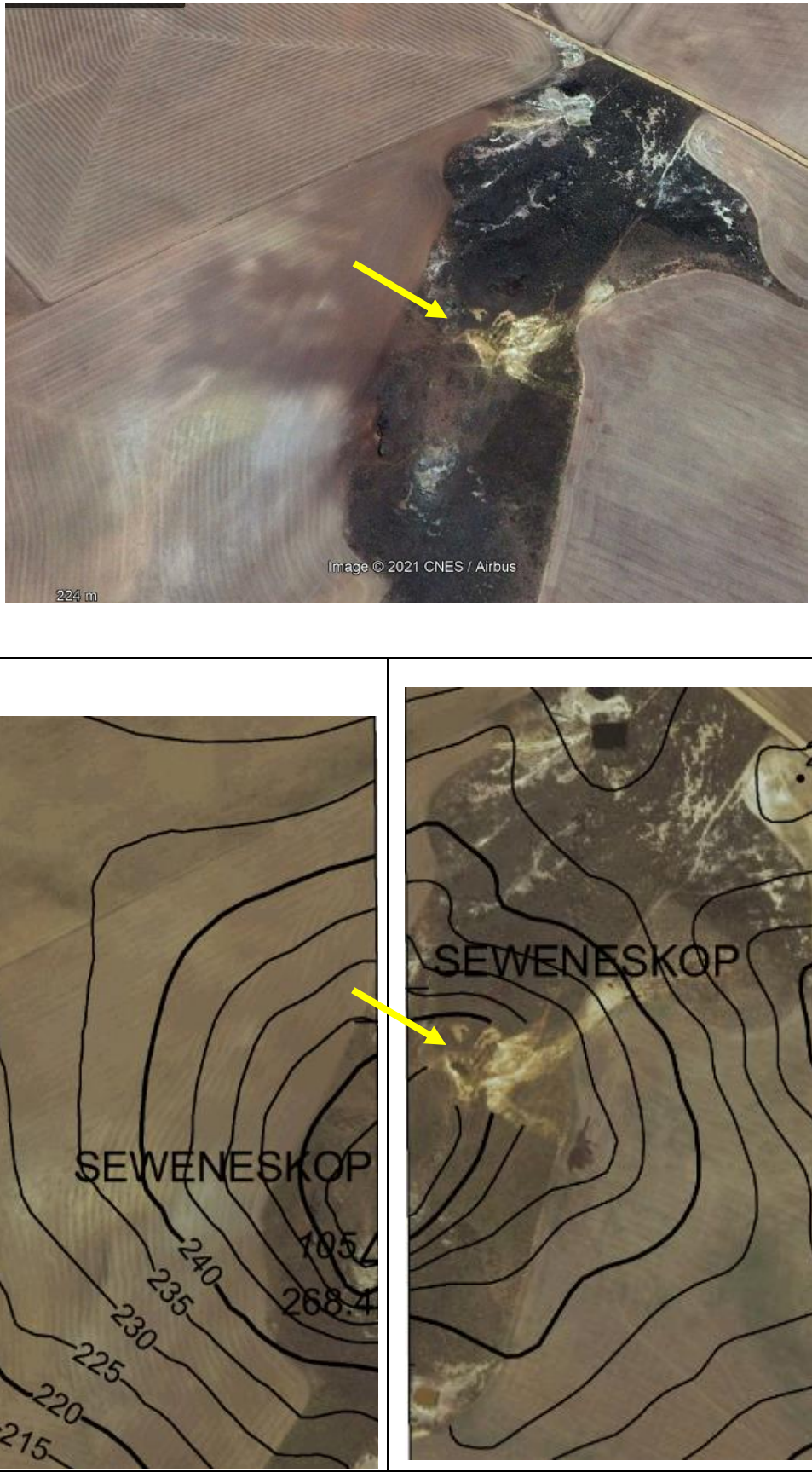

Figure 10. The Seweneskop Mine (arrow). Top – satellite image. Bottom - topography map.

Ochre clays were mined in the Seweneskop Mine (Figures 11 and 12).

Figure 11. Top, middle and bottom – the Seweneskop Mine.

Figure 12. Top (satellite image) and bottom – the Seweneskop Mine tailings.

The author could not obtain any information on the history of these mines.