

CHAPTER S. SHALE HILLS

Field Note S5b. Mines at Grootkop and Hill 288



Clay mine below the top of Grootkop.

CHAPTER S. SHALE HILLS

Field Note S5b. Mines at Grootkop and Hill 288

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 (See other Field Notes in this chapter).

There are four clay mines in the south of the Shale Hills area (Figure 1).

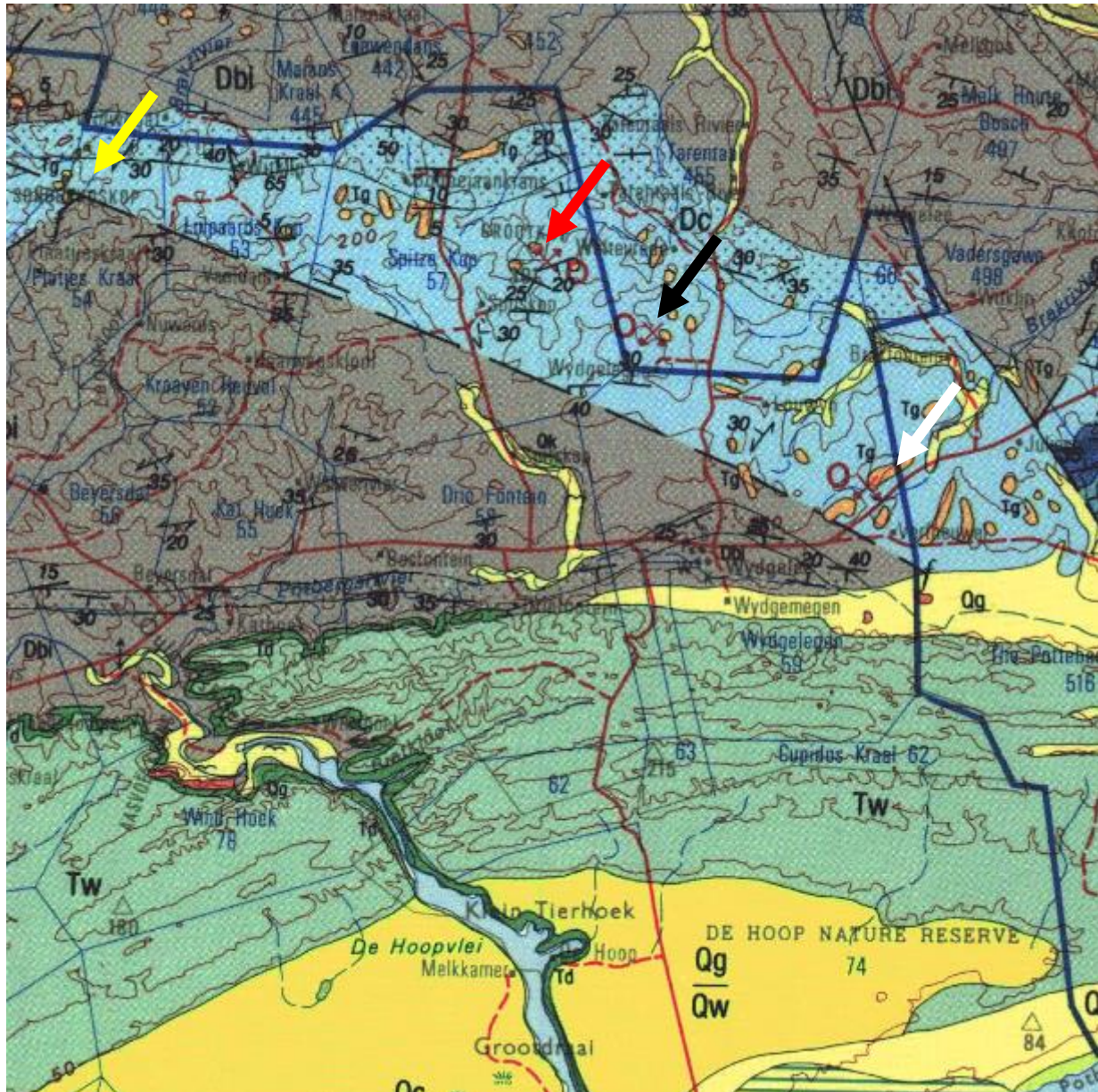


Figure 1. Geology map of part of the Shale Hills north of De Hoop Vlei, showing mine locations (arrows, from west to east): yellow – Sonderkoskop; red – Grootkop and Hill 288; black – Hill 254; white – Verfheuwel.

This Field Note is about the clay mines at Grootkop and Hill 288.

Grootkop and Hill 288 are located ~7.5 km northwest of Wydgeleë (Ouplaas) (Figures 2 and 3).

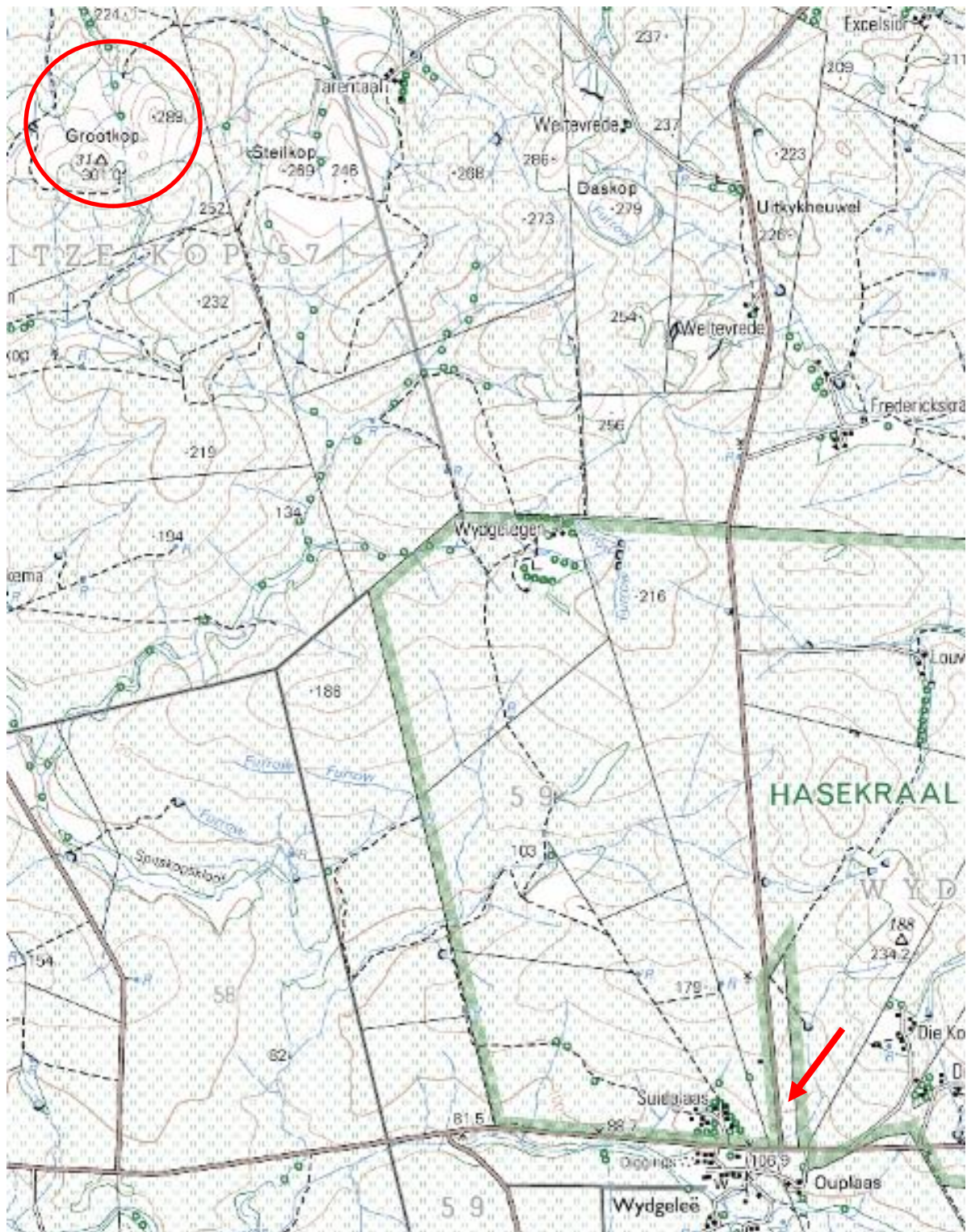


Figure 2. Topography map of the area north of Wydgeleë (arrow). Grootkop and Hill 288 (289 on this map) are within the circle.

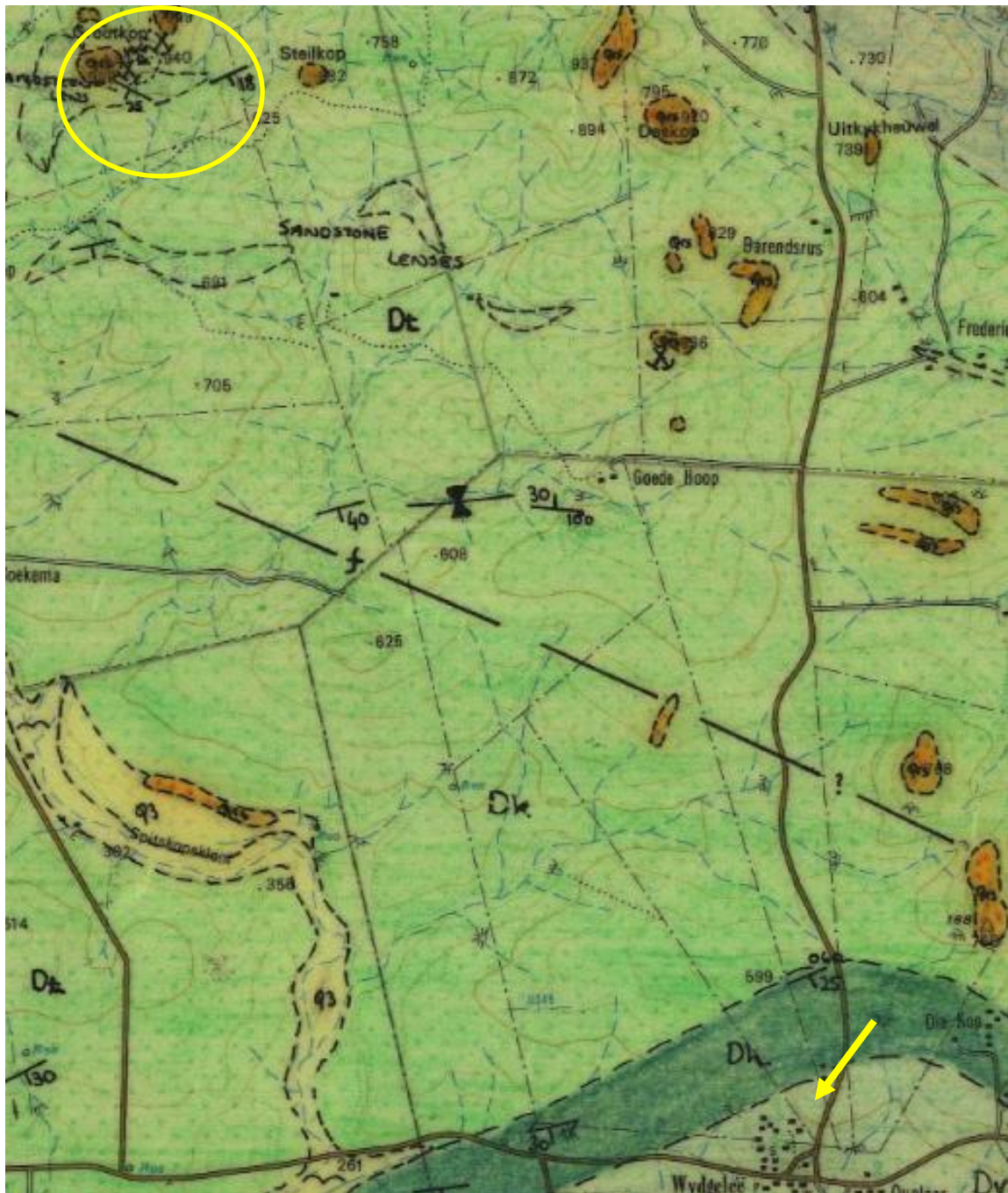


Figure 3. Geology map (1984; elevations in feet) of the area shown in Figure 2. Grootkop and Hill 288 are within the circle. Arrow points on Wydgeleë. Green areas are shales. The orange patches are silcrete (and in places ferricrete) capping.

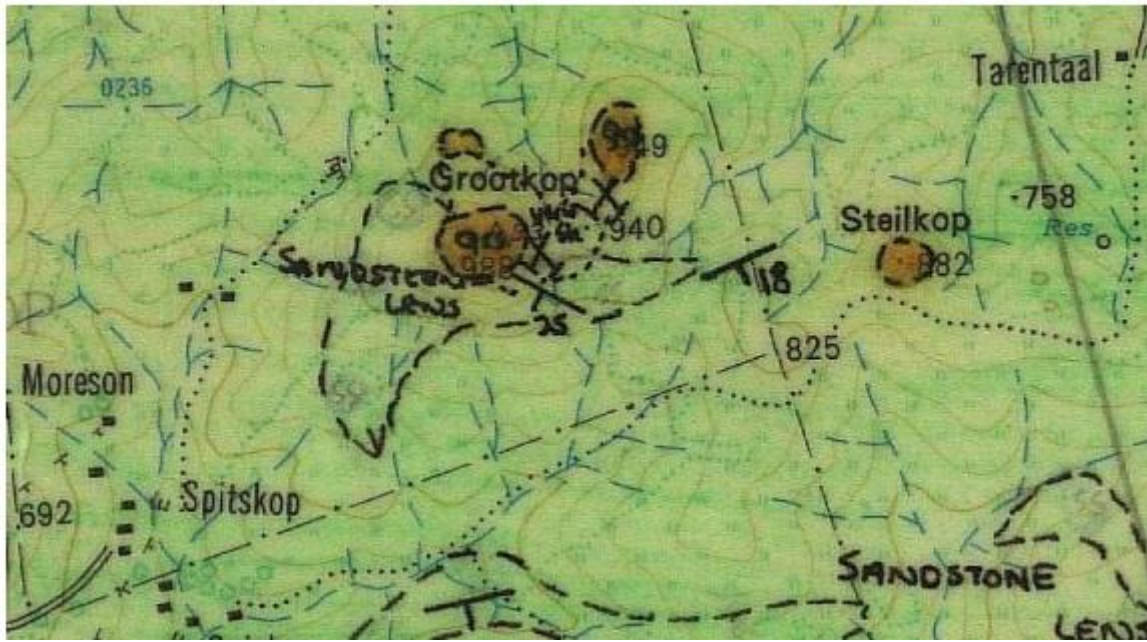


Figure 4. Enlargement of the area encircled in Figures 2 and 3. Note the mine symbol:

Mine not in production 

Grootkop peaks at 301 m above sealevel and its two adjacent hills peak at 286 m and 288 m (Figure 5).

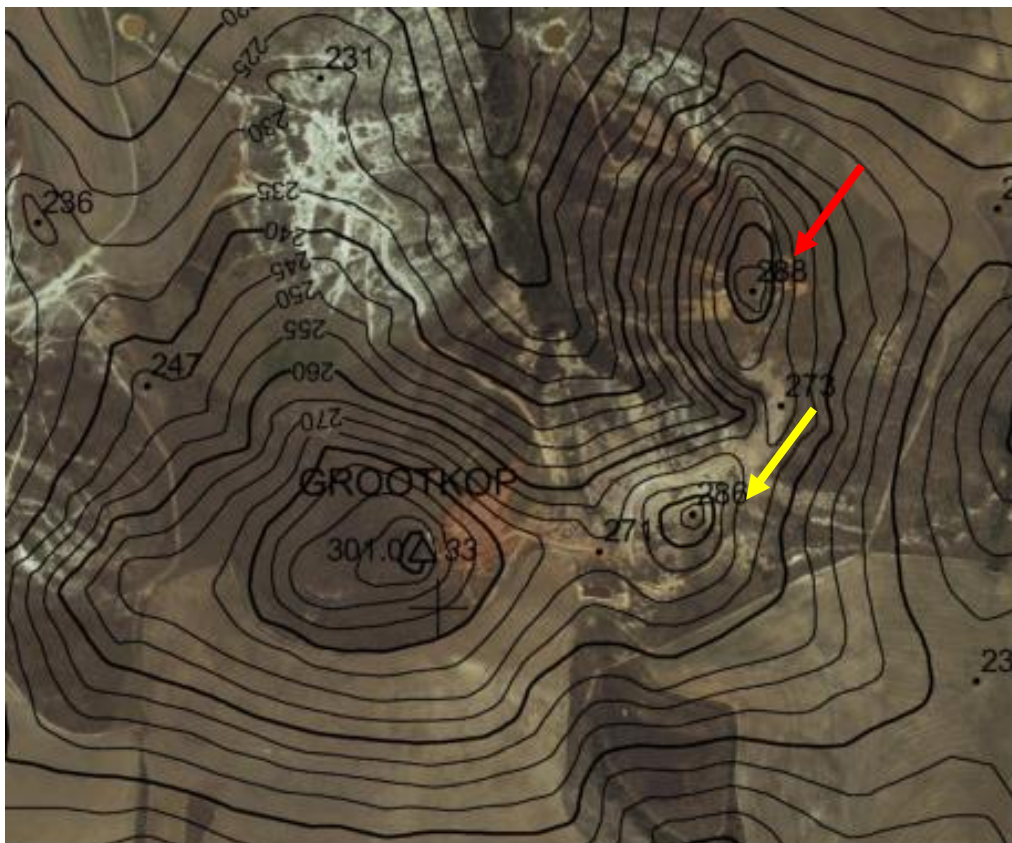


Figure 5. Topography map of Grootkop and the adjacent two peaks (arrows)

Grootkop and the adjacent hills are capped with silcrete (see Chapter D for silcrete) (Figure 6). The mines at Grootkop and at Hill 288 are the only underground mines located so far in the area. Tailings of the excavated earth can be seen on the satellite images (Figure 7).



Figure 6. The silcrete cap of Grootkop. View from the west.



Figure 7. Satellite image of Grootkop and the adjacent hills. The ‘plumes’ of the tailings [red, from the mine on Grootkop, yellow arrow; and ochre from the mine on the adjacent hill (named here Hill 288), white arrow], were washed down the slopes by rains, are easily discerned.

The tailings from the mines cover large areas of the flanks of the hills below the mines (Figures 8 and 9).



Figure 8. View to the east from the peak of Grootkop. The red tailings from the mine on the east flank of Grootkop can be seen at the bottom left. Arrow points to the open cast mine on the western flank of Hill 288. (The mountain at the far right is Potberg).



Figure 9. View to the northeast from Grootkop. The arrow points to the ochre tailings from the open cast mine on the western flank of Hill 288.

A colourful display of clays at the entrance to the mine below the top, on the east side of Grootkop (Figures 10 and 11).



Figure 10. The entrance to the mine. View to the west.



Figure 11. White and red clays at the entrance to the mine.

The entrance to the mine is nearly blocked by material which was eroded and fell from the rocks above the entrance, and which was accumulated in front of it after the mine was abandoned (Figures 12 and 13). Inside there is a central tunnel, extending some 50 m into the hill as well as several side chambers.



Figure 12. The entrance to the mine is nearly blocked.
 (The person investigating the underground mine is J Groenewald, of the Renosterveld Research Centre).



Figure 13. Solid block of silcrete, which fell from the rocks above the entrance.

Large quantities of the tailings from the mine were left to be washed down the eastern slopes of the hill (Figures 14 and 15).



Figure 14. The tailings of the Grootkop mine. View to the southwest from the slope below the mine.

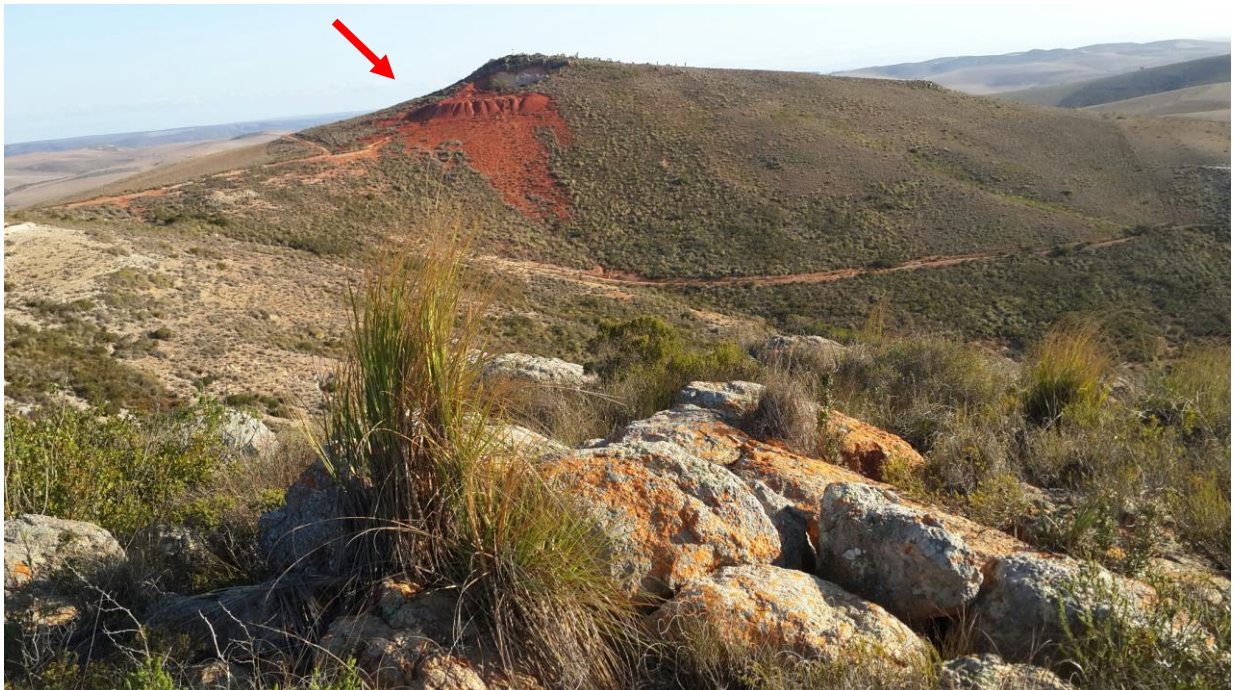


Figure 15. The tailing of the Grootkop mine (arrow). View to the southwest from the ochre clay open cast mine on Hill 288. Note the silcrete in the foreground.

There is a mine on the east side of Hill 288 (Figures 16). Similar, but shorter, system of tunnels exists there underground.



Figure 16. The excavated access to the entrance to one of the two mines on the east side of Hill 288.

(The person investigating the mine is J Groenewald, of the Renosterveld Research Centre).



Figure 17. The entrance to the mine on the east side of Hill 288.
(The person investigating the underground mine is J Groenewald, of the Renosterveld Research Centre).



Figure 18. Colourful clays at the entrance to the mine on the east side of Hill 288.

An open-cast mine, the tailings of which are ochre, is situated below the top, on the west side of Hill 288 (Figure 19). Note the silcrete at the top of the hill.

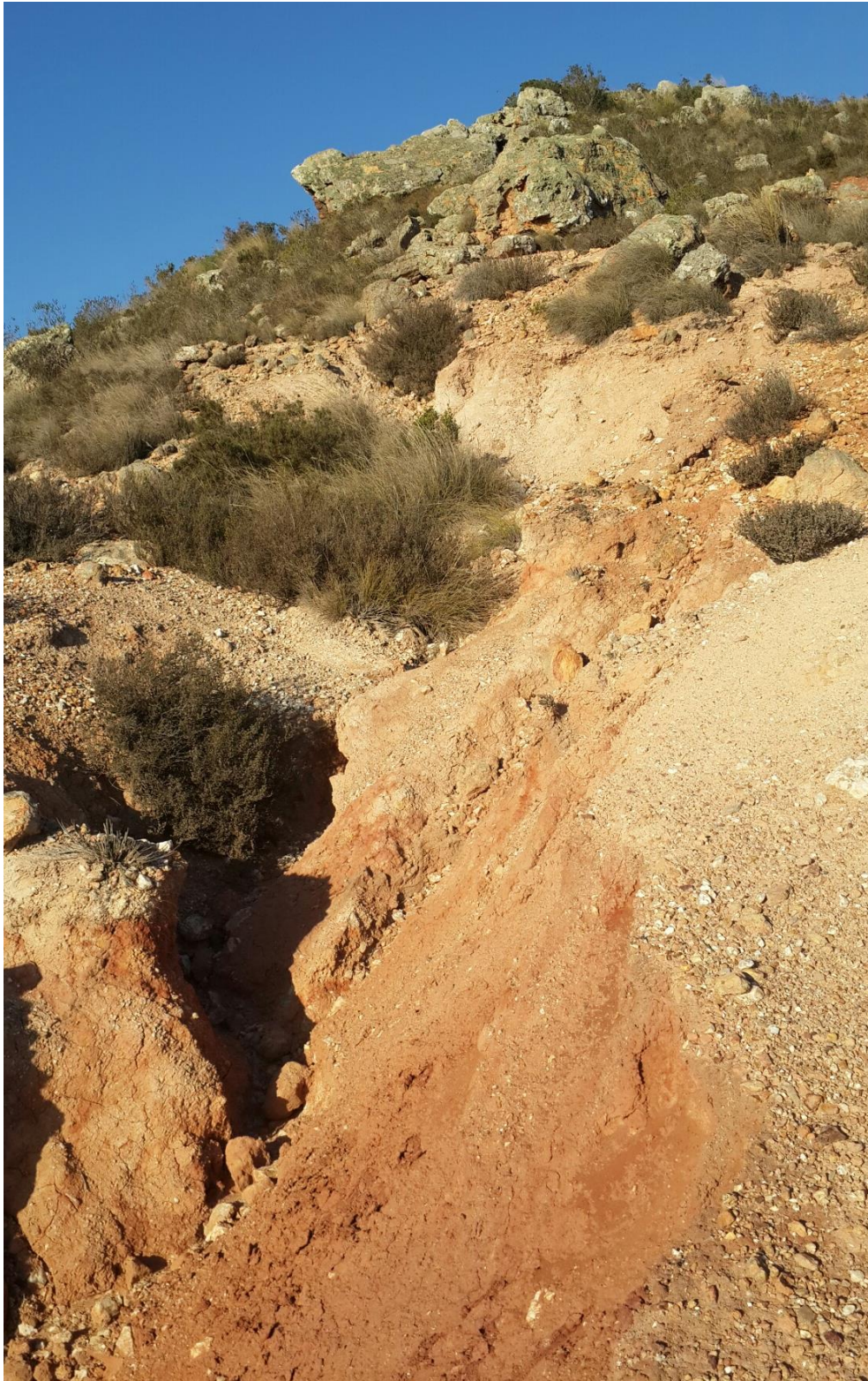


Figure 19. Tailings from the open cast mine on the western flank of Hill 288. Note the silcrete at the top of the hill.

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