

<b>Archaeological Site Report</b>	<b>SiteNo</b>	9/2/008/0005
	<b>Site Name</b>	Old Bridge, Vaal River, Barkly West
	<b>Date</b>	
	<b>Project</b>	
	<b>CaseNID</b>	
	<b>Coords</b>	-28.549658, 24.532981

Page No: 1      **SiteAutoID:** 29470

Site Category: Bridge

**Directions:**

High

**SiteComments:**

Archive Import History: The Bridge and Toll-House, Barkly West The road from Kimberley to Barkly West runs in a north-westerly direction and, just before reaching Barkly West, crosses the Vaal River by this bridge. The toll-house stands on the Barkly West side of the river. Its age and type of construction make the bridge interesting, but in combination with the toll-house it is unique. The need for a bridge at this point was felt from the earliest times because the road linked the flourishing alluvial diggings of Barkly West with the deep mines of Kimberley. In 1874 Moritz Unger, a leading diamond buyer, publicly demanded such a bridge. He lived in Barkly West and went by road from diggings to diggings to buy diamonds. He often found the river a considerable obstacle and it was to be expected that he would be an enthusiastic protagonist of the proposal. But it was only in 1881 that a company was formed to raise the necessary capital for such a bridge. On 23rd September, 1881, John X. Merriman, then Chief Commissioner or Minister of Public Works of the Cape Colony, laid the foundation stone. All the shops in Kimberley shut their doors to celebrate the event which was attended by Cecil John Rhodes and C. C. Campbell, the Civil Commissioner. Little progress was made with the construction of the bridge until 1884, but then James Hill, the senior member of the Cape Legislative Assembly for Barkly West, took matters in hand. He hired extra labour and speeded the work to such an extent that two of the stone pillars each 15 m high, were built in fifteen days and nine days respectively. The bridge was designed by James Ford and built by Fairbank, Panling & Co. It consisted of five spans of 23 m and one of 32,3 metres. The steelwork that rests on the stone pillars was made by Westwood Bailie & Co. of London. This heavy steel structure had to be brought from the Orange River station near Colesberg by ox wagon. The bridge was opened to traffic on 24th June, 1885, by Mrs. Hill. On that occasion she declared: ""I christen this bridge The Vaal River Bridge of West Barkly"". When the symbolic ox-wagon commemoration trek passed that way in 1938 it was renamed the ""Magrieta Prinsloo Bridge"". The toll-house was built to collect toll fees which were necessary to help pay for the bridge. It has been damaged by passers-by, but the stone walls are sound and the building is to be restored in the near future. Proclaimed 1967" Visual Description: The bridge consists of 5 spans of 75 ft and one of 108 ft 6inch.Ironwork weighed 271 tons, was const Colours: Site Features: Condition: Good Construction Date: 1881 Materials: Iron Catalogue: , No: , Significance Category:

Damage Types: