PROGRESS REPORT 12: July 3, 2012

Archaeological Reconnaissance at Tower 167

400KV TABOR-WITKOP TRANSMISSION LINE, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

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INTRODUCTION

An excavation permit (Permit no **80/12/06/002/51, 9/2/253/0027)** has already been issued to the archaeologist, Hester Roodt, for the rescue excavation at Tower 167 by SAHRA in terms of Section 35 (4) of the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999) *which states that "no person may, without a permit issued by the relevant heritage resources authority, destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or otherwise disturb any archaeological or palaeontological site or material or any meteorite; or bring onto, or use at an archaeological or palaeontological site any excavation equipment...*"

On Monday, July 2, the archaeologist and the principal investigator had a meeting with Mr Oscar de Canha from SSP and Mr Roy Dowie representing Eskom, with the purpose to discuss the action to be taken at Tower 167, where a major archaeological site is located. This site was not recorded during previous Impact assessments in 2007 and 2010 (Van Schalkwyk 2010). It was decided that the archaeologists should re-inspect the site to make further recommendations regarding the archaeological process and to simultaneously investigate the possibility of deviating the transmission line around the sensitive area.

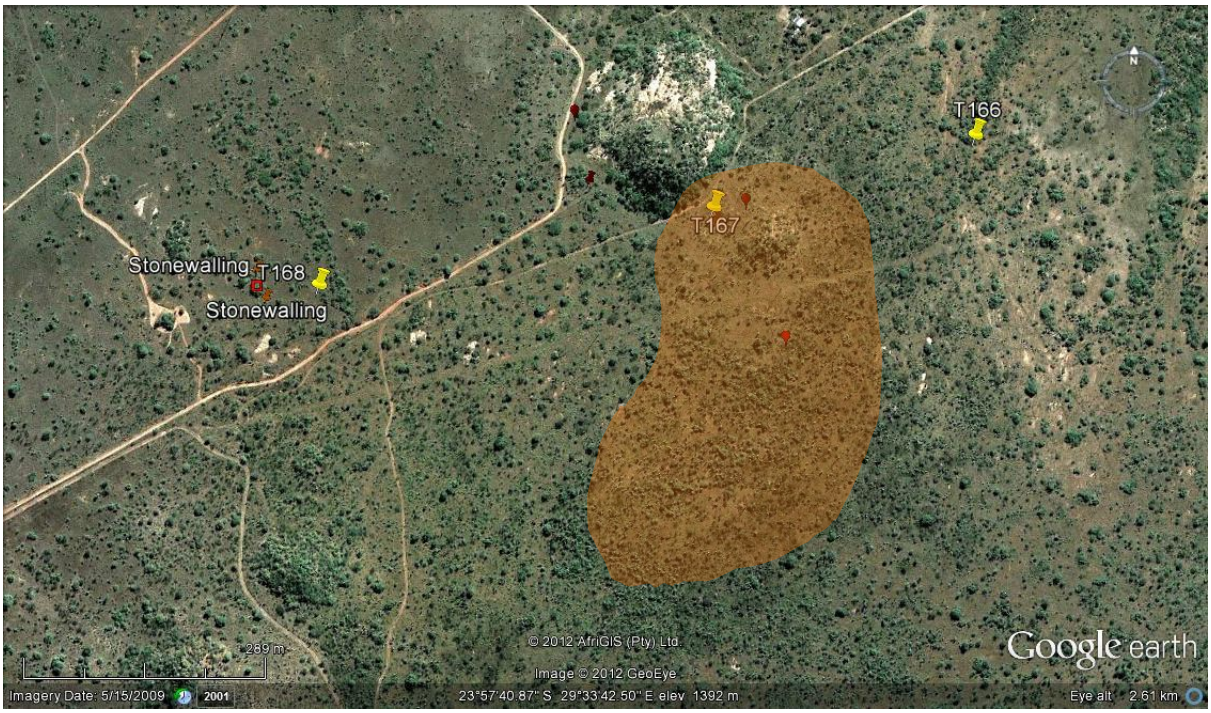

Figure 1. *The approximate extent of the site is demarcated on the Google map. Although the stone walling is not clearly visible on the map, its presence is indicated by the thick aloe growth. The area was walked on foot, and although a large part of it would not be compromised by the present construction of the transmission line, the possibility to deviate the line exists, and it is for this reason that the extent of the site was explored. If the line has to be deviated, it should circumvent the site.*

The site has a multi-component character, which means that it has been occupied by various peoples at different times. The oldest and predominant occupation occurred during the Late Iron Age (LIA), *circa* 1600 - with a second phase which occurred later

during historical times after European settlement in the area. These were probably farm workers.

The layout of the site is typical of the stonewalled Badfontein complex – dating to AD1600 - 1840, which consists of various components or living units, each with its own outer wall and inner livestock enclosures. It is possible that the unit in the neck between the two hills, which will be damaged or destroyed by the Eskom operations, was probably that of the chief since it is located on the highest elevation of the complex, is protected by the small hills and has a good viewpoint towards the east and west.

The stone walling belonging to the Iron Age occupation has been robbed by the people who moved into the area during historical times, evidence of their buildings clearly visible on the southern part of the smaller of the two hills. It is, however, difficult at this stage to establish the extent of either occupation, since thick vegetation (grass, shrubs, acacia trees and aloes) cover large areas of the sites.

The Badfontein stonewalled sites are associated with Ndebele and Koni groups that moved onto the Pietersburg (Polokwane) plateau from about 1600 AD. Distinction between the two groups is difficult to make because both originated in KwaZulu-Natal and both were influenced by Venda and Sotho in the Eastern Lowveld before moving onto the plateau. Accurate dating supplemented by cultural finds and oral traditions may enable the identification of specific groups.

The purpose of the archaeological excavation will be to obtain the necessary data to establish a stratigraphy for the site, to date it by means of carbon dating and thus narrow down the identity of the inhabitants and occupational period. Although the excavations will be very limited, given the short time available, important data will be obtained which would otherwise have been lost. In this respect Eskom will greatly contribute towards understanding the past of the area's history.

Alternative Route

It does not seem possible to deviate the route to the north because of the residential areas located there. Should the line be deviated to the south of its present location, it must be placed far enough to pass the southern extension of the site as shown on the Google image (See *Fig 1*). Thereafter it must turn northwards and also miss the areas indicated in Figure 2 where the probability of other archaeological sites exists. Tentative identification of archaeological sites are based on a Google Earth map searched for dense concentrations of *Aloe marlothii*, which are usually associated with previous occupation, i.e archaeological sites.

It is thus recommended that the transmission line is kept as planned and that an archaeological excavation be undertaken in accordance with the specifications of the SAHRA permit. Bear in mind that, should the line be relocated, a heritage impact assessment must be undertaken of the new line in terms of Section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (1999), which stipulates that any linear development exceeding 300 metre is subject to an impact assessment and approval by SAHRA. It would also probably necessitate re-negotiation with landowners and an adjustment to the EMP. Conducting the archaeological excavation will in the end be more cost and time efficient.

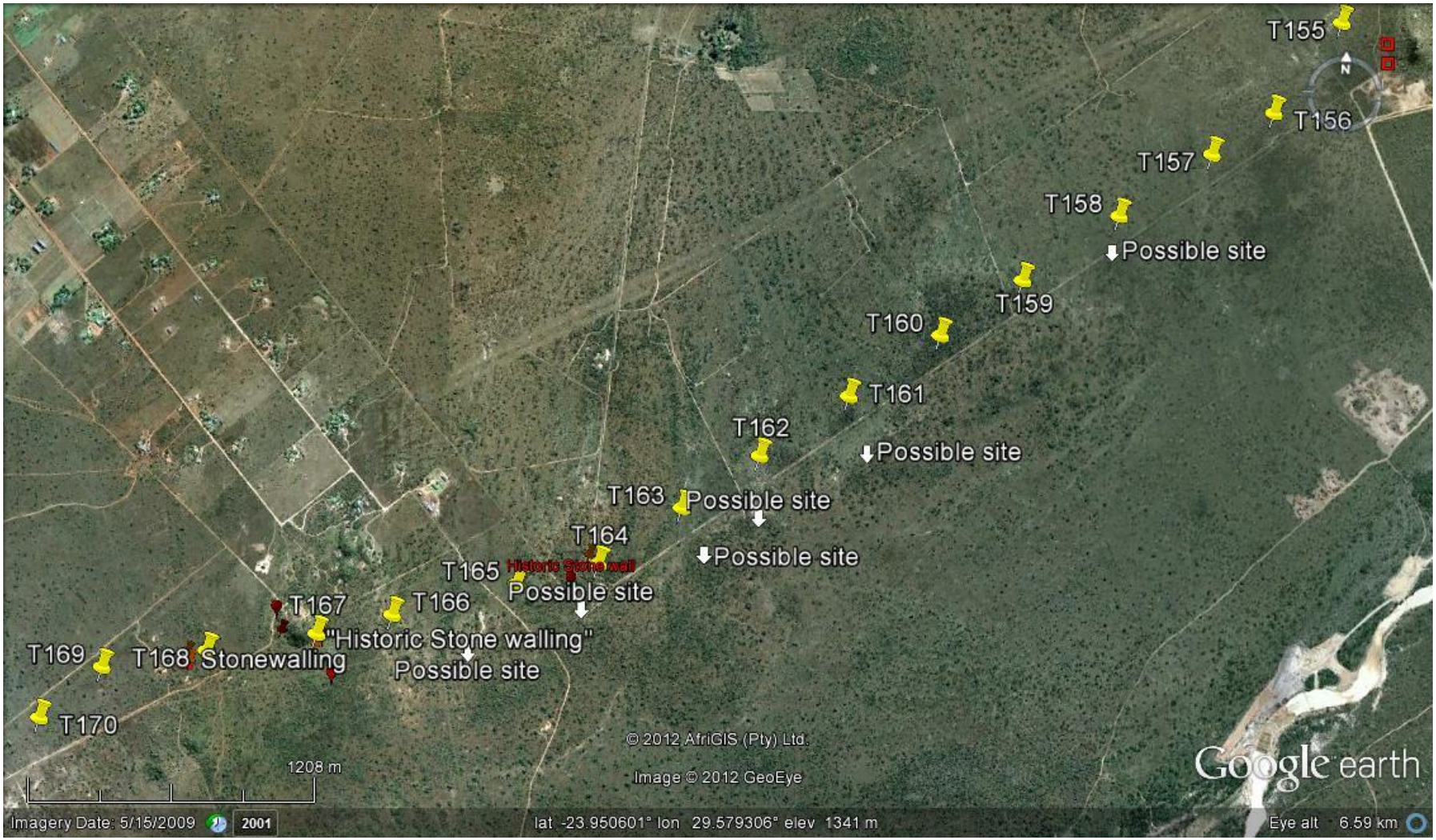

Figure 2. *The white arrow markers indicate the location of archaeological sites or areas likely to contain sites. The entire area will, however, will have to be reconnoitred on foot if the transmission line is to be relocated, since many archaeological sites don't show up on the Google map, while other features in the geological landscape could be mistaken for archaeological sites.*

PLAN OF ACTION

- The part of the site that will be affected by the development must be accurately surveyed and mapped. This will comprise the area where the tower will be erected, the access route as well as where the line will cross it.

- To ease the surveying process, bush clearing has to be done prior to it in order to make the structures more visible.

- The archaeologist should be advised what the maximum width of the area is which will be affected by the vehicular traffic during and after the construction of the tower and the stringing operation.

- Once the archaeological features are surveyed, the archaeologist will, together with a SSP representative, demarcate the areas that will be utilised during construction and stringing of the conductors, indicating access areas.

- The archaeological excavation will mainly concentrate on the areas which will be affected by the tower, the midden which lies directly in the probable access route as well as the part which will be destroyed during stringing operations.

- It is recommended that the archaeologist be present on site during all the construction activities.

REFERENCES

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