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MAPUNGUWALE REHABILITATION PROJECT:

PROGRESS REPORT

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Submitted by:

WC Nienaber

Department of Anatomy

School of Medicine

Faculty of Health Sciences

University of Pretoria

Under the auspices of:

Business Enterprises at University of Pretoria (BE@UP)

and

M Hutten and S Gaigher

AINP



BUSINESS ENTERPRISES
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

UP

UP

1. Mapungubwe Hill Access Route:

The area cleared for the construction of the concrete access path was situated along the worst parts of the erosion *donga* formed by the footpath route prior to January 2003 providing for minimum disturbance of *in situ* hill slope deposits. It leads from just behind the large boulder north of K8 on the Southern Terrace to the narrow pass between the two large boulders below the defile (Western Ascent) leading to the summit of Mapungubwe Hill. At the base of the sandstone boulders leading up into the defile a landing was prepared. This uppermost part of the route probably follows the ancient access to the site and is completed by a wooden stairway. The stairway was erected by a contractor working under the supervision of the archaeologist on specifications drawn up by SANParks through VUKA. It was routed up the defile (Western Ascent to Mapungubwe Hill) in such a manner that as much as possible of the ancient niches presumably used to place poles to form the ancient stairway, will still be visible to the visitor and can be interpreted. The construction of the stairway necessitated the drilling of three holes in the sandstone (two at the bottom end of the stairway and one at the top). These holes are underneath the poles used for construction and will not be visible as long as the current stairway is in place. The contractor could not guarantee the safety of the construction without drilling these holes. The two at the bottom secures the poles forming the base of the stairway up the defile, while the one at the top secures the handrail along the cliff face. All options whereby the stairway could be secured were considered and discussed with the contractor, but none other could provide the purchase needed to secure the safety of the stairs.

Clearing the donga itself and the immediate vicinity of all vegetation established the route for the concrete walkway. The clearing was done by labourers with shovels working under the close supervision of the archaeologist. After the vegetation had been cleared a 1m wide pathway (with as few turns as possible to facilitate easy construction) was pinned and demarcated with string. The landing area at the base of the boulders below the defile was also demarcated. Care was taken to include the worst affected parts of the hill slope and to situate the path and landing in such a way that it would facilitate stabilization of the hill slope deposits in this part of the site. After the pathway and landing was demarcated it was surveyed to establish the extent of the *in situ* deposits to be affected utilising this route. Very little material at all (apart from rocks and obvious hill wash) occurred in the demarcated route. It was evaluated to be the route with the least impact on *in situ* deposits possible on this area of the site.

The demarcated 1m wide area was divided in 3m blocks and all loose surface materials were collected by brushing each block separately. The demarcated landing was treated in the same manner. Very little material was recovered from the screens. All of the material recovered most probably originated from other areas of the site washed down the *donga*/footpath. Only two of the excavation/survey blocks and the landing contained features, with only one of these *in situ*.

A 800mm wide concrete walkway was erected. All potentially sensitive areas along the demarcated route were sandbagged before any concrete was poured, and no intrusive construction methods, such as dug foundations, were allowed. To facilitate construction and to further protect the site surface, a layer of approximately 10cm

thick material from the processed JS2(b) excavation dump was placed along the demarcated route and compacted. The concrete construction was done on top of this. To minimise the visual impact of the walkway it was paved with natural sandstone slabs obtained from the old Army quarry on Greefswald and the cement between the sandstone was coloured dark grey (by mixing it with material from the processed old excavation dumps).

Block descriptions: Mapungubwe access route Blocks 1-18 and Landing

Blocks 1, 3 – 16, 18 contained no *in situ* materials nor any features. These blocks most probably represent hill wash and other debris originating from other parts of the site.

In Block 2 of the Access Route a mortar block occurred on the surface. This artefact almost certainly originated from another part of the site. It is probably a mortar block carried from Mapungubwe Hill and dropped in the footpath.

In Block 12 of the Access Route a mustard yellow compacted gravel deposit (possible floor) with associated cultural remains was badly eroded by the footpath/*donga*. The possible floor deposit only covered a small section of the block in the northwestern corner. The remaining compacted gravel deposit in this section of the block measures approximately 47 x 26cm, being 32cm deep at its deepest. The deposit consists mainly of small clay and gravel pieces, predominantly light brown to mustard in colour. The average granules of clay gravel measures 2 x 1 x 1cm. The extent of this

feature cannot be determined through the section currently exposed; neither can the size of the feature be determined since no excavation was undertaken.

In the southwestern corner of the landing a small mortar block occurred. Apart from this artefact no other deposits were encountered in this area.

Plan drawings of Blocks displaying features in preparation.

2. Mapungubwe Hill Northern Dump

The current project is utilising the dump as a source of material to accomplish the stabilization of the slumped excavation walls on Mapungubwe Hill. In order to preserve the characteristics of the dump the flat top is removed in spade depth (approximately 25cm) spits. This flat top was formed due to the overhang of the cliff from which the material was dumped to form the talus slope. By excavating in this manner the dump is systematically lowered over its whole aspect in an area that is protected from the worst erosion factors by the overhanging cliff. Access to the excavation is via a sandbagged path along the main erosion gully. All these measures were designed to minimise impact while excavating and recovering material and also ensuring that the present activities do not contribute adversely to the future erosion of the dump.

Excavated material is carried down the slope and is screened and sorted, as per the

Terms of Reference for the project, on the Northern Terrace where after the product is transported to the southern side of the hill and carried up.

Training of labour was also conducted at this locality in order to minimise possible mistakes by labour on other more sensitive deposits.

3. Excavation JS2(b) 1934:

During 1934 the western wall (W6) of the Main Entrance was partially rebuilt after it collapsed during excavation (Fouche, 1937). The walls were also left uncovered, as were the other features encountered, and recent visitors to the site have used the entrance between the walls for many years, destabilising them even further. In 1981 these walls were again partially re-built and the approach to entrance was shored up by cement-filled sandbags, while the walls themselves were stabilised by erecting a concrete wall to shore up the foundations (Eloff, 1981). The north eastern wall has since collapsed totally, and after the vegetation was removed the poor state of the Main Entrance was evident. The north western wall (W6) was unstable with several small water flow-offs eroding the terrace from behind the wall, leaving it virtually freestanding. The dry packed wall just north east of the entrance, uncovered in 1934 (as part of the JS2(b) excavation), is also eroding away and has partially collapsed on the north western end.

Since these features (W5 & 6 (Fouche, 1937)) were well described and sufficiently documented at the time of excavation it was decided to cover all the exposed features and to shore up the walls with sandbags to prevent further damage. It was kept in mind that the Main Entrance to the site would be a valuable site feature for tourism purposes, but the state of the walls did not allow for them to be left as they were.

Since the restoration of site features is not included in the scope of this project, and since the archaeologist does not have the necessary expertise, stabilisation by the

available means was the best option. The nature of the sandbag-wall stabilisation employed is such that it can be easily removed if the need arises to view/utilise the walls. In our opinion this should not be considered until a maintenance plan and infrastructure for these features are in place.

The walls were stabilised by packing with sandbags filled with material from what is presumed to be the T.H. 1 excavation (excavated in 1934 by Jones and Schofield (Fouche, 1937)) screens dump immediately north east of the boulder at K8. As soon as a row of bags were placed and beaten with spades the area formed between the wall and bags were filled-in with material from the same source and the process was repeated until the sandbags reached the summit of the wall. At this stage a last row of sandbags were placed to cap the wall and prevent erosion occurring between the walls and packed sandbags (Fig 23).

Initially the maize meal type sandbags were to be covered with material and raked to form an even slope to minimise the visual impact of the sandbagging. During the 14 February 2003 Vhembe/Dongola Archaeological Task Group meeting concerns were raised as to the stability and visual impact of this type of sandbag since these are not ultra violet light stabilized. A compromise was reached where all already erected sandbag embankments would be covered with at least one layer of UV stable "army" type sandbags. These would then be covered with a layer of material originating from the clearing of the profiles and the processing of old excavation dumps. This was done and since the start of April 2003 only "army" type sandbags were used.

All vegetation was cleared from the open JS2(b) excavation and the dumps on its walls. This was done by labourers with shovels and rakes working under the close supervision of the archaeologist. Hereafter a test-trench was excavated in the excavation dump on the north western side of JS2(b) at the extreme north west of what was presumed to be the 1934 excavation wall. This was done to ascertain the original surface of the site before the excavated material was dumped. At the same time the northern eastern end of the north western wall was excavated to locate the remaining intact profile. This method tried to establish the northwestern corner of JS2(b) and indicate the original surface of the site.

All material from these excavations were screened through a 5 and 1.5mm screen and sorted by hand to recover the archaeological materials as indicated by the Terms of Reference for the project. As soon as the original surface of the site in the area below the excavation dumps was ascertained the dumped material was removed with shovels and screened and sorted.

As soon as the vegetation was removed it was evident that several *in situ* site features occurred on the floor of JS2(b). These were most probably excavated in 1934, left open, and was subsequently covered by hill wash and eroding material from the walls of the open excavation. The floor of the JS2(b) was brushed and all rocks and other visible features were cleaned with trowels with the minimum removal of *in situ* deposits. The removed material were screened and sorted together with the other materials from the excavation dumps. The cleaning and brushing uncovered several features, including floors, hut remains and grain bin foundations.

The excavation at the north western corner and along the north western wall of JS2(b) done to ascertain the extent of the 1934 excavation and to expose the profiles for documentation revealed *in situ* deposits. A series of floors as well as midden deposits were found. At first these were thought to be materials originating from the collapse of the walls as the open excavation deteriorated after 1934 based on the assumption that this locality was excavated down to rock bottom, as was noted for JS2(a). It was, however, soon realised that these deposits were *in situ*. Cleaning of the intact floors along the north western wall of JS2(b) also revealed the possible location of a grave. What seemed to be an oval shaped pit in one of the exposed floors containing strings of copper beads was observed. No excavation of this feature was attempted until after the various stakeholders were consulted and an extension to the excavation permit (Permit no.: 80/02/11/012/51) was granted by SAHRA.

The existence of previously unknown *in situ* features and deposits in an area thought to be totally excavated in 1934 required a re-assessment of the approach to the documentation and stabilization of JS2(b). We are of the opinion that the features should be properly uncovered and documented. This would involve the excavation of *in situ* deposits not provided for by the current SAHRA permit, or the Terms of Reference for the project currently underway. The project is also not equipped or staffed to undertake extensive scientific investigation of the locality. The project aims and Terms of Reference were also formulated using current information on JS2(a) as indicated by Meyer (1998). The unfortunate confusion of localities by this author has not only caused uncertainty in interpreting previous field reports, but underscores the need for complete and accurate documentation and investigation of the locality.

Managing the locality in future will also require planners to know what the features

and extent of deposits in this area are. Defining the nature and meaning of the features and deposits will not only provide an interpretation for one of the key site elements, but will also sufficiently prioritise the location for future conservation.

Developments in the documentation and stabilization of JS2(b) was reported to SANParks and SAHRA and the representatives of these institutions were asked to consult and refer the matter to the Vhembe/Dongola Archaeological Task Group and the Parks Committee for guidance on the way forward. The SANParks representative was also asked to refer the possible excavation of the grave location to these bodies.

The 14 February 2003 Vhembe/Dongola Archaeological Task Group Meeting indicated that the revealed site features should be stabilized by appropriate measures while options on the utilization and possible future research at the locality are considered. All the exposed features were stabilized by surrounding them with a low wall (or dam) of sandbags; sandbags were then placed on the surface of the feature to distinguish the stabilization measures from the original deposits and the "dam" was filled-in with material originating from the clearing of the excavation walls and the rehabilitation of the old excavation dumps. The sandbag "dams" will be treated in the same way as described for the embankments built at the Main Entrance stonewalls.

Work on the discarded excavated material on the north western wall of JS2(b) was continued without risking any *in situ* deposits. This material was removed from the site and screened and sorted as per the Terms of Reference for the project. The screened material was stockpiled to the north west of the boulder behind K8 and was

used for the backfilling and stabilization of JS2(b) and other localities on

Mapungubwe Hill.

The incomplete investigations of the north western wall of JS2(b) (work was stopped to allow for consultations) were continued after the SAHRA permit for the investigation of JS2(b) Feature 5 (the presumed location of a human grave) was granted. The aim of this excavation was to establish the profile of the north western wall of JS2(b) so that it could be documented. With hindsight it was unfortunate that the test excavations to establish the profile was first attempted in what was presumed to be the northwestern corner of the JS2(b) excavation. At the time this was the logical choice since it was the highest part of the wall, and therefore the largest sections of the profile would have survived here making it easiest to identify. It was thought that once the surviving in tact profile was found in this location it could be used to identify the profile at the south western reaches of the wall where it was very low and was presumed to be badly eroded. Subsequent work on the wall proved these assumptions to be wrong.

The nature of the excavations conducted in 1934 created a catch-twenty-two situation for conducting the current work since they were not sufficiently reported. Without excavating the northwestern corner the present investigators would not have realised what they were dealing with, but once it was done it was immediately realised that it was approached wrongly. The 1934 JS2(b) excavations (apart from T.H. 1 and 2) were conducted in a horizontal manner. It is now clear that the 1934 workers excavated the features in the locality, which must have been visible on the surface at the time, to the extent where they were exposed and then removed the deposit

between these uncovered features. The excavations were not conducted in a rigorously vertical sided manner, but seems to have proceeded through clearing features encountered, creating a depression salted with exposed features in the process. The Fouche (1937) Plate IX, 2 photograph illustrates this observation.

The highest part of the section in the northwestern corner of JS2(b) is also situated on the steepest part of the hill slope exposing it to the worst erosion. It is possible that the original section (if it existed here) did not survive at all in this locality and the differences observed by the current investigators were artefacts of erosion. A profile of *in situ* deposit was established by the test excavation, but was most probably the surviving midden deposits in this locality (Fouche (1937, Map 4) indicates: "A great number of bones found here") and not the original excavation wall. This "artificial profile" was subsequently used as a guide and a 2 m wide area along the north western wall of JS2(b) which was cleared of eroded excavation dump material and hill wash. This revealed *in situ* features, but the original profile of the 1934 excavations could not be established with certainty. At the southern western end of the north western wall hut rubble and a living floor was exposed once the eroded material was removed. This feature (Feature JS2(b) 14) was on the same level as the area that was presumed to have been excavated in 1934. This proves that the JS2(b) excavation, in some areas, only exposed visible features on the site surface (Refer Fouche (1937) Map 4 and note that only a small part of the "north western wall" of JS2(b) is drawn, indicating that not all of the square previously thought to have been excavated was dug deeper than the original site surface). Roughly in the middle of the north western wall a stone packed feature (Feature JS2(b) 15) was encountered (This feature is not indicated on Fouche (1937) Map 4, but is visible on the Fouche (1937)

Plate IX, 2 photograph). It is clear that this feature was previously excavated since only previously screened deposit was excavated from in between the rocks constituting the feature. The nature of the deposits exposed by the present profile to the southwest and north east of this feature is similar to old screens dump deposits and it is possible that it was more extensively excavated in 1934 than is the case now. From these observations it seems improbable that a straight excavation profile was created along the north western wall of JS2(b) in 1934.

Feature descriptions JS2 (b):

Feature JS2(b) 1

This is the most prominent structure on the floor of the JS2(b) excavation. Several sections of black, burned compacted gravel floor as well as hut *dagga* are exposed at intervals. The exposed hut floors in this structure displays a yellow/white surface. On the surface of this floor, several pieces of hut clay and *dagga* were found. The largest section of floor exposed measures 70cm at its widest and 190cm in diameter. No excavations of this structure were undertaken since the exposure of the hut floors were sufficient to determine their function. Several loose rocks were located on the perimeter of the *dagga* concentration. The function of these is unknown. No pattern in the organization of these rocks could be discerned. A short dry packed stonewall on the northern side of the feature, running north – south, could possibly be associated with this structure. A half-moon shaped irregularity in the centre of the largest of the exposed floors could indicate the position of the wall of the hut (either the interior or the veranda wall). If this was the veranda wall, the southern side of the floor could be

the remains of a veranda or *grvha*. Further investigation of the feature could clarify this aspect

Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b) 2

This feature could possibly be associated with Feature JS2(b) 1 described above since the uncovered floors showed similarities to those of Feature JS2(b) 1. Apart from removing the vegetation and brushing the surface of the feature no excavations were conducted. Therefore observations are limited to that which was exposed by natural processes and superficial brushing. The main feature is a small section of exposed hut floor in the northwestern sector of JS2 (b). The sections of hut floor exposed are all burned grey to black in colour. This was most probably the result of a fire that consumed the structure related to this floor. The top layer of the floor exhibits a slightly organic grassy texture leading to the inference that the top layer could have consisted of some kind of organic matter (It might have been a dung floor). The centre of the floor has been disturbed, probably by burrowing animal activity. To the north of the floor a concentration of six rocks were found. One of these, a flat rock of medium size, exhibits an indentation in its middle. This is the result of human activity and could be the initial stages of a mortar block.

Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b) 3

This feature is represented by a large mound of hut rubble next to the south eastern wall of excavation JS2(b). The most prominent material found here is a reddish grey sand deposit that forms the major part of the mound. A few loose rocks displaying no discernable organization demarcate the southern boundary of this mound. The raised height of this mound is in places up to 30 cm from the general ground level in JS2(b). A single large rock (60 x 30 x 27cm) lays approximately 1m to the west of the structure. A single dislodged mortar block (35 x 40 x 62cm) is found to the south west of the feature. It is unsure, however if this mortar block is connected to the hut rubble feature. The rubble concentration is demarcated on the east by a large boulder.

Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b) 4

A large concentration of hut rubble, similar to Feature JS2(b) 3 forms this feature. Loose sections of hut floor occur in the southern and eastern parts of this feature. The composition of this hut floor is similar to that of Feature JS2(b) 3. A short section of intact hut wall occurs in the centre of this concentration. The section of walling still exhibits the smooth plastering to be found on the outside of the hut walls. Several loose rocks once again indicate the perimeter of the feature.

Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b) 5

This is a smaller concentration of hut rubble to the south of Feature JS2(b) 1. Very few complete sections of hut rubble were visible on the surface of this feature. To the north a concentration of five rocks are found in an area of approximately 2m². To the west is a further concentration of 10 rocks. All of these are 25-40cm in diameter. A section of a hut (gravel) floor is exposed to the south west of the structure.

Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b) 6

This feature was exposed during the excavations to determine the position of the JS2(b) north western profile and indicated the depth of the 1934 excavation. The consistency of the floor is the same as the other floors encountered, although this is the largest example that was exposed. Four prominent stone structures can also still be seen in the north western wall of the excavation and are probably associated with this feature. The size of the floor is approximately 350 x 120cm, where exposed, although a significant section of it could still be covered by eroded material on the floor of JS2(b).

Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b) 7

This is the first of several possible grain bin foundations found in the JS2(b) excavation, and occurs nearly in the centre thereof. The size of this feature is 103 x 99cm. It consists of four upright rocks and several smaller flat rocks surrounding

these. The upright rocks are organised in a circle measuring approximately 100cm at its widest. The upright rocks are on average 10 x 10cm at their base and stands approximately 15 – 20cm high. This feature could possibly be associated with hut rubble approximately 1.5m north east of it.

Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b) 8

This feature represents another possible grain bin foundation. It comprises of six upright standing stones of approximately 20 x 8cm, on average between 18 – 21cm higher than ground level. This feature could possibly be associated with hut rubble found to the south of it (Feature JS2(b) ???). The loose rocks found around this feature are most likely the result of eroded rocks from the terrace wall directly to the north, and up slope, of the feature.

Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b) 9

This feature is also a possible grain bin foundation and is similar to the other structures previously described. The main difference is that the standing stones that constitutes this feature has collapsed. This could have been a recent occurrence since the indentations where the rocks were planted are still visible. The average rock size is 10 x 8cm standing approximately 20cm above ground level. The indentations left by rocks that have fallen over are approximately 9-10cm deep, giving an indication as to the mode of construction of a typical grain bin foundation.

Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b)10

This feature is represented by a smaller concentration of hut rubble in the southwestern section of excavation JS2(b). A small concentration of rocks on the western side could be the remains of a grain bin foundation although no identifiable organization of rocks could be observed.

Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b)11

This is a prominent stonewall to the south of the JS2(b) excavation. This wall was large, but has mostly collapsed due to erosion. It measures approximately 7 metres in length. The eastern side of the wall, where it connects to the large upright bolder just to the northeast of the Main Entrance, is still intact and displays coursed stonewalling.

This is most probably the wall referred to in the Jones and Schofield reports (Fouche, 1937) as W6. Most of the wall was constructed using medium sized rocks between 20 and 50cm in diameter.

Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b)12

This is a small section of loose standing stonewall in the southwestern corner of the JS2(b) excavation. It measures 270cm in length and 50cm at its widest. Two loose

standing rocks are located to the west of the wall with one each located to the north and the south of the feature. The wall is orientated east to west. On the western end of the wall it turns sharply (approximately 80°) to the south and continues on for a further 30cm. The wall consists of two parallel rows of larger rocks with pebble size rocks on the inside of the two rows. Most of the wall is probably still buried. This wall is most probably associated with Feature JS2(b) 14. The undisturbed western side of the wall could possibly continue into the north western profile of the JS2(b) excavation.

Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b)13

This constitutes the whole of the northern eastern terrace walling exposed during the 2003 season. The extent of this walling is still unknown since it was decided not to extend the clearing of this partially collapsed wall to ensure that it does not become unstable. It is however evident that the terrace extends along the whole of the north eastern side of the JS2(b) excavation.

Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b) 14

Hut rubble and a mustard yellow living floor uncovered adjacent to Feature JS2(b)12 on the northern side comprises this feature. These remains of a hut are most probably associated with the Feature JS2(b) 12 stonewall and Feature JS2(b) 10 grain bin foundation.

Complete field notes on this feature still to be translated and typed. Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b) 15

This feature possibly consists of more than one stone-built structures and is associated with the Feature JS2(b) 6 floor. It consists of several vertically planted rocks with at least two horizontal sandstone slabs. The vertical rocks on the southern side of the feature are organised in a circle and most probably are the remains of a grain bin foundation. On the northern side a stone platform occurs directly adjacent to the grain bin foundation with another similar structure immediately to the north of that. It is possible that these stone platforms represent a single feature, i.e. a single large or double stone platform rather than two separate stone platforms at the foot of a grain bin. To the northeast of these stone structures a low stonewall oriented in a northwesterly direction occurs. This wall borders the Feature JS2(b) 6 floor on the northeast. It is clear that the stone structures comprising Feature JS2(b) 15 and the Feature JS2(b) 6 floor form a site feature. This floor with grain bin and stone platform is most probably associated with the Feature JS2(b) 1 hut remains and the midden uncovered in the north-western corner of JS2(b). The structures described as Feature JS2(b) 15 are visible on the Fouche (1937) Plate IX, 2 photograph (Unfortunately it is not clearly shown and no additional information on the feature can be learned from the photograph).

Complete field notes on this feature still to be translated and typed. Plan drawing in preparation.

Feature JS2(b) 16

Feature JS2(b) 16 represent the possible grave observed as part of the Feature JS2(b) 5 hut floor and associated rocks. A string of spiralled copper wire was visible in a roughly oval shaped disturbance in the floor. On investigation it was found that this occurrence was a disturbance in the floor most likely resulting from erosion. The remainder of the floor was removed to reveal Feature JS2(b) 16 which occurred directly on the natural surface of the hill slope. It consisted of a dense concentration of large potsherds, animal bones (in some instances still articulated), ash, charcoal and copper wire wound around fibre of some sort to form a bracelet or necklace. No explanation for the occurrence of these artefacts could be found. Similar features were found at Mapungubwe Hill (pers. comm. A Meyer, 2003/04/02) and lenses of densely packed bone and potsherds are known from K2.

Complete field notes on this feature still to be translated and typed. Plan drawing in preparation.

The stratigraphy of JS2(b):

Northern wall of excavation JS2(b)(1934)

Description and profile drawing in preparation.

Eastern wall of excavation JS2(b) (1934)

Description and profile drawing in preparation.

Western wall of excavation JS2(b) (1934)

Description and profile drawing in preparation.

4. **K8**

The open excavation was covered by a steel and corrugated iron roof and little damage occurred until 1994 when the corrugated sheets forming the roof was removed exposing the profile to the open air. This caused immediate damage by weather and birds nesting in the excavation wall, and was compounded when a porcupine fell into the excavation and burrowed into the wall in an attempt to escape.

The damage necessitated the current repair work on the profile to again restore it to a presentable state. Excavations to cut the profile was conducted with the express aim of removing as little as possible of the *in situ* deposits. This was achieved by cutting back the worst damaged areas of the wall as much as was needed and then stepping the rest of the wall to ensure a stable section. All *in situ* materials that had to be removed were accessioned per layer and the restored section was documented.

Feature descriptions K8:

It was possible to retain Meyer's (1989) Features K8.5.4. and K8.7.1 -- a succession of stone platforms in the north eastern corner of excavation K8. These features will be re-described to access the amount of loss of *in situ* site elements and to facilitate interpretation. Most of the other features were, however, destroyed due to recent damage.

Feature descriptions and plan drawings in preparation.

The stratigraphy of K8:

Eastern wall of excavation K8

Description and profile drawing in preparation.

Construction of the sliding dome roof is awaited. Specifications are complete and a contractor is in the process of being appointed.

5. Locality GW (Gardner's "Western Excavation"):

Apart from the Mk 1 excavation (which was rehabilitated at the time of excavation) all of the walls of the Gardner excavations were in a poor state with rapid erosion in some places causing uncontrolled loss of *in situ* deposits. The stabilization and documentation of these walls were set as one of the high priorities of the project.

The clearing of eroded deposit resulting from the slumped walls started along the southern wall of Gardner's excavation. In order to ascertain the degree of erosion and the portion of the excavation wall still in tact, a test excavation of vertical spits was done in a convenient place where the bedrock was clearly visible. This established the bottom of the profile to be cleared along an approximately 2m stretch of wall. Working from the bedrock vertical spits of 2 - 3cm deep was excavated towards the summit of the wall. This soon established the extent of the portion of the profile still remaining vertical. To best define the degree of slump the crest of the wall

corresponding with the test excavation of the profile was excavated. It was covered with previously screened material, most probably originating from the 1939/40 work. This was removed to reveal compacted gravel floors (usually referred to as living floors) about a metre to a metre and a half away from the in tact vertical profile. By excavating downwards progressively more *in situ* deposits were found, and by leaving them unexcavated they could be followed to the point where these deposits met the in tact profile. This method had the advantage that it created a profile perpendicular to the in tact excavation wall serving to clearly define which deposits remained *in situ* and also accurately establishing the amount of slump caused by erosion.

This method was, however, criticised during the 14 February 2003 Vhembe/Dongola Archaeological Task Group site meeting on the principle that it constituted horizontal excavations and not the clearing of walls foreseen in the project. It was advised that only vertical spits be excavated to establish the in tact profile, where after steps be excavated by means of vertical spits to reveal the eroded deposits. No excavation of the crests of walls should be conducted. The methods employed were adjusted accordingly.

As the clearing of walls progressed it became evident that the references to “excavated to bedrock” in the old excavation reports should, again, not be taken literally as was the case at JS2(b). Several *in situ* structures were found along the base of first the western profile and later along all of the others apart from the southern profile. It seems that practise at the time of excavation was that structures close to the bottom of the cultural deposits were left after they were recorded and had their associated materials recovered. These structures include hut and living floors,

stonewalls and stone built structures such as platforms and grain bin foundations.

These structures were left *in situ* and each was awarded a feature number and was recorded and described.

All of the exposed walls and other uncovered site features were stabilised with sandbag embankments (as previously described) after they were documented.

Feature descriptions Gardner's Western Excavation (GW):

Feature descriptions in the process of being re-worked from field notes.

The stratigraphy of Gardner's Western Excavation (GW):

Northern wall of Gardner's Western excavation

Description and profile drawing in preparation.

Eastern wall of Gardner's Western excavation

Description and profile drawing in preparation.

Southern wall of Gardner's Western excavation

Description and profile drawing in preparation.

Western wall of Gardner's Western excavation

Description and profile drawing in preparation.

6. Locality FE (Fouche Excavations)

The MK 3 excavation was rehabilitated on completion and very little stabilisation is needed in this locality. Since the excavation was well documented and the results published no work, apart from placing stabilisation measures where necessary will be undertaken here during the current project.

Presently the north eastern wall of Van Tonder's 1934 excavation adjacent to JS4 was excavated to establish a profile. This work is ongoing.

7. Conclusion

Apart from various problems encountered so far the project is still on track. Due to poor weather adversely impacting on the work, as well as delays in the completion of the path, it is probable that the project will need to utilize the 6 week contingency foreseen in the Project Proposal in order to accomplish the Terms of Reference.

Summary of Progress: April 2003

Activity	Planned Commence-ment	Actual Commence-ment	Planned Completion	Actual Completion	Current status	Outstanding
JS2(b) Location 11: Mapungubwe Hill: JS2 (a) 1934	January 6, 2003	January 6, 2003	February 7, 2003	April 18, 2003	90% Complete	Layer of UV Stable of bags; Cover with material; Plans and final descriptions in preparation
JS2(b) Possible grave (Feature JS2(b) 5 & 16)	Unforseen	April 1, 2003	Unforseen	April 4, 2003	Complete	Plans and final descriptions in preparation
Main Entrance walling	Unforseen	January 6, 2003	Unforseen	January 17, 2003	90% Complete	Layer of UV Stable of bags; Cover with material
Current access route to Mapungubwe Hill - Prepare path for concrete walkway	January 6, 2003	January 6, 2003	January 24, 2003	January 24, 2003	Complete	Plans and final descriptions in preparation
Oversee erection of concrete walkway, advise upgrading of currant pole ladder	January 27, 2003	March 25, 2003	February 7, 2003	May 2, 2003	Complete	
Sothern Terrace: K8	January 27, 2003	March 31, 2003	February 7, 2003	April 4, 2003	Complete	Plans and final descriptions in preparation
and Main Gardner digs and associated trenches	February 10, 2003	February 10, 2003	May 23, 2003	Ongoing	30% Complete	Plans and final descriptions in preparation. FE - Slight progress
Location 10: Mapungubwe Hill: Erosion Ditch on southwestern side of the summit	May 26, 2003	On schedule	May 30, 2003	On schedule		
MST 1 (Mahobe) on southern slope of Mapungubwe Hill	June 2, 2003	On schedule	June 27, 2003	On schedule		
Excavations on northern slope of Mapungubwe Hill	June 2, 2003	On schedule	June 27, 2003	On schedule		
Terrace: All open excavations (excluding K8), exposed profiles, erosion ditches, animal burrows and	June 2, 2003	On schedule	June 27, 2003	On schedule		
Eastern access route	June 2, 2003	On schedule	June 27, 2003	On schedule		
Location 9: Mapungubwe Hill: Dumps on Northern side	January 6, 2003	January 6, 2003	June 27, 2003	Ongoing	Daily progress	