Archaeological Excavations and Surveys Along the Ariadne-Venus Transmission Line

For ESKOM

By
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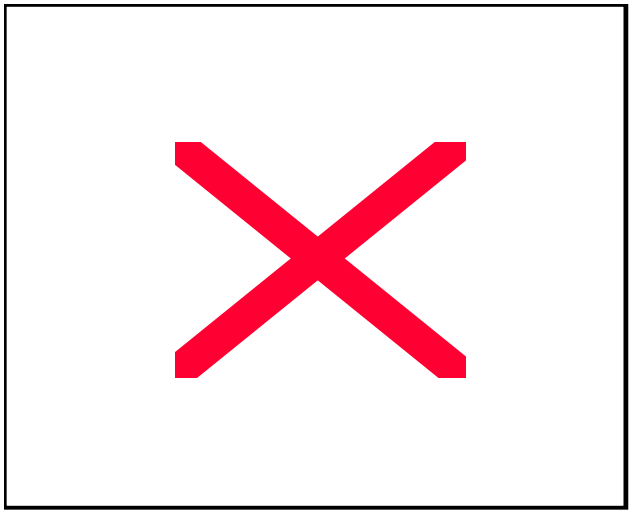

INTRODUCTION

The Institute for Cultural Resource Management was contracted by Eskom to undertake an archaeological survey of the Ariadne-Venus transmission line. Several archaeological sites are already known to occur along the transmission line path and those of its servitudes. Eskom had been informed of these sites during the initial scoping exercise in 1995. The archaeological survey was undertaken during the last stages of the project, and in some cases after servitudes and pylons had been constructed. Once archaeological sites were located, mitigatory measures for each site were given.

The archaeological survey located several archaeological and historical sites, however few of these were in direct line of the transmission line and/or access roads. A total of six archaeological sites are affected as a result of the transmission line. Only four sites had archaeological mitigation prior to negative impact either by Eskom and/or the contractors.

All archaeological and historical sites are protected by the National Monuments Act of 1969 which makes it an offence to alter in any way such sites without a permit from the National Monuments Council (NMC). As from 1 April 1998, the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act of 1997 will replace the current heritage legislation in KwaZulu-Natal. The new heritage compliance agency, Amafa aKwaZulu-Natali, may require an assessment of the impact of any development on heritage resources, where such an assessment is not required by other legislation. The NMC and its successor in KwaZulu-Natal (Amafa) may hold developers responsible for any damage accrued to a site in cases where they have deviated from the permit requirements. It is the responsibility of the developers to apply for a permit should development have a negative impact on archaeological or historical sites.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: DESCRIPTION AND MITIGATION

I describe each site and give the suggested mitigation as stated in previous correspondence with Eskom (in italics). I then describe the mitigation if it had been undertaken.

Woodlands 1

This site is located between the transmission line numbers 131 and 132. The site can be divided into three separate parts: the cattle byre and two possible domestic areas. The main activity area is the cattle byre that is a stone-walled structure that abuts the base of the hill. The cattle byre has both a primary and secondary enclosure. The primary enclosure is ±50 m in diameter, while the secondary enclosure is ±20 m in diameter. The walling is currently ±1 m thick and 0.5 m high. Both enclosures have a sandy soil that may contain archaeological material.

Southeast of the cattle byre is a small hill. Several boulders occur on the top of the hill and may be the remains of stone walling. Slightly downhill of this hill is a stone mound made from local material. This stone mound may be a grave.

Northwest of the cattle byre is a slightly taller hill that may have the remains of stone walling, although these boulders may be natural. In the vicinity of these boulders are areas of sparse vegetation that may suggest areas of human occupation or activity.

Mitigation required

The site appears to be of low significance, however further assessment would be needed if the site is to be affected by the servitudes for the transmission line. The stone mound may be a grave and this should not be affected in any manner. I suggest that the three areas be demarcated and that no heavy machinery disturbs the area. There is currently a track running between the cattle byre and the southeastern hill. If bulldozers continue to use this track, they may damage the stone walling. This should be avoided. A permit from the National Monuments Council would be required if this site is further affected.

Mitigation undertaken

The two hills referred to above have been damaged by bulldozer activity. The stone pile regarded as a potential grave has been destroyed. This is contrary to the proposed conservation mitigation I suggested for the site. While the National Monuments Council will not prosecute the contractors for the damage to this site, I strongly believe that some form of penalty should be placed against the defaulters.

VEN1

VEN1 is a group of four archaeological sites on various plateaus along a hill near the pylon numbers 131 to 135. One site has already been damaged by the current pylon. The sites are low stone-walled settlements and are in a relatively good state of preservation. Each settlement consists of a few circular stone-walled features and a slightly larger circular enclosure nearby. The former may be the remains of houses and the latter a cattle byre. Some of the cattle byres have smaller enclosures within the main byre. At least two of these sites have archaeological deposit, and fragments of ceramic vessels were observed. Human graves may occur at this site. Three of the sites may date between AD 1250 and AD 1440. The lowest site is probably not older than 100 years.

Three of these sites may be directly affected by the construction of powerlines and thus require some form of mitigation. The last site would require mitigation if it is effected by the construction of an access road. These sites are of low (the most recent site) to medium-high significance and any impact will be negative.

There is a strong likelihood that these sites will be damaged when the pylons are constructed, as has already happened with the current pylon. Furthermore, the access road will in all probability be in the vicinity of these sites and thus may negatively affect the sites. I recommend the following mitigation:

- *If at all possible, the pylons and access roads should avoid all stone-walled structures.*
- *The upper three settlements need to be accurately mapped by an archaeologist.*
- *If the pylons are to be placed on a site the location of each pylon leg would examined through archaeological excavation.*

Mitigation undertaken

The stone-walled features of this site were accurately mapped (fig. 1). The four excavation holes for the tower legs were demarcated and excavated. No significant features or artefacts were located in this excavation. The soil was dark brown to black and varied from 6 cm to 20 cm in depth. Bedrock was reached immediately beneath this soil.

Several pottery fragments were located, however, no fragments could be attributed to a specific time period. Two diagnostic sherds were excavated. One sherd had a flat rim with a rounded lip.

The second fragment had a flat rim with a square lip. The pottery ranged from orange to red in colour.

The spatial layout of the whole site suggests that it is a multi-component site, that has been reoccupied over several years, if not centuries. The layout of individual stone-wall features vary from circular to rectangular in shape. The circular walls tend to be lower in height, suggesting a greater age. Several of the stones from the walls have been re-used on different walls, and/or the same feature has been modified at various stages.

The orientation of the entrance of the byre to the slope of the hill may be sued to give a tentative date for each stone-walled feature. Maggs *et al.* (1986; 1991) suggested that if the entrance faces upslope, then the feature would probably pre-date the Shakan era (*c.* 1820 AD). The entrances of the features from VEN1 were difficult to locate because of:

1. the removal of stones by subsequent people,
2. the re-use of the stone features for agricultural purposes in such a way that entrances are blocked to inhibit cattle from entering the stone-walled feature;
3. the older walling was disturbed
4. Walls had been re-used, often with more than one entrance, or had had additional enclosures and entrances built.

In conclusion, VEN1 has features that suggest an intermittent occupation date from 800 AD to the recent past (last 50 years).

VEN2

VEN2 consists of two stone-walled archaeological sites on the same ridge of a hill. The first site is near the location of pylon number 240. This is site is a low stone-walled structure. The walling is not well preserved, but there appears to be an archaeological deposit associated with the walling. This site may date to between AD 1250 and AD 1440. This site is of medium archaeological significance and any impact will be negative.

The second site in this group is near pylon number 242. The site extends from the existing transmission line to the Ariadne-Venus line path. The site has already been negatively affected by the current pylon. The site consists of three to four circular stone-walled structures that may be the remains of houses and a cattle byre. There is a potential archaeological deposit at this site. This site is of medium archaeological significance and any impact will be negative.

While the pylon does not directly affect either site, they may be affected by the construction of servitudes such as access roads. I recommend the following mitigation:

- *The access road should avoid this site*
- *Contractors should not use the stones from this site, as with any other site, in the construction of the pylons.*
- *Both sites need to be accurately mapped by an archaeologist.*
- *Test pit excavations may be required if the pylons directly affect either site, or if the access road intends to cause any damage. These test pit excavations will occur in the areas where the pylon legs are to be inserted into the ground, or where the access road may pass through the site.*

The stone-walled features of this site were accurately mapped (fig. 2). The tower would not affect the site itself, however, the access road has the potential to damage portions of the site. After the site was mapped, I walked the access road with the contractors, indicating where the access road

may be placed. We specifically demarcated areas where stones were not to be removed, and where the road should be placed when it passed between two stone-walls.

VEN223

VEN223 was excavated when the position of tower 223 had been moved after my initial site visit. The tower was now placed directly over a potential grave. The tower was moved 6m away from the grave and onto an area with archaeological deposit. Two 2 m x 2 m x 0.20 m squares were excavated to retrieve archaeological remains prior to reconstruction. In addition to this, the contractors were shown where they were not allowed to impact on the site nor remove any stones without consultation with myself.

Several pottery fragments were recovered. Only one fragment was diagnostic. The rim was flat while the lip is flat with a slight external emphasis.

The site is the remains of a settlement probably dating to within the last 100 years.

CONCLUSION

A post-construction site inspection should occur

Mack, K. Maggs, T. and Oswald, D. 1991. Homesteads in two rural communities: an ethnoarchaeological investigation. *Natal Museum Journal of Humanities* ***3(1)****:* 79-129.

Maggs, T., Oswald, D. Hall, M., and Ruther, H. 1986. Spatial parameters of Late Iron Age settlements in the upper Thukela Valley. *Annals of the Natal Museum* **27(2)**: 455-479.