

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RUINS AT LANCASTER QUARRY, HARRISMITH

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SYNOPSIS

The ruins belong to Type V, which is relatively common. They have been recorded, and no further mitigation is necessary.

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INTRODUCTION

Lancaster Quarries are located on the farm Stille Rust 991, about 15km from Harrismith in the Free State. Future excavations of the quarry will destroy a complex of stone ruins. These ruins were seen by Ms M Bekker, manager of the Basotho Cultural Village in Witsieshoek, who recommended an archaeological survey. As a result, Barker and Associates, on behalf of Lancaster Quarries, commissioned Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to examine the site in terms of Section 2.13 of the Aide-Memoire for Environmental Management Programme Reports.

Two ARM staff and Mr L Korte, the mine manager, visited the site on the 4th of September. The site was then mapped.

OBSERVATIONS

The ruins (28°22'59", 29°03'04") were located on the eastern slopes of Stilleruskop, upslope and west of the present quarry. They were part of a small complex that extended beyond the mining property. As the plan (Figure 1) shows, the walls formed a series of large and small circles connected to an outer wall.

These circles were domestic livestock enclosures, and many had concave profiles due to the removal of dung for fuel. The large enclosures housed adult cattle, while the medium-sized kraals were probably for calves. Such a separation is a common feature in African villages. It provides a control over milk and protection for the calves. The small circles along the outer wall may

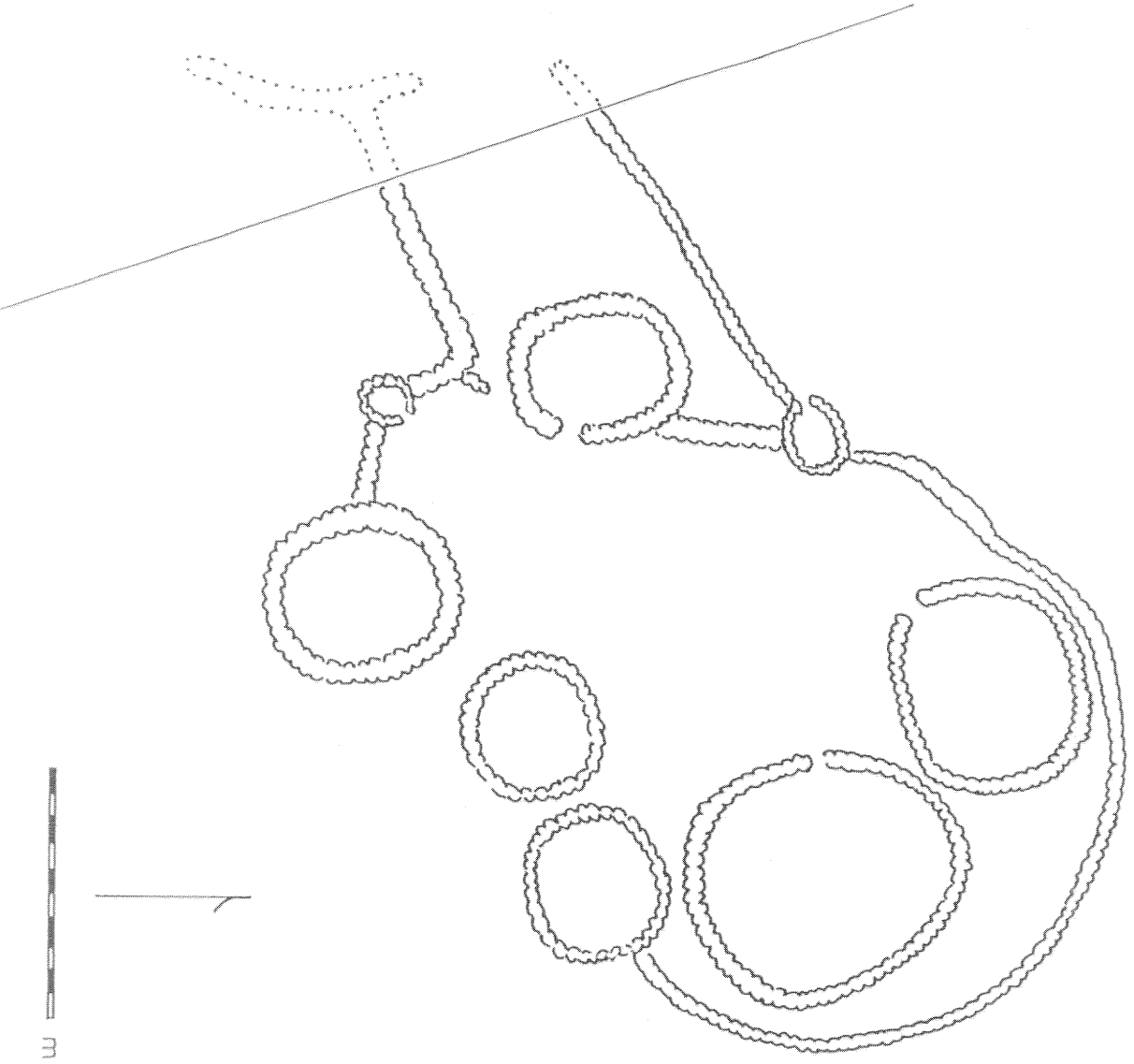


Figure 1. Plan of the Lancaster ruins.

have been collapsed corbelled huts that had provided protection for the kids and lambs.

Because of the ruined state of the walls, it was not possible to identify many kraal entrances. Three probably faced inwards. The main entrance was marked by funnel-shaped walls and faced uphill.

These kraals formed the central zone of a homestead. This central zone would have been surrounded by an arc of grain bins and pole-and-mud houses that formed the residential zone. One upper grindstone used for maize was found in this residential area.

In settlement type, the Lancaster site belongs to Type V (Maggs 1976:6). Other sites of this type have been described by Pullen(1942), Laidler(1936) and Van Riet Lowe (1927). These sites were all occupied by Sotho-Tswana speaking people who not only herded cattle but also cultivated sorghum and millet, and sometimes maize.

Because of the physiological requirements of these plants, there were only two periods when the climate in the Free State was suitable for their cultivation (Tyson and Lindesay 1992): AD1450-1600 and 1750-1820. The maize grindstone suggests that the Lancaster site dates to the late 18th or early 19th century.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Type V sites are common over a large area of the Free State, and the Lancaster site is therefore one of many. Since there is little residential debris, this site is not worth excavating. The plan is sufficient record and no further mitigation is necessary.

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