

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF SITES ON THE
LERALE - SHASHI SECTION OF THE
ELLISRAS - BULAWAYO TRANSMISSION LINE

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SYNOPSIS

Eight archaeological sites along the proposed transmission line, previously located by Campbell and Van Waarden (1993), were inspected. Most sites will not be impacted by the construction of the towers. If there is a need to clear any vegetation in the 55m reserve in the vicinity of the sites, then this should be done by hand. No further mitigation is required.

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INTRODUCTION

Dr M. Mentis of ENVIROBIZ sub-contracted Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to inspect archaeological sites on the Lerale-Shashi section of the Elisras-Bulawayo transmission line. The line had been previously surveyed by Campbell and Van Waarden (1993), but neither consultant was available for this final inspection. Now that ESKOM has established the final location of bends, centre line, the 55m reserve and tower sites, ARM's brief was to assess the coincidence of the final line with archaeological sites and consequent mitigation steps. Of specific importance was the potential impacts of the tower sites, because this information was not available when Campbell and van Waarden did their original survey.

Campbell and van Waarden located 16 sites in the vicinity of the line. They separated 8 from this total as archaeologically significant and recommended that any clearance in their vicinity should be done by hand. Seven of the sites are Iron Age villages and one is a relatively dense scatter of Middle Stone Age tools. Inspection of these sites took place on 26 January, 1995.

OBSERVATIONS

In this section I list the inspected sites and comment on their proximity to the final line and tower sites. The site list is from north (Shashi end) to south (Lerale end). For other details see the original report by Campbell and Van Waarden (1993).

18-C1-14: 21°37'40" S; 28°00'05" E. Indeterminate Iron Age and recent settlement.

Most of this large site is located to the east of the centre line, although a part will be within the 55m reserve. No tower will be erected nearby.

17-D4-19: 21°51'50" S; 27°49'30" E. Iron Age - Leopards Kopje?

This site is east of the centre line and backs onto a kopje. There are no tower bases in the vicinity, although some of the site will fall within the 55m reserve.

17-2-20: 21°53'10" S; 27°8'8" E. Iron Age - historic Tswana.

No tower will be erected near this site, but the entire site lies within the reserve.

17-D4-22: 21°56'15" S; 27°47'30" E. Iron Age - historic?

This site stretches from the Mmadikgaka River southwards for 500m. Immediately south of the river a tower will be erected. Clearing for the tower has unfortunately disturbed archaeological material. The cleared area contains pottery and one intact granary base towards the south eastern corner. Bulldozers may have destroyed other granary bases. There is no depth of deposit, however. The tower site is on

a bend in the line, and the different design of a bend tower has a smaller impact. The intact granery base, therefore, will not be impacted. Parts of the site south of the tower base lie within the line reserve, particularly the stone mounds to the west, which have been identified as burials.

27-B2-11: 22°08'00" S; 27°46'30" E. Iron Age - Leopards Kopje/Toutswe?

This isolated cattle kraal is located immediately off the north-west corner of a cleared tower site (109). The kraal is partly inside the line reserve. No material was seen in the cleared area.

27-B2-12: 22°14'00" S; 27°46'00" E. Iron Age - Khami period?

The 10 granery platforms originally identified are well west of the centre line, but may be in the 55m reserve. Approximately 100m south-east of the platforms is a small mound, 6m in diameter. The grey colour of the deposit indicates that this had been a cattle kraal. Although no pottery or bone was found between this feature and the granery bases, it is likely that the two formed part of a single site. The kraal falls within a tower site and has been disturbed by bulldozers. Antbear burrowing had also turned the deposit over.

27-D2-1: 22°33'05" S; 27°46'10" E. Middle Stone Age.

This MSA site is mostly outside the centre-line and the 55m reserve. There is no tower site in the vicinity.

27-D2-2: 22°44'30" S; 27°45'40" E. Post 1600 Moloko?

This site straddles the centre-line, but there will be no tower erected in the vicinity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are based on the principle that the research potential of the site should be minimally impacted. In this regard not all sites are equally important. Their importance depends on such factors as frequency, uniqueness, amount of material, preservation and present research goals. Consequently, some sites, even though they may be in the middle of a tower, are not worth mitigation. In this case, the only site with any meaningful research potential is 17-D4-19, and no towers are nearby.

Of the two sites already impacted by the bulldozers, the granery base at 17-D4-22 need not be disturbed if the ESKOM agent monitors the construction of the bend tower. No deposit is worthy of mitigation in the rest of the cleared area.

The second site, 27-B2-12, contains the kraal. Mr G. Fourie agreed on site that the placement of the central base and stays would miss the kraal and that monitored construction of the tower would reduce any further disturbance.

The remaining archaeological sites will not be affected by tower bases, but sections of all eight fall within the transmission line reserve. If tall trees which threaten the transmission lines and any archaeological sites coincide, then these trees should be handcleared, rather than removed by bulldozer. This stipulation can be narrowed specifically to two sites; **17-D4-19** and **17-D4-22**. The reason for this is that in the first instance there may be future research potential, and in the second case, there is a possibility of disturbing the burials to the west of the centre-line. If ESKOM follows this recommendation, I see no need for any further archaeological mitigation.

REFERENCE

Campbell, A. & C. Van Waarden 1993. Ellisras - Bulawayo transmission line: archaeological impact assessment. Unpublished report for Envirobiz Africa by Marope Research, Francistown.