

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE
MAJUBA RAILWAY REALIGNMENT

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SYNOPSIS

One site requires attention, and another should be noted. First, the remains of a turn-of-the century settlement starts 37m west of the 16.2km flag. Either this settlement should be recorded extensively, or the line shifted eastwards. Secondly, a dry fountain lies on the route near the 16.4km flag.

INTRODUCTION

RESULTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Spoornet has proposed a realignment from the 12km peg onwards (Revised Route 'B') of the new railway line between Palmford and the Majuba power station. On December 4, we examined the new route for graves and other sites of human activity 50 years or older. Such sites were recorded on the 1:10 000 ortho map provided by SRK.

RESULTS

Between the 16.2km flag and a cement reservoir lies the remains of an unusual African settlement (Site 1 on Figure 1). The settlement remains include at least 7 rectangular mud houses, 3 circular stone structures and 1 stone-based wagon house (ca 7-8m wide by 11-14m long). The wagon house and size of the complex indicates that the inhabitants were prosperous.

Metal artifacts (e.g. an English-made cast-iron pot) date the complex to the beginning of this century. At that time the most likely means for black families to obtain such wealth was through share cropping on white-owned farms. After the last Anglo-Boer War, many Afrikaans-speaking farmers found it difficult to succeed. As a consequence they went into partnership with black farmers who would use their own cattle for ploughing.

In the case of Site 1, the land owner most likely lived in the main farm house a few hundred metres to the north (Site 1a). Remains there show that the original building was a three-room longhouse with a kitchen at the back, all made of stone and sundried brick. Later, fired brick walls were added. This sequence indicates that the original house probably dates to about the 1880s



Figure 1. Archaeological sites between 16 and 17km.

and was then used for several generations.

Besides the house, the homestead included the foundations of a dairy and milking shed. The farmer had also built a stone wall to protect a fountain behind the main farm house. In fact the homestead was probably established here because of the fountain.

Another fountain was later utilized near the 16.4km flag (Site 1b). This second fountain is now dry, but it might become active with an increase in rainfall. The proposed new route passes directly over this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Because it represents a special relationship that existed between many black and white farmers, the share-cropper complex should be avoided. It physically begins about 37m west of the 16.2km flag. By shifting the line a few metres further east, the complex can be avoided altogether. If this is not possible, then the site must be extensively mapped and excavated in the areas that will be damaged. To protect the rest, the site should be fenced off during construction.

Spoornet should note the existence of the second fountain.