

CULTURAL HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF A PROPOSED POWERLINE AT BLUROCK NEAR ESTCOURT, KWAZULU-NATAL



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EIA	Early Iron Age
ESA	Early Stone Age
HISTORIC PERIOD	Since the arrival of the white settlers - c. AD 1820 in this part of the country
IRON AGE	Early Iron Age AD 200 - AD 1000 Late Iron Age AD 1000 - AD 1830
LIA	Late Iron Age
LSA	Late Stone Age
MSA	Middle Stone Age
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998 and associated regulations (2006).
NHRA	National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999) and associated regulations (2000)
SAHRA	South African Heritage Resources Agency
STONE AGE	Early Stone Age 2 000 000 - 250 000 BP Middle Stone Age 250 000 - 25 000 BP Late Stone Age 30 000 - until c. AD 200

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A cultural heritage survey of a proposed powerline route at Blurock adjacent to Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal produced no heritage features directly adjacent to the proposed route. A Voortrekker memorial and associated graveyard do occur in the south eastern section of the study area. However, this heritage site is situated more than 120m from the proposed route and it is not threatened by the proposed development. There is no archaeological reason why the proposed development may not proceed as planned. However, attention is drawn to the South African Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999) and the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act (Act no 4 of 2008) which, requires that operations that expose archaeological or historical remains should cease immediately, pending evaluation by the provincial heritage agency.

1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT

Table 1. Background information

Consultant:	Frans Prins (Active Heritage) for Ludloko Developments
Type of development:	Proposed construction of a 2.5km long powerline at Blurock adjacent to Estcourt.
Rezoning or subdivision:	rezoning
Terms of reference	To carry out a Heritage Impact Assessment
Legislative requirements:	The Heritage Impact Assessment was carried out in terms of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA) and following the requirements of the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999) (NHRA) and the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act, 1997 (Act No. 4 of 2008)

1.1. Details of the area surveyed:

The study area is situated adjacent to Estcourt on the north eastern aspect (Fig 1). The proposed powerline includes three potential routes that roughly runs from a north west to a south east direction (Fig 2). The GPS coordinates for the starting point is given as: 28° 59' 53.53" S and 29° 52' 33.09" E and the end point as 29° 00' 27.80" S 29° 53' 25.69" E. The southern section of the study area includes the Bushman's river and a functioning quarry with associated buildings and machinery. Stone heaps and other

rubble produced by the quarry is dumped in selected areas of the study area. Some exotic Eucalyptus trees occur near the quarry and adjacent to the access roads in the southern portion of the study area. The northern section of the study area is situated at a higher altitude and it is also less disturbed by the activities associated with the quarry. The non-disturbed area is characterised by indigenous grasslands and some indigenous Acacia trees.

2 BACKGROUND TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL HISTORY OF AREA

The greater Estcourt area has been relatively well surveyed for archaeological sites in the past. Some sites have been recorded by cultural resource consultants who have worked in the area during the last two decades whilst archaeologists from the then Natal Museum have made various visits to the area. The low altitude and densely wooded areas in the immediate vicinity of Estcourt have been intensely occupied by Middle and later Iron Age farmers since around 1200 AD. Some of these sites have also been excavated by Professor Oliver Davies, Dr Tim Maggs and Gavin Whitelaw of the then Natal Museum at various periods between 1978 and 2005 (Huffman 2007). The well-known Moorpark Middle Iron Age site occurs approximately 20km to the west of the study area.

The available evidence, as captured in the KwaZulu-Natal Museum heritage site inventories, indicates that the area in the near vicinity to the study area contains a wide spectrum of archaeological sites covering different time-periods and cultural traditions. These include 11 Early Stone Age site, 28 Middle Stone Age sites, 14 Later Stone Age sites, and 48 Later Iron Age sites (including some Middle Iron Age Sites belonging to the Moor Park Tradition), and numerous historical sites dating back to the colonial period

Most of the Stone Age sites in the near vicinity of the footprint occur in open air contexts as exposed by donga and sheet erosion. The Early Stone Age sites occur close to permanent water sources. Some Middle Stone Age flakes, probably dating back to ca. 40 000 – 200 000 years ago, occur in disturbed context in dongas and road cuttings. The majority of Later Stone Age sites as well as rock art sites occur further west in the foothills of the Drakensberg. These typically occur in small shelters

in the sandstone formations some leading up to the Drakensberg. However, 11 Iron Age rock engraving sites also occur in the greater Estcourt area. These engravings are usually made on dolerite outcrops in areas with an altitude above 1000 metres above sea level.

The San were the owners of the land for almost 30 000 years (Mitchell 2002) but the local demography started to change soon after 2000 years ago when the first Bantu-speaking farmers crossed the Limpopo River and arrived in South Africa. Around 800 years ago, if not earlier, Bantu-speaking farmers also settled in the greater Estcourt area. Although the majority of sites constructed by these African farmers consisted of stone walling not all of them were made from stone. The earliest sites that dates back to approximately 1200 AD are called Moor Park after the type site situated at Moor Park Nature Reserve close to the project area. These sites were occupied by early Nguni-speaking farmers and most probably represent extended family homesteads (Huffman 2007). The Later Iron Age sites of the area were most probably inhabited by Nguni-speaking groups such as the amaBhele and related groups (Bryant 1965). However, by 1820 the amaBhele was dispersed from this area due to the expansionistic policies of the Zulu Kingdom of King Shaka. African refugee groups, such as the amaHlubi, and other individuals were given permission to settle in the area by the British colonial authorities after 1845. After the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879 and the Bambatha Rebellion of 1911 many of the African people in the study area adopted a Zulu ethnic identity.

European settlement of the area started soon after 1838 when the first Voortrekker settlers marked out large farms in the area. . Various sites in the area belong to the Voortrekker era especially former laagers such as Veglaager – now covered by the waters of Wagendrift Dam. Some of the farms in the area also contain graves and structures relating to early Voortrekker settlement such as those at the nearby Blaauwkranz and Rensburg Kopie. However, the majority of older buildings on farmsteads in the area were erected by British colonists after 1850 who occupied farms previously inhabited by Voortrekker pioneers (Bizley & McKenzie 2007). Fort Durnford was built in the 1870's to combat San raids from the Drakensberg. This prominent heritage site is situated approximately 3km from the study area and can be seen in the distance (Fig 3). Anglo-Boer War activities also took place in the area and

the most southern skirmish between Boer and Brit in Natal took place at Willow Grange to the immediate south of Estcourt.

3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE SURVEY

3.1 Methodology

A desktop study was conducted of the archaeological databases housed in the KwaZulu-Natal Museum. The SAHRIS website was consulted for potential heritage sites in the area. In addition, the available archaeological and historical literature covering the greater Estcourt area was also consulted.

A ground survey, following standard and accepted archaeological procedures, was conducted. A cordon of 50m on either side of the proposed powerline routes was surveyed.

3.2 Restrictions encountered during the survey

3.2.1 Visibility

Visibility was good. However, the indigenous grasses are tall and dense and it is possible that some features could be hidden by the dense vegetation.

3.2.2 Disturbance

No disturbance of any potential heritage features was noted. However, major disturbance occur in the southern section of the study area as caused by the workings of the functioning quarry (Fig 4).

3.3 Details of equipment used in the survey

GPS: Garmin Etrek

Digital cameras: Canon Powershot A460

All readings were taken using the GPS. Accuracy was to a level of 5 m.

4 DESCRIPTION OF SITES AND MATERIAL OBSERVED

4.1 Locational data

Province: KwaZulu-Natal

Town: Estcourt

Municipality: Umtshezi

4.2 Description of the general area surveyed

No heritage sites or features occur within 50m from any of the three alternative powerline routes. A Voortrekker Memorial and associated graveyard occurs in the south eastern section of the greater study area (Figs 2 & 3). The GPS coordinates for this site is 29° 00' 28.93" S 29° 53'16.39" E. However, this heritage feature is situated more than 120m from the nearest proposed powerline route. It is therefore not threatened by the proposed development.

5 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (HERITAGE VALUE)

5.1 Field Rating

Not applicable as no heritage sites occur adjacent to the proposed powerline corridors. None of the known heritage sites in the greater Estcourt area are threatened by the proposed development.

Table 3. Field rating and recommended grading of sites (SAHRA 2005)

Level	Details	Action
National (Grade I)	The site is considered to be of National Significance	Nominated to be declared by SAHRA
Provincial (Grade II)	This site is considered to be of Provincial significance	Nominated to be declared by Provincial Heritage Authority
Local Grade IIIA	This site is considered to be of HIGH significance locally	The site should be retained as a heritage site
Local Grade IIIB	This site is considered to be of HIGH significance locally	The site should be mitigated, and part retained as a heritage site
Generally Protected A	High to medium significance	Mitigation necessary before destruction
Generally Protected B	Medium significance	The site needs to be recorded before destruction
Generally Protected C	Low significance	No further recording is required before destruction

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed construction of a 2.5 stretch of powerline at Blurock adjacent to Estcourt may proceed in terms of heritage values as no heritage sites are in any danger of being destroyed or altered. None of the proposed powerline routes pose a threat to any heritage sites or feature. However, the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act requires that any operations exposing archaeological and historical residues should cease immediately pending an evaluation by the heritage authorities.

7 MAPS AND FIGURES

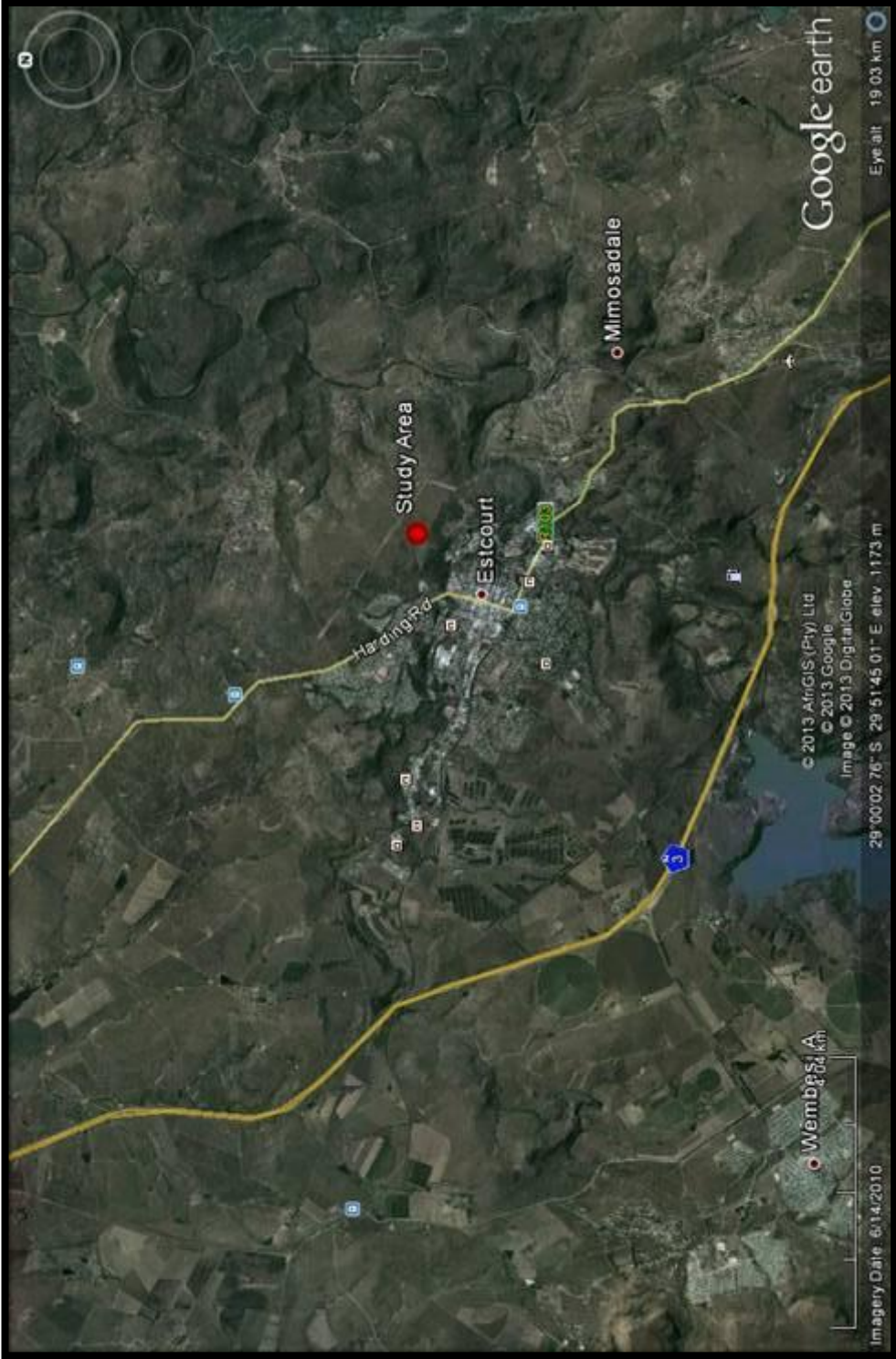


Figure 1. Google aerial photograph showing the location of the study area adjacent to Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal.



Figure 2. Google Aerial Photograph showing the location of the proposed powerline at Blurock adjacent to Estcourt. The preferred route is indicated in black. Two alternative routes are indicated in yellow and red. A heritage site occurs in the south eastern section of the study area, however, it is situated more than 120m from the proposed powerline route and it is not threatened.



Figure 3. The prominent landmark and heritage site, Ford Durnford, can be seen from the study area in the distance.



Figure 4. Voortrekker Memorial hidden in the dense grass. This site is situated more than 120m from the proposed powerline route and it is not threatened by the development.



Figure 5. Voortrekker memorial and associated graveyard. This heritage site is situated more than 120m from the proposed powerline route and it is not threatened by the development.

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