ARCHAEOLOGIC AL EXCAVATIONS AT THE SITE UMV1 - GLENDALE

FOR: BOSCH & ASSOCIATES, & ESKOM
BY: FPGAVIN ANDERSON, NATAL MUSEUM INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The Natal Museum Institute for Cultural Resource Management was contracted to undertake an archaeological survey of the proposed Glendale-Shakaskraal transmission line in 1996. This survey indicated that four archaeological sites would have been affected by the transmission line, and that two of these sites would require further mitigation. This mitigation was to occur prior to any construction of the transmission lines.

The archaeological sites requiring mitigation are located in the valley of the Umvoti River. The larger and more important site, UMV1, is located approximately 50m from the river and is situated in the floodplain. The second site requiring mitigation, UMV2, was located on a hill above the river.

The mitigation required for these two sites was in the form of test pit excavations to further determine the full significance of the site. The excavation squares would be placed in the location of the legs of the pylons, and would be larger than the excavated hole required for the erection of the pylon itself. This allows the for the exact location of the affected area to be mitigated and counters potential damage that may be caused by the construction phase.

MITIGATION

UMV1

On arrival at UMV1, I noticed that a bulldozer had already cleared the sugarcane as well as topsoil from the site for the erection of the pylons. Moreover, four holes had been excavated into the site by the construction/engineering company. This meant that the site had already been significantly disturbed prior to the commencement of the archaeological mitigation.

Nonetheless I located an area with several sherds towards the riverside of the site and placed a small 1m X 1m test pit excavation to determine the significance of the site. Artefacts (mostly sherds) were observed from 5 cm - 15 cm below the current surface, however there was a low density of artefacts.

These sherds indicate that the site dates to *c.*1 700 years ago (*c.*200AD), and was a representative of the first farmers in southern Africa. Fortunately, the location of the pylons, and the subsequent damage to the site by the construction phase, appears to have occurred in an area where little cultural debris occurs. The main occupation of the site appears to occur further upslope.

I did not excavate any further at this site, since the damage had already occurred in the area that needed mitigation.

UMV2

As with UMV1, UMV2 had been disturbed by bulldozers prior to archaeological mitigation. The site was now a scatter of artefacts on the surface, with the cultural horizon, and any possible features destroyed.

The site appears to post-date the arrival of maize in KwaZulu-Natal, ie post 1600 AD, and is probably not older than 200 years.

I did not excavate this site, as originally proposed, since potential features had already been removed/damaged. Furthermore the scatter of artefacts that remained on the site suggested that the site was not as significant as originally believed.

CONCLUSIONS

Two archaeological sites were identified as requiring mitigation prior to the erection of transmission lines. These sites were to be excavated to determine their full significance. On arrival at both sites, I discovered that both sites had been affected by bulldozer activity, and that UMV1 had already been excavated. The initial phase 1 archaeological report clearly stated that no sites identified as requiring mitigation were to be affected prior to further archaeological studies. These suggestions have been ignored.

Due to the sites already being damaged, I did not complete the required mitigation, since it would not have been archaeologically beneficial nor cost-effective. Nonetheless Bosch & Associates (and/or Eskom) still require permits to damage parts of the site.