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ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HERITAGE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED UPGRADING OF THE BULK WATER SUPPLY AT NORVALSPONT NEAR GARIEP DAM, NORTHERN CAPE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Unsobomvu Municipality, Colesberg, is planning the upgrading of the bulk water supply system at Norvalspont, Northern Cape. A new pipeline will run over a distance of about 1km from the pump station to the existing Norvalspont water treatment installation. The surroundings had been disturbed by previous building and road construction developments and trenching activities.

A few heavily patinated stone flakes occur on the plateau near the water reservoir. The sample is very small but seems to be part of a general distribution of Middle Stone Age material in the area. The finds are considered of minor significance. A single Anglo-Boer War milk tin top was found in the same area.

An Anglo-Boer War British blockhouse is located near the pump house on the riverbank. The sand stone structure was modified into a residence. From the outside, it appears to be in good order and well maintained. The blockhouse will not be affected by the proposed pipeline developments.

The old pump house on the riverbank is seriously neglected and all the pumps, diesel engines and electric motors have been removed.

No other archaeological or any cultural remains were found along the proposed pipeline route.

Mitigation measures will not be necessary and I recommend that the proposed developments and planning of the pipeline may proceed.

INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

MDA Environmental Consulting, from Bloemfontein, is commissioned by the Unsobomvu Municipality, with headquarters at Colesberg, to compile the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

Scope and Limitations

The investigation provided the opportunity to examine the route proposed for the installation of a new water pipeline from the pump station along the Orange River to the existing water treatment works on the outskirts of Norvalspont. A dense growth of thorn bush is widely spread along the riverbank, limiting access to the actual water line.

Methodology

1. Standard archaeological survey and recording methods applied.
2. Survey of previous HIA reports.
3. Site inspection on foot and by vehicle.
4. Layout of the area and features plotted by GPS.
5. Surroundings and features recorded on camera.
6. Preparation of maps & literature.
7. Research on the history, archaeology & heritage remains.

INVESTIGATION

Norvalspont is located within a potentially rich Anglo-Boer War historical and Stone Age archaeological region (Bergh & Visagie 1986). Historians are aware that archaeological remains occur in the form of Stone Age flakes and tools (Sampson 1968, 1970, 1972, Dreyer 2007, 2008). Later Iron Age stone walled living sites have not been discovered in this region (Maggs 1976).

Remnants of Anglo-Boer War activities are expected to occur in and around Norvalspont. These remains could include blockhouses and sangars, fired cartridge shells and metal food containers displaying heavily soldered seams, are some of the most common finds. At the Norvalspont concentration camp, the position of the tents was paved with empty food and milk tins and can still be observed after a hundred years.

The present heritage investigation provided the opportunity to examine the route proposed for the installation of the pipeline from the Orange River to Norvalspont. The site was investigated on 11 September 2012. Neil Devenish from MDA Environmental Consultants accompanied me during the site visit.

The study aims to locate and evaluate the significance of heritage sites, archaeological material, manmade structures older than 60 years, and sites associated with oral histories and graves that might be affected by the proposed developments. In many cases, planted and self-sown trees and other types of vegetation represent a major part of the historical landscape of human settlements in villages and towns, on farmyards or even deserted places in the open veld. These features should be recognised and taken into consideration during any heritage investigation.

The route was examined for possible archaeological and historical material and to establish the potential impact on any cultural remains that may be found. The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is done in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), (25 of 1999) and under the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act. 108 of 1998).

It is essential to take note of the Anglo-Boer War (1900-1902), concentration camps and skirmish sites in the Norvalspont region (Breytenbach 1970, Pakenham 1997). Distinctive food cans and specific types and calibres of fired cartridge cases normally identify these sites.

NORVALSPONT DURING THE ANGLO-BOER WAR (1899-1902)

In post war narratives, the Anglo-Boer War concentration camp at Norvalspont is described as “a model camp”. This achievement is attributed to the camp manager, Lt St John Cole Bowen, the first civilian superintendent of the Norvalspont refugee camp. The Norvalspont camp, like Aliwal North, Kimberley and Orange River Station, was in the Cape Colony, although it formed part of the concentration camp complex of the Orange River Colony. The placing on the banks of the Orange River ensured an ample water supply, with plenty of wood from the river bush. Norvalspont was a wagon and railway crossing on the Orange River but the concentration camp was isolated from any other towns. The Norvalspont camp was established in November 1900, as relief for the overcrowded Bloemfontein concentration camp with its dire shortage of water.

The first camp superintendents, both military men, seem to have been capable officials. Lt Wynne of the Imperial Yeomanry was fondly called the “Father of the Camp”. Major Du Plat Taylor of the Grenadier Guards, who instilled firm military discipline, succeeded him in January 1901. By February 1901, the camp passed into civilian administration, when St John Cole Bowen was appointed. His personal capability ensured that St John Cole Bowen was later chosen as a travelling inspector of refugee camps. Nearly everyone who met him spoke of his calm efficiency, mentioning that his rule was firm, but just and kind. Emily Hobhouse, who visited the Norvalspont camp on 12 March 1901, stated later that St John Cole Bowen possessed clear administrative powers. Although St John Cole Bowen did not show any obvious compassion with the Afrikaner Boers, the fact that he was of Irish descent, may have given him some sympathy for the local white people. After the war St John Cole Bowen became a resident

magistrate in the Free State, spending his life amongst the Boers whom he had served in the camps (Cloete 2000). (St John Cole Bowen was born on 20 September 1872, the son of Robert St John Cole Bowen and Elizabeth Jane Clarke. In 1903, he married Kathleen Lillian Winifred Rosslein, daughter of Edward Rosslein. The couple had two sons named Robert Edward Cole Bowen, born 25 May 1904 and Henry St John Cole Bowen, born 22 May 1906, died 16 January 1962. St John Cole Bowen held the office of Resident Magistrate in the Orange River Colony. He died in 1952).

Like other camps, Norvalspont had its equal measure of problems. The measles epidemic struck early, followed by scarlet fever and diphtheria. Families poured in without warning and tents and blankets ran out. Some of the Boer inmates deserted the camp, which forced St John Cole Bowen to fence in those who were a bad influence. Upon all these struggles, St John Cole Bowen had to deal with a distasteful British medical officer. To add to his misery, Miss Catherine Malherbe arrived to run the hospital as matron. She immediately turned out to be a troublemaker and took up the argument on behalf of the refugees. She insisted that the Boer people were cruelly treated in the refugee camps, going out of her way to persuade the inmates of this fact. She used her influence to convince the Boer women to have no confidence in the Medical Officer and not to allow their children to be taken to the camp hospital (De Villiers 2008).

During the Anglo-Boer War, Norvalspont became a strategic station on the Noupoort – Bloemfontein railway line. On 1 November 1899, the Philippolis and Edenburg commandos under Gen H.J. Schoeman occupied the railway bridge at Norvalspont and they subsequently invaded the Cape Colony. By 5 March 1900, the British forces pushed back the Boers from the Cape Colony, who on their retreat, blew up the three central columns of the railway bridge. On 15 March 1900, the engineers started to construct a pontoon bridge, allowing 2 infantry battalions, a cavalry squadron and 600 mounted infantrymen under Gen R.A.P. Clements to cross the river into the Orange Free State. By 30 March 1900, a temporary railway bridge was in operation (Jones & Jones 1999). It is interesting to note that the original railway bridge was altered into a road bridge some time after the war (Fig.5). Several plaques attached to the structure, confirm the original erection in 1889 (Fig.6), with alterations and maintenance in 1907 (Fig.7) and 1938 (Fig.8). Another railway bridge was erected afterwards (Fig.9).

No mention is made of any serious skirmishes near Norvalspont

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Eastern Cape and particularly the areas along the Orange River and other occasional streams, have concentrations of a variety of Stone Age flakes and tools. The artefacts were made and discarded by successions of prehistoric peoples who lived by hunting and foraging (Sampson 1985). The surveys by Sampson along the Orange River (1968, 1970, 1972), produced records of

camps and workplaces of Early Stone Age (2 million – 150 000 BP), Middle Stone Age (150 000 – 30 000 BP) and Later Stone Age (30 000 BP – 200 AD) artefacts.

A number of Taaibos Korana and Griqua groups, remnants of the Later Stone Age peoples, managed to survive the assimilation by Sotho/Tswana tribes at Mamusa near Schweizer Reneke (Van den Berg 1996).

The archaeological record of the Free State Province represents a long time span during the human past. The area is exceptionally rich in terms of Iron Age living sites, which date between mid 17th century and early 19th century (Maggs 1976, Mason 1962, 1986, Evers 1988). The Later Iron Age phase brought people who cultivated crops, kept livestock, produced an abundance of pottery in a variety of shapes and sizes and smelted metals. Extensive stone walled enclosures characterise their permanent settlements.

This movement of people into the interior resulted from dramatic climate changes and a rapid population growth along the east coast of South Africa. Increased pressure on the natural resources and attempts to control trade during the early 19th century brought the emergence of powerful leaders in the coastal area. Subsequent power struggles developed into a period of instability on the central Highveld. This time of strife or wars of devastation, known as “difaqane” (Sotho/Tswana) or “Mfecane” (Nguni), affected many of the Black tribes in the interior. Attacks from east of the escarpment initiated by the AmaZulu impis of Chaka in about 1822, were sustained by the AmaNdebele of Mzilikazi and the AmaNgwane of Matiwane into the Free State, thus uprooting among others, the Batlokwa of Sekonyela and Mantatise and various smaller Sotho/Tswana tribes further inland. On their turn, the Batlokwa drove off the Bafokeng of Sebetoane from Kurutlele, a mountain near Senekal in the Free State, who, in their effort to escape the pursuit by the AmaNdebele forces, eventually landed up in the Caprivi (Dreyer & Kilby 2003).

This period of unrest directly affected the peoples of the Free State, Northern Cape and North West Province, resulting in the displacement of scores of tribesmen, women and children. The stronger tribal groups, such as the AmaNdebele of Mzilikazi, assimilated many of these Batswana refugees.

Early European missionaries and travellers ventured into the interior of the country during the 19th century (Dreyer 2001) and the Rev James Archbell established the missionary at Thaba Nchu by 1834. Several of the marauding hordes affected the lives of the Batswana tribes living at Dithakong near the mission station of Robert and Mary Moffat near Kuruman.

The Iron Age archaeology of the Free State is characterised by a wide distribution of stone walled sites on the ridges and hills. There is detail and consistency in the arrangement and design of these structures. People's

expression of culture has left its imprint on the material environment. The settlement patterns display human perceptions with regard to social clustering, economic system and political organisation. Patterns culminate in the arrangement of huts, byres and middens in a particular order and in relation to one another. Spatial organisation in general is characterised by the central position of stock byres and the placing of the main dwelling area on the perimeter of the settlement. Although a variety of different classes and types of settlement have been defined, these are all variations of the Central Cattle Pattern (CCP), a specific model for the organisation and use of space in Zulu and Sotho/Tswana settlements.

The classification of sites is based on the assumption that settlement layout is bound and prescribed by cultural perceptions. The identification of different ethnic groups is thus possible from the way in which these traditional peoples organised their different living places in terms of space and time. The result was directed by cultural preference (choice) and function. The significance of livestock, personal status, kinship, social organisation and the diverse roles of men, women and offspring have always been important in the understanding of settlement patterns.

The Later Iron Age classification of settlement patterns formulated by Maggs (1976) and Mason (1986), produced a standardised archaeological framework for the ordering of structures and sites characterised respectively by stock enclosures with connecting walls, in certain cases including corbelled huts (Type V), surrounding walls (Type N) and huts with bilobial courtyards (Type Z). Associated pottery assemblages with different decoration styles confirm the classification of sites based on layout (Maggs 1976:290). Different settlement patterns also produced huts of different materials in different styles.

LOCALITY

Norvalspont is located about 11km south of Gariep Dam along the Orange River on the way to Colesberg (Map 1). The existing pump facilities are on the riverbank with the water treatment installation about 1km distant on the outskirts of Norvalspont (Map 2&4).

The following GPS coordinates (Cape scale) were taken: (Map 2).

WATER RESERVOIR	30°37’41”S. 025°27’34”E Altitude 1238m (Fig.1).
PUMP STATION	30°37’21”S. 025°27’50”E Altitude 1241m (Figs.2&3).
BLOCK HOUSE	30°37’24”S. 025°27’50”E Altitude 1211m (Fig.4).

RESULTS

FINDS

A few heavily patinated stone flakes occur on the plateau near the water reservoir (Fig.10). Some of the flakes show secondary flaking on the dorsal side (Fig.11) and in certain cases percussion bulbs are clearly recognisable (Fig.12). Although the sample is very small, it seems to be part of a general distribution in the area. Through the application of standard tool typology and basic characteristics, the material can arbitrarily be classified as Middle Stone Age. The sample is considered of minor significance.

A single Anglo-Boer War milk tin top was found in the same area (Fig.13).

An Anglo-Boer War British blockhouse is located near the pump house on the riverbank (Fig.4). For a number of years the sand stone structure has been modified into a residence. From the outside, it appears to be in good order and well maintained. We could not gain access to the building without prior arrangements, but according to a member of the Friends of the Anglo-Boer War Museum in Bloemfontein, the interior of the blockhouse at Norvalspont is in a very good condition. The blockhouse will not be affected by the proposed pipeline developments (Map 4).

The old pump house is seriously neglected and all the pumps, diesel engines and electric motors have been removed (Figs.2&3).

No other archaeological or any cultural remains were found along the proposed pipeline route.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The lithic remains found during the investigation seem to be in the form of a general distribution of patinated flakes and flaked cores. The impact on the heritage remains of the proposed pipeline developments at Norvalspont will be of minor significance.

No other cultural or historical components were found during the investigation, nor were there any buildings, graves or burial grounds in the area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no obvious reasons delay the commencement of further planning and development of the site. I recommend that, depending on the finds of the other specialists, the planning and the development of the installation may proceed.

MITIGATION

No mitigation measures will be required along the route.

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PAARDELAAGTE (Portion 19 GROOTRIVIERWAGENDRIF 29)
ODENDAALSTROOM (Portion 13 GROOTRIVIERWAGENDRIF 29)
CYFERFONTEIN (Remainder GROOTRIVIERWAGENDRIF 29)
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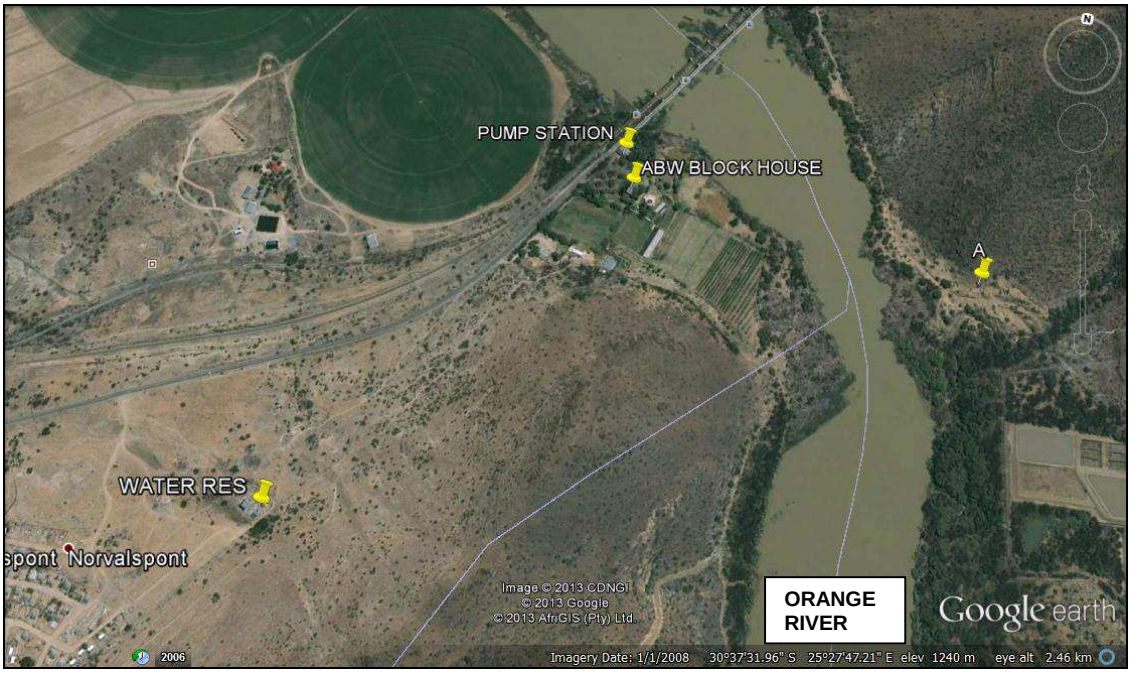
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:

Map 1 Norvalspont in relation to Gariep Dam, the N1 main road, Bethulie and Springfontein.



Map 2 Water reservoir at Norvalspont and the Pump Station on the Orange River (3025CB).

Map 3 Pump Station and Anglo-Boer War block house in relation to the Orange River.

Map 4 Pipeline route 2C (red line) from the Orange River pump station to Norvalspont reservoir.

Fig.1 Reservoir at the water treatment works, Norvalspont.

Fig.2 Old pump station building at the Orange River.

Fig.3 Interior of the old pump station building at the Orange River.

Fig.4 Anglo-Boer War blockhouse near the Norvalspont pump station on the Orange River.

Fig.5 Road bridge across the Orange River near the Norvalspont pump station.

Fig.6 Badge on road bridge indicating 1889 as the year of manufacture.

Fig.7 Plaque reads: “Strengthened by the Engineering Dept, 1907”.

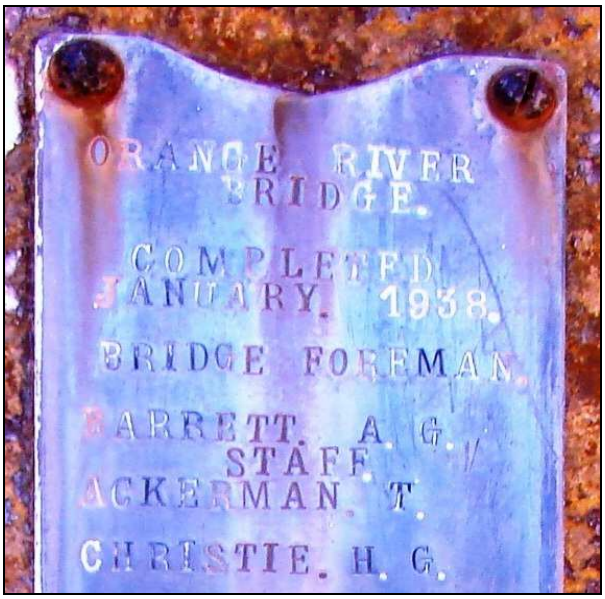


Fig.8 Plaque indicating maintenance to the road bridge in 1938.

Fig.9 Railway bridge across the Orange River near the Norvalspont pump station.

Fig.10 Scatter of natural stone and worked flakes near the Norvalspont water reservoir.

Fig.11 Patinated and worked flakes found near the water reservoir.

Fig.12 MSA flake (Bic Pen = 135mm).

Fig.13 Anglo-Boer War milk tin top from near the water reservoir (Diameter = 60mm).

Fig.14 Facing Norvalspont from the water reservoir.

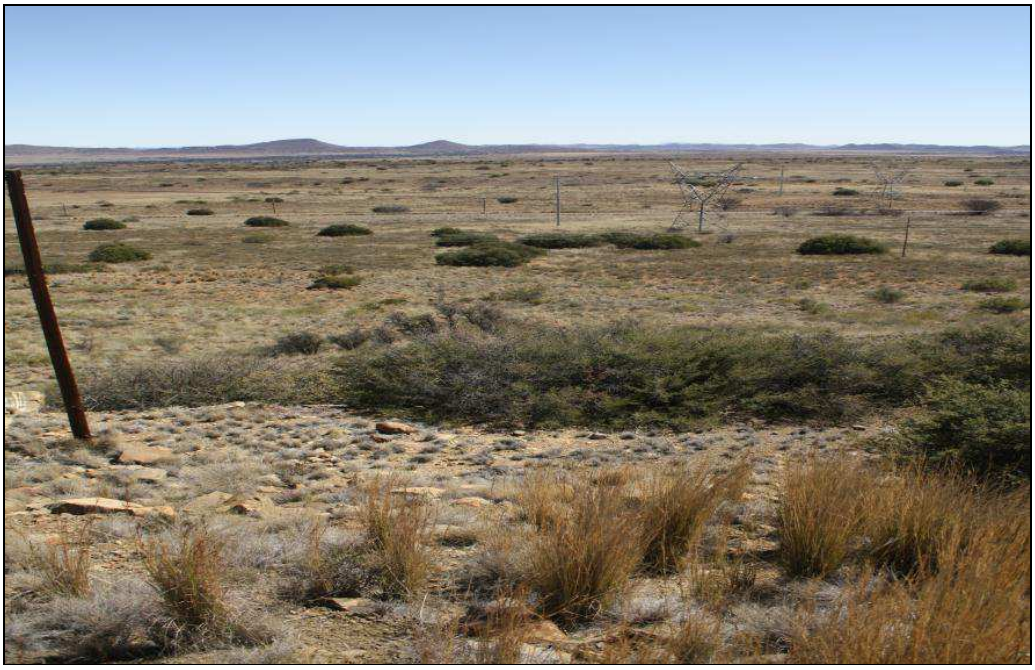


Fig.15 Area around the Norvalspont water reservoir.

Fig.16 Monument at Norvalspont Concentration Camp.