

PROJECT PROPOSAL . KATHU TOWNLANDS 1

Kathu Townlands¹, located on the eastern edge of the town Kathu, between it and the N14 from Kuruman to Postmasburg, was found in 1980, and further investigated by way of excavations some 300 m apart in 1982 and 1990. There, quarrying and knapping of an underlying jaspelite outcrop, about 11 ha in extent, was carried out by Late Acheulean artisans, prior to 600 000 years ago. The significance of the Provincial Heritage Site relates to various findings, perhaps the most remarkable of which is its richness, with an estimated billion or more artefacts, likely more than all the like-aged localities of Europe combined. Another is the presence within the lithic assemblages there of blades and blade-cores, which are only evidenced in East Africa, the Levant, and Europe, at progressively later dates. Specularite fragments have also been retrieved there, which points to an extremely early advent for the practice of pigment retrieval in the interior of South Africa (Beaumont & Bednarik 2013).

Resolving a legal wrangle now requires me to undertake further investigations on the eastern periphery of the site, which falls on the western edge of the farm Bestwood 459. The plan is to sink three test pits, each 1-2m² in extent in order to sample the southern, central and northern sectors of that area by way of 5 cm spits. Anticipated stratigraphy, on the basis of previous fieldwork, is an upper about 50 cm of sterile red Hutton Sands, the artefact-rich mining layer which is there likely to be between 50 cm and 1 m thick, below which is jaspelite bedrock. My report will detail the precise thickness of those levels in each excavation, and the number / typology of the artefacts which were recovered. My earlier digs both yielded about 9 000 artefacts per m³, of which most were chips, chunks, and waste flakes.

REFERENCE:

Beaumont, P.B. and R.G. Bednarik. 2013. Tracing the emergence of palaeoart in sub-Saharan Africa. *Rock Art Research* 30 (1):33-54.

P.B. Beaumont
ASAPA 010.