

**THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS OF TRON04**

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**FOR TRONOX KZN SANDS (Pty) LTD**

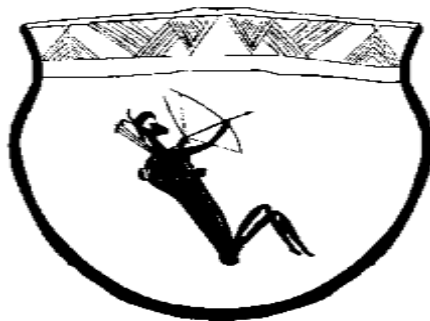
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## Abbreviations

HP	Historical Period
IIA	Indeterminate Iron Age
LIA	Late Iron Age
EIA	Early Iron Age
ISA	Indeterminate Stone Age
ESA	Early Stone Age
MSA	Middle Stone Age
LSA	Late Stone Age
HIA	Heritage Impact Assessment
PIA	Palaeontological Impact Assessment

### GENERAL AGE. GROUPS DATE

Period	Pottery Group	Associated language/people	Years ago
ESA	N/A	Foragers/hunter/gatherers	1.5 million - 250 000
MSA	N/A	Hunter gatherers	250 000 – 30 000
LSA	N/A	San Hunter gatherers	30 000 – 2 000
EIA	1	Mzonjani	1 700 – 1 500
EIA	2	Msuluzi	1500 - 1300
EIA...	3	Ndondondwane	1300 – 1100
EIA	4	Ntshekane	1100 - 900
LIA	5	Blackburn/Mpambanyoni	900- 700
LIA	6	Moor Park	700 - 500
LIA	7	Thembi-Tsonga	500 – 250/300
Historical	Groups 8,9	Zulu-speaking people	300 – present

ESA = Early Stone Age

MSA = Middle Stone Age

LSA = Late Stone Age

EIA = Early Iron Age

LIA = Late Iron Age

# INTRODUCTION

Tron04 is located ~2km south of Mtunzini and within the Tronox Sands Ltd Fairbreeze Mine. As part of the EMP, archaeological surveys are undertaken on a monthly basis. The surveys concentrate on areas that have been recently exposed for mining related activity. Tron04 was first recorded in mid-2019, and was noted for having several glass beads on the surface. The site was initially not going to be mined, but by November 2019 the mine path had changed, and TRON04 was to be destroyed. Excavations at TRON04 began on 23 March 2020 only to be interrupted by the national Corona-19 Lockdown from 27 March 2020. Four days of excavation occurred. Excavations restarted on 5 May 2020 as the excavations at the site were considered essential for mine planning and production. These excavations continued until 15 May 2020.

TRON04 is located on the southern part of the easternmost hill from the ocean. A small iron smelting area was recorded 200m northwest of TRON04, while small scatters of pottery and stone tools have been recorded on adjacent hills. The hill has been under afforestation since the 1930s and I did not expect to find any intact archaeological sites in these types of areas, due to the old practice of destumping.



**FIG. 1: GENERAL LOCATION OF TRON04**





**FIG. 2: LOCATION OF TRON04**



# METHOD

All sites are grouped according to low, medium, and high significance for the purpose of this report. Sites of low significance have no diagnostic artefacts, especially pottery. Sites of medium significance have diagnostic artefacts and these are sampled. Sampling includes the collection of artefacts for future analysis. All diagnostic pottery, such as rims, lips, and decorated sherds are sampled, while bone, stone, and shell are mostly noted. Sampling occurs on most sites. Sites of high significance are excavated and/or extensively sampled. Those sites that are extensively sampled have high research potential, yet poor preservation of features. We attempt to recover as many artefacts from these sites by means of systematic sampling, as opposed to sampling diagnostic artefacts only.

## Defining significance

Archaeological sites vary according to significance and several different criteria relate to each type of site. However, there are several criteria that allow for a general significance rating of archaeological sites.

These criteria are:

### **1. State of preservation of:**

- 1.1. Organic remains:
  - 1.1.1. Faunal
  - 1.1.2. Botanical
- 1.2. Rock art
- 1.3. Walling
- 1.4. Presence of a cultural deposit
- 1.5. Features:
  - 1.5.1. Ash Features
  - 1.5.2. Graves
  - 1.5.3. Middens
  - 1.5.4. Cattle byres
  - 1.5.5. Bedding and ash complexes

### **2. Spatial arrangements:**

- 2.1. Internal housing arrangements



- 2.2. Intra-site settlement patterns
- 2.3. Inter-site settlement patterns
- 3. Features of the site:**
  - 3.1. Are there any unusual, unique or rare artefacts or images at the site?
  - 3.2. Is it a type site?
    - 3.2.1. Does the site have a very good example of a specific time period, feature, or artefact?
- 4. Research:**
  - 4.1. Providing information on current research projects
  - 4.2. Salvaging information for potential future research projects
- 5. Inter- and intra-site variability**
  - 5.1. Can this particular site yield information regarding intra-site variability, i.e. spatial relationships between various features and artefacts?
  - 5.2. Can this particular site yield information about a community's social relationships within itself, or between other communities?
- 6. Archaeological Experience:**
  - 6.1. The personal experience and expertise of the CRM practitioner should not be ignored. Experience can indicate sites that have potentially significant aspects, but need to be tested prior to any conclusions.
- 7. Educational:**
  - 7.1. Does the site have the potential to be used as an educational instrument?
  - 7.2. Does the site have the potential to become a tourist attraction?
  - 7.3. The educational value of a site can only be fully determined after initial test-pit excavations and/or full excavations.

The more a site can fulfil the above criteria, the more significant it becomes. Test-pit excavations are used to test the full potential of an archaeological deposit. These test-pit excavations may require further excavations if the site is of significance. Sites may also be mapped and/or have artefacts sampled as a form of mitigation. Sampling normally occurs when the artefacts may be good examples of their type, but are not in a primary archaeological context. Mapping records the spatial relationship between features and artefacts.

# EXCAVATIONS

This is a brief summary of the excavated finds and is not meant to be a full analysis, as that is beyond the scope of work of this project.

## EXCAVATIONS & STRATIGRAPHY:

The site had been partly levelled, and disturbed, when used as a storage area for pipes. This is when it was first recorded in 2019. Prior to the excavations, the area was cleared of much of the ground vegetation. The designated area was mapped by the Tronox surveyors who divided the site into a grid of 6m x 6m squares. Each square was numbered, and then subdivided into four 3m x 3m squares during the excavations (fig.'s 3 – 5).


A total of 52, 3m x 3m squares were excavated over fourteen days. The first four days had a team of seven people; however the national shutdown on 27 March 2020 prematurely cancelled the excavations. Excavations continued on the 5 May 2020 for another ten days, but with only five people due to workforce number restrictions at the mine. The excavations were considered to be an essential service as the site was stopping mining activity until excavations were completed.

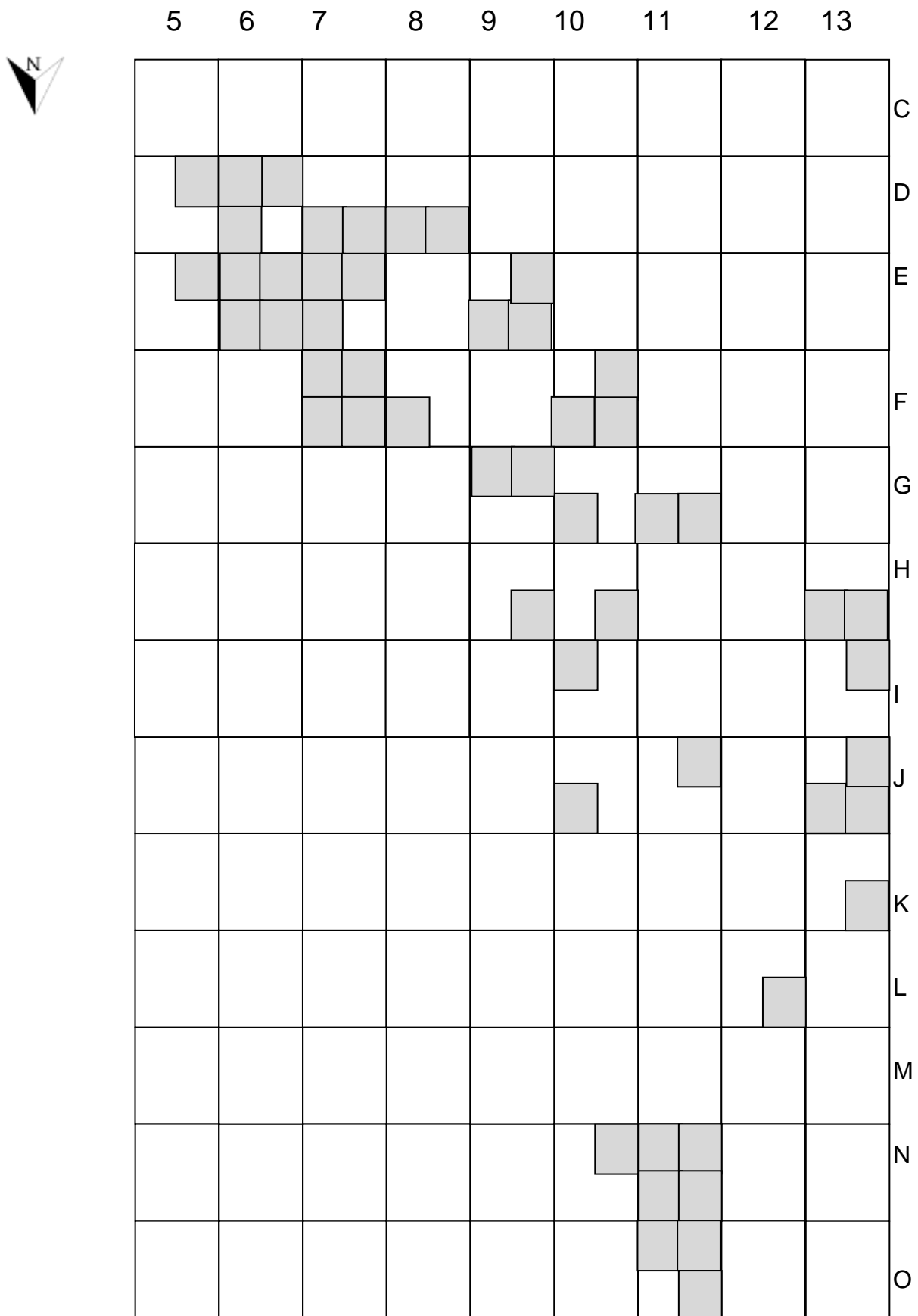
Each square was excavated in 10cm Spits. Excavations in a square stopped when the light brown sand was reached (fig. 5). This normally occurred at 50cm – 70cm below the surface across most of the site, except along the D-line. Most of the cultural horizon occurred in the upper 30cm of deposit.

The excavation strategy was to begin from the outer squares and move towards the centre of the site. This allowed for easier use of spoil heaps as the excavation continued. I was also consciously following the traditional Nguni-speaking settlement pattern that I had thought occurred at the site.

After the excavations were completed a further 30cm was cleared by the bulldozer under supervision. The area was left to settle for a week, and then a further 30cm was cleared. This was to determine if any human remains occurred on the site. The site was too large to continue excavating for possible human burials.

**FIG. 3: SITE EXCAVATION MAP**

 = excavated 3m x 3m



**FIG. 4: SITE EXCAVATION**





**FIG. 5: GENERAL VIEW OF THE EXCAVATION AREA**



**FIG. 6: STRATIGRAPHY SECTION AT SQUARE E5.2**



## **RESULTS**

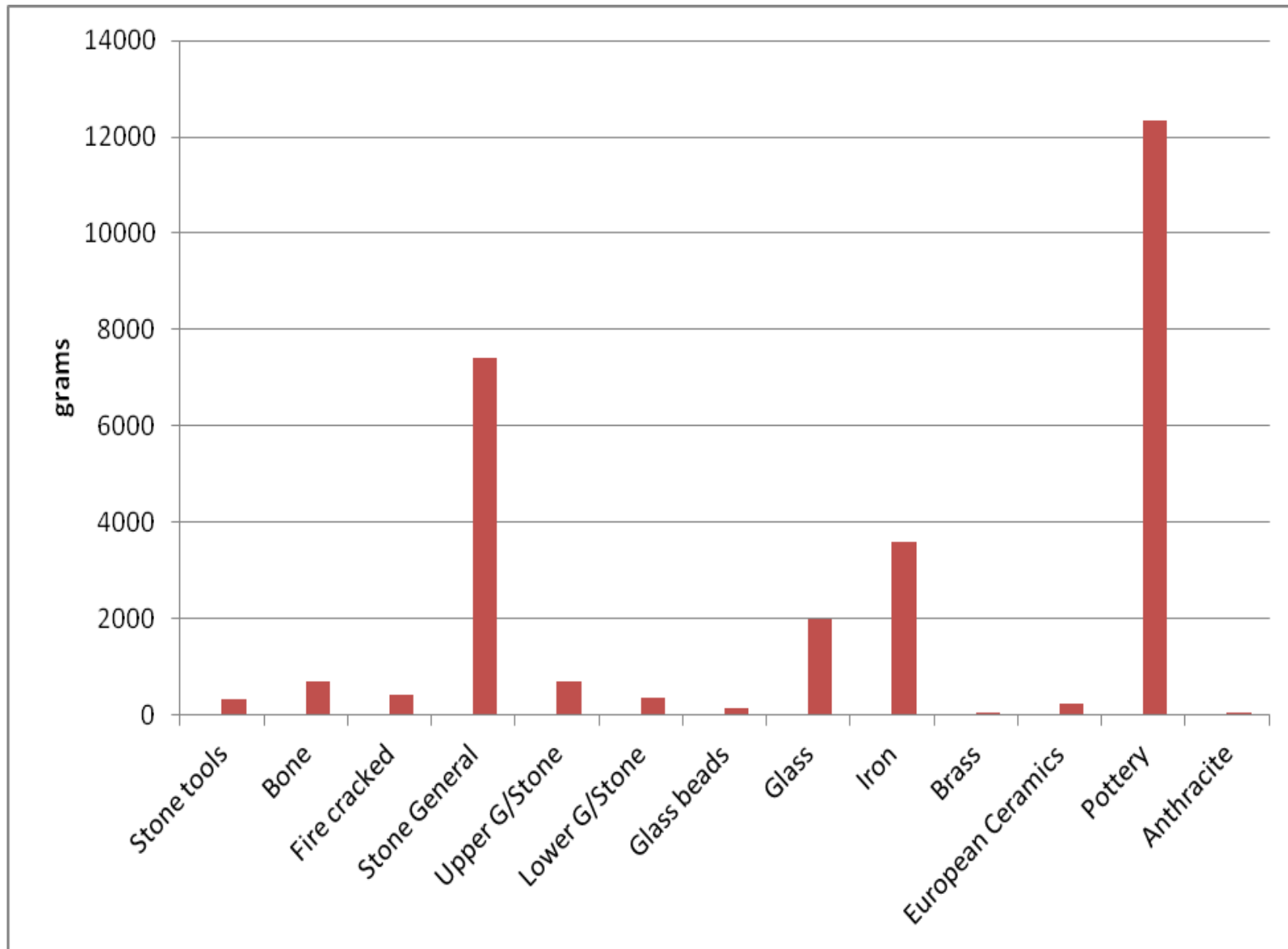
The excavated material is divided into thirteen categories for the analysis. The total weight for each artefact is given in Figure 7, while Table 2 summarises these results.

### **STONE TOOLS**

The stone tools were few in number and tend to be found at the base of the excavations. Fig. 8 shows some of these tools. The tools are as follows:

- Middle Stone Age
  - 4 x flakes on quartz or quartzite
- Late Stone Age
  - 5 flakes on quartz /or quartzite
  - 2 chunks on quarts
  - 1 Bipolar core on quartz
- Indeterminate Stone Age
  - 2 chunks on quartzite

**FIG. 7: ARTEFACT & ECOFACTS TOTAL WEIGHTS<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> glass beads are represented in frequency



**TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF EXCAVATED MATERIAL WEIGHT**

<b>ARTEFACT</b>	<b>GRAMS / NUMBER</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Stone tools</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>335.5</b>
<b>Bone</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>682.5</b>
<b>Fire cracked rocks</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>403</b>
	<b>n</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Stone General</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>7397</b>
<b>Upper Grinding Stone</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>680</b>
	<b>n</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Lower Grinding Stone</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>344</b>
	<b>n</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Glass beads</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Glass</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>1976</b>
<b>Iron</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>3573.5</b>
<b>Brass</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>European ceramics</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>Pottery</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>12331</b>
<b>Anthracite</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>44</b>

**FIG. 8: STONE TOOLS AT TRON04**





Two stone tools (the bipolar core and an utilised flake) were found in the same pit as the *beshu* and smoking bowl.

## **FAUNAL REMAINS**

Faunal remains were mostly isolated occurrences in the various squares. The faunal remains included the remains of:

- Bird
- Small bovid (e.g. goat)
- Large bovid (e.g. cattle)

Square D6.1 has a small pit of faunal remains of an adult and sub-adult large bovid. These remains were in a hard soil and were removed as a whole on site, and separated at the office. Some of the remains had knife cut marks on them.

The occurrence of well preserved faunal remains is important as it indicates that the soil acidity has not corroded the organic material. This suggests that human remains will be well preserved if they occur on the site.

## **FIRE CRACKED ROCKS**

Fire-cracked rocks are stone that has cracked due to the heat of a fire. These normally indicate the presence of a hearth nearby. Only two fire cracked rocks were excavated in the Square O11 region.

## **STONE GENERAL**

These are not stones that were used as artefacts, nor are they locally available. Some of the stones might be related to afforestation. The stones vary in size. A total of 397g were excavated.

## **UPPER GRINDING STONES**

Upper grinding stones are normally made from quartz river pebbles. They vary in size and that relates to their function. Two of the upper grinding stones were used for

grinding maize, while one was used for polishing daga floors and/or the burnish on pottery, and one was used for crushing *muti* (traditional medicine).

## LOWER GRINDING STONES

Four small fragments of lower grinding stones were excavated. The fragments were too small to determine if they were used for sorghum/millet or maize. Maize was introduced to southern Africa by Portuguese sailors in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

## GLASS BEADS

The site was first noted for the number of glass beads on the surface around Square E6. Most of the beads were sampled prior to the excavations. A total of 148 glass beads were recovered from the site. These beads were predominantly white beads of various sizes. All the beads, except one, are drawn beads. The bead collection includes:

- Large white
- Small white
- Light blue
- Pink
- Red on yellow
- White with blue stripes
- Orange
- Dark blue with several facets
- Oval dark blue
- Red
- Green

One of the more interesting bead collections were from Square D7. There was a row of green and a row of red beads each on a thin wire. This suggests that some beads were used as a bracelet and not only on clothing. The beads are late 19<sup>th</sup> century glass beads.

Figure 9 shows some of the excavated beads.

**FIG. 9: SELECTED BEADS FROM TRON04**





## GLASS

Several fragments of glass were found along the southern half of the site. The bottles date to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most common glass bottle on the site was the beer bottle. The beer bottles are probably from SAB and a few of them have parts of the line "This BOTTLE IS THE PROPERTY OF <BREWERY NAME> BREWERIES". Fig. 9 shows the excavated bottles and the completed versions (<https://www.antiquebottles.co.za/brands.php>).

**FIG. 9: BEER BOTTLES**





The next frequently occurring bottle fragment is the Case Gin Bottle. These bottles have four straight sides and a square base that allowed easily fitting 4 to 12 bottles in a wooden packing case. The bottles were imported mostly from the Netherlands, and the shape made for more efficient packing during shipping. Some bottles have a makers seal on the top of the bottle's shoulder; however, none of these were found on site. The bottle predates 1903. Fig. 10 shows the case gin bottles from the site and a complete version. These bottles date from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**FIG. 10: CASE GIN BOTTLE**



Medicinal bottles occur at the site. These include the blue and clear medicinal and poison bottle varieties (11). Two Pascall sweet jars were found (fig. 12). One was just a fragment of the base, while other was a complete bottle with a much corroded screw on lid. The complete bottle was found in Pit 1. The bottle is from J Pascall, Surrey, UK. The stamp on the base has J Pascall, with a '5' in a triangle. The bottle probably dates between 1895 and 1898. J Pascall was established as a

Limited company in 1898 and thus the bottle predates this (<http://letslookagain.com/2015/03/a-history-of-james-pascall/>).

Another familiar bottle fragment is the Rose's cordial bottle with the familiar leaf pattern (fig. 13). The rest of the bottles consisted of generic wine/beer bottles, possible window pane, and a possible curved glass for an oil lamp (fig. 14).

**FIG. 11: MEDICINAL BOTTLES**



**FIG. 12: J PASCALL SWEET BOTTLE**



**FIG. 13: ROSES CORDIAL FRAGMENT**





**FIG. 14: GENERIC GLASS ARTEFACTS FROM TRON04**



## **IRON**

Several iron artefacts were noted along the southern part of the site. In most instances they were much rusted and only the basic shape or function could be ascertained. None of the iron fragments were curated

The most common form artefact was nails of different kinds and sizes (fig. 15).

Several fragments of knife blades, and a possible bone handle, were excavated (fig. 16).

A thick metal plate with a drilled hole was located near Sq D7. It appears to be the (small) door handle of a stove, or similar object.



**FIG. 15: TYPES OF NAILS FROM TRON04**





**FIG. 17: IRON PLATE**



## **METAL ALLOYS**

The most common alloyed metal is bronze. They are as follows:

- Rifle cartridges (fig. 18)
  - Both are cordite charges and thus predate 1906
  - Both had .303 bullets
  - Date to 1899 to 1902
  - The Royal Laboratory, Woolwich Arsenal, Cordite, Mark II cartridge 1893-1904
  - (Greenwood & Batley, England, cordite, Mark II, 1899 - 1902
- Grommet? (fig. 19)
- Harmonica blow or draw plate (fig. 20)
- Brass tube (fig. 21)
- Silver plated spoon (fig. 22). Harrison Brothers & Howser, Sheffield, England, ALPHA is a patent for specific type of plating. 1862 – 1909 (<http://www.silvercollection.it/ENGLAHARRISONBROTHERS.html>; [http://www.strazors.com/index.php?id=612&doc=harrison\\_brothers\\_and\\_howson\\_sheffield\\_](http://www.strazors.com/index.php?id=612&doc=harrison_brothers_and_howson_sheffield_))



- Birmingham Make UK, Paris Solide patent, suspender/ waistcoat buckle. 1889 – 1906 ([http://warnerhomestead.com/yahoo\\_site\\_admin/assets/docs/Warner\\_Buckles\\_32893452.pdf](http://warnerhomestead.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/Warner_Buckles_32893452.pdf)) (fig. 23).
- Brass strip with regular holes (fig, 24)

None these artefacts have been excavated in KZN before.

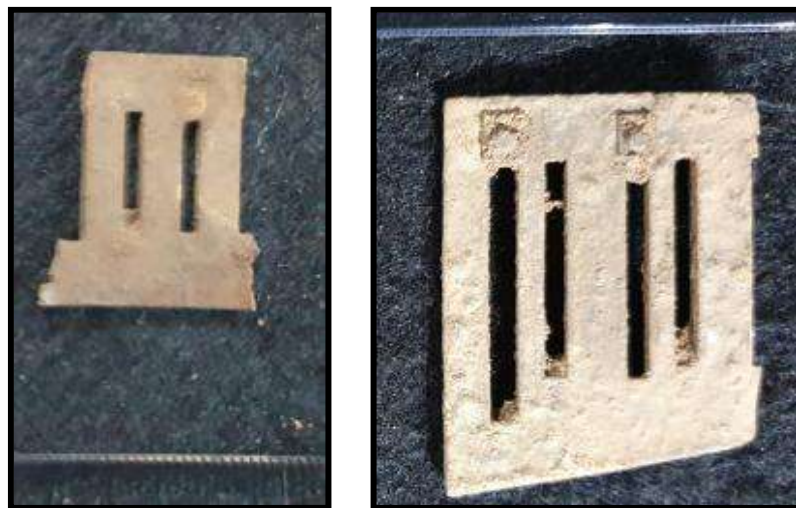
**FIG. 18: RIFLE CARTRIDGES**



**FIG. 19: BRASS GROMMET**



**FIG. 20: HARMONICA BLOW/DRAW PLATES**



**FIG. 21: BRASS TUBE**





**FIG. 22 SILVER PLATED SPOON**



**FIG. 23 SUSPENDER/ WAISTCOAT BUCKLE**





**FIG. 24: BRASS STRIP**



## **PORCELAIN**

Four types of porcelain artefacts were excavated:

- Button: a porcelain disc on a brass back 10mm wide (fig. 25)
- Tea cup: Two small fragments of a white tea cup with no markings
- Milk jug: The lip spout of a (presumed) milk jug was located in Square E6 (fig. 26)
- Barton's (Binnacle) Burner: Paraffin burner for a ship globe, or onion, lamp. Late 19<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 27).

**FIG. 25: CERAMIC BUTTON**



**FIG. 26: JUG LIP SPOUT**



**FIG. 27: BARTON BURNER**





## SOAPSTONE SMOKING PIPE

A decorated soapstone smoking pipe was found in Square E5.2 Pit 1. The pipe is mostly in tact with a few old chips. The sand and other contents of the pipe were left inside for future analyses. However there was a dark residue along the inner side. The pipe is most likely a cannabis smoking pipe. These are extremely rare artefacts from excavations. Fig. 28 shows the pipe *in situ* and after it was partially cleaned.

**FIG. 28: SOAPSTON PIPE**



## CLOTHING

A single partial ox-hide apron, with a metal clasp, was found in Pit 1 (fig. 29). The apron is probably a *beshu*. The apron was very dry and fragile and had to be treated on site with glycerine. The glycerine is not ideal; however it re-hydrated the leather and made it pliable enough to remove and store for future curation. The arrow in fig. 29 points to the clasp.

The apron appeared to be folded, and some areas still had the cattle hair on it.



**FIG. 29: COW HIDE APRON AND CLASP**



## **POTTERY**

The pottery from the site can be divided into two distinct periods: Blackburn and Late 19<sup>th</sup> century Zulu. The Blackburn pottery is named after the first excavated site in KZN (Davies 1971). The site dates to 900- 700 years ago and represents the first Nguni-speaking people in KZN and is the first phase of the late Iron Age.

The Blackburn pottery is located at the northern half of the site around the M11, N11, O11 squares. The pottery is thin-walled and mainly brown in colour. Some of the shards are decorated (fig. 30) and these are as follows:

- Vertical incisions on the outer lip
- Vertical incisions on the outer and inner lip
- Rectangular impressions (on the body)
- 5+horizontal grooves on the body



**FIG. 30: BLACKBURN POTTERY AT TRON04**



The late 19<sup>th</sup> century Zulu pottery at TRON04 is thin-walled and black or brown in colour. One bowl fragment was noted while the rest are cooking and drinking vessels. The black shards have a burnish and are the only ones that are decorated. The decorations are limited to rows of *iintsumpa* and are only found on beer pots. The other parts are undecorated. Fig. 31 shows some of these shards.

**FIG. 31: LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ZULU POTTERY**



A single complete pot was found in Square E5.2 Pit 1. The pot had a black burnish, no decorations and was inverted (fig. 32). There were no contents inside the pot. While the pot was complete in the excavations, it started cracking as it dried. It was removed as one pot inside a plastic bag, so that all fragments were not lost. The pot appears to be an undecorated beer pot (*ukhamba*).



**FIG. 32: INVERTED BEER POT**



## **ANTHRACITE**

Several fragments of anthracite were found in the southern half of the site. These fragments could relate to the site or be post depositional.

## **PIT 1**

Pit 1 is located in Squares E6.1 and E5.2 (fig. 33). The pit is a slightly darker brown soil that was dug into the sterile light brown soil. Pit 1 is ~80cm x 60cm in size and was 30cm deep. The pit contained the following artefacts:



- Soapstone pipe
- Pascall sweet bottle
- Leather apron and clasp
- Iron peg
- Iron nail
- Complete beer pot
- Iron strips

**FIG. 33: PIT 1 IN SQUARES E5.2 & E6.1**



## GENERAL DISCUSSION

TRON04 can be divided into two different occupations: early Late Iron Age and Late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first occupation occurs 700 – 900 years ago and is associated with Blackburn pottery. The excavations yielded an area of high pottery concentration in three 6m x 6m squares in the northern part of the site. The site did extend further northeast; however, the excavations in this area were not yielding new information and I moved to the southern part of the site. There was a distinct lack of subsurface features probably due to the afforestation, and few organic remains relating to this site.

This is the first recorded and excavated Blackburn site between the Uthukela and UMhlatuze Rivers and the pottery will be useful for comparison with other excavated Blackburn sites to the north (Anderson 1996 – 2004; Anderson and Anderson 2005 – 2019).

The southern part of the excavation is the more interesting and important aspect of the site. The site was first noted due to the occurrence of glass beads on the surface, as well as faunal remains and a few glass fragments. These artefacts suggested that the site would post-date 1850s and that organic remains could still occur. More importantly, there was a high chance of human remains occurring at the site and these would need mitigation if uncovered.

The excavations yielded well preserved faunal remains mostly of adult and sub-adult bovids (probably cattle). These remains suggest that human remains could occur on the site. The only problem is that they are subsurface and unmarked. We removed a further 60cm of deposit across the whole site to see if the graves would be exposed. This area will be monitored.

The unexpected aspect of the site was the occurrence of several European artefacts in what was thought to be a standard mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century Zulu settlement. I have recorded and excavated several sites dating to the same period in the Zulti North



mining lease and none had as many European artefacts (Anderson 1996 – 2004; Anderson and Anderson 2005 – 2019). The Barton Burner, Birmingham Make buckle, Pascall bottles, and even the *beshu*, are all first time recordings in an archaeological excavation in KZN. The cannabis smoking pipe is rare, but they have been excavated occasionally. However, given the influence of John Dunn in the area, these artefacts would be expected.

The European artefacts allow for a more precise dating of the site. The bottles, rifle cartridge, paraffin burner and buckle all suggest a date between 1880 – 1910. If using the cordite rifle cartridge, then the site predates 1906, but this does not exclude the fact that they could have been stored. The dates of the site are important in that several historical events occurred during the occupation of the site that would have had an impact on the people living here. These events are:

- 1879: 2<sup>nd</sup> Anglo-Zulu War – Fort Napoleon and General’s Hill occur nearby
- 1856 – 1895: John Dunn influence in the general area
- 1895: Mtunzini made into a “town”
- 1899 – 1902: 2<sup>nd</sup> Anglo-Boer War
- 1902-1904: Zululand Lands Delimitation Commission
- 1906: Bambatha Rebellion/Uprising

The site appears to have been deserted by 1906.

## CONCLUSION

The excavations at TRON04 were undertaken in March and May 2020. Members of the community were hired by Tronox Sands, and trained by myself, to assist with the excavations. A total of 52 3m x 3m squares were excavated over 14 days down to a general depth of 40cm below the surface. After the excavations were completed, a further 60cm of deposit was cleared across the demarcated site under archaeological supervision. This was to allow the area to settle and for potential human remains to be uncovered. The area is being surveyed until mining removes

the site.

The excavations yielded two distinct occupations: early late Iron Age, and late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Late Iron Age occupation dates to 700 – 900 years ago and is an example of the Blackburn pottery. This occupation is restricted to the northern part of the site. The excavations in this area were restricted to eight 3m x 3m squares and yielded the standard pottery associated with this type of site. No organic material was recovered. Two pieces of slag were excavated and could be related to the smelting site 200m northwest.

The southern part of the site uncovered a site probably dating from the 1880s to the 1906. The site is a Zulu settlement with several European ceramics. These artefacts included traditional beer pots, the remains of a *beshu* and a soapstone cannabis pipe. The European artefacts included a ship paraffin lamp, gin, beer, wine and medicinal bottles, glass beads, silver plated spoon, harmonica fragments and various brass artefacts (rifle cartridges, waistcoat buckle, and grommet). Several of these artefacts have never been excavated before in KZN. The range of artefacts can probably be attributed to the influence John Dunn and Mtunzini formally being recognised as a town in 1895.

No human remains were excavated; however, the occurrence of well preserved faunal remains relating to the site indicates that human graves probably do occur. The residents of the site would still have practiced traditional burial practices. Provided the 80+ years of afforestation has not destroyed the remains I am hoping they will be found during the monitoring program. Tronox Sands and Umlando have been in communication with the two communities, who claim this specific hill since any ancestral human remains will belong to them,

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