

**AN INVESTIGATION OF LATE IRON AGE SITES ON  
THE FARM HATHERLEY 331JR, PRETORIA DISTRICT**

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## SUMMARY

**An investigation of Late Iron Age sites on the farm Hatherley 331JR, Pretoria district.**

It is proposed by the City Council of Pretoria that a new refuse dump be established. The most suitable site seems to be located on part of the farms Hatherley 331JR and Pienaarspoort 339JR, east of Pretoria, Gauteng Province. As some Late Iron Age settlement structures occur on the farm Hatherley, the National Cultural History Museum was commissioned to investigate these archaeological sites.

The archaeological sites can be associated with the Manala section of the Southern Ndebele, the members of whom are known to have lived in this area during pre-colonial and historical times. The particular sites can be dated by oral history to the period c. AD 1650 - 1820.

From the investigation, the following conclusions can be made:

- The sites are currently not of cultural, emotional, historical or religious significance to the Ndebele people.
- After investigation and documentation has taken place, the sites will not produce much more information of value for the understanding of the prehistory/history of the Ndebele in particular and the region in general.

It is therefore recommended that the proposed development can continue. However, in order to ensure that no accusations are made to the effect that elements of the heritage of black people are indiscriminately destroyed, it is suggested that the City Council of Pretoria should make money available to develop a certain section of these sites as a site museum.

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## AN INVESTIGATION OF LATE IRON AGE SITES ON THE FARM HATHERLEY 331JR, PRETORIA DISTRICT

### 1. BACKGROUND

It is proposed by the City Council of Pretoria that a new refuse dump be established. To this end, a number of possible locations were originally investigated. After the environmental assessment for each of these was done, the apparently most suitable site was located on part of the farms Hatherley 331JR and Pienaarspoort 339JR, east of Pretoria, Gauteng Province. As some Late Iron Age settlement sites occur on the farm Hatherley, the National Cultural History Museum was commissioned to investigate these from a cultural historical point of view.

### 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference for this project can be summarised as follows:

2.1 To investigate the Iron Age sites on the farm Hatherley by means of archaeological, anthropological and historical methods.

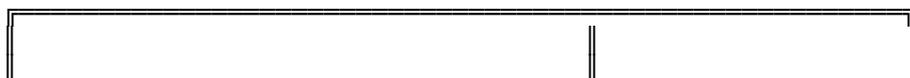
2.2 To determine whether the sites are still of significance to science or the descendants of the original inhabitants, or, alternatively, if they can be forfeited to the proposed development.

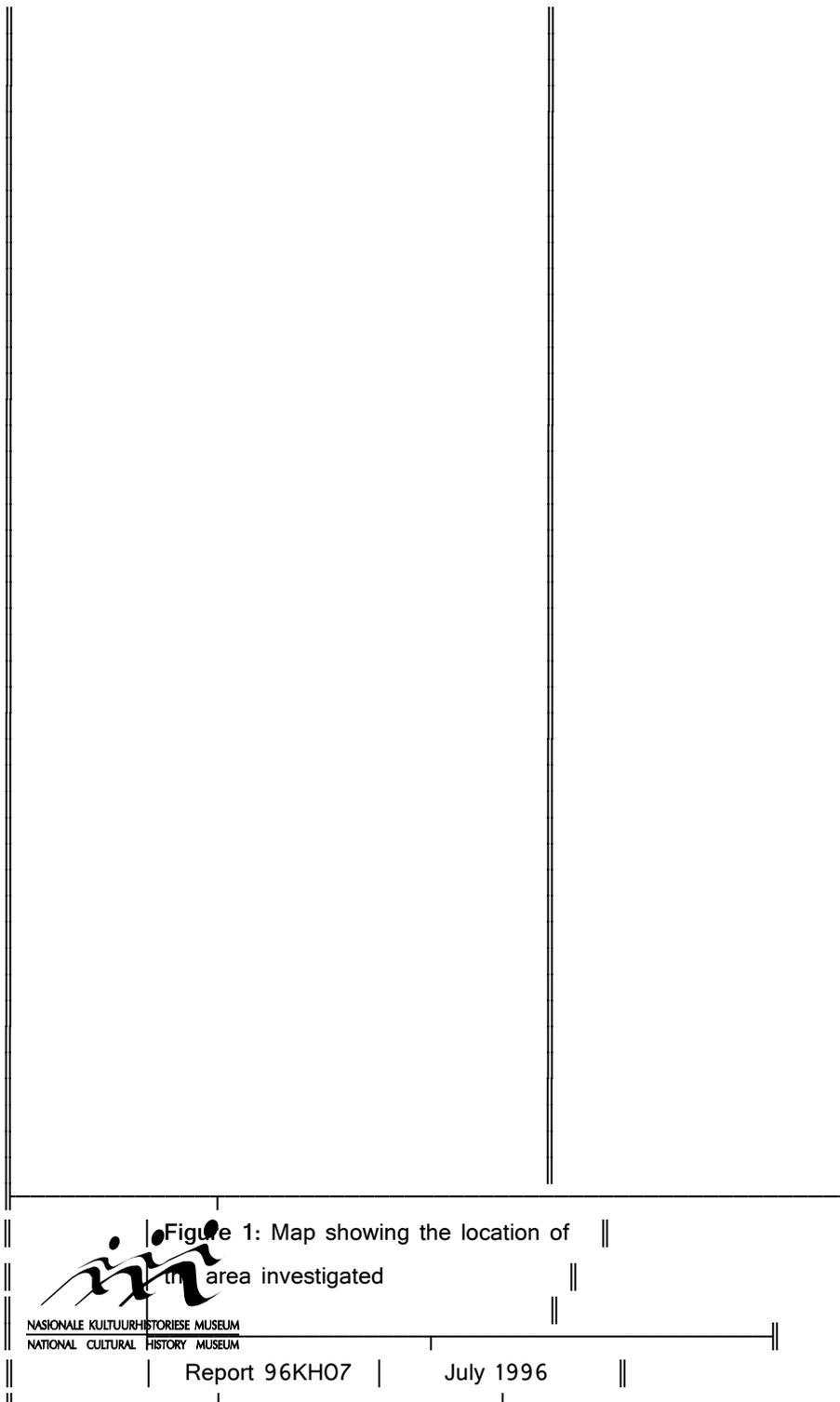
2.3 If the investigation indicates that the sites are not of sufficient significance, to gather as much information possible, by scientific means, so that even if they are destroyed, the information concerning them will be retained for posterity.

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The area under consideration is located on sections of the farms Hatherley 331JR and Pienaarspoort 339JR in the Pretoria district of Gauteng Province (Figure 1).

The geology of the area is made up of shale of the Magaliesberg Formation of the Pretoria Group of the Transvaal Sequence. Some later intrusions of diabase





occur as outcrops in the area.

The original vegetation of the area is classified as Bankenveld (Acocks 1975:99). This is open savanna with *Acacia caffra* and *Celtis africana* trees dominating. A large variety of grass species occurs. Acocks indicates that intensive cultivation of this type of veld by Iron Age people resulted in *Hyparrhenia hirta* (blougras/steekgras) becoming very dominant in the disturbed areas. The next veld

type, Sourish Mixed Bushveld (Acocks 1975:48), occurs just to the north of this and the change-over is sometimes indistinct. This latter veld type is sometimes found in the Bankenveld on rocky outcrops. It includes *Acacia karroo*, *Acacia caffra* and *Rhus* sp as some of the principle trees, with *Cymbopogon plurinades* and *Themeda trianda* as dominant grasses.

Large sections of the area have been cultivated in the past, and some pine trees were planted in one part.

The Iron Age settlement sites are located in the south western section of the area under consideration. Their position seems to be right on the ridge, so that the available outcrop of stone could have been used in constructing the settlements. This ridge also forms the watershed.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

The investigation consisted of four elements:

##### 4.1 A survey of the literature

The standard archaeological, anthropological and historical literature was consulted. In addition, a search of archival sources was also done.

##### 4.2 Ethno-historical investigation

For the purpose of this investigation, knowledgeable Ndebele informants, who are regarded by community members as such, were brought to the site on two occasions. One of the informants is the respected praise poet (imbongi), Mr Joyina J Mahlangu (see Mahlangu 1987). Praise poets are often indispensable on such occasions as they are able to record the settlement and migratory history of an entire ruling house or clan. On the second occasion a member of the royal house of the Manala-Ndebele tribe, Mr Zwelabo J Mabhena, himself an authority on Manala oral history, also visited the site.

During these visits existing oral historical evidence (previously recorded) was once more verified and tested for inconsistencies, deviations, distortions, new testimonies and current implications. Since the visit, Mr. Mabhena has clarified historical uncertainties with elders within the Manala Ndebele community.

The second part of the investigation entailed an *in situ* ethnographic interpretation of structures on the Hatherley sites. Although the ethnographic timespan might be elongated and vastly expanded in terms of contemporary knowledge (e.g. Question: What will an elderly man of approximately 60 years know about settlement patterns of the 1800s or earlier?), information on general settlement tendencies (e.g. spatial orientations, gender divisions) of earlier settlements could be deduced and derived from the recent past (in terms of current memory) as part of the 'active memory'. This has proved to be successful in ethno-archaeological exercises on similar

Ndebele sites in the Mpumalanga province.

#### 4.3 Inter-site comparison on a regional basis

The sites were also compared with other Ndebele sites in the immediate region, especially on the farms Zwartkoppies, Mooiplaats and Tierpoort.

#### 4.4 Archaeological investigation

A number of test trenches were excavated according to archaeological principles in order to test the content of the sites. A detailed plan of each of the sites was also drawn.

## 5. RESEARCH RESULTS

### 5.1 SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

Very few published sources exist on this particular topic, and only one source that refers to these sites in particular, namely Van Warmelo (1930), could be found. A few other sources, eg. Van Vuuren (1987, 1992), deal with the history of the Ndebele and their settlement layout in general.

### 5.2 ETHNO-HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION: MANALA-NDEBELE HISTORY AND THE HATHERLEY SITE

#### 5.2.1 Early history

The Southern Ndebele, as an ethnic category, should not be confused with the Zimbabwean Ndebele, also known as Matabele. The former, also known as the Transvaal Ndebele (linguistically comprising the Southern and Northern Ndebele), were most probably among the earliest Nguni speaking people in the immediate area north of the Magaliesberg range north of Pretoria. Through oral history a settlement near the present Bon Accord dam, called KwaMnyamana, under a founding ruler (chief) called Musi was identified.

During his reign the tribe allegedly split up into four to five separate migrating groups: Manala, Ndzundza, Kekana, Mhwaduba and Sibasa sections. The Ndzundza who settled in the Steelpoort river basin became (derogatively) known as Mapoggers by white settlers in that area.

#### 5.2.2 The Manala section

The Manala-Ndebele settled over a wide area towards the east of the present Pretoria, roughly: north and north east of the Bronberg range (from Wapadrans in the west towards Tigerpoort and Bapsfontein in the south east), south of the Magaliesberg and Pienaarspoort range (known to the Manala as Ko- or KwaQobongo) and from Mamelodi in the west towards the Cullinan intersection on

the N4 in the east.

This area, according to oral tradition, was geo-politically divided in three regions. To date, it is unclear whether these divisions denoted tribal subregions, wards or headmanships, whether they were chronologically occupied and deserted, and exactly which rulers or chiefs (amakosi), were linked to these areas. Each of these subregions were divided into a variety of settlement areas (see below).

What also emerged from an examination of the oral tradition was that, since the diaspora and almost complete annihilation of the Manana chiefdom by Mzilikazi in approximately 1825, remnants of the tribe regrouped in scattered settlements or clusters of settlements (imizi) up till recent times. Many of these Manala became labour tenants on white owned farms in the area.

As a result of the destruction caused by Mzilikazi's bands, the Manala underwent a threefold split. This split, it appears, was aggravated by internal strife within the ruling house. They are currently divided into the Mbhongo- (since Silamba), Mgibe- and Makerane- sections, which became statutory recognized tribal authorities in the former KwaNdebele homeland.

### 5.2.3 Hatherley in the KoNonduna region

The pre-colonial threefold regional divisions consisted of Ezotshaneni, Embilaneni and KoNonduna regions. According to oral tradition, the three regions were consecutively occupied: Ezotshaneni (between c. 1677 and 1717), Embilaneni (between c. 1717 and 1747) and KoNonduna (between c. 1747 and 1825 at the time of the diaspora). These dates are essentially speculative and are based on the complex dating model.

Furthermore, although a dynasty of successive Manala rulers (or amakosi) could be linked to these regions it (1) remains unclear where most of them are buried, (2) is uncertain how many times, and if, they rebuilt the royal homestead (umtjhade), and (3) appears that during the early 1800s the entire area, comprising the three regions, was under Manala political control.

#### 5.2.3.1 The Manala royal genealogy

The names of all 33 rulers (amakosi) (c. 1642 to present), as well as the chronology of succession, are known:

- (1) Mafana - first name known in oral tradition
- (2) Mhlanga
- (3) Musi - who established Kwamnyamana
- (4) Manala - the founder
- (5) Nsele
- (6) Magutshana
- (7) Mrhawu
- (8) Ncagu

- (9) Buyambe
- (10) Mabhena - founder of the ruling clan
- (11) Mdibane - established KoNonduna
- (12) Pofu
- (13) Bolile
- (14) Matshaba - linked to Hatherley (Emakopana)
- (15) Zerhulu
- (16) Zidli
- (17) Mdala
- (18) Sibindi - attacked by Mzilikazi
- (19) Tharhana
- (20) Mgulane
- (21) Mavula - founder of the Makerane section
- (22) Mgibe - founder of the Mgibe section
- (23) Silamba - founder of the Mbhongo section in 1873.

Enoch Makhosoke II is the current ingwenyama (or king) of the Mbhongo section and the 33rd ruler since Mafana. (The names of the last few rulers are not mentioned as they could not have had any influence on the Hatherley site.)

#### 5.2.3.2 KoNonduna in geographical context

Informants were unclear as far as the exact geographical boundaries of this sub-region is concerned. It might have overlapped with the adjacent Embilaneni. They could, however, provide names of farms which formed part of this region:

Klipkop 396 JR, a (undefined) section of Zwartkoppies 364JR, Hatherley 331JR, a (undefined) part of Mooiplaats 367JR and Zwavelpoort 373JR.

The area comprising the Hatherley farm was known in oral history as Emakopana and is mentioned in a praise poem (ibongo) of the chief Matshaba (no. 14) (Van Warmelo 1930:76, Van Vuuren 1992:156). It appears that the KoNonduna ward was established at the time of the reign of Mdibane and lasted until the time of the attack by Mzilikazi during Sibindi's (no. 18) reign.

It is unclear whether Matshaba, the only name specifically associated with Emakopana (or Hatherley), actually resided there. Informants allege that the royal residence (or capital) might not have been situated on that farm, but elsewhere, probably on the farm Mooiplaats.

### 5.3 INTER-SITE COMPARISON

From this investigation it was deduced that differences and comparisons exist between the sites on Hatherley and other Ndebele sites in the region. As far as the stone walling is concerned, the sites on Zwartkoppies are not as extensive as those on Hatherley. In the Bronberge, particularly on Klipkop and Zwavelpoort, sites are found where the stone walling is similar to that on Hatherley. The cultural deposit

on some of the sites on Zwartkoppies included significant amounts of ash, bone, pottery and glass beads, which are not found at Hatherley. The site on Zwartkoppies, however, was destroyed by the so-called "Silver Lakes" development before it could be scientifically investigated and documented.

## 5.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

The aim of the archaeological investigation was to test the cultural remains on the site to see if they would conform to ethnographic information and oral tradition. The sites, as defined by the presence of stonewalling and other cultural remains, are located in four different areas (Figure 2).

### 5.4.1 Methodology

The archaeological investigation consisted of five test trenches that were excavated on different sections of site numbers 1 and 2. These consisted of either very long trenches, 6,0 x 0,50 m, or small squares, 2,0 x 0,50 m. The excavation was done according to natural stratigraphy and arbitrary layers, 0,10 m thick, and was excavated down to sterile soil.

Detailed maps of the various sites were also drawn (Figure 3 - 6).

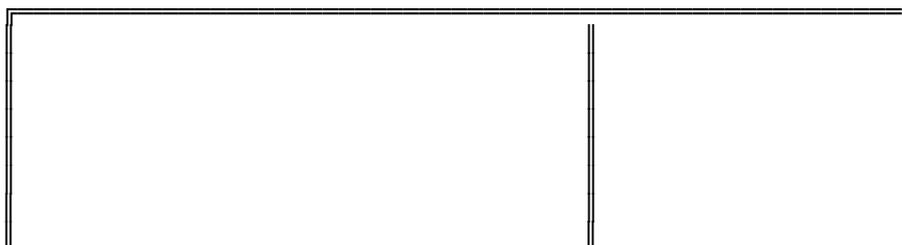
Very little cultural material was retrieved by means of the archaeological investigation. Most of what was retrieved was found at a depth of approximately 5-10 cm below the surface.

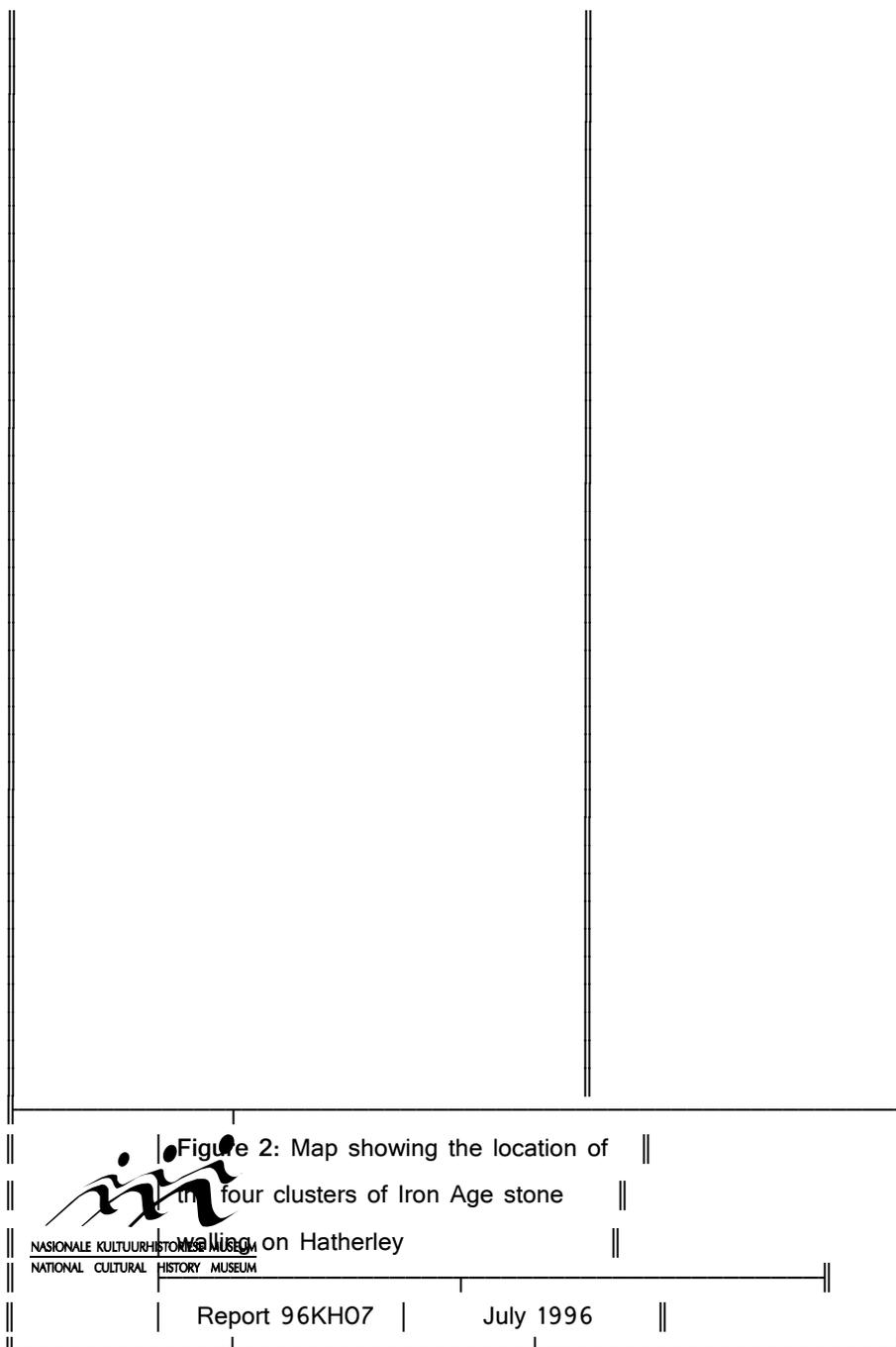
### 5.4.2 Ceramics

A number of small pottery fragments were recovered from excavation 1, 4 and 5 during excavation. As with the material found on the surface, these pieces were, for the most part, not larger than 2 cm square. None had any decoration and only two or three lip pieces were recovered. Very little could therefore be deduced from the pottery recovered.

### 5.4.3 Fauna

A few indistinguishable pieces of bone were found in excavations 1 and 4. One fragmented piece seems if it was worked as it shown some signs of polish.





#### 5.4.4 Stone

A number of grinding stones were found. As they are usually indicators of activity areas, their positions were plotted on the maps. Some upper grinding stones and rubbing stones were also found. These are more likely to have been carried around, and their positions were therefore not plotted on the maps.

#### 5.4.5 Char coal

Char coal was found in excavations 1, 4 and 5. Samples from excavations 1 and 4 on site number 1 will be submitted for dating purposes, and the results will be added to

this report as soon as possible. However, as the sites are dateable from oral history sources to the last couple of hundred years, which is well within the upper limits of C14 dating, no more accurate date is expected.

#### 5.4.6 Stone walling

The most characteristic human developments on these sites are the stone walling. These are for the larger part made up of loosely stacked diabase rocks. Most walls are generally low, and only in a few cases are they higher than 0,50 m above the ground. One or two sections of the walls are constructed according to the 'in-filling' technique - two rows of large stone, filled in with smaller bits of 'rubble'. As the walls are quite low, and from the number of stones available, it is deduced that the walls could not have been very high in their origin state. It is therefore argued that they served to create and indicate space, rather than as walls.

Although extending over a relatively large area, the stone wall structures on these sites are not as well preserved as other Ndebele sites of the same period in the Embilanani and Ezotshaneni area, as well as certain Ndzundza sites in the Middelburg district. The informants suggest that they are not as 'prominent', 'impressive' and extensive as other sites in the area (e.g. KwaThapeso) where certain Manala chiefs (e.g. Mabhena) are alleged to have been buried and/or where the royal settlements (imitjhade) were established.

The spatial arrangement and function of these walls will be addressed in more detail in the following section.

## 6. SETTLEMENT LAYOUT

It is simply impossible to apply current and recent settlement models (e.g. 1930s) on pre-colonial settlement sites (c. pre-1840s, before the first white settlers moved into the region), as if the time perspective remained stagnant. There are too many variables. The earliest experiences of the informants date back to roughly ten to fifteen years after birth, thus approximately the 1950s. What they know via the oral record is based on what they were told by the previous generation.

Despite this, certain features, notions and characteristics in settlement layout seemed to have remained reasonably unchanged.

It is suggested that the Hatherley sites were the homestead of a local headman (induna or ikosana), and probably of the three generational type. This means that the founder, together with several wives, at least one son and his household, and probably a grandson, could have resided there. This, however, is purely speculative and based on comparative experience of other Ndebele sites.

In this description of settlement layout, reference is mostly made to site 1, in Figure

3, as this conforms more to the ideal type and therefore makes explanation easier. Site number 2 (Figure 4) was also a living site. However, it differs considerably from the former. The reason for this might be that it was a multi-component site, being occupied at various times by single family units. The other two sites, number 3 (Figure 5) and number 4 (Figure 6) were probably agricultural sites.

The cattle enclosure (Figure 3.1) lay in the centre, with a cluster of living units or homesteads/huts (izindlu) spaced around it. The enclosure marked Figure 3.2 could have been the court area, called *ibandla*, where visitors were received and men gathered. The main entrance to a complex normally faced in a north easterly direction. In the case of this settlement, this would have been past the cattle enclosure, on the right hand side of the court area.

The arbitrary social divisions in the Manana-Ndebele settlement or village (*umuzi*) between a right hand section (*ubunene*) and a left hand section (*ikhohlo*) could be applied to most Ndebele settlements, meaning that homestead (hut complex) Figure 3.3 probably belonged to the principal wife's household, and homestead Figure 3.4 to that of the first left hand wife.

It is also known that a perimeter wall (*isirhodlo*) was usually constructed around each living unit or hut (*indlu*). What remains, then, are stone circles ranging between 2 and 4 m in diameter. Informants allege that the hut structures of that period were of the grass beehive type and built inside these perimeter (*isirhodlo*) circles.

Informants speculated that the stone heaps (Figure 3.5, 6) could either have been related to collapsed medicine huts used by diviners or herbalists (*inyanga*), or have served as granary platforms on which grain baskets (*isilulu*) were erected.

The sites indicated in Figures 5 and 6 most probably had to do with agricultural activities. The large number of heaps of stones are probably the result of clearing the fields for planting. A place such as this is called *kwaSimayembiwa* - a place where the fields are excavated - by the Manala. The one or two smaller pieces of stone walling might have been erected as part of shelters for people who looked after the crops.

## 7. DISCUSSION

Investigations on the ethnohistory of the Ndebele in the area indicate beyond doubt that the region and sites in the area were occupied by Southern Ndebele speaking people from approximately as early as the late 1600s up until around the middle 1800s (Van Vuuren 1992: 149-167, Van Warmelo 1930). These calculations are based on a complex threefold (generation, ruling time, regimentation) dating mechanism often utilized in oral historical methodology. Oral evidence has thus far ruled out the possibility of other occupation (e.g. Tswana speaking) during that period.

The ethno-historical investigation had as a secondary aim the collection of information concerning the spatial organisation of the site. In this regard, the various spokespersons could shed some light as to the location of various activity areas, such as individual households, the gathering place for men, the cattle kraal, etc.

Ethnographic analogy and the 'filling in' of such data on most pre-colonial sites are problematic, as explained earlier. Applying living settlement data to such sites is intended as constructing an ethnographic model which might assist the archaeologist in this case. This data should be constantly scrutinized and re-evaluated in terms of new interpretations.

The lack of cultural remains on the site needs to be addressed, and three reasons are put forward. From the lack of significant deposits of material culture on the sites, it is deduced that they were not occupied for very long periods. The stone walling, though extensive, can be misleading. One way of creating living space is to clean it of stones, which is packed in the form of walling. This might explain some of the heaps and walls that do not seem to have a function integral to the settlement layout. Secondly, it might be that the sites were not inhabited by a person of substance, such as a chief or headman. A third possibility is that the sites were used only seasonally while the crops were cultivated and that all items of material culture were removed as the people moved back to a more permanent settlement.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn:

8.1 From the interviews conducted with the Ndebele people, it seems as if the sites do not significantly feature in their history. In other words, no important historical event or person is linked with the site. Neither is the site used to revere any particular ancestor (ko phahla).

From the above, it is concluded that the sites are currently not of cultural, emotional, historical or religious significance to the Ndebele people. After consultation with Manala elders and other representatives of the community, Mr Mabhena is of the opinion that this specific site at Hatherley is of little importance to the Manala community and, although it should be archaeologically documented, it could be utilized for other purposes. To our own knowledge, only sites with a perceived 'living' and recent genealogical link to the current ruler are of real importance, e.g. Wallmannsthal (Ko Mjekiyeke).

8.2 The sites will not produce much more information of value for the understanding of the prehistory/history of the Ndebele in particular or the region in general.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

During the last ten years, Manala community leaders have shown a keen interest in restoring settlements of historical and archaeological importance. The post-1873 site at Wallmannsthal was recently declared as a national monument and is utilized by the tribe as venue for the annual Silamba day celebrations. There is also a keen interest in declaring pre-colonial sites in the Ezotsaneni, Embilaneni and KoNonduna regions as national monuments, in particular those sites where members of the ruling house were buried. Community representatives have also expressed interest in some form of land restitution in that area.

Based on the above, two recommendations are put forward for consideration:

9.1 As the sites are fully documented, and not of much historical, emotional and scientific significance, they can be forfeited and the area used as part of the refuse dump site. For this a valid permit will have to be obtained from the National Monuments Council.

9.2 In the light of the opening statement above, and in order to ensure that no accusations are made to the effect that elements of the heritage of black people are indiscriminately destroyed, it is suggested that the City Council of Pretoria should make money available so that a section of the sites can be excluded from the proposed development. It is suggested that the site indicated in this report as site number 1 (Figure 2 and 3) be set aside for this purpose. It will have to be fenced off and kept clean. In this case, it might as well be developed into a small site museum, open to the public.

The Sammy Marks Museum is located on the neighbouring farm of Zwartkoppies. The advantage of this is that the National Cultural History Museum can manage and curate this site and, more importantly, professional interpretation and education to visitors, already visiting the Museum in large numbers, would be easily achieved.

## 10. REFERENCES

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## 10.2 Maps

1:50 000 Topocadastral map - 2528 CB Silverton

1:50 000 Geological map - 2528 CB Silverton

## 11. PROJECT TEAM

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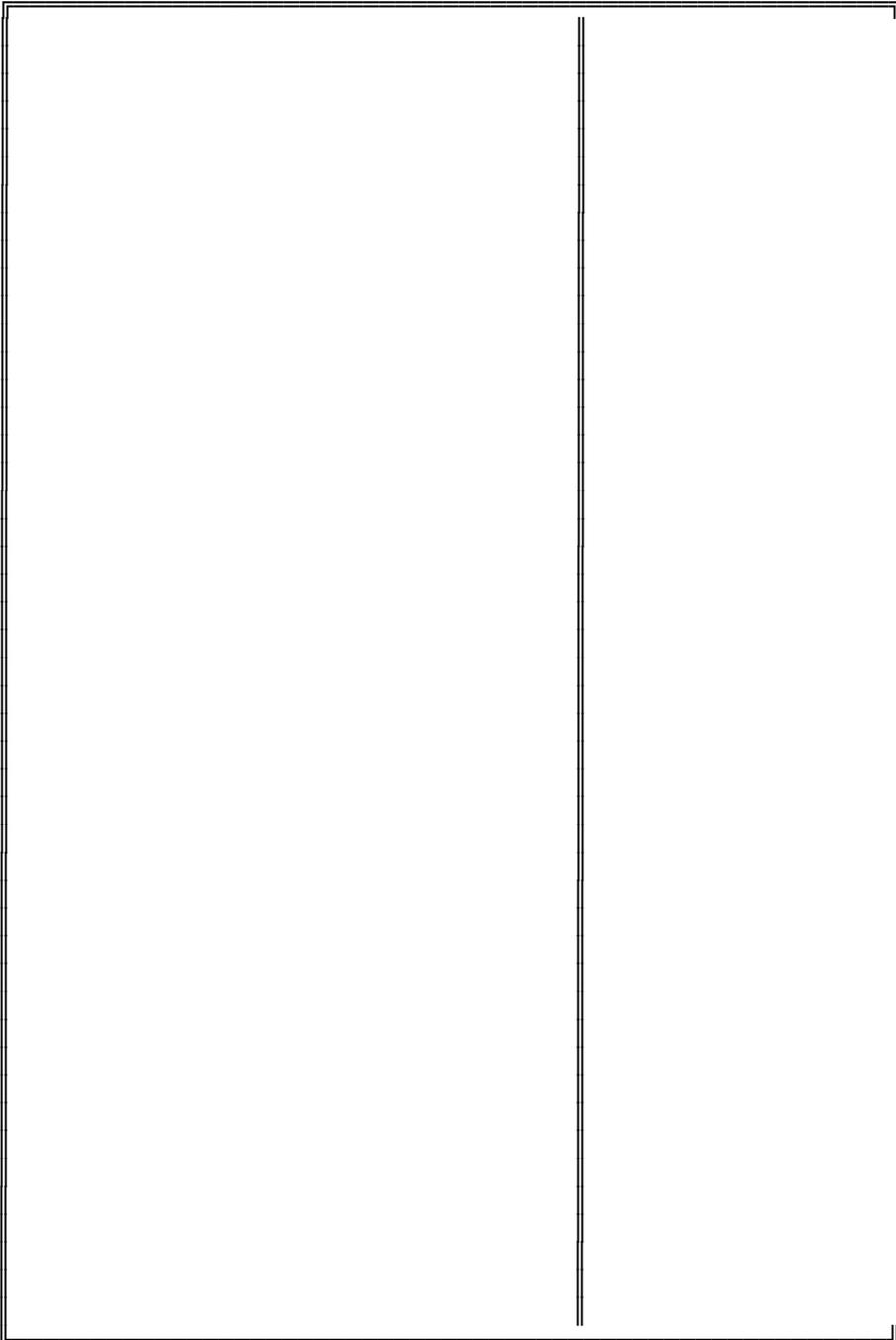


Figure 3: Map showing the layout of the largest settlement site - site number 1 on Bathery



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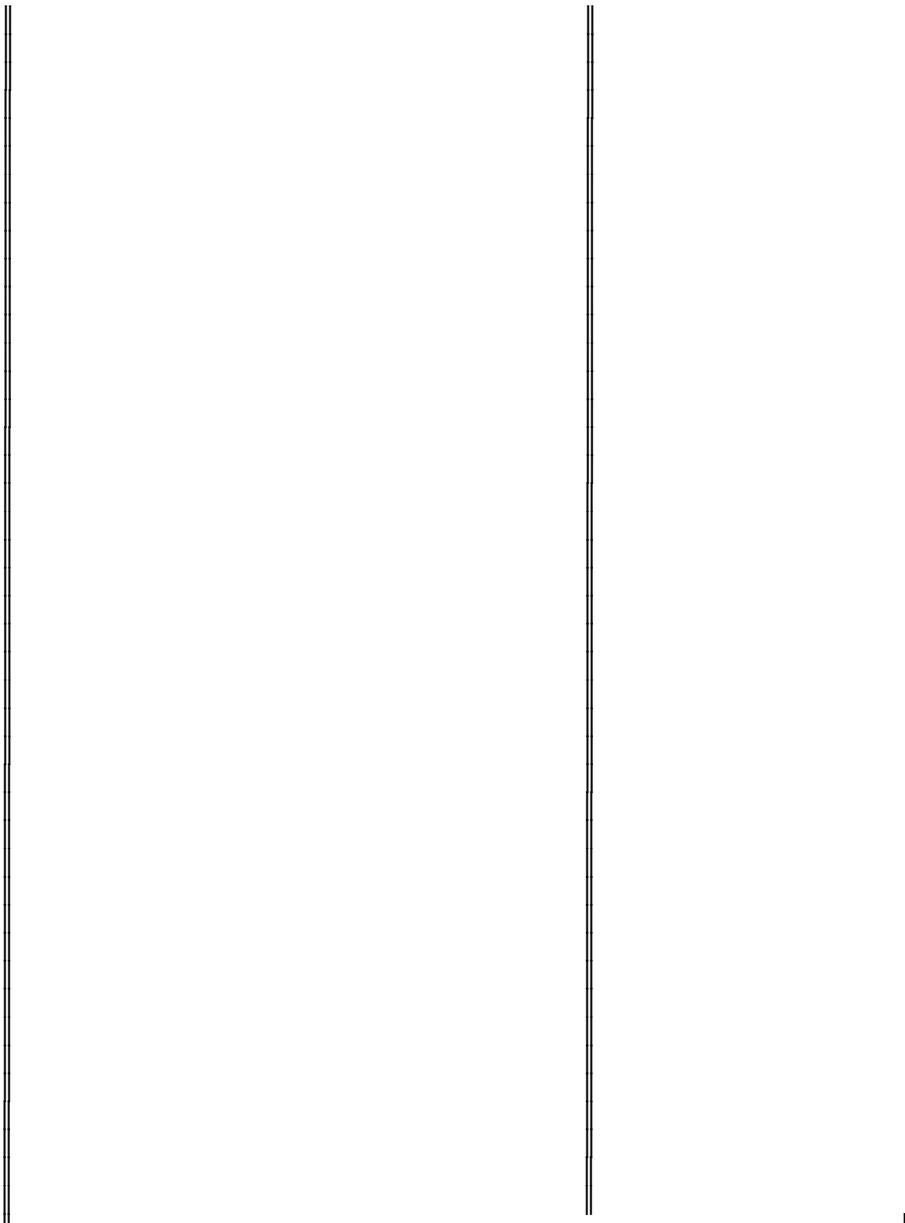


Figure 4: Map showing the layout of the second settlement - site number 2 - on Hatherley



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