

**HOEKFONTEIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES
EXCAVATIONS REPORT FOR KEELEY
GRANITE MINE (PTY) LTD.**



AFRICAN HERITAGE CONSULTANTS CC

2001/077745/23

DR. UDO S KÜSEL

Tel/fax: (012) 567 6046

Cell: 082 498 0673

E-mail: udo.heritage@absamail.co.za

P.O. Box 652

Magalieskruin

0150

July 2006

HOEKFONTEIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES EXCAVATIONS REPORT FOR KEELEY GRANITE MINE (PTY) LTD.

1. INTRODUCTION

Documented and excavated sites

Permit No.80/04/10//010/51 was issued on the 22 November 2004 for the mitigation of archaeological sites on the farm Hoekfontein 432 JQ near Ga-Rankuwa North West Province (see map 1). These sites were under threat of being destroyed during granite mining. Four sites have been recorded and excavated (see sites map 2). In the meantime mining operations have been suspended on Hoekfontein because of the low quality of the granite.

2. DOCUMENTED AND EXCAVATED SITES

2.1 Site A

The site lies east and north of a very large outcrop of granite. It has low stonewalling. Most of the walls are less than 0.50 metres in height (see plan of site A and photographs 1 & 2).

Excavation I was done in a stone circle adjacent to the granite outcrop, where we expected to find a hut floor. An excavation of 2 X 2 metres was dug. The top 20-cm of the deposit was sterile. Deeper than 20 cm revealed an ash layer which eventually ended on the northern side at a depth of 60-cm. In the southern corner was a large rock (see photograph 3).

The ash layer was very sterile. Only a few potshards and very little bone were found. No charcoal could be retrieved. Of the pottery, fifty pieces were undecorated. Only three decorated potshards were found of which two were rim pieces. All three decorated potshards have stamp decoration with bands of black (graphite) and red (ochre).

Seven rim pieces were found of which five were undecorated and two decorated.

2.2 Site B

This site is a narrow site sloping steeply from south to north with low stone walling with walls less than 0,5 metre high. Two excavations were carried out in this section.

Excavation 1

The excavation size was 2 X 2 metres. The top 20 cm was sterile soil. The site was excavated in 20 cm layers. Layer 2 (20 to 40 cm)) contained only five pieces of bone and twenty-five pieces of pottery. Of these only two were decorated. Both pieces have stamp decoration.

Layer 3 (40 –60 cm) contained twenty pieces of bone and only fifteen undecorated pieces of pottery.

Excavation 2

A trench of 0.5 X 7metres was excavated. The top 20 cm was sterile soil. Layer two went down to 40 cm and ended on sterile virgin soil. The excavation only yielded 52 undecorated pieces of pottery (see photograph 4 and plan of site B).

2.3 Site C

Site C lies northwest from sites A and B. The site slopes steeply from south to north. The interesting thing about these stonewalls is that they are higher and better build than the walls at sites A and B. Some walls are still a meter high (see photograph 5). There is also a well-defined pathway leading up the hill and through the settlement to an enclosure with three small circles (each 90 cm in diameter) next to each other (S25° 35' 37.4" and E27° 55' 13.2") (see plan of site C).

The three small circular structures each consists of three circular rows of upright flat stones placed in the ground at an angle so that their tops lean to the outside of the circles (see photograph 6 and 7).

Excavation 1

The area around the three circles was cleaned and all surface material sifted. In total fifty-five undecorated potshards were found as well as four rim pieces of which three are decorated with stamp decoration. On the inside of the three circles there was a concentration of ash.

A layer of 20 cm deep was then excavated. The inside of the three circles yielded a lot of ash and some pottery. A total of eighty-four undecorated potshards were found as well as twenty-three decorated pieces. Only two rim pieces were found of which one was decorated.

Excavation 2

This excavation was done just west of the three small stone circles in a stonewalled circle of 5 metres in diameter. This area we thought might have been an enclosure for a hut. A trench of 0.5 X 5.0 metres was dug through the enclosure. The site was again dug in 20 cm layers.

Layer 1 This layer yielded twenty-nine undecorated potshards, two decorated shads of which one was also a rim piece, as well as two undecorated rim pieces. Only one piece of bone was present.

Layer 2 This layer contained forty-nine undecorated potshards as well as seven decorated pieces and five rim pieces of which only one was undecorated. A total of twenty-seven pieces of bone were also found. Halve a piece of an iron arm bangle was found.

Layer 3 This layer yielded fifty-five undecorated potshards and only one rim piece.

Layer 4 This layer contained one hundred and thirteen undecorated potshards as well as six rim pieces of which three were decorated. It also contained one reworked potshard (possible a broken clay spindle). The excavations also yielded eighty-five fragments of animal bone.

Layer 5 This layer consisted out of sterile soil. No trace of a hut floor could be found.

Excavation 3

A trench of 0.5 X 2 metres was dug in a large stone enclosure south of excavation 2. This excavation was sterile and no cultural material was retrieved.

Stone gongs

Just north of the settlement on granite outcrops adjacent to the settlement there are two stone or rock gongs (see photographs 8 and 9). Rock gongs are stones, (mostly granite or norite) which when hit with another hard stone, produce a pleasing note or sound. When the rock is struck at different places on the surface it will produce, different notes. A number of rock gongs have recently been recoded in the granite/norite areas of Pretoria/Rustenburg and Sekhukhuneland. Rock gongs have a wide distribution throughout Southern Africa and northwards as far north as the Sahara dessert.

2.4 Site D

Site D is the most southern settlement of the four sites recorded. Its stonewalls are not well defined and only 20 to 30 cm high.

Excavation 1

The excavation was done in a stone circle. A 2 X 2 metres excavation was dug which yielded no cultural material.

Excavation 2

A trench of 0.5 X 7 metres was dug. No cultural remains were found. This is strange as the site has a large number of small stone circles or platforms, which might have housed granaries.

3. DISCUSSION

Settlement pattern

These four archaeological sites are part of a much larger archaeological settlement on the farm Hoekfontein and specifically the Zwartkoppies Mountain. In a scoping exercise of the mountain over 470 sites were recorded (Küsel, Nov. 2003)

This mountain has most probably one of the largest concentrations of Late Iron Age Tswana settlements. The largest numbers of large sites occur at the northern foot of the mountain. These sites are up to 100 metre in diameter with well constructed stonewalls of up to one metre and more in height. At these sites deep deposits are present. The site excavated for the Oskraal Water pipe project gave Radio Carbon (C14) dates from 1433 – 1900. This makes it most probably the longest continuous occupation of an Iron Age site in South Africa (Küsel July 2002)

The four sites recorded and excavated on the mountain most probably represent the last phase of settlements on the mountain. These sites were evacuated when the Nguni invasion by Mzilikazi took place. People moved up the mountain because of security reasons into defence positions on the mountain. These sites most probably date to the beginning of the 19th century and the rise of the Zulu empire.

From the excavations it is clear that the mountain sites were occupied for a very short period of time. The sites have very little remains of cultural material. The sites are also relatively small. The sites are squeezed in on small plato's on the mountain where the topography is not too steep and where there are not too many protruding rocks.

The layout of the settlement pattern also follows not the traditional layout as in the valley where the cattle enclosures are in the middle of the settlement together with the men's gathering place and the houses on the rim of the settlement (compare site plan of proposed Mmakau Heritage Site).

The four sites on the mountain were recorded because of threat by granite mining. A fifth site lies between site B and D and was not recorded because the area is not earmarked for development. If this site were recorded it would have given a more completed picture of the settlement pattern on the mountain.

Within each of the four sites there are small stone platforms, which are typical of granary platforms. This is an indication that the settlements were occupied at least for one season or more.

The most interesting of the four sites is site C. The outstanding feature of this site is the three small stone circles with ash in the middle. Their construction was so different from the normal granary platforms that it needed further research. Searching through literature we eventually found a photograph of a similar construction in Quinn's book "Food and Feeding Habits of the Pedi" (1959: Plates 98 – 100). Quinn's photograph depicts the tribal fireplace at the entrance of a chief's settlement of the Pedi.

The link between the people of Hoekfontein and the Pedi lies in a common ancestor Diale, who lived at Schilpadfontein east of Hammanskraal. He had a number of wives, the youngest of which Mmathobelo, was his favourite. By his superior wife he had a son, Modise. Mmathobele gave birth to a son nick-named Lellelateng who became the favourite son of Diale. Modise the senior son could not accept this occurrence and left with his section to become the founder of the Mmakau section at Hoekfontein. Lellelateng eventually had to flee because of jealousy. Leaving behind the main section Lellelateng now known as Thobebe fled northeast wards with his followers and founded the Pedi nation (Mönnig H.O. 1978:14).

From the above it is clear that the Mmakau and Pedi people had the same origin. This also explains the presence of the secret fireplace at Hoekfontein and in Sekhukhuneland. Mönnig H.O. gives the following description of the secret fireplace of the Pedi

"Within the enclosed area is the fire-place of the men (sebeso sa banna), which is usually partially encircled by low stone wall (morako) extending from the outer enclosure. The area around this fire, enclosed by the wall, is called kgorong (literally: in the kgoro), and is the men's gathering place, where no woman or uninitiated boys are allowed. In the kgoro of the chief, the poles (mesemolele) of all the boys' initiation sessions are placed in this area near the fire. This fireplace is usually on the right-hand side of the kgoro, but not necessarily so. There may also be two or even three fires for the men in the kgoro, so that they may get the full benefit of sun or shade at various times of the day during the various seasons. One of these fires will, however, be the principal ceremonial fire of the unit. Within the kgoro is also a fire, and where the men gather during rainy days. Most kgoros also have a tree (sehlare sa kgoro) within the enclosure where the men can gather in the shade." ((Mönnig H.O. 1978: 222).

Pottery

The four sites are relatively poor on cultural material. Pottery pieces recovered are also very small. Most pieces are less than 5 cm in length. The decoration on the pottery is mainly stamp decoration. Narrow bands of red (ochre) and black (graphite) are sometimes present (see photograph 10).

The rim pieces of pots are also very small which makes the identification of pot shapes and types very difficult.

The pottery found is typically Late Moloko associated with Late Iron Age Tswana archaeological sites.

Only one reworked piece of pottery, possible part of a clay spindle was found.

Iron

Only half of an iron arm bangle was found in site C (see photograph 11).

Bone

The sites also contained very little bone. Most bone fragments are smaller than 5 cm. This makes the identification of species utilized difficult.

Oral history on the site

According to Pistorius (1995: 18(2) 51) this complex of stonewalled settlements is part of the so-called Mabyanamatshwaana early Tswana settlement. Mabyanamatshwaana is mentioned in the oral histories of the Hurutshe, Kgatla and other Tswana tribes as well as the Ba Pedi.

The present inhabitants of the area where the archaeological site occur are the Ba Kgatla ba Mmakau. Very little is known of the history of the Kgatla for the first two generations after their founder, Mokgatla had succeeded from the parent group. Legabo, Pogopi and Botlolo succeeded him. After the death of Botlolo, the tribe divided into two sections, under Mogale and Tabane. Tabane left with his group and settled at what is known as Schilpadfontein. Tabane was succeeded by his son Motsha. Motsha was succeeded by Diale, who gave rise to the Mmakau, the Motsha and the Pedi (Mönnig HO 1978: 10- 16).

As already mentioned the Makau section of the Kgatla under Modisa left Schilpadfontein and settled on Hoekfontein and adjacent area. The Modise dynasty is still in charge of the area today, though they had fled to Botswana during the time of Mzilikhazi, but returned to the area in the second half of the 19th century. Though they know of the existence of the archaeological site on the mountain the present generation knows nothing about their ancestors association with the sites.

From an archaeological point of view it is interesting that both the Ba Pedi and the Ba Kgatla ba Mmakau originated from Diale who lived at Schilpadfontein. This explains the presence of the three small stone circles (fire places) in settlement C. According to Pedi tradition the sacred fireplace has to be guarded and kept burning at the entrance of the chiefs settlement. In research work done in Sekhukhune I found these fireplaces at almost all the chiefs settlements. Visitors wait for an interview with the chief at the fireplace till they are invited to the kgoro or men's gathering place (see photograph 12).

4. CONCLUSION

The four-recorded sites represent the final occupation of the mountain by Tswana people during the Late Iron Age. The people had abandoned the site at the foot of the

mountain to seek safety on the mountain. These sites were only occupied for a short period of time before the people fled to Botswana in fear of Mzilikhazi's Nguni soldiers.

The most important result of the survey is most probably the discovery of the three sacred fireplaces, which link these sites and the Pedi to a common ancestor Diale, who lived at Schilpadfontein west of the present Hammanskraal.

5. REFERENCES

- i. Küsel U.S. – July 2002, Oshoek Water Supply Hoekfontien 432 JQ
- ii. Küsel U.S. – November 2003, Keeley Granite – Survey of Archaeological sites on Hoekfontien 432JQ
- iii. Mönnig H.O. 1978, The Pedi
- iv. Pistorius J.C.C. 1992, Molokwane an Iron Age Bakwena Village
- v. Quinn P.J. 1959, Food and Feeding Habits of the Pedi

PHOTOGRAPHS



No. 1 Stonewalling at site A



No. 2 General view of stonewalling of site



No. 3 Excavation 1



No. 4 Trench through site B



No. 5 Detail of stonewalling of site C



No. 6 The three fireplaces of site C



No. 7 Detail of one fireplace



No. 8 Stone gong at site C



No. 9 Small stone gong at site C



No. 10 Pottery from excavated sites

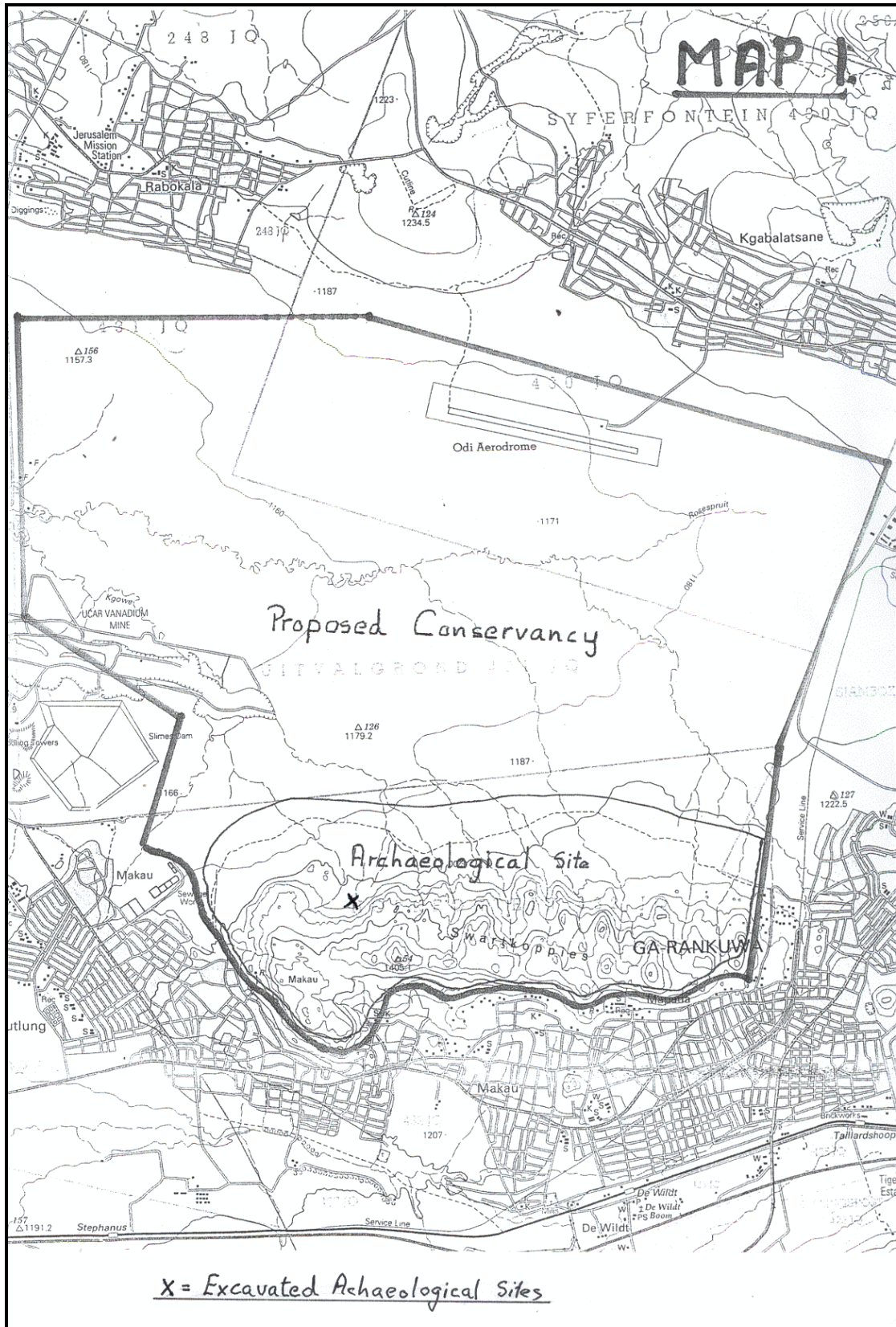


No. 11 Half of an iron bangle

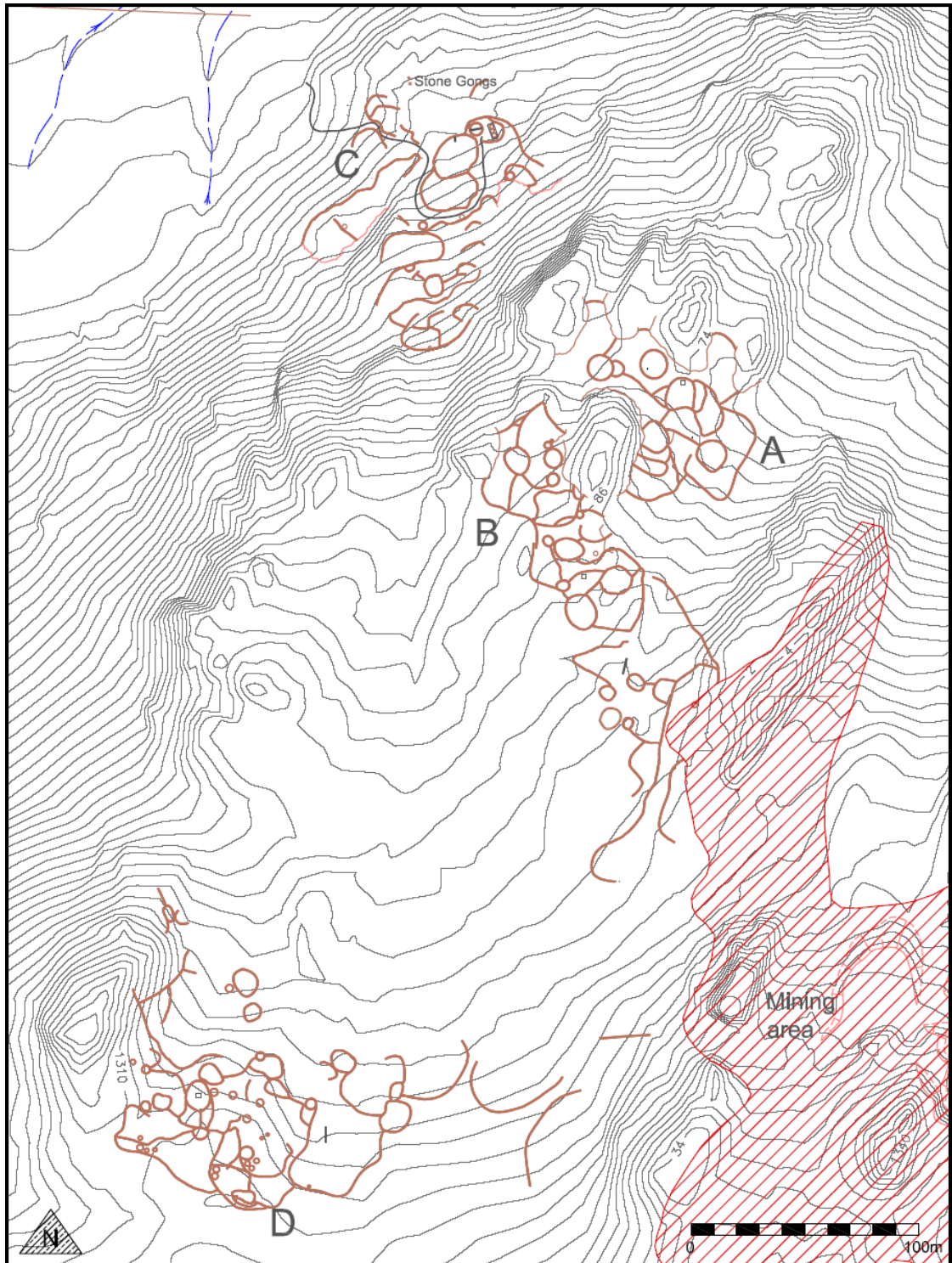


No. 12 Secret fireplace at chiefs village in Sekhukhune

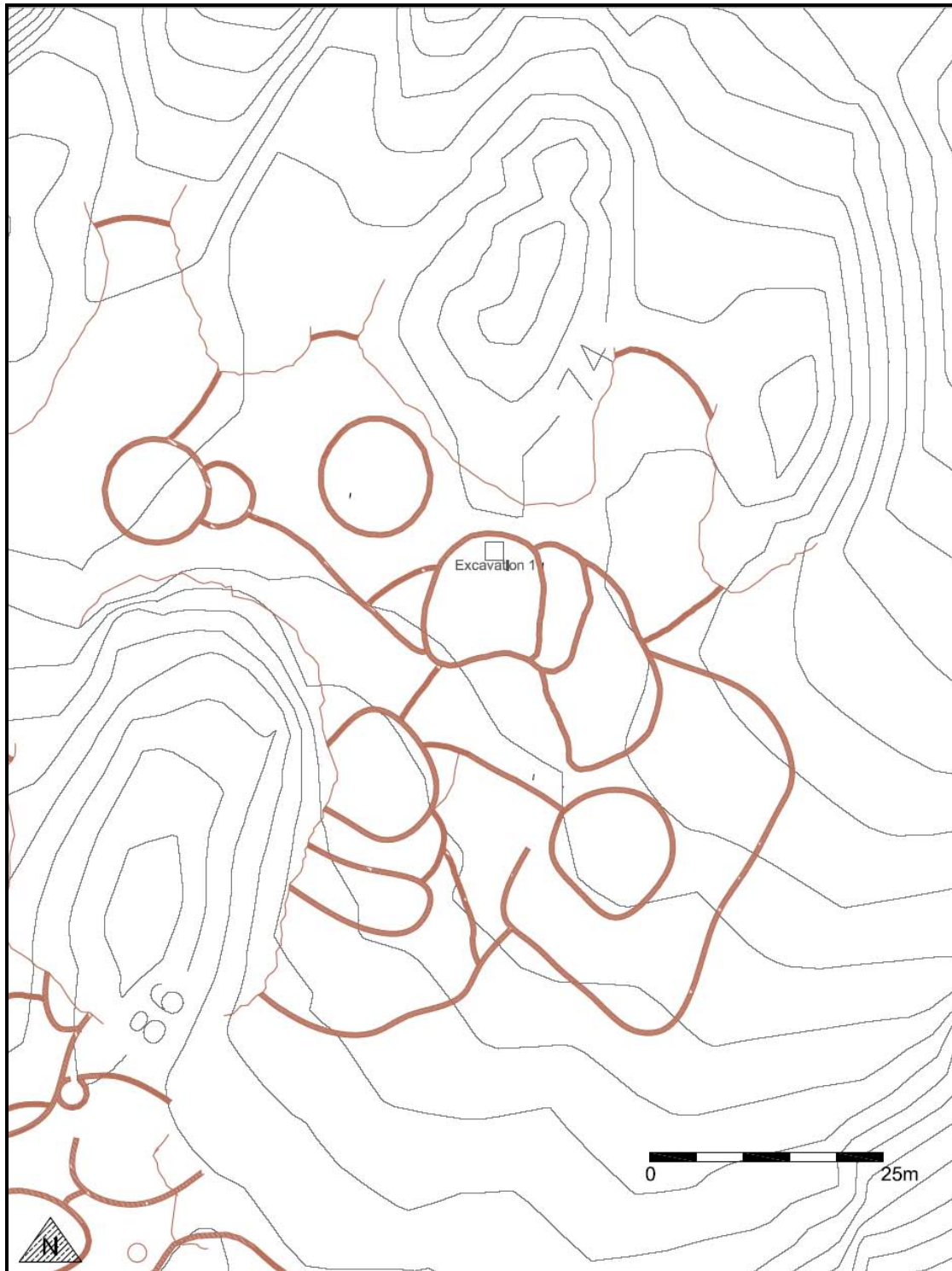
MAPS



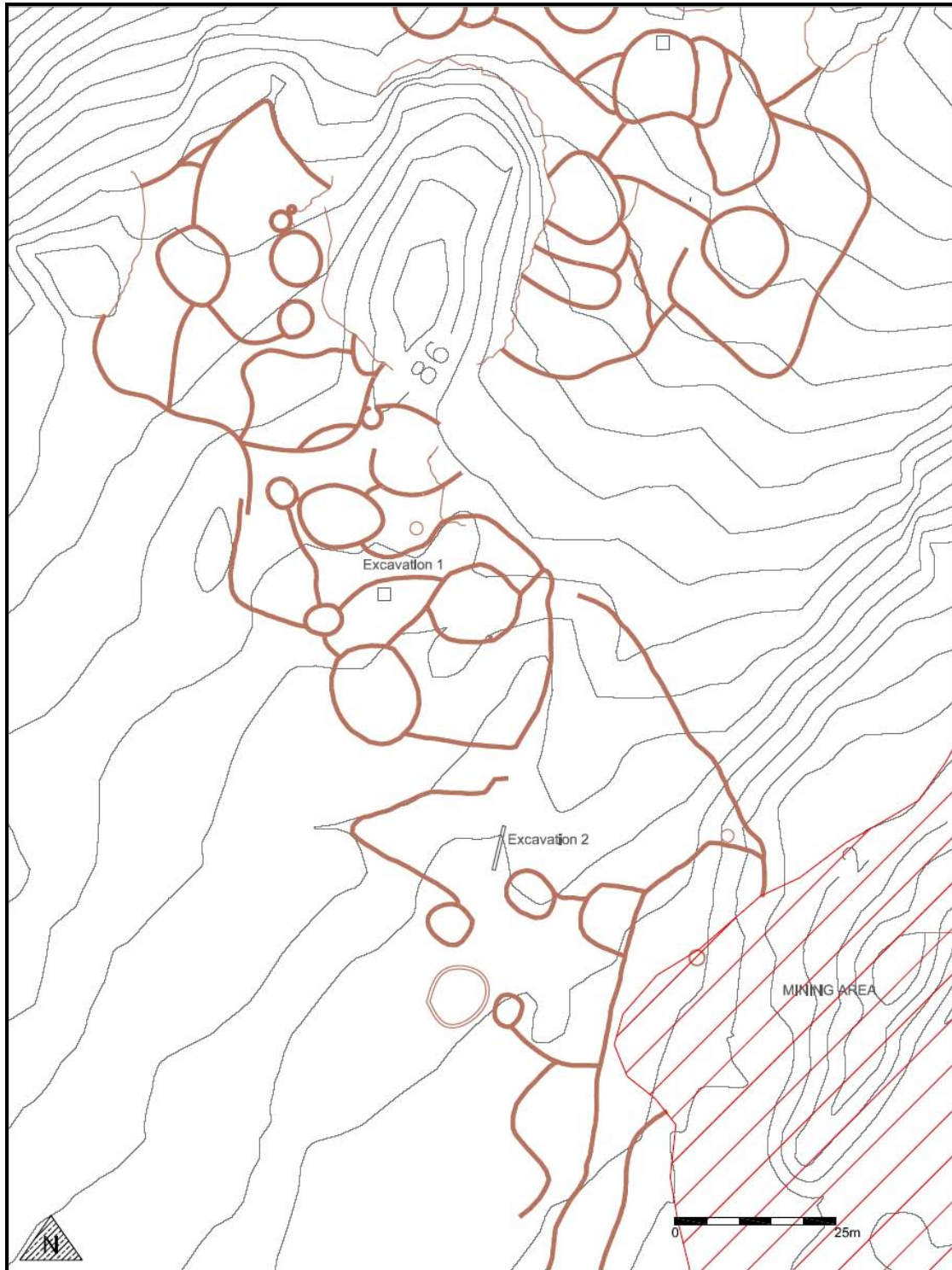
Locality of Archaeological Sites Excavated



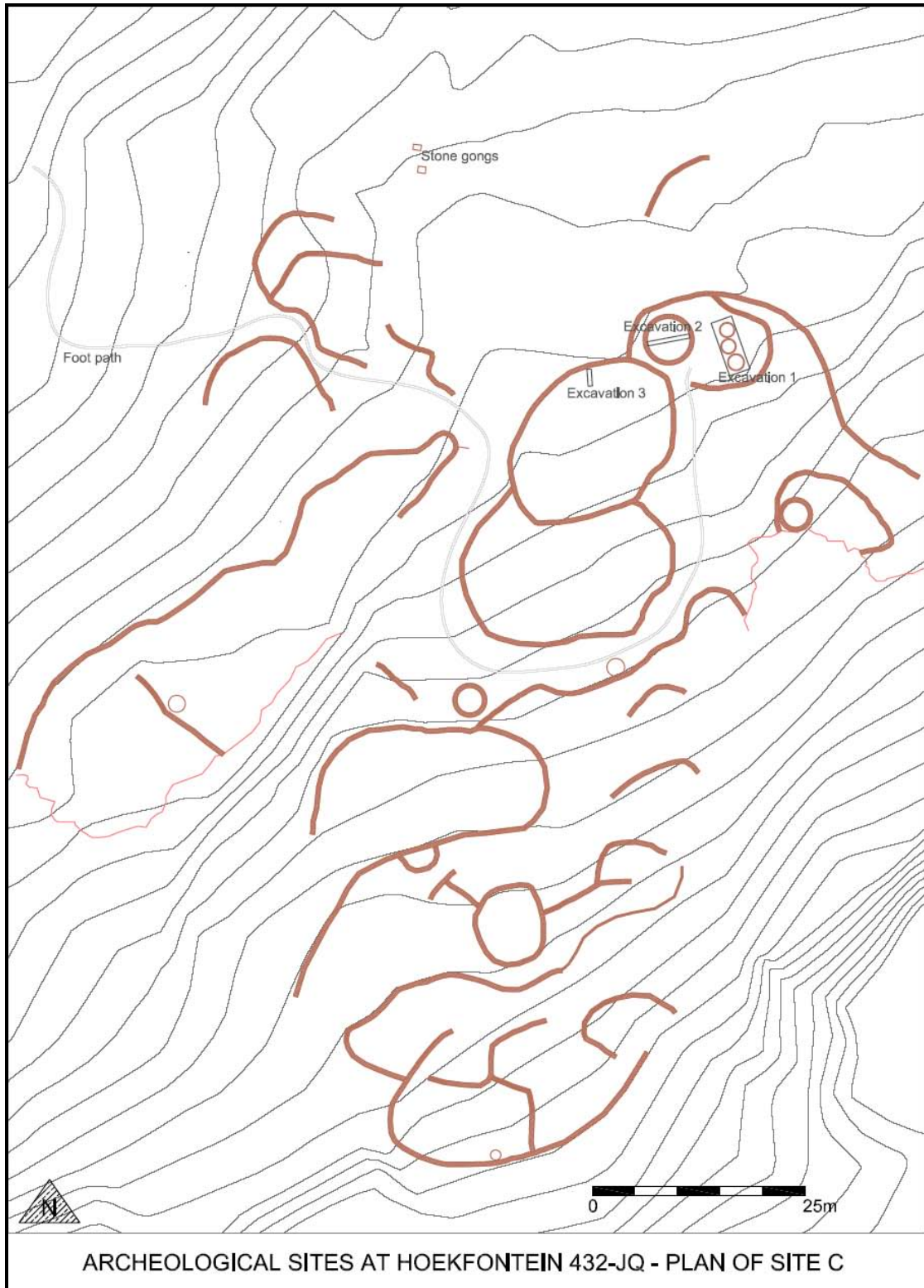
MAP2: ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES AT HOEKFONTEIN 432-JQ

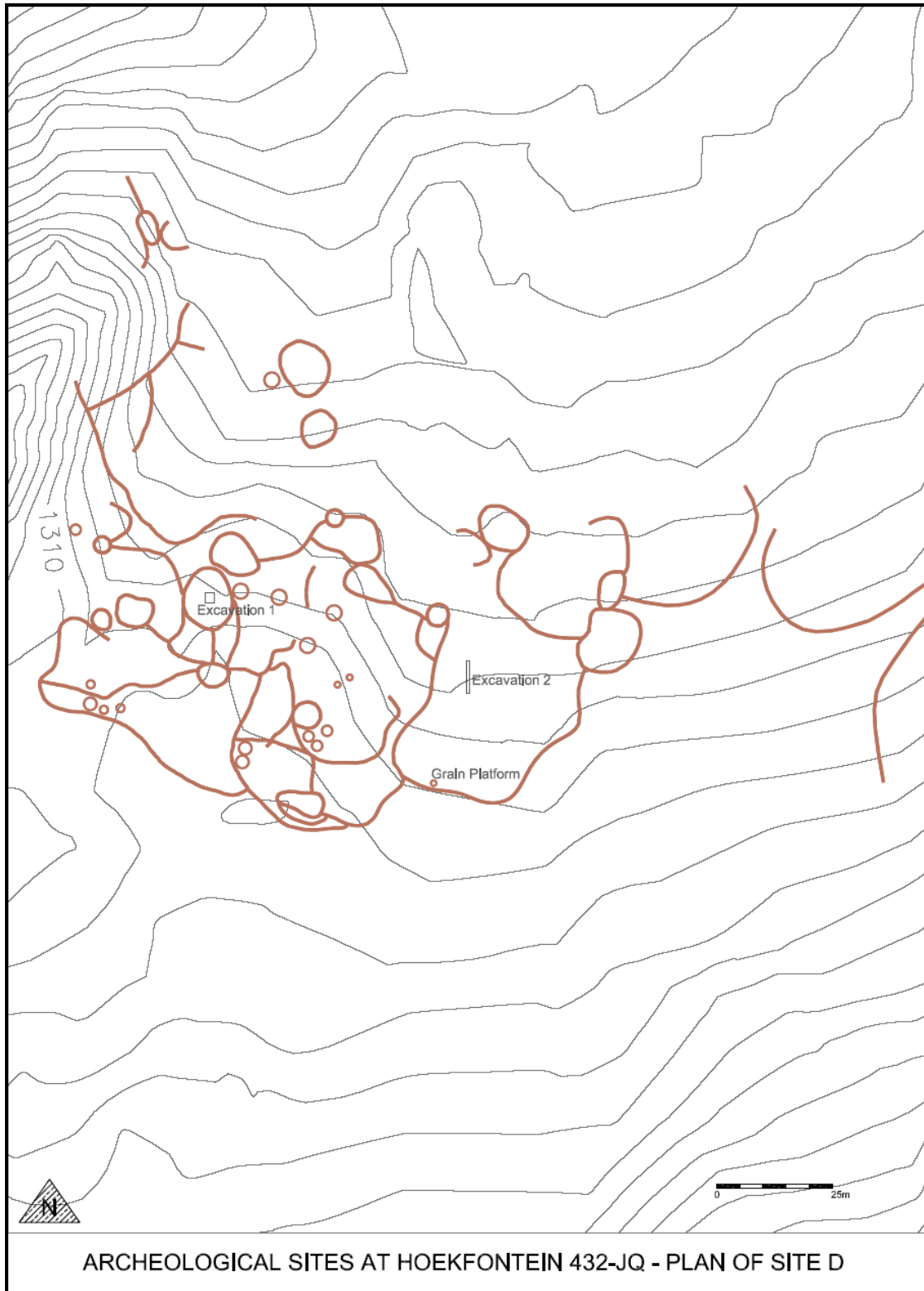


ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES AT HOEKFONTEIN 432-JQ - PLAN OF SITE A



ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES AT HOEKFONTEIN 432-JQ - PLAN OF SITE B





ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES AT HOEKFONTEIN 432-JQ - PLAN OF SITE D