

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

EXCAVATION OF PLATBERG MISSION STATION (Pinekloof Farm)

SAHRA Ref: 9/2/325/0012

Introduction

Platberg on the Caledon mission station was established in 1833 by the Wesleyan Missionaries as one of a chain of mission stations in the area they called the Bechuana District, for Carolus Baatje and his “Bastards”. Carolus Baatjes and his “Bastards” or Newlanders move wraithlike in and out of the historical records. Their exact place of origin in the colony is at this point shrouded in mystery. Carolus Baatjes’ name is first mentioned in the Wesleyan missionary accounts of 1833 when he formed part of the group of Rolong, Griqua, Korana and attendant missionaries from the Boetsap and Platberg on the Vaal mission stations, who set off on an expedition to find a better watered and safer area in which to settle. Later in 1833 roughly 12000 people, moved from Platberg on the Vaal and Boetsap to the Caledon River Valley area (Schoeman:1991:25) and were settled between four Wesleyan Mission stations. Carolus Baatjes and the Bastards settled at Platberg on the Caledon or Platberg 2, a site which was chosen because it boasted two strong springs (figure 1). We are as yet unsure of how many people were settled at Platberg in 1833 but in July 1842 the Reverend Cameron, resident missionary from 1840 to 1845, was ordered to take a census of the Platberg village by the civil commissioner at Colesburg. He declared that the entire population of the village on that day was 380 people, as approximately 20 were away for various reasons. The village consisted of 200 houses, but he unfortunately does not say whether they were hartebeest houses, mat huts or mud brick houses (Cameron:1842:86). By 1851 Platberg consisted of 30 to 40 brick built houses (Broadbent:1865:200; Schoeman:1988:36). We have, unfortunately, not yet located a plan of the village.

2014

The first field work took place from 14 August to 20 August 2014. The first three days were spent extensively mapping the site using a total station after which Prof. Esterhuysen continued to map the site (figures 2 and 3) whilst the rest of the team started to excavate a midden. As can be seen from figure 2 and 4, the site is extensive with numerous rectangular stone wall footings and both yard and orchard walls. The two largest stone walled enclosed areas, possibly the orchards, can be seen from figure 4. This particular Google image clearly shows the extent of collapsed stone walled yards and orchards. The Rev Shaw on visiting Platberg in the late 1840s commented favourably on the village “large number of gardens and orchards are well enclosed and hundreds if not thousands of fruit trees give the whole a very interesting rural appearance” (Broadbent:1865:200).

Figure 3 is a plan of a small section of the village which includes what we have tentatively identified as the mission complex, being the church and mission house, marked A, which is surrounded by a

large yard/mission garden enclosed with collapsed stone walling. These structures are as yet unexcavated. The Rev Cameron recorded employing a Sotho man to build a dry stone wall to enclose the mission garden (Cameron:1840:363) and the Rev Giddy wrote with some satisfaction in 1847 that the fruit trees in the mission garden were laden with fruit (Schoeman:1991:94). The large structure (B) immediately to the south east of the mission complex is possibly the building erected to house the mission society's precious printing press. This was excavated in July 2015 and will be reported on in 2016.

Three stone walled enclosed gardens/orchards in association with three rectangular wall footings can be seen to the north east of the mission complex (C,D,E). A Further point of interest on this plan, marked F, is one of the smaller rectangular structures with stone wall footings referred to hereafter as BH, was excavated in July 2015.

Excavation

VM Midden

One of the smaller middens (Figure 3, G) associated with a small structure (H) was identified as one which could possibly be excavated in four days (Way Point 174). The midden (VM) was cleared and a grid was laid out (figure 5, 6 & 7). The soil and ceramic deposit thrown up by an animal making its burrow, created an overburden which extends from H102, H101 and G103 and alerted us to the possibility of this being a fairly rich midden. Four squares were earmarked for the current excavation (figure 5 & 8) which we excavated in 5cm spits and due to time constraints we eventually concentrated on squares H101 and H102 (figures 9 & 10). A stratigraphic drawing of the south section of square H101 can be seen in figure 11.

Surface/Spit 1

The overburden thrown up by the animal burrowing was grey and very hard in places. The burrow entrances were found in squares H101, H102 and G102 (figure ...). In the areas free of the overburden the deposit was hard and fine grained brown. Roots and plant material were found in all the excavated squares. Not much in the way of cultural material was found other than in the overburden. 12 buckets removed from squares, G103, H101, H102 and H103

Surface / Spit 2

The deposit was fine textured, hard and brown in colour. Numerous roots were found in the deposit. 9 buckets removed from squares H101, H102 and H 103.

Spit 3

20cm of deposit was excavated in order to get to the base of the animal burrow in squares H101 and H102. Square H102 was divided into spits 3a and 3b. H101 was taken out as one spit and was a pink-brown colour which was placed in 3b below.

Spit 3a

The brown coloured deposit was fine and hard which is still part of the overburden. 8.5 buckets removed.

Spit 3b

The deposit changed from brown to a fine grey-brown soil with flecks of charcoal and small chunks of brick which gave the deposit a pink-brown hue in places. An increase in cultural material is evident and appears to mark the top of the midden. The base of this spit coincides with the base of the animal burrow. 15 buckets removed.

Spit 4

This spit was once again taken out in 5cm. The deposit as in spit 3 was soft and sandy and pink-brown in colour in H101 and a fine ashy grey in H102. Grass bedding from the animal burrow is evident. 11.5 buckets removed.

Spit 5

The deposit in H101 remained a pink-brown colour and was fine in texture. The deposit in H102 was ashy with patches of the animal burrow. 6.5 buckets removed.

Spit 6

The deposit in H101 was grey tinged with pink and was fine in texture. The deposit in H102 was also grey and was fine and ashy in texture. 10 buckets removed.

Spit 7

The deposit in H101 was fine in texture and pink-grey in colour. Termite activity is evident. The amount of cultural material diminished. 4.5 buckets removed.

Spit 8

The deposit in H101 was pink-grey and fine with patches of more orange deposit. 4 ¾ buckets were excavated.

Spit 9

Due to time constraints we decided to excavate the southern half of the square to see whether we could ascertain the base of the midden. The colour of the deposit remained pink-grey with brown patches. The texture remained fine. Termite activity was evident in the south-western portion of the square. The deposit appears to be sterile. We augured in the south western section of the square (figure 10) which yielded sterile deposit with decomposing sandstone at the base, which confirmed our view that were below the base of the midden. The base of the midden is probably to be found between spits 7 and 8.

This midden appears to be quite rich in cultural material and will be revisited in the 2016 excavation. The structure associated with it, which is built alongside the orchard/yard walls will also be excavated at that time to see whether we can ascertain the interior layout of the structure.

Material culture

Ceramics

A surface collection of all ceramics and glass was made on building mounds as well as middens to prevent them being further fragmented due to occasional tractor activity on the site. An area which may have been used as a midden was located on the north facing slope looking towards the ravine with ceramics and metal items spilling down the slope, possibly washed down by summer streams, called the wash and labelled W in the tables. All these collection points were plotted in using the total survey station. A further surface collection made by the previous farmer and his daughter over the years was donated to the excavation and has also been used, labelled FC in the table. The imported ceramic assemblage can be seen in Tables 1 and 2, which lists the surface collections as well as the imported ceramics found in the VM excavation. Details of the imported ceramic assemblage from VM Midden can be seen in Tables 3 and 4. The imported and local ceramic assemblage analysis will be further refined and thus the tables may change slightly once this is done.

Imported Ceramics

As can be seen from Table 1 the range of imported ceramics is what we would expect from the occupation of the site from 1833 to 1865/6. The majority of the ceramics are British refined industrial ware which was exported to the colonies in large numbers during the nineteenth century.

Chinese Porcelain

The 2014 excavation yielded only found two Chinese porcelain vessels. A rim, neck and shoulder sherd from a ginger jar (figure 12.) shows that characteristic unglazed shoulder (Klose:2007:111). A further sherd was found in the farmer's collection. These wares were imported in large numbers to the Cape in the eighteenth century, but the quantity dwindled dramatically once the British took over the Cape in the early nineteenth century, although according to Klose they are still found from early to mid nineteenth century Cape sites (Klose:2007:48).

British Porcelain

Two sherds have been tentatively identified as English bone china. One is a hand painted body sherd with overglaze enamel dots decorating the plant stems. The second sherd is a plain white footring from a saucer (figure 13).

Stoneware

Four salt-glazed stoneware sherds have been excavated. These vessels were “mass-manufactured” for factory produced food and drinks (Klose:2007:37). These containers may well have been used as storage containers in the kitchen long after the original contents had been consumed. A further seven stoneware vessels were found (figure 14).

Industrial Refined stoneware

The single example of smear-glazed stoneware, with a sprig design is a cheap copy of Jasperware (figure 15). Jasperware is usually unglazed whereas this example is glazed. It was mass produced and probably ornamental (J.Goodwin. pers.com).

Refined Industrial wares

The majority of the ceramic assemblage thus far is British industrial earthenware produced in the nineteenth century and represent the most inexpensive wares on offer. These are found in the form of transfer printed earthenware, tea ware and table ware (86 vessels) and colourful examples of industrial slipware (annular ware)(18 vessels) which are predominantly bowls, hand painted bowls in harsh colours (15 vessels), and spongeware (9 vessels).

Transfer-printer ware

The majority of the industrial white wares are made up of transfer printed wares in the Romantic landscape style (figure16) and of these a large proportion are blue transfer printed wares (of designs other than willow pattern) which translates into 35 vessels (Table 2). More affordable than this type of decoration in the transfer printed category is the willow pattern which accounts for 8 vessels. Other colours represented in the romantic landscape style are brown, purple, red, green and black. Romantic landscape views were produced from 1831 to 1851 (Miller:2000:14). One of the patterns identified thus far is the Canova pattern which dates from the 1830s to 1840s and forms part of the romantic landscape style and is found on both tea and dinner services (Snyder:1997:95 &124). This tureen lid shows part of the repeating pattern which always contains a large urn (figure17). This particular sherd has also been reworked on the broken edge of the underside (figure18).

Flow blue transfer printed wares are well represented amongst the transfer printed wares. 18 vessels were identified making up 10.45% of the imported ceramic assemblage (Table 1 and 2, figure19 &20). One of which is a cup rim and body in what looks like the London/Grecian shape decorated with the “Chinese Pagoda” on the exterior (figure 21)(Gaston:1983:56; Miller:2011:10). A second cup/bowl rim with the “Chinese Pagoda” decoration came from the farmer’s collection (figure 21).

Shell edged

The single unscaloped impressed pattern shell-edged rim with blue painted rim edge earthenware sherd formed part of the farmer's surface collection (figure 22). This particular pattern was produced from 1841 to 1857 (Klose:2007:140).

Industrial slipware or Annular ware was the cheapest decorated earthenware until spongeware was produced. Annular ware goods were utilitarian and mainly mugs and bowls were produced (J.Goodwin pers. Com). According to Klose, although mass produced, most of this type of decoration was produced predominantly on hollow ware and very little on flat ware (Klose:2007:67) which certainly appears to be the case from the Platberg assemblage thus far (figures 23, 24 & 25). Four carinated bowls were excavated, one of which has a dendritic decoration which is also known as mocha (figure 26).

Majolica

This type of ceramic decoration is represented by two sherds, both of which are moulded, hand painted in bright colours and were mainly used as ornamental dishes (figure 27). The production of Victorian Majolica commenced in 1851 (Miller:2000:13).

Hand painted in harsh/chrome colours

This type of decoration, used on table and teawares, became popular in the 1830s and remained so throughout the nineteenth century (Klose:2007:62). A total of 15 vessels were identified (figure 28).

Sponged ware

Nine sponged vessels were excavated in a variety of colours, for example shades of blue, purple, green, black and maroon (figure 29 and 30). Sometimes three colours were sponged onto one vessel (figure 31). After 1845 shapes were cut into the sponge (figure 31, sherd on the far right). This particular example forms part of the farmer's collection. Sponged ware was the cheapest decorated ceramic ware in the second half of the nineteenth century (Klose:2007:68).

Refined coloured-bodied wares

Two carinated bowl bases and footrings made of yellow ware were surface collections from two different middens (figures 32 and 33). Yellow ware was manufactured in Derbyshire (J.Goodwin pers. com.). This ware type was produced in the form of kitchenware (food preparation and storage) as well as items such as chamber pots (Klose:2007:58).

Clay Pipes

The only evidence of clay pipes has been from surface collections. Four broken pipe stems were found. One of which has impressed roulette dots and slightly raised but indistinct letters. A further stem bears the word GOUDA I in raised relief. Two undecorated pipe bowl sherds were also collected.

Local Ceramics

From the surface collections within the village and the VM excavation in 2014, local earthenware is found in very small quantities compared to imported ceramics, but in far larger numbers from the wash, on the northern slope of the Platberg (Table 5). The use of this steeply sloping area on the edge of the village still needs to be ascertained. The majority of sherds are grit and grog tempered, undecorated and unburnished. The burnished sherds range from red, and black to brown. Only two sherds were decorated; one is an unburnished rim sherd which has diagonal impressions across the top of the flattened rim. The second is an unburnished body sherd which is decorated with comb stamped diagonal lines beneath which is a cross hatched pattern (figure 34). 34 of the total of 121 sherds were soot encrusted on the outside suggesting that these vessels were used as cooking pots. Of this number 26 were collected from the wash.

Discussion

The surface collection of ceramics across the site has shown that imported ceramics, especially British industrial wares, are found throughout the mission station, from both the many numerous small house mounds and associated middens as well as the three large mounds making up the missionary's complex which suggests that these wares were finding their way into the homes and everyday lives of most of the people living on the mission station. The majority of British industrial wares at Platberg are the less expensive wares on offer.

Local ceramics are found throughout the site in context with imported ceramics, although in comparatively small quantities. Bones and burnt local cooking pots were excavated from BH and PPH, but this assemblage has not yet been analysed. It appears that local ceramics were used in many Platberg homes, including that of the missionary. They were easily obtainable (unlike the imported ceramics) and probably much more affordable.

Glass

The glass assemblage still has to be analysed, but it appears that the majority of the glass sherds found come from bottles. One is a dark olive green square case gin bottle base, with the typical pointed resting points, on which the bottle stands when upright which is indicative of case gin bottles prior to the 1870s. The area in between these points is slightly arched (Jones and Sullivan:1989:86).

Glass Beads

20 glass beads were excavated from VM, the majority of which are simple monochrome beads (Table 6). Four compound beads were found, all of which are drawn red-on-white core oblate beads, also called white hearts or *Cornaline d' Aleppo*. These beads were produced in Venice from the mid 1830s (Wood:2008:185) and are present at Mgungundlovu which was occupied from 1828 to 1839 which suggests that they arrived in southern Africa shortly after they were first produced (Saitowitz:1990:24, 139). Many of the beads are patinated and pitted to a greater or lesser degree.

This “layered crust” is caused by the decomposition of the glass in the deposit (Jones and Sullivan:1989:15). The colours of the beads still need to be matched against a Munsell colour chart.

Metal

The metal assemblage still has to be carefully analysed, but a variety of nails and a two eyes from hook and eye fastenings were found in VM. A single ribbed percussion cap was found in spit 3 in the VM excavation. This find is not unexpected as the British army was encamped at Platberg in 1850 and again in 1852. Double-barreled muzzle-loading percussion carbine muskets were issued to the British army in 1839 (Hooper-Box:1998 :14) although they were using rifles which fired Minie bullets whilst encamped at Platberg in 1852 (Saks:1994:3; Schoeman:1988:

A drawer pull was a surface find from mound A in the mission complex.

Bone

The Bone assemblage has yet to be analysed.

Botanical assemblage

The Floral assemblage is currently being analysed by S.Hadwick, but peach pips were found in the VM midden excavation.

Slate

A broken piece of lined slate was recovered from spit 7 in the VM excavation (figure 35) as well as a slate pencil from spit 3. As both adults and children were taught how to read and write it could have belonged to either (although the majority of students were children) but it does suggest that someone from the associated house was involved in learning at the mission station school.

2015

This year’s fieldwork season commenced on 6 July 2015 and ended on 21 July 2015. Two areas were concentrated on, being the investigation of one large structure (PPH) and one smaller structure (BH), figure 3 (B) and (F) respectively. The layout of PPH is somewhat complicated.

The excavated material has not yet been analysed in any detail but it appears that PPH may have been the structure which housed the printing press. About six printers’ metal types were uncovered in the midden to the east of the building. Unfortunately some of the metal type faces had rusted to the extent where the letter can no longer be seen or are broken, but Prof. Esterhuysen has thus far been able to discern an “e”, “g” and a “T” or “I”. The society’s printing press moved around with the Rev Richard Giddy, who was a trained printer. He was the resident missionary at Platberg from 1845 to around 1855 or 56 and these types probably date to his period of occupation. The buildings possible function as the printing works may be the reason for the unusual layout. A very

rich midden was discovered in the south eastern section of the yard just east of PPH. This will be further excavated in 2016.

A smaller dwelling, BH was chosen to compare the layout of the building and the material culture with PPH being one of the larger dwellings. BH appears to be a one roomed building with a pebble floor. The excavation of this building will be continued in 2016. The associated midden has not yet been located.

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TABLE 1

IMPORTED CERAMIC WARE – Total Number of Sherds

WARE TYPE CATEGORY	SH	SHR	WS	VM	HM	DM	KM	MM	PPH	STH	FC	W	Total
PORCELAIN													
Asian Export ware								1					1
Asian market ware		1									1		2
European porcelain/bone china							2						2
STONEWARE													
British salt-glazed						4						1	5
European stoneware		1		1		1	1		1	1			6
REFINED INDUSTRIAL WARES													
White-bodied													
Painted Harsh colours				9		2	5						16
Painted white and gold											1		1
Transfer printed													
Blue:willow				8		3	2		1		9	1	24
Blue:other		6		15		5	20	2	1		9		58
Single colour	1			4	1	3	7				5	1	22
Flow		3		20		4	4				2	3	36
Plain white		7		10	2	5	4				1		29
White moulded				3			1						4
Victorian Majolica			1					1					2
Shell edged											1		1
Industrial slipware		5		4		4	9				13		35
Sponged				6		1	2				4		13
Refined Coloured Bodied wares													
Yellow ware					1	1					1		3
Brown/black teapot ware		1										1	2
Industrial refined stoneware													
Basalt (refined stoneware)												1	1
Smear-glazed stoneware							1						1
TOTAL	1	24	1	80	4	33	58	4	3	1	48	10	267

TABLE 2

IMPORTED CERAMIC WARE– MNV

WARE TYPE CATEGORY	SH	SHR	WS	VM	HM	DM	KM	MM	PPH	STH	FC	W	Total
PORCELAIN													
Asian Export ware								1					1
Asian market ware		1									1		2
European porcelain/bone china							1						1
STONEWARE													
British salt-glazed						3	1						4
European stoneware		1		1		1			1	1		2	7
REFINED INDUSTRIAL WARES													
White-bodied													
Painted Harsh colours				7		1	3				2	2	15
Painted white and gold						1							1
Transfer printed													
Blue:willow				3		1	1		1		1	1	8
Blue:other		3		9		3	9	2	1		7	1	35
Single colour	1			4	1	3	2				4		15
Flow		2		11		2	2				1		18
Plain white		1		6	1		1				1		10
White moulded				2			1						3
Victorian Majolica			1					1					2
Shell edged											1		1
Industrial slipware (all types)		2		2	1	3	5				5		18
Sponged				2		1	2				4		9
Refined Coloured Bodied wares													
Yellow ware					1	1					1		3
Brown/black teapot ware		1										1	2
Industrial refined stoneware													
Basalt (refined stoneware)												1	1
Smear-glazed stoneware							1						1
TOTAL	1	11	1	47	4	20	29	4	3	1	28	8	157

TABLE 3**V'S Midden – Total number of Imported Ceramic Sherds**

WARE TYPE CATEGORY	Sc	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	Total
PORCELAIN –									
Asian ware									
European porcelain/bone china									
STONEWARE									
German salt glazed	1								1
British salt-glazed									
REFINED INDUSTRIAL WARES									
White-bodied Industrial white wares									
Painted Harsh colours	2			1	4		1	1	9
Painted white and gold									
Transfer printed									
Blue:willow				7	1				8
Blue:other	1	2		8	2			2	15
Single colour	1			1	1		1		4
Flow		2		4	6	2		5	19
Plain white		2		4			1	4	11
White moulded				3					3
Shell edged									
Factory made slipware (all types)				3				1	4
Sponged	5			1					6
Refined Coloured Bodied wares									
Yellow ware									
Brown/black teapot ware									
Industrial refined stoneware									
Basalt (refined stoneware)									
Jasper ware									
TOTAL	10	6		31	14	2	3	13	79

TABLE 4

V'S Midden – Minimum Number of Imported Vessels

WARE TYPE CATEGORY	Sc	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	Total
PORCELAIN –									
Asian Export ware									
Asian market ware									
European porcelain/bone china									
STONEWARE									
German salt glazed	1								1
British salt-glazed									
REFINED INDUSTRIAL WARES									
White-bodied Industrial white wares									
Painted Harsh colours	2			1	2		1	1	7
Painted white and gold									
Transfer printed									
Blue:willow				2	1				3
Blue:other	1	2		4	2			2	11
Single colour	1			1	1		1		4
Flow		1		2	3	2		3	11
Plain white		1		2			1	2	6
White moulded				2					2
Shell edged									
Factory made slipware (all types)				1				1	2
Sponged	1			1					2
Refined Coloured Bodied wares									
Yellow ware									
Brown/black teapot ware									
Industrial refined stoneware									
Basalt (refined stoneware)									
Jasper ware									
TOTAL	6	4		16	9	2	3	9	49

TABLE 5

Frequencies of Local Ceramics

Area	Frequencies of Grit tempered sherds	Frequencies of Grit and Grog tempered sherds	Total	Frequencies of undecorated Rim sherds	Frequencies of Decorated Rim sherds	Frequencies of Burnished sherds	Frequencies of decorated body sherds
VM	12		12			3	1
SHR	2		2				
HM		1	1				
DM	6	1	7		1	5	
KM		3	3	1		4	
PPH	1		1				
W	34	62	96	8		10	
Total	54	67	121	9	1	22	1

TABLE 6**GLASS BEADS – V'S MIDDEN**

Colour	Method of manufacture					Size				Clarity		Total
	D	W	Cylindrical	Oblate	Compound	VS	S	M	L	O	TL	
White	1		1				1			1		1
Black	5			5			2	3		5		5
Baby Blue	1		1				1			1		1
Dark Blue	3			3			3			3		3
Turquoise	1			1			1				1	1
Dark Green	1			1			1			1		1
Mauve	1			1			1			1		1
Red on white core	4				4		4				4	4
Red	3			3			3			2	1	3
Total	20		2	14	4		17	3		14	6	20

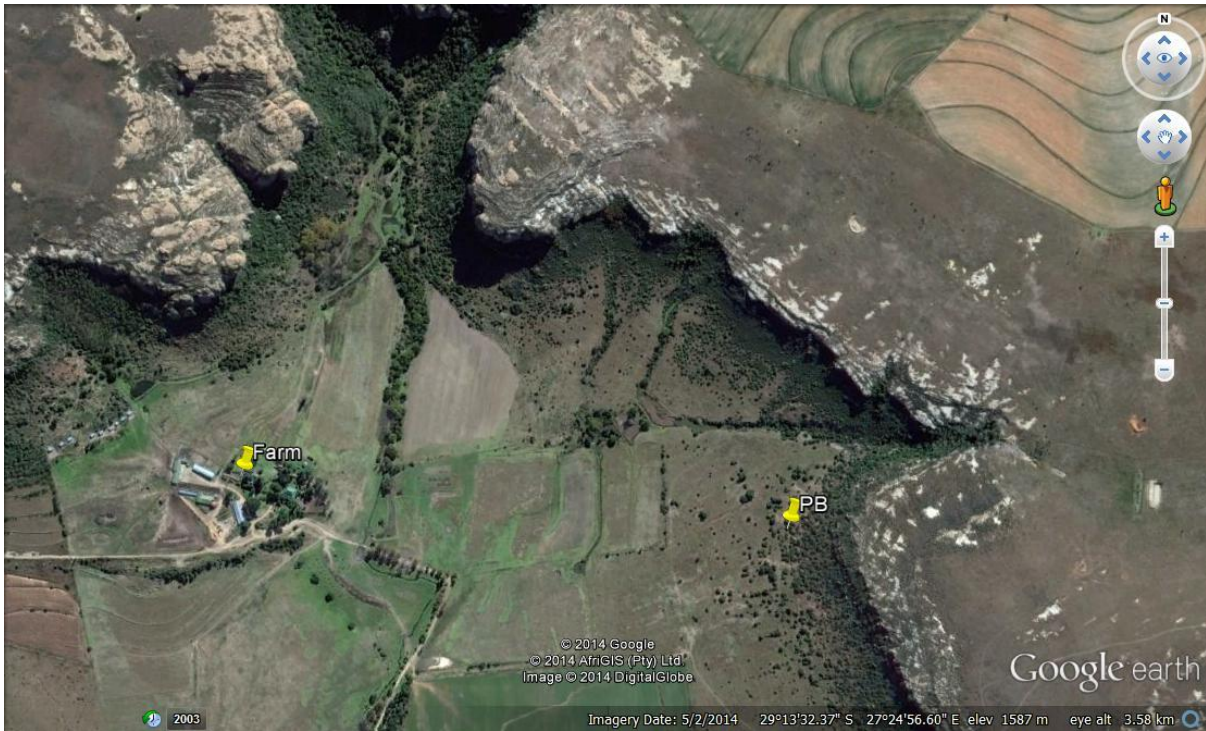


Figure 1



Figure 2

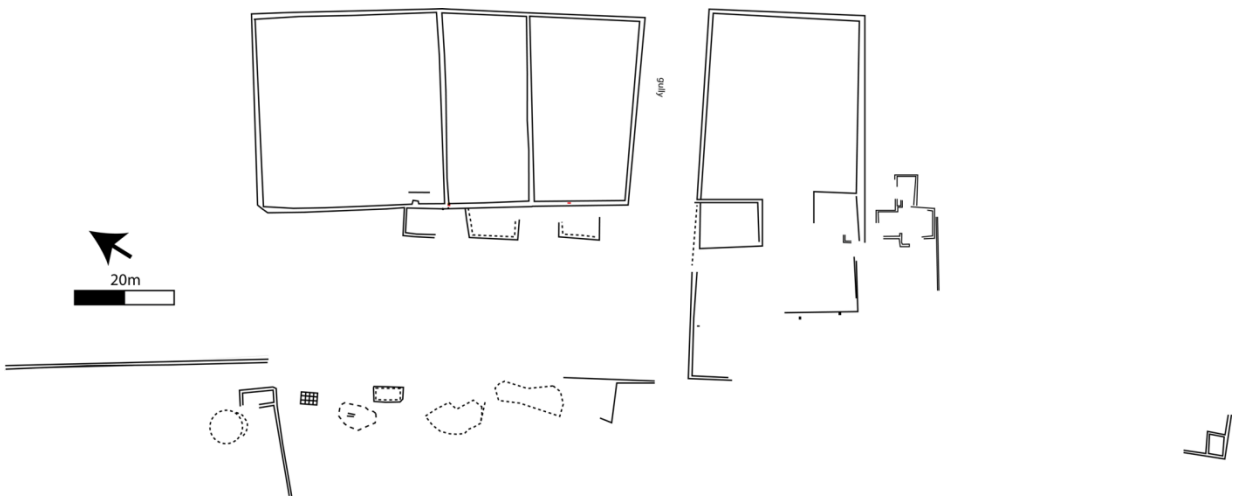


Figure 3



Figure 4

PLATBERG
V's MIDDEN



- Excavated squares
- Animal burrow
- Conglomerate rock slab

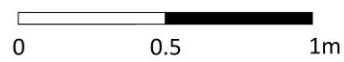


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

PLATBERG
V'S MIDDEN: UNIT H101

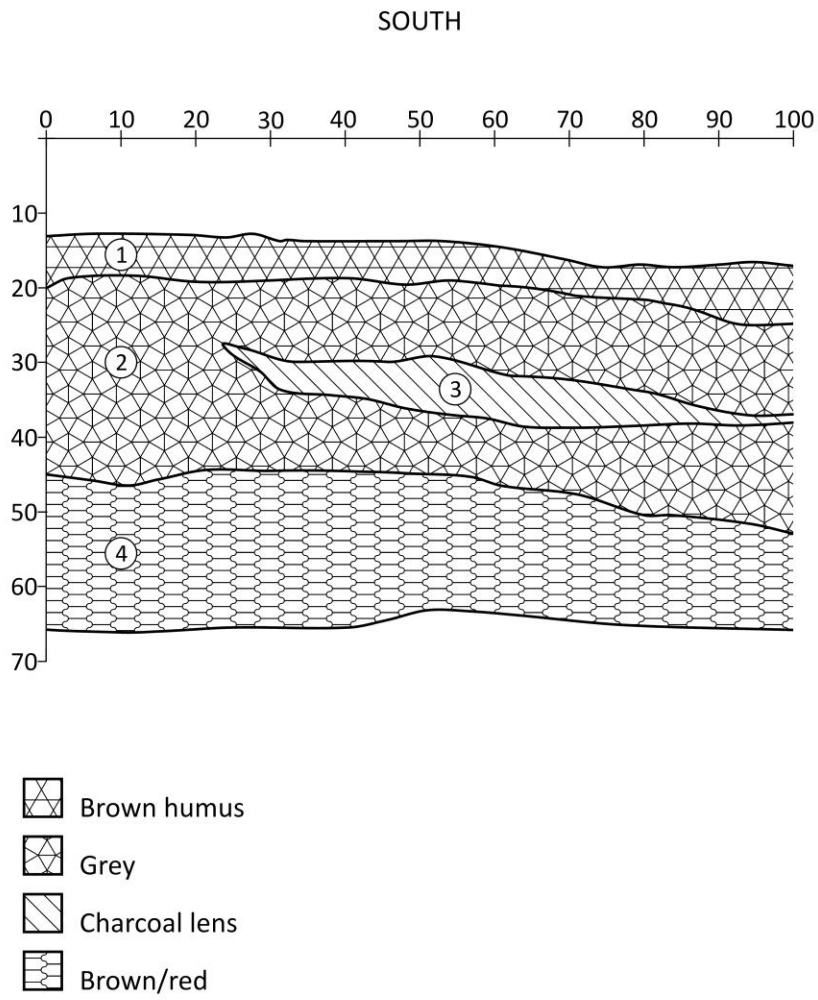


Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20

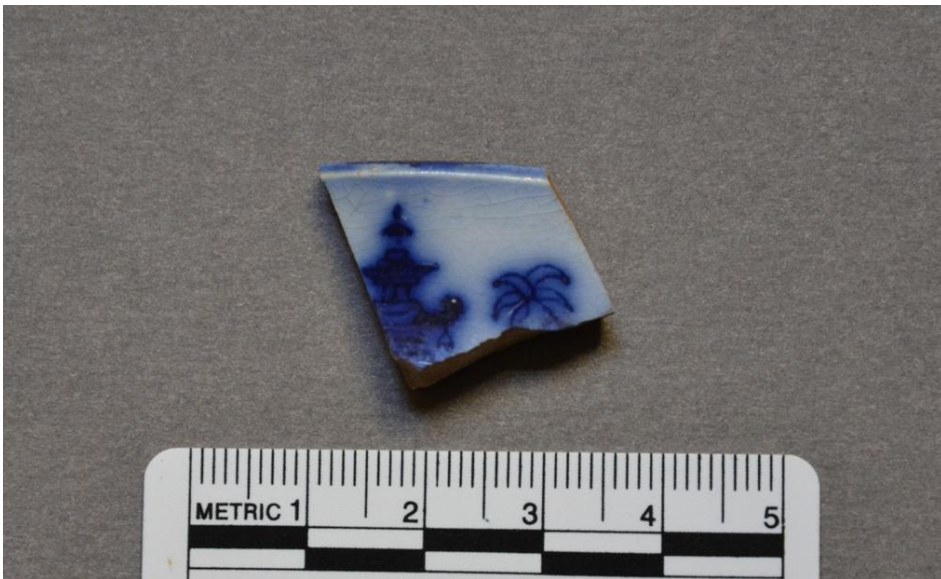


Figure 21

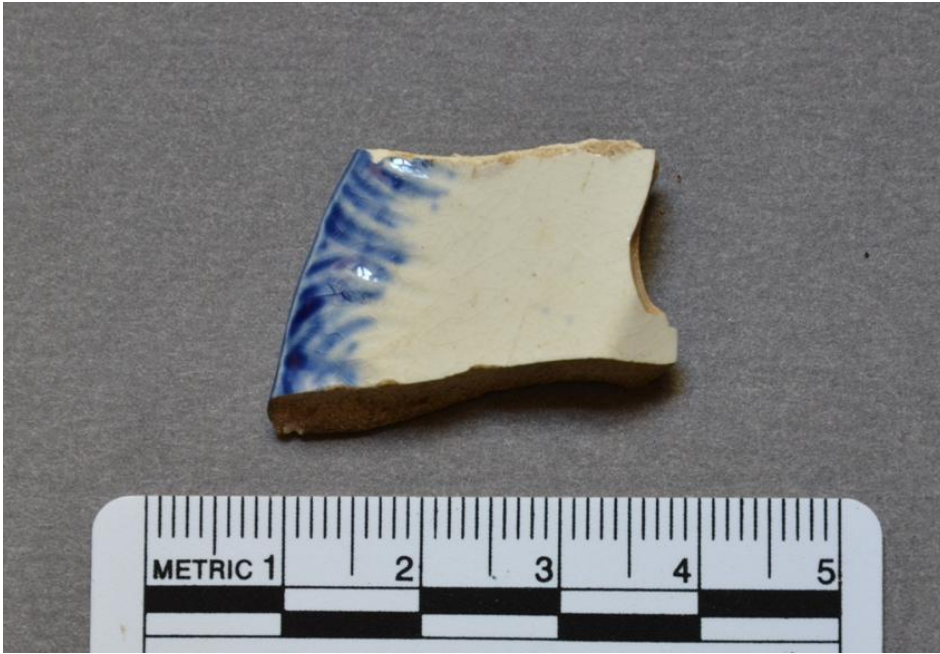


Figure 22

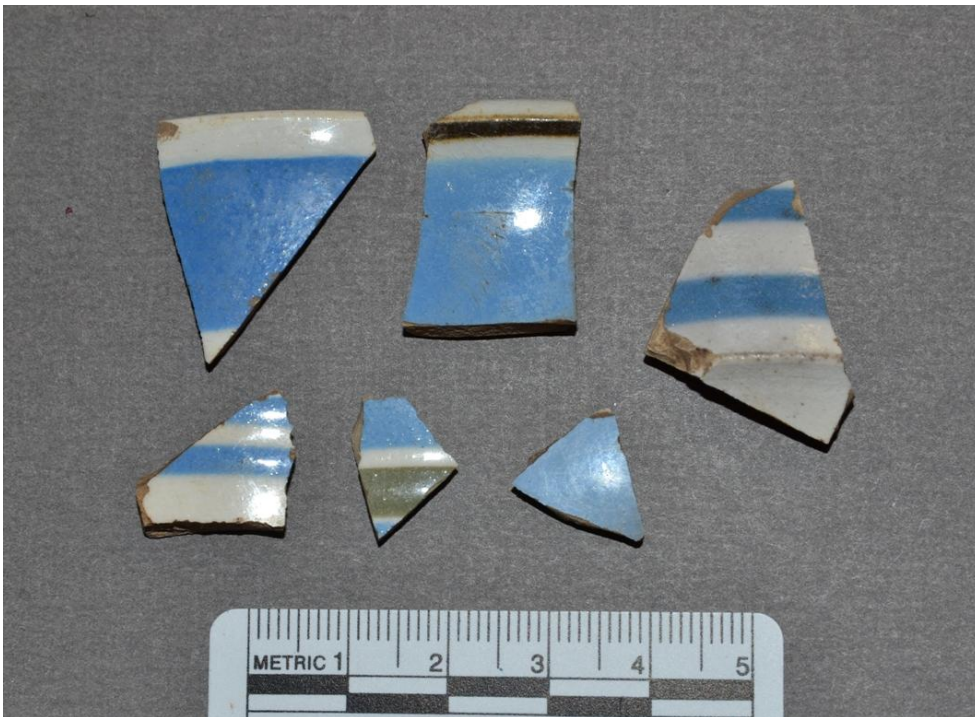


Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25



Figure 26

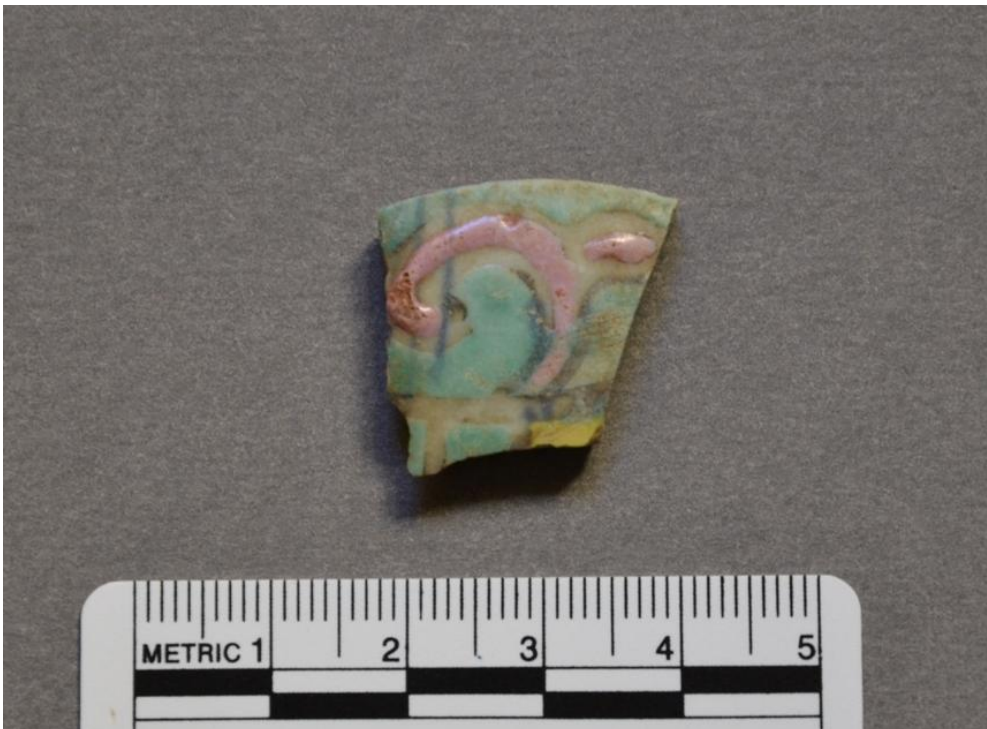


Figure 27



Figure 28



Figure 29

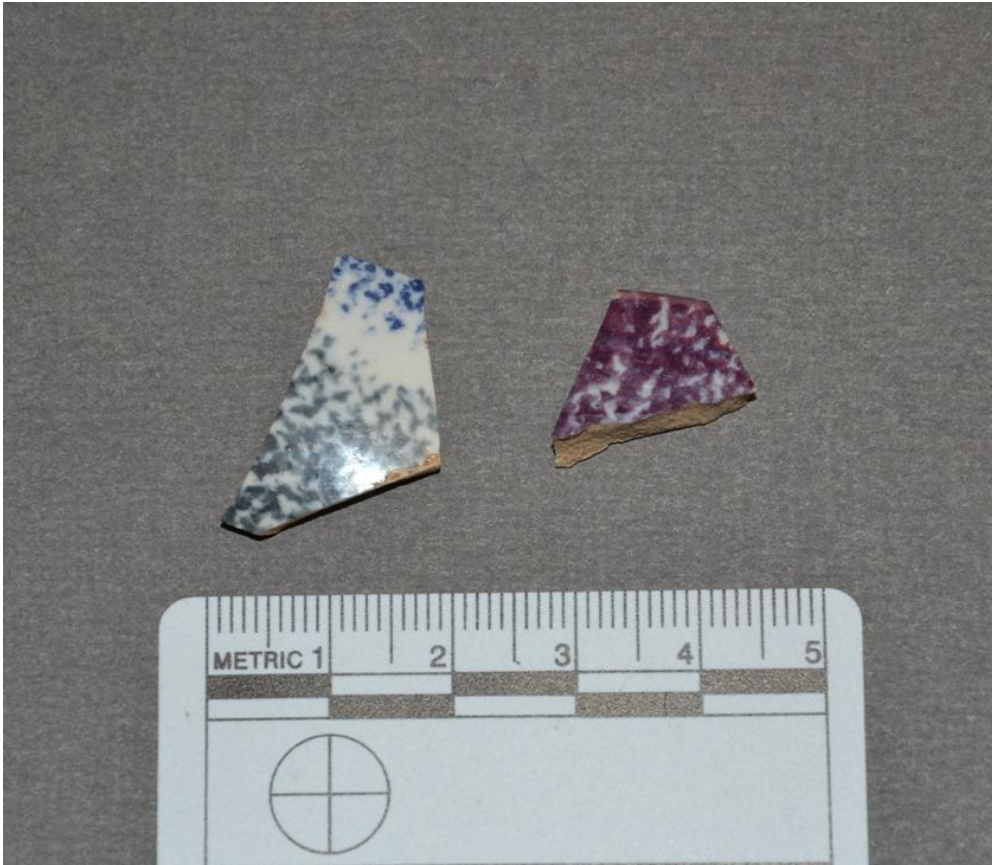


Figure 30

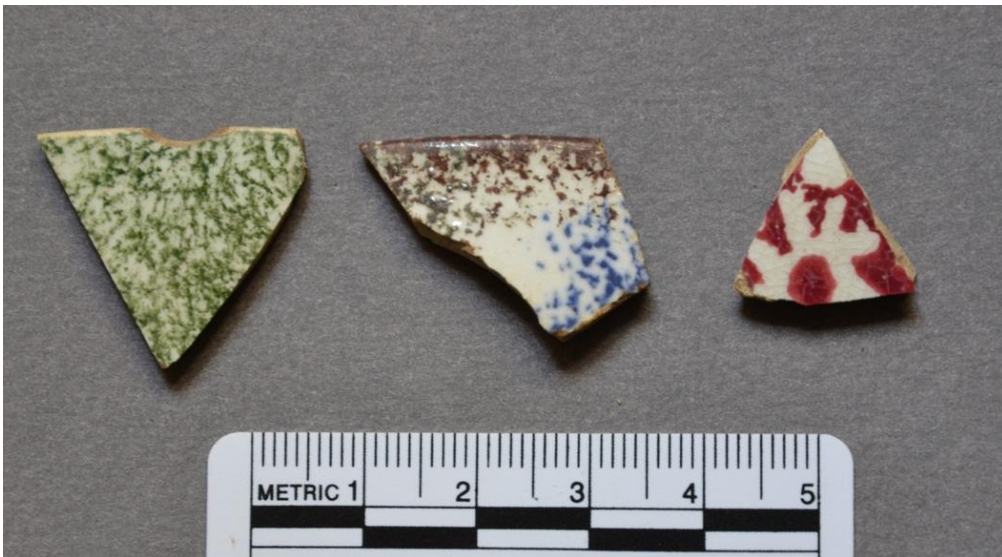


Figure 31



Figure 32



Figure 33

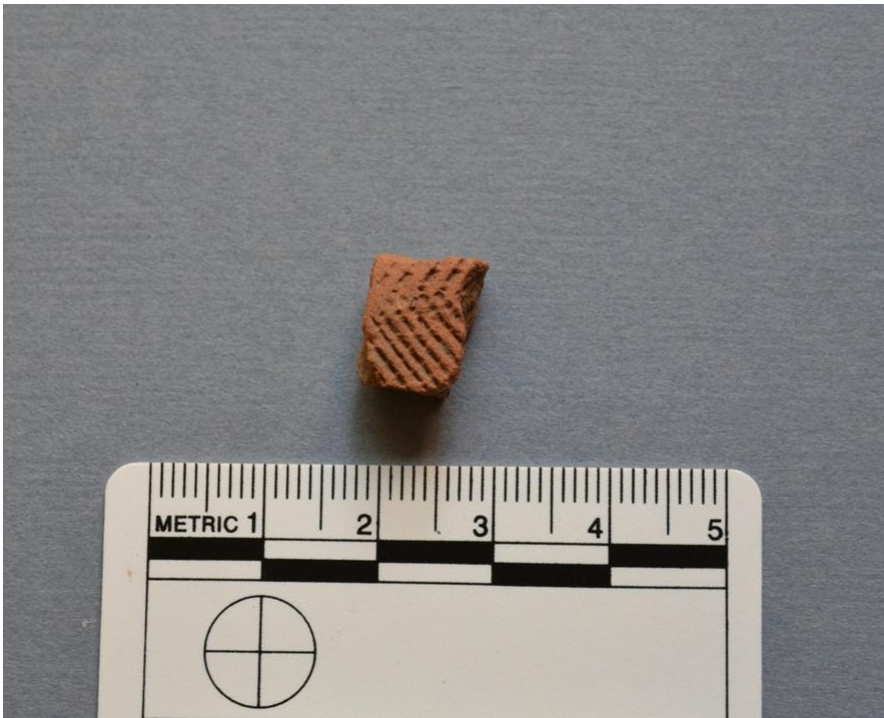


Figure 34



Figure 35