

**Final report on excavations conducted on the farm Bulhoek, Steynsburg district,  
Eastern Cape Province**

**SAHRA Reference: 80/12/05/010/51, 9/2/086/0001**



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## **Introduction**

This report should be considered as a replacement of the previous interim report since a mistake was made with the block numbers at Midden 2. This report contains the correct block numbers as well as the data from both fieldtrips (2012 & 2013).

The archaeological fieldwork at Bulhoek forms part of a larger project focused on the analysis and study of material culture pertaining to early trek-farmer sites located in the north-eastern Cape and southern Free State. Bulhoek has been identified as one such site and additional complementary sites will be identified through on-going survey work in the area. Collectively these sites contain a material culture sequence from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and will serve as comparative data with other farming sites such as Welkomskraal, which I studied for my Masters dissertation. The research at Bulhoek is part of a registered trek-farmer research project at the National Museum, Bloemfontein and could later evolve into a PhD thesis.

The fieldwork focused on the middens, specifically the surface collection of midden material, as well as excavations in the identified middens.

Bulhoek is a provincial heritage site and the house is protected according to Government Notice nr. 3792 dated 1973-03-02. The site is accessible to the public, but access is not controlled. The site is therefore vulnerable to people with metal detectors, bottle collectors etc. Collection of the material from the middens will not only help to protect this heritage in a professional manner, but the analysis of the recovered material will also provide a better understanding of the political-economy of this site, as well as other related trek-farmer sites.

The excavations at Bulhoek were conducted in association with Ms Joanna Behrens, from the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology at Unisa.

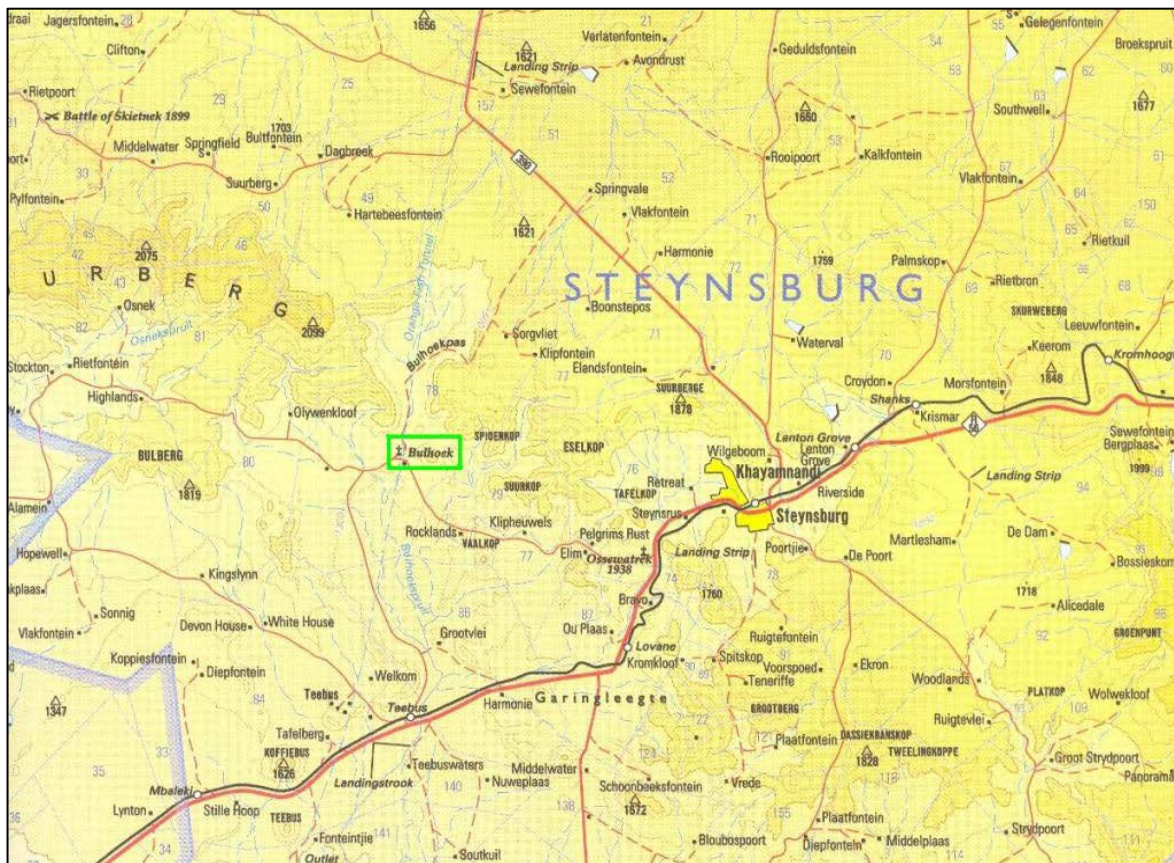
The team during the first fieldtrip consisted of myself, Thys Uys and Myra Mashimbye (National Museum, Bloemfontein), as well as Chriselle Bruwer from the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology at UNISA.

Mrs Hannie Steyn from the Steynsburg museum provided assistance with sorting. Assistance with sorting was also provided by the staff from the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, UNISA (Joanna Behrens, Jan Boeyens, Maria van der Ryst, Francois Coetzee and Natalie Swanepoel) during the final stages.

During the second fieldtrip the team consisted of myself, Thys Uys, Myra Mashimbye (National Museum, Bloemfontein), as well as Joanna Behrens from the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology at UNISA. Three volunteers provided valuable assistance with the excavations, namely Debbie Palk, Heidi Fivaz and Vanessa Maitland.

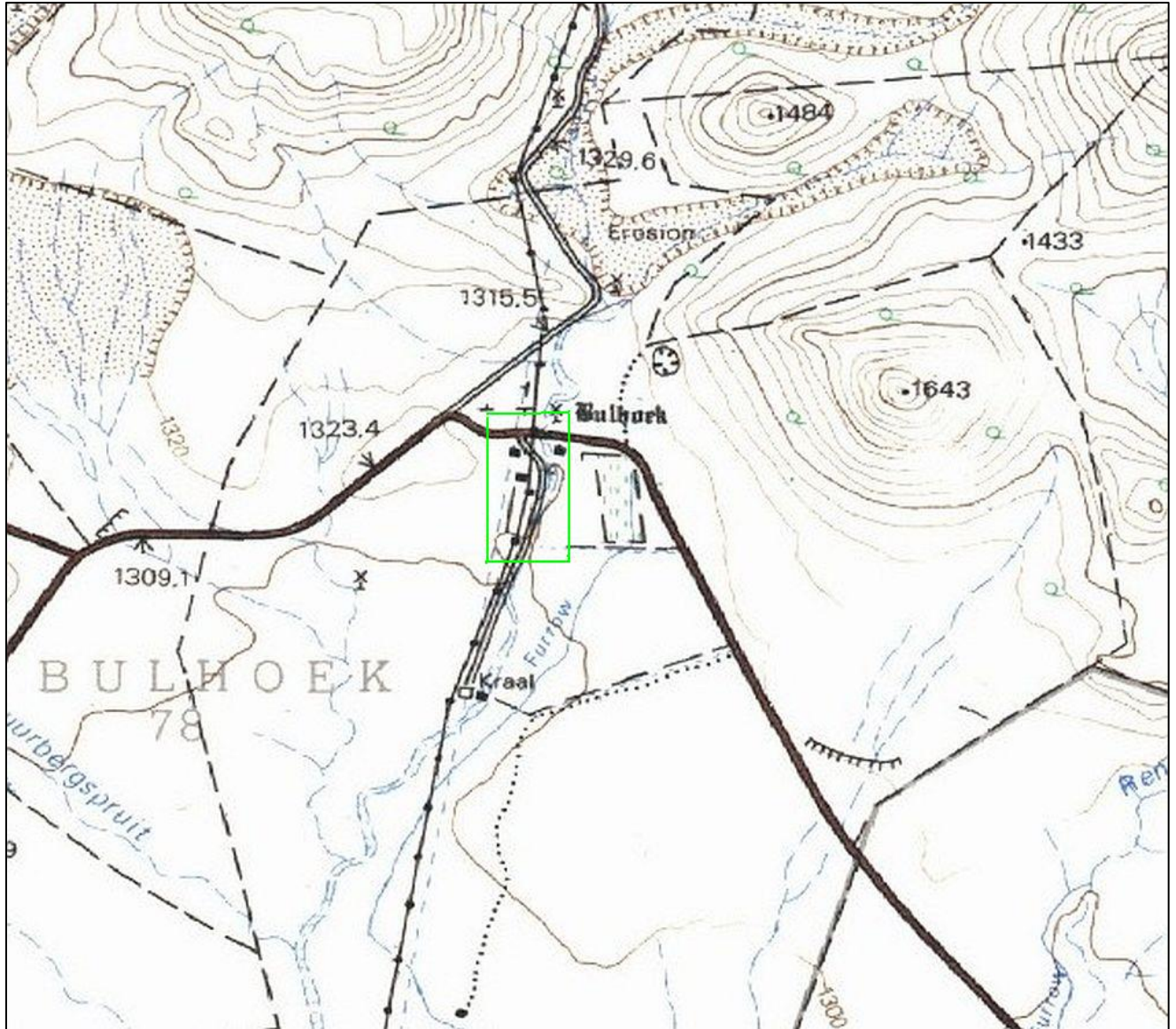
### Location of the site

Bulhoek no. 78 is situated in the district of Steynsburg in the Eastern Cape Province (**Figure 1**). Since the 1930s Portion 11 of this farm has belonged to the Steynsburg Museum (**Figure 2**). The site is located at approximately 31°16'40.5552" S, 25°40'34.8888" E.



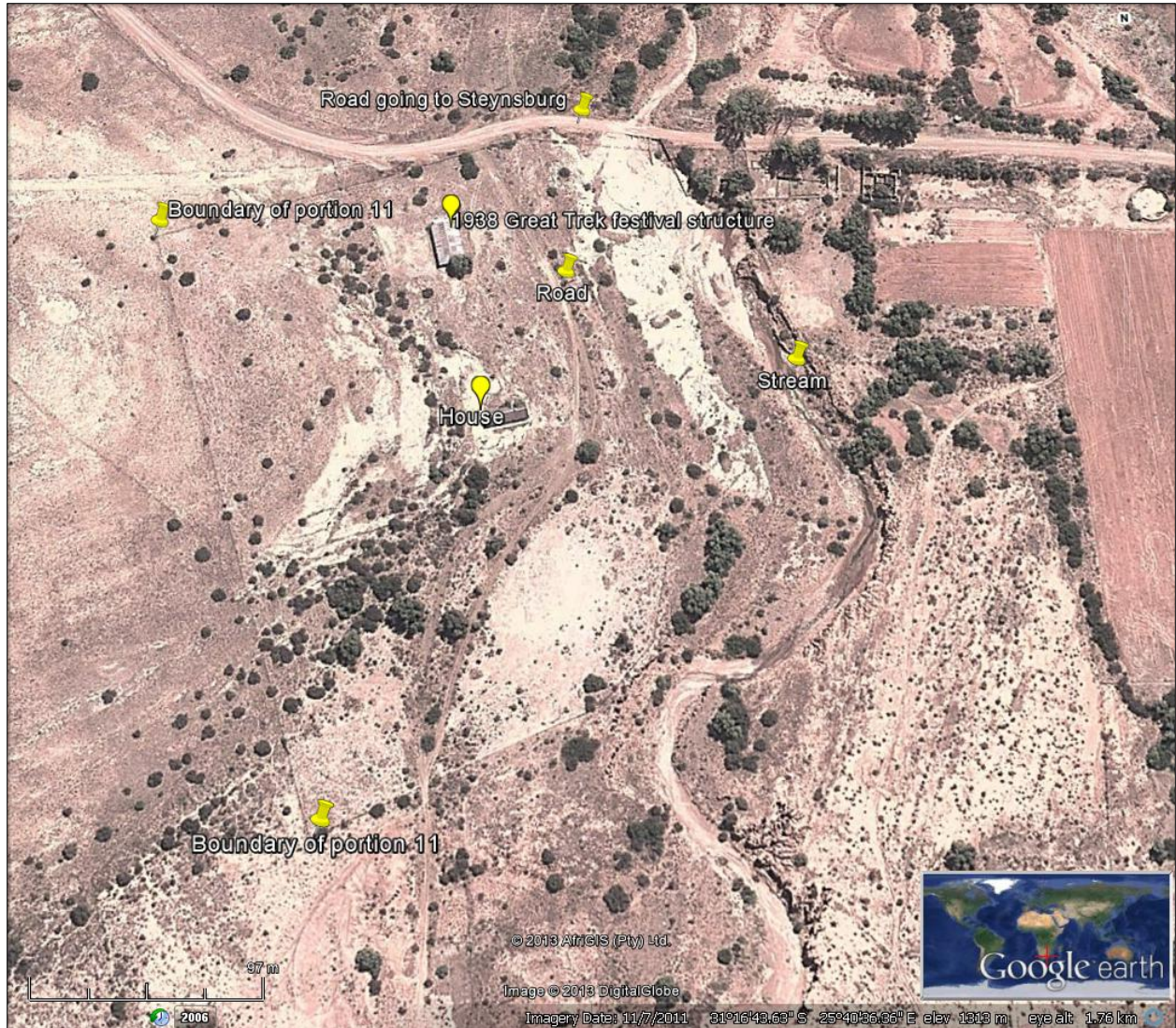
**Figure 1: The location of Bulhoek in the district of Steynsburg, Eastern Cape Province.**





**Figure 2: The location of the research area on portion 11 of Bulhoek no. 78, Steynsburg district. (Map 3125 BC Teebus)**





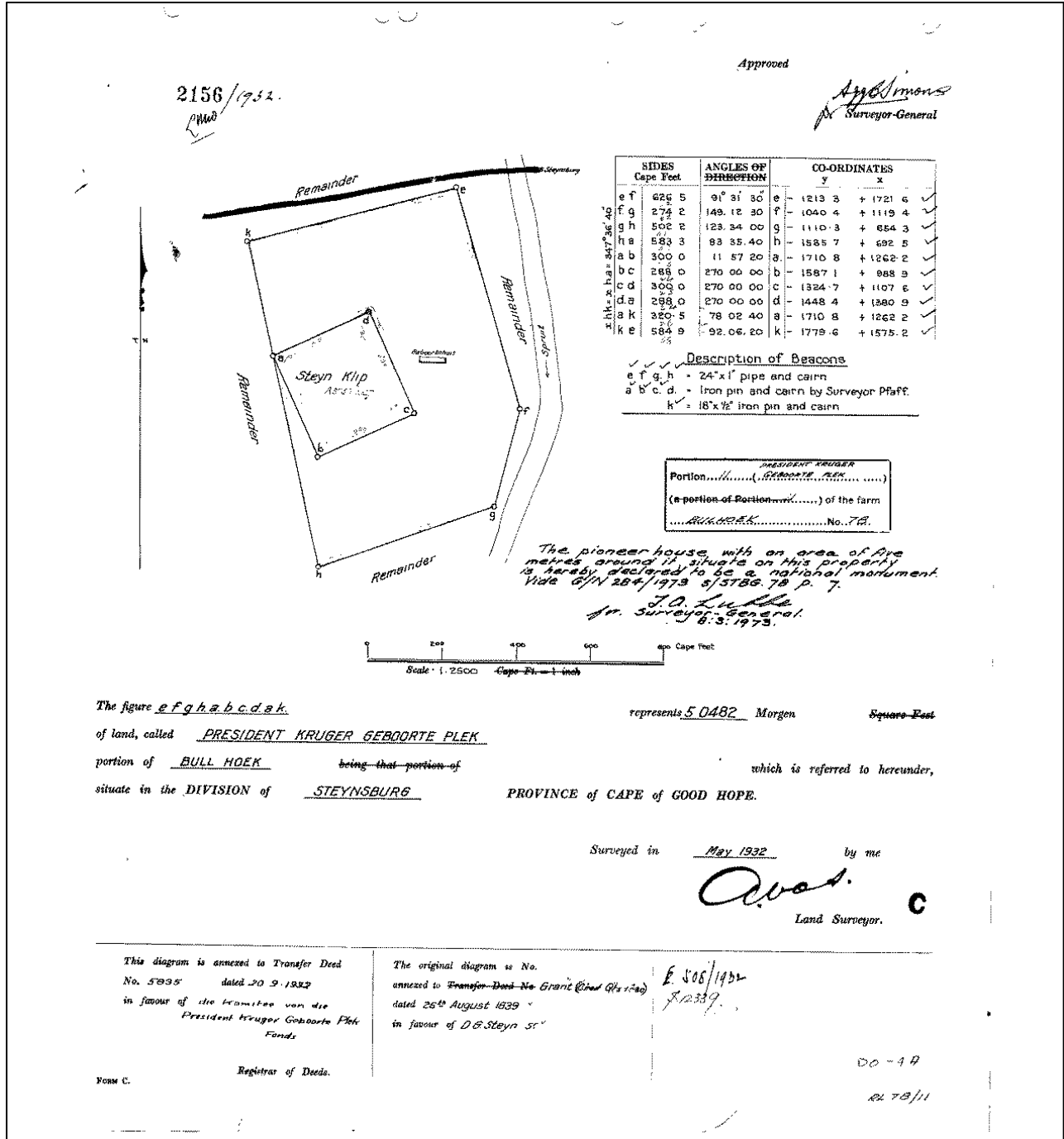
**Figure 3:** The location of the research area on portion 11 of Bulhoek no. 78, Steynsburg district.

The border of portion 11 of Bulhoek no. 78 is visible in **figure 3**.

### **Historical background and the location of features**

The first owner of Bulhoek (Figure 4) was Douw Gerbrand Steyn, born in 1777 (son of Douw Gerbrand Steyn and Catharina Maria Potgieter). He married Alida Barendina van der Walt on 19 April 1795 (daughter of Tjaart van der Walt and Anna Martha Venter). She was born in 1780 and died on 2 August 1850. Douw Gerbrand Steyn and his wife had thirteen children.

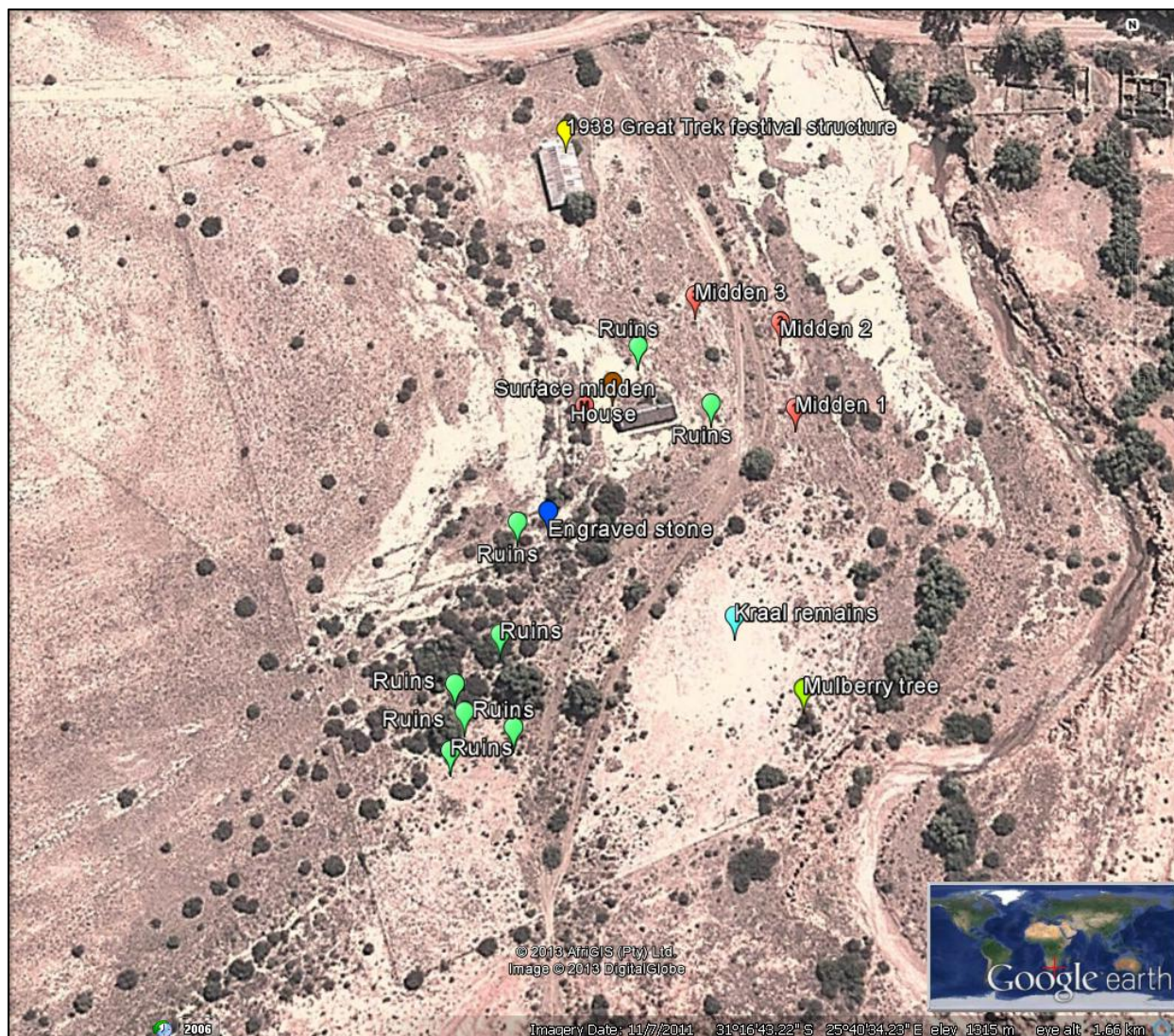




**Figure 5: Portion 11 of the farm Bulhoek no. 78.**

Several features were identified during the first fieldwork season that took place in October 2012. These features can be seen in **figure 6** and are discussed below.





**Figure 6: All the features found at Bulhoek.**

An engraved stone with the initials of Douw Gerbrand Steyn and the date 1809 can still be seen on the site (**Figure 7**), not far from the house and close to the ruins of an unidentified structure which can be seen in **figures 8** and **9**. The date of 1809 indicates a starting point for occupation at Bulhoek, although it might have been temporary at first, keeping the lifestyle of the trek-farmer in mind.

Old photos of two houses at Bulhoek, which includes the main house, were obtained from Mr Aucamp from Steynsburg (**Figures 10-12**). These photos showed the damage caused by a fire which, according to Mr Weitz from Steynsburg, occurred sometime before the Anglo-Boer war. This information indicates that occupation ended much earlier than initially anticipated.





**Figure 7: Engraved stone with the date 1809.**



**Figure 8: The ruins of an unknown structure close to the engraved stone.**





**Figure 9: The ruins of an unknown structure close to the engraved stone.**



**Figure 10: The remains of the main house after it was damaged in a fire.**

(Photo: Ben Aucamp)





**Figure 11: The remains of the main house, as well as those of a house next to it, after it was damaged by a fire.**

(Photo: Ben Aucamp)



**Figure 12: The remains of the main house, as well as those of a house next to it, after it was damaged by a fire.**

(Photo: Ben Aucamp)



**Figure 13: A recent photo of the main house at Bulhoek, indicating where the other house once stood.**



The photo in **figure 10** was taken at the backside of the main house. In **figure 11** the main house as well as another house can be seen. The photo is taken from the area close to the mulberry tree, with some of the branches visible in the right-hand side of photo. The location of the mulberry tree in relation to the structures on the farm can be seen in **figure 6**.

A close-up of the houses can be seen in **figure 12**. The building materials used in the construction of the two houses are visible and provide a valuable record of the vernacular architecture that existed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in this area. Since the second house does not exist anymore, the photo also gives a good indication of where it was situated in relation to the remaining structures and the middens at the site. This can also be seen in **figure 13**.



**Figure 14: The house and 1938 Great Trek festival structure at Bulhoek.**

Due to the historical importance of Bulhoek the people of Steynsburg made use of the site for the celebration of historical events. The biggest festival that ever took place at Bulhoek was the 100 year celebration of the Great Trek in 1938. The festivities took place at a structure, erected for this



purpose (**Figures 14-16**), at the house itself (**Figures 17-21**), as well as at the remains of an unidentified structure situated behind the house that was later demolished (**Figures 20-22**).



**Figure 15: The 1938 Great Trek festival structure at Bulhoek.**



**Figure 16: Celebrations at Bulhoek in 1938 with the Great Trek festival structure on the left.**

(Photo: Steynsburg museum)

The main house at Bulhoek was restored for the Great trek festivities, but not to its original form. This is clearly visible when comparing the houses in **figures 12** and **13**, and also when comparing **figure 12** with other photos in this report. The inside of the house corresponds to the 1930s era in which it was restored (**Figure 19**). It is unknown if the house next to it was demolished during this time or earlier.



**Figures 17 & 18: The house at Bulhoek, 1938.**

(Photos: Steynsburg museum)



**Figure 19: Festivities inside the house at Bulhoek, 1938.**

(Photo: Steynsburg museum)



Photos taken during the Great trek festivities in 1938 shows an unidentified structure situated at the back of the main house (**Figures 20-22**). This structure is unfortunately not visible in **figures 11-12**.



**Figure 20: House with unidentified structure behind it, 1938.**

(Photo: Steynsburg museum)



**Figure 21: Unidentified structure behind house, 1938.**

(Photo: Steynsburg museum)



**Figure 22: Festivities inside the unidentified structure at Bulhoek, 1938.**

(Photo: Steynsburg museum)



**Figure 23: A scale model of the house at Bulhoek, 1938.**

(Photos: Annemarie Carelsen, Ditsong Natural Museum of Cultural History, Pretoria)

A scale model of the house, with a room attached to the rear was found by Annemarie Carelsen at the Ditsong Natural Museum of Cultural History, Pretoria (**Figure 23**). The following is written on the base: Donated to the President Kruger museum by J.J. Schwartz sr., Fairland, Transvaal, 1938.



It is however not a true representation of the house. The model represents the restored 1938 version of the main house, but the room at the back does not. When looking at the back of the house in **figure 10**, it is clear that there was not a room attached to it. The unidentified structure was therefore also not attached to the house and could have been an outbuilding or separate house that was build at a later stage, since it was build with brick and not clay. It is possible that the scale model is a representation of how they intended to restore the house, but due to factors such as time or financial constraints, it did not happen.

At some point the unidentified structure was demolished because it became too dilapidated. The foundation however, is still visible (**Figures 24-26**).



**Figure 24: Rear view of house where foundations are still visible.**



**Figures 25 & 26: Foundation of unidentified structure.**

Other features include the remains of a kraal in front of the house (**Figures 27-29**), an old Mulberry tree next to the kraal (**Figures 29 and 30**). As previously mentioned the mulberry tree is visible in **figure 11** which also provides a view of the kraal area. According to Mr. Charles Viljoen the kraal had a deep deposit of dung and was burned. The kraal was also destroyed, but details are unknown.



**Figures 27 & 28: The remains of the kraal in front of the house.**



**Figure 29: The remains of the kraal, looking from the house.**





**Figure 30: Mulberry tree next to the kraal at Bulhoek.**

The ruins of unidentified structures were found southwest of the house (**Figures 31-32**) where a few locally produced pot sherds were found on the surface (**Figure 33**).



**Figure 31: Ruins of unidentified structures in the bushes southwest of the house.**





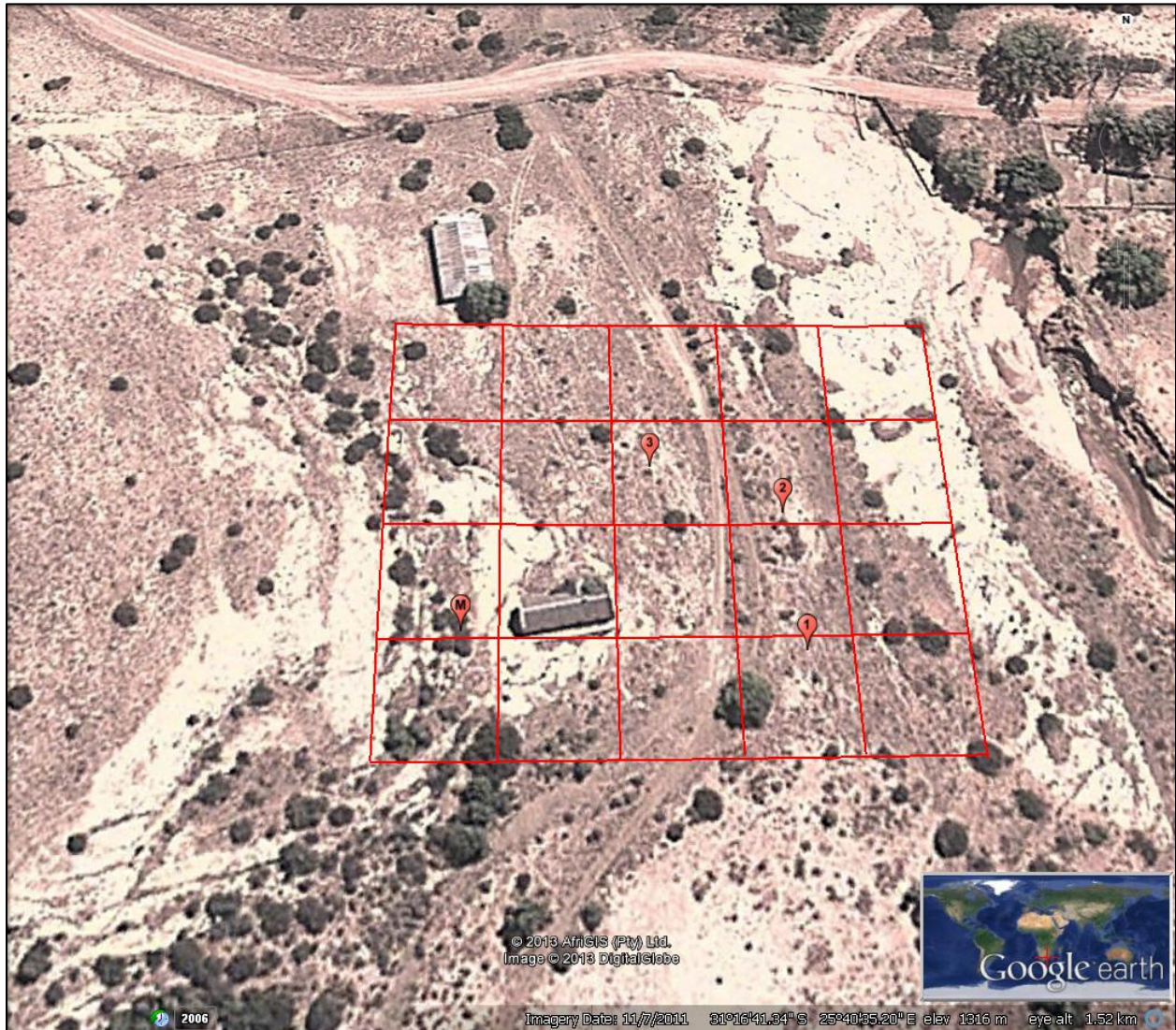
**Figure 32: Ruins of unidentified structures in the bushes southwest of the house.**



**Figure 33: Pottery found at the ruins in the bushes southwest of the house.**



## Archaeological fieldwork at Bulhoek: October 2012 & October 2013



**Figure 34: A view of the grid and the location of the middens at Bulhoek.**

Archaeological fieldwork took place for two weeks in October 2012 and again for two weeks in October 2013. A grid of 25 x 25 metre blocks was laid out across the area around the house where four possible middens were located. Each block was numbered to serve as the reference for the material collected from the surface of these blocks (**Figures 34 and 35**). The blocks that contained possible middens were further divided into 1 x 1 metre blocks to record the exact location of the excavated units.





**Figure 35: The grid showing the numbered blocks.**

Examples of some of the material found during surface collection can be seen in **figures 36-39**.



**Figure 36: Ceramic: Factory-made slipware.**



**Figure 37: Ceramic: Spongeware (left) and Factory-made slipware (right).**





**Figure 38: Ostrich eggshell.**



**Figure 39: Shell.**

In addition to the types of artefacts shown above, items such as wire, screws, nails, glass, beads, buttons, eyelets, harmonica pieces, enamelled metal, cartridge casings, tin can remains and re-used metal were found on the surface.

A midden was identified in block 2-1, on the western side of the house at S31°16'42.15", E25°40'34.1". Closer investigation revealed that the material constituted an ephemeral surface scatter exposed by heavy rain and gravitational flow. The location of this midden, in and around the bushes adjacent to the main house, can be seen in **figures 40** and **41**.



**Figure 40: Washed out midden adjacent to the house.**



**Figure 41: Washed out midden, located in and around the bushes.**

### **Midden 1**

Midden 1 is located in block 1-4/U13 at S31°16'42.30", E25°40'36.9".

Excavation uncovered a variety of material, including ceramics, glass and fauna (bone), as well as a bead, buttons and rusted metal fragments.



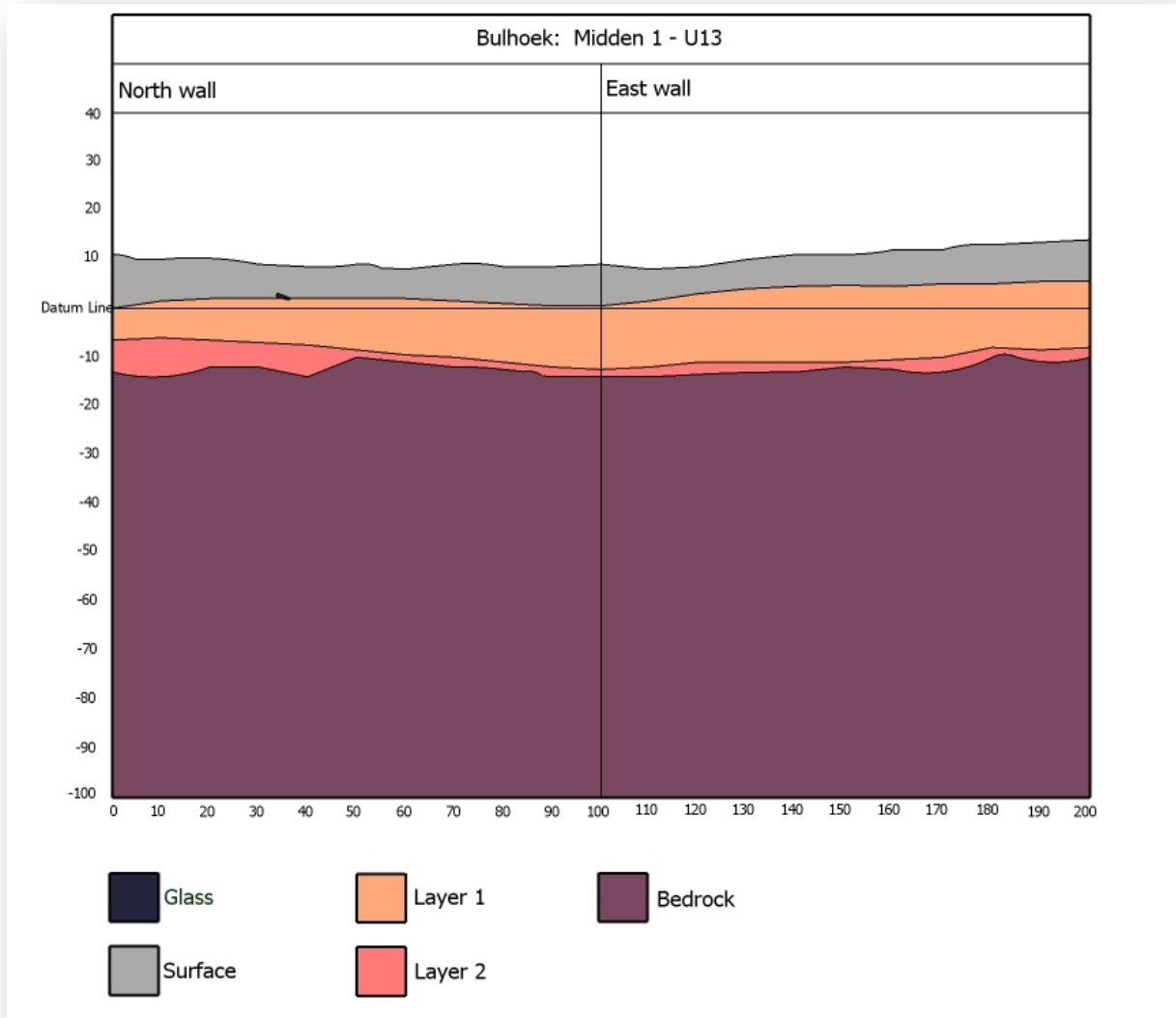
**Figure 42: The surface of Midden 1.**



**Figure 43: Midden 1 with the house in the background.**



Midden 1 consisted of three layers, including the surface. The surface level was excavated in a spit of 100mm. Layers 1 and 2 were excavated stratigraphically.<sup>1</sup> The midden was relatively shallow with a maximum depth of 0.24m (**Figures 42 to 44**). Excavation of midden 1 was concluded during the first fieldtrip in October 2012.



**Figure 44: Stratigraphy of Midden 1.**

(Drawing: Thys Uys)

<sup>1</sup> Excavations in Middens 1 and 2 (Block F14) followed the natural stratigraphy wherever possible. Where no soil colour change was readily evident, excavation proceeded in artificial levels (or spits) of 100mm (or less than 100mm where a colour change was apparent). Natural stratigraphic layers of unusual extent were excavated in two (or more) arbitrary layers. This strategy was adopted as a precautionary measure to ensure maximum control over the accretion and internal chronology of the middens.

## Midden 2

Midden 2 is possibly the oldest midden on the site, although this still needs to be verified through detailed analyses of the material. The midden is located in block 3-4 at S31°16'41.45", E25°40'36.8".

During the first fieldtrip in October 2012 a 1 x 1 metre test unit was excavated (F14). This revealed that the midden was fairly large and deep (0.7m) and the excavation was therefore extended to a 1 x 2 metre unit (**Figures 45-52**).



**Figure 45: The surface of Midden 2.**



**Figure 46: Midden 2, block F14.**



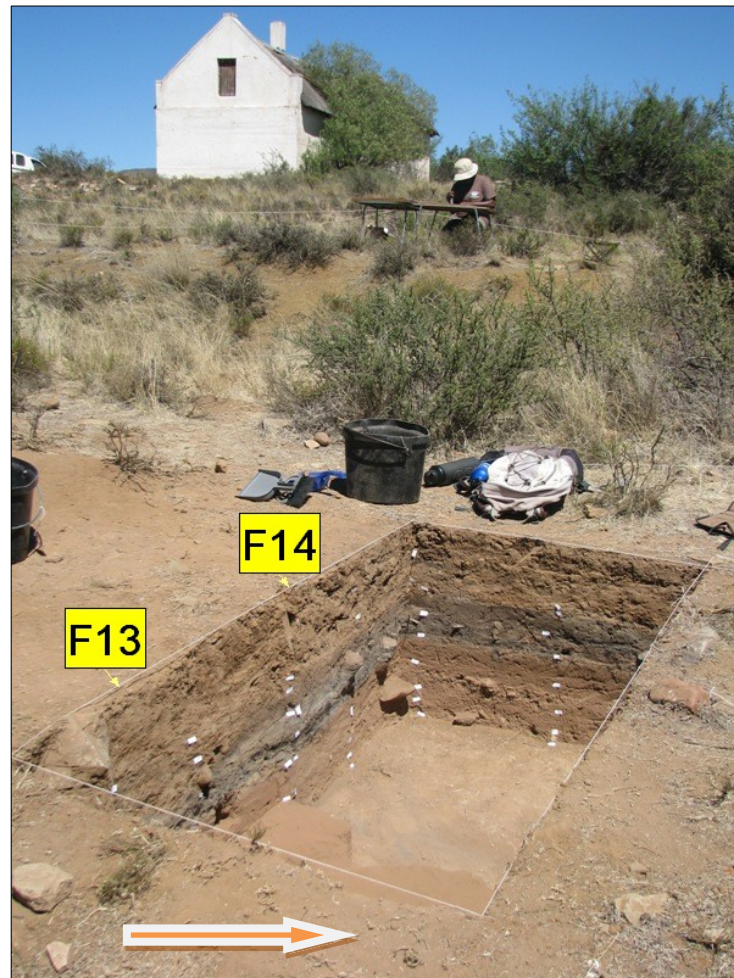
**Figure 47: Layer 7 of Midden 2, block F14.**



**Figure 48: Extension from F14 to F13.**



Block F14 of Midden 2 comprised nine levels including the Surface and, with the exception of levels 2 and 8, was excavated using arbitrary intervals of 100mm. Levels 2 and 8 represent spits of  $\pm 60\text{mm}$  and  $\pm 25\text{mm}$  respectively and are indicative of a noticeable change in soil colour and texture (Level 2) and sterile bedrock deposits (Level 8). Small animal burrows were present in the southwest corner of the unit at Surface and along the north and east walls, as well as the central section, at Levels 7 and 8.



**Figure 49: Midden 2 (extended from block F14 to F13).**

The F14 test unit provided a clear window into the midden. Three broad stratigraphic horizons were evident in the section (**Figures 50 and 53**) with the majority of the cultural material occurring below Level 3. Significant quantities of fauna and the recovery of relatively large imported ceramic fragments suggested that Midden 2 may have served as a primary dump for the Bulhoek

household/s and the excavation was accordingly extended eastwards (F13), to track the rich seam of ash and associated deposits (**Figure 47**). Block F13 was excavated stratigraphically in six layers (Layers A-F). Layers D and E were each removed in two layers rather than as a single horizon to maximize chronological control. The stratigraphic layers in F13 can be broadly correlated with the F14 levels: Layer A (Levels 1-3); Layers B and C (Level 3); Layer D (Levels 4 and 5); Layer E (Levels 6 and 7) and Layer F (Level 8). An animal burrow was present in the south west corner of the F13 unit at Layer F.



**Figure 50: The bottom of Midden 2 (F14 & F13).**



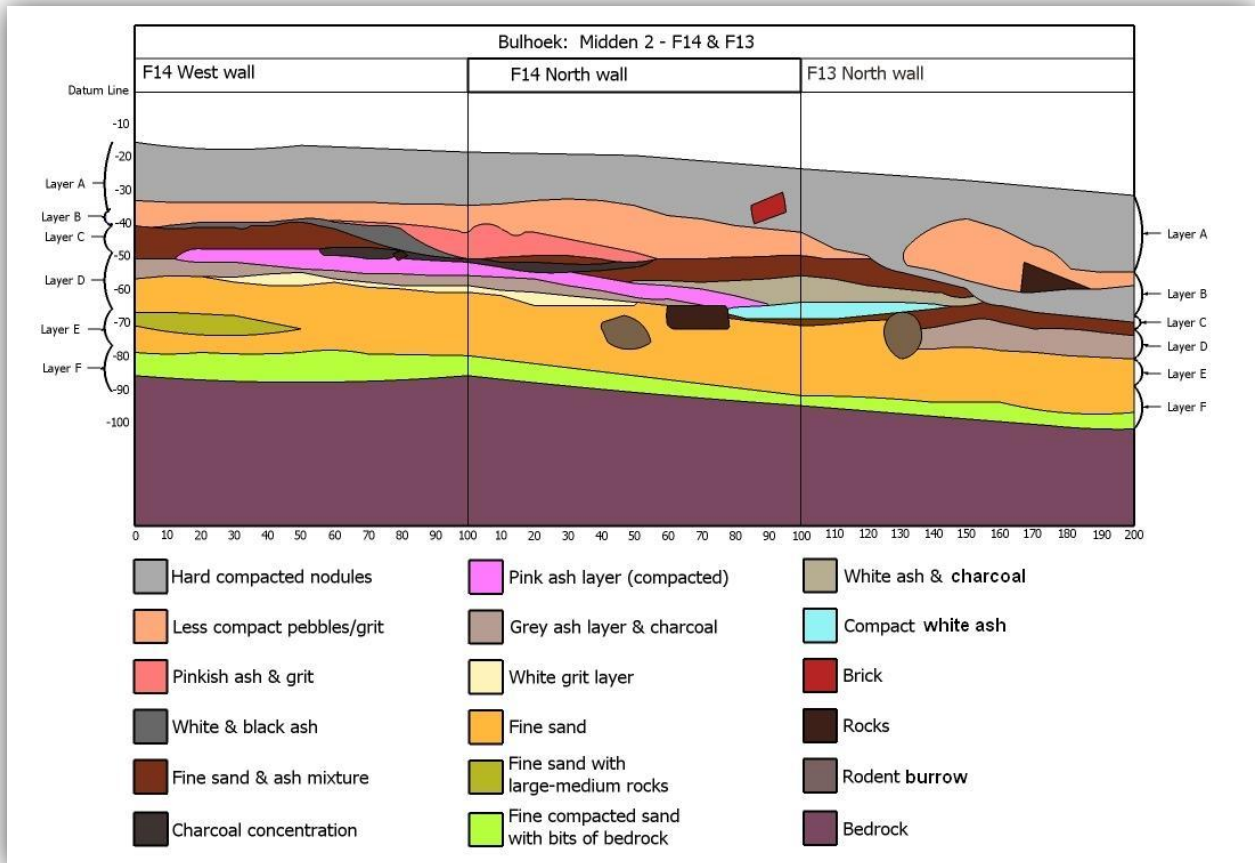
**Figure 51: The bottom of Midden 2.**



**Figure 52: Stratigraphy inside Midden 2.**



Midden 2 yielded a large quantity and variety of material including ceramics, glass, beads, buttons, fauna (bone and shell), burnt corn cob, peach pip fragments, and metal objects such as pins, needles, hook and eye fasteners and screws.



**Figure 53: Stratigraphy of Midden 2, block F14 and F13.**

(Drawing: Thys Uys)

Fieldwork continued in October 2013 with Midden 2 being the primary focus. Midden 2 was extended to the south, adding a 1x2 metre block to F14 and F13. These were labelled E14 and E13 respectively. This can be seen in **figure 54**, looking from the north of the midden to the south, and in **figure 55**, looking from the opposite side. These photos were taken while still busy with Layer A in both E14 and E13. Block E14 consisted of four layers, A, B, C and D, which continued into Block E13 (**Figure 55**) and was excavated stratigraphically.



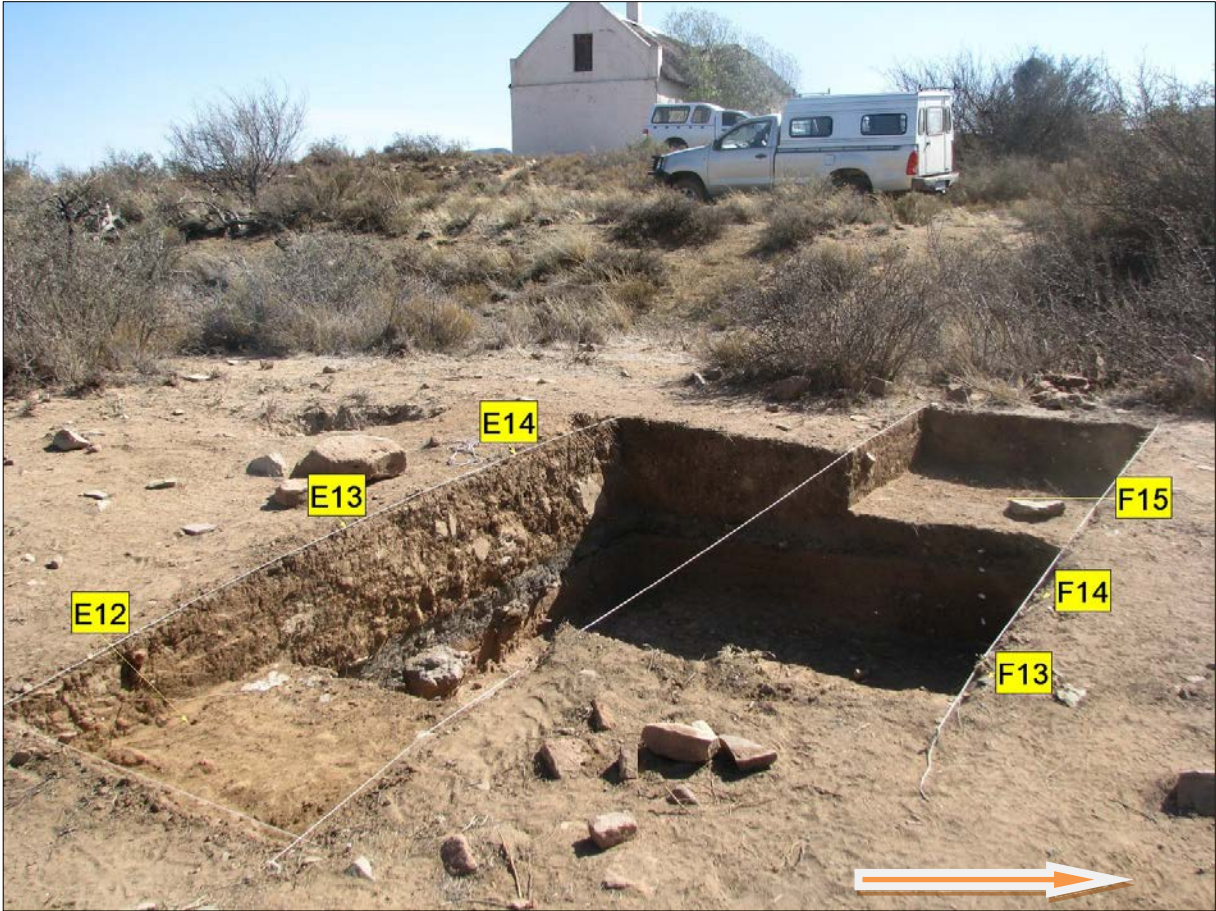
**Figure 54: Midden 2 extended to the south.**



**Figure 55: Midden 2, extended to the south.**

Upon completion of E14 and E13, the excavation was extended to E12 and F15. The location of these extended blocks can be seen in **figure 56**.





**Figure 56: Location of excavated blocks in Midden 2.**



**Figure 57: Midden 2, block E12.**



Block E12 consisted of three layers, A, C and D, that was excavated stratigraphically. Layer B did not continue into this block (**Figures 57-58**).

The final extension was made to block E11 (**Figure 59**). The three layers, A, C and D, continued into this block and were excavated stratigraphically as well. The stratigraphical layers of the southern section of Midden 2 can be seen in **figure 60**.

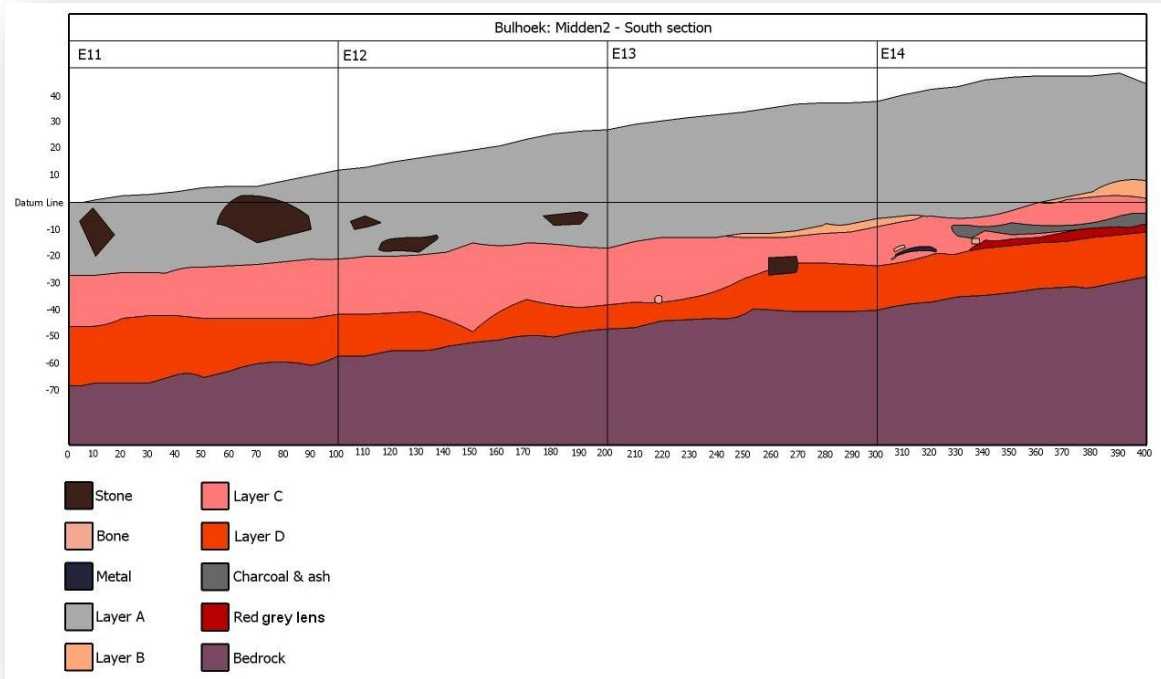


**Figure 58: Midden 2, block E12.**



**Figure 59: Midden 2, block E11.**





**Figure 60: Stratigraphy of Midden 2, south section (E11-E14)**

(Drawing: Thys Uys).

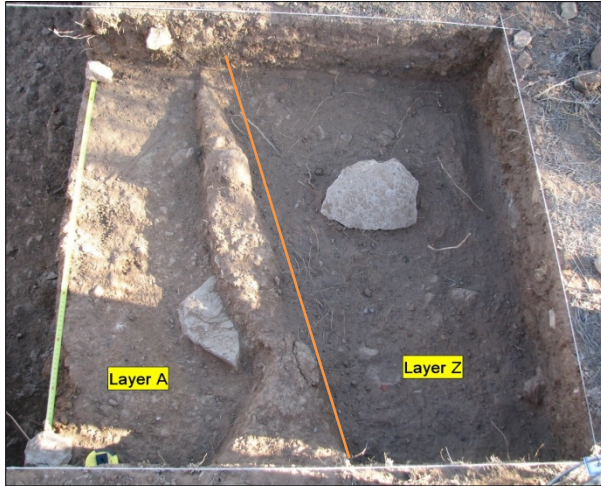
A disturbance was found during the excavation of block F15 (**Figure 61**). A change in soil colour on the same level (layer A) was noticed. The disturbed part of Layer A was labelled as Layer Z. The disturbed area can be seen in **figures 62-65**.



**Figure 61: Midden 2, block F15.**



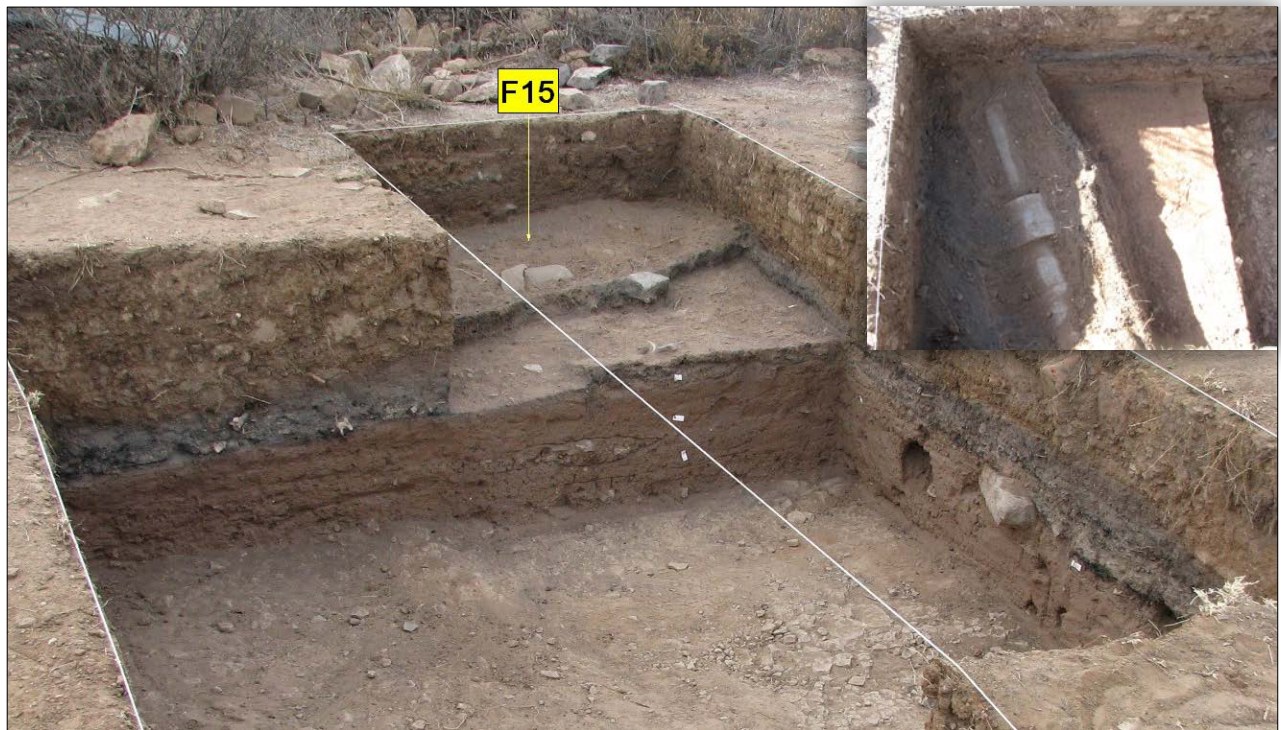
**Figure 62: Layer A and Z, block F15.**



**Figure 63: Layer A and Z, block F15.**



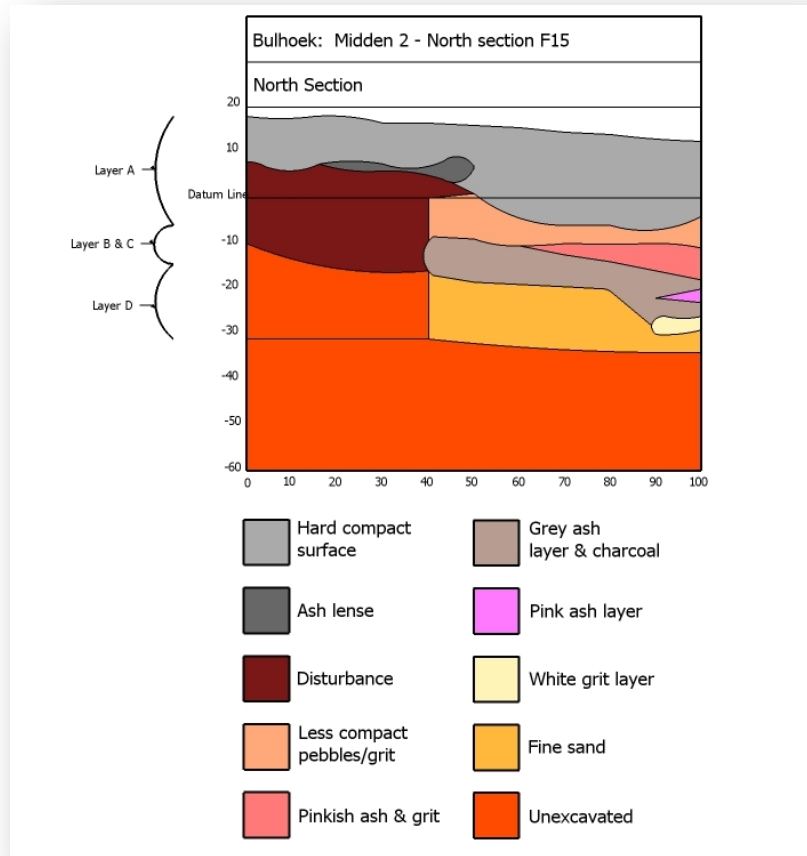
**Figure 64: Disturbance in block F15.**



**Figure 65: Midden 2, block F15.**

The disturbance in F15 turned out to be a pipe that could be connected to the 1938 festival activities. The pipe was left intact and excavation was stopped in Layer D (Figures 65 and 68). F15 consisted of five layers, A, B, C and D, as well as layer Z. The stratigraphy can be seen in figure 66. The excavation of midden 2 was concluded at the end of the second field trip in October 2013. The excavated blocks can be seen in figures 67 and 68.





**Figure 66: Stratigraphy of Midden 2, block F15.**

(Drawing: Thys Uys)



**Figure 67: Midden 2, indicating all the excavated blocks.**





Figure 68: Midden 2, indicating all the excavated blocks.



## Midden 3



**Figure 69: The surface of Midden 3.**



**Figure 70: Midden 3.**



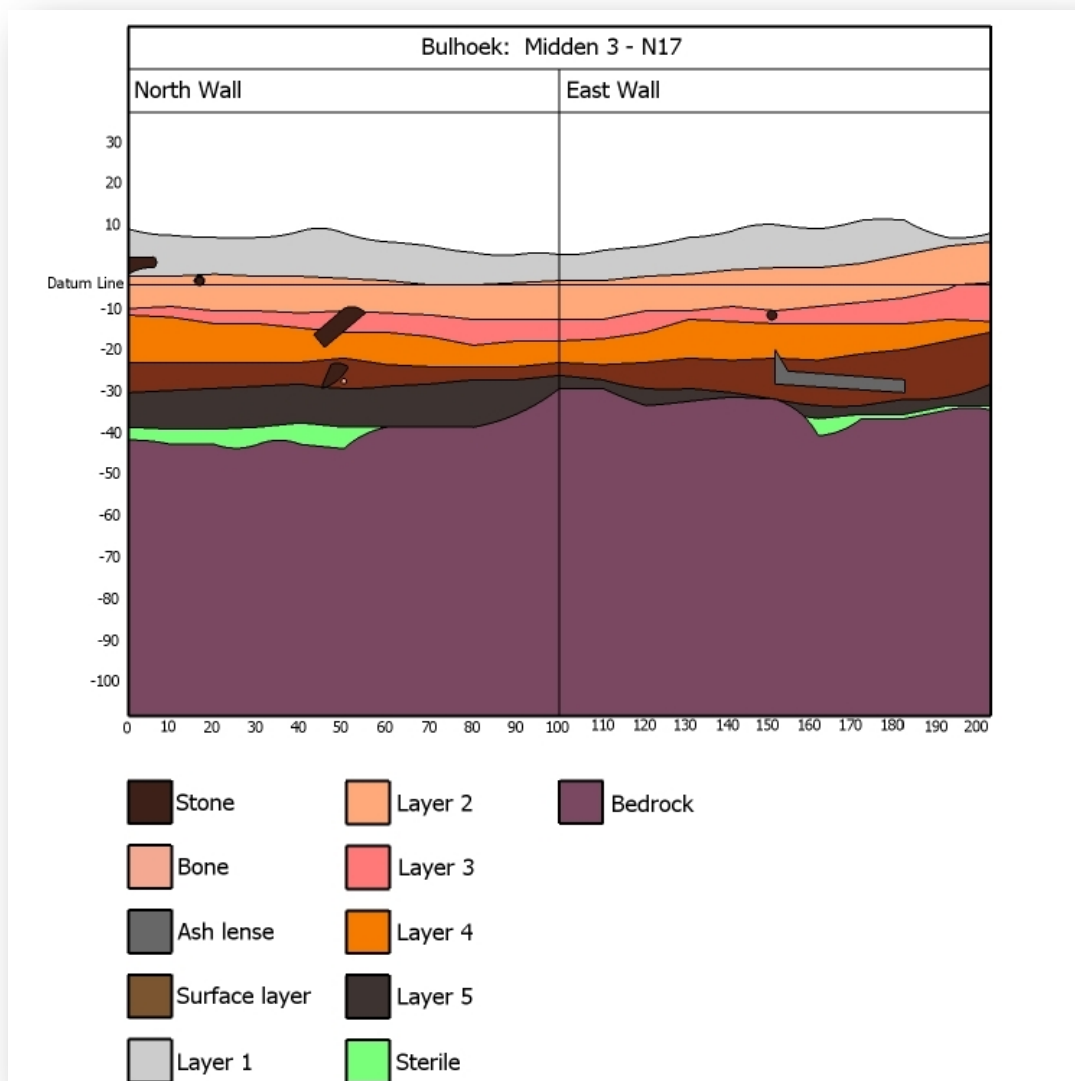
**Figure 71: Midden 3.**



**Figure 72: Midden 3.**

Midden 3 is located in block 3-3 at  $S31^{\circ}16'40.95''$ ,  $E25^{\circ}40'35.7''$ . A relatively dense surface scatter and ash coloured soil prompted a more detailed investigation of this area but a 1 x 1 metre test unit revealed the accumulation to be shallow in extent.

Midden 3 comprised seven levels, including the Surface. The midden was excavated in intervals of 100 mm (Surface and Levels 1, 4 and 5). Soil colour/texture changes were noted at Levels 2 and 6 and Levels 2, 3 and 6 were accordingly removed in smaller increments. Animal burrows were present along the north east wall at Level 6. The midden had a maximum depth of 0.48m (**Figure 73**). A small quantity of artefacts was recovered and includes fauna (bone), ceramics, glass, a napkin pin / safety pin, a cartridge casing, a button, a bead and rusted metal fragments. The excavation at Midden 3 was concluded in October 2012 during the first fieldtrip.



**Figure 73: Stratigraphy of Midden 3.**

(Drawing: Thys Uys)



## Analyses of the material

The analyses and accessioning of material excavated and collected is still in process. Detailed analyses will commence when the preliminary cleaning and processing is complete. The faunal material will be analysed by Louisa Hutten from the Archaeology Department at the University of Cape Town. The material was given to her on loan during September 2015. A sample of the artefacts collected can be seen in **figures 74-81**.



**Figure 74: Ceramics.**



**Figure 75: Plant material.**







**Figure 78: Clothing / needlework items.**



**Figure 79: Slate and slate pencils.**





Figure 80: Harmonica pieces.



Figure 81: Porcelain smoking pipe.



Figure 82: Cartridge casings.





**Figure 83: Household items.**

### **Further research**

Extensive archival and genealogical research on the owners of the farm still needs to be undertaken.

### **Sources**

Chief surveyor-general: <http://csg.dla.gov.za>:

- Farm 78, Bulhoek, district of Steynsburg
- Farm 78, Bulhoek, portion 11, district of Steynsburg

Coetzee, G.C.J. & Behrens, J. 2013. 1<sup>st</sup> Interim report on excavations conducted on the farm Bulhoek, Steynsburg district, Eastern Cape Province. Report submitted to SAHRA.

Mostert, D. 1940. *Gedenkboek van die ossewatrek 1838-1938*. Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers Beperk.

Photographs of the original houses at Bulhoek supplied by Ben Aucamp, Steynsburg, scanned copies supplied by Annemarie Carelsen (Ditsong museums).