

# Leopard Rock Shelter

## Final Report

By

Drs. Matthew V. Caruana<sup>1</sup> & Timothy R. Forssman<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Palaeo-Research Institute, University of Johannesburg, P.O. Box 524, Auckland Park 2006, South Africa.

<sup>2</sup>Anthropology & Archaeology Department, Humanities Building 8-5, University of Pretoria, Hatfield 0028.

December 2019

## Table of Contents

Site Information .....	3
Introduction .....	3
Site Description .....	4
Excavations .....	6
Final Remarks.....	7

## Figures

Figure 1 - Leopard Rock Shelter geographical map .....	4
Figure 2 - Map Location of Leopard Rock Shelter .....	5
Figure 3 - Floor plan of Leopard Rock Shelter and proposed excavation plans.....	5
Figure 4 - The interior of Leopard Rock Shelter .....	6
Figure 5 - Surface Finds. A&B) Stone tools; C) Pottery sherd; D) Ostrich Egg Shell.....	6
Figure 6 - Dr. Forssman excavating a 50x50cm test pit .....	7

## Site Information

Permit #: 8783

Case ID: 8783

SAHRA Permit Officer: Ragna Redelstorff

Permit Issue Date: 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2015

Permit Expiry Date: 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016

Permit Holders: Dr. Matthew V. Caruana (University of Johannesburg) & Timothy R. Forssman (University of Pretoria).

Site: Leopard Rock Shelter, Farm Hartbeesthoek 498 JQ, Hartebeestportdam, North-West Province, South Africa (Figs. 1 & 2).

GPS Coordinates: 25°50'55.39"S; 27°48'13.92"E

## Introduction

In 2014, Phillip Tetley, owner of the Haasgat property within Kalkheuvel West (Hartebeestportdam, Gauteng Province) informed Dr. Matthew V. Caruana of a small rock shelter located near his property that contained stone tools eroding out of the floor sediment. Mr. Tetley took Dr. Caruana to this locality in 2015, where Later Stone Age (LSA) stone tools and Iron Age pottery were noted. Mr. Tetley passed on the details of the landowners, represented by Ms. Tracy Kraus, who agreed for the rock shelter to be excavated.

Dr. Caruana formed a research plan and collaboration with Dr. Timothy R. Forssman (University of Pretoria) to excavate the cave, as Dr. Forssman's research focus is on the contact period between LSA and Iron Age communities in South Africa. As per the agreement signed between Ms. Kraus and Drs. Caruana and Forssman, the latter researchers began to set up the rock shelter for excavation, including datum and control points for surveying, and mapping plans to open a 50x50cm geological trench and eventually a 3x3m excavation trench. Upon consulting the landowners, the name 'Leopard Rock Shelter' (LRS) was agreed upon for the archaeological locality.

The permit to excavate LRS was issued by the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA) in December of 2015. Datum and control points were installed into the cave with rockset Polyfilla, with the intension of removing control points from the walls once the

excavation was finished. The geological grid was set up to explore the depth of the deposit, and Dr. Caruana and Forssman began excavating in February of 2016.

In June of 2016, a tenant on the property contacted Dr. Caruana to express their discontent with the excavations of the cave. He identified himself as a 'steward' of the land and accused Drs. Caruana and Forssman of 'vandalising' the rock shelter, to which he was personally and emotionally attached. Dr. Caruana contacted Ms. Kraus and explained the situation and the tenant's discontent. Ms. Kraus later responded to say that the tenant had filed a bid to buy a portion of the property where LRS was located and that the tenant purposefully objected to the excavations due to a perceived potential increase in the property's value. Ms. Kraus stated that she had explained to the tenant that the landowners were upset that Drs. Caruana and Forssman research plans were interfered with and that the tenant had no right to complain about the research at LRS. The tenant apologised to Ms. Kraus and said that it was wrong to contact Dr. Caruana without consulting the landowners.

Nonetheless, Drs. Caruana and Forssman decided that moving forward with excavations with a disgruntled tenant on the property was not safe and risked further disrepute with the local community. The research plans for LRS were halted and the permit left to lapse without further reports of research.

## Site Description

LRS is located in the North-West Province, ~46 km north of Johannesburg within the UNESCO Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site (Figs. 1 & 2). It falls within the property boundaries of the Farm Hartbeesthoek 498 JQ (Map# 2527DD), North-West Province, owned by the Regel Family Holding (PTY). Its floor plan is approximately 10,000 cm x 4,000 (Fig. 3 & 4) and its sediment deposit preserves LSA artefacts and Iron Age pottery remains.

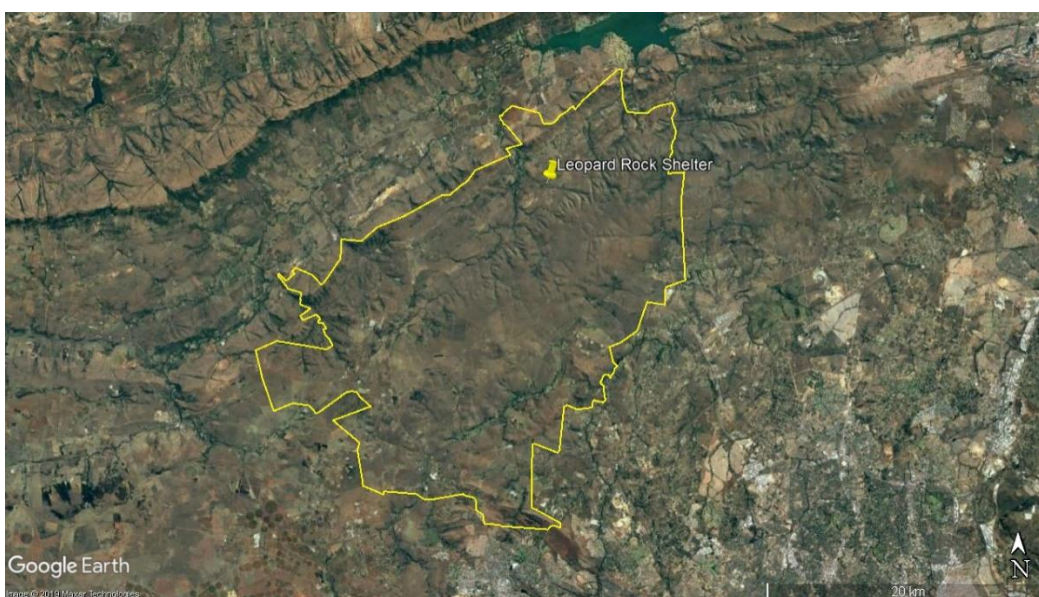


Figure 1 - Leopard Rock Shelter geographical map

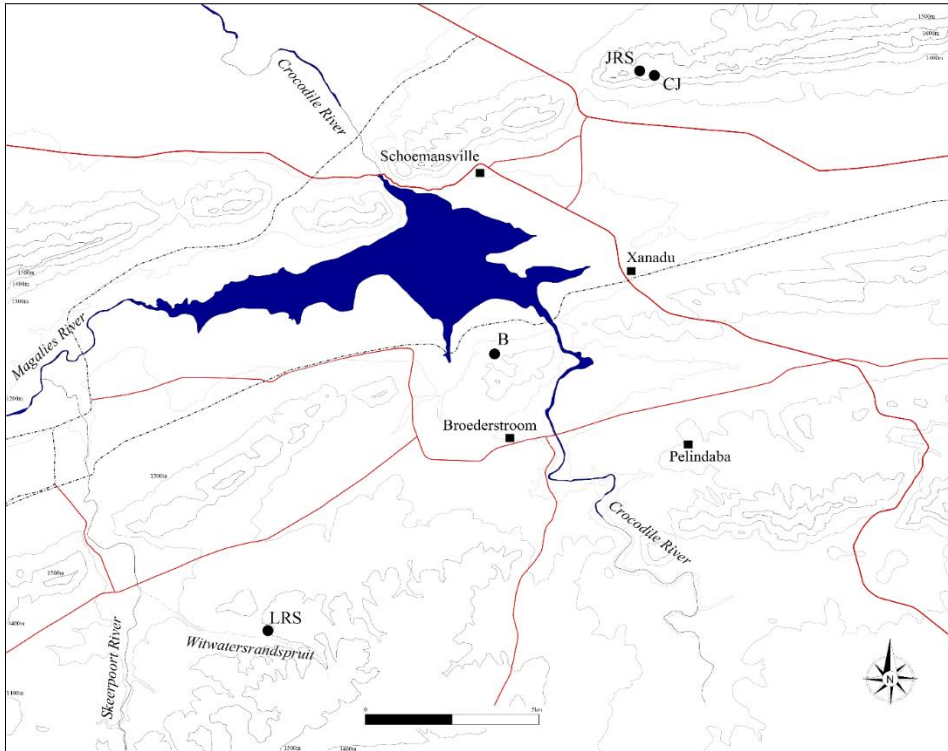


Figure 2 - Map Location of Leopard Rock Shelter

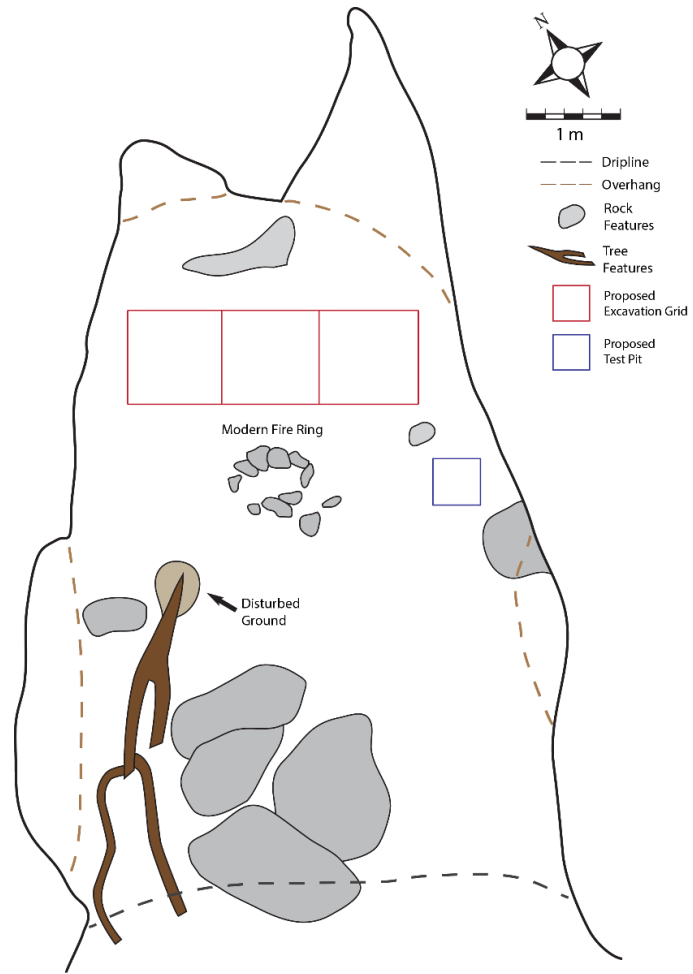


Figure 3 - Floor plan of Leopard Rock Shelter and proposed excavation plans





Figure 4 - The interior of Leopard Rock Shelter

## Excavations

Upon the first research trip to LRS, ten surface artefacts (including stone tools, ostrich egg shell fragments and pottery) were first collected and are currently curated at the University of Pretoria (Fig. 4 & 5). Dr. Forssman excavated a 50x50cm test pit to understand the depth of the archaeological deposit, which reached approximately 20cm in depth (Fig. 6). However, further research was halted to do the land tenant issues described above.

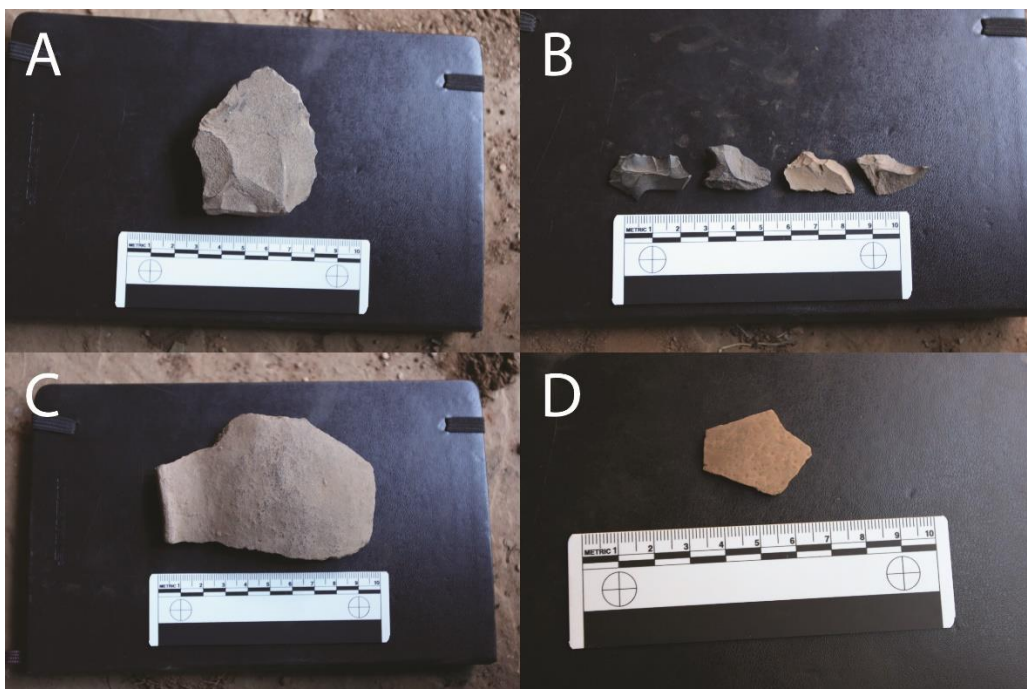


Figure 5 - Surface Finds. A&B) Stone tools; C) Pottery sherd; D) Ostrich Egg Shell



*Figure 6 - Dr. Forssman excavating a 50x50cm test pit*

## Final Remarks

Unfortunately, the research program at Leopard Rock Shelter was halted due to a minor dispute with a land tenant on the property. Work never resumed after the initial excavation of the test pit, which did not reach the basement rock of the deposit. No archaeological remains, beyond the surface finds (N= 10), were recovered and thus an analysis of the site could not be undertaken. The status of the site is unknown, nor is the ownership of the land at this point.