

FIRST INTERIM REPORT

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF AN EARLY TREK-FARMER
SETTLEMENT AND TRADING POST:**

THE FARM LEEUSPRUIT 469, ROUXVILLE DISTRICT, FREE STATE PROVINCE

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INTRODUCTION

The archaeological investigation of Leeuspruit 469, forms part of a larger research project that focusses on the study and analysis of the material culture associated with early trek-farmer sites located in the north-eastern Cape and southern Free State. The farm Leeuspruit 469 is situated in the Rouxville district (3026BD).

The first two-week fieldwork expedition took place during September 2015 and concentrated on the middens close to the homestead ruins. This specifically involved the collection of surface material, as well as the excavation of the identified middens. Two middens were identified and labelled as Midden 1, and Midden 2, respectively.

The 2015 fieldwork team consisted of seven participants. This included myself, Loudine Philip, Myra Mashimbye and Thys Uys from the Department of Archaeology at the National Museum, Bloemfontein. Three UNISA Archaeology Master's degree students, assisted with the excavations. Heidi Fivaz and Debbie Palk assisted for the entire two-week period, while, Jan Engelbrecht, however, was only present during the first week.

The second fieldwork expedition took place from 5-16 September 2016. The focus shifted to the area opposite the farmstead, across the gravel road, close to the spruit. The fieldwork team consisted of seven members in total. This included Thys Uys and myself from the National Museum, Bloemfontein, and four volunteers. Three of these volunteers, Heidi Fivaz, Jan Engelbrecht and Sky-Lee Fairhurst, are UNISA students. The other volunteer, Celeste Rossouw, is associated with AMAFA, and participated during the first week of fieldwork.

This report will focus on aspects such the layout of the site, the location of structures and the archaeological fieldwork conducted. Due to the withdrawal of fellow permit applicant Loudine Philip from the project, the detailed recording and analysis of the structures on the site will not be done.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Leeuspruit, also known as Waaipoort, was one of the first farms established by a *trekboer* family in this part of the Free State. The farm was occupied in the early 1830s by one of many Swanepoel families who settled in the Rouxville area. According to Pretorius (1997: 136) the first owner, P.F.R. Swanepoel, “built his house near a poort at the foot of a hill so that it overlooked the old transport road which linked Aliwal North to Lesotho and the Eastern Free State. The settlement’s strategic position allowed the Swanepoels to witness a steady stream of Voortrekkers, traders and travellers.” Leeuspruit was therefore considered as a trading post that allowed people to obtain fresh oxen or horses for their trips ahead, as well as, fresh food supplies (Nienaber, 1986:27).

According to Mr Henry Swanepoel, a descendent of the first Swanepoel settlers, the farm was situated on an old hunters’ route and not the trader’s route. The traders apparently used a different route that passed Klipplaatsdrift, also in the Rouxville district. When travelling from the Cape Colony, hunters followed a route that crossed the Orange River into the Orange Free State at Buffelsdrift (Aliwal North). From there the route went in the direction of Suurbult (now Rouxville), passing Leeuspruit, and eventually crossing the Caledon River at Jammersdrift (Wepener).

Mr Swanepoel also stated that the first owner of Waaipoort was in fact Johannes Jacobus Swanepoel, the father of P.F.R. Swanepoel. Johannes Jacobus Swanepoel (1784-1871) went by the nick name of Blou Koos. He lived in the Graaff-Reinet district, before he and his family moved to the district of Rouxville. In 1882 Leeuspruit was registered in the name of Philippus Johannes Cornelis Swanepoel, the son of P.F.R. Swanepoel.

LOCATION OF THE SITE

Leeuspruit 469 is situated in the district of Rouxville in the southern Free State (**Fig. 1-2**). The original farm has been divided into two parts by the gravel road that runs between Rouxville and Zastron (**Fig. 3-4**). Portion 1 of the farm is owned by Mr Harry Goosen, while the Remainder of the farm is owned by Mr Piet Fouché.

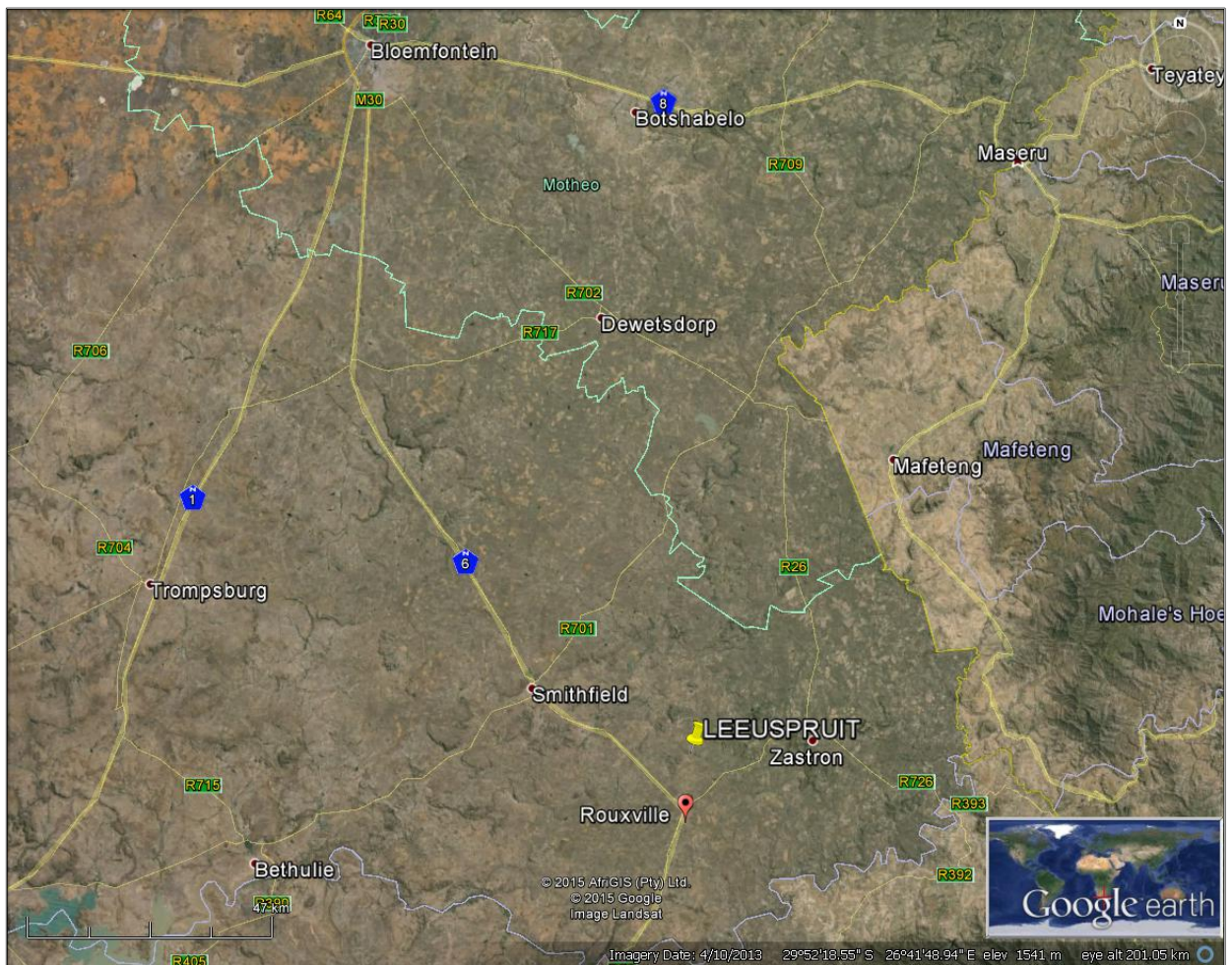


Fig. 1: Google earth image showing the location of Leeuspruit in the southern Free State.

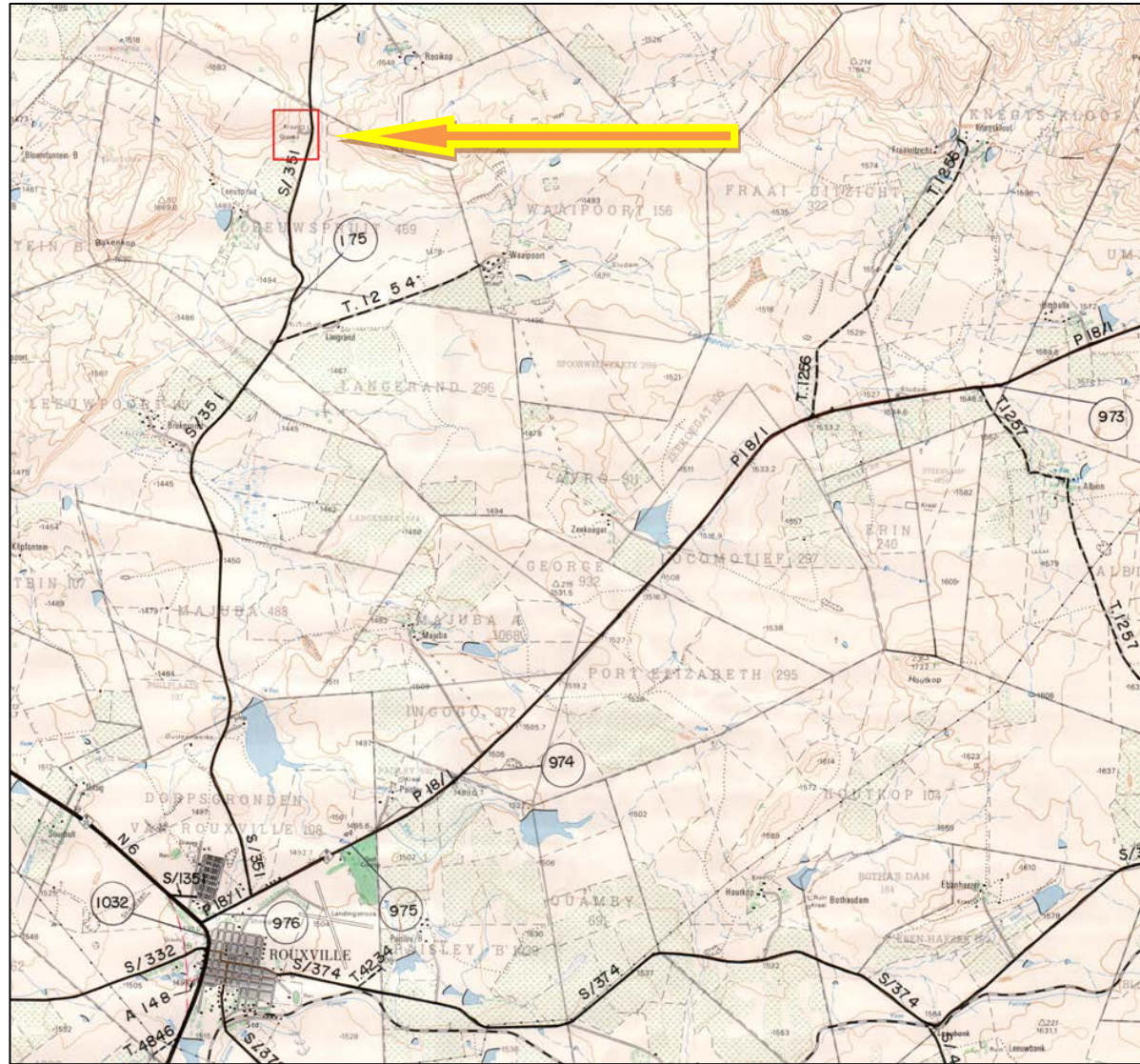


Fig. 2: The location of Leuspruit in relation to Rouxville on the 1:50 000 map (3026BD).

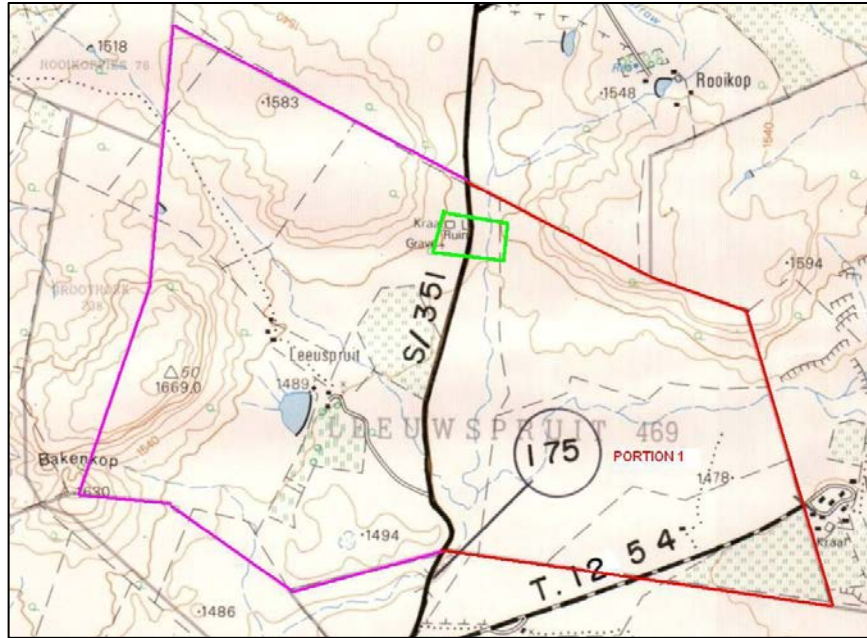


Fig. 3: Leeuspruit 469 with the gravel road passing through it.



Fig. 4: A gravel road separates the Remainder of Leeuspruit (left) from Portion 1 (right).

FIELDWORK SEPTEMBER 2015

Structures and features identified

Fieldwork during the 2015 field season was conducted on the Remainder of Leeuspruit 469.

A virtual grid was laid out over the study area in Google earth (**Fig. 5**). The applicable section of map 3026DB was superimposed over the Google earth image. It became evident from studying the aerial photographs, as well as from the surface surveys, that road work was done in the area at some stage. The trajectory of the road past the old farmstead structures, has changed to some extent. This alteration to the road becomes more visible when the image overlay function in Google earth is applied, and influences the appearance of the location of the structures on the various maps (**Fig. 6 & 7**).

The grid consists of 25x25 m numbered units. It provides contextual reference for the collected surface material, and serves as guide for plotting the distribution of artefacts across the site's surface.



Fig. 5: Grid across research area.

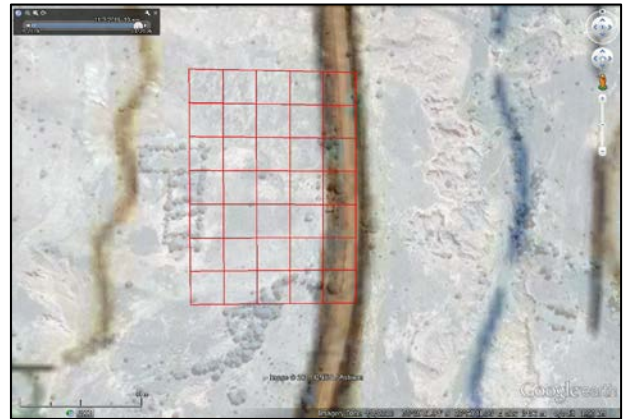


Fig. 6: Image overlay in Google Earth.

The farmstead, including the main house and most of the other structures, are located on this portion of the farm. The locations of these structures are indicated on the maps in **Fig. 7-9**. Bold typed abbreviations (e.g. **G1**), are used as keys to indicate the position of a specific structure or feature on the maps.

Structures and ruins visible in this area include the following:

- Graveyard 1 = **G1 (Fig. 10-13)** A graveyard containing the graves of several Swanepoel descendants, as well as some unidentified graves.
- Terrace = **T (Fig. 14)** A possible terrace.
- House 1 = **H1 (Fig. 15-18)** The main house.
- House 2 = **H2 (Fig. 19-20)** Another house.
- Structure 1 – 6 = **S1, S2, S3, S4, S5 & S6 (Fig. 21-29)** Portions of walls and foundations of unidentified structures.
- Kraal 1, Kraal 2 = **K1, K2 (Figure 30-35)** Kraals for livestock.

Other features found include the following:

- A stone with cut marks on the surface at Structure 1, **Fig. 36**.
- A lower grounding stone (**S**), **Fig. 37**.
- Two middens, called Midden 1 and Midden 2 (**1 – 2**), **Fig. 38-49**.

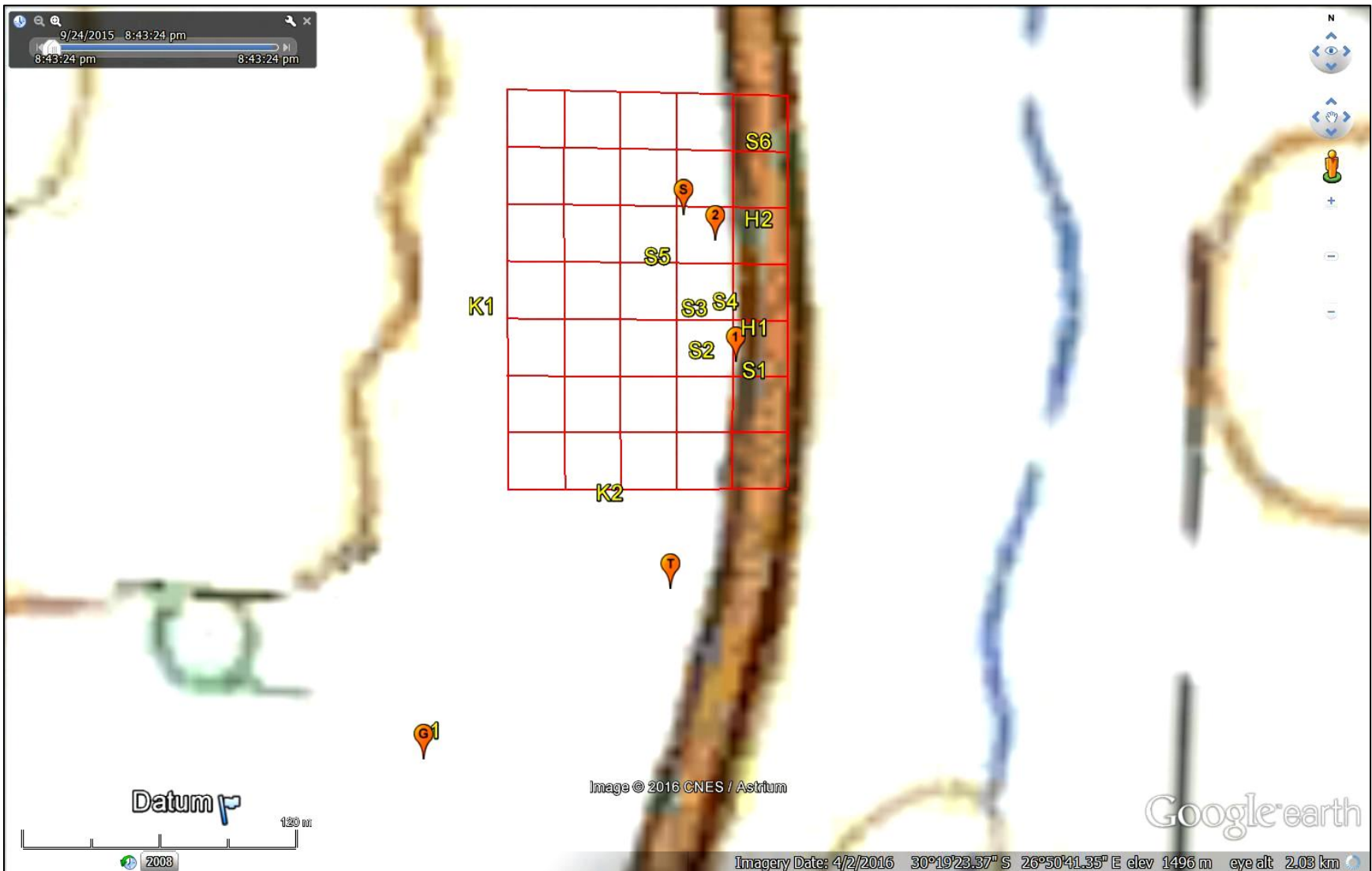


Fig. 7: Map with grid, indicating the position of the structures, and features on the site.

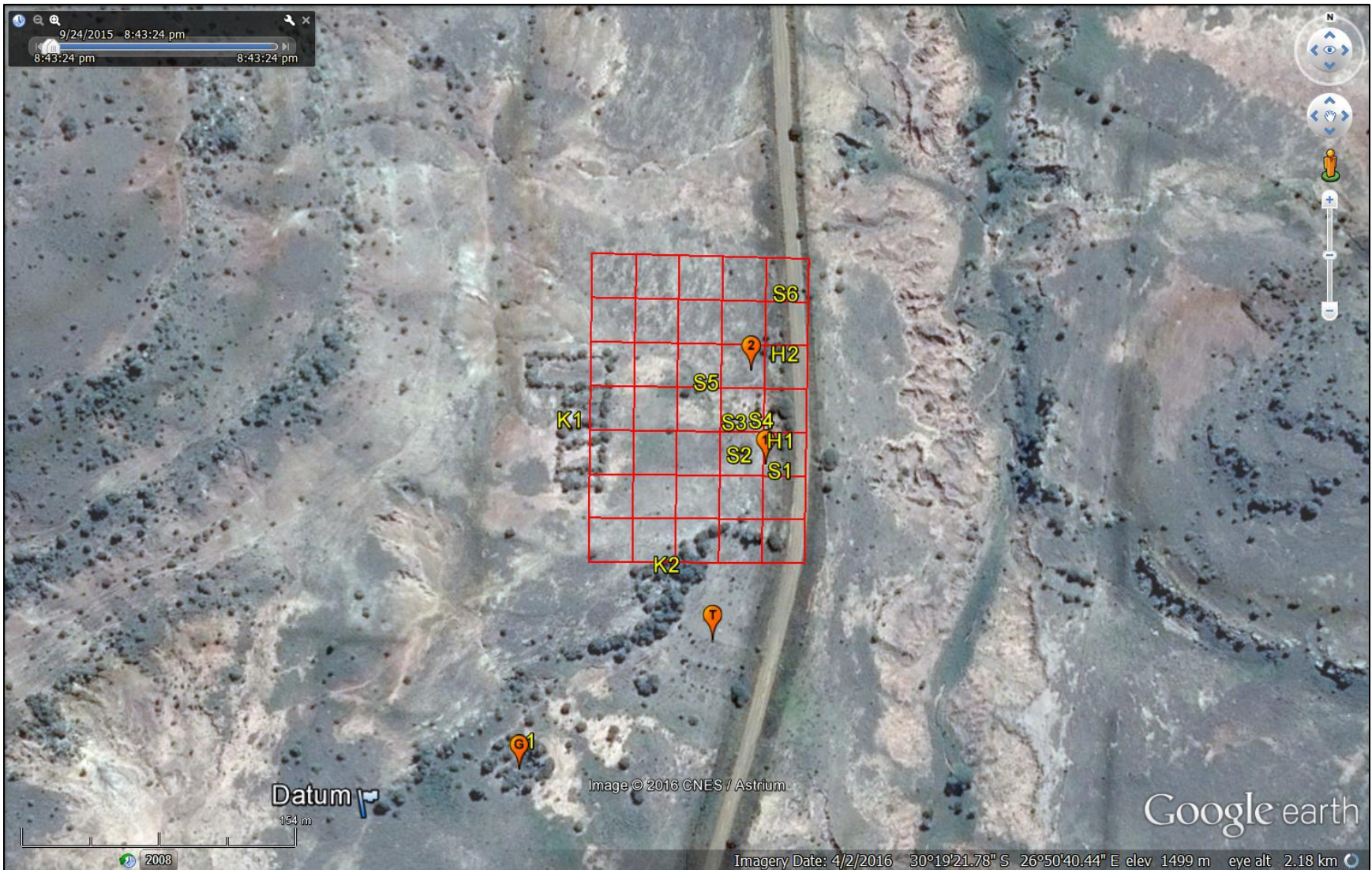


Fig. 8: Google earth image with the grid and location of the structures, and features on the site.



Fig. 9: A close-up of the area indicating the position of the mentioned structures, and features.

According to Mr Henry Swanepoel, the original owners of Leeuspruit, Johannes Jacobus Swanepoel (1784-1871) and his wife, are buried in unmarked graves in the graveyard.



Fig. 10 & 11: The graves of P.F.R. Swanepoel and A.M. Swanepoel, born Gouws.



Fig. 12: The graves of P.J.C. Swanepoel and A.M. Swanepoel.



Fig. 13: The graves of J.G. Gouws and S.J. Gouws, born Breytenbach.



Fig. 14: A view of the terrace at the site.

The main house in **Fig. 15-18, (H1)** is the best-preserved house on the site and it is clearly visible from the gravel road. The main entrance of the house faces the road. The gravel road is marked by the arrow in **Fig. 15**.

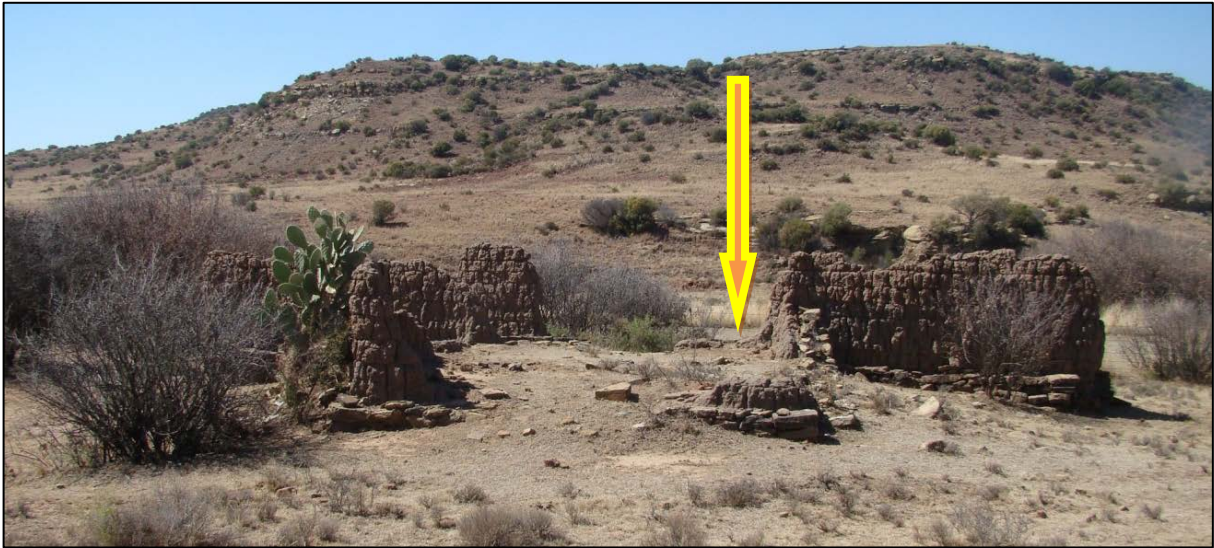


Fig. 15: The main house at the site (House 1, **H1**).

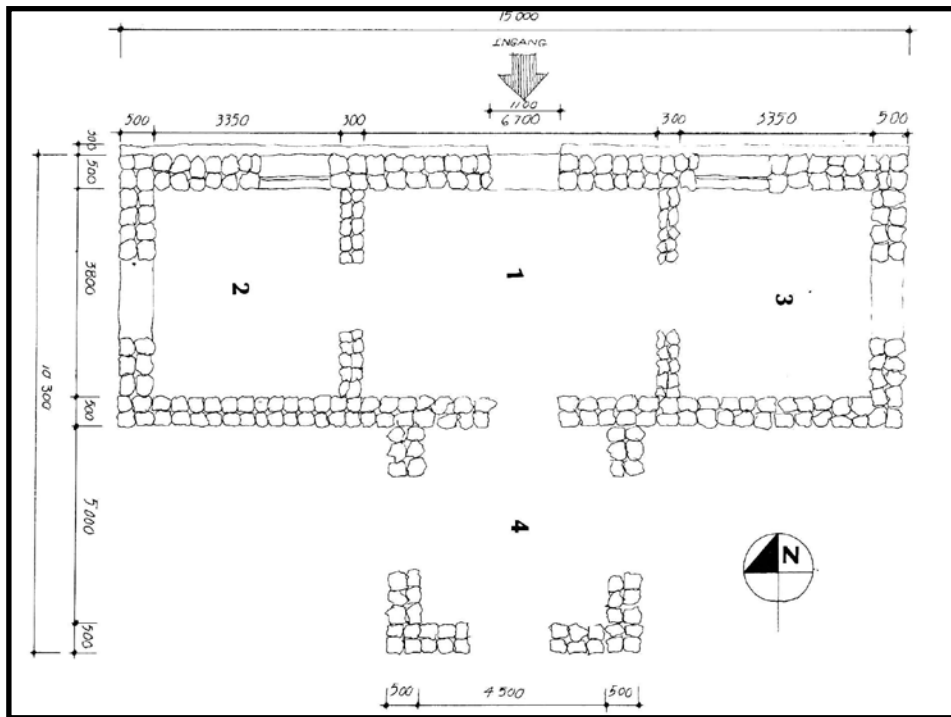


Fig. 16: Floor plan of the main house (Nienaber, 1986: 24).

The floor plan of the main house at Leeuspruit (**Fig. 16**) was compiled by P.J. Nienaber in 1986. The floor plan layout in **Fig. 16** corresponds with the direction of the house in **Fig. 15**. According to Nienaber (1986: 25), the house consisted of a living room (room 1), a bedroom on the left, one on the right, and an oven / fireplace in room 4. The house consists of mud layered walls built on a stone foundation (**Fig. 17 & 18**). The ruins represent one of the best-preserved examples of an early trek farmer dwelling that we have encountered thus far.



Fig. 17: Mud layered walls on a stone foundation.



Fig. 18: The main house at the site (**H1**).

The ruins of a second house (**H2**) was also found (**Fig. 19-20**). Partial clay walling is still visible, as well as a part of the stone foundation.

The remains of six unidentified structures are located within the vicinity of the houses. Since the purpose of these buildings are undetermined at this stage, they will henceforth be referred to as Structure 1 to 6 (**Fig. 21-29**). Further archival research, in conjunction with the analysis of the artefacts associated with the structures, may eventually provide clues to the function of some of these structures.

Two large kraals, consisting of a network of smaller kraals, are discernible (**Fig. 30-35**). Kraal 1 (**K1**) is the largest structure on the site, and serves as a landmark when consulting aerial photographs and Google earth.

A stone with cut marks was found on the foundation of Structure 1 (**Fig. 36**) and a lower grindstone was located between House 2 and Structure 5 (**Fig. 37**).



Fig. 19: Ruin of House 2 (H2).



Fig. 20: Ruin of House 2 (H2).



Fig. 21: The foundation of Structure 1, situated between the gravel road and Midden 1.



Fig. 22: Foundation of Structure 2, with Midden 1 at the back to the left.



Fig. 23: The ruin of Structure 2.



Fig. 24: Foundation of Structure 3 in the front, and House 1 in the background.



Fig. 25: The foundation of Structure 3.



Fig. 26: The foundation of Structure 4, and House 1 in the background.



Fig. 27: Foundation of Structure 4.



Fig. 28: Foundation of Structure 5.



Fig. 29: Foundation of Structure 5.



Fig. 30: Kraal 1.



Fig. 31: Kraal 1.



Fig. 32: One of the smaller kraals inside Kraal 1.



Fig. 33: One of the smaller kraals inside Kraal 1.



Fig. 34: One of the kraals forming part of Kraal 2.



Fig. 35: Another kraal forming part of Kraal 2.



Fig. 36: Stone with cut marks found on the foundation of Structure 1.



Fig. 37: Lower ground stone found a few metres behind House 2, close to Structure 5.

Excavations conducted at the middens

Two middens were identified. The midden closest to the main house is the largest and has been labelled as Midden 1, while the smaller midden situated close to House 2, has been labelled as Midden 2.

Midden 1

Midden 1 is associated with House 1, Structure 1, and Structure 2. The surface area of the midden was extensively disrupted by animal burrowing as can be seen in **Fig. 38-45**. The aim was to excavate 1x1 m units that presented little to no evidence of burrowing activity on the surface. A grid was laid over the midden within the parameters of the virtual grid devised on Google earth. Excavations were conducted in three 1x1 m units within block 5-5/AY-21, numbered as 16, 17 and 22 (**Fig. 42, 44**).

Excavation layers were removed in 10 cm spits. Within the first two excavated layers, signs of animal disturbance became apparent. Further excavations revealed the extent of the tunnelled maze made by the meerkat colony, and other burrowing animals, residing within the midden.



Fig. 38: Midden 1, with House 1 in the background.



Fig. 39: Midden 1.



Fig. 40: Close-up of Midden 1.

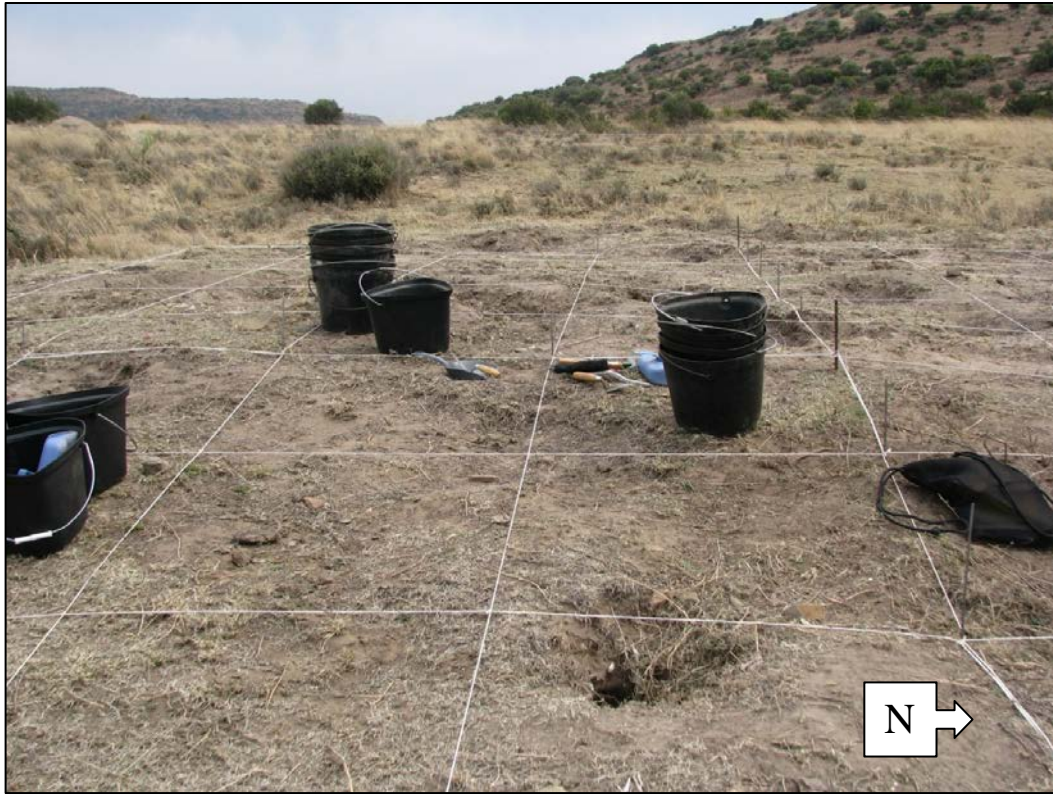


Fig. 41: The grid across Midden 1.

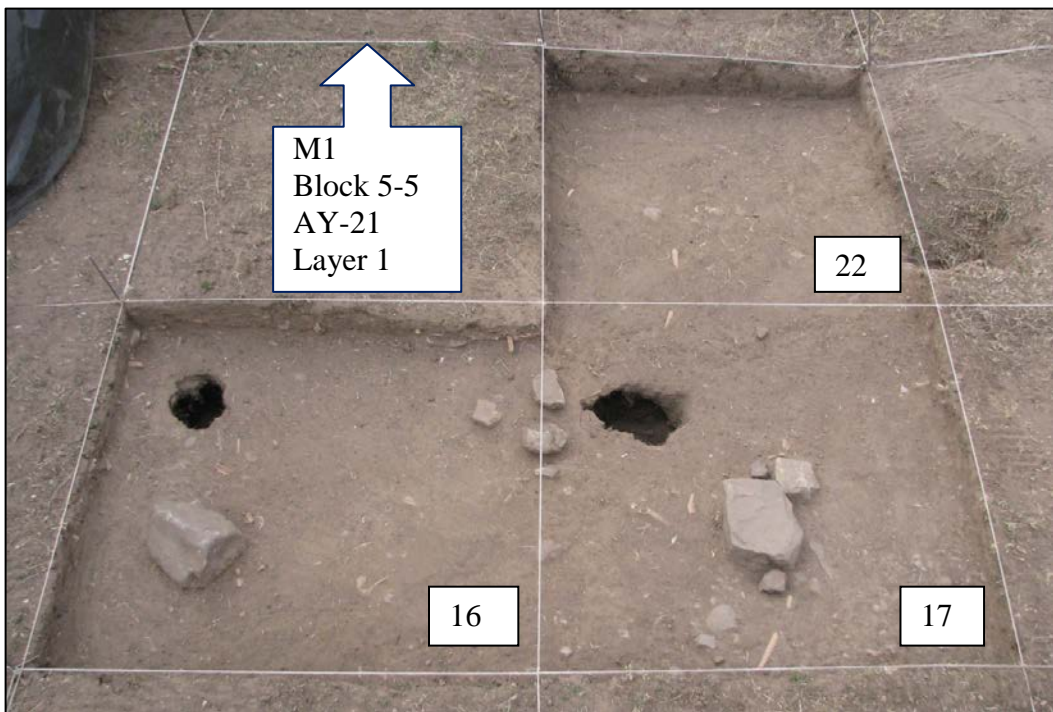


Fig. 42: The three 1x1 m blocks excavated in Midden 1.



Fig. 43: Excavations at Midden 1.

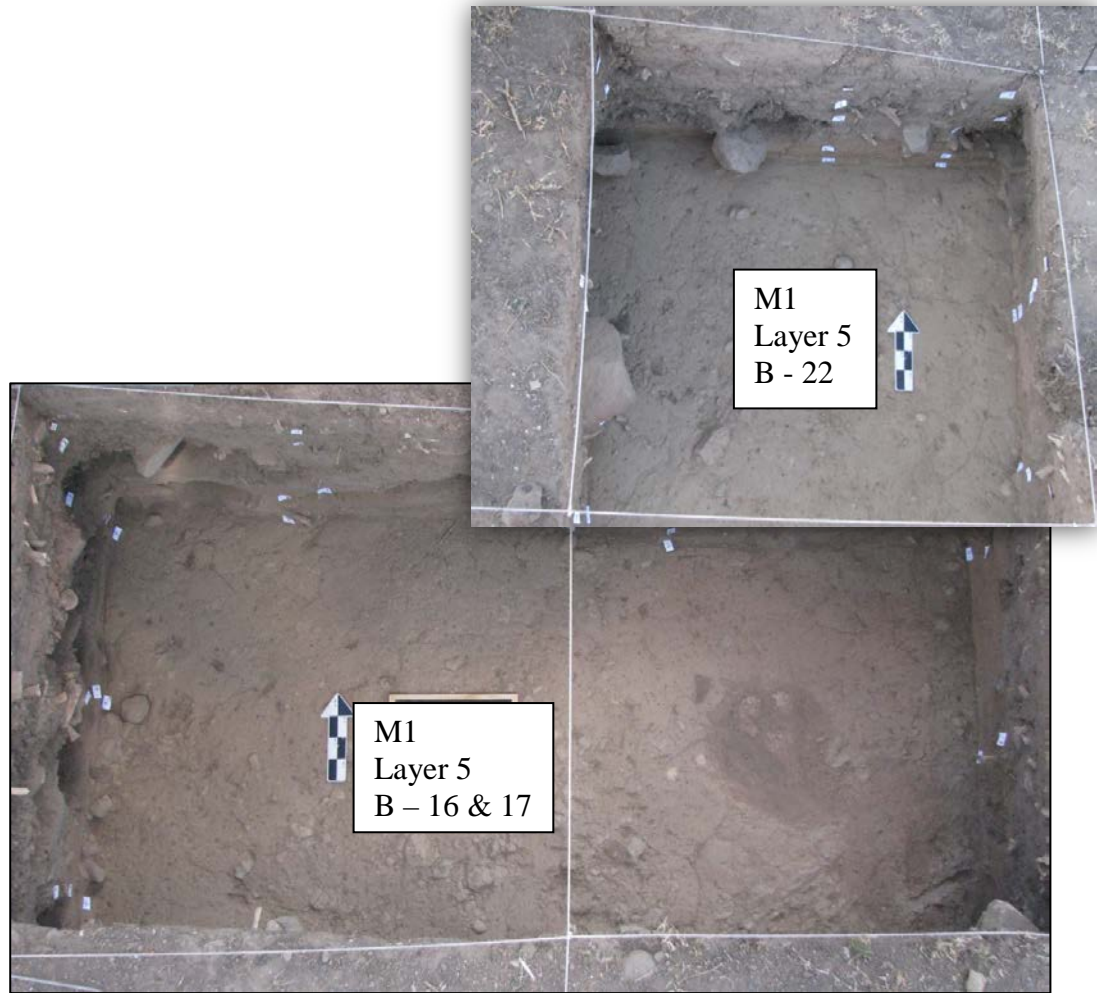


Fig. 44: The completed excavation of Midden 1.



Fig. 45: Midden 1, Unit 16, western wall, showing the extend of the animal burrows.

Midden 2

Midden 2 is situated behind House 2, a small distance from Structure 5. The second midden was similarly disturbed by burrowing animals (**Fig. 46-48**). Excavations were conducted in two 1x1 m units in block 3-4/AN-19, with the least amount of disturbance on the surface. The 1x1 m units are numbered 21 and 22 (**Fig. 49**). Unlike Midden 1, this midden was very shallow (**Fig. 49**), and despite the presence of several artefacts and ash on the surface, it did not yield as much material culture as expected.



Fig. 46: Midden 2, with House 2 in the background.



Fig. 47: A close-up of Midden 2.



Fig. 48: The grid across Midden 2.



Fig. 49: Excavations at Midden 2.

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During the second field season in 2016, the focus shifted to the area opposite the farmstead, on Portion 1 of Leeuspruit farm. Erosion caused tremendous damage to the structures and middens in this area (**Fig. 50**). Further damage was done when the direction of the gravel road was slightly altered at some stage.



Fig. 50: A view across the research area on Portion 1.

The virtual grid from 2015 was extended to include Portion 1 (**Fig. 51**), and to cover the area where approximately 99% of the artefacts were collected. The grid in **Figure 51** reflects the area distribution of surface artefacts across the research site. High concentration of objects occurred in certain units of the grid, while other units were limited to only two or three artefacts. The complete pattern of dispersal may only become apparent once all the data has been processed.

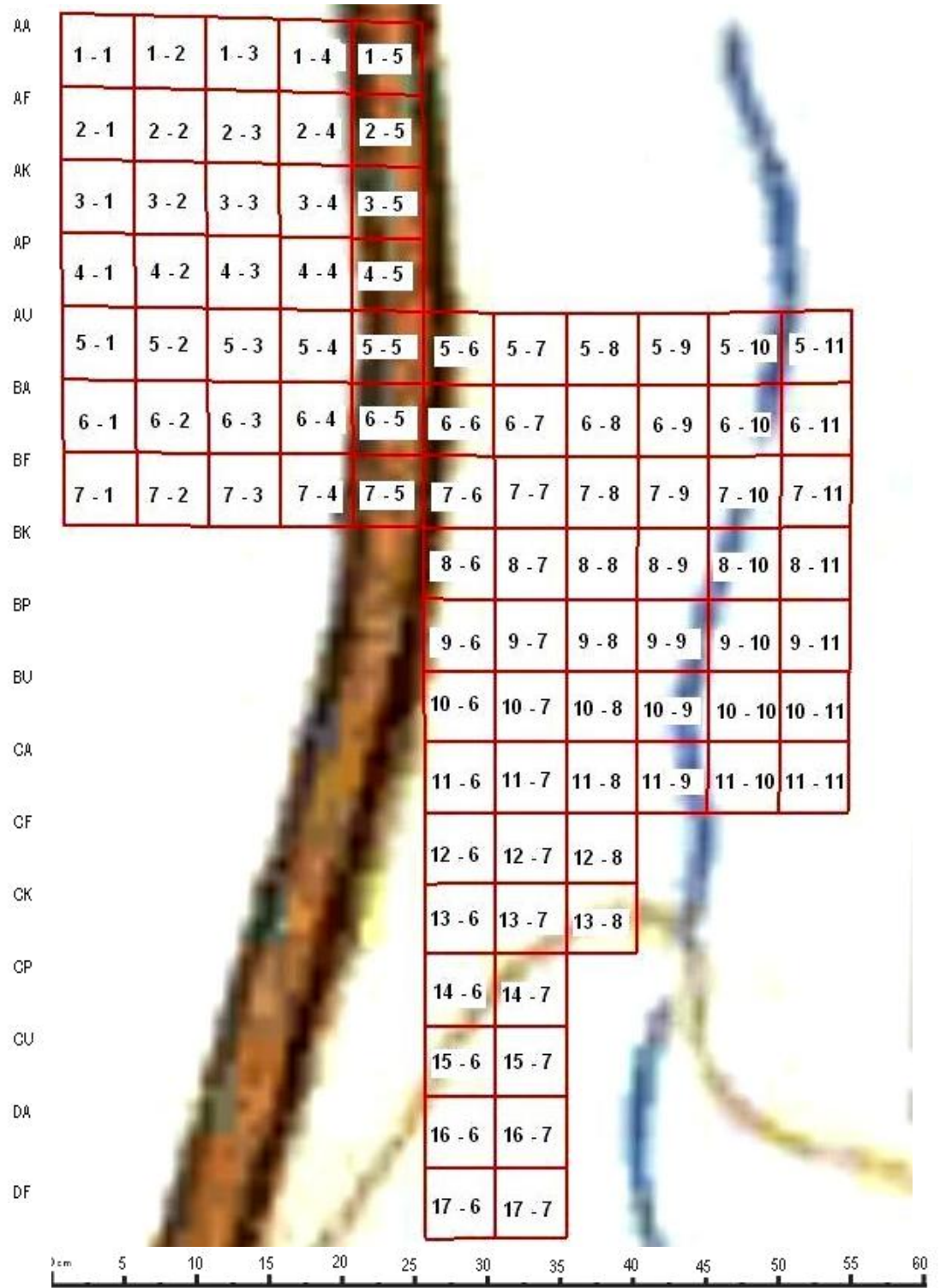


Fig. 51: Virtual grid placed across the research area.

Several structures and features were found on Portion 1. The locations of these structures and features are indicated on the maps in **Fig. 52-55**.

1. Kraals for livestock (**K3-K7**), **Fig. 56-64**.
2. Informal graveyard (Graveyard 2 = **G2**), **Fig. 65-68**.
3. Possible clay structure (**S7**), **Fig. 69-70**.
4. Unidentified structures (**S8-S9**), **Fig. 71-73**.
5. Engraved stone (**i**), **Fig. 74**.
6. The excavated areas are indicated as **A** and **B**, **Fig. 75-93**.

Kraal 3 is the most distinguishable structure on this site (**Fig. 56**). The northern wall of the kraal has eroded away, as well as any features that might have existed on the northern side of the kraal (**Fig. 50, 53**). The eastern wall, next to the spruit, is still visible, but natural erosive forces are engendering its collapse and disappearance (**Fig. 54**). The softer top soil of the kraal has been washed away, along with any evidence of a possible midden associated with the kraal. The number of artefacts recovered across the surface of the kraal, and surrounding area, clearly indicates that this was more than just a kraal for livestock. This will be investigated against the background of the traders' route.

Kraal 4 is situated across the spruit, opposite Kraal 3 (**Fig. 57**), with the probable remains of a smaller enclosure next to the outer wall (**Fig. 58**).

The smaller remnants of Kraal 5 are a few metres north of Kraal 4 (**Fig. 59**). There appears to be another small enclosure, at the entrance of the kraal (**Fig. 60**).

Kraal 6 is some distance away from the rest of the structures (**Fig. 61 & 62**).

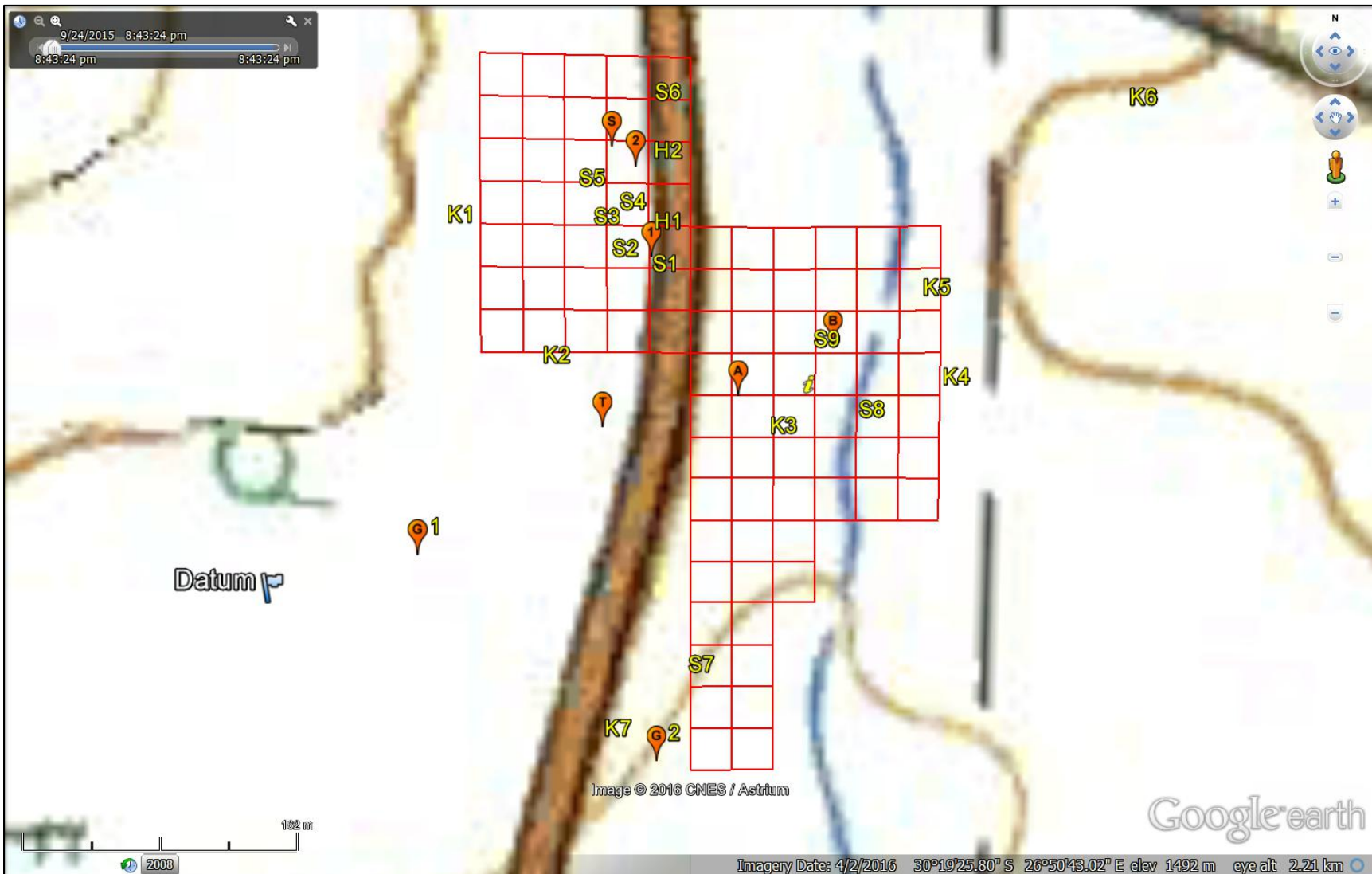


Fig. 52: Extended grid, indicating the location of all the structures and features found on both portions of Leeuspruit.

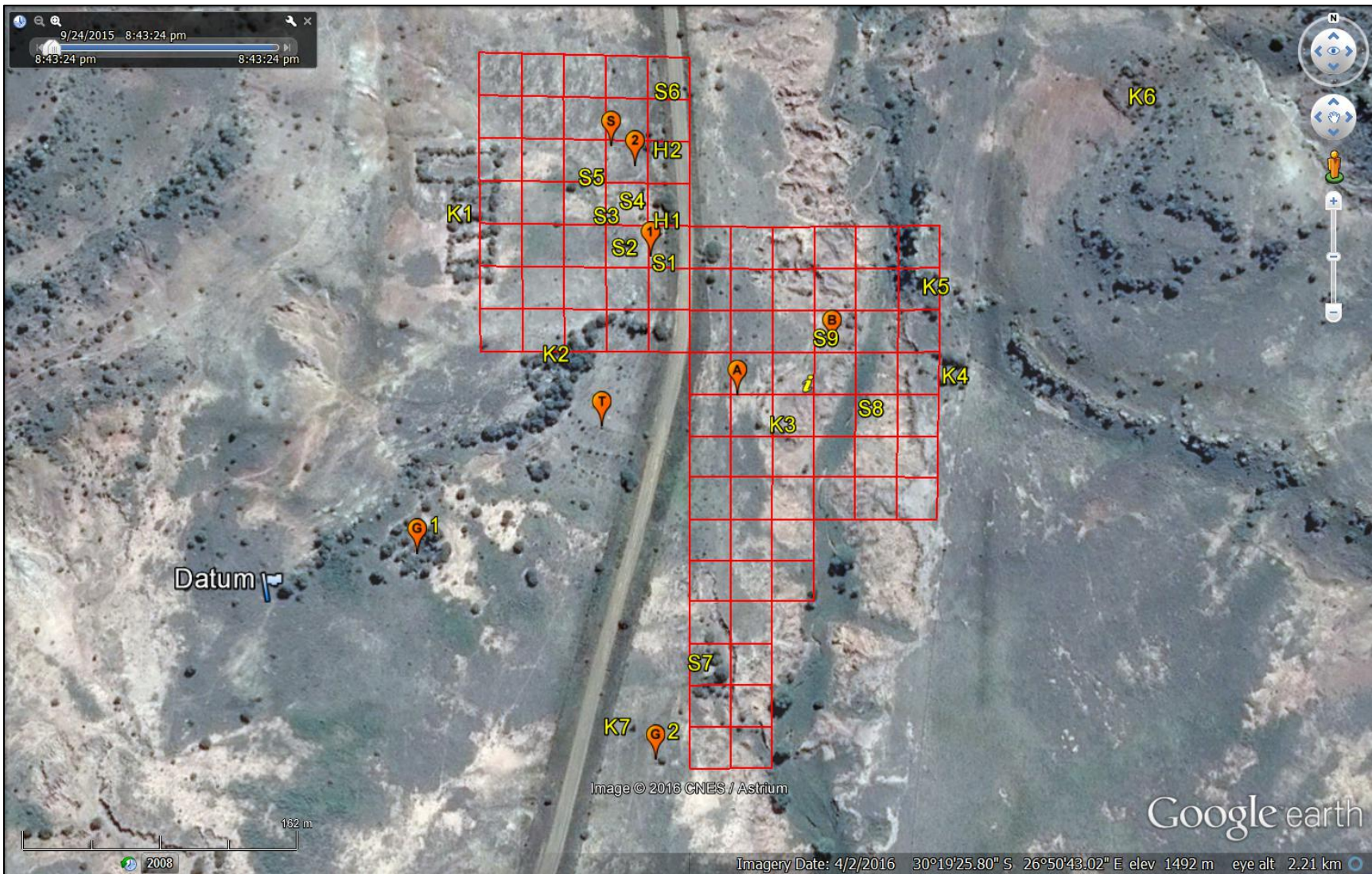


Fig. 53: Extended grid, indicating the location of all the structures and features found on both portions of Leeuspruit.

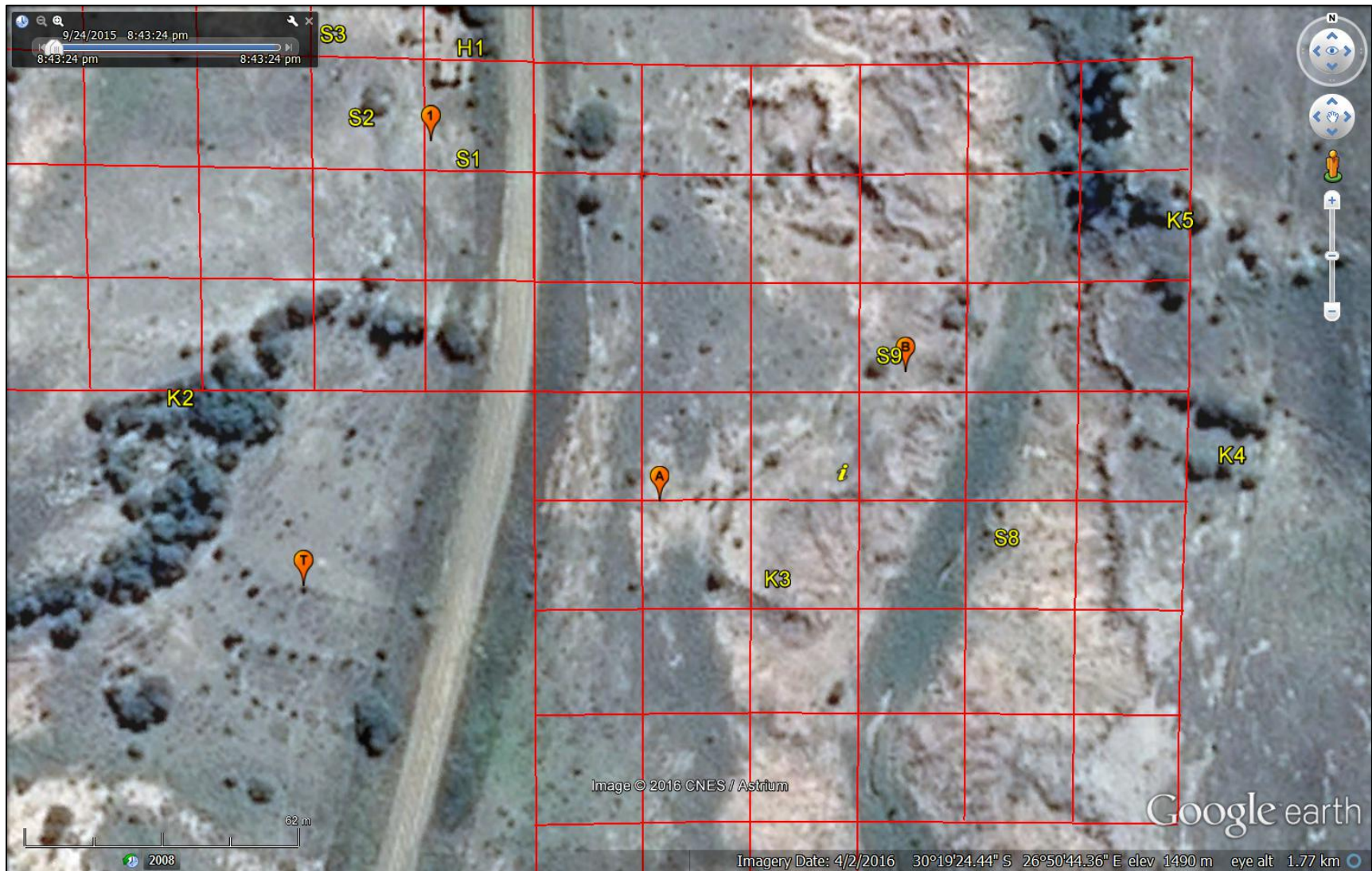


Fig. 54: A close-up of the grid across the northern part of the research area on Portion 1.

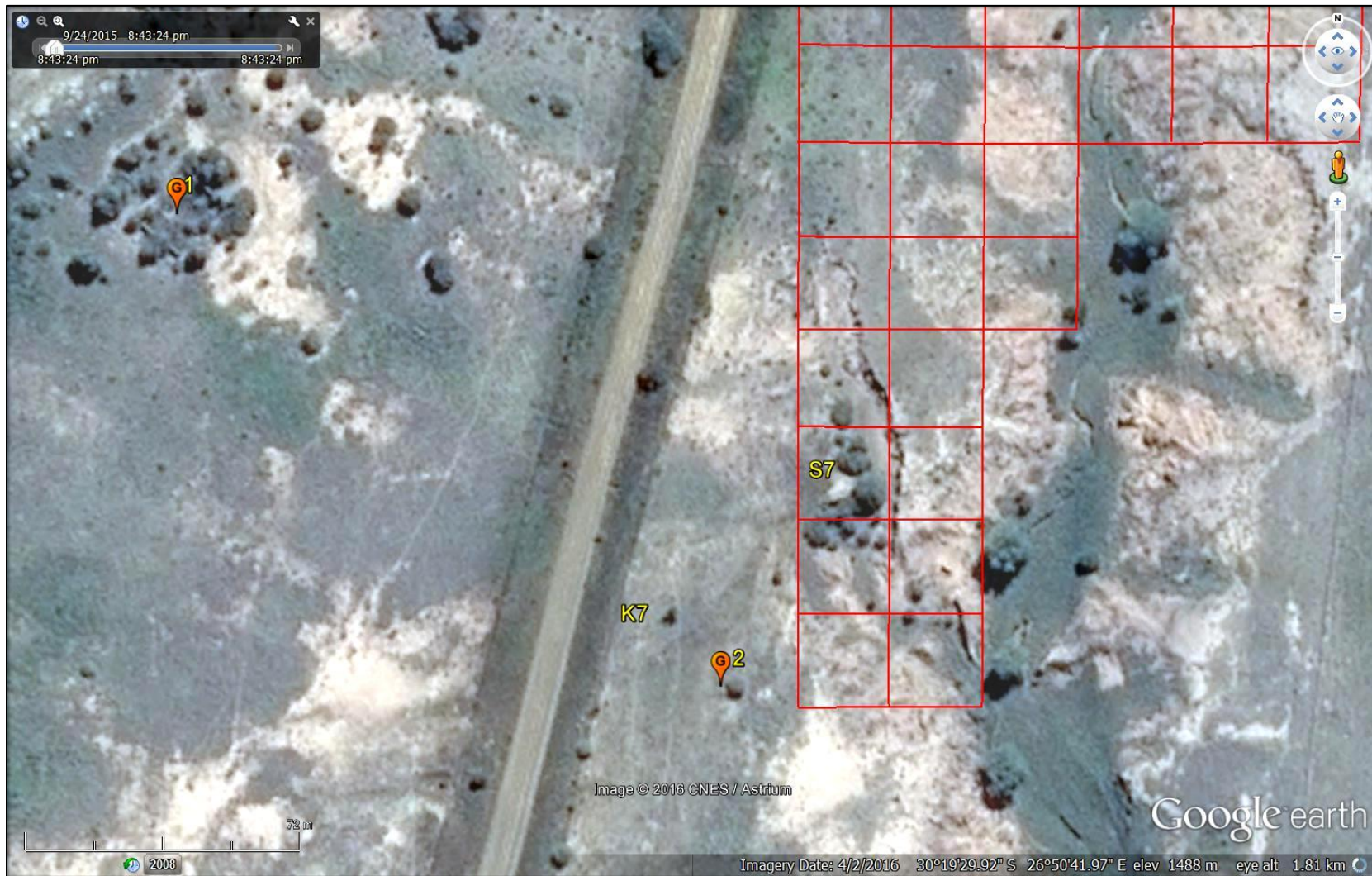


Fig. 55: A close-up of the grid across the southern part of the research area on Portion 1.



Fig. 56: View of Kraal 3.



Fig. 57: Kraal 4, with a possible enclosure on the right (indicated by the arrow).



Fig. 58: Possible enclosure next to Kraal 4.



Fig. 59: Kraal 5.



Fig. 60: Enclosure at the entrance of Kraal 5.

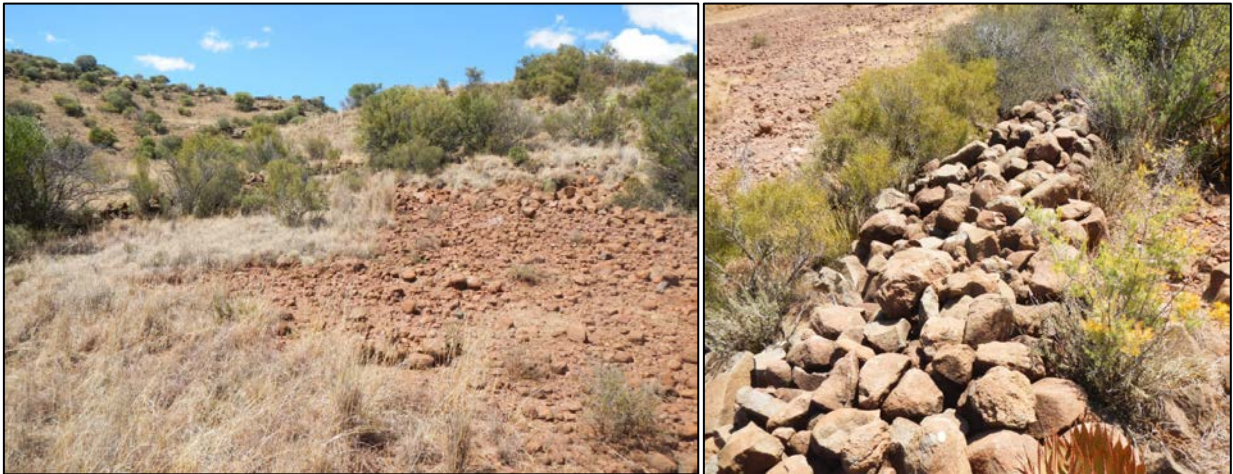


Fig. 61 & 62: Kraal 6.

Kraal 7 is located at the southernmost point of the grid (**Fig. 63 & 64**). An informal graveyard was found not far from the kraal (**Fig. 65-68**). There is a total of seven stone marked graves with undressed headstones. Six of the graves are orientated east, covered with fieldstone mounds, and although not in a recognizable straight line, have been placed next to each other. The seventh grave has a north facing burial axis, and even though overgrown by vegetation, the small unmarked headstone and fieldstone grave cairn is still clearly discernible (**Fig. 68**). None of the headstones on this burial site are inscribed.

A few metres west of Kraal 7, close to the edge of the spruit, the possible remains of a clay structure (Structure 7) was identified (**Fig. 69 & 70**). There was a slight increase in the number of artefacts collected in this area, especially at the edge of, and down the spruit embankment, where some artefacts were washed down. The increase in artefact scatter may merely be the result of natural phenomena, although the nearby informal graveyard strengthens the possibility of a dwelling at this locale.



Fig. 63: Kraal 7.



Fig. 64: Kraal 7.



Fig. 65: The informal graveyard in the foreground, and Kraal 7 (indicated by the arrow) in the background.



Fig. 66: Informal graveyard.



Fig. 67: Informal graveyard.



Fig. 68: A grave overgrown by vegetation at the informal graveyard.



Fig. 69: Foundation of possible clay structure (Structure 7).



Fig. 70: Structure 7 in the foreground, and Kraal 7 in the background.



Fig. 71: Structure 8.



Fig. 72: Structure 8.



Fig. 73: Red brick structure (Structure 9).



Fig. 74: Engraved stone in relation to Structure 9 in the background.

Structure 8 is positioned right next to the spruit, making it vulnerable to flooding (**Fig. 71-72**). It is small, and due to its dilapidated state, no features could be identified. The function of Structure 8 is unknown.

Structure 9 is situated in the northern part of Kraal 3, next to the western wall (**Fig. 73**). A combination of red clay bricks and fieldstone was used in the construction of this feature. A few metres south of Structure 9 an engraved stone was found (**Fig. 74**). Talcum powder was sprinkled on the inscription in an attempt to make it more legible, but unfortunately the inscription is still difficult to decipher.

Excavations conducted on Portion 1 of Leeuspruit

Grid A

Despite extensive surveys of the area, no middens could be positively identified. Excavations conducted at a prospective midden site, proved it to be no more than a shallow collection of material, either gathered through natural processes, or the remnants of a washed out midden (**Fig. 75-78**). If there were one or more designated areas allocated for rubbish, they are not observable anymore, their artefacts scattered across the site by natural rainwater runoffs.

Grid A was laid out across the potential midden, and excavations were carried out in three 1x1 m squares: D1, F2 and G1 (**Fig. 77 & 78**). When it became apparent that it probably was not a midden, only two of the three units were excavated up to a sterile conclusion. Although the artefacts recovered were minimal, they did comprise of material not found during the surface collections, such as ostrich eggshell.



Fig. 75: Prospective midden where Grid A was laid out.



Fig. 76: Prospective midden where Grid A was laid out.

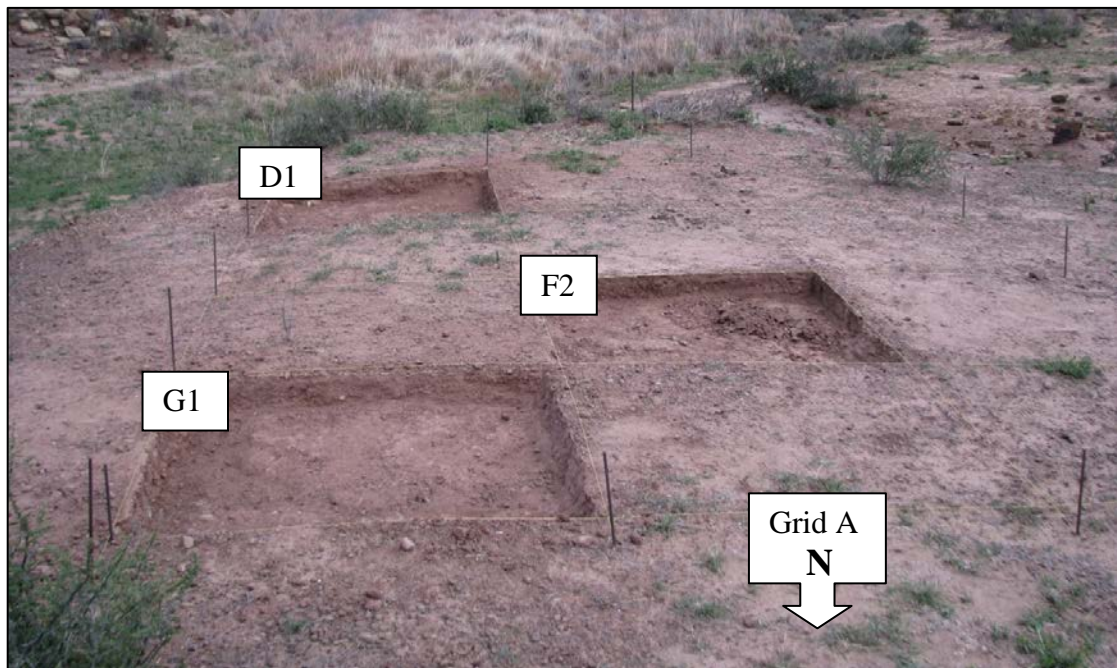


Fig. 77: Excavation of Grid A.



Fig. 78: Excavations conducted at Grid A.

Grid B

Grid B was laid out to cover both the red brick feature (Structure 9), and a deposit of faunal remains nearby, which, contrary to original thought, turned out to be an animal “grave”, and not a midden (**Fig. 79- 93**).

Several 1x1 m units were excavated at Structure 9, Grid B: G15, G16, H14, H15, H16 and I16 (**Fig. 84-88**). Most the excavations concentrated on clearing the partial mud brick and fieldstone wall, and investigating the feature up to floor level. Due to time constraints, only H15/16 were completely opened. Units H15/16 revealed a mud brick and stone furrow with a metal pipe running along inside it, discontinuing at an opening in the wall (**Fig. 88 & 89**). The investigative

excavation in unit D4 recovered only faunal remains (**Fig. 90-93**). No cultural material or further evidence of a midden were found.



Fig. 79: Grid B.



Fig. 80: Excavation at Structure 9, Grid B.



Fig. 81: Excavation at Structure 9, Grid B with Kraal 4 in the background.

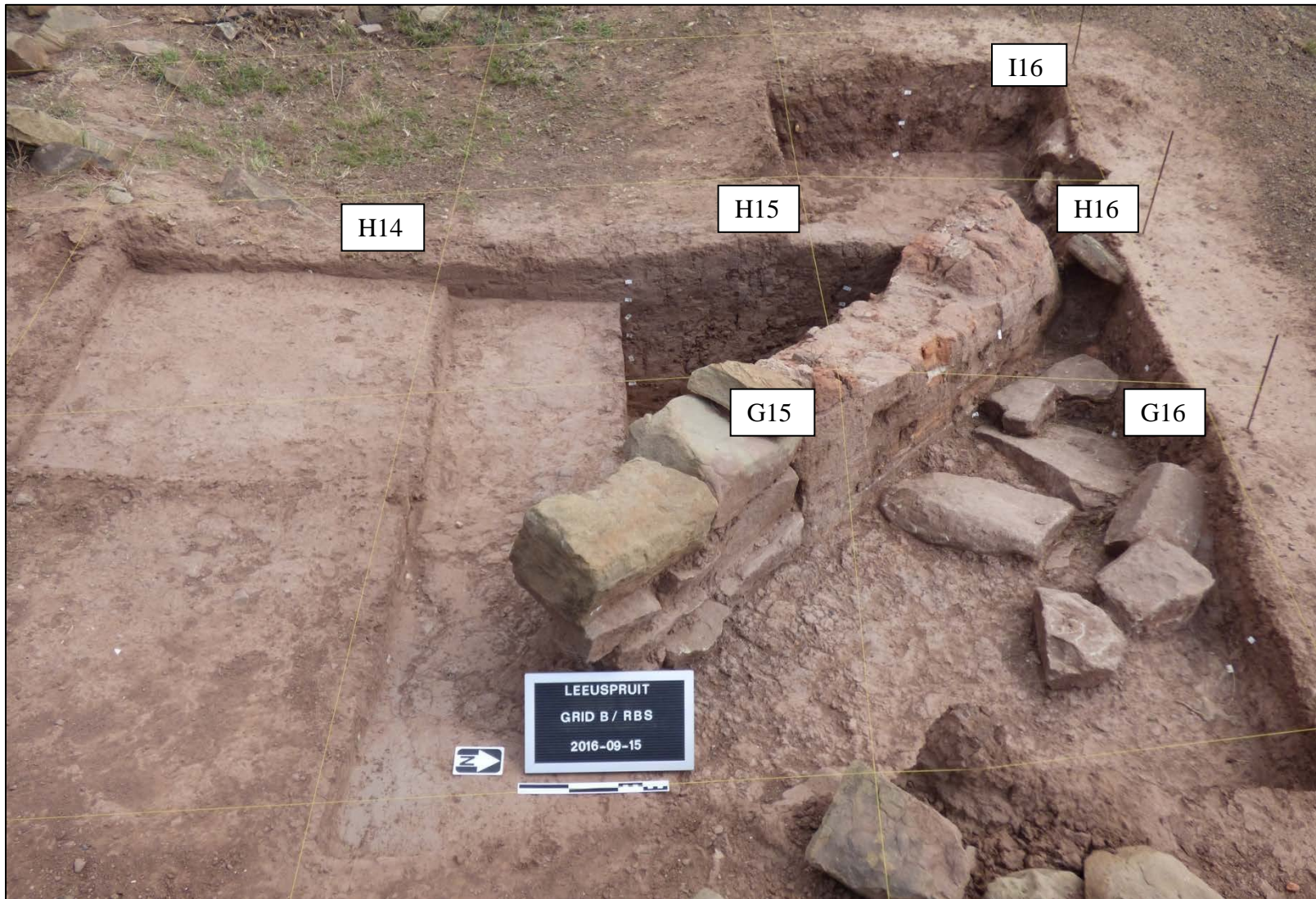


Fig. 87: Excavation at Structure 9 in Grid B.



Fig. 88: Excavations at Structure 9 revealed this water pipe.



Fig. 89: Excavations at Structure 9 revealed this water pipe.

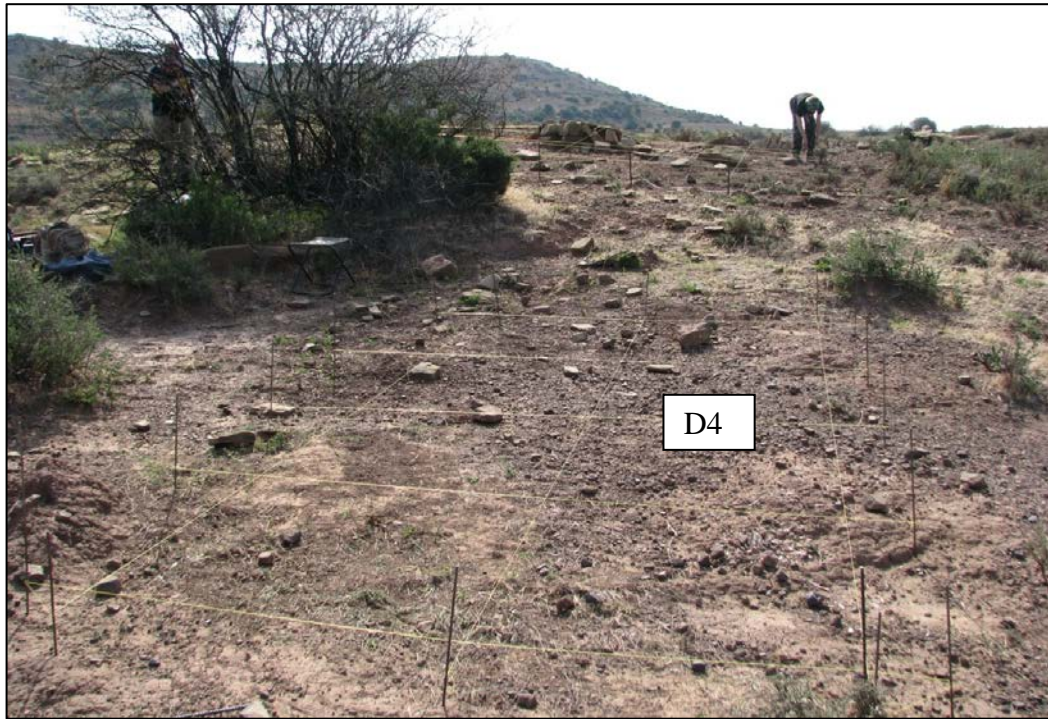


Fig. 90: The location of Unit D4, Grid B before excavation.

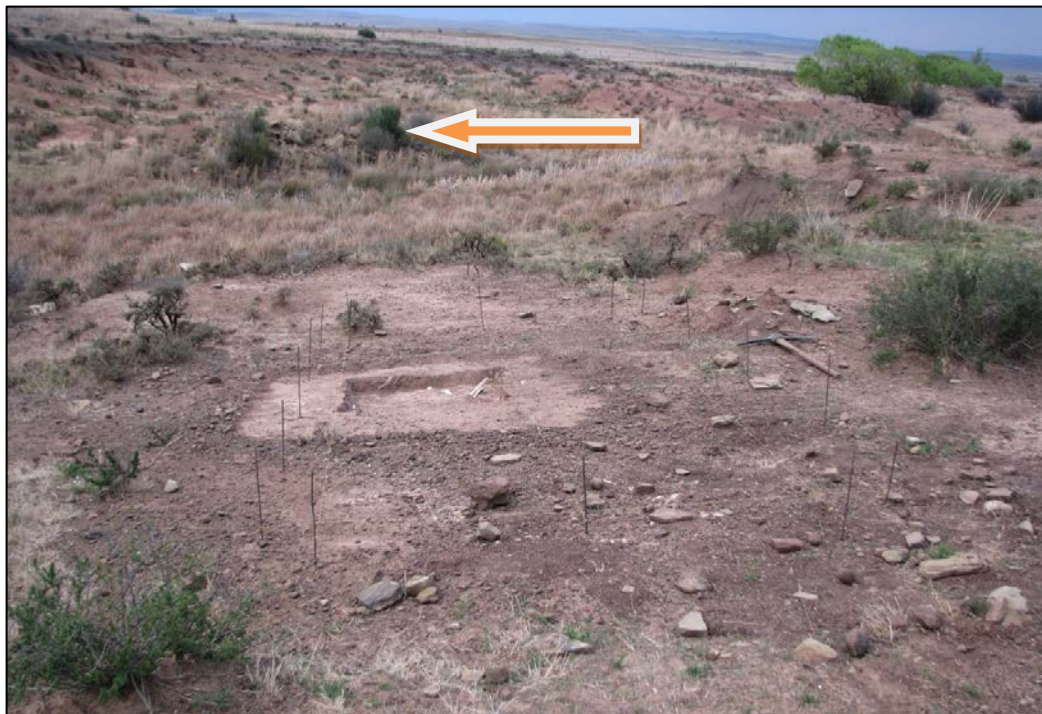


Fig. 91: Excavation in D4, Grid B, with Structure 8 in the background.



Fig. 92: Unit D4, layer 1 in Grid B.



Fig. 93: Unit D4, layer 2 in Grid B.

Analysis of the artefacts

Analysis is still in the early stages and more comprehensive feedback will be provided in the final report. Artefacts such as European ceramics, local ceramics, window pane and bottle glass, glass beads, metal and glass buttons, pieces of smoking pipes, botanical remains like peach pips, and faunal remains that include bone, shell, and ostrich eggshell, were collected.

Sources

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