

**A REPORT ON THE DOCUMENTATION OF STONE WALLED FEATURES THAT WILL BE
IMPACTED ON BY THE AUTHORISED MONTROSE INTERCHANGE, MPUMALANGA**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beyond Heritage was appointed by Trac N4 and Core Environmental Services to document two stone walled enclosures that will be impacted on by the proposed Montrose N4 Interchange, Mpumalanga Province. The sites (Feature 1 & Feature 2) were identified by Van der Walt (2020) during the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) conducted for the proposed Project. The recorded features are located within the authorised impact area and will be demolished as a result.

The 2020 HIA described the features as ephemeral stone packed enclosures of unknown purpose and recommended the documentation of the enclosures that includes scaled drawings upon which a destruction permit must be applied for from SAHRA. These recommendations were supported by SAHRA in their review comments of the HIA (Case number 15212).

The current report is conducted in fulfilment of the comments issued by SAHRA and will outline the work conducted during the documentation process in fulfilment of the recommendations, and the results achieved. It is believed that the documentation of the structures encapsulated in the report is sufficient to support the application of a destruction permit since both features are of negligible significance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The proposed N4 Interchange is located at the existing T-junction of the National N4 Toll Route between eMgwenya (Waterval Boven) and Mbombela (Nelspruit) with the alternative Schoemanskloof Route R539, Mpumalanga. The proposed interchange was assessed during the Environmental Assessment Process. A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) was conducted as part of this process by Van der Walt (2020), SAHRA Case number 15212, and SAHRA subsequently provided final comments on the assessment.

Within the authorised impact area, two stone packed features will be directly impacted on and is further considered in this report. The 2020 HIA recommended that Phase 2 heritage documentation of the identified features (Feature 1 and 2) should be completed, after which a permit for their destruction can be applied for from SAHRA. In fulfilment of these recommendations the features were documented during the week of the 18th of November 2021. The Area of Interest (AoI) where the features are located is on the farms Montrose 290 JT & Elandshoek 302 Mpumalanga Province (Figure 1 - 3).

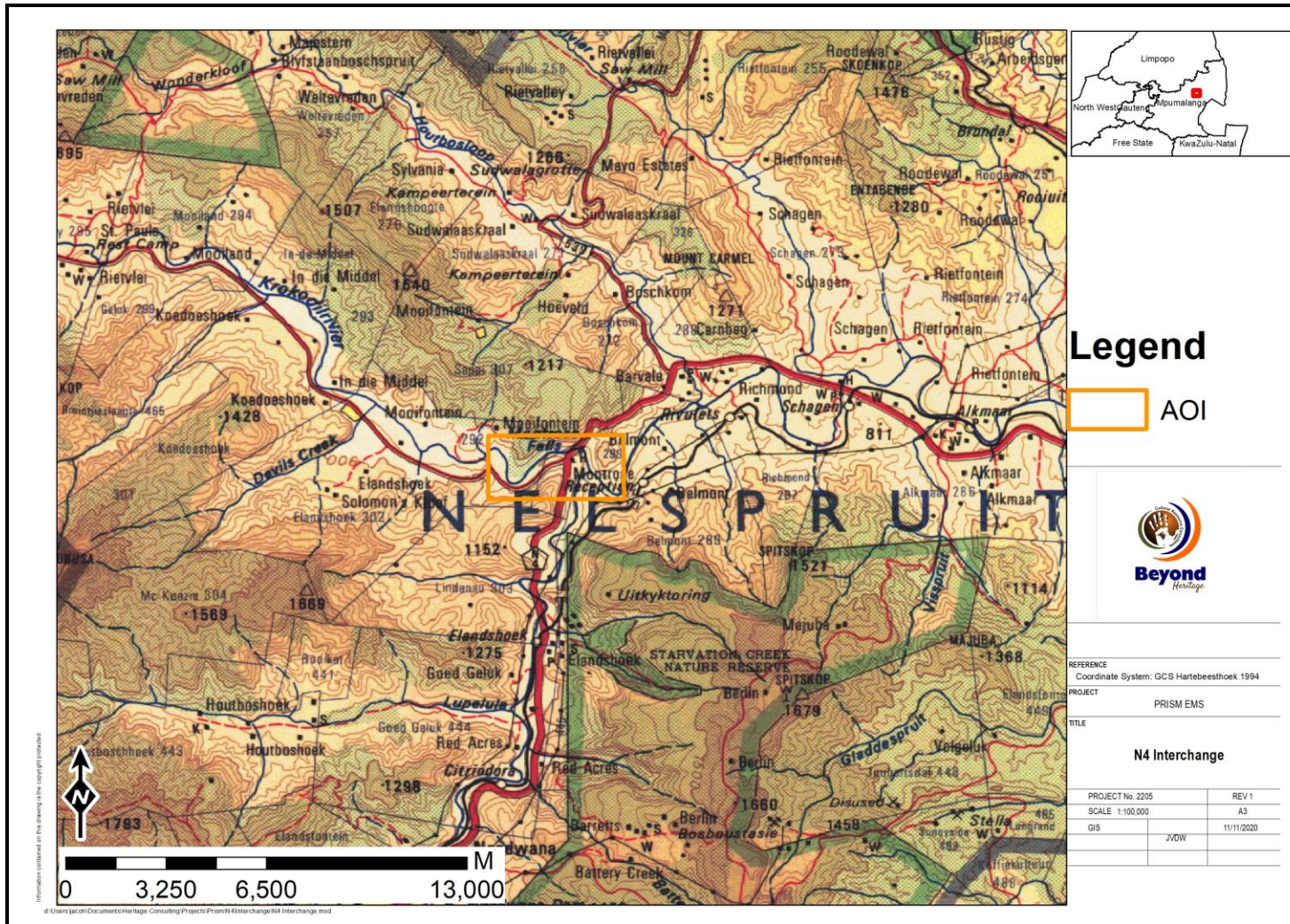


Figure 1. Regional setting of the project.

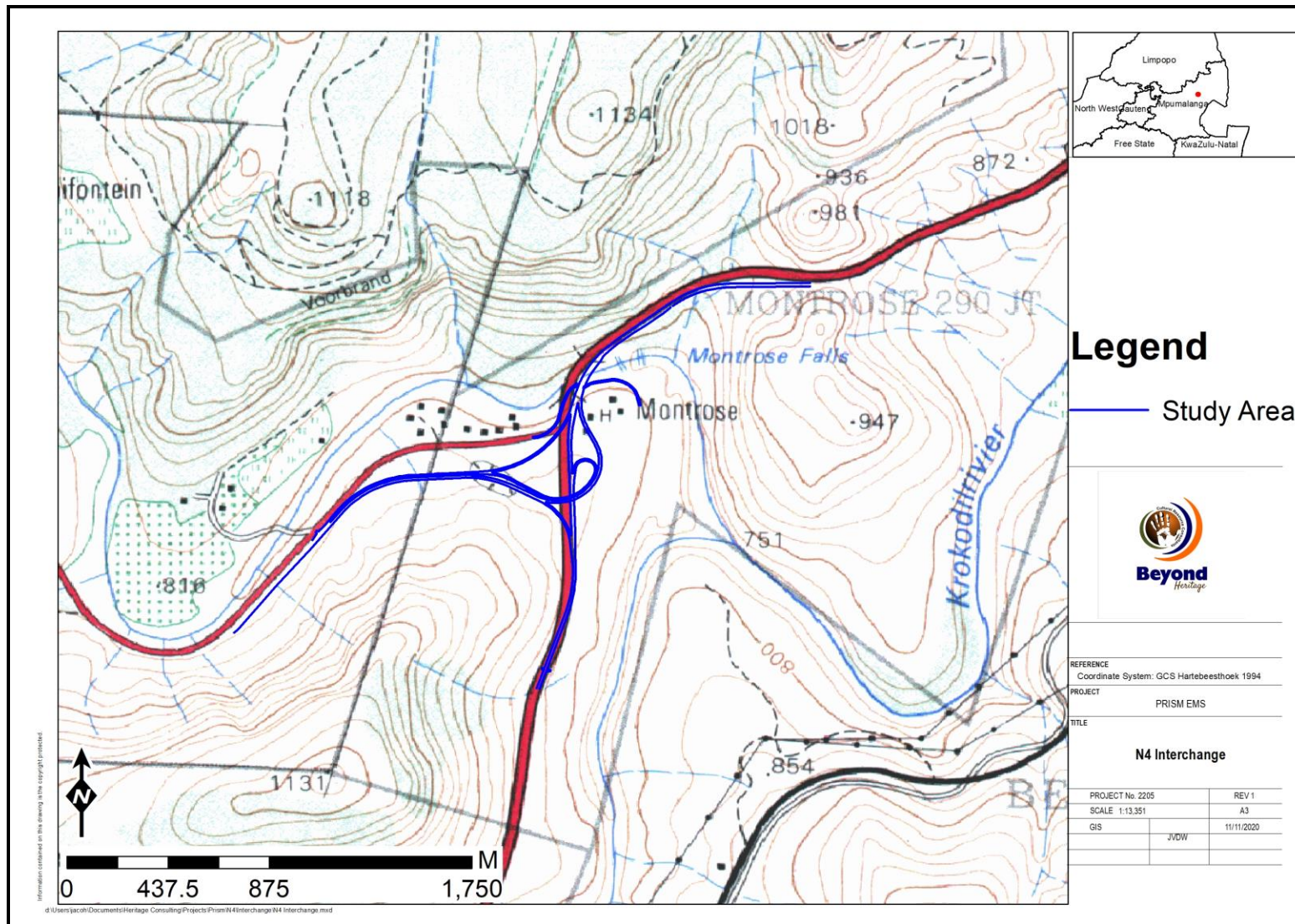


Figure 2. Local setting of the project.

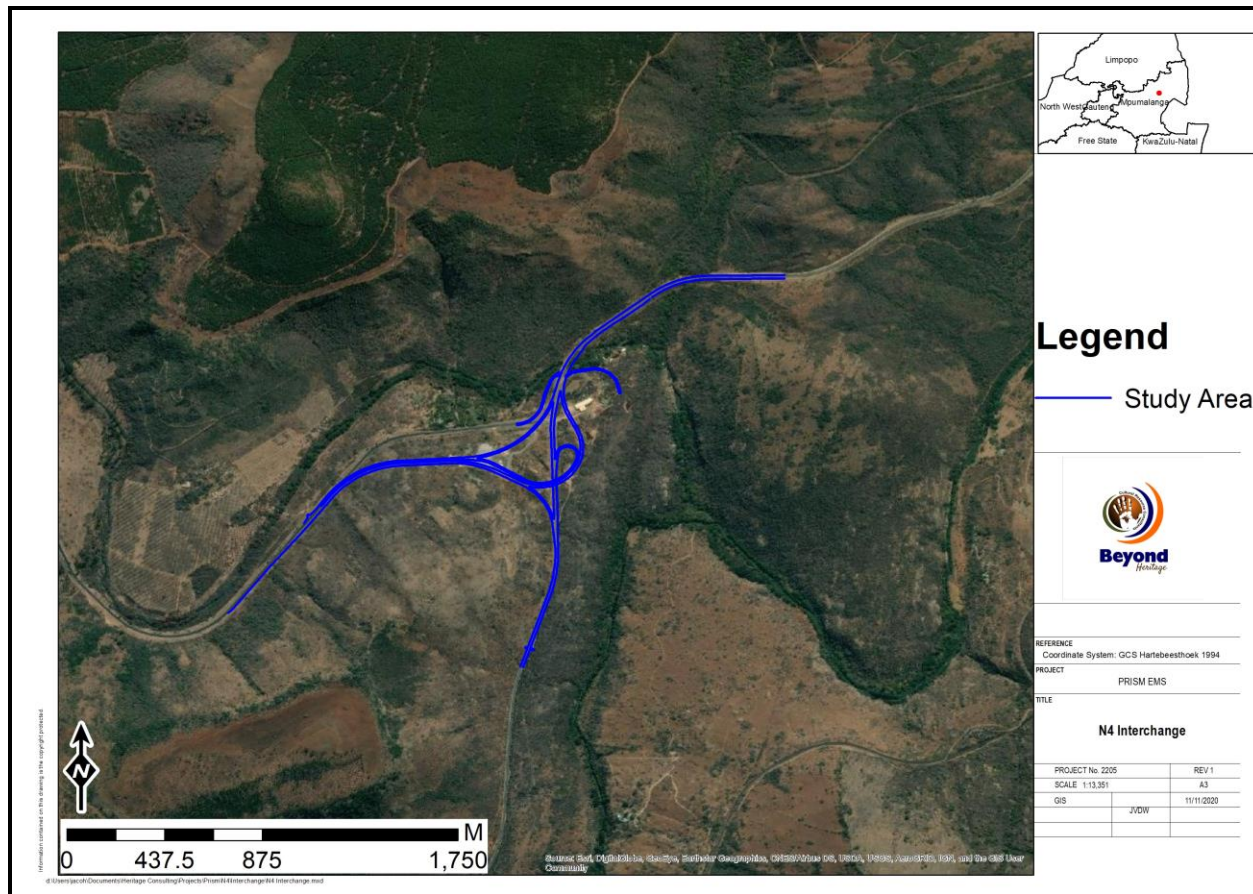


Figure 3. Aerial view of the proposed interchange.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE RECORDED FEATURES

The 2020 HIA recorded two, ephemeral stone-walled enclosures as Feature 1 & Feature 2. These features were overgrown, and it was not possible to determine if these features could have formed part of a larger Iron Age settlement complex that has been destroyed by earthmoving activities relating to quarries and road construction in the study area or if they are of a more recent nature. No other cultural material was found associated with these features apart from a single undecorated potsherd at Feature 2. The walls are collapsed with no clear discernible entrances and measures less than 2.5 meters in diameter. Due to the vegetation cover and state of preservation, it was not possible to determine their origin or function nor age. The two features will be directly impacted on by the development of the interchange, their spatial relation to each other is illustrated in Figure 4.

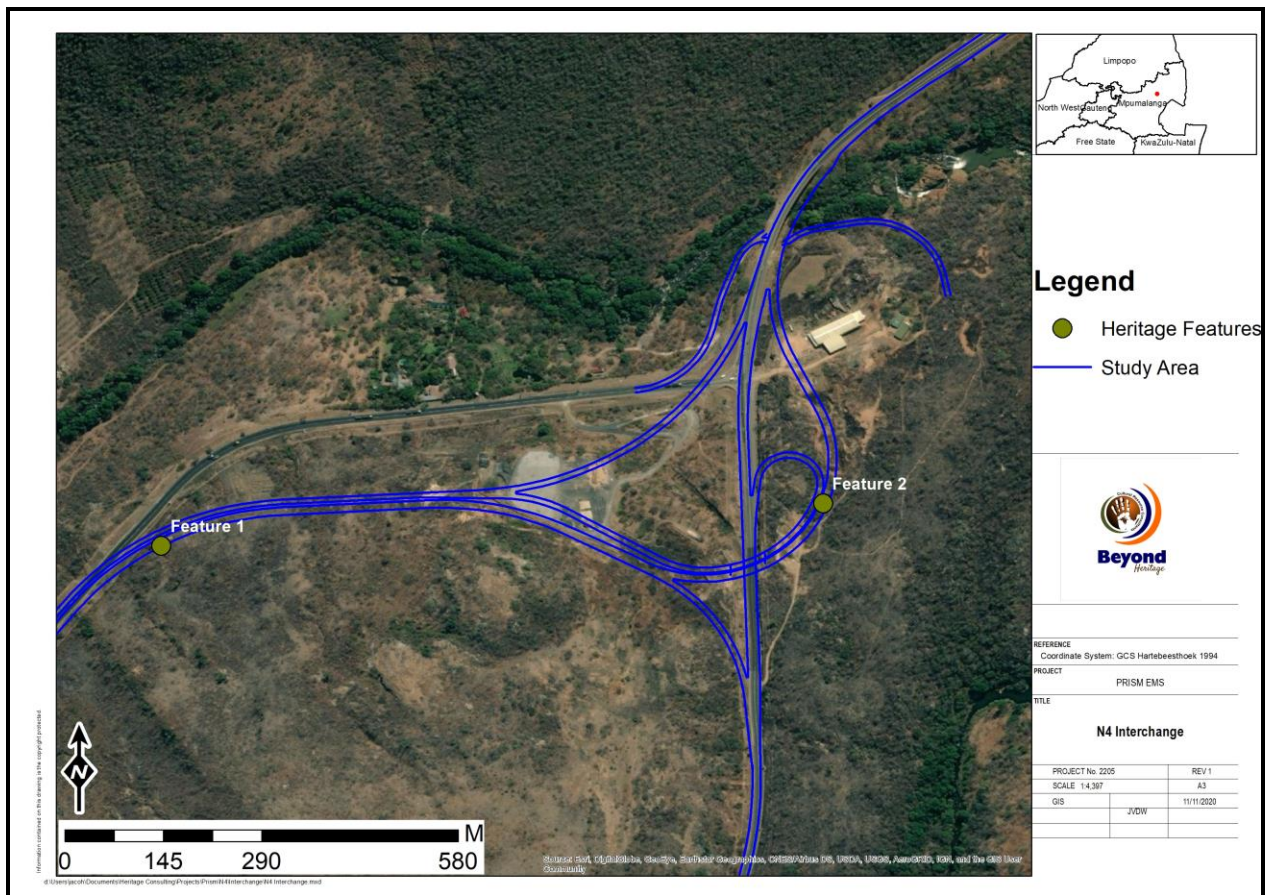


Figure 4. Recorded features in relation to the proposed development.

2.1. Terms of Reference

The scope of work is as follows:

- Site visit and recording of structures;
- Drafting of a report on the assessment and recording of the structures;
- Recommendation on the demolition of the structures;

3. METHODOLOGY

The sites that will be impacted on by the interchange development (Feature 1 and 2) were subjected to Phase 2 documentation which entailed additional research on the cultural historic background of the area in which the sites are located and detailed mapping of the site layout and features with a total station. The methodology employed are briefly described below and the results are discussed under Section 5 & 6 of this report.

3.1 Cultural Historical Background

A brief survey of available literature was conducted to extract data and information on the area in question to provide general heritage context of the study area. This literature search included published material, unpublished commercial reports and online material, including reports sourced from the South African Heritage Resources Information System (SAHRIS).

3.2 Mapping

The main aim with the mapping the recorded features was to document the settlement layout of the sites that will be impacted on by the proposed development. The documentation of the sites was achieved by means of preparing scaled ground plans of the sites. Main features were also photographed. True north is indicated on all plans and site photographs.

4. DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

The project is located between eMgwenya (Waterval Boven) and Mbombela (Nelspruit) with the alternative Schoemanskloof Route R539, Mpumalanga (Figure 1 – 3). The general area is characterised by gently rolling hills, with a few large rivers bisecting it. The vegetation in the study area although transformed in some areas forms part of the Savanna Biome and classed as Legogote Sour Bushveld and the landscape is characterised by gently to moderately upper pediment slopes with dense woodland including many medium to large shrubs, with short thicket occurring on less rocky sites (Mucina and Rutherford, 2009). The receiving environment is characterised by road developments, mining activities and warehouses. Vegetation cover in the study area varies from grassland on the slopes to thick riparian zones next to the river.

5. CULTURAL HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The later phases of the Iron Age (AD 1600-1800's) are represented by various tribes including Ndebele, Swazi, BaKoni, and Pedi, marked by extensive stonewalled settlements found throughout the escarpment and particularly around Machadodorp, Lydenburg, Badfontein, Sekhukuneland, Roosenekal and Steelpoort. The BaKoni were the architects of a unique archaeological stone building complex who by the 19th century spoke seKoni which was similar to Sepedi. The core elements of this tradition are stonewalled enclosures, roads and terraces. These settlement complexes may be divided into three basic features: homesteads, terraces and cattle tracks.

Smaller tribes such as the Pai and Pulana were attacked by and made to flee from the aggressive Swazi, especially during the *mfecane* (difaqane). They (Swazi) were particularly active in the Lowveld during the difaqane period (1820's) and it is well-known that they frequently attacked and ousted smaller herder groups like the Pai and Pulana, especially in the area today known as Low's Creek. They were however

prevented from settling in the low-lying areas due to the presence of the tsetse fly and malaria. Consequently, there is little evidence of large-scale settlement in the Crocodile River valley until the time of colonial settlement (1890's) and later. Small, isolated dry-packed stone-walled enclosures found near Nelspruit and surrounding areas may be attributed to these smaller groups who hid away from the Swazi onslaught. The sites were probably not used for extended periods as they were frequently on the move as a result of the onslaught and therefore small, indistinct and with little associated cultural material.

Researchers such as Mike Evers (1975) and David Collett (1982) identified three basic settlement layouts in this area. These sites can be divided into simple and complex ruins. Simple ruins are normally small in relation to more complex sites and have smaller central cattle byres and fewer huts. Complex ruins consist of a central cattle byre, which has two opposing entrances and several semi-circular enclosures surrounding it. The perimeter wall of these sites is sometimes poorly visible. Huts are built between the central enclosure and the perimeter wall. These are all connected by track-ways referred to as cattle tracks. These tracks are made by building stone walls, which forms a walkway for cattle to the centrally located cattle byres. A combination of these features occurs on a few dispersed sites to the north west of the study area (Celliers 2019).

Individual sites range from simple enclosures, which consist of single or two concentric stonewalled circles found in small, isolated settlements, to complex sites with large central enclosures which have smaller enclosures attached to their outer walls. The walls are built with undressed, locally occurring, stone. Walls on average are 0.5 to approximately 1 meter high, although often only the foundation stones are left. Feature 1 and 2 conform to these attributes.

6. DOCUMENTATION OF STRUCTURES

The structures were cleaned by hand to expose all the features since the area is highly overgrown. After completion of the bush clearing scale plan drawings was conducted and photographs of certain features were taken. No excavations were conducted.

The following section of the report provides a brief description of each structure, consisting of a plan drawing and photographs. Figure 4 illustrate the recorded features in relation to each other that will be discussed in the subsequent section.

6.1 Feature 1

This feature was highly overgrown with grass and small bushes. After clearing it became evident that no entrance or systematically packed walls occurred here. The feature consists of an excavated central area, into the rocky slope of the hill where the feature is located, possibly by hand with stones and soil dumped surrounding the excavation providing the illusion of being a circular enclosure. This is evident in the plan drawing of the Feature that shows no entrance and being teardrop in shape (Figure 5). Excavation within the feature is approximately 1.2 meter from the present surface level with the dumped soil and stone approximately 28 cm high and 32 cm wide with an inside diameter of 2.3 meters. The feature after vegetation clearance showing the lack of dry-stone packed walls are illustrated in Figure 6- 9.

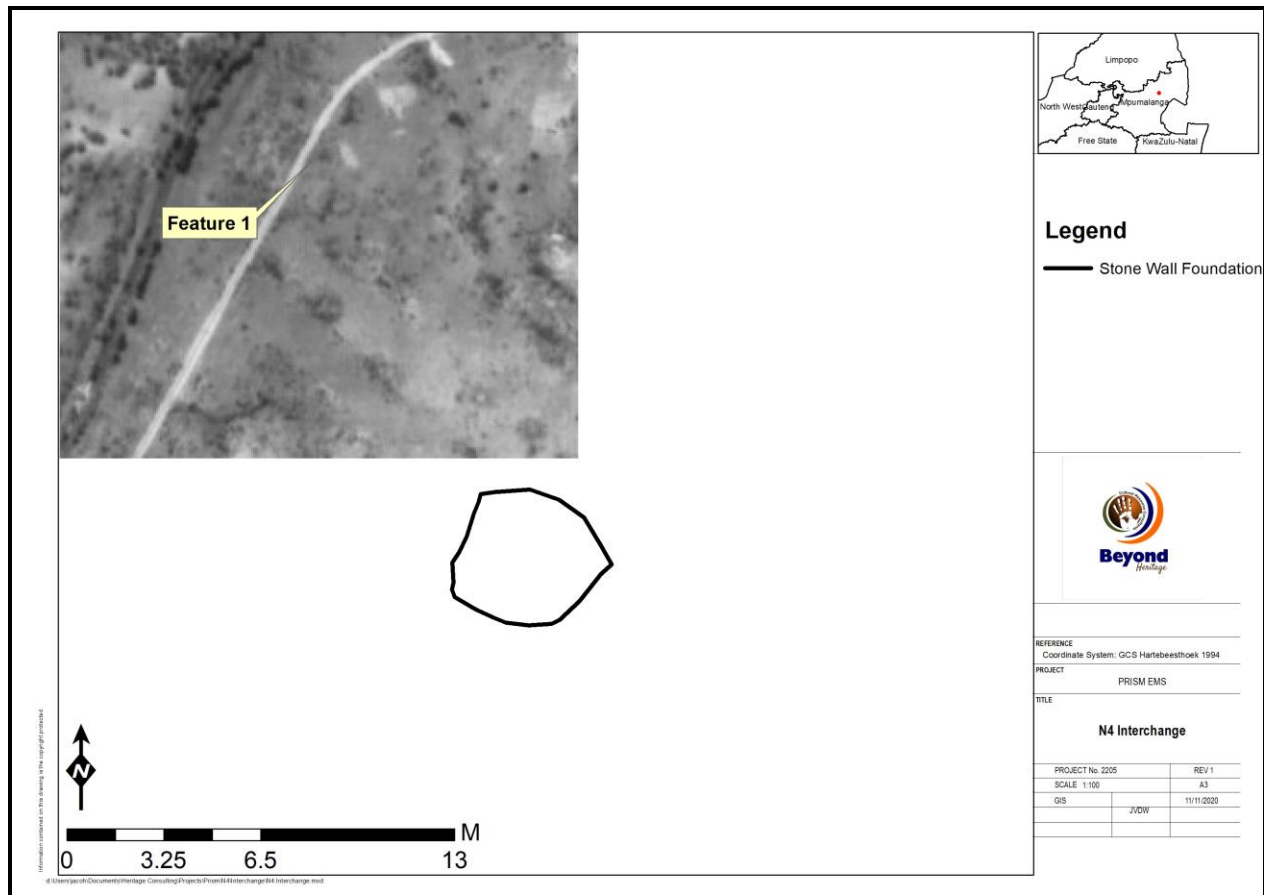


Figure 5. Plan drawing of Structure 1. The insert shows that the recorded structures are not visible on aerial photographs dating to 1959. There are also no indication of a settlement or structures in the surrounding area.



Figure 6. Western elevation of Feature 1.

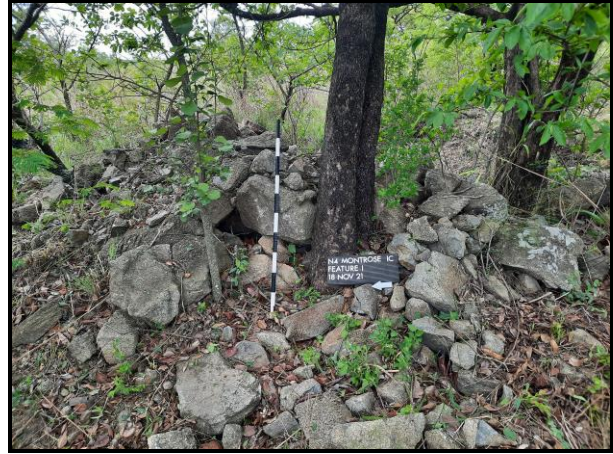


Figure 7. Southern elevation of Feature 1.



Figure 8. Northern elevation of Feature 1.



Figure 9. Inside the excavated area within Feature 1.

6.2 Feature 2

Feature 2 is an ephemeral, stone packed, circular feature (Figure 11). No other cultural material or features were found apart from a single undecorated potsherd. The walls are expediently packed and not conforming to established Iron Age construction methods of outer walls with a rubble infill. The walls collapsed with no clear discernible entrance and measures 2.5 meters in diameter. The walls are approximately 60 cm high and 40cm wide. Construction methods and general site conditions are illustrated in Figure 12 – 15.

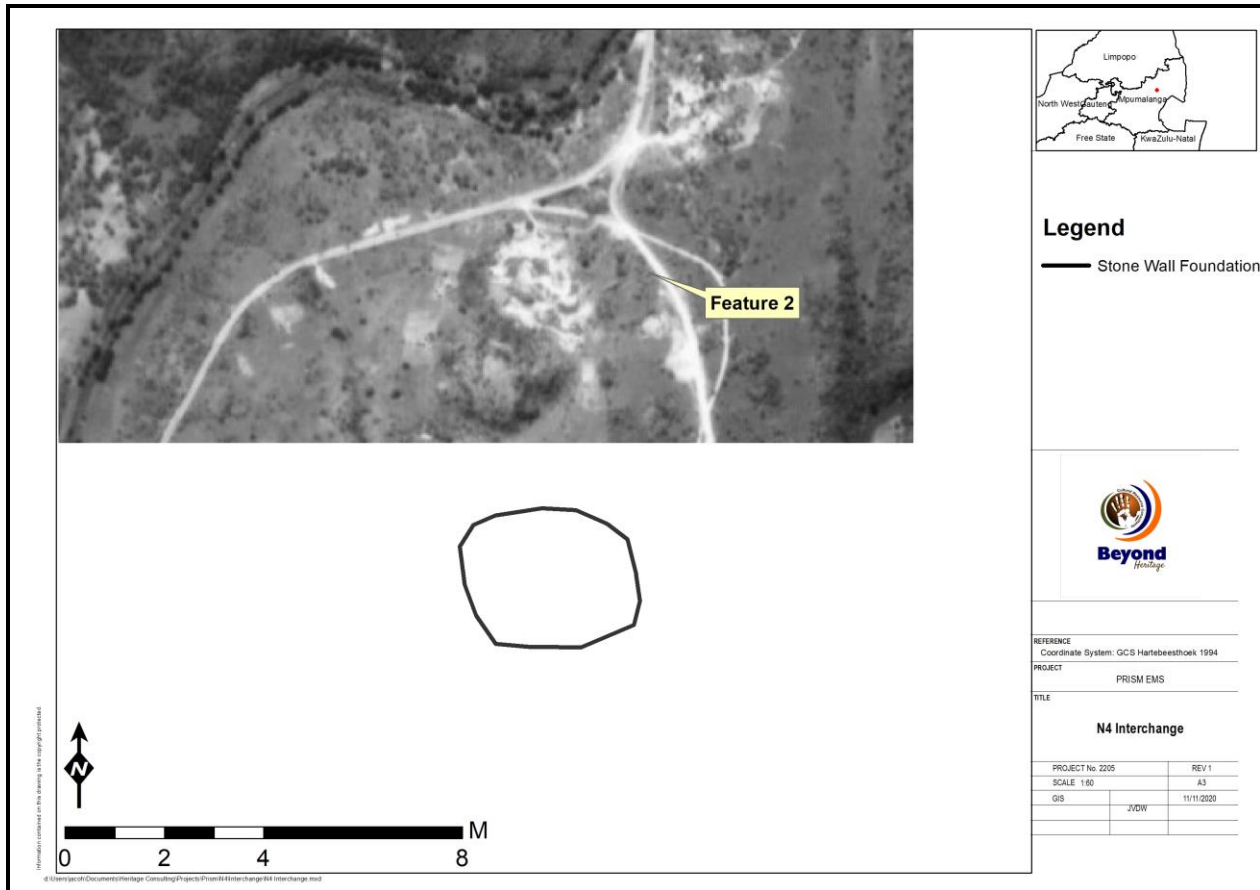


Figure 10. Plan drawing of Feature 2. The insert shows that the recorded structures are not visible on aerial photographs dating to 1959 and no larger archaeological settlement is visible.



Figure 11. Southern elevation of Feature 2.



Figure 12. Western elevation of Feature 2.



Figure 13. Feature 2 viewed from the North.



Figure 14. Average height of the walls at Feature 2.

6.3. Discussion

After the features have been cleaned it became clear that neither Feature 1 nor Feature 2 conform to expected Iron Age construction methods consisting of circular outer walls and a rubble infill (Walton 1958). These features were constructed expediently, and no cultural material, features or archaeological deposit was noted in association with the documented features. Both features are on the slopes of the undulating landscape and the lack of anthropogenic deposit at both sites negates the need for excavations.

Feature 1 comprises an excavated central area, into the rocky slope of the hill where the feature is located, possibly by hand with stones and soil dumped surrounding the excavation providing the illusion of being a circular enclosure. The purpose of feature 2 is unknown but could be related to people working on the roads and quarries in the area visible on aerial photographs of 1959, possibly used as a cooking shelter/ windbreak. There are no larger Iron Age settlements visible on the 1959 aerial map nor any structures, similarly the recorded features are not visible.

Both features are of low heritage significance, are isolated occurrences and has no cultural heritage or architectural elements of significance. This document supports the application of the destruction of these features based on the approval of SAHRA.

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