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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF AN
IRON AGE SITE ON THE FARM DE GLADDEKLIPKOP 763 LS,
SEKGOSESE DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

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SUMMARY**Archaeological investigation of an Iron Age site on the farm De Gladdeklipkop 763 LS, Sekgosese District, Limpopo Province**

During January 2004, archaeologists from the NCHM conducted archaeological excavations at an archaeological site on the farm De Gladdeklipkop 763 LS in the Limpopo Province. The development of the BoTlokwa Commercial Hub prompted the work, with the aims being to develop a chronology of settlement at the site, as well as to interpret and reconstruct the domestic economy practiced at the site during its occupation. Nearly 15 000 objects were recovered from the six excavations that were undertaken and the surface as well.

Based on the above, it was determined that human occupation of the site have been taking place for more than 1000 years, commencing in approximately AD 700 and continuing up to the mid 20th century. It was also possible reconstruct the domestic economy practiced at the site for the duration of its occupation. The diet of the occupants consisted to a large extent of meat, although other food sources such as cereals, plant foods and shell food (freshwater marine) were also utilized. They practiced herding, although hunting and trapping non-domestic animals also took place. Links with trade networks existed, as evidenced by the glass trade beads, while hide working and metalworking was also more than likely practiced.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF AN IRON AGE SITE ON THE FARM DE GLADDEKLIKOP 763 LS, SEKGOSESE DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

INTRODUCTION

In this report, the results of an archaeological investigation of a multi-component settlement site on the farm De Gladdeklipkop in the Sekgosese District of Limpopo Province are presented.

The reason for the archaeological investigation arose from the fact that development was to take place on the site. The BoTlokwa Commercial Hub, also called the Motume Trading Post, was developed here for the benefit of the local community. The aims of the development are to help with poverty alleviation in the area, through the promotion of tourism and development of crafts produced by local people, which will be manufactured and sold on-site in so-called "Villages" (Beading, Metal, Fabric and a Carving Village). These villages are in the shape of rondavels, and developed in sympathy with the natural and cultural environment they are located in. There will also be a restaurant, curio shop and amphitheatre. An on-site display/exhibition hall, built in the same style as the villages will be constructed to present the archaeology of the site through text and objects.

The archaeological work conducted at the site is the result of a number of surveys carried out earlier, in 2001 by the National Cultural History Museum, at the request of the developer. The resulting report (Van Schalkwyk 2001) proposed a number of mitigation measures, including archaeological excavations, before development could commence. The archaeological investigations started in January 2004, after a permit was obtained from SAHRA.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The site is located on the farm De Gladdeklipkop 763 LS, on the western side of the N1 road, approximately 60km northeast of Polokwane (Pietersburg), in the Sekgosese District of Limpopo Province (Fig. 1). A large granite outcrop dominates the site, and it is along the foot of this that most of the settlement is situated.

Two veld types occur in the area. The development area is located in Sour Bushveld, with Mixed Bushveld occurring to the east of that (Acocks 1988). The current land cover can be described as degraded land, due to over grazing and exploitation for firewood. The morphology can be described as slightly undulating plains, with the largest river, the Sand River, located to the west of the study area. The lithology is granite, which is an intrusion into the gneiss found in the larger area.

Throughout the project the developer was conscious of the archaeological remains and went to considerable effort to avoid unnecessary destruction of the site by controlling and minimizing the earthworks and adapting building designs and construction techniques. It is calculated that less than 20% of the site was impacted on by the development. It was in this area that the archaeological mitigation was implemented.

Apart from recovery of material from the site as it was impacted on, the aims of the archaeological work were basically two-fold:

- to develop a chronology of settlement at the site through radiocarbon dating and the analysis and interpretation of cultural material recovered during the excavations;
- to reconstruct and interpret the domestic economy that the people followed at the settlement during its occupation.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology comprised the following:

Surface collection – Material was collected from the surface, and particularly from the development areas when it was exposed through earthworks, in trenches and such.

Excavations - Excavations were measured out in pre-determined areas, such as on middens and areas where construction was to take place. Standard archaeological methods of excavation were used.

Mapping and Drawing - This was done using a Nikon Total Station Electronic Surveying device. The data generated through this was downloaded onto computer and a software package called Model Maker was then used to generate a map and drawing of the site. Detailed profile drawings for each excavation were also made.

Documentation - This comprised preliminary documentation in the field of artefacts recovered during excavations. Artefacts were sorted into different categories and put in labelled bags and boxes. This was done per excavation and layer. Further documentation was done in the laboratory, with detailed sorting of artefacts into various categories.

Photographic documentation - Photographs of the site in general, as well as individual structures, features and objects, were taken to help with the interpretation of the findings. These photographs also form part of the permanent record of the site.

Analysis & Interpretation – Artefacts were analysed in the laboratory by the researchers (pottery, ceramics, metal, glass and other material) and by experts (faunal remains and C14 dating).

Surface collection

A fairly large amount of cultural material was recovered during the surface sampling, and include decorated and undecorated pottery, ceramics, faunal remains, shell and some stone objects such as a grooved soapstone fragment, possibly a whetstone, and grinding stones. This material was recovered to increase the sample size from the site, as well as to preserve it.

Excavations

In total 6 excavations were carried out, 5 of them formal and a sixth (Excavation 4) was more informal, being a trench that was made by a bulldozer to test the deposit in an area of the site where development was to take place. The locations of the excavations are indicated in Fig. 2.

Excavation 1

This was a 3 x 3 m square put out on an ash midden, located in an area close to where the restaurant is being developed. Three stratigraphic layers or cultural horizons were uncovered. Layer 1 was approximately 30 cm deep and had a light to dark brown colour. The first 15 cm contained fairly recent, historical, material, including metal fragments, wire, nails, copper beads, glass and plastic beads and glass shards. Some faunal remains and shell, as well as typical Late Iron Age (LIA) pottery (some decorated pieces) also came from layer 1. A spent cartridge with the date 1899 stamped on it was recovered from layer 1, as well as two spear blades. Layer 1 therefore contained a mixture of historic and LIA material.

Layer 2 was also 30 cm deep, and consisted of a light-grey coloured ash. Cultural material recovered from this layer included LIA pottery, faunal remains and shell, as well as ostrich egg-shell beads (OES) and part of a clay figurine. No material dating to historical times came from layer 2.

The third layer starts at a depth of 60 cm, and continued down for a further 25 cm. The colour and consistency of the layer was a grey ashy to light brown coloured soil. Sterile soil started appearing at a depth of about 80 cm, being brown and large grained particles. A large amount of faunal remains and pottery came from layer 3. More worked bone came from layer 3, including a bone needle and arrow points, than from the previous two levels. A nearly complete, articulated skeleton of a juvenile *Bos taurus*, was found near the south wall of the excavation.

Excavation 2

This was a 1 x 5 m trench, located roughly between the amphitheatre and restaurant that are being developed. Seven layers, representing 3 occupational levels, were excavated. These three levels were again a historical, followed by a LIA and finally, an earlier Iron Age level. The seven layers were made up of 3 stratigraphic layers consisting of a brown and red coloured soil up to a depth 47 cm, an ashy layer approximately 19 cm thick and a dark brown coloured soil between 8 and 12 cm thick.

The remains of a stone wall was uncovered within the first few centimetres of the excavation. The wall is between 34 and 39 cm wide, and about 15 cm high. Some recent cultural material, including glass fragments, glass beads, porcelain, metal objects such as copper beads, tin lids and a rusted bed frame section, was recovered, presenting further evidence for a historical occupation of the site. The Iron Age material found include decorated and undecorated pottery, worked pieces of bone, faunal remains and a few OES beads.

Excavation 3

This was a 12 x 1 m long trench, later extended a further 5 m north. It was set out over an ash midden, situated in the area where the amphitheatre will be located. Nine arbitrary layers

were opened up, with a total depth of just more than 1 m. These nine layers represent 4 stratigraphic layers forming part of at least 3 occupational levels (Fig. 3).

The first two layers represent the historical level of occupation, and included a stone wall, possibly the remains of a rondavel type of structure. This layer consists of a dark to red brown soil (about 20 cm thick) and a thin, 5 cm thick yellowish clay lens on top of an ash layer, and contemporary with the stonewall. Cultural material from this layer included glass beads, glass and metal fragments and ceramics. Layer 2 is an approximately 25 cm thick grey ash layer, representing the Late Iron Age occupation of the site. Material from this layer consists of decorated and undecorated pottery, faunal remains, shell, OES beads, worked bone and bone tools and a number of stone tools.

Below the stone wall and ash was a pit smeared with cattle dung and clay. This was probably a grain storage pit. The pit started appearing at a depth of around 50 cm, it was dome shaped and had an approximate diameter of 156 cm. The height of the pit was about 55 cm at the highest point. The walls and floor of the pit was smeared with cattle dung. The pit was dug into a layer of hard, burnt clay about 11 cm thick. This could have been the floor of some structure such as a hut. Pieces of bone and pottery are embedded in this surface. Sterile soil was reached approximately 5 cm below the floor of the pit. This pit represents the third, and possibly, Early Iron Age, occupational level. Artefacts found include faunal remains and some decorated pottery.

Later, a 4 x 1 m trench was set out perpendicular to the original Excavation 3 (in its northern part). The aim was to follow the hard clay surface to see whether or not it was part of some structure and what its relationship to the pit and stone wall was. A fair amount of cultural material, including some pottery and faunal remains were recovered.

Excavation 4

Excavation 4 was not a formal excavation, but a pit dug by an excavating machine to test the potential of the deposit an area where one of the villages was to be built. It was 3 x 3 m square, and although it contained a fair amount of ash, only a few potsherds and bone fragments were recovered. The depth of the excavation was about 80 cm.

Excavation 5

Excavation 5 was a 3 x 3 m square, located on an ash midden. Three layers were excavated down to a depth of 129 cm before sterile soil was encountered (Fig. 4). Layer 1 was almost 30 cm thick, ending at a depth of around 50 cm below surface, this after 20 cm of topsoil was taken off by graders removing trees for the development. The first few centimetres were very hard, consisting of a dark brown soil, before starting to become ashy and softer. Artefacts from layer 1 included a few metal fragments, glass beads, decorated and undecorated pottery, faunal remains, shell and a Late Stone Age stone tool.

Layer 2 was about 30 cm thick as well, ending at a depth of around 80 cm below the surface. It is an ashy layer, light grey in colour. Cultural material found in this layer include a large amount of decorated and undecorated pottery, faunal remains, bone tools, OES beads and shell fragments, as well as a number of stone tools. At a depth of between 60 and 65 cm, a burial was uncovered. The individual was buried in a semi-flexed position on its left-hand side, facing north. The skeleton and skull was badly preserved, with arms, some toe and

finger bones, ribs and some vertebrae missing. The person looks like a young adult female. No detailed analysis of the skeletal remains has been undertaken yet.

Layer 3 continued to be very ashy (light-grey in colour) and sterile soil appeared at a depth of 129 cm. Layer 3 is therefore approximately 49 cm thick. Again, decorated and undecorated pottery, faunal remains and some ostrich eggshell fragments were found.

Excavation 6

This was another excavation on a midden, measuring 3 x 3 m. Three layers were opened up, representing human occupation from the Early Iron Age up to more historic times (Fig. 5).

Layer 1 was approximately 30 cm thick, and consisted of light to dark brown soil. A large amount of pottery, many decorated, and faunal remains were recovered, while one OES bead was also found. The only historical material found in layer 1 was fragments of metal tins. Layer 2 was also about 30 cm deep, and faunal remains and pottery was again found in abundance. Layer 2 consisted of a light grey coloured ash. Layer 3 continued for a further 40 cm before sterile soil was reached. The layer became less ashy in the last 10 cm. Only a few pieces of pottery and some bone were recovered from Layer 3.

THE FINDS

Nearly 15 000 objects and artefacts were recovered from the excavations and the surface of the site. This includes ceramics, pottery, faunal remains, metal, glass and glass beads, shell, stone tools and a variety of other cultural objects. The largest part of the sample is made up of faunal remains (48.49%), followed by ceramics (47.52%).

Faunal remains

The faunal remains totalled 7268 individual objects, of which 6893, or 98.84%, were unidentifiable bones and teeth (including worked bone and formal bone tools). Only 5.47% (398) identifiable bones and teeth were recovered.

Of the 33 species identified the largest number of identifiable specimens came from domestic animals. The hunted animals make up the next largest group followed by the trapped and gathered animals. It seems that although animals were herded a fair amount of the diet consisted out of wild animals. It can be argued that the springhares found were not solely hunted for their meat, but also for their skins.

The ant-bear bone found is interesting, as this animal appeared to have special meaning for many Iron Age societies (Grivetti 1981; Quin 1959). It is interesting to note here that it is said that the Tlokwa people had the *thakadu* (ant-bear) as their totem at their origin site of Tlokweng near Potchefstroom. The ant-bear would presumably therefore not have been eaten.

The presence of lion, ant-bear and bullfrog in the layers presumed to be of (Early) Iron Age origin is interesting, as all three were used in rituals. The bullfrog, though poisonous at certain times in the year, could also have been used as a food source.

The *Canidae* (dog species) juvenile found in the trench had cut marks on the right distal humerus. This could be due to skinning, or could point to the animal being used as a food source. In all, 5 canid individuals were identified, including the one from the trench dug by the builders. The others came from Excavation 3 layer 4 (2 individuals) and Excavation 5 layers 2 and 3 (2 different individuals) respectively. The presence of dog (wild or domestic) is very interesting. All of these remains were recovered from layers and at depths that could possibly be associated with the Early Iron Age occupation of the site. This can only be confirmed however with proper C14 analysis, and the dating of the dog remains should be considered.

Worked bone and bone tools

A total of 59 worked bone fragments and flakes, as well as more formal tools, were recovered from the excavations and surface of the site. The sample includes scrapers, a number of broken needles and awls, as well as some arrow points and broken arrow shafts. A few bone pendants, possibly worn around the neck, were also recovered. The worked bone and tools came from all the excavations, and are associated mainly with those layers linked to the Iron Age.

Unidentifiable bone & teeth

The unidentifiable bone and teeth was analysed according to the different skeletal parts they represent, while taphonomy was also looked at in the process. Unidentifiable means that animal species, sex and age classes can not be determined through the remains, which include enamel, skull, rib and vertebrae fragments, as well as bone flakes and miscellaneous bones. Taphonomy includes aspects such as damage and modification, evidence of exposure to fire, rodent and carnivore gnaw marks and natural weathering.

Nearly 33% of the sample was recovered from Excavation 3, followed by Excavation 1 (25.38%), Excavation 5 (15.75%) and Excavation 6 (13.93%). Just over 12% of the sample came from Excavation 2 and the surface of the site. Most of the unidentifiable faunal remains (82%) are made up of bone flakes and miscellaneous bones. Seventy five percent showed some signs of damage and/or modification, while more than 37% of the sample was exposed to fire. Natural weathering (exposure to water, sun) was noticed on 17%, with only 3.8% undamaged at all. Carnivore and/or rodent gnaw marks was recorded on 7 fragments.

Identifiable faunal remains

Identifiable means that specific skeletal parts, such as front and hind legs or pelvis, are easily recognized, and that animal size, species, age class and possibly sex of the animal can be determined as well. During the analysis process the Number of Individual Specimens (NISP) and the Minimum Number of Individual (MNI) animals that contributed to the sample are also determined. Any evidence of damage or modification or other taphonomy is also recorded.

A total of 398 identifiable bones and teeth were recovered, of which a large number came from the surface of the site (132) specimens. Regarding the formal excavations, Excavation 3 contributed just over 25% of the sample, with Excavations 1 & 5 producing 55 specimens (nearly 14%) each. Excavation 2 contributed 12 (3%) and Excavation 6 34 (8.5%) specimens.

The initial sorting of the bone material into not identifiable and identifiable specimens was done at the National Cultural History Museum and the specimens presumed to be identifiable were sent for analysis.

The usual identification percentage of identifiable material for an Iron Age site amounts to at least 20 % of material recovered. However, only about 4 % of possible identifiable material was given to the researcher who analysed the material. Her findings therefore are based on the material she received which amounted to 1% of the bone material recovered. It is possible that there is still some identifiable material among the not identifiable fragments.

The analysis was done with the help of the Transvaal Museums' Archaeozoology Department's collection. The analysis was done at international standards as promoted by ICAZ (International Council of Archaeozoology)

Weathering was estimated by comparison to the rest of the sample analysed.

The total sample bones that could be identified were 398 with a mass of. 6408.9g. All the species identified either still occur or did occur in the region in the past.

Species

A variety of 33 species were identified. Most commonly found was *Bos taurus* (cattle) followed by *Ovis aries* (sheep) and then *Capra hircus* (goat). The largest variety of species, 19 in all, was found in Excavation 3. This excavation unit also produced the largest identifiable sample (103 specimens). For full species list see Appendix 3.

Age classes

In the surface material 3 juveniles were identified. In Excavation 1 three aged specimens were identified, with two in layer 1 and one in layer 3. Four sub-adult specimens were identified, two in layer 1 and two in layer 3 respectively. Three juveniles were identified in layer 1 (two) and in layer 2 (one). Excavation 3 yielded three aged specimens (two in layer 2 and one in layer 4). There were also five juvenile specimens, one in layer 3; one in layer 4; two in layer 5 and one in layer 8. One neonate was identified in layer 3. Excavation 3.1 layer 1 yielded 1 juvenile. Excavation 5 yielded three juveniles, with one in layer 2 and two in layer 3. One neonate was identified in layer 2. Excavation 6 layer 1 produced one juvenile specimen. The canid (dog) found in one of the trenches dug by the builders on the site was identified as a juvenile.

Sex

Excavation 3 layer 4 yielded two pubis bones that could be sexed. Both these specimens proved to be male *Bos taurus*.

Pathology

Four individuals with pathology were identified. On the right mandible of a *Bos taurus* individual the third premolar was out of sequence with the remainder of the tooth row. A *Panthera leo* (lion) dewclaw had exostosis, possibly due to old age or trauma. There was also evidence of bone-to-bone articulation on the proximal end of this specific skeletal part. On another right mandible of a *Bos taurus*, the third premolar and the 1st molar was worn down

probably due to pathology on the upper tooth row. Two teeth of a *Capra hircus* individual (a lower left 2nd molar and a right lower 2nd molar) had uneven wear on the enamel possibly due to pathology on the upper tooth row.

The number of pathological bones found, seven in all, is relatively high for the size of sample. This could point to possible genetic factors, but would require further research into the Archaeozoology of the region.

Taphonomy and worked bone

Out of the total of 398 fragments, 22 were burnt. An additional three bones were weathered and 12 bones show cut marks. One bone had rodent gnaw marks.

Three weathered bones were identified in the surface collection, but this taphonomic identification could be unreliable as the bones were exposed to the elements for a fairly long period of time. A fair amount of fresh breaks were found in the material but most of these could not be assembled, as the complete bone sample was not available.

Ceramics

Historical and recent ceramics

Thirteen pieces of historic, or more recent, ceramics were recovered (Fig. 6). The fragments include 4 pieces of white, undecorated, porcelain, 1 piece of decorated porcelain and 8 pieces of dark brown glazed stoneware. The stoneware and 4 of the porcelain fragments came from Excavation 2, layer 1, while 1 piece of porcelain was found in layer 2 of Excavation 3.

The lack of any decorations, or any other identificatory marks, make it difficult to date these pieces or determine their origins. The only decorated fragment is very small, but could date to between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, all the pieces come from levels associated with other recent, or historic, artefacts and features, such as stonewalls, glass and metal beads and fragments of glass. Whatever the timeframe, these objects are clear evidence of a recent historic settlement phase at De Gladdeklipkop. No functional types, or vessels, represented by the pieces could be determined, as the fragments were too small. They were however more than likely plates, cups and other household artefacts.

Other ceramic/clay objects

Pieces of hut rubble, including hut wall and fragments of clay/dung floor, were found in small numbers (18 in total) in all excavations. Most pieces came from levels (surface and layers 1 & 2) associated with historic and LIA settlement at the site.

A single fragment of a ceramic spoon, or ladle, was recovered from Excavation 1, layer 3. This object has traces of black and red ochre smear on it.

Three tuyeres, or clay blowpipe, fragments were also recovered. Tuyeres were used as parts of bellows in metal smelting furnaces, and these fragments are therefore tantalizing evidence of metal smelting and working being practiced at the site. One fragment each came from

- (a) single band of herringbone design followed by a single band of incisions
- (b) multiple band of applied herringbone design
- (c) red and dark red ochre chevrons bordered by incised lines
- (d) single band of stylus impressions bordered above and below by single incised lines
- (e) single cross-hatched band bordered above and below by single incised line
- (f) line of horizontal incisions followed by a single band of thumbnail impressions
- (g) multiple bands of cross-hatching bordered by band of punctates

The decoration layouts (position of motif on vessel) vary. There are:

- (1) decoration below the rim and on the body
- (2) decoration on the neck
- (3) decoration just below the rim
- (4) decoration on top of the rim
- (5) decoration on the edge of the rim
- (6) decoration on the shoulder/body
- (7) decoration on top of the rim and on the neck

Four types of vessel were identified, including:

- (a) Bag shaped pots
- (b) Pots with slightly everted necks
- (c) Pots with upright necks
- (d) Bowls

The intersection between profile (4) and layout modes (7) produced a possible 28 classes of vessel, of which 7 are present. They are:

- (1) Bag shaped pots with decoration below the rim and on the body
- (2) Pots with decoration on the neck
- (3) Pots with decoration below the rim
- (4) Pots with decoration on the shoulder
- (5) Pots with decoration on the neck and shoulder
- (6) Pots with decoration on the rim and the neck
- (7) Bowls with decoration on the body

Although the pottery sample was fairly fragmented, and only two partially complete vessels were found, we were able to identify a number of decoration types, some motifs and a few vessel profiles. Dating the site using the decorated ceramics, and placing them in any specific, recognizable, sequences, were however much more difficult. Some of the pottery is similar to the Doornkop (Lydenburg Heads site) sequence (Huffman, pers. comm.: 2004, Whitelaw 1996) (Fig. 7), while others could belong to the Eiland (Fig. 8) or Late Moloko phases (Huffman pers. comm.: 2004, Loubser 1989) (Fig. 9). This provides a tentative chronology of settlement at the site of more than a thousand years (AD 800 – AD 1800). It seems therefore as if there were at least 3, and maybe even 4 phases of settlement at the site, starting from the EIA (Doornkop & Eiland), to the LIA (Moloko/Letaba) and finally the historic time period.

Metal

A relatively small number of metal artefacts were recovered from the excavations. Nearly 50% of these were unidentifiable fragments. The metal came mainly from the historic levels of settlement, with the highest percentages from Excavations 1 & 2. No metal artefacts were recovered from Excavation 6.

The identifiable metal artefacts include spearheads (Fig. 10), copper beads and bangles and a variety of other objects such as a spent cartridge, screws, nuts, pieces of wire, tin lids and a button. The spent cartridge has a dated manufacturer's mark - **DM 1899 K**. This denotes Kynoch, a German ammunitions manufacturer. The date of 1899 mean that it might come from the period of the Anglo-Boer War, although this cartridge could've been used much later. It does however verify the historic component of the settlement (J van den Bos, pers. comm.: 2004) (Fig. 11).

Stone artefacts

In total 40 stone artefacts were recovered during the archaeological investigations. They were found in all excavations, except Excavation 4 and 6, and on the surface of the site. The biggest number (34) is Middle to Late Stone Age tools (such as scrapers, blades and points), flakes and cores. Excavation 3 produced the most stone artefacts (25).

The other stone artefacts include 3 upper grinding stones, a piece of worked red ochre, 1 rubbing stone (used for smoothing hut floors) and a grooved soapstone object. This grooved stone is unfortunately incomplete, but has deep grooves on opposite sides of it. Its function is unknown.

Beads

Twenty-six pieces of glass were recovered, from Excavations 2, 3 and 5 (Fig. 12). The glass fragments include transparent, brown and dark green coloured pieces. Although mostly bottles, such as wine, beer and other liquor, are represented, a few pieces of window glass and pieces of a glass plate were also identified.

A large number of glass beads came from the excavations (100 in total), most of them (72) from Excavation 1. They were mainly found in the first two layers of the excavations, and in association with historical and LIA cultural material. They are typical of beads found at Late Iron Age sites in the area. A large variety of colours are present, including red, green, light and dark blue, pink, black, yellow and white. The beads also vary in size.

A single pink plastic bead was recovered from the first layer of Excavation 5.

Shell

A total of 100 shell fragments, including river mussel, land snail, ostrich eggshell and various shell beads, were recovered from the surface of the site as well as from all the excavations.

Although most of the shell was fragmented, a number of complete or partially complete shells were also recovered. Some of the fragments and complete shells have signs of being used (in

the shape of cut and polish marks), probably as pottery scrapers or burnishers. One tortoise shell fragment was found in Excavation 5.

Thirteen shell beads were recovered, of which 5 was manufactured from ostrich eggshell and 8 from other shells. The size of beads varies, and they came from all the excavations.

Miscellaneous

One object falling under this category was recovered. This is a piece of faeces, possibly human in origin, from Excavation 3, layer 3.

Human Skeletal Remains

As already mentioned, a burial was exposed in Excavation 5 (Fig. 13). The remains were possibly that of an adult female. The skeletal remains were badly preserved, with a number of skeletal parts missing, or broken. No grave goods were found associated with the burial. The individual was buried on its left side, in the semi-flexed position, facing north. A detailed anatomical analysis has not been undertaken, but could be considered at a later stage.

Although this was the only burial opened during formal excavations, four other burials were exposed during earlier construction work on the access road at De Gladdeklipkop, and removed by the archaeologists of the NCHM. These remains were, however, claimed by the local community, and no expert analysis was therefore possible. The community has since reburied them in an undisclosed location. The scattered remains of a further 3 individuals were also recovered, due to construction work as well. These remains could also be studied in more detail at a later stage.

DATING THE SITE

Determining a time frame for human occupation of the site was one of the main aims of the archaeological research. Relative dates were obtained through the analysis of cultural material, especially decorated ceramics (both historical and Iron Age) and other objects that can be compared to dated artefacts from sites with known dates. In this instance, some historical objects, such as the spent cartridge and decorated porcelain pieces, provide a relative date for the last phase of settlement at the site of the late 19th to mid 20th centuries. The decorated Iron Age ceramics from De Gladdeklipkop are similar to ceramics found at already dated sites, providing us with a tentative chronology of settlement of between approximately AD 700 – AD 1800.

More absolute dates was obtained from two samples, one of charcoal and the other burnt bone, submitted to the dating laboratory QUADRU, at the CSIR. The analysis of these samples provides us with calibrated radiocarbon (C14) dates that are fairly accurate. Although a number of samples were recovered during the De Gladdeklipkop excavations, most were too small to be of any use for analytical purposes.

The two dates were as follows:

Excavation 1 (burnt bone) from layer 3: 1220 ± 50 BP (AD 730)

Reconstructing and interpreting the domestic economy of the settlement proved more attainable. However, trying to look at similarities and differences over time, as well as changes that might have occurred was not really possible. Domestic economy includes aspects such as trade, agriculture, diet and metalworking.

Evidence of trade comes in the shape of the glass beads. These types of glass beads were traded during a major part of the Iron Age, and are found on many southern African archaeological sites dating to this time. Metal objects, such as the copper earrings and metal bangles, were of course also trade items.

The type of agriculture practiced at the site is also difficult to reconstruct. It is more than likely that crops such as maize, sorghum or millet, or a combination of a few, were grown and utilized here, although no definite evidence for these were found. The only tangible evidence for the production and use of such crops at the site is the 'grain' storage pit uncovered in Excavation 3, probably dating to the Early Iron Age phase of settlement at De Gladdeklipkop.

Domestic animals (cattle, sheep & goat) produced the largest number of identifiable specimens to the bone sample, followed by hunted, trapped and gathered animals respectively. Therefore, although they herded animals to a large extent, a fair amount of their diet consisted out of non-domestic species such as steenbok, impala, blue wildebeest, zebra, buffalo and giraffe. They also trapped animals such as springhares, of which a large number are represented in the faunal sample. Other food sources that contributed to their diet include freshwater mussel and giant landsnail, while the utilization of the canids and bullfrogs as food source can also be debated. The diet of the people, right through time, has therefore been very high in meat content.

Another aspect of domestic economy that can be mentioned is skin or hide working. The springhares would have been trapped not only for their meat, but also for their skins. Other evidence for this is the lion, leopard and other carnivore remains found in the excavations. These animals would have been hunted and trapped more for their skins than as a source of meat. Some of the worked pieces of pottery and bone could also have been used as scrapers in curing the hide.

Metalworking is the last aspect of domestic economy that needs some discussion. Although the evidence is very scant, a few pieces of metal slag and some tuyeres (clay blowpipe fragments) were recovered from the excavations, pointing in the direction of this activity.

Cultural Identities

Determining the cultural identities of the people who settled at the site during the different time periods was one of the main aims of the archaeological investigations.

During more recent historical times, and even possibly during the Late Iron Age, we know that the Tlokwa people settled in the area (Fig. 20). It is said that the origin of all Tlokwa people can be traced to Tlokweg on the Mooi River near Potchefstroom, where they had the *thakadu* (ant-bear) as their totem. From here can be traced the Tlokwa tribes of North West Province, Free State, Lesotho, KwaZulu-Natal, Botswana and Limpopo. Exactly when this segregation took place, can no longer be determined with any clarity. It is however justifiable to estimate that the northward movement of the Tlokwa people took place before the year 1700. According to tradition they first settled at Moletane in the Potgietersrus district, but

early in the 18th century they moved further northward (Van Warmelo 1953). Many of the sites identified in the area are of Tlokwa origin (Van Schalkwyk 2001).

Determining the cultural identities of the earlier Iron Age people who lived at the site is more problematic. Although there is some Doornkop and Eiland style decorated pottery, the decorated sample is too small to say with absolute surety that people associated with these traditions were present at the site, although it is quite possible. The Moloko (Tswana) pottery recovered at the site also indicates that Tswana speaking people possibly lived here during the Iron Age.

More in depth investigation of the pottery found at the site, as well as oral traditions research, needs to be undertaken in order for the cultural identities to be determined without a doubt.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the site has been disturbed by the development of the BoTlokwa Commercial Hub, we were able to carry out successful archaeological excavations. These excavations not only served to ‘rescue’ cultural objects from ultimate destruction, but also helped in the interpretation and reconstruction of the history of the site. Nearly 15 000 objects were recovered in the process, including pottery, bone, metal objects, glass beads and stone tools.

It is possible to say that human occupation of the site have been taking place for more than 1000 years, commencing in approximately AD 700 and continuing up to the mid 20th century. To some extent we were also able to interpret the domestic economy practiced at the site over the span of occupation. The diet consisted to a large extent of meat, although other food sources such as cereals, other plant foods and marine shell were also utilized. They practiced herding, although hunting and trapping non-domestic animals also took place. Links with trade networks existed, as evidenced by the glass trade beads, while hide working and metalworking was also more than likely practiced.

PROJECT TEAM

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APPENDIX 2: ILLUSTRATIONS

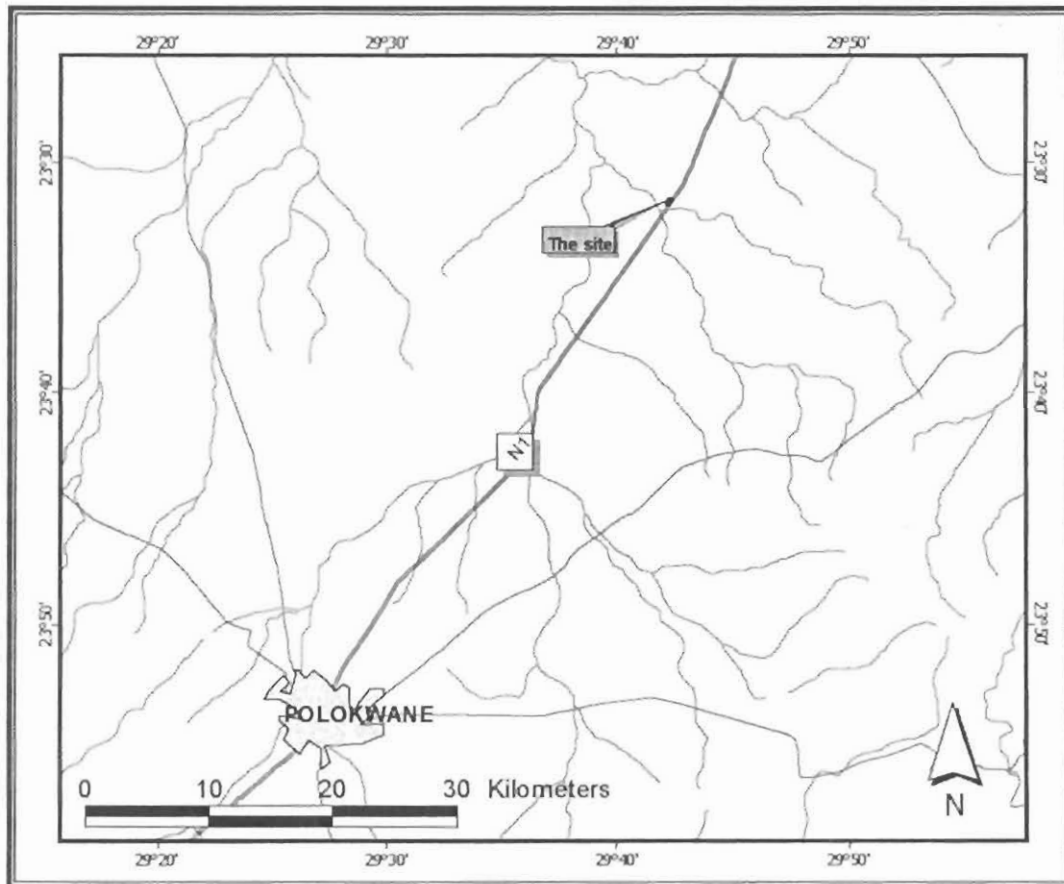


Fig. 1. Location of the site.

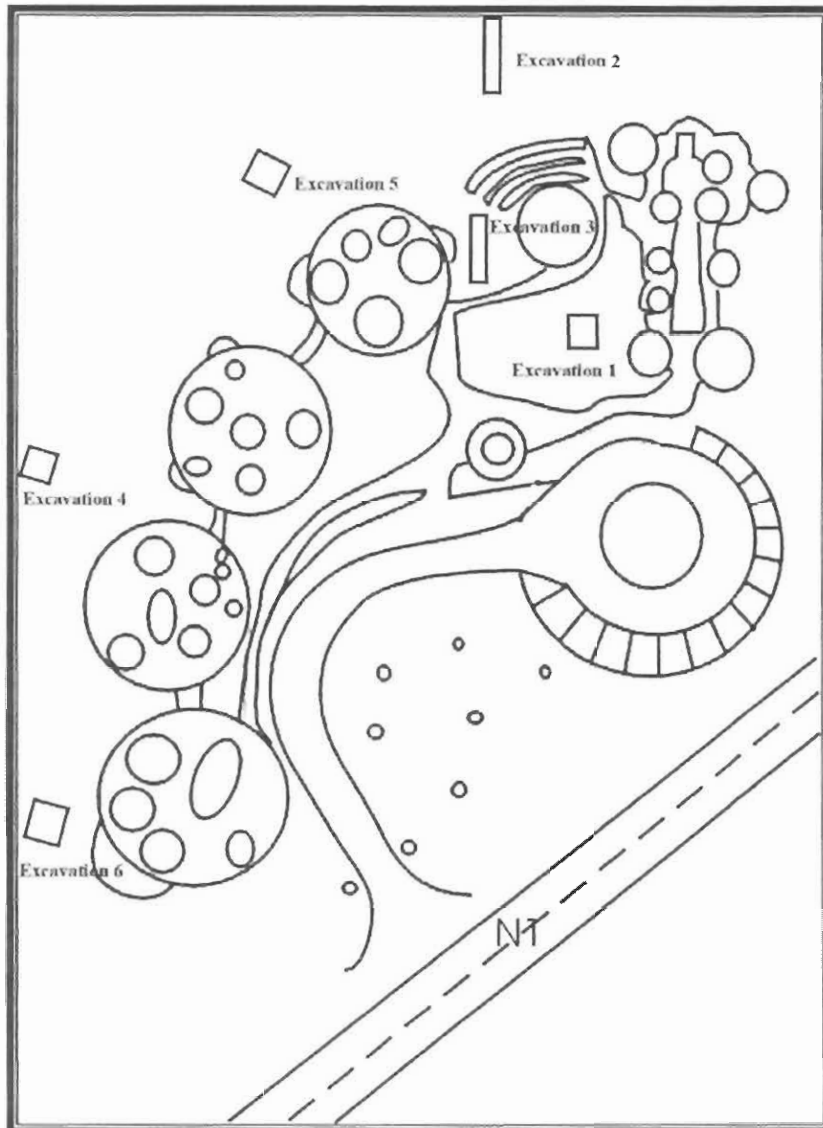


Fig. 2. Position of the excavations in relation to development on the site.

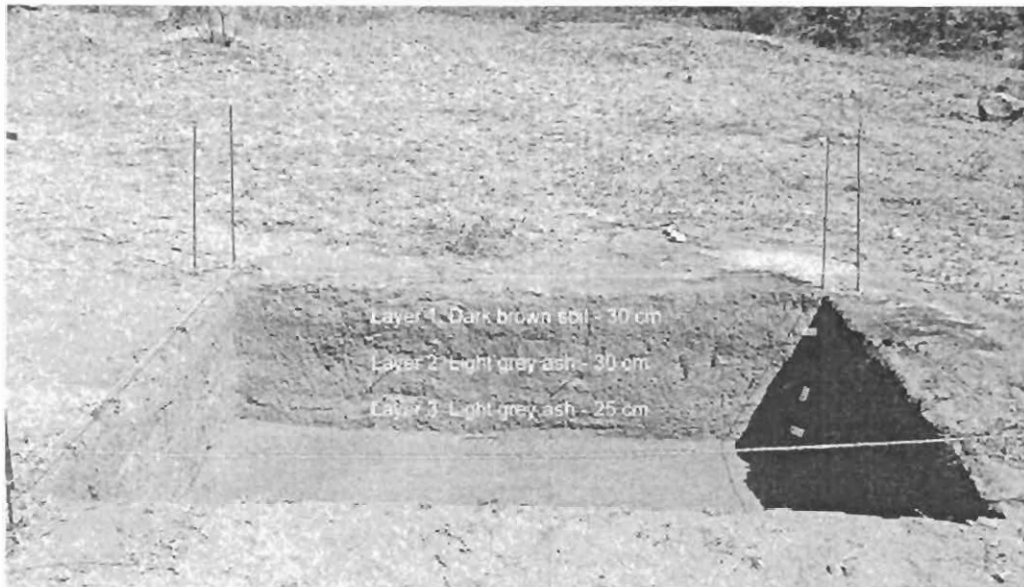


Fig. 3. Excavation 1, showing the stratigraphy.

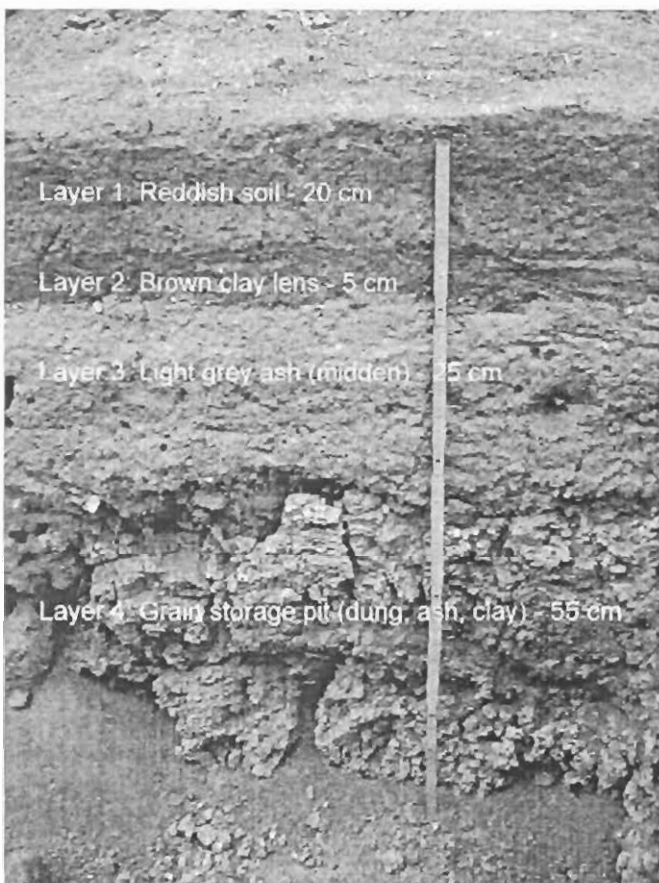


Fig. 4. Excavation 3, showing the stratigraphy.

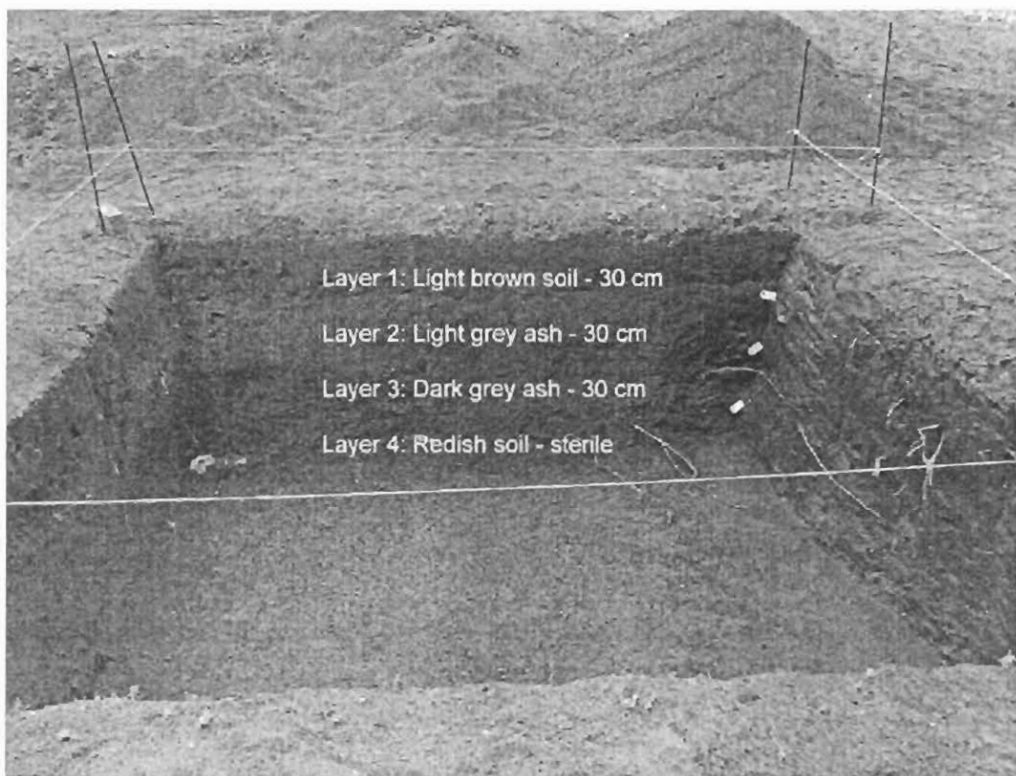


Fig. 5. Excavation 6 showing the stratigraphy.



Fig. 6. Contemporary ceramics.

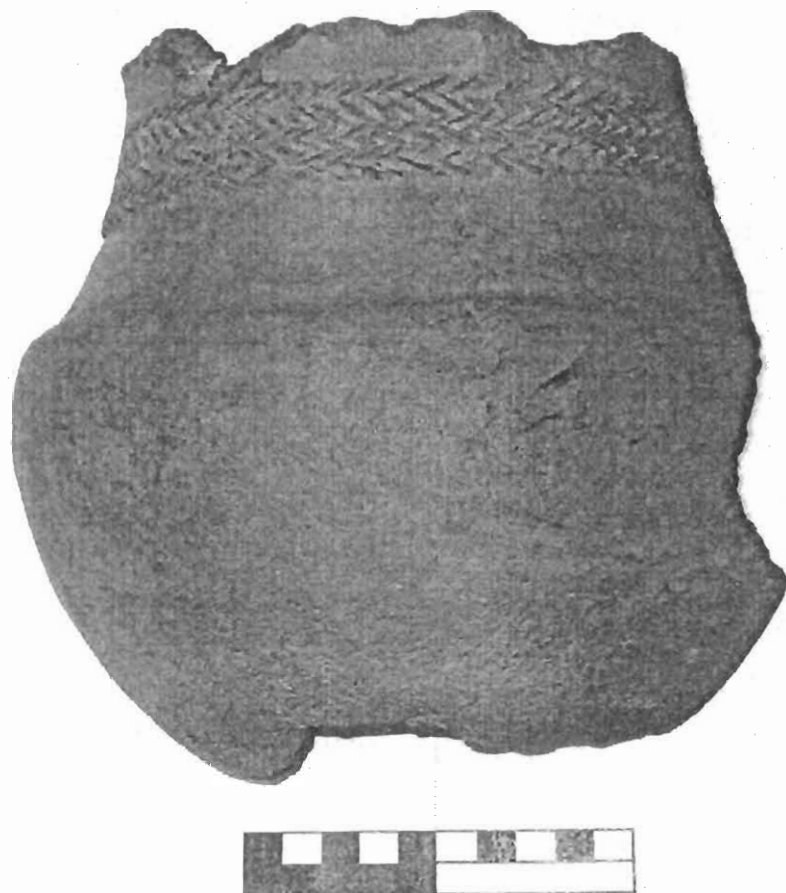


Fig. 7. Doornkop type pottery, dating to the Early Iron Age.



Fig. 8. Letaba type pottery.



Fig. 9. Lctaba type pottery.



Fig. 10. Spear blades.

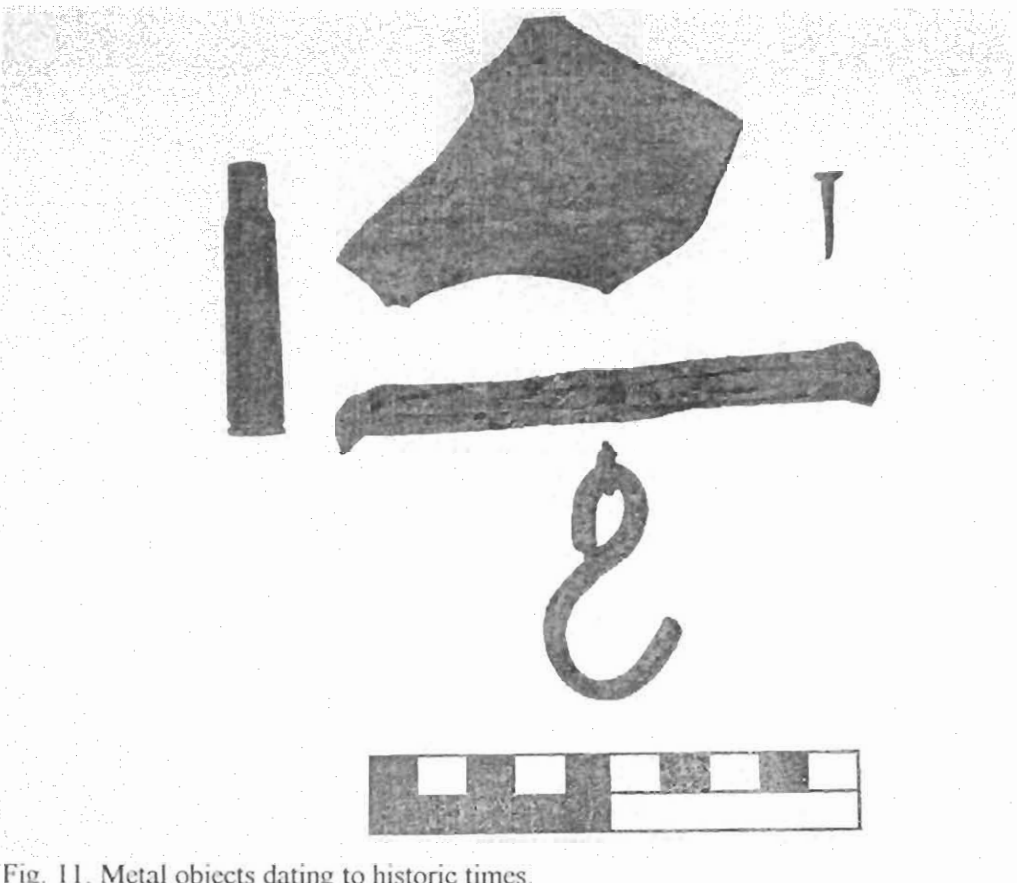


Fig. 11. Metal objects dating to historic times.

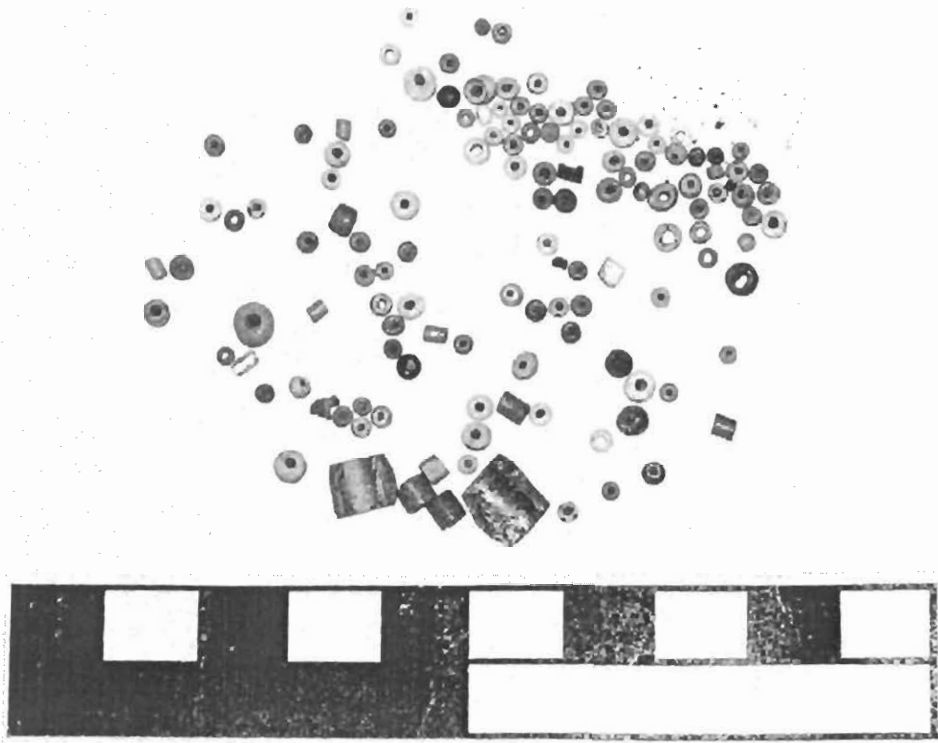


Fig. 12. Glass beads found on the site.



Fig. 13. Burial in Excavation 5. Note that both arms, some vertebrae and ribs of the individual are missing.

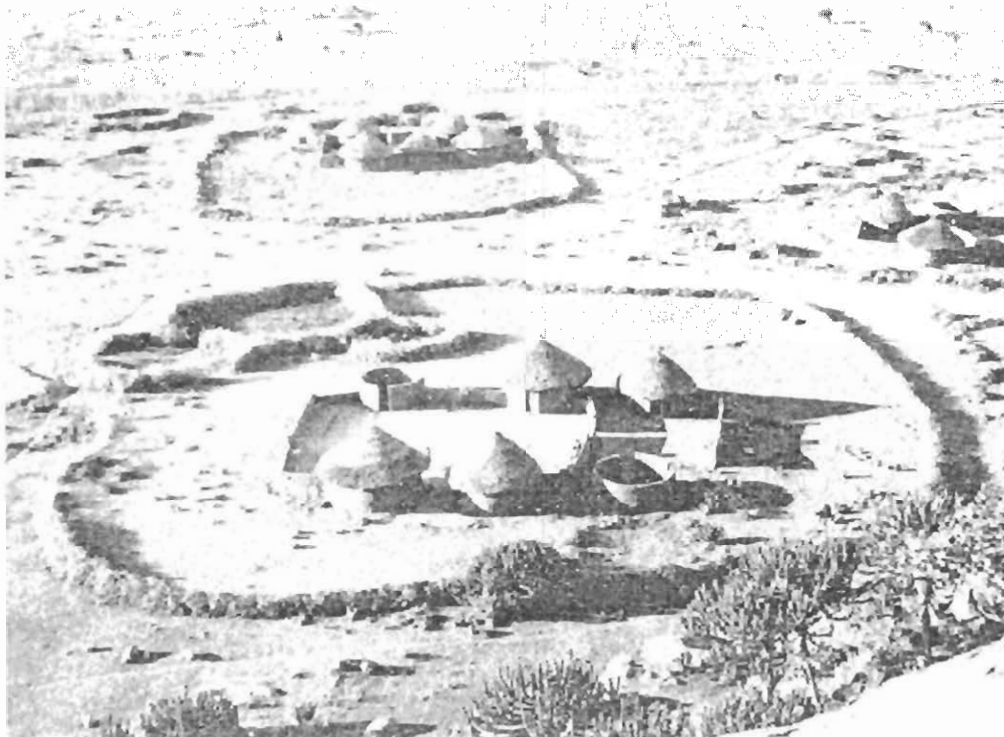


Fig. 14. Typical Tlokwa settlement dating to the early 20th century (Van Warmelo 1953).

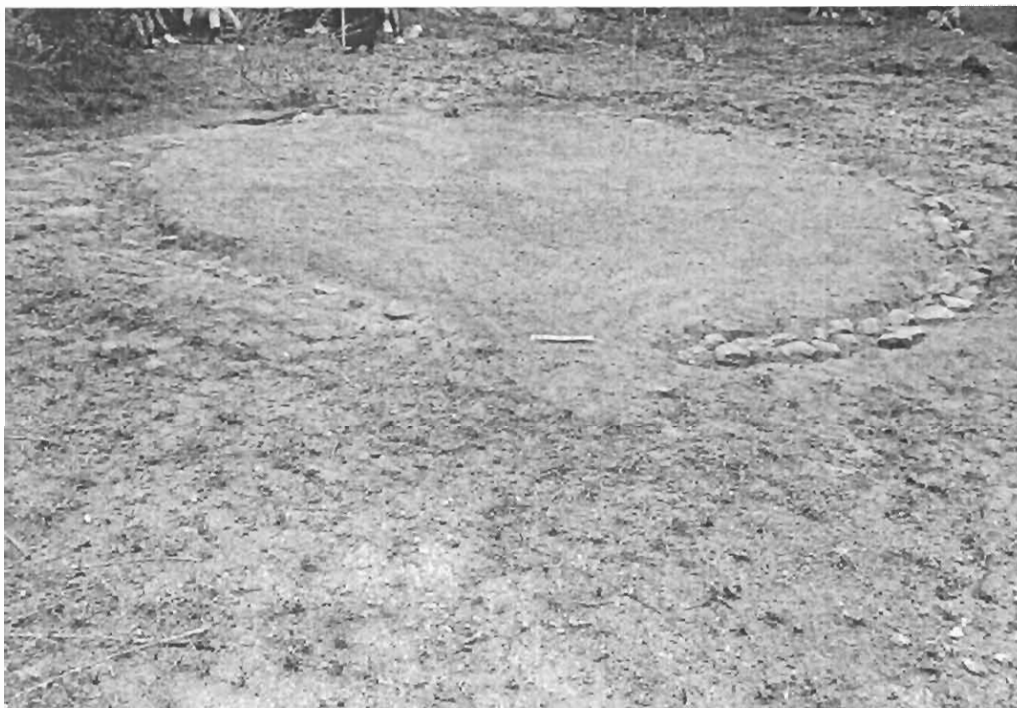


Fig. 15. Foundation of a structure similar to that shown in Fig. 14.

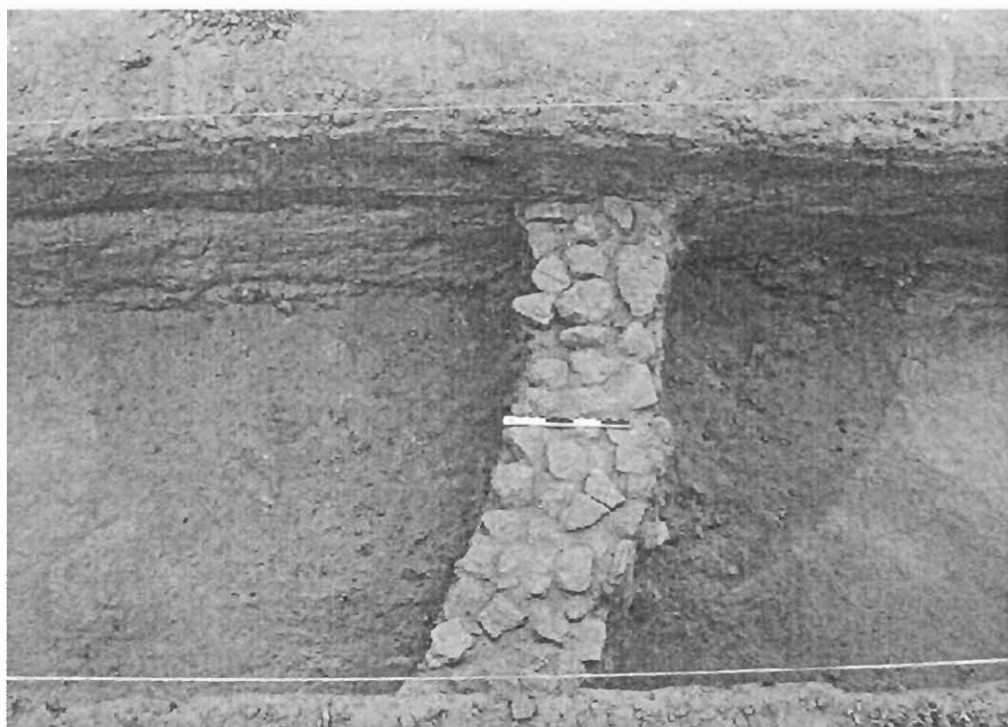


Fig. 16. Excavation 3, showing the stone wall and the clear outlines of the earlier grain storage pit.

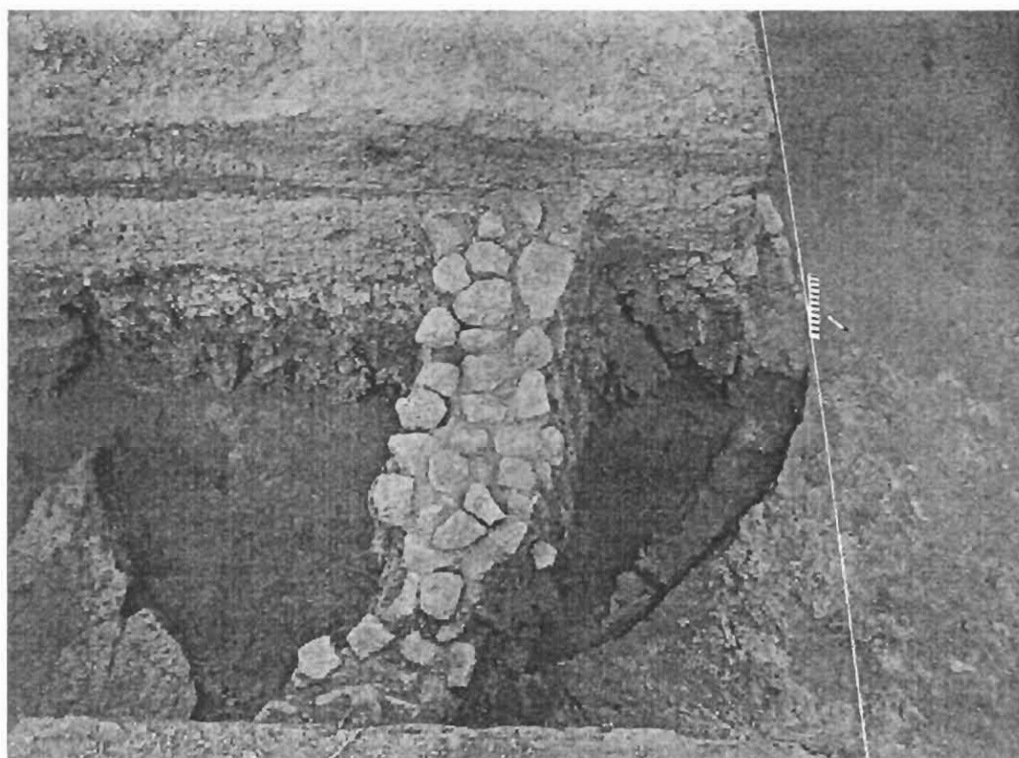


Fig. 17. Excavation 3, extended to the right, showing the grain pit and the hard clay floor.

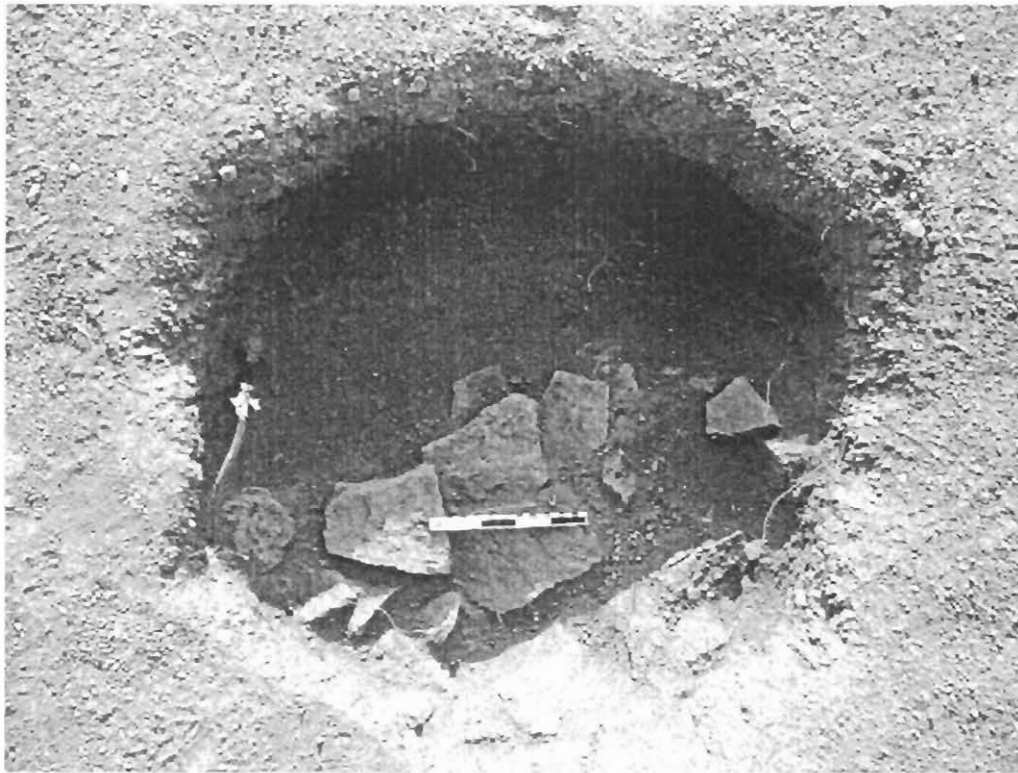


Fig. 18. One of the pit features. The bottom was lined with small stones.

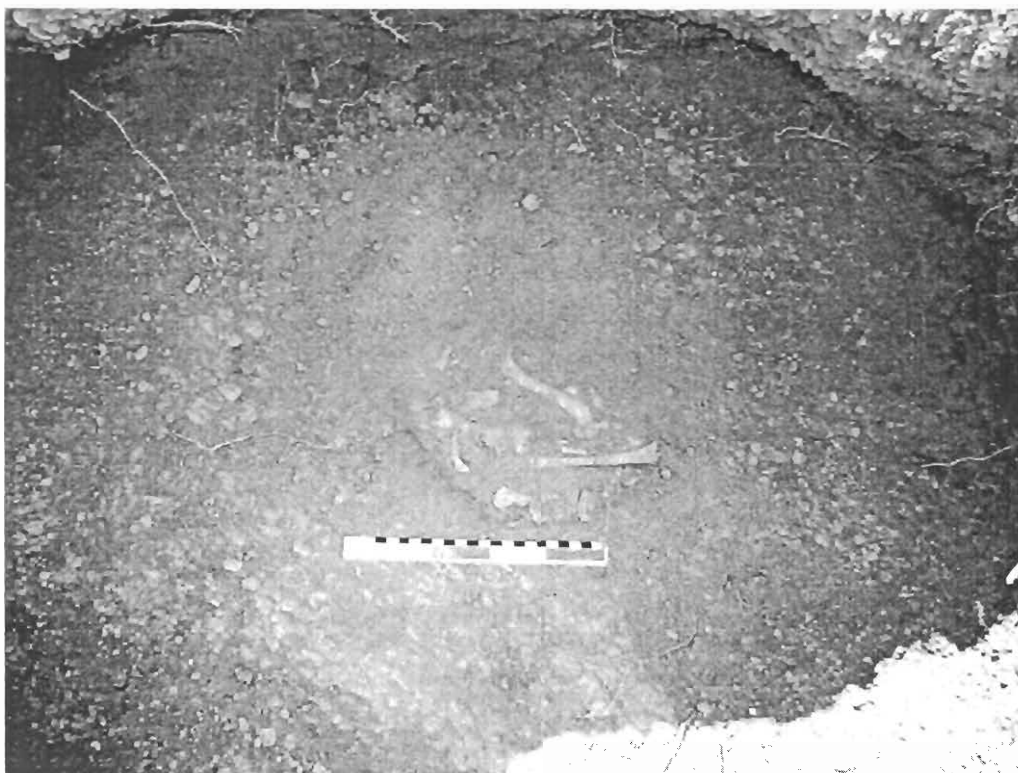


Fig. 19. One of the pits with the remains of the skeleton of an neonate *Ovis/Capra* (sheep/goat).



Fig. 20. Photograph taken on the site by H.F. Gros during the 1880s. Although he does not explain the action presented in the foreground, the background gives a clear picture of the last phase of occupation on the site.