

Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment of
Verkykerskop, Phumelela Local Municipality, Free State
Province.



Report prepared for
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Executive Summary

- At the request of MDA Environmental Consultants, a Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment was carried out for the village of Verkykerskop, located between Harrismith and Memel, in the northeastern Free State.
- The field assessment revealed no evidence of intact or capped Stone Age artifacts or Iron Age structures within the confines of the footprint.
- Precisely recorded grave sites as well as the old Annasdal homestead and kraal are located outside the proposed development areas.
- The development will not impact negatively on the historical heritage of Verkykerkop.
- The site has been sufficiently recorded, mapped and documented in terms of conditions necessary for a Phase 1 archaeological impact assessment.
- The affected area around Verkykerskop village is **graded General Protection C (Field Rating IV C)** and can be accessed for further development.

Introduction

At the request of MDA in Bloemfontein, a Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment was carried out at the village of Verkykerskop in the Free State Province where the establishment of a new township is being planned (**Fig. 1**). The village is located on the farm Aansluit 261, which is also an operational farm and conservation area. Many of the original homesteads in the village have been converted into tourist cottages. The development footprint includes Aansluit 261 and Annasdal 668. The extent of the proposed development (over 5000 m²) falls within the requirements for a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) as required by Section 38 (Heritage Resources Management) of the South African National Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 25 of 1999).

Terms of Reference

- Identify and map possible archaeological sites and occurrences using available resources.
- Determine and assess the potential impacts of the proposed development on potential archaeological resources;
- Recommend mitigation measures to minimize potential impacts associated with the proposed development.

Methodology

A desktop assessment of known and potential archaeological heritage in and around Verkykerskop is based on existing field data, published scientific literature and assessment reports, including earlier fieldwork carried out at Verkykerskop (Dreyer (2008a, 2008b). Garmin GSx 60 GPS hand models (set to the WGS 84 map datum) and digital cameras, were used to record relevant data during a field assessment of the development footprint. A three-member team took part in the field assessment.

Description of the Affected Area

Locality Data

Maps: 1:50 000 topographical map 2729 CD Verkykerskop

General Town Coordinates: 27°55'17.01"S 29°17'4.64"E.

Verkykerskop is situated in the northeastern Free State on the R722 road between Harrismith and Memel (**Fig. 2**).

Background

Pleistocene alluvial exposures of the Cornelia Formation, containing fossils and stone tool artifacts, have been recorded near the Vaal River north of Verkykerskop (**Fig. 3**). These Quaternary deposits are characterized by several distinct fossil mammal species as well as numerous stone tools including Early Stone Age Acheulian hand axes (Butzer *et al.* 1974; Brink & Rossouw 2000). There is currently no record of Cornelia Formation sediments in the vicinity of Verkykerskop.

The archaeological footprint in the region is noticeably represented by stone walled late Iron Age settlements (**Fig. 4**). Labeled Type N by Maggs (1976), the earliest late Iron Age settlements from the north-eastern corner of the Free State provided radiocarbon dates going back to between the 15th and 17th century A.D. The Type N settlement type is named after Ntsuanatsatsi hill, the legendary place of origin of the Fokeng people, which is situated between Frankfort and Vrede (Type site OU1, farm Helena, Maggs 1976). Type N settlement units are characterized by primary enclosures arranged in a ring linked by secondary walling thus forming a large secondary enclosure in the middle (**Fig. 5**). Pioneer missionaries Arbousset and Dumas reported on many stone ruins at Ntsuanatsatsi and also mentioned two other significant landmarks in the region that are relevant to pre-colonial Basotho history, including Peme (Leeukop) and Sefate (Verkykerskop) (Dreyer 2001). Type N settlements subsequently led to Type V settlement units (Type site OO1 Makgwareng, Lindley District), after the former were replaced or converted into a new settlement pattern (Maggs 1976) (**Fig. 5**). Type V settlements spread out further to the south and east, but did not extend further than the Vet River and the Drakensberg escarpment.

Field Assessment

The terrain east of the village is characterized by rolling hill topography and open, grass covered plains punctuated by several small man-made dams (**Fig. 6 - 7**). The majority of the buildings including other modern structures as well as four grave sites were recorded during a previous survey of Verkykerskop (Dreyer 2008a, 2008b) (**Fig. 8 - 12**).

Significance of Impacts and Recommendations

The field assessment revealed no evidence of intact or capped Stone Age artifacts or Iron Age structures within the confines of the footprint. The grave sites as well as the old Annasdal homestead and kraal are located outside the proposed development areas. The development will not impact negatively on the historical heritage of Verkykerkop.

The site has been sufficiently recorded, mapped and documented in terms of conditions necessary for a Phase 1 archaeological impact assessment. The affected area around Verkykerskop village is **graded General Protection C (Field Rating IV C)** and can be accessed for further development.

References

- Brink, J.S. and Rossouw, L. 2000. New trial excavations at the Uitzoek-Cornelia typ locality. *Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum* 16(6): 141 – 156.
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- Maggs T. M. O’C 1976. *Iron Age Communities of the Southern Highveld*. Occasional Publications of the Natal Museum No. 2. Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg.

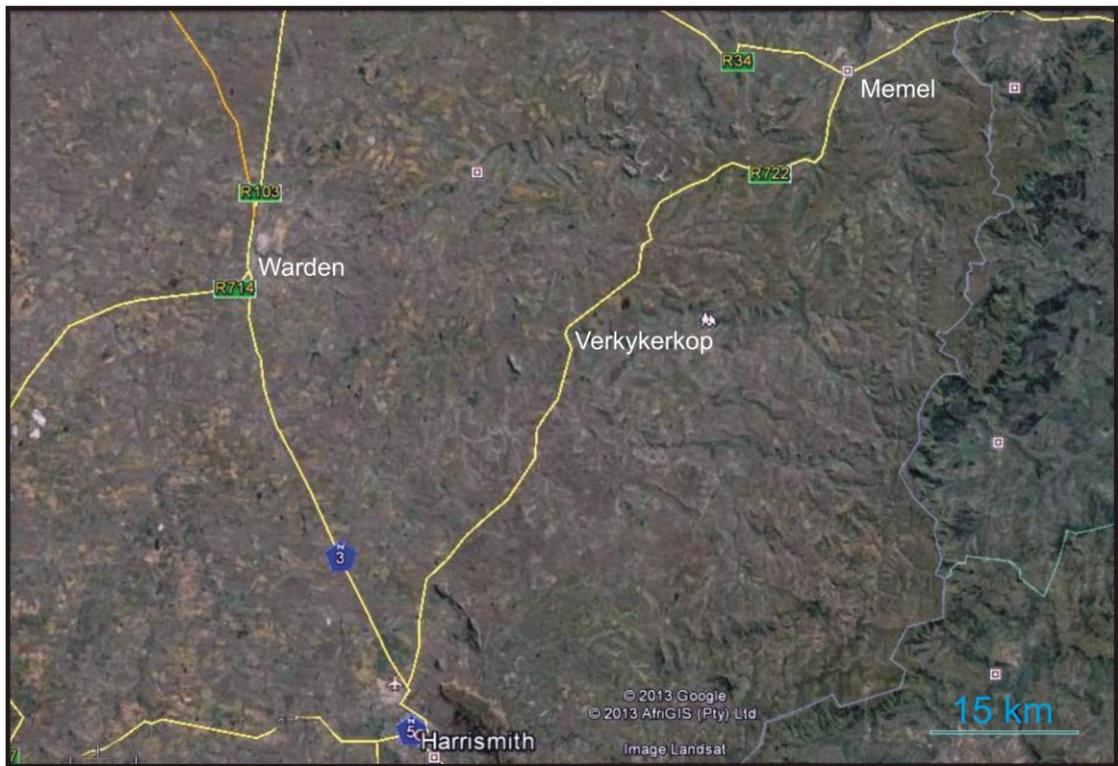


Figure 2. Position of Verkykerskop in relation to other towns in the northeastern Free State.



Figure 3. Fossil- and artifact-rich dongas at the Cornelia Formation type site near Cornelia.

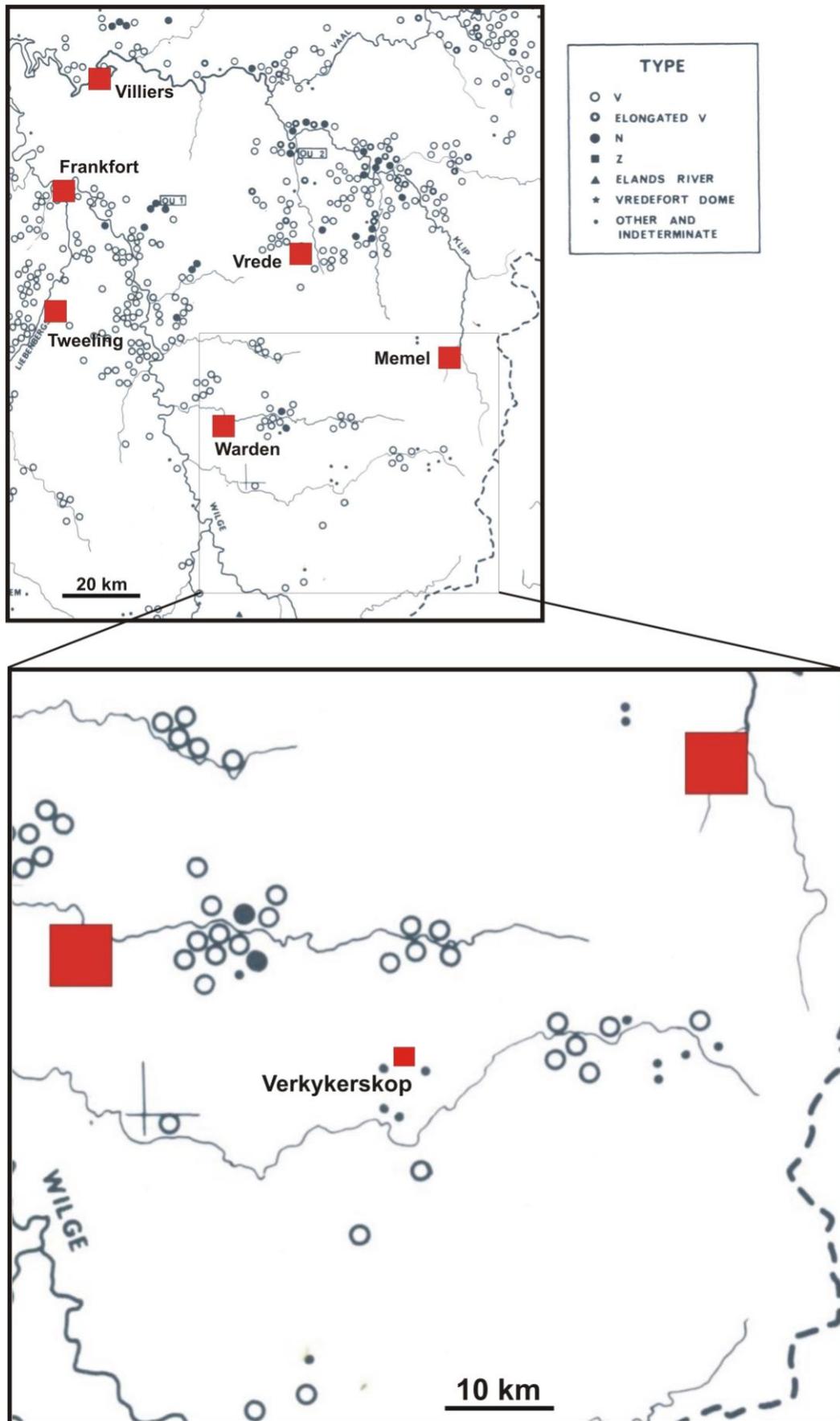


Figure 4. Distribution of Iron Age settlements near Verkykerskop (after Maggs 1976).

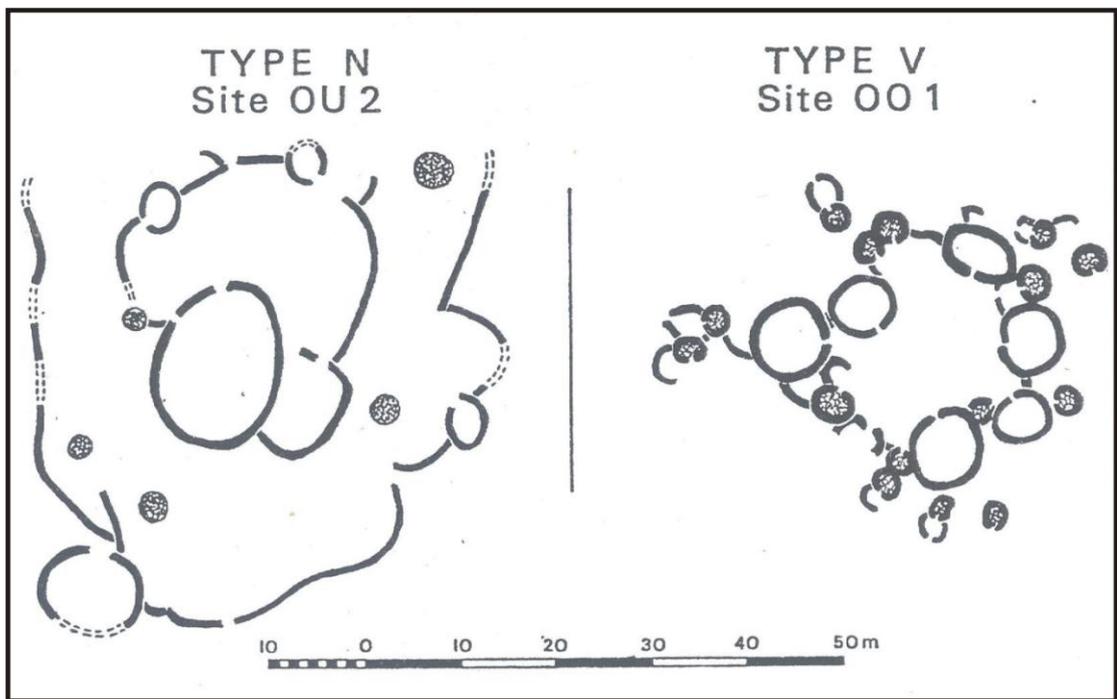
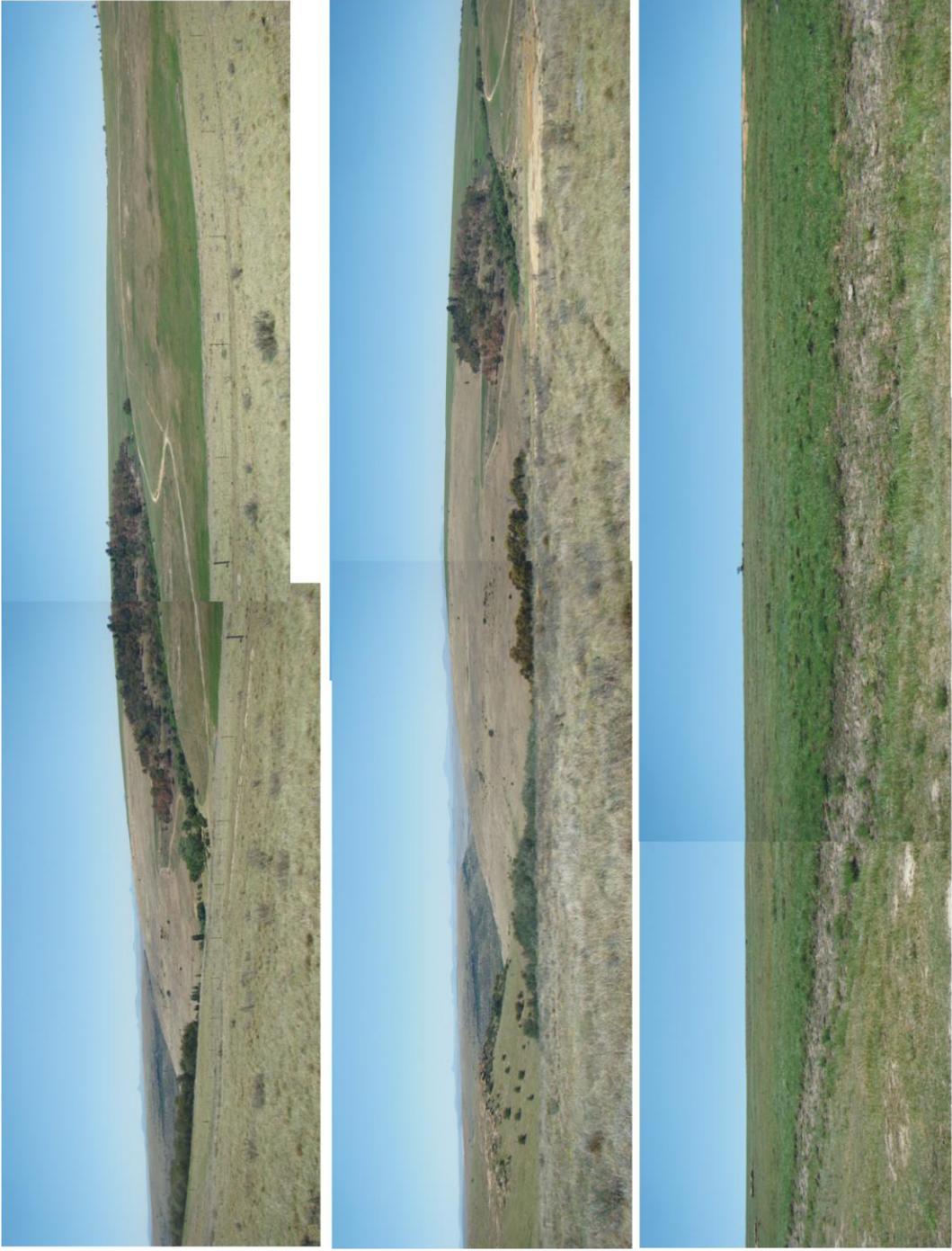


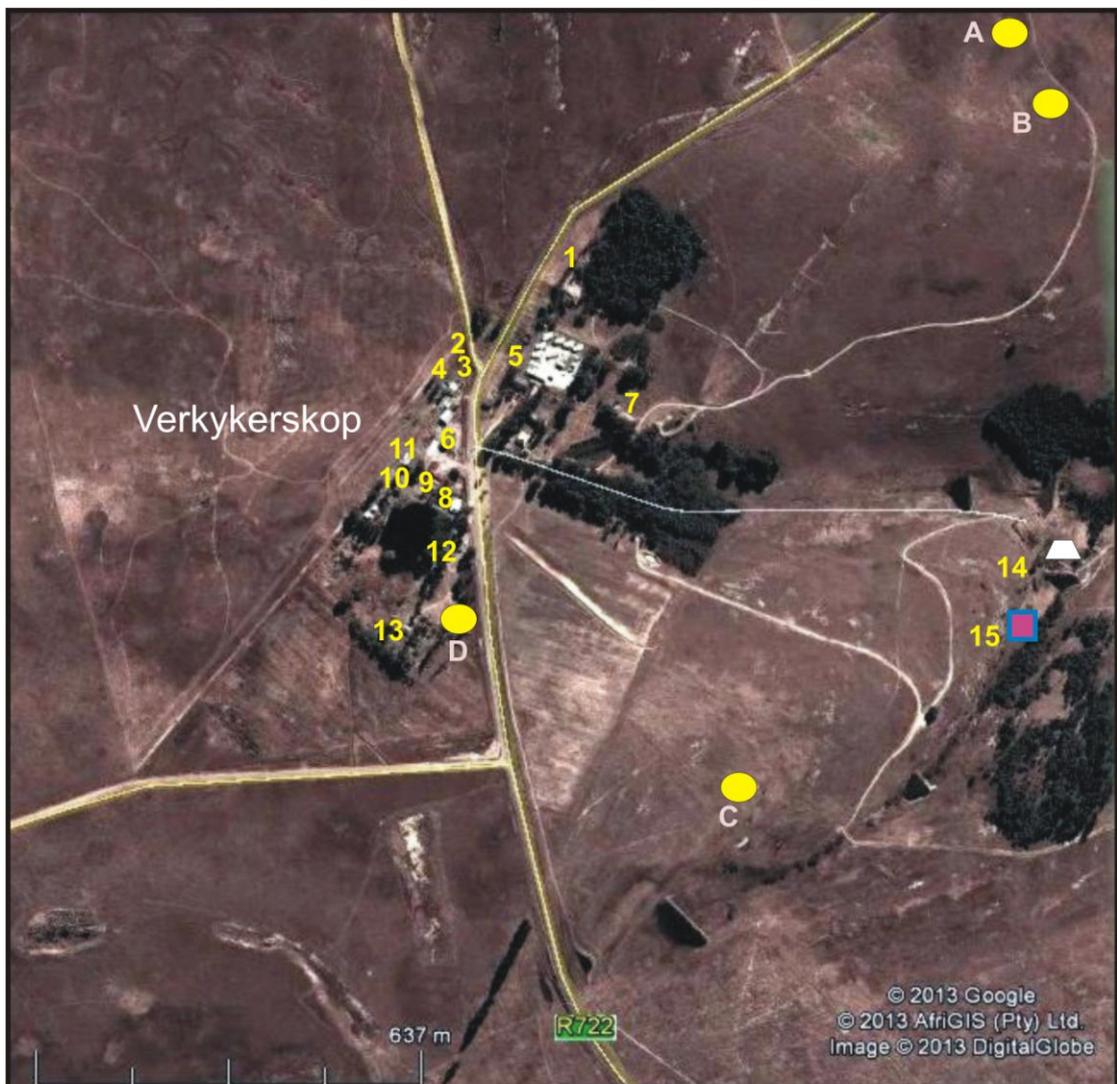
Figure 5. Iron Age settlement types found in the northeastern Free State (after Maggs 1976).



The terrain around Verkykerskop village, looking east (top), north (middle) and west (bottom).



Figure 7. Man-made dams on Annasdal 668.



● Grave site

△ Old Annasdal Homestead

■ Large rectangular stone walled kraal

Figure 8. Modern and historical structures recorded during the survey (No 1 -15, see figs 9-12). The grave site coordinates are A) S27 54 52.0 E29 17 19.0, B) S27 54 57.0 E29 17 22.0, C) S27 55 32.0 E29 17 03.0 and D) S27 55 22.0 E29 16 47.0



Figure 9. Historical and modern buildings marked on map in Fig. 8.



8



9



10



11



12



13

Figure 10. Historical and modern buildings marked on map in Fig. 8.



Figure 11 The old Annasdal homestead.



Figure 12. Rectngular stone-walled kraal located near the old Annasdal homestead.