

## Archaeological Mitigation Report

For the Iron Age/Historical Site (PLA1677/S.35-027) and Iron Age Smelting Site (PLA1677/S. 35-006) near Mokopane, Limpopo Province

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To comply with heritage legislation (NHRA No. 25 of 1999) a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) was conducted for the Platreef mine lease area (Higgitt *et al* 2013). During this assessment several heritage significant sites were identified of which two sites (PLA1677/S.35-006 and PLA1677/S.35-027) will be impacted on by the proposed mining activities and it was recommended by the authors that mitigation measures be implemented prior to development commencing. These recommendations were supported by SAHRA in their review comments of the report, and HCAC was subsequently appointed by Ivanplats to conduct the mitigation.

This document represents a final report on the results of the excavations and mapping conducted on an Iron Age Smelting Site (PLA1677/S.35-006) and an Iron Age/Historical Site (PLA1677/S.35-027) at the Platreef Mine, Mokopane, Limpopo Province. Both sites were mitigated by HCAC under SAHRA permit ID 2180ID:2062 (Case ID 7783). Excavation of the “Iron Age/Historical Site” (PLA1677/S.35-027, was undertaken as the first phase of the archaeological mitigation for the Platreef project between 15 and 22 November 2016. The mitigation work conducted at Site PLA1677/S.35-027 was completed successfully and SAHRA issued a destruction permit for the site on 13 April 2017 (Permit Number 2503).

The second phase of mitigation entailed the detailed mapping and test excavations of the Iron Age smelting site (PLA1677/S.35-006) conducted on the 23 February 2017 and again between 27 July and 22 November 2017. It is believed that the archaeological mitigation work conducted for this site was completed successfully and the proposed development can continue based on obtaining of a destruction permit from SAHRA.

This report will outline the work conducted during the fieldwork in fulfilment of the permit requirements, and the results achieved for site PLA1677/S.35-006 and Site PLA1677/S.35-027.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ivanplats (Pty) Ltd (“Ivanplats”) formerly known as Platreef Resources (Pty) Ltd applied for a mining right application for the proposed Platreef Project located near Mokopane in the Limpopo Province. Platreef proposes to develop an underground mine with associated surface infrastructure on the farms Turfspruit 241KR, Macalacaskop 243KR and Rietfontein 2KS. To comply with heritage legislation (NHRA No. 25 of 1999) a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) was conducted for the mine lease area (Higgitt *et al* 2013). During this assessment several heritage significant sites were identified of which two sites will be impacted on by the proposed mining activities. These two sites were classified by Higgitt *et al* (2013) as an Iron Age smelting site (PLA1677/S.35-006) and an Iron Age/Historical Site (PLA1677/S.35-027). Both these sites were mitigated by HCAC under SAHRA permit ID 2180.

Excavation of the “Iron Age/Historical Site” (PLA1677/S.35-027, was undertaken as the first phase of the archaeological mitigation for the Platreef project between 15 and 22 November 2016. Mitigation at the site consisted of bush clearing, detailed mapping of the site layout and archaeological features with an EDM and test excavations. The mitigation work conducted at Site PLA1677/S.35-027 was completed successfully and SAHRA issued a destruction permit for the site on 13 April 2017 Permit Number 2503.

The second phase of mitigation entailed the detailed mapping and test excavations of the Iron Age smelting site (PLA1677/S.35-006) conducted on the 23 February 2017 and again between 27 July and 22 November 2017.

## 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

HCAC was contracted by the client to undertake the mitigation measures of site PLA1677/S.35-006 and PLA1677/S.35-027. The former was identified by Higgitt *et al* (2013) as an Iron Age Smelting site and PLA1677/S.35-027 as an Iron Age/Historical Site. Site PLA1677/S.35-006 is located to the east of the village of Tshamahansi, at the foot of a mountain ridge on the farm Rietfontein 2 KS. Site PLA1677/S.35-027 is located on a flat landscape between the villages of Ga-Kgubudi and Ga-Magongoa, and an informal settlement, Mzombane on the farm Turfspruit 241 KR. These sites are located to the north of Mokopane in the Limpopo Province (Figure 1). Mitigation was necessitated as the sites will be directly impacted on by the operation area and the proposed tailings facility of the proposed mine (Figure 2 & 3).

According to the site descriptions in the 2013 HIA site PLA1677/S.35-006 consist of terraced walling, middens with undiagnostic potsherds and faunal remains as well as iron slag. Site PLA1677/S.35-027 is marked by both circular and rectangular stone foundations and remnants of linear walls. Undiagnostic potsherds, glass and metal fragments are found scattered over the site.



Both sites were subjected to a Phase 2 investigation which entailed the archaeological documentation of the sites with the following objectives:

- Bush clearing on the site, to expose archaeological features;
- Detailed mapping of the site layout and archaeological features with an EDM;
- Test excavations to determine site extend and subsurface features as well as the depth of the archaeological deposit;
- The main aim of the excavations will be to obtain a representative cultural material sample.

This report outlines the findings of the Phase 2 archaeological documentation of site PLA1677/S.35-006 and PLA1677/S.35-027.

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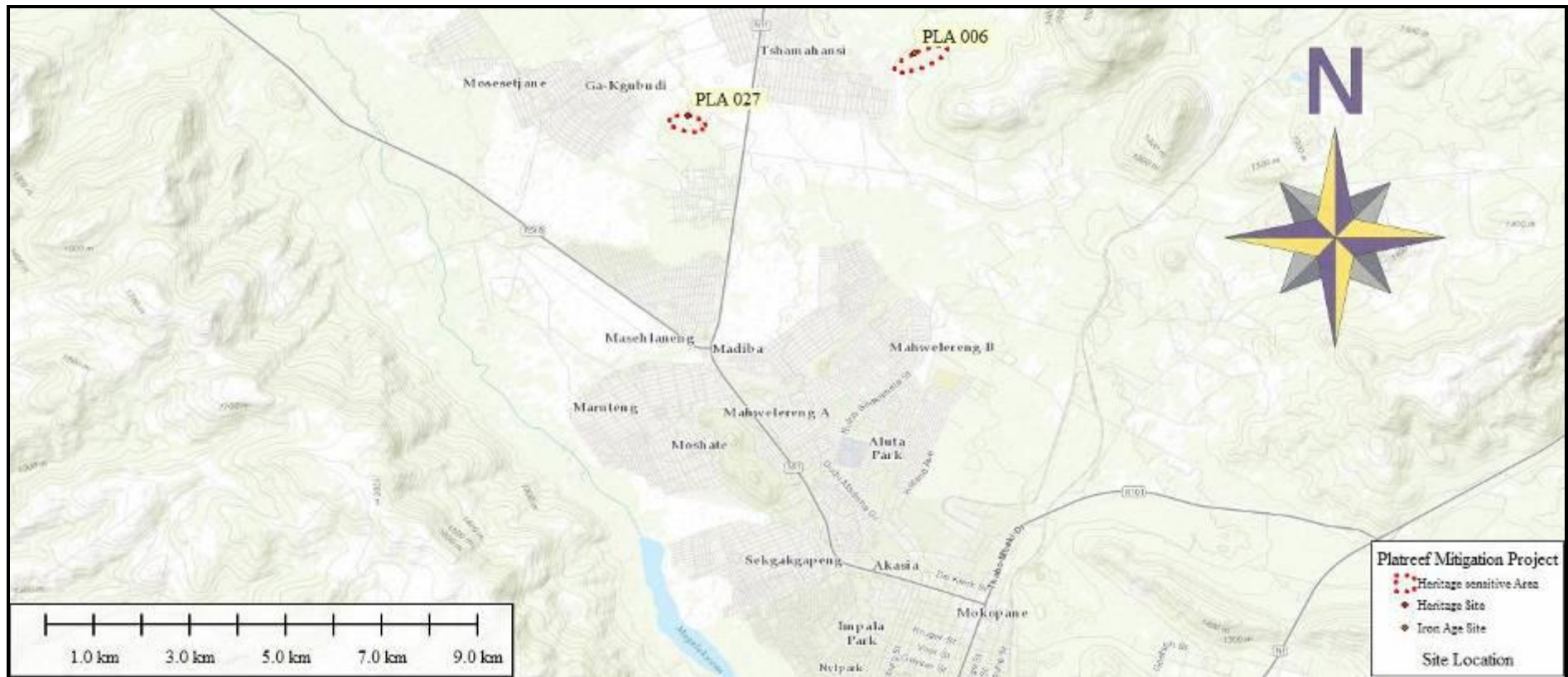


Figure 1. Locality map.

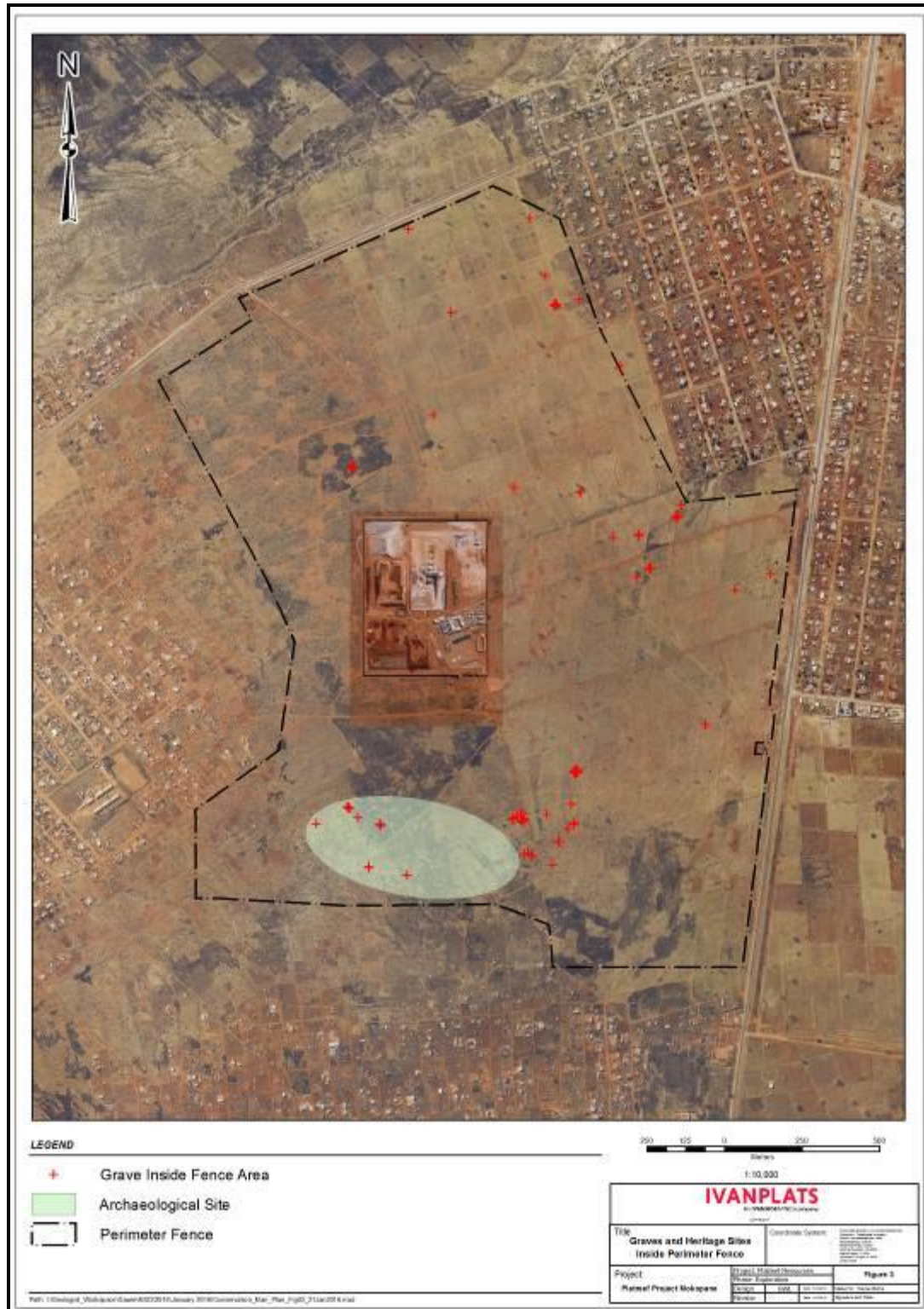


Figure 2. Location of site PLA1677/S.35-027 and recorded graves inside the perimeter fence.



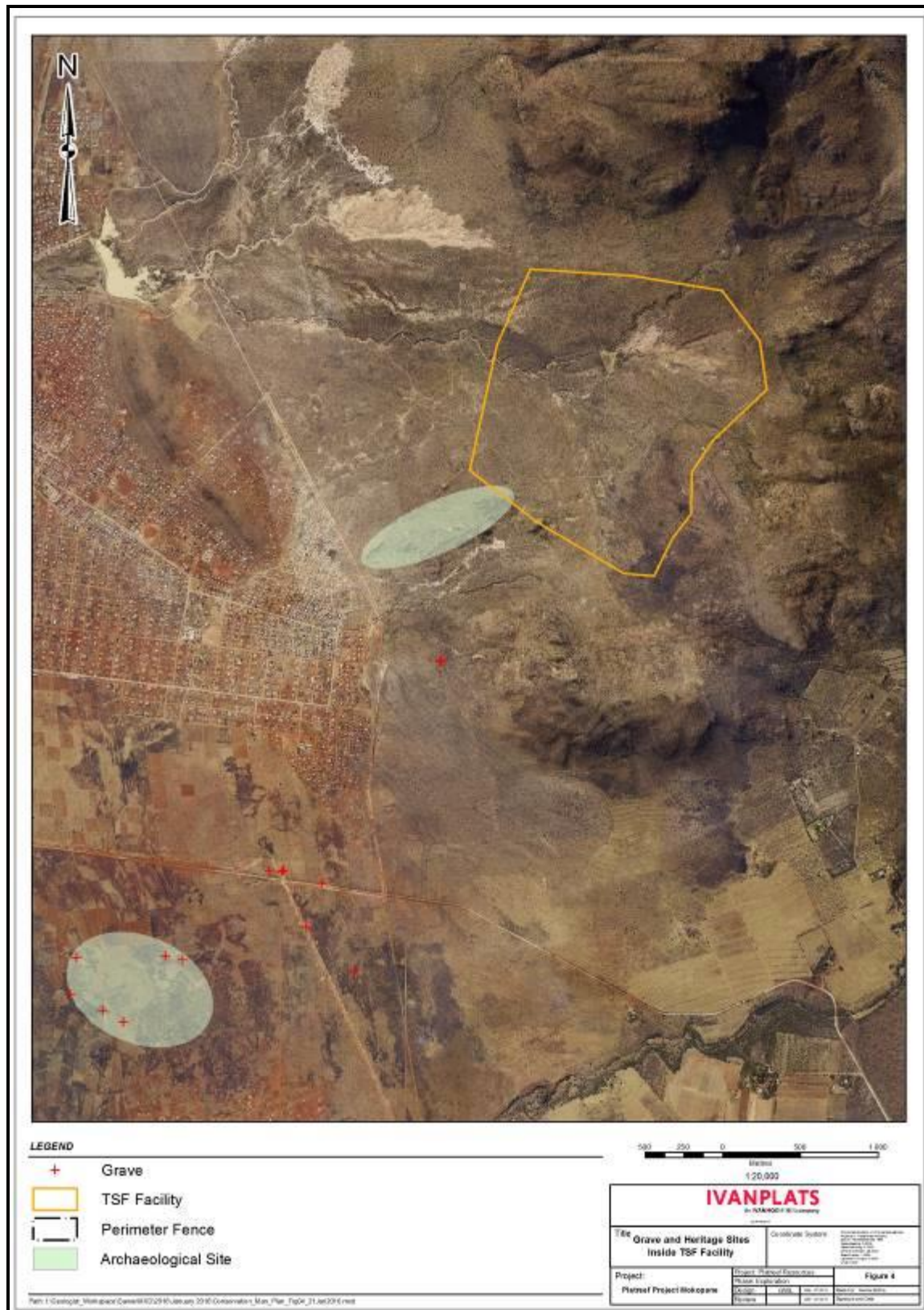


Figure 3: Location of site PLA1677/S.35-006 in relation to the TSF facility.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **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 of Sites PLA1677/S.35-006 and PLA1677/S.35-027 was to document the settlement layout of both sites that will be impacted on by the proposed Platreef mine. The documentation of the sites was achieved by means of preparing scaled ground plans of both sites. These maps were compiled after the sites were surveyed with a EDM. Main features and historical structures were also photographed. Excavated layers and features were recorded in plan and section drawings of selected features. True north is indicated on all plans and site photographs. Photographs of the excavations were taken using a 1m scale and close-up photographs with a 10cm scale.

#### **3.3 Excavations**

Excavations focused on surface features and were conducted stratigraphically whereby the uppermost deposit was exposed and recorded before excavation. Excavations was terminated either when continuous deposits, such as sterile soil were encountered. Text excavations were conducted through sterile deposits to confirm the lack of underlying cultural deposits. Stone walled structures were exposed in order to record their dimensions and method of construction. At Site PLA1677/S.35-006 shovel pit testing was conducted within open spaces where no surface features were visible. Excavated material was screened through a fine and course screen and all excavations were backfilled. Digital photographs of the excavations were taken together with plan drawings. Where stratigraphy was encountered profile drawings of the excavations were done.

#### **3.4 Analysis**

All artefacts were retained, with the exception of building material such as bricks and boulders at Site PLA1677/S.35-027. Due to the small diagnostic ceramic assemblage recovered from the excavations no further analysis of form, function and style was necessary because this would have been statistically meaningless and discussion of the artefacts is restricted to short descriptions and photographs. Faunal remains were too fragmented to warrant analysis although all were kept. An accession list of artefacts is included as Annexure A.

### 3.5 Dating

Fragments of charcoal were collected in the midden excavations at Site PLA1677/S.35-006 and dating results are pending. No datable material was collected at Site PLA1677/S.35-027.

## 4. Cultural Historic Background

As the proposed mining activities do not impact on Stone Age sites, the Stone Age background of the area will not be discussed in this report (For a discussion of the Stone Age please refer to McNabb & Binyon, 2004; Phillipson, 2005).

### 4.1. Iron Age

The Iron Age as a whole represents the spread of Bantu speaking people and overlaps both the pre-Historic and Historic periods. It can be divided into three distinct periods:

- The Early Iron Age: Most of the first millennium AD
- The Middle Iron Age: 10th to 13th centuries AD
- The Late Iron Age: 14th century to colonial period.

The Iron Age is characterised by the ability of these early people to manipulate and work Iron ore into implements that assisted them in creating a favourable environment to make a better living. Several Iron smelting sites are known from the Waterberg region to south-west of the study area (Boeyens *et al*, 1995). With other minerals like tin and copper that was smelted at Rooiberg (Miller & Hall, 2008). Based on ceramic distributions as defined in Huffman (2007), sites from all three periods can occur in the study area.

The Early Iron Age in the wider area is represented two distinct pottery assemblages. The oldest assemblage belongs to the Mzonjani ceramic *facies* of the Urewe tradition and dates to between 450 and 750 A.D. The second is the Kulundu tradition and is represented in the wider area by the Doornkop and Diamant ceramic *facies* which date to between 750 and 1000 A.D. The Middle Iron Age is represented in the area by the Eiland *facies* of the Kulundu tradition, dating from between 1000 and 1300 A.D. To the south of the study area at Mokopane several Late Iron Age sites are found belonging to the Moloko and Letaba ceramic traditions and shows that Northern Transvaal Ndebele lived there from about AD 1780 to 1840 (Huffman1996). Closer to the study area Huffman (1997) identified two 'Moloko' settlements dating to approximately 1500 – 1600 A.D.

Several groups entered and occupied the area since 1600 A.D. including Ndebele, Shangaan and Koni people (Loubser, 1994). During the 17th Century Iron Age Nguni farmers moved from the Hlubi tribe in the north west of Kwa-Zulu Natal and settled in the former Transvaal as the Transvaal Ndebele during the 16 – 17th<sup>th</sup> century. They were split into two major groupings of which the Northern Ndebele settled in the Mokopane and Polokwane region.

#### **4.2. Historical Period**

The beginning of the Historical Period overlaps the later phases of the late Stone and Iron Ages and is characterised by the first written accounts of the region from 1600 A.D. onwards. By the 19th century, several local Ndebele communities occupied the region around the study area, one of the most prominent being the Kekana. During this time several early European travellers, hunters and missionaries such as Cornwallis Harris and Robert Moffat visited the region in the 1830's and they were followed by the first colonists under Louis Trichardt in 1837, marking the first contact between the Boers and Ndebele (Naidoo, 1987). Considerable tensions arose between the settlers and the local people (Bonner 1983; Esterhuysen *et al.* 2009) and there were a number of skirmishes including the famous siege of the Ndebele ruler Mokopane in the Makapans caves (Tobias 1945). After this siege in 1858 a second group of Ndebele, the Langa of Hlubi (Nguni) origin under the Chief Mankopane, were attacked by a Boer expedition. After their defeat, Chief Mankopane settled on Thutlwane Hill which is located north-west of the study area (Jackson 1969). For a discussion on the history of the Kekana Ndebele refer to Esterhuysen (2008).

## 5. DOCUMENTATION AND EXCAVATION OF SITES

### 5.1 Site PLA1677/S.35-006

This site is referred to as PLA 006 is located to the east of the village of Tshamahansi (Figure 4). The site is characterised by terrace walls with scallops and circular enclosures. The site is situated along the northern foot of a long granite ridge and is slightly elevated offering vistas of the surrounding flat landscape. The site therefore is elongated in its spatial layout (Figure 5) and in its general appearance. Its orientation is west to east with the terraces and scallops facing towards the north. The stone that was used to construct the settlement was collected from the ridge and therefore were locally available. The settlement pattern at Site PLA 006 is primarily determined by the local geomorphology and topography.

The site is located approximately 900m from the banks of the Klein Sandsloot with various tributaries draining the area and it is most likely that the sites inhabitants collected their drinking water from this source. Domestic animals such as cattle would have grazed in the immediate surroundings of the site which is flat and covered with grass veld.

The site is still in a pristine condition with very little impact of any nature visible on the site although the surrounding area has been transformed by overgrazing and is covered in very dense *Dichrostachys cinerea* (Sickle bush). The fact that the site was constructed along a granite ridge clearly indicates the need for rock as building material. Loose stones were collected from the ridge and used in the core-and-rubble construction technique characteristic of Iron Age settlements (e.g. Walton 1958). The walls are generally low, and often incorporated natural boulders in the construction.

The site was surveyed in detail and ground plans were compiled for the site and its associated structures where seven areas were excavated (Figure 6 & 7). The settlement is characterised by several components, namely:

- Circular kraals and scallops;
- Large stone platforms and maize grind stones;
- Terraces;
- Shallow ash middens and
- Evidence of Iron working possibly smithing activities.

The site components and excavations are now discussed.



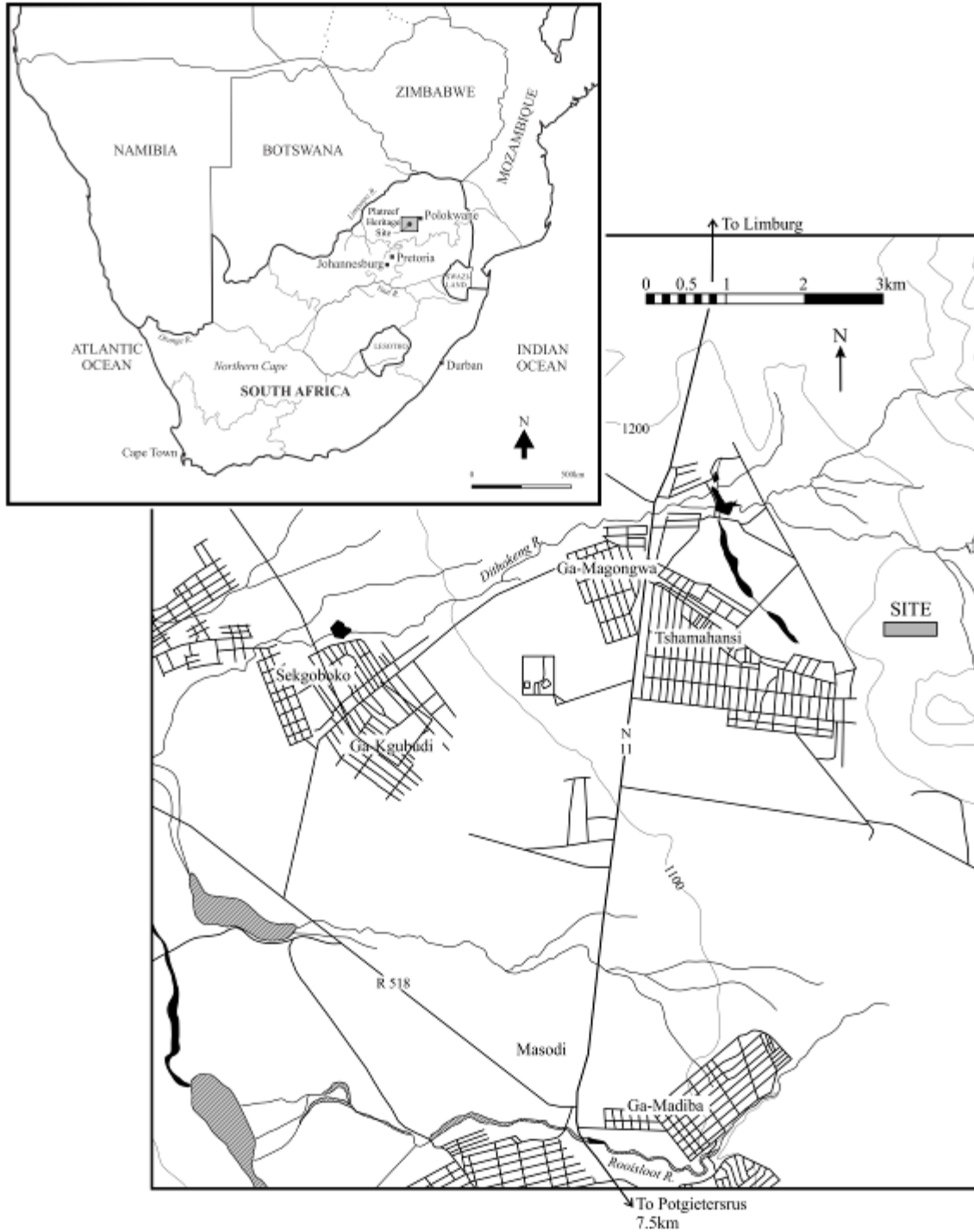


Figure 4: Site PLA1677/S.35-006 (Site) in relation to the village of Tshamahansi.

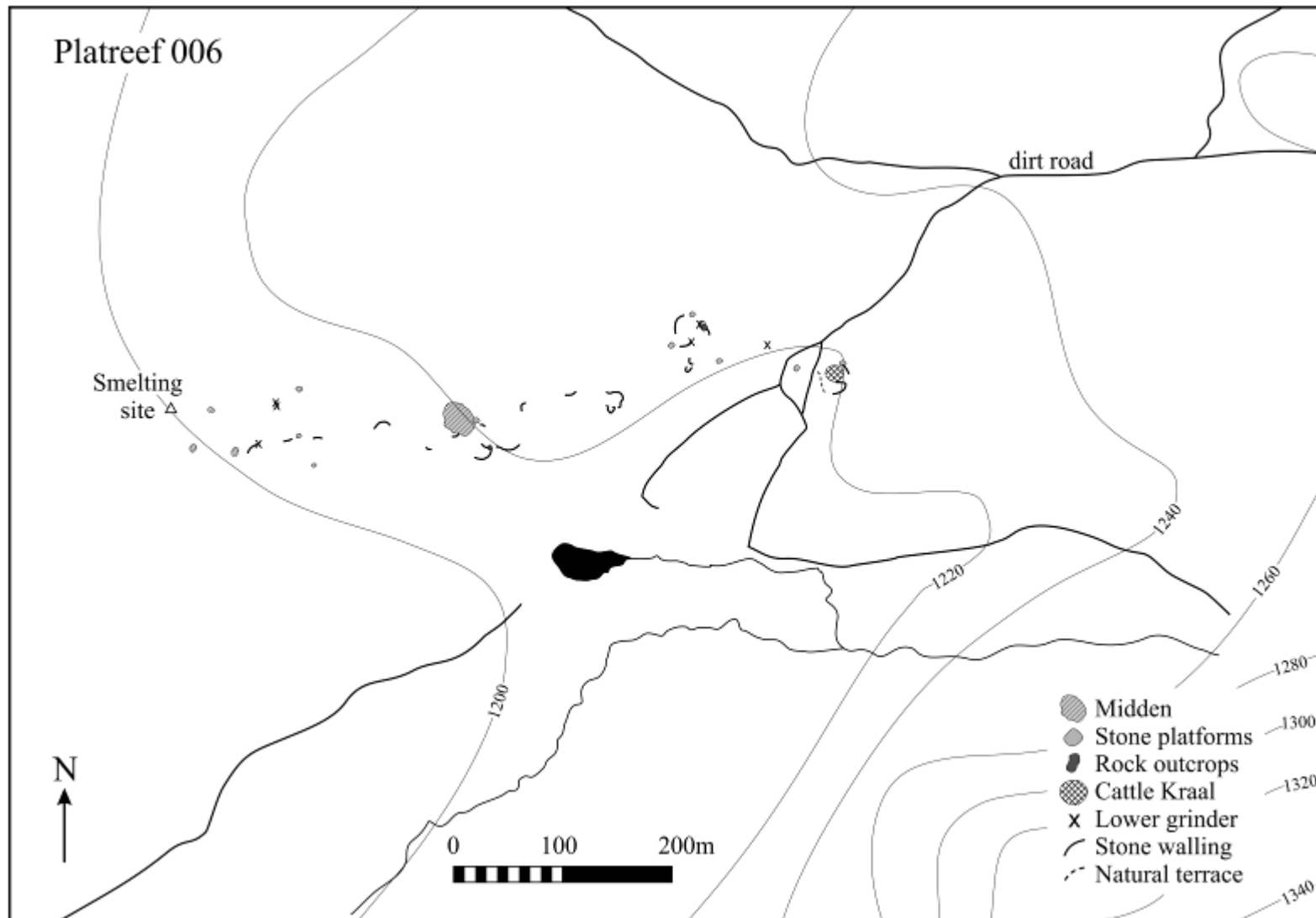


Figure 5: Plan Drawing of Site PLA1677/S.35-006.

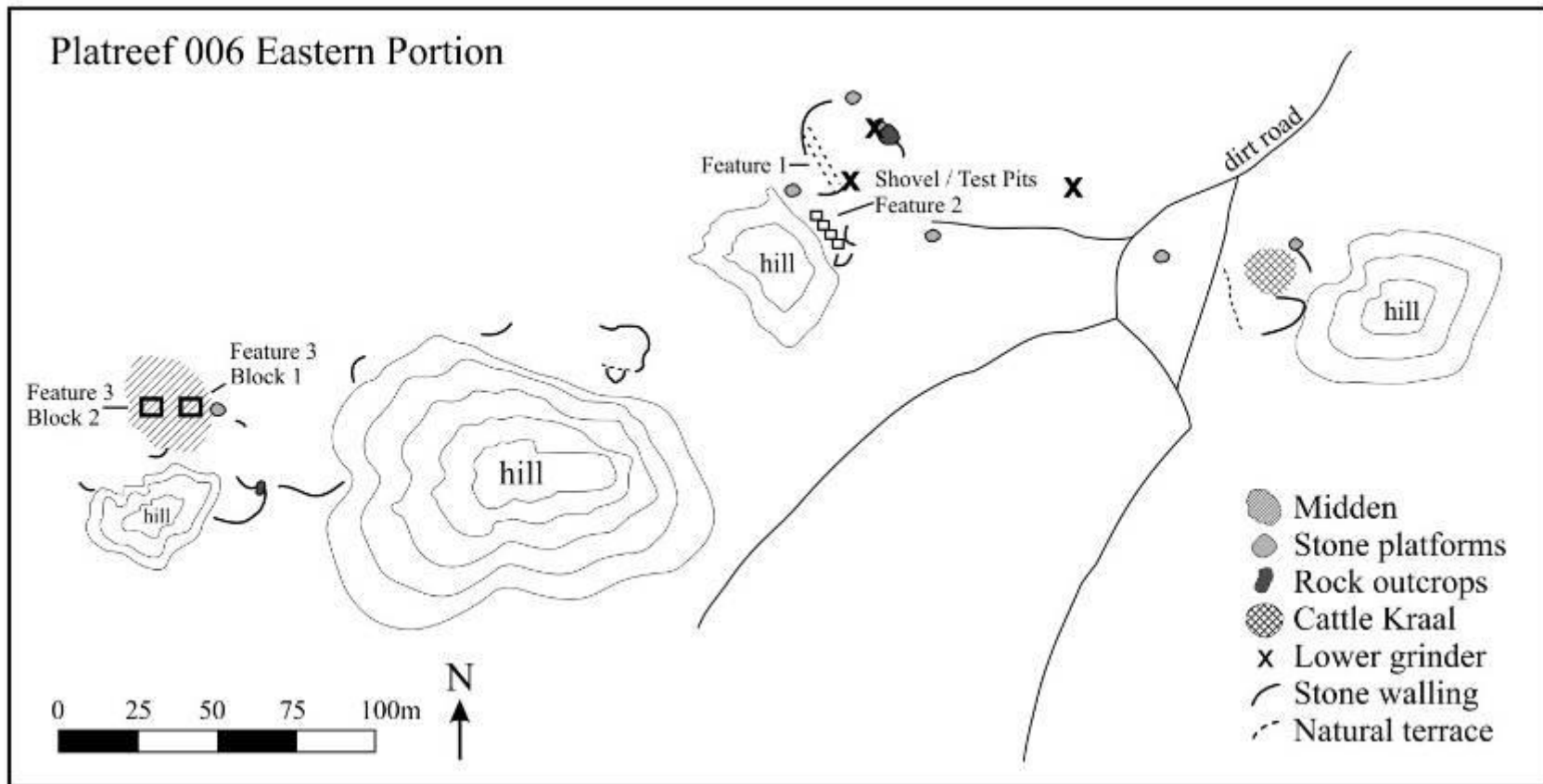


Figure 6: Eastern portion of Site PLA1677/S.35-006 with excavations.

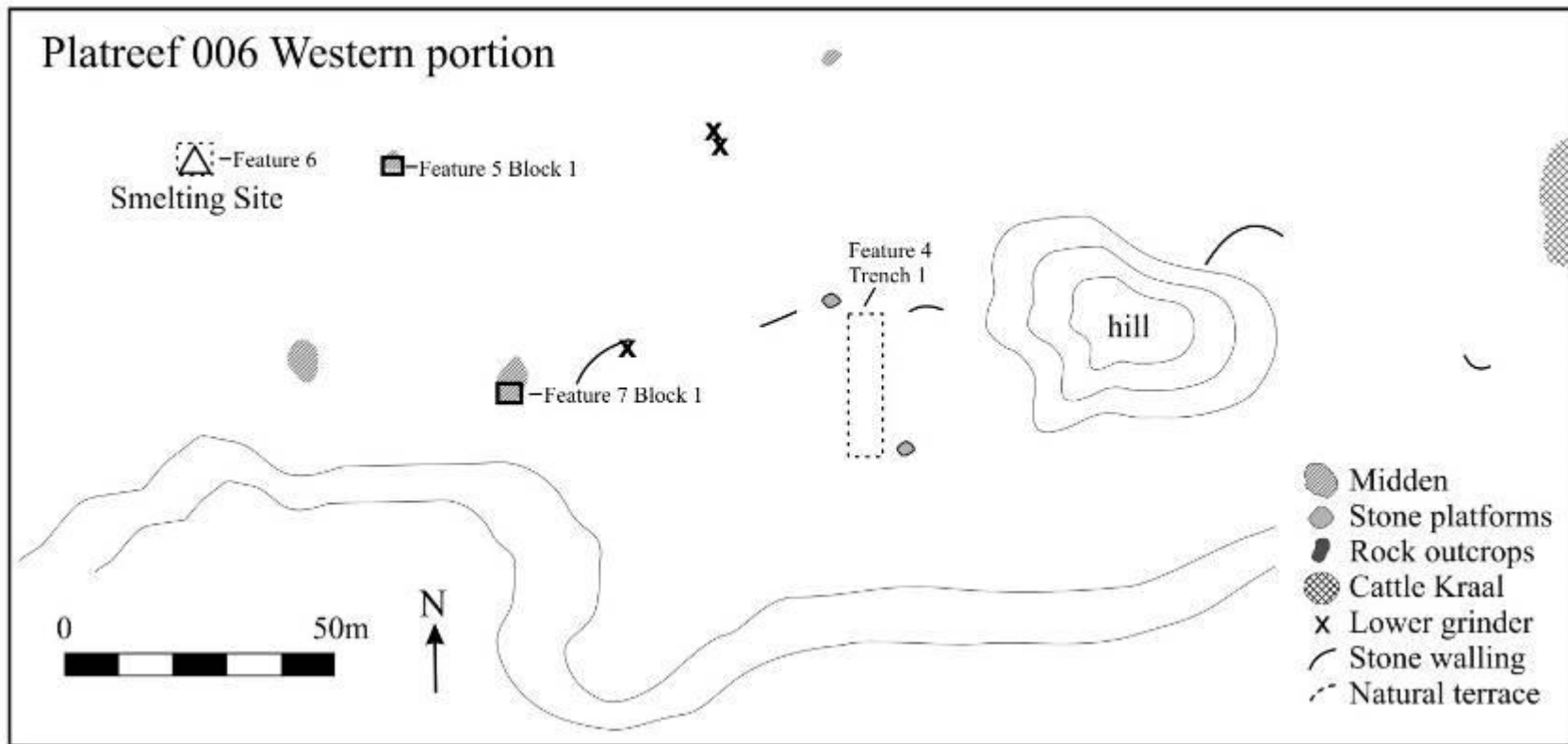


Figure 7: Western portion of Site PLA1677/S.35-006 with excavations.

### Feature 1

Feature 1 consist of three scallops forming an enclosure void of trees and bushes (Figure 8). There are two entrances marked by large stone cairns. Several ant hills occur in the middle of the feature and the soil is extremely hard when excavated. A 16-meter trench was excavated through the feature in 2-meter blocks from the outer walls (Figure 9). Apart from the partial ceramic fragments of a broken vessel with red ochre and black graphite bands (Figure 10) other finds include decorated ceramics (Figure 11) iron fragments (Figure 12) earthen ware (Figure 13) glass beads (Figure 14) and an iron bead (Figure 15). No stratigraphy was noted and the excavation was terminated at an average depth of 25cm on a very hard red sterile layer.



Figure 8: Feature 1 viewed from the north west.





Figure 9: Base of outer wall.



Figure 10: *In situ* ceramic fragments of broken vessel.



Figure 11: Decorated ceramics from Feature 1.





Figure 12: Iron fragments.



Figure 13: Earthen ware.

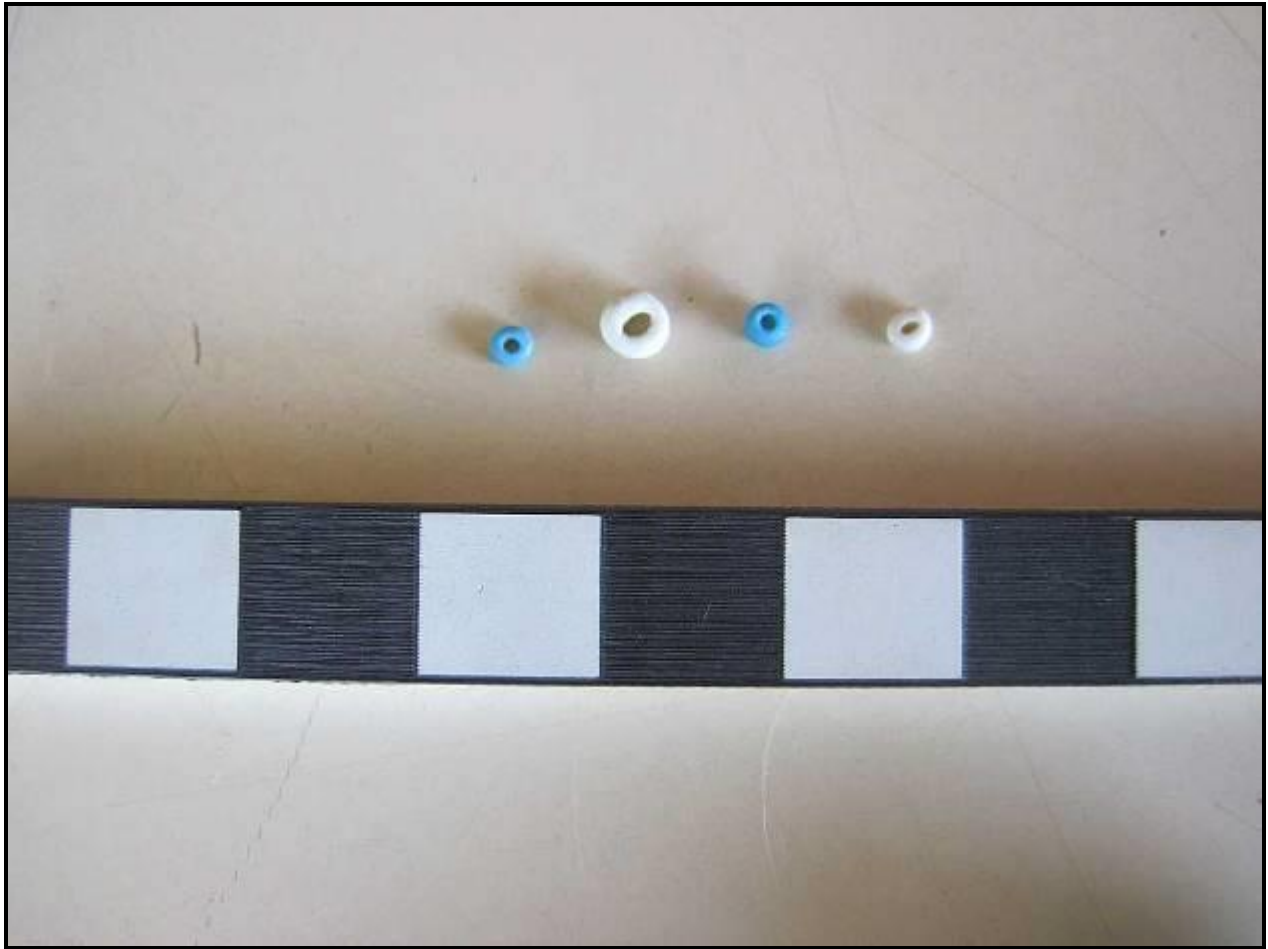


Figure 14: Glass Beads.



Figure 15: Iron bead.

**Feature 2**

This feature consists of several scallops and an open area in the topography. No surface features are visible in this area. Eight shovel pit tests were conducted in this area (Figure 16) and apart from two glass beads (Figure 17) very little diagnostic artefacts and no stratigraphy was noted. The excavation was terminated at an average depth of 28cm in a hard, sterile red soil matrix.

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Figure 16: Shovel pit test at feature 2.

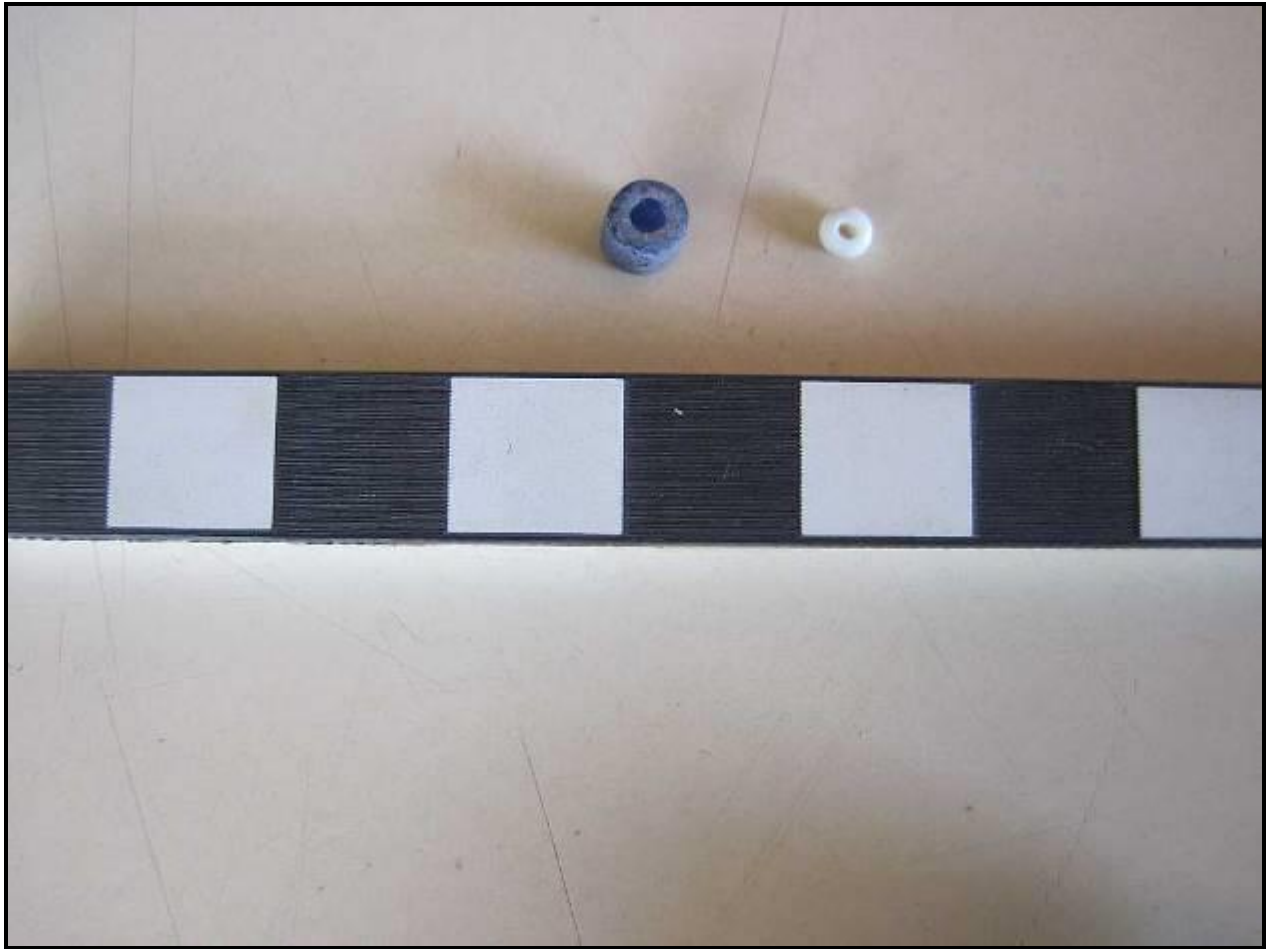


Figure 17: Beads from shovel pit test at feature 2.



### Feature 3

Feature 2 consist of a large ash midden in a dense *Dichrostachys cinerea* (Sickle bush) (Figure 18). The deposit is disturbed by burrowing animals and excavations are placed outside of these disturbed areas as much as possible. Two blocks were excavated here Block 1 and Block 2 both measuring 2 X 2 meters. The stratigraphy is homogenous consisting of grey ashy soil and excavations are conducted in 10 cm arbitrary layers to bedrock (Figure 19) and were recorded as 1 stratigraphically layer. The midden slopes to the north and west and the deepest point is 73 cm and the shallowest 49 cm. Evidence of burrowing animals (Figure 20) were found throughout the excavations. This excavation was rich in artefacts and although very few decorated ceramics (Figure 21) was found several rim and neck pieces was excavated (Figure 22). In addition, glass beads (Figure 23) ostrich eggshell beads (Figure 24) hexagon glass beads, (Figure 25) a clay bead (Figure 26) and a stone bead (Figure 27) and an iron bead (Figure 28) was found among other cultural items. Of interest is the fragments of a stone bowl pipe (Figure 29) often used for dagga smoking (Laidle & Scott 1938, Walton 1953).



Figure 18: General site conditions at Feature 3 block 2.





Figure 19: Animal disturbance evident at Feature 3 block 2 – Eastern profile.



Figure 20: Bedrock at block 1 Feature 3 viewed from the south.



Figure 21: Feature 3 block 1 decorated ceramics.



Figure 22: Feature 3 block 2, decoration and rims fragments.





Figure 23: Glass beads from Feature 3 block 1.



Figure 24: Ostrich eggshell beads from Feature 3 block 1.



Figure 25: Hexagonal glass beads from Feature 3 block 1.



Figure 26: Clay bead from Feature 1 block 1.





Figure 27: Soap stone bead from Feature 3 block 1.



Figure 28: Iron bead from Feature 3 block 1.



Figure 29: Fragments of dagga stone pipe bowl from Feature 3 block 2.

#### Feature 4

Feature 4 is located on a terrace marked by open topography with no visible surface features (Figure 30). A trench of 50 meter was set out in a north south orientation and 25 1-meter X 50 cm blocks excavated. The excavations were terminated at an average depth of 23 cm on a hard, sterile red soil layer (Figure 16). Few artefacts and no stratigraphy were noted here. Artefacts consist of glass and iron beads (Figure 31) glass fragments (Figure 32) ostrich eggshell beads (Figure 33) and a possible copper bead (Figure 34).



Figure 30: Feature 4 viewed from the north.



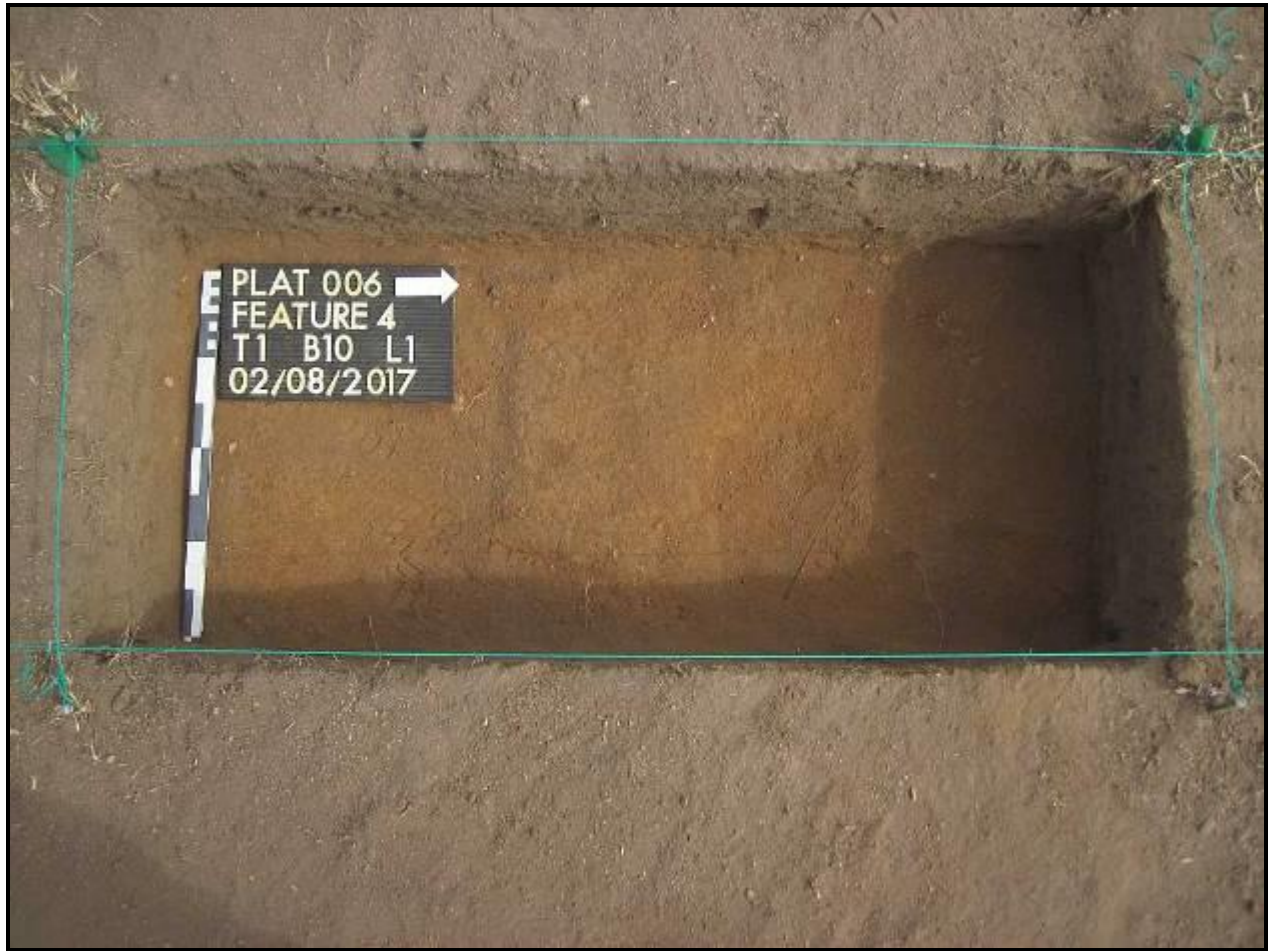


Figure 31: Shallow deposit at Feature 4 block 10 where excavation is terminated within a hard, sterile soil layer.





Figure 32: Iron and glass beads from Feature 4 block 1.



Figure 33: Glass fragments from Feature 4 block 16.



Figure 34: Ostrich eggshell bead from Feature 4 block 19.



Figure 35: Possible copper bead from Feature 4 block 25.

### Feature 5

Feature 5 consists of an ash midden that is disturbed by burrowing animals and excavations are placed outside of these disturbed areas as much as possible. A single 2 X 2-meter block was excavated here. Excavations were conducted in 10 cm arbitrary layers but due to the lack of stratigraphy were recorded as one layer. The excavation was terminated at 53 cm in a hard, red, sterile soil layer (Figure 36). Fewer artefacts were recorder here compared to the other middens and finds included undecorated ceramics with rims (Figure 37) glass beads (Figure 38) and iron fragments (Figure 39).



Figure 36: Termination of excavation in sterile deposit at Feature 5.





Figure 37: Ceramic rim fragments from Feature 5.



Figure 38: Glass beads from Feature 5.



Figure 39: Iron fragment from Feature 5.

## Feature 6

Feature 6 consists of an ash midden that is disturbed by burrowing animals and excavations are placed outside of these disturbed areas as much as possible. A single 2 X 2-meter block was excavated here. Excavations in the midden deposit were conducted in 10 cm arbitrary layers but due to the lack of stratigraphy were recorded as one layer (Layer 1) with Layer 2 consisting of a gravel and red soil layer. The excavation was terminated at 38 cm in a hard, red, sterile soil and gravel layer (Figure 40). Few artefacts were recovered from this excavation notable finds include ostrich eggshell beads (Figure 41) and one glass bead (Figure 42) and worked stone (Figure 43).



Figure 40: Feature 6 Block 1 viewed from the North.



Figure 41: Ostrich eggshell beads from Feature 6.



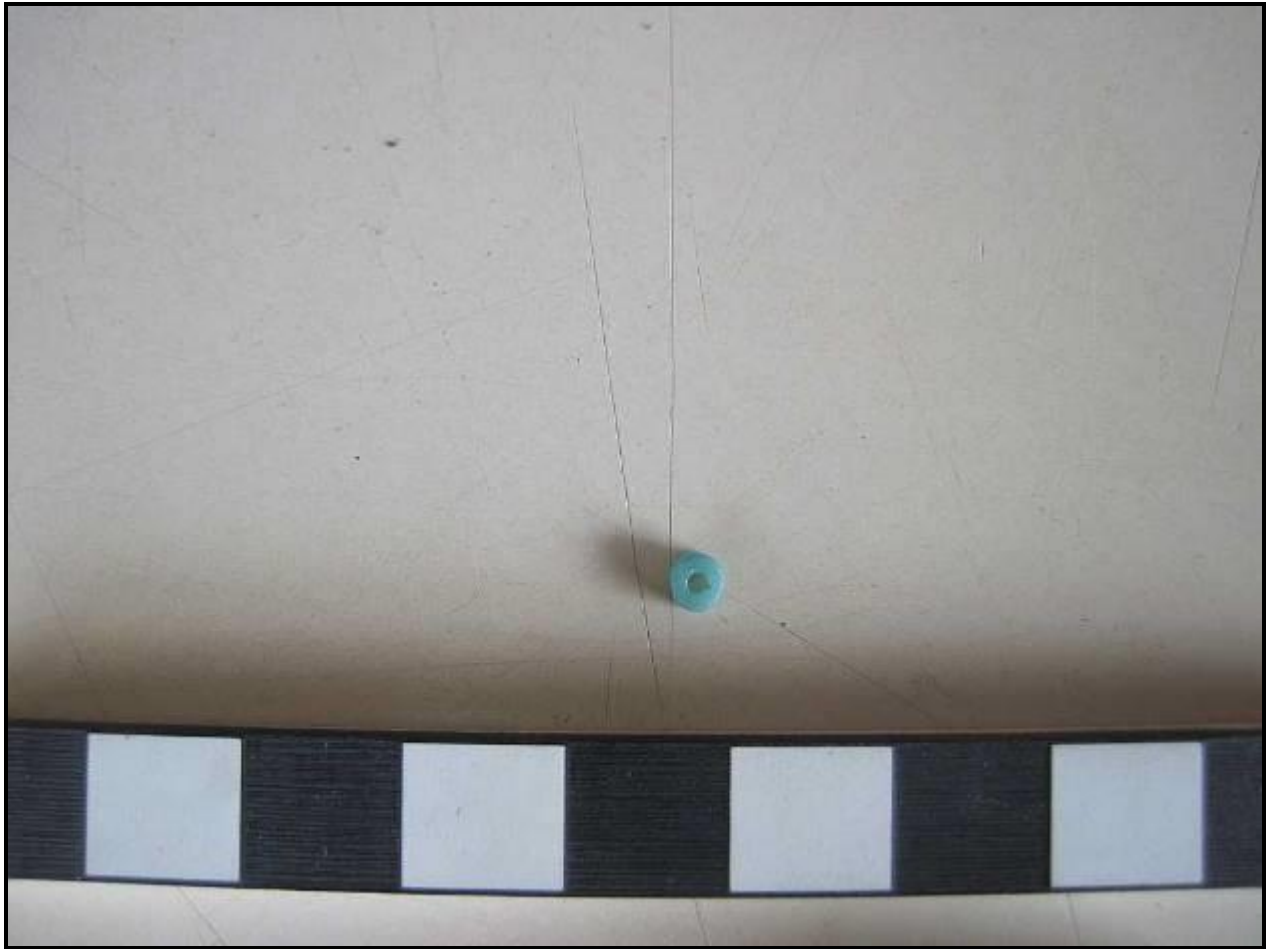


Figure 42: Turquoise glass bead from Feature 6.



Figure 43: Worked stone from Feature 6.

**Feature 7**

Feature 7 consists of a slag heap mixed with nodules of white quartz (Figure 19). No features such as the remains of a furnace or *tuyere* pipes were recorded here. The feature is marked with several upper grinding stones with a circular stone pattern on the exposed bedrock. This bedrock is burned black possibly from fires.



Figure 44: Surface layer of Feature 7.





Figure 45: Northern view of Feature 7 layer 1.

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Figure 46: Close up of Feature 7.



## 5.2 Site PLA1677/S.35-027

Site PLA1677/S.35-027 was divided into two sites, Site A and Site B (Figure 47). Rectangular and circular stone walled structures were exposed in order to record their dimensions and method of construction. A single midden was observed at Site A and was excavated for cultural material to obtain a relative date for the site as no other datable material (e.g., charcoal) for absolute dates was excavated.

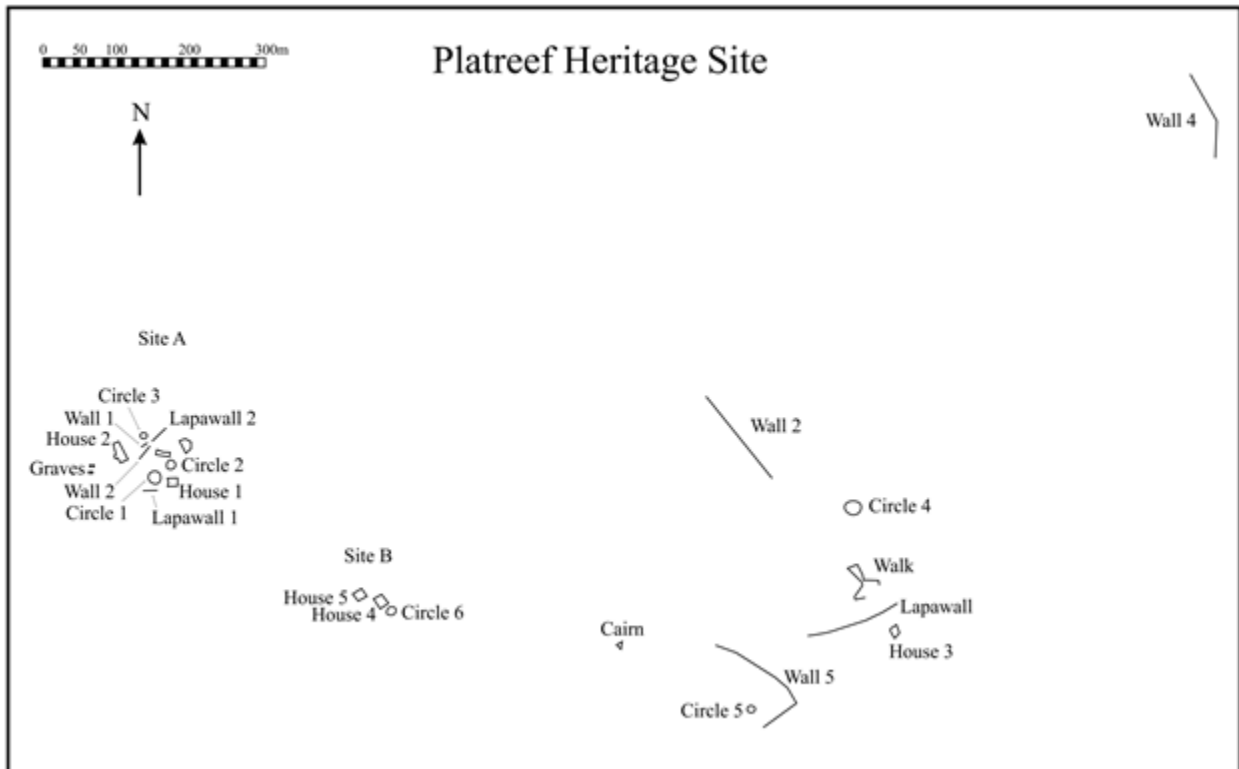


Figure 47: Plan showing Site A and Site B.

### 5.2.1 Site A

Site A consisted of several features, from lapa walls to circular features (huts), rectangular houses, graves and a midden (Figure 48). Of these, three features were excavated namely, Feature 1 (House 1), Feature 2 (Circle 1) and Feature 3 (Midden). These three features will now be briefly discussed.

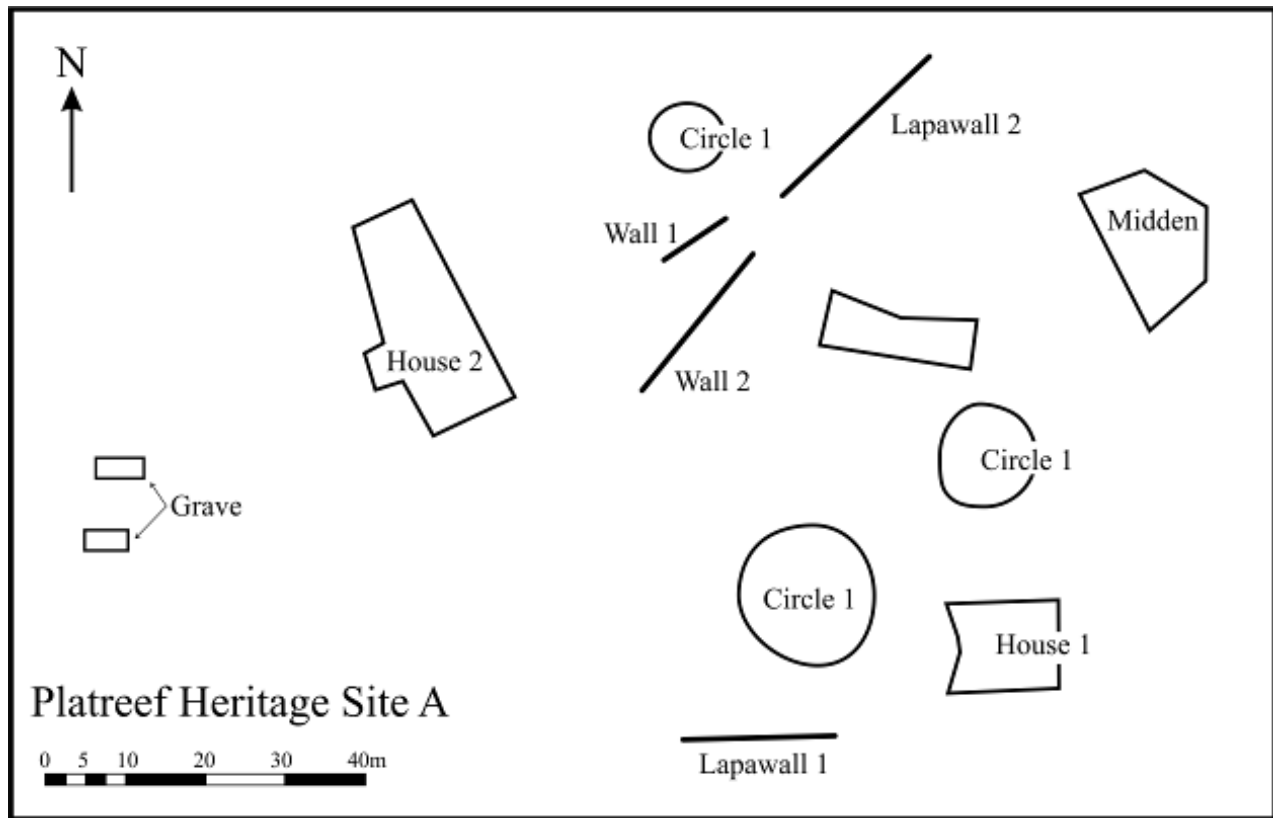


Figure 48. Recorded features at Site A.

### Feature 1

This feature consists of a rectangular stone walled house with an entrance facing west. The walls collapsed inward covering the habitation floor. An excavation measuring 150 x 150 was set out inside the feature (Figure 49) and hand excavated up to a red mud smeared floor found at 26cm from the PSL (present surface level). Very few artefacts were recovered from this excavation hampering any meaningful interpretation of the function of the structure. Finds included plastic beads, wire and fragments of metal (Figure 50). This excavation was further extended towards the entrance to the structure but no evidence of a door was found (Figure 51).



Figure 49. Test excavation at Site A Feature 1.



Figure 50. Metal fragments recovered from Site A Feature 1.



Figure 51. Extent of excavation at Site A Feature 1.



## Feature 2

This feature consisted of a large sleeping hut (5 meters in diameter). This feature was divided in half and the northern section excavated (Figure 52). Again, the walls collapsed inwards setting on top of a red smeared clay floor, approximately 6 cm thick, found 15 cm from the PSL. The red clay floor is found on top of a sterile hard clay deposit. The entrance to the hut faces north and the *in situ* remains of nails, (Figure 53) where doorposts used to be, were found here. Again, almost no artefacts were recovered here.



Figure 52. Excavation of sleeping hut.



Figure 53. *In situ* nails were found where doorpost used to be.

### Feature 3

A 1 x 1-meter excavation was conducted on a small midden deposit (Figure 54), later extended to a 2 x 2-meter excavation. The stratigraphy consists of a homogenous 20 cm of light grey ashy soil. The excavation was terminated at 25 cm from the PSL in a hard, sterile layer of hard clay. Of all the features excavated this was the richest in artefacts. Artefacts consists of undecorated ceramics, nails, plastic beads, metal and glass fragments and a Bov 3 molar (Figure 55).



Figure 54. Excavation of midden.





Figure 55. Fragments of glass, nails, a bead as well as undecorated ceramics, metal fragments and a piece of tube was recovered from Feature 3. These artefacts were recovered from Layer 1 and 2 of the excavation.

### 5.2.2 Site B

Site B is a much smaller site consisting of two rectangular stone built houses and a small hut (Figure 56), the latter was possibly a cooking hut. Two of these features, Feature 1 (House 6) and Feature 2 (house 5) were excavated. These two features will now be briefly discussed.

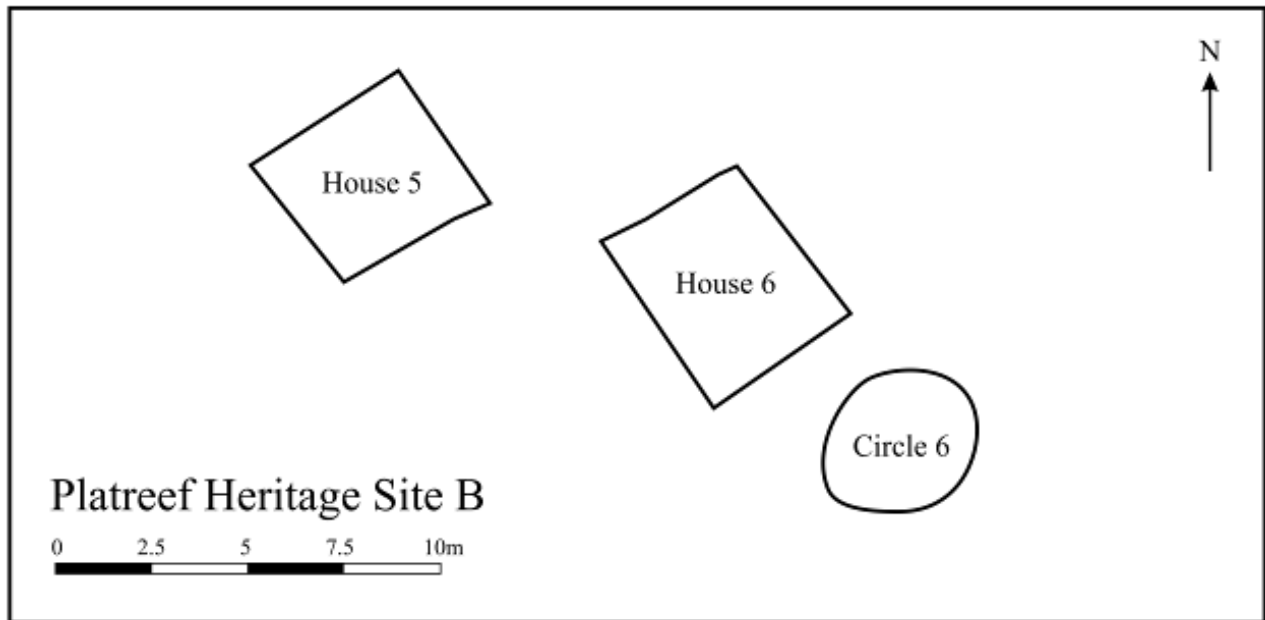


Figure 56: Plan drawing of Site B



**Feature 1**

Two ant hills occur in the northern corner of the site resulting in a hard clay deposit at these areas. The walls of the feature collapsed inwards on top of a red clay floor 30 cm from the PSL. The floor is 9 cm thick and is on top of a layer of stones packed as foundation (Figure 57). The foundation is approximately 14 cm thick. The door is located to the west. The excavation was conducted in blocks (block A and B) of 2 x 1.4 meters. Very few artefacts were recovered here consisting of glass and metal fragments (Figure 58).

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Figure 57. Stone packed foundation of feature 1.



Figure 58. Glass fragments as well as undecorated ceramics and a metal artefact was recovered from Site B, Feature 1 B.

## Feature 2

This rectangular feature has very little deposit. The feature had a red clay smeared floor (Figure 59) close to the PSL. The floor is approximately 9cm thick, on top of a boulder foundation (Figure 62). Excavations were done of two quadrants of 1.80 x 1.80, blocks A and B. Very few artefacts were recovered here consisting of mostly glass and metal fragments (Figure 61) although some screws, nails and a lock was found (Figure 63).



Figure 59. Excavations at Site B Feature 2.





Figure 60. Red clay smeared floor indicated in red on top of sterile clay.





Figure 61. Artefacts recovered from Site B Feature 2A.



Figure 62. Stone packed foundation.



Figure 63. Artefacts recovered from Site B Feature 2B.

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 6.1. Site PLA1677/S.35-006.

Several groups entered and occupied the general area since 1600 A.D. including Ndebele, Shangaan and Koni people (Loubser, 1994). By the 19th century, several local Ndebele communities occupied the region, one of the most prominent being the Kekana. Late Iron Age sites to the south of the study area at Mokopane belonging to the Moloko and Letaba ceramic traditions, shows that Northern Transvaal Ndebele lived there from about AD 1780 to 1840 (Huffman 1996). Other studies in the area (Moore 1981; Loubser 1994) suggest that the Northern Transvaal Ndebele lived in the stone-walled sites in the region. During this time Europeans started to move into the area (around the 1830's) and marked the first contact between the Europeans and the local Ndebele (Naidoo 1987). The interaction between the Ndebele and Europeans was often marked by conflict and the local geography was important during times of turmoil and instability when groups preferred to move into rugged terrain which offered defensible opportunities whilst the open terrain remained indefensible and vulnerable.

The spatial organisation of Site PLA1677/S.35-006 is marked by terraces. These terraces are interpreted as walling for hut terraces and suggest that the site could belong to a greater Venda complex (which also includes Lovedu and Birwa), this complex could also include Shangaan (Huffman 2017 pers. comm.). Test trenches and shovel pit testing on these terraces did not reveal the remains of any huts. However, the absence of any burnt clay from the remains of the huts as well as the absence of any clear foundation stones and hut floors suggest that the dwellings may have been constructed with branches and grass. The dwellings therefore may perhaps have been bee-hived shape huts, similar to those which were used by Nguni communities.

Few diagnostic ceramics was recovered and following Huffman's 1980 formalized procedure the sample is too small to conduct a stylistic analysis. The ceramics do however have affinities with historic pottery, and could belong to the greater Venda complex, this is however an under-researched ceramic entity (Huffman 2017 pers. comm.) and is a tentative classification. While radiocarbon dates are pending from the site diachronic evidence such as colonial artefacts (metal and earthen wares and glass) indicates that this site dates from the more recent past and must post date 1830's as a minimum when the first Europeans moved into the area.

The economic subsistence of the occupants of the stone walled complex contained enclosures for keeping stock and together with lower and upper maize grinding stones indicate that some form of farming was practised. The permanent stone platforms found on site on which grain baskets were placed often manufactured from clay or grass further attest to a farming community. Although no faunal analysis was conducted due to the fragmentary nature of the bone material no assumptions about the collection of food, particularly meat and therefore hunting practises vs slaughtering could be made, it can be expected that the occupants of the complex did practise some kind of hunting, gathering and collecting. The small slag heap from Feature 7 was probably derived from smithing activities due to the lack of extensively vitrified *tuyeres* and oven fragments.

Site PLA1677/S.35-006 together with other stone walled sites in the general area is located within the Ndebele sphere of influence and therefore may have been occupied by Ndebele groups from AD1600 onwards. It is however unlikely that the site was occupied as early as this date suggests. The historical material found in the excavations suggest that this site was occupied after AD1830. In addition, with the historical ceramics the site shows strong affinities in term of layout and material culture with sites at Mokopane (Huffman & Steel 1996). Where the similar layout appears to belong to Loubser's (1994) Group III pattern, this type of walling and the blue hexagonal beads from Feature 3 date the site from about AD 1855 to 1875 (Huffman & Steel 1996).

## **6.2. Site PLA1677/S.35-027**

It became clear after mapping of the site that the layout does not conform to Iron Age Stone walled settlements but rather to a recent/contemporary family homestead. Artefacts recovered also confirmed this deduction and the initial assessment of the site being archaeological during the 2013 assessment is contradicted. Although the sites do not have any substantial archaeological deposit and the majority of the excavations yielded very little in material culture some deductions can be made from the retrieved artefacts.

The material recovered from the excavations included plastic beads, fragments of metal, glass and bicycle tubes, undecorated ceramics and very few faunal remains (animal bones). Various nails were also found with round heads and rounded shafts indicating a recent occupation of the site. Unfortunately, none of the artefacts has any maker marks etc. to positively date the sites. The two graves at Site A are related to a person born in 1960's and further enhance the recent occupation interpretation of the site. Most of the artefacts and the site layout indicate to a mid to late 20th century occupation.



The material recovered from Site PLA1677/S.35-027 is a representative cultural material sample of the sites, and although no highly significant objects were recovered, it does provide a glimpse into the lives of the occupants. It is believed that the archaeological mitigation work conducted was completed successfully and a destruction permit has been approved for Site PLA1677/S.35-027 by SAHRA.

### **6.3. General**

It must be kept in mind that sites like these might still yield unmarked graves and recommend that the site should be monitored during construction and this aspect will be handled under the grave relocation process together with a chance find procedure as detailed in the CMP.

It is believed that the archaeological mitigation work conducted for this site was completed successfully and the proposed development can continue based on obtaining of a destruction permit from SAHRA.

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