

■ KENYA

Updated provenance information for 7 LSA sites from the Central Rift Valley, Kenya

Alex Wilshaw
 Leverhulme Centre for Human
 Evolutionary Studies
 University of Cambridge, UK
 Email: aw386@cam.ac.uk

The National Museums of Kenya houses many archaeological collections of great scientific value that are used regularly by contemporary researchers. However, there are a large number of collections that were made in the early part of the 20th century that are either under-utilised because of an absence of important provenance information – primarily concerning the location of the sites, or they are not used at all. As a result, they have been largely excluded from published work and have little or no future in archaeological research.

This situation is an unfortunate waste of important archaeological evidence. In order to en-

hance the potential of such sites for future generations, an attempt was made to update the location information to modern standards as part of a wider study into the Late Stone Age (LSA) of the Central Kenyan Rift. This was achieved by discovering either a) a Kenya Survey map reference for the site (which was rare), or b) a description of the site’s location, which could be identified on a Kenya Survey map using landmarks and other relative measures that could then be converted into Global Positioning System (GPS) data. This was attempted for more than 20 LSA sites, of which seven eventually resulted in a site location with a reliable degree of accuracy.

A brief description of each site is given below and summarised in Table 1 giving the site name and Kenya National Museum number (KNM) that can be used to locate the collection in the museum, the Kenya Survey map number and co-ordinates of landmarks associated with the site (all of which are 1:50,000 scale), and the converted GPS location information. Unfortunately, the archival material held in the archaeology department of the National Museums of Kenya is not catalogued and so sources cannot be referenced directly within the archive. However, the information utilised in the location of sites originated predominantly from the catalogue cards and collection labels stored with the artefacts and these can be found using the associated KNM number.

Site name	KNM	Map	Coordinates	Longitude	Latitude
1. Gilgil CDF	616	133/2	AK994424	36°18'2"E	0°31'2"S
2. Gilgil Estate	603	119/4	BK065548	36°21'45"E	0°24'37"S
3. Gilgil Township	615	119/4	BK015450	36°19'20"E	0°30'2"S
4. Griswold-Williams Farm	635	.	.	36°31'10"E	1°10'10"S
5. Kabete Mwimuto	597	.	.	36°45'20"E	1°15'20"S
6. Knightwick	611	.	.	36°31'0"E	1°11'0"S
7. Little Gilgil River sites	614, 618, 619, 620	133/2	BK0542	36°21'20"E	0°31'16"S

Table 1: Location data for the seven updated collections.

1. *Gilgil Caxton Dairy Farm (CDF)*. This is a small surface collection (Q.6.g), reported to be from a farm just outside Gilgil approximately 5km southeast of Lake Elmenteita, that was collected in 1944 by Captain Scale. A collection of small farm buildings, cattle troughs and a water pump can be located in the expected area (AK994424 133/2), and is highly likely to have once been Caxton Dairy Farm. This is used as a general location for the location of the assemblage (36°18'2"E 0°31'2"S), but is unlikely to be the exact location.

2. *Gilgil Estate*. This collection of artefacts (Q.4.a.1) is described as being found *in situ* in silts below a railway bridge near to the Rumuruti to Gilgil Road (now East Road) by L.S.B. Leakey in 1938. This site can be quite precisely located. There is a single railway bridge that fits the description, which can be found at BK065548 on Kenya Survey map 119/4; the railway line can also clearly be seen on Google Earth (36°21'45"E 0°24'37"S).

3. *Gilgil Township*. This is a small surface collection (Q.6.a), which was reportedly found *in situ* with a number of bovid and equid teeth by Captain Scale. No specific date is mentioned for the collection, but Scale was predominantly active during the early-mid 1940s. The township from this period can be found on a map to give a general location for the collection (BK015450 133/2)(36°19'20"E 0°30'2"S).

4. *Griswold-Williams Farm*. This is an open site, its numbering (Q.18) suggests it was collected in the 1930s, possibly by L.S.B. Leakey; the only known location information is that it is on the Knightwick Escarpment, close to the north of the Knightwick Site, in the Kedong Valley. Using the relative location of this site to Knightwick and the approximate distances stipulated in the description, a location has been given which would be in the general vicinity of the site (36°31'10"E 1°10'10"S).

5. *Kabete Mwimuto*. This surface collection (Q.1.a.1) was made in 1932. The location information is vague, but Kabete Mwimuto is named on

Kenya Survey map 148/1 (36°45'20"E 1°15'20"S); these coordinates are suggested as a general location for the site which, given the small size of the settlement at the time, would be in reasonable proximity.

6. *Knightwick*. This assemblage was collected in two series from a ditch. L.S.B. Leakey and the East African Archaeological Expedition made the initial collection in 1929, followed by a further collection (which may have been a small excavation) in 1937-1940 (Q.4.e). The location of this site is reported to be on Griswold-Williams Farm land on the Knightwick Escarpment, on the southern edge of the Kinangop Plateau where it meets the Kedong Valley. Also it is only a few miles to the south of Montagu's Farm – a site that does have accurate location information (BJ513722 map 148/1) (36°31'20"E 1°8'0"S). A location point is given for this site, and although it cannot be verified as completely accurate, must be within the general vicinity of the site given the location descriptions (36°31'0"E 1°11'0"S).

7. *Little Gilgil River*. The Little Gilgil River site is made up of four accessions (Q.6.a, d, e and f), which were discovered by L.S.B. Leakey and Copley between 1931 and 1942. The sites are said to be located within close proximity to each other, eroding out from along the Little Gilgil River, near to where it adjoins the larger Gilgil River. This can be located on Kenya Survey map 133/2 in grid square BK0542, and although the exact location cannot be determined, a fairly accurate general location can be awarded to these collections (36°21'20"E 0°31'16"S).

Overall, these investigations give reasonably accurate location data for over 700 shaped stone tools. It would be inappropriate to use such sites in studies relying on highly accurate location data or for complex spatial analyses in which a divergent location could influence the results. However, researchers engaging in projects that require only a general site location would be able to include these sites in a dataset with confidence. Ultimately,

it is the responsibility of individual researchers to assess which, if any, of the sites have the required accuracy for their study. Sadly, unless a researcher comes forward with private archives or personal knowledge of these sites, it is unlikely that their exact locations will ever be discovered. Nevertheless, given their existence and the cost of retaining such collections, it is better to try to improve the research potential of such sites rather than leave the collections languishing in museums without purpose.