



SOVRINTENDENZA
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI
SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Archaeological Evaluation at Tal-Qares, Mosta
i.c.w. Rationalisation Scheme Map 27, Site E

Preliminary Report prepared by
Nathaniel Cutajar and Mevrick Spiteri

Superintendence of Cultural Heritage

May 2014

1.0 Background

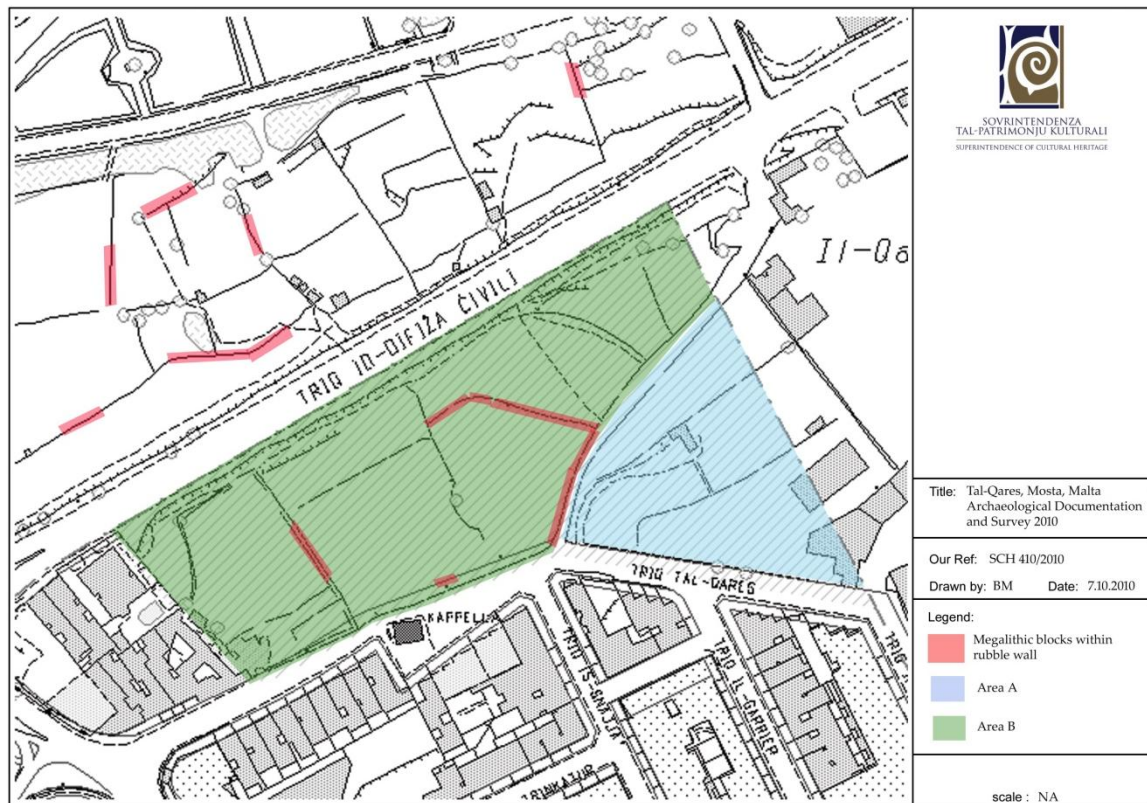
3 August 2009. MEPA submitted a report to the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage with its considerations on the Rationalisation Scheme proposal at Tal-Qares, Mosta – Map 27, Site Ref. E.

MEPA's report describes the area as 'an important archaeological site' and recommended that:

- More investigations are required prior to its inclusion in the Development Zone;
- The area currently occupied by a batching plant may be included within the Development Zone (Area A, Plan 1 below);
- Two rubble walls built with large ashlar blocks should be Scheduling as a Class B Archaeological Monument;
- Two fields were proposed for Scheduling as Class C Archaeological Monuments due to the presence of surface scatters of ancient pottery fragments.

8 October 2010. Following a preliminary assessment of the area, the Superintendence recommended to MEPA that:

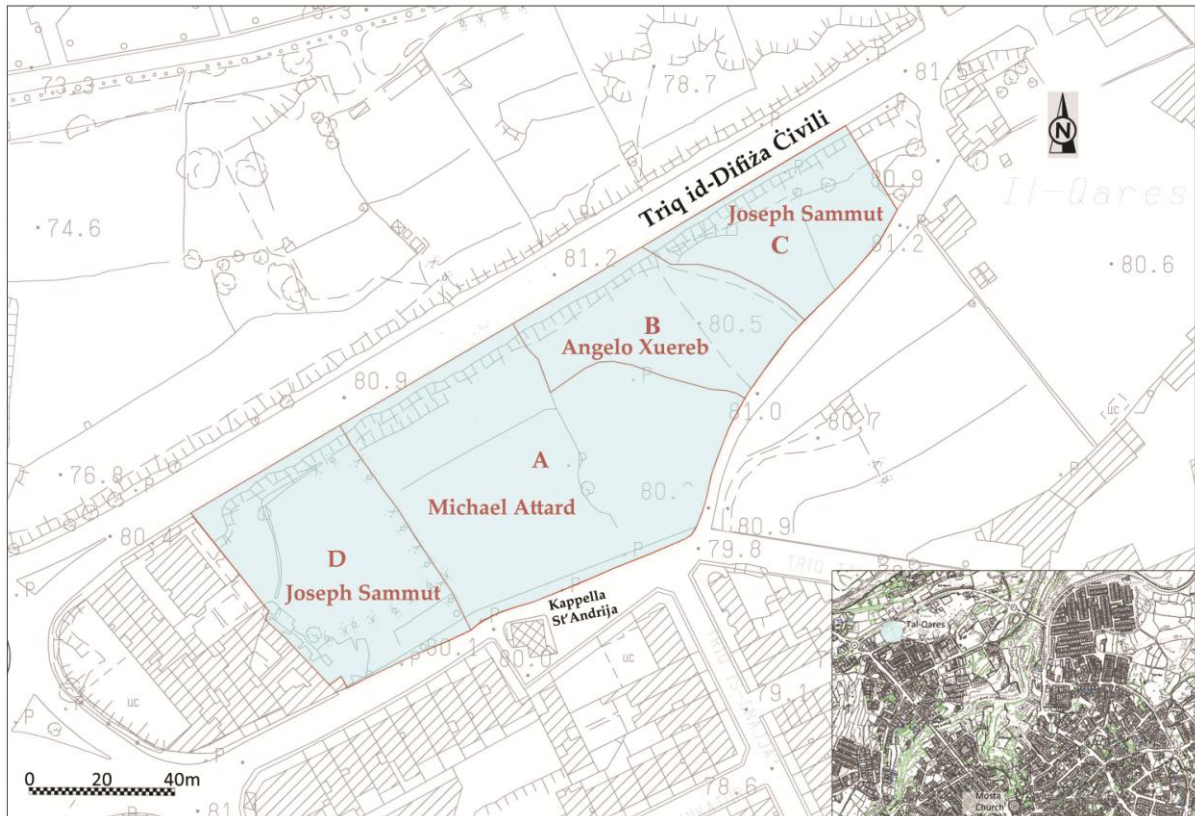
- The area presently occupied by a batching plant (Area A, **Plan 1**) could be included within the Development Zone.
- The rest of the Scheme (Area B, **Plan 1**) should be excluded from the Development Scheme on account of its archaeological potential. This area should be scheduled as Class B.



Plan 1: Tal-Qares, Mosta – Area A (footprint of existing batching plant) and Area B (area of archaeological potential)

9 February 2011. The Superintendence (SCH) and MEPA received letters of objection from two of the land owners whose property had been excluded from the Tal-Qares Rationalisation Scheme. In the letters the owners objected to the assessment made by SCH and MEPA. They also stated that they were willing to fund an archaeological investigation to establish conclusively whether their property at Tal-Qares was of cultural heritage value or not.

December 2011. Following discussions with MEPA and with the land owners, the Superintendence agreed to carry out archaeological investigations of four properties at Tal-Qares (Area B shown on **Plan 1**). This involved the investigation of a massive total area of 5,871m² (**Plan 2**). The objective of the investigation was to address the concerns raised by the land owners and establish the exact archaeological value of these properties. The investigation was entirely funded by the land owners, but was directed by the Superintendence. Terms of Reference for the start of the archaeological investigations were issued by the Superintendence on 15 December 2011.



Plan 2: Fields A to D: the four properties to be investigated at Tal-Qares

The archaeological investigation of Fields A, B and C were completed between 2012 and 2013. The outcome of these investigations is outlined in Section 2 below.

In spite of repeated attempts by the Superintendence to negotiate access to Field D, this was not provided by the owner. Field D has therefore not been archaeologically investigated.

This archaeological report on tal-Qares is therefore based only on the results obtained from Fields A, B and C.

2.0 Results of the Investigations and Recommendations

This section of the report describes the archaeological results obtained at Tal-Qares up to the time of writing. Each field is described separately.

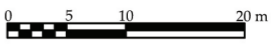
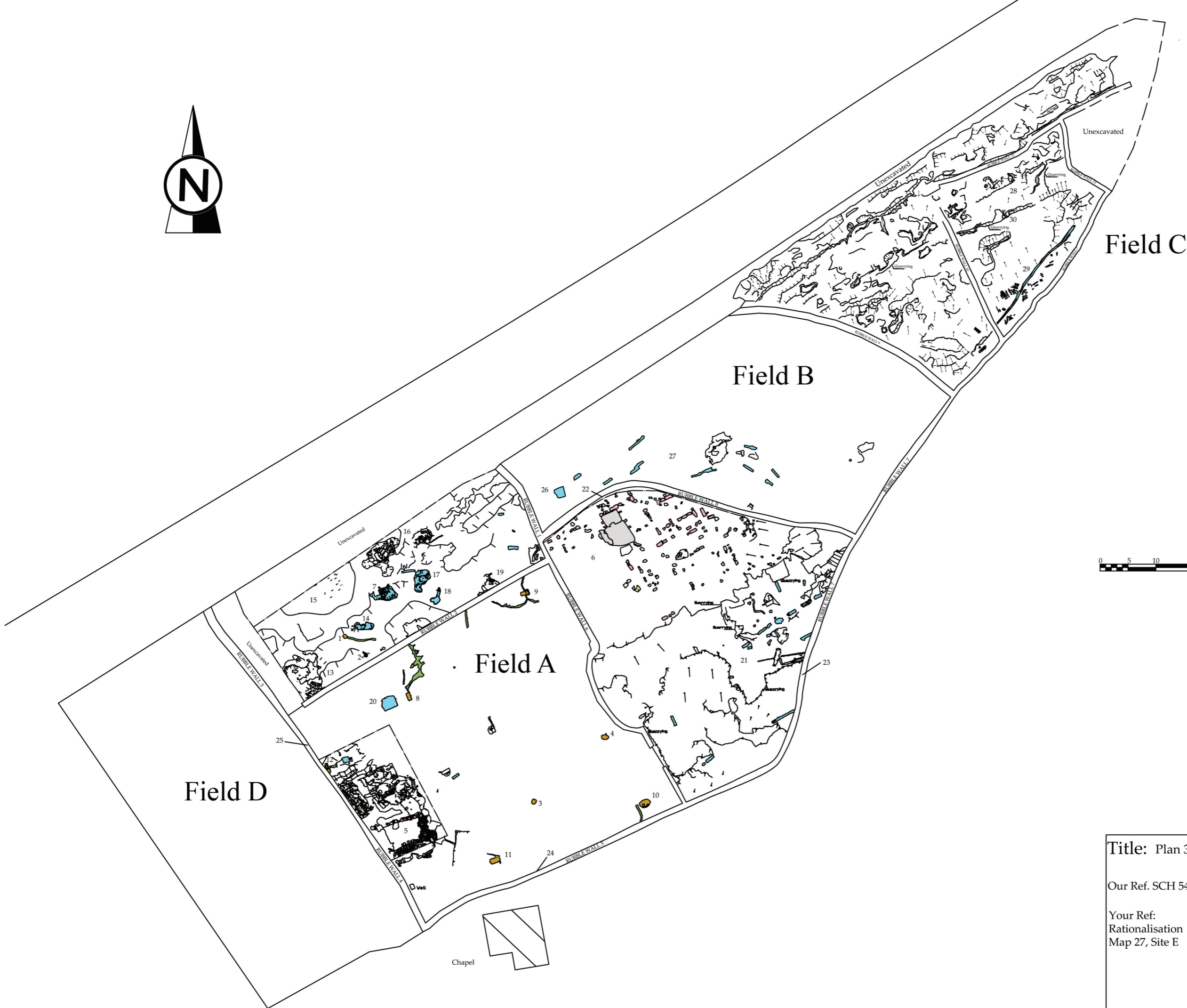
The status of the investigation in each field is described, together with any pending issues that need to be tackled in each property.

The main archaeological features identified in each field are described, and are also illustrated by means of plans and photography.

The original recommendations made by the Superintendence in 2010 have been revised and updated in the light of the results obtained by the archaeological investigations.

Plan 3: General plan of the archaeological remains uncovered in Fields A, B and C

(next page)



Title: Plan 3 - Archaeological Remains discovered
in Fields A, B, C

Our Ref. SCH 545/10

Your Ref:
Rationalisation
Map 27, Site E

Date: 13.05.14

Legend

	Rock-cut trenches, pits and post-holes		Basin
	Floor		Quarrying
	Rock-cut channels		Cisterns
	Wall alignments		Deposits
	Kiln		

2.1 Field A: property of Mr. Michael Attard

Current Status of the Investigation: The archaeological evaluation and documentation of Field A have been completed.

The only pending action in Field A is the protective backfilling of those archaeological features which are most at risk of being damaged by long-term exposure.

Results of the Investigation: The investigation confirmed that Field A is of high archaeological value meriting protection.

The main archaeological features identified in Field A are shown on **Plan 4** and include the following remains:

- Four silo pits (Features 1 to 4 – **Plate 1**);
- Foundation walls of an ancient structure on the western limit of the site (Feature 5 – **Plate 2**);
- Foundation walls and floors of ancient structures and possible vat to the area's north-east limit (Feature 6 – **Plate 3**);
- Structural Remains of a kiln, probably Early Roman (Feature 7 – **Plate 4**);
- Five ancient water cisterns and associated rock-cut channels (Features 8 to 12 – **Plate 5**);
- Extensive traces of ancient quarrying, including at least seven major quarry pits (Features 13 to 20 – **Plate 6**);
- Numerous traces of agricultural vine trenches, with the main complex found to the south-east of the property (Feature 21 – **Plate 7**);
- Four rubble walls built with large ashlar blocks (Features 22 to 25 – **Plate 8**).

The archaeological features identified in Field A include rock-cut features, structural remains and stratified deposits.

Only a small percentage of the archaeological deposits documented in Field A have been fully excavated. The excavated sample was sufficiently large to establish the physical extents of the surviving archaeological features and their state of conservation, together with their probable function and chronology. The remaining stratified deposits identified on site were left unexcavated.

The investigation revealed that Field A contained extensive archaeological remains belonging to an ancient rural settlement.

Some features of this settlement (1 to 4 above) are typical of Middle/Late Bronze Age sites (Borg in-Nadur 1500-750 BC).

Most of the archaeological features identified in Field A belong to an Early Roman rural settlement (third/second century BC) which included an extensive water management system (water cisterns and water channelling – Features 8 to 12) and structural remains (Features 5 and 6). The residential character of this settlement is indicated by the large amount of domestic ceramics fragments, particularly cooking ware, found within the excavated features.

Furthermore the presence of a circular kiln structure (Feature 7) indicates that some artisanal activities were also being carried out within this Early Roman settlement.

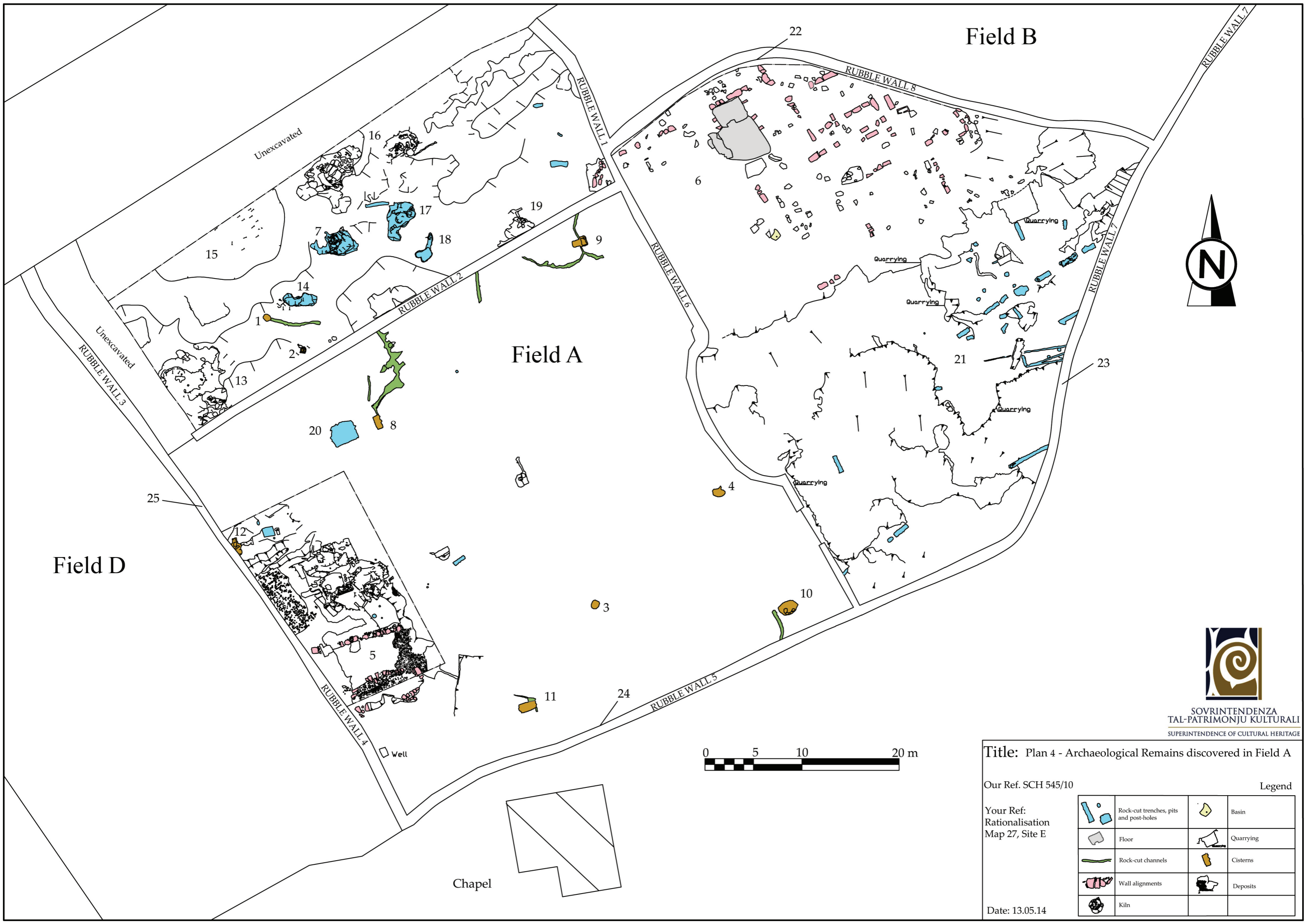
Extensive traces of ancient shallow agricultural and quarrying practices were also found across large areas within Field A (Features 13 to 21).

The rubble walls (Features 22 to 25) were constructed in a later historical moment, when the area of Tal-Qares was transformed into arable fields. Large rectangular limestone blocks extracted from the ancient remains and reutilised in the construction of the agricultural rubble walls.

Recommendations:

1. The archaeological features unearthed in Field A are of high value and must be protected from unsuitable forms of land use.
2. As already recommended by MEPA in 2009, and as confirmed by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage in 2010, these archaeological remains are to be scheduled at an appropriate level of protection in terms of the Cultural Heritage Act and of the relevant Structure Plan Policies.
3. Measures should be adopted to ensure that the archaeological remains are conserved on a long-term basis, and that it remains available for future archaeological investigations and research. The adopted measures are to include the controlled backfilling of the exposed archaeological deposits.

Plan 4: Archaeological remains uncovered in Field A (next page)



Field B

Field A

Field D



SOVRINTENDENZA
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI
SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Title: Plan 4 - Archaeological Remains discovered in Field A

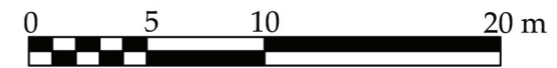
Our Ref: SCH 545/10

Legend

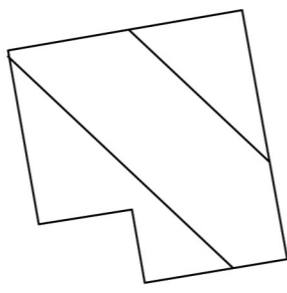
Your Ref:
Rationalisation
Map 27, Site E

	Rock-cut trenches, pits and post-holes		Basin
	Floor		Quarrying
	Rock-cut channels		Cisterns
	Wall alignments		Deposits
	Kiln		

Date: 13.05.14



Chapel



Well

Unexcavated

Unexcavated

RUBBLE WALL 8

RUBBLE WALL 7

RUBBLE WALL 1

RUBBLE WALL 6

RUBBLE WALL 2

RUBBLE WALL 3

RUBBLE WALL 4

RUBBLE WALL 5

RUBBLE WALL 7

Quarrying

Quarrying

Quarrying

Quarrying

15

13

14

1

2

20

16

17

18

19

8

3

11

24

10

4

Quarrying

21

23

22

25

Quarrying

Quarrying

Quarrying

Quarrying

Well

Chapel

Unexcavated

Unexcavated

RUBBLE WALL 8

RUBBLE WALL 7

RUBBLE WALL 1

RUBBLE WALL 6

RUBBLE WALL 2

RUBBLE WALL 3

RUBBLE WALL 4

RUBBLE WALL 5

RUBBLE WALL 7

Quarrying

Quarrying

Quarrying

Quarrying

15

13

14

1

2

20

16

17

18

19

8

3

11

24

10

4

Quarrying

21

23

22

25

Quarrying

Quarrying

Quarrying

Quarrying

Well

Chapel

Plate 1 – Silo pits



Plate 10 – Shallow quarrying and vine trenches uncovered in Field C



Plate 2 – Foundation walls of an ancient structure (Feature 5)



Plate 3 – Foundation walls and floors of ancient structures (Feature 6)



Plate 4 - Detailed views of the remains of a kiln (Feature 7)



Plate 5 – Ancient Water Cisterns



Plate 6 - Rock-cut pit in Field A (Feature No. 20)



Plate 7 – Quarrying and Vine Trenches in Field A



Plate 8 – Large ashlar blocks within various stretches of the rubble walls



2.2 Field B: property of Mr. Angelo Xuereb

Current Status of the Investigation: The archaeological evaluation of Field B has been completed.

The only pending action in Field B is the completion of the general survey of the area and the survey of the north face of Feature 22 (**Plan 5**).

Results of the Investigation: The investigation confirmed that Field B is of low archaeological value.

The only features of archaeological interest documented in Field B are:

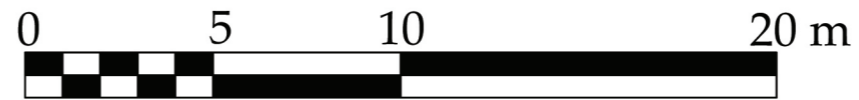
- A rubble wall which incorporates part of an ancient wall, built of large ashlar blocks (Feature 22 – **Plate 8**);
- A rock cut pit of undetermined function (Feature 26 – **Plate 9**);
- Various agricultural vine trenches (Feature 27 – **Plate 9**).

Recommendations:

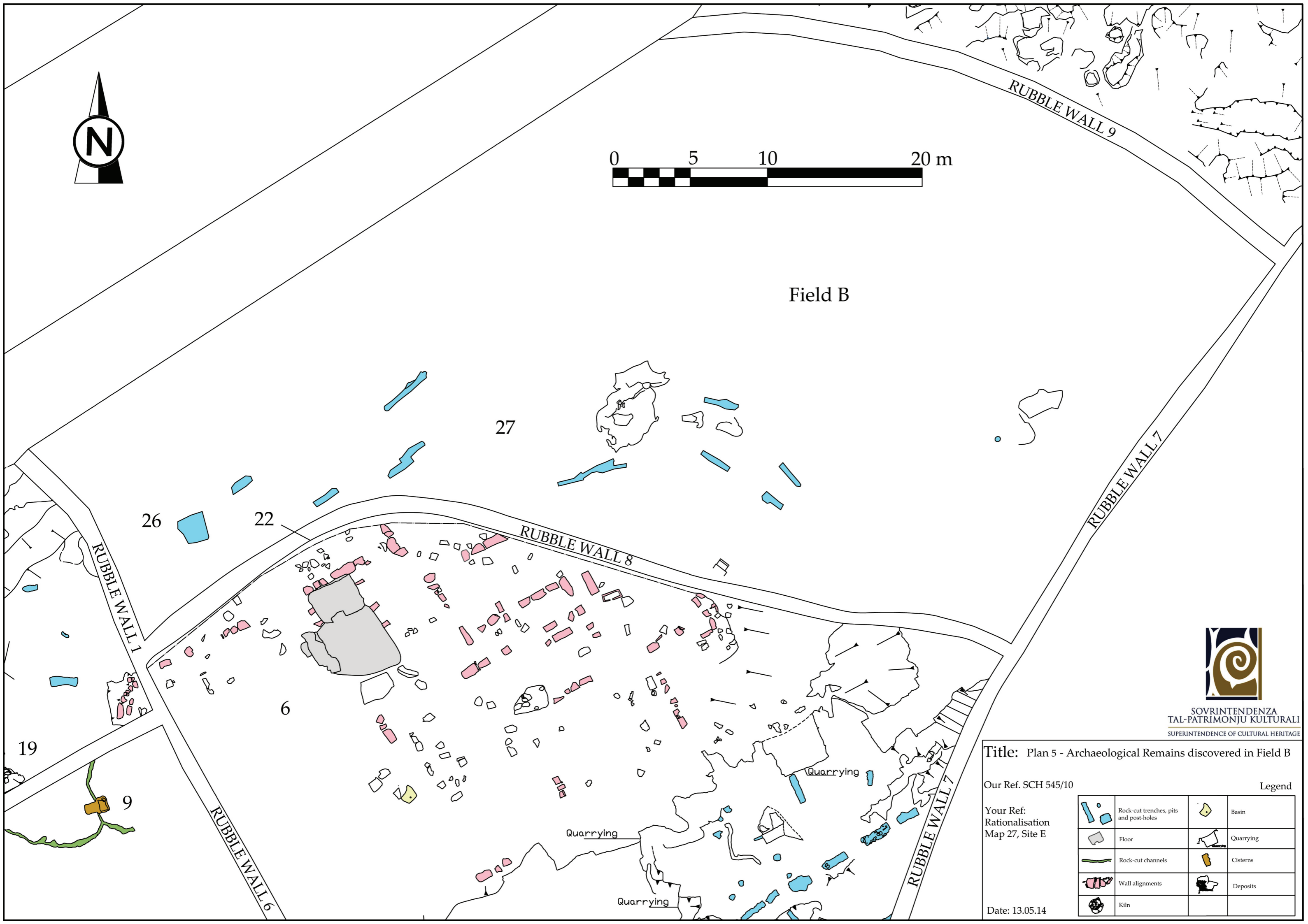
There is no objection to the inclusion of Field B in the Development Zone on condition that the following measures are observed:

1. The archaeological features noted in Field B are to be scheduled at an appropriate level of protection in terms of the Cultural Heritage Act and of the relevant Structure Plan Policies.
2. The archaeological data required to complete the documentation of this site must be finalised to the specifications of the Superintendence.
3. Rock-cutting for construction purposes should not impact the archaeological features recorded on the southern end of the field.

Plan 5: Archaeological remains uncovered in Field B (next page)



Field B



SOVRINTENDENZA
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI
SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Title: Plan 5 - Archaeological Remains discovered in Field B

Our Ref. SCH 545/10

Legend

Your Ref:
Rationalisation
Map 27, Site E

	Rock-cut trenches, pits and post-holes		Basin
	Floor		Quarrying
	Rock-cut channels		Cisterns
	Wall alignments		Deposits
	Kiln		

Date: 13.05.14

Plate 9 – Ancient Water Cistern (Feature 26) and agricultural trenches in Field B



2.3 Field C: Property of Mr. Joseph Sammut

Current Status of the Investigation: The archaeological evaluation and documentation of Field C has been completed.

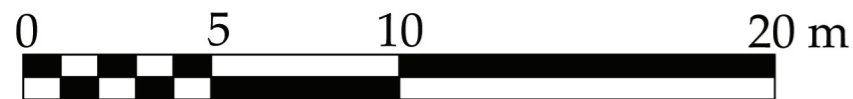
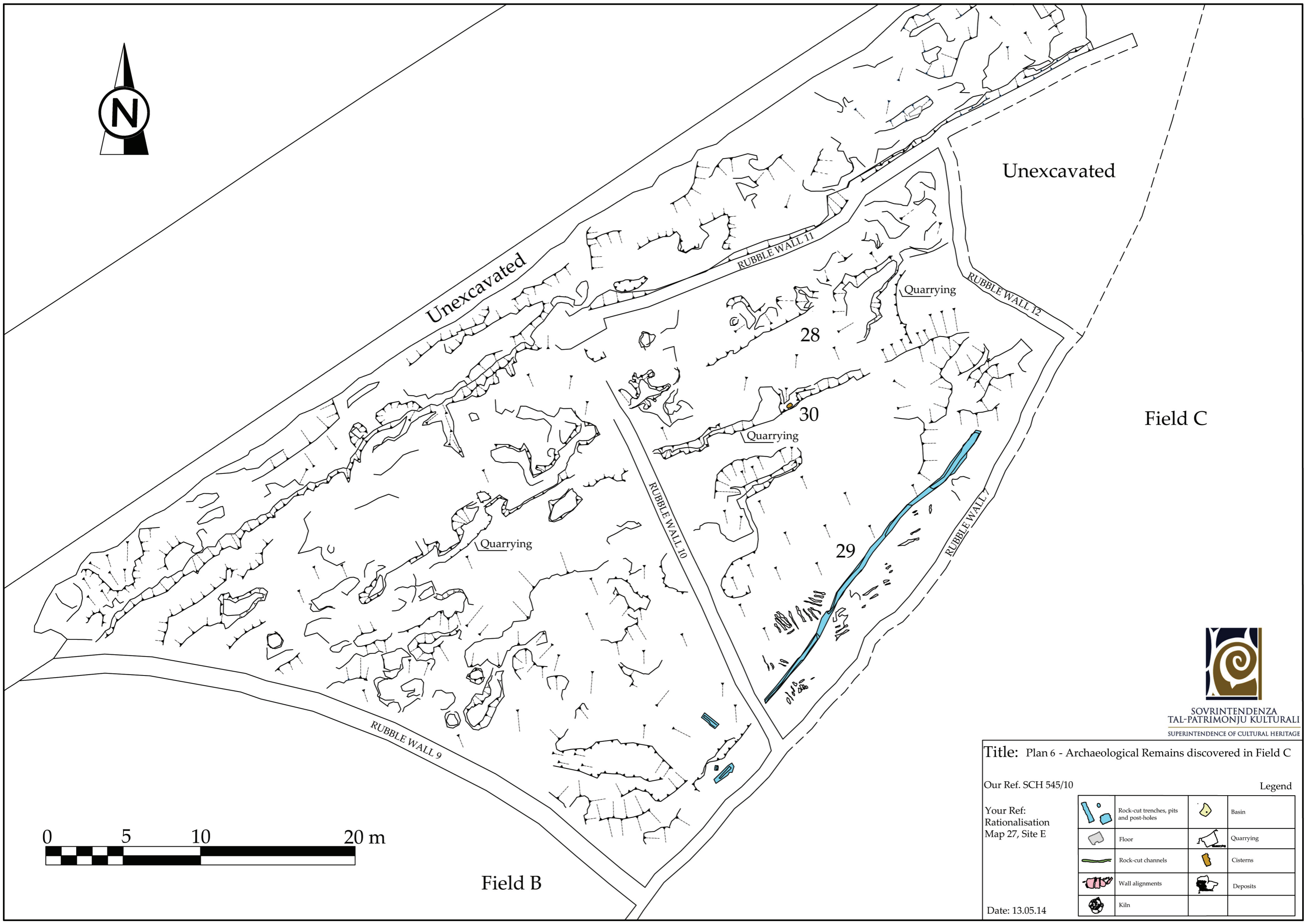
Results of the Investigation: The archaeological evaluation established that Field C is of low archaeological value. The only features worth noting were:

- Various shallow quarry marks (Feature 28 – see **Plate 10**);
- A line of agricultural vine trenches on the southern limit of the property (Feature 29 – see **Plate 10**);
- Possible ancient water cistern (Feature 30 – see **Plate 10**).

Recommendation: There is no objection to the inclusion of Field C in the Development Zone subject to the following:

1. Feature 30 is to be Scheduled at an appropriate level of protection in terms of the Cultural Heritage Act and of the relevant Structure Plan Policies.

Plan 6: Archaeological remains uncovered in Field C (next page)



Field B

Unexcavated

Field C



SOVRINTENDENZA
TAL-PATRIMONJU KULTURALI
SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Title: Plan 6 - Archaeological Remains discovered in Field C

Our Ref. SCH 545/10

Legend

Your Ref:
Rationalisation
Map 27, Site E

	Rock-cut trenches, pits and post-holes		Basin
	Floor		Quarrying
	Rock-cut channels		Cisterns
	Wall alignments		Deposits
	Kiln		

Date: 13.05.14

Plate 10 – Shallow quarrying and vine trenches uncovered in Field C



2.4 Field D: Property of Mr. Joseph Sammut

Current Status of the Investigation: Field D was not investigated, due to the owner's objections to the start of works.

Results of the Investigation: No results are available for Field D.

Judging by the results obtained in the adjacent Field A, there is however a high probability that some archaeological remains also extend into Field D.

Recommendation: This property should not be included in the Rationalisation Scheme until it is suitably investigated and should be given appropriate protection due to its potential for yielding archaeological remains.