

THE EXCAVATION OF THREE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AT KLEIN  
SLANGKOPPUNT, KOMMETJIE.

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## AIMS

The primary aim of the excavations was the rescue of the sites from damage or destruction, due to the imminent development of the area. The excavations, however, were motivated by research concerns as well. The Noordhoek Valley, of which Klein Slankoppunt Peninsula forms part, is an area rich in archaeological occurrences. Evidence for early human history in the valley goes back about 0.5 million years. Thus, the excavations are an attempt to describe some aspects of precolonial settlement on the Cape Peninsula.

## THE REGION

The area investigated is the Klein Slankoppunt Peninsula between the northern end of Bokramstrand and the lower reaches of the Wildevoel estuary. The sites excavated are located in the dune cordon about 50 metres from the sea-shore (Fig. 1). These sites, in our opinion, provide more information on early human behaviour than the sites behind the dune cordon. We were initially concerned about the inland sites (see Kaplan and Parkinson 1990 Fig. 1 & page 4), as it was these sites which would most likely be impacted by the housing project. Three sites (SKP 2, 3, & 8), all shell middens, were tested for their archaeological significance. SKP 8 contained shellfish remains and a few stone artefacts scattered over a wide area, but when test excavated, had no depth to it, and generated very little shell. Contrary to our initial expectations it was clear that these sites would not fulfill the excavation and rescue objectives.

Our focus then shifted to some in-situ midden material eroding out of some of the vegetation-covered dunes (sites 4, 5, 6, and 7). SKP 14, we decided, was also worth sampling. It was clear that these sites might fulfill our objectives better than the inland middens, and provide a larger, quantifiable and comparative sample. Three sites were chosen for excavation. These were SKP 6, 7 and 14 (Figs 2-3). Twelve days were spent excavating the three sites.

## THE EXCAVATION AND STRATIGRAPHY

SKP 6 is approximately 170 m west from the mouth of the Wildevoel estuary overlooking Noordhoek beach. The midden is exposed on the right-hand side of the pathway covered by a recent dune capping which is partially covered by indigenous milkwood trees. A large portion of the midden has been destroyed by human activity, mainly trampling.

Approximately 40 cm above the base of the dune, some in-situ shell was found eroding out of the side of the dune. The dune was cleared of all vegetation cover. It was then cut back 3 m in order to create a platform on which to work, and to facilitate a controlled excavation (Fig. 4). The first layer of shell was exposed approximately 1 m below the surface of the cleared dune,

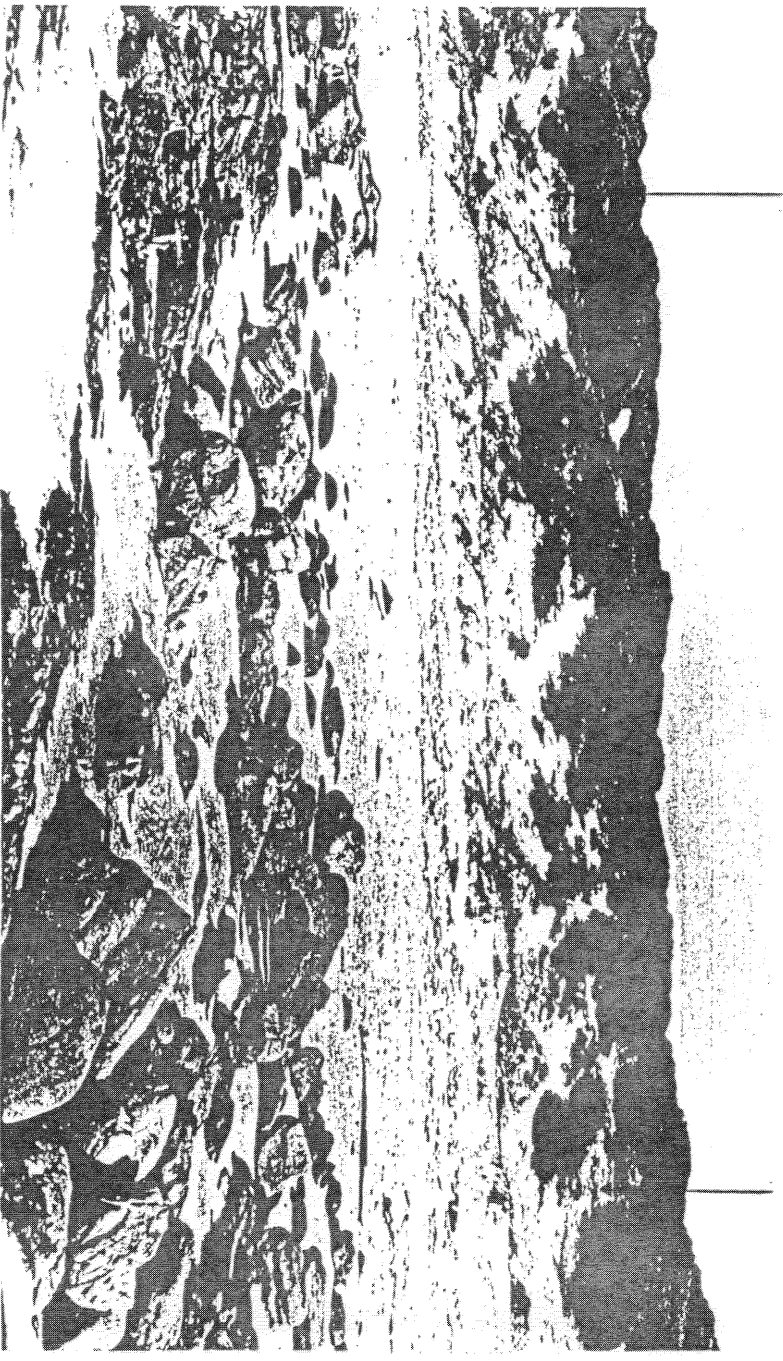


FIGURE 2. SLANGKOPPUNT 6 (RIGHT) AND 7 (LEFT): ARROWS INDICATE LOCATION OF SITES.

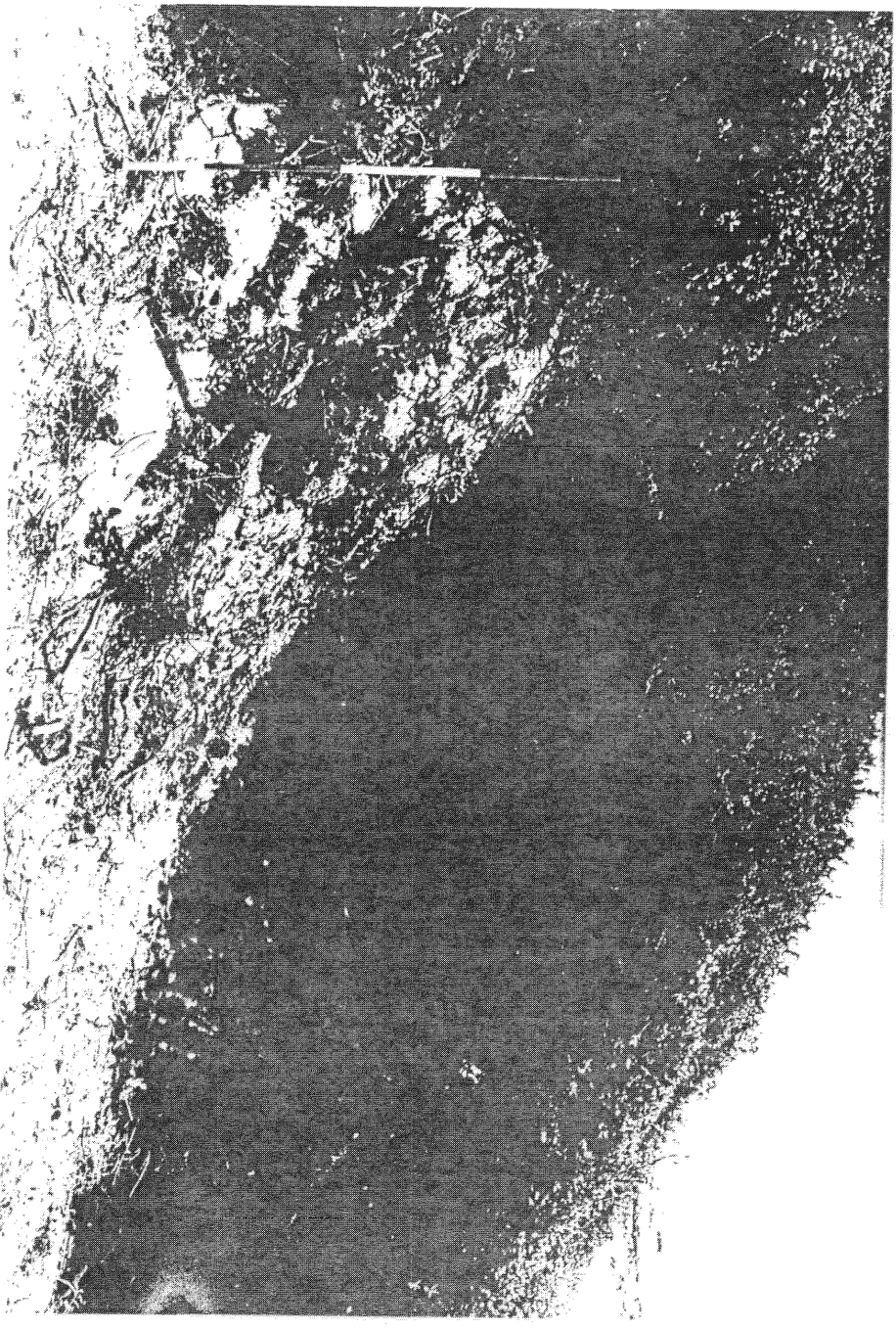


FIGURE 4. SLANGKOPPUNT 6: EXPOSED MIDDEN.

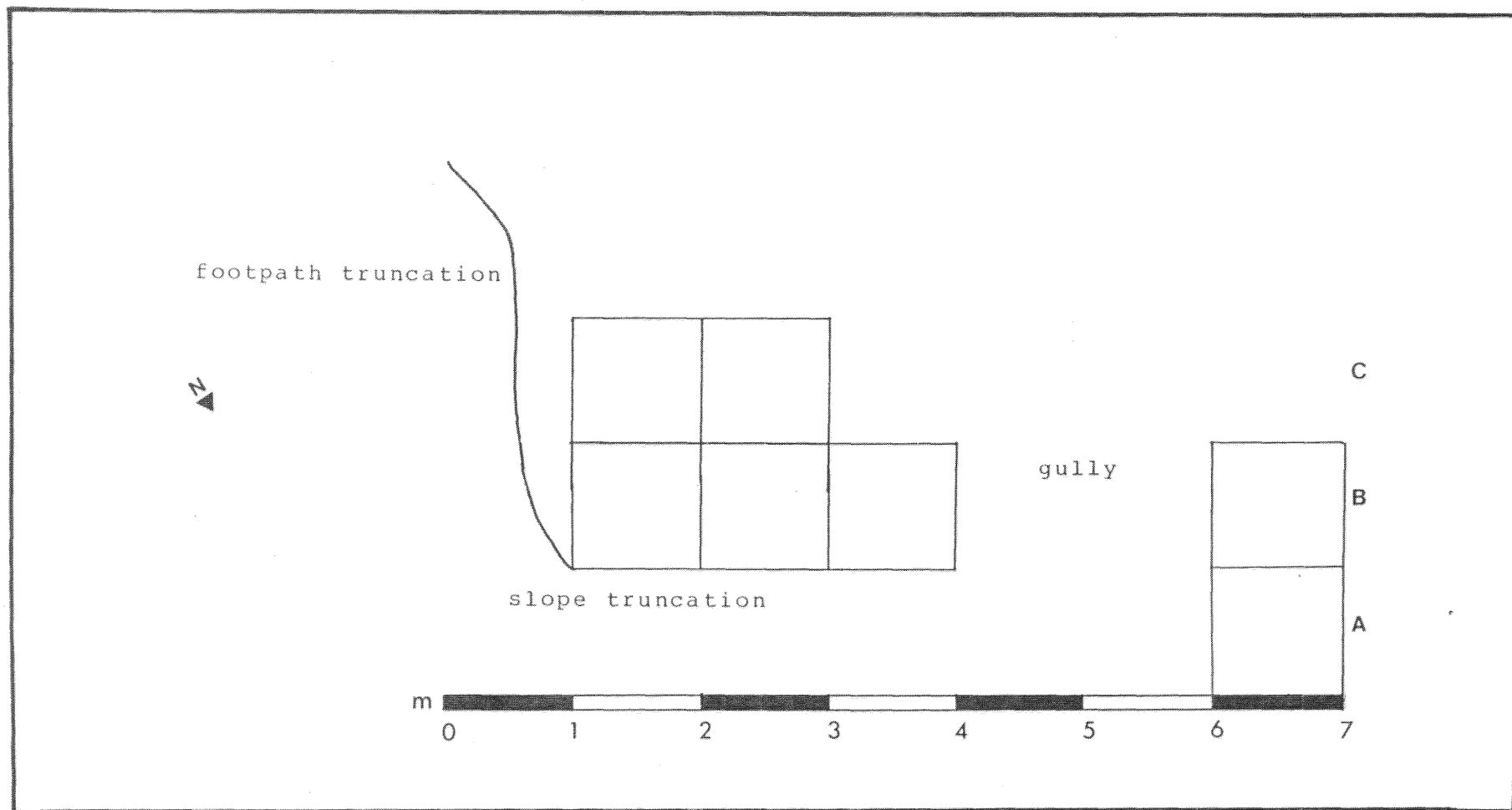


FIGURE 5. SLANGKOPPUNT 6: SITE PLAN.

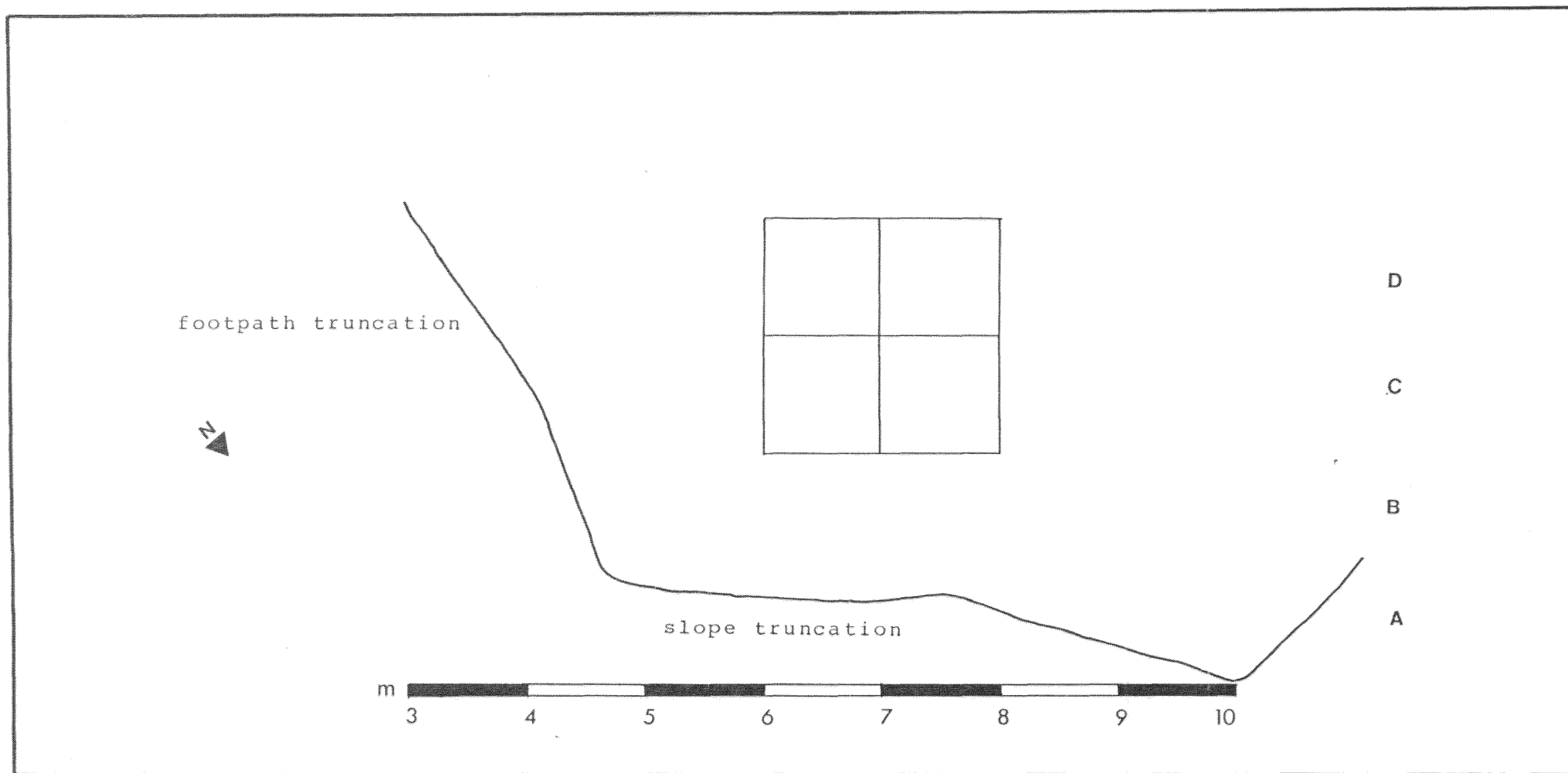


FIGURE 7. SLANGKOPPUNT 7: SITE PLAN.

The excavation was designed around sampling the site, as a 100% recovery of the material would have taken too long. A 35 m long base line was laid out along the outermost edge of the site. Starting at the 7 m mark, where the shell and cultural remains lay thickest on the surface, a 4 x 4 m grid was laid out against the slope. Each 1 m square in the grid was then excavated. Omitting the next 4 metres, the same procedure was followed at the 15 m and 31 m mark. The third and fourth 4 m blocks (between 23-30 m), were not excavated, as the archaeological material lay beneath possibly a metre or more of dune sand. In all, 32 squares were excavated (Fig. 8). The objective of such a sampling procedure was to recover a large enough sample to compare across squares, to identify any spatial patterning, and to generate a set of observations which could be compared to the midden material from SKP 6 and 7.

The 7-10 and 31-34 m grids produced the richest artefactual material. The majority of stone artefacts, pottery, ostrich eggshell, ostrich eggshell beads, shell scrapers, and shell pendants were recovered from these grids.

#### ARTEFACTUAL REMAINS

The majority of cultural artefacts came from SKP 14 (Table 1). Only four stone artefacts were recovered from SKP 7. These include a broken quartz flake, a quartz chip, and a quartzite chunk and cobble. No artefacts were found in SKP 6.

Stone artefacts Waste, comprising flakes, chips, chunks and cores, forms the majority of stone artefacts recovered from SKP 14 (Table 2). These make up 96.6% of the total stone artefact assemblages. In the utilized category, two lower grindstones were recovered, while one miscellaneous retouched piece was the only formal tool found. The raw material frequencies for the different artefact categories is presented in Table 3. In the waste category quartz comprises 88.1% of the raw material frequencies, followed by quartzite at 8.3% and 'other' at 3.6%.

Pottery Five pieces of pottery were recovered from SKP 14. Four pieces came from the 7-10 m grid, and one piece came from the 31-34 m grid (Table 1). All the pieces are unburnished body sherds and have a matrix of grit and quartz chips (Fig. 9). In all likelihood, the pottery sherds can be classified as Cape coastal, which means they are the kind regularly and characteristically found on coastal shell middens around the Cape.

Ostrich eggshell beads Seven ostrich eggshell beads were found at SKP 14 (Fig. 9). Four came from the 31-34 m grid, and three came from the 15-18 m grid (Table 1).

Ostrich eggshell Eighteen pieces of ostrich eggshell came from SKP 14 (Fig. 9). Fourteen were found in the 7-10 m grid and four in the 31-34 m grid (Table 1). The pieces may have been used for the manufacture of beads, or represent broken water containers.

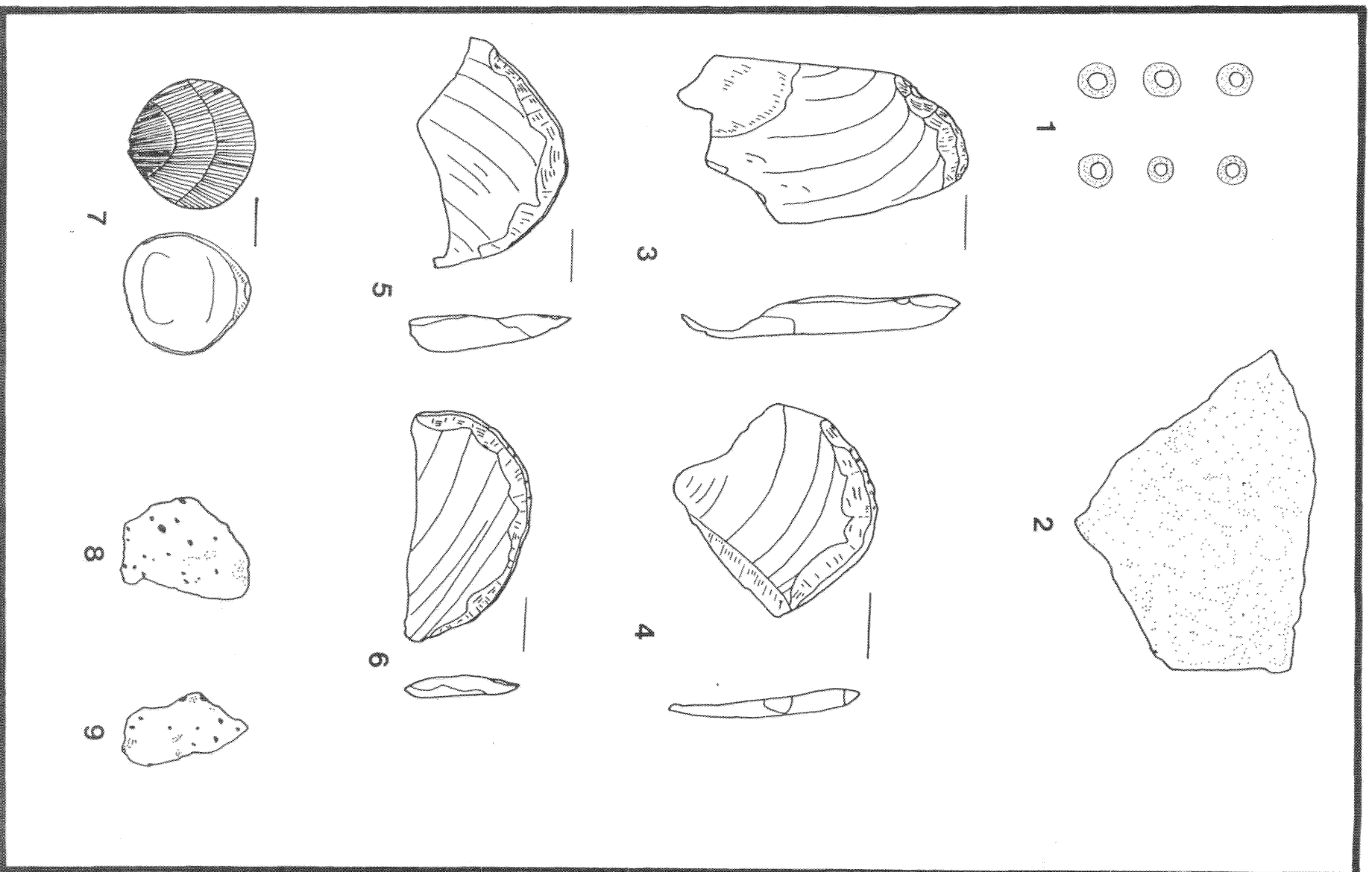


FIGURE 9. SLANGKOPPUNT 14: CULTURAL ARTEFACTS. 1. OSTRICH EGGSHELL BEADS; 2. OSTRICH EGGSHELL; 3-6. DONAX



	n.	% Category	% Total
WASTE			
Chips, chunks & flakes	78	92.9	
Irregular Cores	2	2.4	
Single Platform Cores	2	2.4	
Bladelet Cores	2	2.4	
TOTAL	84		96.6
UTILIZED			
Grindstones	2	100.0	
TOTAL	2		2.3
FORMAL			
Miscellaneous	1	100.0	
Retouched Pieces	1		
TOTAL	1		1.1

TABLE 2. SLANGKOPPUNT 14: STONE ARTEFACT FREQUENCIES.

Shell scrapers Archaeologists argue that shell and stone scrapers were used as skin cleaning tools. Thirty white mussel (Donax serra) scrapers were recovered from SKP 14 (Fig. 9). Twelve came from the 7-10 m grids, two from the 15-18 m grids and 16 from the 31-34 m grids (Table 1). Seven miscellaneous retouched pieces and two minimally retouched pieces of Donax, were also found. Donax scrapers have been found from Renbaan Cave in the Clanwilliam District, associated with a date of 1500 years BP, at Elands Bay Cave where they occur in 8000 year old levels, and even from the Dutch colonial outpost at Oudepost on the Churchhaven peninsula, where they may be not much older than 300 years.

Pendants Two shell pendants (Glycymeris connollyi) were recovered from the 31-34 m squares at SKP 14 (Fig. 9).

The distribution of the cultural, non-lithic artefacts from SKP 14, is presented in Table 1. As can be seen, the spatial distribution of the artefacts do not form a coherent pattern which may shed light on behaviour or social activities. The only pattern to emerge is that the majority of cultural artefacts came from the 7-10 and 31-34 m grids.

#### FAUNAL REMAINS

Fauna, including both marine and terrestrial, was recovered from the excavations. MNI refers to the minimum number of individual animals that could be identified, based on the most frequently occurring body parts. There is a fairly high degree of bone fragmentation from the three sites, particularly from SKP 14, which may have affected the MNI count.

The minimum numbers of individual species of animals and birds from SKP 6, 7 and 14, are presented in Tables 4, 5 and 6. The MNIs from both SKP 6 and 7 are small and do not include more than three individuals from a single species. The MNI from SKP 6 is one for most species, except for Cape cormorant (Phalacrocorax capensis) which is three and crayfish (Jasus lalandii) and medium bird, which are two each. The presence of domesticated sheep (Ovis aries) in the sample coincides with the late occupation of the site (Table 4).

There are no major differences between the faunal counts from Layers 1-3 in SKP 7. The presence of brown hyaena (Hyaena brunnea), a carnivore, in Layer 1, may point towards another agent in the accumulation of this small sample. Cape fur seal (Arctocephalus pusillus), bird, small mammal and crayfish, also came from Layer 1. The MNI for Layer 2 is small, with only one Cape cormorant and one tortoise (Chersina angulata) occurring. Cape cormorant, tortoise, crayfish, seal and whale were recovered from Layer 3 (Table 5). The incidence of bone here is unusual as it does not support the (later) argument that Layer 3 is the remains of a raised beach. It is possible that some bone may be displaced from the overlying layers. The presence of a very

Species	Layer 1	Layer 2	Layer 3
Cape Cormorant			
<u>Phalacrocorax capensis</u>	1	1	3
Tortoise			
<u>Chersina angulata</u>		1	1
Crayfish			
<u>Jasus lalandii</u>	2		1
Seal			
<u>Arctocephalus pusillus</u>	1		1
Brown Hyaena			
<u>Hyaena brunnea</u>	1		
Whale (indet.)			1
Small mammal (indet.)	1		
Microfauna (indet.)	1		

TABLE 5. SIANGKOPPUNT 7: MINIMUM NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL ANIMALS AND BIRDS.

Species	Surface Layer
Tortoise ( <u>Chersina angulata</u> )	3
Sheep ( <u>Ovis aries</u> )	1
Cow ( <u>Bos taurus</u> )	1
Dog ( <u>Canis familiaris</u> )	1
Seal ( <u>Arctocephalus pusillus</u> )	1
Small carnivore (indet)	1
Crayfish ( <u>Jasus lalandi</u> )	37
Crab ( <u>Cyclograpsus punctatus</u> )	1
Dune mole rat ( <u>Bathyrqus suillus</u> )	2
Steenbok/Grysbok ( <u>Raphicerus</u> )	1
Horse ( <u>Equus caballus</u> )	1
Cape Cormorant ( <u>Phalacrocorax capensis</u> )	7
Jackass penguin ( <u>Spheniscus demersus</u> )	3
Pink-backed Pelican ( <u>Pelecanus rufescens</u> )	1
Goose/Duck	1
Chicken ( <u>Gallus gallus</u> )	1
Small bird (indet)	2
Medium bird (indet)	2
Large bird (indet)	1

TABLE 6. SLANGKOPPUNT 14: MINIMUM NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL ANIMALS AND BIRDS.

The shells from SKP 6, square B 3, SKP 7, square C 8, and the shell from SKP 14, squares 10 B, 8 A, 16 A, 16 D, 33 A, and 33 D, were analysed.

The preferred shellfish from all three sites is the black mussel (Choromytilis meridionalis), followed by the various limpet species (P. granatina, P. granularis, and P. argenvillei). These shellfish are available from the intertidal zone close to the sites at low and mid-tides and form a very dependable food resource. In Layer 1 at SKP 6, some 68.7% of the shellfish consumed was black mussel, followed by limpets (20.3%), whelks (10.2%) and winkles (0.8%) (Table 8). In Layer 1 at SKP 7, black mussel comprises 60.5% of the shellfish consumed, followed by limpets (19.2%), whelks (19%) and winkles (1.2%). Layer 2 is dominated by black mussel, where it increases to 78.8%, followed by a decrease in limpets (15.3%), whelks (5.5%) and winkles (0,5%) (Table 9).

Barnacle Layer and Layers 3 and 4, which we believe to exhibit the features of a former shoreline, (and therefore not the result of human activity), are also dominated by black mussel (Table 9). In these layers black mussel is 65.7%, 67.7% and 71.5% respectively. The frequencies for limpets, whelks and winkles are also not significantly different than those in Layers 1 and 2.

Black mussel dominates the shellfish species at SKP 14 at 55.6%, considerably lower than at SKP 6 and 7, followed by limpets (31.4%), whelks (11.9%) and winkles (1.2%) (Table 10). Here, however, blurring of the sample may have occurred due to mixing of modern shell.

Of the limpet species, Patella granatina dominates the human occupation units in all three sites (Tables 8, 9 & 10). It is 83.7%, 75.5% and 72.4% respectively in Layers 1 at SKP 6 and 7, and in the Surface Layer at SKP 14. This is followed by Patella granularis at 16.3%, 17.3% and 16.4% respectively. Layer 2 at SKP 7 is dominated by Patella granatina at 71.9%, while Patella granularis is 21.9%. In the raised beach levels, Patella granatina is 60% in Barnacle Layer, 39% in Layer 3 and 26.9% in Layer 4, with a corresponding increase in Patella granularis in all three layers (Table 9).

Table 11 presents the percentage frequencies of the total weights of shellfish species for SKP 7. The information is used to argue that Barnacle Layer, Layer 3 and Layer 4, are the remains of an elevated former shoreline. Arguing earlier that black mussel was the preferred shellfish species in the diet of the inhabitants, the total weights of black mussel decrease substantially in Barnacle Layer, and Layers 3 and 4, when compared to Layers 1 and 2 (Table 11). The total weights of limpets also decrease substantially when compared to the overlying layers.

LAYER	1	2	BL	3	4
Number of identifications	506	41	102	269	137
Frequencies (%) of					
<u>Choromytilus meridionalis</u> (mussels)	60.5	78.8	65.7	67.7	71.5
<u>Patella</u> spp. (limpets)	19.2	15.3	19.6	15.2	19.0
<u>Burnupena</u> sp. (whelks)	19.0	5.5	13.7	17.1	8.8
<u>Oxysteles</u> (winkles)	1.2	0.5	1.0	-	0.7
Frequencies (%) of limpets					
<u>P. granatina</u>	75.5	71.1	60.0	39.0	26.9
<u>P. granularis</u>	17.3	21.9	35.0	48.8	57.7
<u>P. argenvillei</u>	6.1	4.7	5.0	4.9	7.7
<u>P. barbara</u>	1.0	1.6	-	4.9	3.8
<u>P. cochlear</u>	-	2.4	-	2.4	-
<u>P. miniata</u>	-	-	-	-	3.8
Frequencies (%) of mussels					
<u>Choromytilus meridionalis</u>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

TABLE 9. SLANGKOPPUNT 7: SHELLFISH REMAINS. BL DENOTES  
BARNACLE LAYER.

LAYER	1	2	BL	3	4
Frequencies (%) of					
Large black mussel	76.0	72.3	44.8	53.2	45.9
Limpets	11.3	13.2	5.7	8.8	4.1
whelks	1.3	0.8	0.8	1.7	0.6
Winkels	0.2	0.1	0.02	0.04	0.07
Barnacles	7.0	7.8	32.3	23.0	33.3
Junior black mussel	3.6	4.2	16.1	12.8	14.4
Water-worn shell	0.5	1.5	0.3	0.4	1.6

TABLE 11. SIANGKOPPUNT 7: SHELLFISH WEIGHTS. BL DENOTES  
BARNACLE LAYER.

Site	Layer	Left Hinge	Right Hinge
Slangkoppunt 6	1	7.6	8.0
Slangkoppunt 7	1	7.9	7.8
	2	6.5	6.4
	Barnacle	6.5	6.9
	3	5.8	6.2
	4	5.6	5.8
Slangkoppunt 14	Surface	6.2	6.4

TABLE 12. Slangkoppunt 6, 7, and 14: Shellfish lengths.



and traditional forms of society being undermined as permanent (Dutch) settlement intensified, conflict appears to have become the dominant form of relationship between Khoi and San.

In the case of SKP 7, where Layers 1 and 2 are separated by a layer of sand with some intruded shell, the site was revisited after a period of some years. The Layer 2 shellfish remains from SKP 7 were fragmented with less whole shell present. This suggests that deposition was slow and that probably more than one visit took place. Compare this to Layer 1 in SKP 6 and 7, where many more whole shell was found, it suggests rapid deposition and a very brief, possibly single, visit. The  $440 \pm 50$  BP date for Layer 2 at SKP 7 might then represent a minimum date for numerous visits to the site.

The diet of the strandloping inhabitants was not restricted to shellfish. Apart from molluscs and crayfish, the people also ate fish, tortoise, seal, birds and terrestrial mammals. SKP 6 contains the remains of domesticated sheep. This is not unusual given that sheep appear in the archaeological record about 1800 years ago. Their presence coincides with the late date for the sites. All these animal, marine and bird species are common to many coastal sites.

Black mussel was the preferred shellfish, followed by the various limpet species. Mussel and limpet communities still breed in the rocky intertidal zone close to the sites. The almost total absence of any cultural remains on the midden sites is not unusual in shell middens, and probably reflect the fact that the activity on these sites was one of food processing. The remains of a large female seal, approximately 10 years old at the age of death, was recovered from Layer 1 in SKP 6. Together with the two individuals from Layers 1 and 3 in SKP 7, this may represent an opportunistic catch rather than an active hunt. Other bone recovered from SKP 6 and 7 include sheep, tortoise, fish, crayfish and bird, thus complementing the shellfish diet of the inhabitants.

SKP 14, on the other hand, represents a different archaeological signature on the landscape. The site is an open scatter of shellfish fragments on an exposed dune slope. Associated with the shells are ostrich eggshell, beads, pottery, shell scrapers, stone flakes and grinding stones. The majority of cultural artefacts were found amongst the boulders in grids 7-10 and 31-34, suggesting that it may have been here, under cover of some protection, that social activities such as food processing (grinding of plant foods and skin cleaning), and cooking (using fired clay containers), may have taken place. We know, from the dating of charcoal-bearing layers from cave sites in which pottery has been found, that these sites represent an occupation which began some time after 1800 years ago and carried on into more recent times. Bone was also recovered from SKP 14, and includes sheep, fish, crayfish, bird, tortoise, snake, small

If development goes ahead as planned with minimal dune remodelling, the impact on the visible and invisible sites should be minimal. However, if large scale movement of dunes with associated in situ floors takes place, the archaeological sites would be threatened.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

A rich archaeological heritage lies exposed on the surface and buried beneath the dunes of the Klein Slankoppunt Peninsula.

We urge that development of the peninsula avoid or minimise the damage to the sites which have not been sampled.

If plans to upgrade or enlarge the development project are considered, the Archaeology Contracts Office would have to reassess what impact this might have on the archaeology.

We strongly urge that throughout the development programme, archaeologists from the University of Cape Town Contracts Office be consulted at each stage of the development. The exposure of more sites, including burials, is very likely, given the high archaeological visibility of the region. Developers should therefore inform the subcontractors involved in the project to the likelihood of this occurring. Should any skeletal remains or midden material be uncovered, members of the Archaeology Contracts Office should immediately be informed.