

SITE INSPECTION 1 (2004)

9/2/02/0004 (Clem Willem Hage)
9/2/04/2/0023 (Piet Hage msp)

HWC Reference No. C13/3/6/2/1/1/1/C2

Date: 30th January - 01 February 2004

Locality: West Coast, Lamberts Bay and Elands Bay area.

Area(s)/sites:

- Diepkloof Shelter, farm Grootrif, north of Retlinghuis, western shore of Verlorenvlei
- Steenbokfontein Cave, Steenbokfontein farm, 8 km south of Lamberts Bay
- Kreefbaai midden, mouth of Watrifsoutpan
- Elands Bay Cave, Baboon Point, Elandsbaai
- Elands Bay Open shelter, Baboon Point, Elandsbaai
- Mike Taylor's Midden, Mussel Point
- Pancho's Kitchen Midden, Waterkloof

HWC representatives present: Dr. A. Jerardino

Other attendants: Mr. Royden Yates (Archaeologist, IZIKO: South African Museum),

Ms. Genevive Dewar (Archaeologist, PhD student, University of Cape Town), Dr. Ana Bohlin (Social Anthropologist, University of Goteburg), Mr. Lachlan Mathews (local resident from Lamberts Bay)

Date of this report: 9th February 2004

Background:

Since taking the responsibility of Archaeologist (Senior Heritage Officer) in the offices of Heritage Western Cape, a number of cases have been brought to my attention. As a result, many archaeological sites need to be visited, some of which are located within the same geographical area. One such group of sites is located in the Lamberts Bay and Elands Bay area (West Coast). Given the fact that some of my colleagues had undertaken research in this area (Mr. R. Yates), others are involved in research projects along the coast further north in Namaqualand (Ms. G. Dewar), and yet other local residents have an active interest in promoting the cultural heritage of this area (Mr. L. Mathews), I decided to invite them as part of a visiting and working party. Mr. R. Yates made a complete photographic record of this trip with the use of a digital camera.

Diepkloof Shelter (DPK) needed a visit as an international team of South African and French scientists (University of Cape Town & CNRS - Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) was excavating it. The excavation permit was issued by SAHRA in 1999 before HWC was given competency to act as a Provincial Heritage Resource Agency (Permit No. 80/99/09/003/51). The permit has since expired and a report was received by SAHRA two days ago.

Steenbokfontein Cave (SBF) is a very important site not only because of its

contribution to the cultural sequence along the west coast of South Africa, but also to the cultural sequence of southern Africa. SBF is one of a handful of archaeological sites dating to between 3000 and 2000 years ago, and the only large cave in the whole of the west coast with substantial volumes of deposit dating to this millennium and also to the mid-Holocene. This later period of time is not represented in the majority of sites excavated in the Western Cape. Furthermore, not only does SBF have large volumes of deposit dating to these two periods of time, the contents of these deposits have proved to be one of the richest and diverse as a result of the excellent preservation of this material. Archaeological excavations were carried out between 1992 and 1997 under a permit issued by the National Monuments Council (Ref. No. 9/2/022/9, dated 24.09.1992) and, later on, by SAHRA (Permit No. 8/96/01/006/51, dated 08.01.96). A final report on the results of the excavations at SBF was submitted to SAHRA in 1997. Because of the quantity, quality and uniqueness of the material information (faunal and artefactual) present in SBF, this site is a good candidate for Grade II if not Grade I status. SBF needed to be visited as no archaeological excavations had taken place for the last seven years. After the last excavation season, SBF was back-filled with nursery plastic bags and covered with corrugated iron sheets and large rocks. The owner (Mr. H. Burger) of Steenbokfontein farm and family members visit the cave on a regular basis as part of recreation activities and/or monitoring rounds of adjacent cultivated fields. The state of the excavated trenches, which were properly covered by archaeologists after last activities were finished in January 1997, needed to be assessed.

Kreefbaai midden (KFB) is a large shell midden (or a string of shell mounds) and falls within the definition of the so-called "megamiddens" (Jerardino 1996). It is located in private land (Wagedrif Farm), which is owned by Mr. H. A. L. Louw who lives in the farm after the name "Wadrif" (tel: 027 412 2551). KFB is one of the largest megamiddens identified between Mussel Point (south of Elands Baai) and Doring Baai (north of Lamberts Bay). KFB is an extremely important site because of its size, faunal composition and high density of material. As a megamidden, KFB is one of a handful of archaeological sites with material dating to between 3000 and 2000 years ago. According to systematic archaeological research in this area, this millennium was a very eventful period of time in the prehistory of the west coast of South Africa (Jerardino 1996). R. Yates, D. Halkett and A. Manhire obtained a small column sample in 1985 (Yates 1989). Soon after, Dr. Ed February sampled KFB for charcoal remains, which were used for his Masters thesis. Plans to sample it again were under way in 1994 (NMC Ref. No. 9/2/072/13/5, dated 19.04.1993)), but no further sampling was undertaken. Given its singularity and relevance for the precolonial history of the west coast, KFB is a good candidate for Grade II if not Grade I site status.

Elands Bay Cave (EBC) is a large cave to which the public has easy access. It is located on the bottom slopes of Baboon Point and only about 40 meters away from the coastal road that runs parallel to the coastline between Elands Bay and Mussel Point. Prof. J. Parkington (UCT) excavated this cave in the 70's, and numerous publications and postgraduate thesis work have resulted from this research. Large surface areas of the cave walls are filled with extensive rock art imagery. Red eland torsos and decorated handprints are one of the most frequent themes in such panels. The cave was cleaned from graffiti (mainly done with charcoal) by a party of archaeologists and volunteers led by Dr. J. Deacon (then working for NMC) in the early 1990's. The floor of the cave was covered with large sheets of black and white plastic, on top of which loads of gravel was

laid to completely seal and protect the floor. An NMC framed metal notice board was placed in the southern end of the cave entrance, which gives some basic information about the relevance of this site to the visitor. The need for visiting this site responds to a report by Mr. Rob Armstrong (Archaeologist working in Bushman's Kloof Private Reserve, Clanwilliam) after he had been there in mid-January 2004. Mr. Armstrong reported to me personally that fires had been lit in the cave, probably as a result of it being used as a camping place, and that the immediate surrounding areas had also been used as latrines. Most worrying was also the observation that a cell phone number had been scratched on one of the large eland torsos. Mr. Armstrong provided me with a digital photograph of this act of vandalism (saved in CD disc). An assessment of the conditions in and around EBC seemed urgent.

Elands Bay Open is a small shelter about 30 meters north of EBC and mid-way down the slope between EBC and dirt road. Dr. Liora Horwitz and Mr. Cedric Poggenpoel (UCT) excavated EBO in the early 1980's. Observations resulting from this early work are part of the contents of Horwitz' Honors thesis (Horwitz 1979). After a long hiatus in archaeological investigations, Prof. J. Parkington and Dr. L. Horowitz resumed excavations briefly in August 1994 with the help of Ms. Lee Manning. No reports resulting from this latter fieldwork have been received by SAHRA. From Mr. Armstrong report regarding EBC and surrounding areas been negatively affected by people's activity, I suspected that EBO was also been used as a camping spot. An assessment of the conditions in and around EBO seemed also urgent.

Mike Taylor's Midden (MTM) is a large megamidden (see definition above) located immediately behind the rocky reefs of Mussel Point. This site was sampled in several occasions between 1973 and 1994 (Jerardino & Yates 1997). MTM is perhaps the second largest megamidden so far identified between Mussel Point and Doringbaai. Research has shown that there is considerable spatial variability in the deposits it contains. These observations corrected earlier impressions by archaeologists who regarded megamidens as largely "homogenous" in composition. These earlier assertions had direct and important implications regarding sampling of these and other megamidens. Adequacy of sample size not only is pivotal to excavations geared by academic questions, but also central to Contract Archaeology where such sampling gives shape to budgets. MTM is located privately owned land named "Mossel Bay Nature Reserve", which is owned by several private investors (Mossel Bay Nature Reserve CC). In 1998, the owners expressed the intention to build holiday houses on top of MTM. An AIA was conducted by Dr. Peter Nilssen (Nilssen 1998), and based on his report and earlier research in this site, SAHRA approved the development in this property subject to the strict condition that houses were to be built around the periphery of MTM. Since this decision was taken, SAHRA has not received any further expression of intention from the owners of Mossel Baii Private Nature Reserve. Mary Leslie (Archaeologist, SAHRA) asked me to find some time to visit MTM and check for any possible developments happening on and around this site.

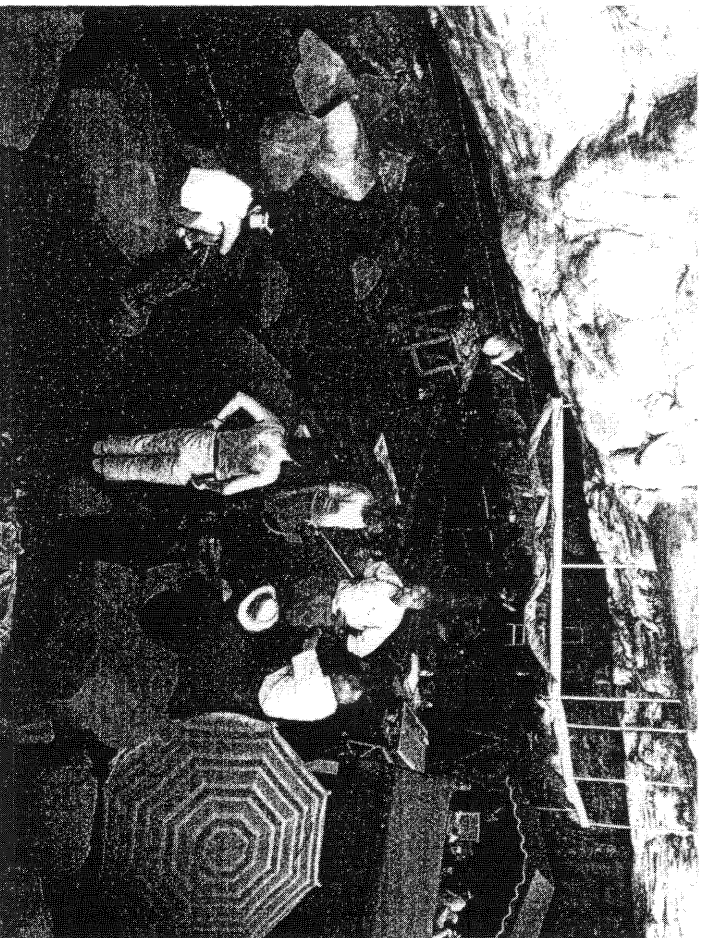
Pancho's Kitchen Midden (PKM) is a small shelter with much of the deposits spilt over a large talus. PKM is located about 1.5 km in a southeasterly direction from MTM and tucked in on the northern edge of the entrance to Waterkloof. This site is located right next to cultivated land belonging to Mr. T. Smit of Elands Baai. PKM was excavated between 1990 and 1992 under a permit issued by the NMC (Ref. No.

9/2/072/13/3, dated 10.04.1992). Further excavations at this site were planned for 1996 (SAHRA Permit No. 8/96/01/006/51, dated 08.01.1996), but no further work was done at this site until today. Observations resulting from excavations at PKM were part of a PhD thesis project, which led to the publication of two articles concerning specifically with PKM (Jerardino 1996, 1997, 1998). Despite its modest size, PKM proved to be a key component for the reconstruction of the Late-Holocene cultural sequence in the Elands Bay area. Together with SBF, PKM contributes with one of a few stone artefact assemblages from cave or shelters dating to the megamidden period. No other such types of sites so far excavated appear to have deposit dating to the megamidden period. Despite of, or because of, their size, and also the sheer quantities of marine shells in megamidens, these large sites have yielded very small amounts of cultural remains. Thus, excavations in PKM and SBF have helped filling in a significant chronological gap in the cultural sequence of the West Coast of South Africa. After the last excavation season at PKM, trenches were only partially back-filled where sections were at its weakest, which was at the interface between the calcrete and the deposits deriving from the earliest occupation of PKM (about 0.3 m in depth). The trench was then covered by the original sheets of corrugated iron fixed to a frame of wooden poles. The intention of the permit holder was to return at an undetermined date to continue fieldwork there. Nevertheless, no excavations have been undertaken since then. Some slumping of sections was observed during sporadic visits to PKM over the last 10 years. Thus, it became clear that the excavated trenches needed to be back-filled completely. Our visit to PKM in this occasion was intended to do exactly that.

Observations:

Diepkloof Shelter

We arrived to DPK about 14:30 hr on Friday 30th January. Dr. Jean Philippe Rigaud and Dr. Pierre-Jean Texier from CNRS, and Mr. Cedric Poggenpoel from the University of Cape Town welcomed us. They kindly explained us the extent of work done this year at the site. Work around the excavated trenches was stopped since mid-morning, as this was the last day of activities in this large cave. During this season, archaeologists were able to connect stratigraphically the two areas within the shelter where excavations had been taken place since 1999, namely the deep sounding excavated in the north-west area of the shelter and the more recent explorations in the southern end of this shelter. As a result of a 1 m wide trench connecting these two areas, the team has concluded that the deep sounding lies stratigraphically below the deposits encountered below the surface in the southern end of the shelter. Mr. R. Yates expressed some concern about the shape of the trench, which follows an "L" pattern, with the longest arm semi-parallel to the front of the shelter. Such an excavation makes it difficult to connect stratigraphically the deposits lying on either side of the trench when field notes are not at hand (or lost). Perhaps, the best choice would have been to excavate an "L" shaped trench, but with the one arm off-set by one square meter from the other arm, and allowing in this way easy following of stratigraphic components from one side of the trench (arm) to the other. All excavated material was plotted and properly bagged for processing at the laboratories of the University of Cape Town. Trenches were being back-filled with army bags as we left the site for Lamberts Bay.



Diepkloof Shelter: excavations in progress

Steenbokfontein Cave

We arrived to Steenbokfontein farm around 10 hr on the morning of Saturday 31st of January. After spending some time talking to Mr. Herman Burger (farmer) and Ms. Kita Burger (farmer's wife), we headed for Simon se Klip, the name of the koppie where two large caves are located. One of them, facing northwest, is Steenbokfontein Cave (SBF). The large cave facing south-east and closer to the parking area was visited first, then SBF, and on the way back to the car we visited the small shelter (with decorated hand prints on the sealing) situated east from the large cave. The state of preservation of all of these sites has remained the same since my last visit to this farm in early December 2000. Some burrowing by small animals (e.g., meercat or mongoose) was observed in SBF between the back wall and square I4. However, we didn't feel too concerned, as black nursery bags filled with sand protected much of the section. A closer attention will be given to this observation during our next visit to SBF in the near future (no dates discussed yet). SBF was excavated over several seasons between 1992 and 1997 under excavation permits issued by the National Monuments Council (Ref. Nr.9/2/022/9; Permit No. 8/96/01/006/51).



Simonsklip koppie: Steenbfontein Cave on far left

Kreethaai 'C' midden

Access to this coastal site located about 100 meters from a continuous rocky shoreline was possible after having borrowed a key to open a locked gate from Mr. H. A. L. Louw. While and after introducing ourselves and explaining our intentions for our visit to KFB, Mr. Louw told us about the cultural heritage and value of his farmhouse. His house was built by the initial inhabitants out of a frame of whalebones. He encountered some large rib bones while opening one of the external walls to make for a window. Mr. Louw also showed us an old storeroom with a door that was kept locked with a wooden lock and wooden key. Mr. R. Yates remembered that he had seen such an ingenious devise in some farm he visited in the past in the Ceaderberg (exact location was forgotten).

KFB midden appeared greatly disturbed, but no greater than how it was found when first sampled in 1985. Local road building authorities had scooped many cubic meters of shell midden material before 1985 to use it as filler and stabilizer of various tracks across sandy fields in the area. KFB appears to be a succession of shell mounds stringing along the margins of a rocky shoreline alternated with rock pools. In my opinion, this long and semi continuous rocky platforms offer a greater surface area and microhabitats for marine intertidal resources than at any other rocky shore near other megamiddens. Perhaps, this would explain the massive volumes of material accumulated by hunter-gatherers in this location between 3000 and 2000 years ago.



Kreefbaai megamidden, Lamberts Bay

Access by the public to KFB is controlled by Mr. Louw, who charges a fee of R5_00 for the key to the gate from the toll road between Wadri'soutpan and Elands Bay. According to Mr. Low, most of the visitors are family members. During our visit we saw evidence for fires having been lit on the surface of the midden, empty can and beer/spirits bottles piled among black mussel and limpet shells collected during such recent visits. Driving of cars over the surface of many of the mounds that make KFB is causing damage to this site and loss of valuable archaeological material. It was suggested by some of us that a proper picnic area to be built away from the shell mounds in order to divert car movement and its destructive consequences to KFB material. Stabilization of one of the tallest sections, which remains semi-intact, is also urgent, perhaps leaving a stable and visible section of it as part of an educational display persuading people to protect this and other similar sites.

Elands Bay Cave

We visited this site in the morning of Sunday 1st of February 2004. We inspected all areas of the cave including floors, rock walls and its paintings, and the surrounding slopes, particularly along the southern end of the cave. One fire had been lit in the

middle of the cave causing some of the plastic sheets to burn. Many of the rock art images looked scratched, most probably because people used the readily available gravel on the floor to do such damage. Evidence for people throwing gravel at the paintings was apparent from several gravel stones found on ledges below painted images. As reported by Mr. Armstrong, one of the large eland torsos had been scratched with a cell phone number. The areas around the slopes to the caves and path to the south of cave showed some evidence of loitering. Nevertheless, it didn't seem very extensive or very recent.



Elands Bay Cave: damage to rock art

Clearly, some conservation measures are urgently needed at EBC. One of these would certainly need to deal with the ongoing damage to the painted images. The site either needs to be cleaned from gravel and covered with some other material (beach or river sand), or simply covered by sand to stop people from using gravel stones to scratch the paintings. Alternatively, or in addition to this, a walk path needs to be built to allow people access for viewing of the paintings, and, at the same time, to keep them at a safe distance from these. Keeping in mind that veld fires can cause the ignition of such walkways and in turn cause extensive damage to adjacent paintings, metal would be a better choice of material for building such a structure. This would raise the costs, however, sourcing of local expert hand would keep costs reasonable according to Mr. Lachlan.

Keeping the cave clean from rubbish and loitering not only depends from periodical clean ups by municipal staff who don't seem to have done work in and around the cave for some time. As pointed out by Ms. Dewar, the whole image of the surroundings of the cave is that of decay, offering little on the way of inviting people to look after the place. The lack of a rubbish bin, proper path and handrail leading to the cave, and the presence of dilapidated buildings dating to the XXth Century (Second World War radio station filled with graffiti and derelict hostel belonging to nearby crayfish factory) in the background contributes to an image of lack of care and abandonment. The NMC metal notice board needs to be replaced by a larger one in a

format more appealing to the younger generation without needing to change the content of the information. Teenagers would be the likely perpetrators of much of the defacing of rock art, according to Mr. L. Matthews who is familiar with the local social situation in the Elands Bay and Lamberts Bay areas. In sum, the cave and the surrounding area including nearby abandoned/derelict buildings need to be upgraded and existing infrastructure upgraded.

Elands Bay Open

This small overhang consisting of a cluster of large boulders was visited immediately after EBC. No fires seem to have been lit at or around this site. Some littering of empty cans was observed. The unsatisfactory state of preservation of EBO deposits responds mainly to sections left unprotected which have collapsed since they were exposed during excavations. EBO sections need to be cleaned, stabilized and back-filled.

Mike Taylor's Midden

We left EBC around 13:00hrs, and on our way to Pancho's Kitchen Midden, we could observe MTM from the dirt road. No development was seen in the property known as Mossel Bay Nature Reserve, within which MTM is located. Only a new white sandy track road was seen approximately at the edge of MTM and running perpendicular to the dirt road where we were driving. This sandy track road was probably built to allow access to the beach.

Pancho's Kitchen Midden

We spent all of the afternoon of the 1st February at PKM before we headed back to Cape Town around 17:30hrs. We proceeded to back-fill the site by collecting the orange and clay-like sand found along the streambed situated a few meters from the site. With the help of two spades, we took turns to fill loads of sand into Mr. Matthews bakkie, which he then reversed to the open trench. Sand was then off-loaded into the excavated squares avoiding any further slumping of sections. The red-orange color of the sand contrasted markedly with the dark organic deposits that form the midden. Large boulders and small pieces of corrugated iron were left between layers of sand. Between the three bakkie-loads of sand, we attempted to compact the sand by trampling on it. After the trench was filled to the edge with sand, the original cover made of corrugated iron and wooden poles was placed again on top.

Acknowledgements:

Special thanks to Dr. Ana Bohlin and Mr. Lachlan Matthews, who had no previous history of professional archaeological work in the Elands Bay and Lamberts Bay area for their support and hard work. I am also very grateful to Mr. Royden Yates and Ms. Genevive Dewar for their support in the field, useful comments, and photographic record.

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