

AN INITIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF A PORTION OF FARM 572 “HOEK VAN DE BERG”: HERMANUS

Prepared for

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Prepared by

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Archaeology Contracts Office (ACO) was asked to examine a portion of the farm known as the “Hoek van de Berg” at Mudge Point, lying between Hawston and Vermont on the Cape south coast. Most of the land has private nature reserve status at present. The area that has been investigated excludes the immediate coastal strip and admiralty zone. The location is shown in Figure 1.

The ACO undertook to:

- i) locate archaeological sites and assess content, age and significance
- ii) plot site positions on appropriate maps
- iii) prepare a report detailing the findings of the investigation and making recommendations about ways to mitigate the impacts of development on archaeological sites

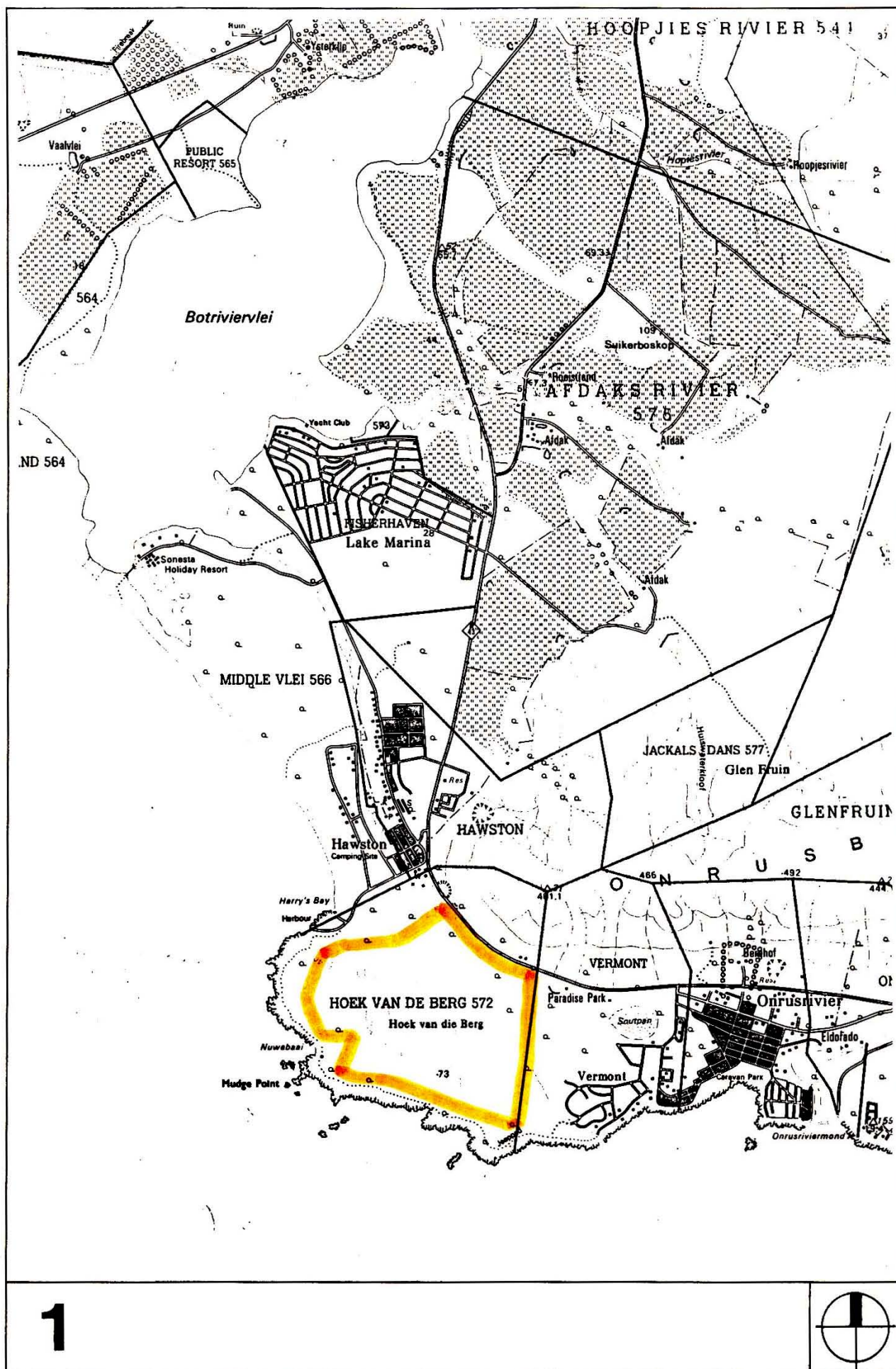
2. BACKGROUND: PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN THE SOUTHERN CAPE

The first formal research into the prehistory of the southern Cape was initiated by Professor John Goodwin in 1938 with the publication of the results of excavations at Klip Kop Cave at Hermanus (Goodwin 1938). By 1946 he had looked more widely at the area and recorded the presence of many archaeological sites. More specifically, tidal fish traps (*visvywers*), common in the Agulhas region, and associated shell middens¹ were recognised, and resulted in the publication of a paper about prehistoric fishing methods. He concluded that the same people were responsible for the presence both the fish traps and shell middens and stressed that excavation was necessary to test this hypothesis (Goodwin 1946).

It was not until the 1970's however that an intensive programme of research was instituted by archaeologists from the South African Museum that provided further insight into the prehistory of the area. Excavations at Die Kelders Cave (Schweitzer 1979) and Byneskranskop 1 (Schweitzer and Wilson 1982) have showed that occupation of the area first took place many thousands of years ago. In the case of Die Kelders, more recent excavations have suggested the presence of human remains in Middle Stone Age deposits dating back over 40 000 years (Avery and Grine, in prep). While these excavations have concentrated on caves, as these offer the most potential for finding long, vertical sequences of occupation, other work has focused on open shell middens around Pearly Beach and at Hawston (Avery 1974, 1976). More recently research has been carried out on middens at Stilbay (Hart and Parkinson 1991., Henshilwood, in prep) and at Danger Point (Halkett and Hart 1993, 1996.)

It is generally accepted by archaeologists that shortly after 2000 years ago, a new economic system was introduced into southern Africa. This involved the adoption of transhumant pastoralism (in the case of the southern Cape, this included herding of sheep and much later, cattle) over the traditional hunting and gathering lifestyle, although the latter was probably never completely discontinued. The presence of pottery, and the bones of domesticated animals are indications of the introduction of this economic system and are usually only found in the upper parts of excavated sequences or in some shell middens.

¹ Shell middens, or mounds, accumulated as a result of the exploitation of marine molluscs and other marine animals that occur in the intertidal zone. These marine foods formed a major part of the diet. The bones of terrestrial animals, particularly tortoises, are commonly found in these deposits as well.



3. METHOD

Examination of aerial photographs supplied by Dr. Raimondo showed that one of the major features of the area is a dune field extending between Vermont and Hawston. This has recently become heavily infested by rooikranz. The thickness of the bush meant that our observations were limited to open areas of the dune sea, where as a result of sand shift or underlying calcrete, the bush has not been able to take hold. This area was covered on foot while areas further inland were visited by car. We attempted to assign GPS locations to sites but found difficulty obtaining readings at certain times. Sites were assigned individual numbers and brief observations about content were recorded.

4. OBSERVATIONS

Ten archaeological sites have been located. The positions are shown in Figure 2.

4.1 HVB 1

GPS Location: 34°24.8028' S 19°07.5913' E

The site consists of a stone artefact and shell scatter dispersed across a calcrete platform at the top of the prominent ridge to the north east of *Nuwebaai*. The artefactual material appears to be MSA and consists of flakes, cores, hammerstones, hammers. Raw materials include quartz, quartzite and silcrete. Shell species include *T. sarmaticus*, *P. longicosta*, *P. granatina* and *Burnupena* sp. Some artefacts and shell were observed to be embedded into the calcrete. No bone was seen.

Importance: This site in itself does not show any unique features. It does however alert one to the presence of MSA in the area. While there is no bone on this site, calcrete and the processes which lead to its formation can give rise to good preservation of organic material.

Impact: No impact is envisaged under the current plans.

Mitigation: No immediate mitigation is suggested but in the event of landscaping or development on the ridge, either directly on or in close proximity to, then such activities need to be monitored by an archaeologist.

4.2 HVB2

GPS Location: 34°24.6379' S 19°07.8387' E

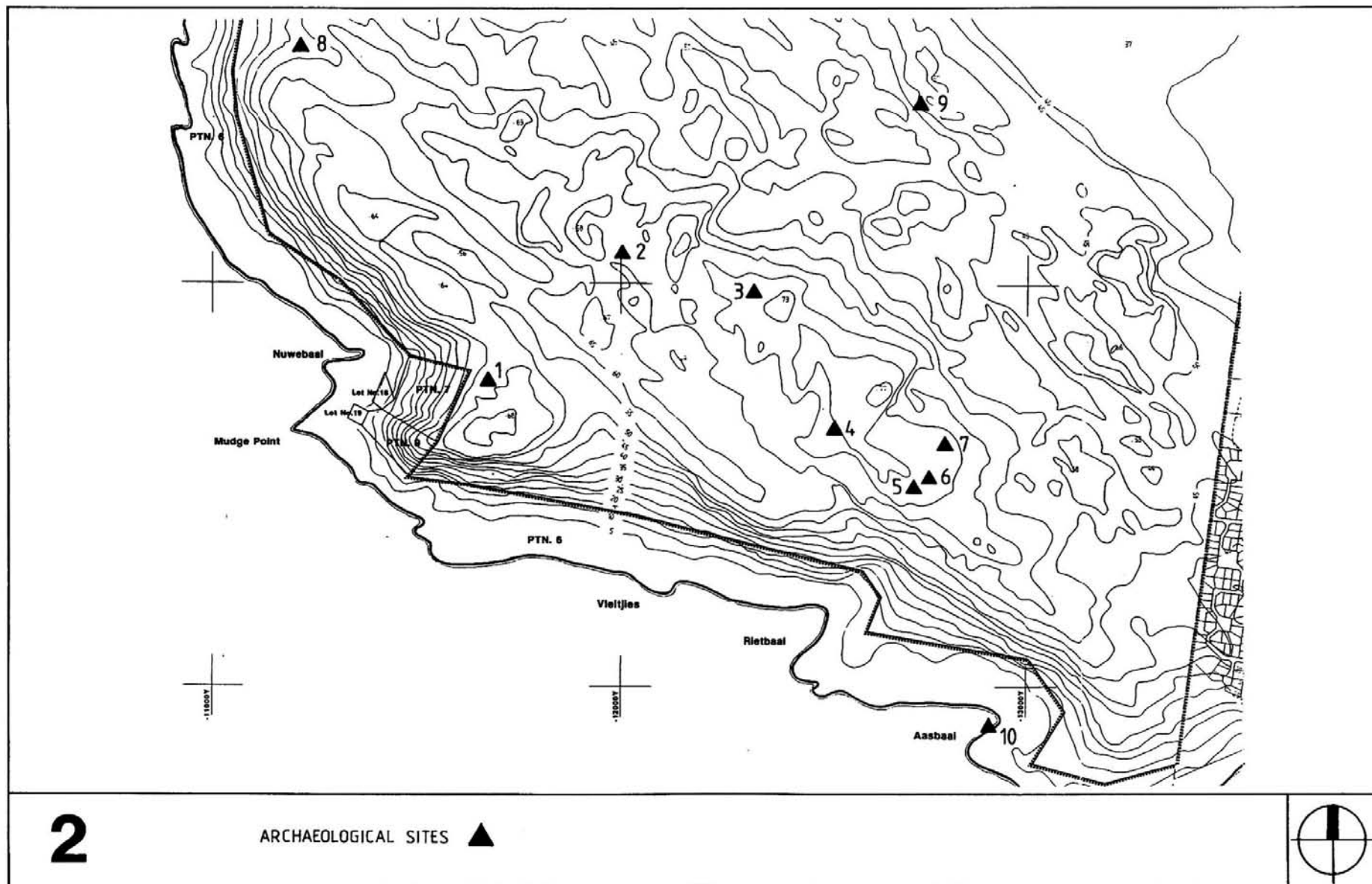
The site consists of a scatter of large "Cape Coastal" pot sherds² dispersed over a wide area in a deflation hollow. No other artefactual material or shell was associated.

Importance: The site in itself is not important. There are no associated artefacts.

Impact: No impact is envisaged.

Mitigation: The pot sherds should be collected by an archaeologist.

² Cape Coastal pottery has been described by Rudner (1968) as indigenous ceramics with varying degrees of grit temper. A variety of shapes and sizes are recognised. Decoration and external modification in the form of lugs and feet can be present.



4.3 HVB3

GPS Location: 34°24.6904' S 19°08.0406' E

The site consists of an extensive stone and shell scatter extending over a calcrete platform. The stone artefactual material suggests a mix of LSA and MSA. Artefacts consist of flakes and cores made on quartz, quartzite and silcrete. A relatively small amount of shell is present and species include *C. meridionalis* and *P. argenvillei*. It was again noticed that some artefacts were embedded in the calcretes.

Importance: As with HVB1 the content does not suggest any particular uniqueness but attests to the presence of early human occupation of the area in general.

Impact: This site may be impacted by development.

Mitigation: In the event of landscaping or development of the dune sea, either directly on or in close proximity to the site, then such activities need to be monitored by an archaeologist.

4.4 HVB 4

GPS Location: 34°24.8769' S 19°08.1814' E

The site consists of a single lens of LSA shell midden eroding out of the side of a deflated dune. Some typical informal quartzite stone artefactual material is associated. The shell lens is fairly substantial although probing around suggested that very little apart from the exposure has remained buried and only the single lens was present. A range of species including *T. sarmaticus*, *H. midae*, *Oxysteles* sp., *P. barbara*, *P. granularis*, *P. granatina* and *D. serra*. Some fish bone was observed.

Importance: There is little associated artefactual material and bone tends to be limited. As a result the site has limited importance.

Impact: Possible impact will occur as a result of development.

Mitigation: No mitigation suggested.

4.5 HVB 5 and HVB 6

GPS location: malfunction (see Figure 2 for plotted locations)

Two small shell scatters with small amounts of stone artefactual material. HVB5 shell species include *P. argenvillei* and *T. sarmaticus*. Stone consists of a quartzite core and some manuports. HVB6 Shell species include *T. sarmaticus*, *Oxysteles* sp. and *Burnupena* sp. More stone is present here as is some "cape coastal" pottery.

Importance: There is little associated artefactual material and bone tends to be limited. As a result the site has limited importance.

Impact: Possible impact will occur as a result of development.

Mitigation: No mitigation suggested.

4.6 HVB7

GPS location: malfunction (see Figure 2 for plotted locations)

The site, a small shell scatter with a few stone artefacts lies in a deflation at the southern end of a shifting dune. Shell species include *T. sarmaticus*, *H. midae* and *P. argenvillei*. Stone consists of quartzite flakes.

Importance: There is little associated artefactual material and bone tends to be limited. As a result the site has limited importance.

Impact: Possible impact will occur as a result of development.

Mitigation: No mitigation suggested.

4.7 HVB8

GPS Location: 34°24.3213' S 19°07.2480' E

Extensive scatter of MSA and LSA stone artefacts and shell over a large calcrete surface on the ridge on the north west side of the farm. Artefacts observed include flakes and cores made on quartzite, quartz and silcrete. One retouched flake was seen. Shell includes *T. sarmaticus* and *P. granatina*.

Importance: No immediate mitigation is suggested but in the event of landcaping or development on the ridge, either directly on or in close proximity to, then such activities need to be monitored by an archaeologist.

Impact: Possible impact will occur as a result of development.

Mitigation: In the event of landcaping or development of the dune sea, either directly on or in close proximity to the site, then such activities need to be monitored by an archaeologist.

4.8 HVB9

GPS Location: 34°24.4216' S 19°08.3098' E

The site lies on the side of a high dune on the north eastern side of the dune sea. The area is heavily vegetated by aliens and access is along a jeep track. The site consists of a dense shell scatter with associated stone artefacts. The shell is originating from a lens in the dune. The stone artefactual material includes flakes and cores of quartz, quartzite and silcrete. Two lower grindstones and a broken bored stone were also observed. Shell species include *Turbo sp.*, *Oxystele sp.*, *P. granatina*, *P. argenvillei* and *P. barbara*. No ceramics were observed but fragments of ostrich eggshell are present.

Importance: This is one of the few sites which has a reasonable stone artefact assemblage. A small amount of shell may still be present under the dune.

Impact: This site is likely to be negatively impacted as a result of development.

Mitigation: Stone artefactual material should be collected and shell sampled.

4.9 HVB10

No GPS location. See Figure 2 for location.

The site is a tidal fish trap located in a gully at *Aasbaai*. This is located outside of the investigation area but it is nevertheless worth recording and mention.

Importance: Fish traps are found along rocky shorelines particularly in areas where there are natural tidal gulleys and lots of loose boulders with which to construct walls. Many of these features are found around Arniston, Cape Agulhas and all around the Cape Peninsula. Recently some have been found at the mouth of the Berg River on the west coast. The relationship between fish traps and shell middens is not fully understood although it is believed that some middens have resulted from activity around such traps.

5. DISCUSSION

This initial assessment has not identified all the sites on the land as a result of both time constraints and heavy alien infestation. Nevertheless we feel that we have a fair understanding of the pattern of occupation that occurred in the past.

A wide range of time periods are represented with Middle Stone Age (MSA) material being found on most of the exposed calcretes. The stone artefacts seem to consist mainly of waste that is flakes and cores, and no classic MSA artefacts were observed. The fact that shell is associated in some cases seems to rule out the possibility of the material being older than MSA. No bone was observed on the surface sites. A small cave above Nuwebaai has been examined by Dr. G. Avery of the SA Museum and he has commented on the bone accumulations there. He is of the opinion that bones may have been collected by both brown hyena and porcupine and that some bone embedded in the calcretes could be of considerable vintage.(see appendix 1 for copy of reports). This cave should be brought to the attention of Prof. J. Parkington and Prof. R. Klein who are both working on accumulations on the west coast. While the surface scatters lack a formal tool and bone component they do indicate the presence of people in the area at this early time. Calcretes can lead to good bone preservation and it is not impossible that bone may lie below or sealed within the calcrete. Great interest in bone samples from this time period exists because of the potential for finding human fossil material therein.

Later Stone Age material (LSA) is present as we had expected. While the bulk of midden material is in the immediate vicinity of the shoreline and hence beyond the scope of this investigation, some sites have been found in the dune sea. The sites here tend to be fairly ephemeral and are generally not considered worthy of further study, although in two cases we feel that material needs to be collected. The presence of indigenous ceramics on some sites indicates that these sites post-date 2000BP.

It is likely that there are additional sites in amongst the alien vegetation. Until such time as there is a fire or the bush is cleared it will be impossible to find these.

6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEAM

Fieldwork and report

Dave Halkett
Tim Hart

7. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1

TELEPHONE 24-3330

ENQUIRIES



SOUTH AFRICAN MUSEUM

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ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED
TO THE DIRECTOR

OUR REF.

Mr J Raimondo
Department of Geography & Environmental Science
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7700

15 January 1986

Dear John and Frank

Herewith the list of species represented by the bones seen
and removed from the cave at Hoek Van Die Berg.

<u>Haliotis midae</u>	perlemoen (large <u>Balanus</u> sp. barnacle probably attached).
<u>Spheniscus demersus</u>	jackass penguin
<u>Cetacea</u>	whale
<u>Arctocephalus pusillus</u>	Cape fur seal
<u>Bathyergus suillus</u>	Dune mole rat
<u>Hystrix africaeaustralis</u>	porcupine (quills, scats, gnawing on bones and roof.
<u>Canis mesomelas</u>	black-backed jackal
<u>?Loxodonta africana</u>	elephant
<u>Equus</u> sp.	zebra, horse
<u>Raphiceros</u> sp.	steenbok, /grysbok
<u>Taurotragus oryx</u>	eland
<u>Bos taurinus</u>	domesticated cattle
<u>Ovis aries</u>	domesticated sheep

It was not possible to identify any of the fossil bones
embedded in the calcrete although at least one antelope
species is present. Both the more recent and fossil
accumulations were probably made by brown hyaenas (strand
wolf) although porcupine activity in the form of gnawing on
bones (old and more recent) and the cave roof indicates that
this species also used the cave and may have brought the odd
bones in. The origin of the perlemoen shells is perplexing.
I doubt that people brought them in but the hyaena and,
perhaps more likely, the porcupine could have done so.

The fossils in the calcrete are probably of Upper Pleistocene age (130 000-12 000 years ago) judging by other examples from the southwestern Cape. The more recent remains are probably no more than a few hundred years old. The cave is very dry and well-ventilated, however, and this would help to preserve bones longer. There is no information that I can find for the extirpation of the brown hyaena (an individual was killed near Ceres in 1954). The eland is likely to have been shot out relatively quickly because their meat and skins were sought after and the ease with which they can be hunted. Sparrman (1,1786:131) mentions this and that by 1775 they had been extirpated from the Bredasdorp and Caledon region. However, in 1777 Paterson (1790:10) saw them near Cape Hangklip (away from the more populated flat regions now used for wheat farming.

I imagine that this species did not last much longer than early farming in the Bot River/Hermanus area although the bones could be much older.

I trust that this information will be useful. We enjoyed our day and thank you for your hospitality.

With best wishes

Graham

Graham Avery
Department of Archaeology

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ENQUIRIES



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ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED
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OUR REF.

Dr F E Raimondo
12 Exeter Ave
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4 November, 1987

Dear Frank,

I have just realised that we did not send you the list of
species from the second cave. I enclose it herewith.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Graham'.

Graham Avery
Dept of Archaeology

Ref. A13.3

LIST OF SPECIES FROM HOEK VAN DIE BERG CAVE 2

<i>Haliotis midae</i>	perlemoen
<i>Spheniscus demersus</i>	jackass penguin
Diomedidae	albatross
<i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>	Cape cormorant
<i>Arctcephalus pusillus</i>	Cape fur seal
<i>Hyaena brunnea</i>	brown hyaena
<i>Canis ? mesomelas</i>	Black-backed jackal, but may be domestic dog
<i>Loxodonta africana</i>	elephant
<i>Equus</i> sp.	zebra, horse
<i>Alcelaphus buselaphus</i>	red hartebeest
<i>Connochaetes</i> sp. (fossil)	wildebeest
<i>Taurotragus oryx</i>	eland
<i>Bos taurus</i>	cattle
<i>Ovis aries</i>	sheep

This occurrence is clearly very similar in origin to the previous one and my comments in that instance (letter 15 January, 1986) would apply here.

G. Avery
4 November, 1987