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Interim Report Archaeological Excavations At Leentjiesklip 2, Langebaan

1. Background

In 1987 Parkington and Poggenpoel conducted a general Phase 1 archaeological assessment of land that was destined to be developed by Club Mykonos, Langebaan. Over 40 archaeological sites were located on the land in question. Some of these were considered to be important which resulted in a number of Phase 2 archaeological investigations taking place in the area. These included the excavation of 4 sites at Lynch Point in 1989 and a further season of excavation at Leentjiesklip 3 in 1991. Most of the material is considered to have predated the introduction of ceramics with the oldest site dating to 3800 years ago. The 1991 project at Leentjiesklip 3 was not completed as the clients went into financial difficulties and could not continue the proposed development. Much of the land has remained in a dormant state until 1997 when CML developers began developing and selling off several parcels of land in the area. One of these is located at Leentjiesklip 2 and is being developed by De Huizemark. The Archaeology Contracts Office was commissioned by this organisation to conduct rescue excavations on this portion of land. Parkington and Poggenpoel (1987) located a number of shell middens on the site which were described according to their surface characteristics. Unfortunately test excavations were not routinely conducted during phase 1 assessments at this time so very little was known about the below surface characteristics of the material. This meant that the phase 2 excavations this year had to be conducted with minimal background information to guide the excavation programme.

2. Excavations at Leentjiesklip 2

Leentjiesklip 2 lies directly north of Langebaan. It is one of 3 granite promontories on the eastern edge of Langebaan Lagoon facing directly towards Saldanha Bay. Swells entering the bay are adequate to support shellfish colonies on granites in the intertidal zone. These were a food source for prehistoric people who were attracted to the area. A large vegetated dune lies adjacent to the rocky outcrop, Parkington and Poggenpoel located archaeological material in the form of scatters of shellfish in this area. Some 4 separate archaeological sites were identified in 1987. Since that time the area has experienced severe secondary impacts from increased human usage of the area (scrambler motorcycles and off road vehicles). As a result of this only two archaeological sites could be identified on the surface.

The team, lead by John Gribble was instructed to commence the study by making as many random test excavations possible into areas where archaeological material was visible. They concentrated on the dune body (LTK1) and land inland (east) of the access road where Parkington and Poggenpoel had located material (LTK2). Test excavations in the dune body were sunk to depths of up to two meters in instances but at first failed to locate any identifiable lenses of archaeological material.

The dune body contained a minimal quantity of archaeological material throughout indicating that the surface material had been concentrated as a result of deflationary processes. Similarly LTK2 turned out to be a site with minimal concentration of material and was not worth sampling.

2.1 LTK 1

The team then commenced setting up a formal excavation on the dune body with the aim of sampling one of the densest concentrations of material visible. 100 mm spits were used and the material was sieved through 1.5 and 3 mm sieves when dry but through 3 mm sieves only when it was damp. At a depth of 1300 mm it became apparent the concentration of material in the dune body was increasing with consistent but small amounts of bone being present. It was then decided to continue the excavation laterally and downwards to sample as much of the material as possible. Lenses of shell midden were located at depths greater than two meters below surface. These consisted of several discrete interleaved shell pockets. These were probably the remains of single (or at the most very limited) occupation events associated with small hearths. As these contained good bone samples (bird, fish, tortoise, small mammals, marine mammals) the team was instructed to widen the excavations and remove as much of the material as possible. In all an area of 11m^2 was opened with lenses of midden material extending through about 6 of these. Excavations were terminated at a depth of 2.4 m below surface. As yet information concerning the details of comparative quantities of shell remains and artefactual material is not available as curation of the bulk samples is not yet complete. The deep lenses did not contain any pottery, but small quantities of ostrich eggshell beads, worked bone and stone artefacts were recovered.

2.2 LTK 3

A further test excavation in a gully running down the side of the dune onto the beach produced a small lens of shell and some fragments of pottery. This was removed because we feared that it would be destroyed by secondary impacts from people using the gully for access to the beach.

3. Conclusion

Much of the archaeological material recorded by Parkington and Poggenpoel in 1987 has been destroyed by secondary impacts resulting from human usage.

However excavations into the dune body at leentjiesklip 2 have produced a number of interesting samples of archaeological material which are estimated to be more than 2000 years old. It is probable that there are more buried lens in the dune body but these are not visible from the surface. The dune is extensive in area and rises to 5 m above the surrounding landscape. The soil texture within the dune is consistent throughout which indicates that the sands accumulated steadily - probably after the mid-Holocene high sea level 4000 years ago.

Prehistoric people camped intermittently on the dune during this time leaving several deeply buried lenses of material.

It is quite possible that there are further buried lenses of material in the mound. It will not be possible to excavate these without the assistance of heavy machinery to level the dune. Since the dune is to be one of core features of the development, this is option is not considered practical. Test excavations indicate that these are likely to be below the depth of services and house foundations of the forthcoming development.

Some 10 archaeological sites have now been excavated in the area of Club Mykonos which means that there is now potentially a substantial body of information about the Late Stone Age prehistory of the area.

4. Recommendations

Further excavations at Leentjiesklip are considered impractical due to the fact that it is unlikely that deeply buried material will be impacted. It will not be possible to excavate any more material without a large earthmoving operation to disassemble the dune body. As the dune body forms a landscape of the proposed development, this is not considered an economical option. However, should archaeological material come to light during the excavation of services, an archaeologist should commissioned to inspect the finds and sample as necessary.

It is suggested that a permit be issued to De Huizemark to destroy the remaining surface archaeological material for development purposes.

Reference:

Parkington, J.E. and Poggenpoel, C.E. 1987. Phase 1 Archaeological investigation, Club Mykonos Langebaan. Unpublished report prepared for Club Mykonos.