

**REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE WEST  
COAST NATIONAL PARK**

Prepared for

Manager: Cultural Resources, S.A. National Parks.

Attn. J. Verhoef

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Prepared by  
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## 1. Executive Summary

A scoping report for an archaeological investigation of the West Coast National Park was completed in March 1998. This identified the need to relocate and assess the significance of the archaeological sites, that have been previously reported in the literature, in the field and to survey areas where sites might be expected but where none have been recorded. With the exceptions of the Drie Susters and the Stofbergfontein sites, the known sites have been relocated. Nine new sites have been located in the current survey, thereby doubling the number of recorded sites. A traverse of the Sixteen Mile beach zone of the Park failed to produce any significant new locations. The Donkergat restricted area was not surveyed and this remains a task for the future.

## 2. Introduction

The scoping report, prepared at the request of Mr J. Verhoef, manager: cultural resources, recommended that archaeological sites in the Park recorded in the literature be located on the ground and assessed so that they could be effectively managed. Further, the scoping report noted that most of the known sites were along the lagoon margin and recommended that a field survey be undertaken of other areas where sites might be expected. This report outlines the results of the field work undertaken from 20 - 23 July 1998 aimed at relocating known sites and locating new sites. It has been successful in that most of the known sites have been found and a number of new sites have been recorded. The results provide a firmer basis for management planning.

## 3. Results

### ***Relocation of known sites***

The known archaeological sites in the Park referred to here are those that have been reported in the literature. The scoping report includes copies of the full details of the sites drawn from published literature and theses and is a source of the primary data. The positions of the sites were located on a map in the scoping report. The two occurrences at a location shown on the 1:50 000 map as the **Drie Susters** could not be relocated in spite of a search in the area. These appear to be relatively ephemeral shell scatters and are possibly of lesser significance. During the course of this survey there was not an opportunity to search for the site of **Stofbergfontein** on the lagoon edge. This site was excavated by Robertshaw in the 1970s and as a potentially significant site it needs to be relocated and assessed.

### **Posberg Reserve: Vlaeberg Site**

This location is really three separate known midden occurrences as described in the scoping report. The most prominent of these sites is the midden cut by the road that was labelled Area 2 by the excavators (Smith *et al.*, 1991). There are no standing sections but the midden materials have been reported as occurring within 10 cms of the surface and to be some 25 cm

thick. Shell is visible in the road cutting but the section is obscured by collapse and vegetation. A probable extension of this site, marked as Vlaeberg 2 on the map in this report, is discussed below and has potential for future investigation. The significance of the Vlaeberg site is that it has been dated to 500 years old and it includes pottery, stone artefacts and marine and domestic mammals apart from shell. It needs to be accorded a high conservation status and, for example, the position should be taken into account in routine road maintenance and like activities.

### **Kreeftebaai**

This is a midden occurrence on the upper slope of the high granite koppie overlooking the bay. Radiocarbon dating shows the occurrence to be about 1000 years old. It has been excavated (Smith *et al.*, 1991) and has produced pottery, bone and shell artefacts and faunal remains. The shellfish residues are scattered between the boulders of the koppie. The site is isolated and its position is some protection although it is close to the water tanks of the private settlement. It is an exposed position and susceptible to erosion. Foot traffic should be discouraged to maintain stabilising vegetation.

### ***New Sites located in this survey***

**Plankiesbaai 1 (PL1)** (GPS position: 33.07.48S, 17.58.34E).

PL1 consists of a wide spread of shell over approximately 40 m next to the beach, at the back of a rocky shore and in a dark brown soil. Imported rock material noted on the site was silcrete and quartz. Pottery fragments, as well as some ostrich eggshell were visible on the surface. Shellfish remains mainly consist of *Patella* spp., like *Patella argenvillei* and *P. cochlear*. There does not appear to be any thickness to the shell occurrence and it may be a remnant of a deflated midden. This reduces the significance of the site.

**Plankiesbaai 2 (PL2)** (GPS position: 33.07.47S, 17.58.34E).

PL2 is situated some 30 m from PL1. It appears to consist of the same materials and is similar in appearance. A silcrete scraper and other artefact remains were found. No pottery was seen. This is not conclusive evidence of an older age but such is possible.

**Plankiesbaai 3 (PL3)** (GPS position: 33.07.52S, 17.58.21E).

This site is situated at the Plankiesbaai picnic area. It is cut by a road and stretches over approximately 40 m along the road. The midden has an apparent thickness of some 15 cm. Some artefacts were found in the deposit, together with silcrete chunks and ostrich eggshell fragments. The shellfish remains consist of patellid species. Bone fragments are visible.

As this site is at a public picnic area where there is an information board on whales, it is a possible location for the construction of an information board on shell midden occurrences in the Park. A peel (cast) of this or another midden section in the Park could be mounted and annotated as a display.

**Kreeftebaai 1 (KB1)** (GPS position: 33.08.30S, 17.58.55E).

The shell midden is situated near the shore at Kreeftebaai, outside the privately owned land. It consists of a very wide scatter of mainly shell fragments. Identifiable shell were mostly *P. argenvillei* and other patellids. Although some pottery fragments were noted, no other artefacts were seen. The area is well vegetated, exposures are not good and significance is rated as low.

**Kreeftebaai 2 (KB2)** (GPS position: 33.08.31S, 17.58.59E).

The shell midden is situated on a low rise in the privately owned area at Kreeftebaai. It is relatively large, but visibility is very low because of the vegetation. Stone artefacts were observed, along with silcrete and quartz pieces. The deposit consists of shell remains of patellid and some bone fragments. Assessment of significance is difficult in this case because of lack of exposures but it may prove one of the better preserved middens on the peninsula.

**Kreeftebaai 3 (KB3)** (GPS position: 33.08.40S, 17.59.35E).

This is a very extended midden and stretch over about 150 m in a dune area. It is just outside the private section on the beach, in front of Klein Eiland. No artefacts were found here, but pottery fragments were observed. A small number of bone fragments were found. The shell is mostly patellids but mussel and periwinkles are also present. Two hearths could be identified by the fire cracked stone, but these are very weathered and eroded. The significance is reduced by this being a badly deflated site but the occurrence is very visible and is the only one where stone hearth features were visible.

**Preekstoel 1** (GPS position: 33.08.51S, 18.01.53E).

The midden is below the parking area at Preekstoel. It can be seen on the side of the boardwalk. The midden, primarily patellid species, stretches over a wide area, but shell washed down the slope makes it difficult to map the true extent. Ostrich eggshell, tortoise carapace, fragments of bird bone and larger animals. were noted in addition to pottery and artefacts in imported silcrete and quartz.

As this is the probable site where the Langebaan footprint display will be erected it is a potential position for information on the midden occurrences to be displayed. The midden occurrence would need to be defined in its extent and in its thickness if it were to be used in any display or a peel taken from it.

**Vlaeberg 2** (GPS position: 33.06.49S, 18.00.25E).

This site was found just opposite the original Vlaeberg site, in and on the granite outcrop overlooking on the road. In the outcrop there is some shell remains, but they could either have been stored there to get them out of the way, or they could have come down from the top of the outcrop. On top of the outcrop there is various shell scatters, which mainly consist of *Patella* species. This site would be ideal for further excavations.

**Vlaeberg 3** (GPS position: 33.06.49S, 18.00.19E).

Scatters of shell were observed on the right hand side of the road going up the slope of Vlaeberg. The shell is spread in a inconsistent manner over a very wide area. Locality, where protected by vegetation or rock, the shell materials form a patch. In view of the degraded state of the midden the significance is rated as low.

**4. Other observations**

The Sixteen Mile Beach was surveyed by driving a vehicle along its length and making a series of foot traverses across the fore-dunes at selected points. This long stretch of sandy beach is productive in the sand mussel, *Donax serra*, but no definite *Donax* middens could be identified. As such middens occur elsewhere along the Cape coast, there was the possibility that they would be found in the Park as well.

A traverse along existing roads and on foot was carried out on the inland side of the lagoon. Exposures are poor in general and in particular at this time of year and no sites were located. It can be noted that bone eroding from a probable ancient hyena den in the limestone has been recovered from near Langebaan in the past and such chance discoveries may be made again.

The palaeontological site in the dunefield was excluded from the survey and is not reported here. No comment is offered on historical sites with the exception of the kraal at Geelbek. During the restoration of Geelbek, the kraal near the lagoon was not given any attention. It may be one of the older structures and is in a poor condition (see photos). It has deteriorated in the last few years. The kraal and its positioning is one of the features and main elements of any farm “werf “. It would involve little expense, the cost of some lime plaster, to stabilise the structure and conserve it in its present state. The suggestion is to prevent further loss of the original fabric and not to repair or rebuild it. If this is not done as a matter of some urgency the kraal will be reduced to a pile of rubble.

## 5. Conclusion

The previously known sites detailed in the scoping report and new sites located in this survey are all shell middens. They show a unity in that the shellfish species are dominantly patellids and most, if not all are associated with pottery. The presence of pottery dates the sites to within the last 2000 years and links the sites to Khoekhoe herders. The sites that have been radiocarbon dated are all younger than 1500 years. The only site that may be older than 2000 years is PL 2. The dating of these site is relatively late in the archaeological record in that there are shell middens along the coast dating from 12 000 years and an increased number dating from 5 000 years ago. It would seem that the middens in the Park area record the later phase of coastal occupation after the introduction of herding.

None of the middens seen in this survey are as large or the layers as thick as those encountered in the comparable survey carried out in the Agulhas National Park. These two different parts of the Cape coast show the influence of the contrasting ecological settings on human settlement. The middens in each Park are a local record and they are important to understanding the diversity in lifeways.

The shell middens at the Park have been the subject of a number of research projects and there is already a body of information available on them as shown by the scoping report. This survey has identified Vlaeberg 2 and Kreeftebaai 2 as sites with research potential

## 6. Recommendations

This survey can be seen as part of a process in establishing the range of cultural resources in the Park and should be used in conjunction with the scoping report. The scope has been determined by recommendations of the scoping report. Further recommendations following from the survey are given here.

- It is recommended that the survey be extended to include Donkergat at some future time. Although Donkergat is not currently within the Park it is possible that sites of high significance occur there and these need to be conserved.
- It is recommended that to increase the educational value of the Park that consideration be given to erecting a display on shell middens. An effective means of display is the use of a peel from a suitable section.
- It is recommended that Park rangers be made aware of the nature and significance of archaeological occurrences like shell middens, so as to better manage these resources. The Vlaeberg roadside occurrence has been noted as an example where such knowledge would aid conservation.

- It is recommended that lime plaster be used to stabilise the kraal walls at Geelbek. Advice can be sought from the National Monuments Council technical division on appropriate measures.