

**PRELIMINARY REPORT
SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE RESOURCES AGENCY
PERMIT: 80/00/10/OO6/51
FARM KLEINRIVIER 178
KOUKAMMA MUNISIPALITY, EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE
FEBRUARY 2002**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF KLEINRIVIER SHELTER

The small shelter is situated on the farm Kleinrivier some 30 km north of Joubertina in the Onder-Kouga region. The site is located some 100 m above the Kleinrivier valley in the foothills of the Kouga Mountains, facing in a south-west direction.

The shelter formed along a fold in Witteberg quartzite and measures some 22 m long, 8 m deep and the roof some 10 m high. There are only a few very faded paintings visible, of which two are hand prints. Most of the floor is well protected by a layer of loose roof gravel and grit.

Although the shelter is south-west facing with a high roof, it is well-protected against the elements. The shelter is exposed to full sunshine from noon, which contributed to the organic remains being well-preserved in the surface units. Samples were submitted for dating.

Five sq. metres were excavated to bedrock. One of these had been almost completely destroyed by modern day post holes. The depth of the deposits ranged between 0.30 m to approximately 2.20 m. Bedrock near the rear wall dropped steeply from a shallow step to a depth yet to be established. A rock fall with large blocks, presumably from the roof, prevented further excavations.

Most of the top 0.20 m of the excavations consisted of shallow hollows, some lined or filled with humified grass material and disturbances filled with roof grit and blown in plant material. These features yielded no or very little archaeological material.

The next 0.50 m of the deposit consisted of a series of lenses of carbonised plant material, ash, layers of sterile roof grit, pits, post hole and disturbances. These deposits reached to between 0.50 m to 0.80 m from the surface and rested on a yellow/white sterile roof gravel and grit floor.

The rest of the some 1.20 m to bedrock composed thick layers of sterile roof gravel and grit, separated by thin black, white or red-brown ashy lenses. The stone tool assemblages (small bladelets manufactured of silcrete) from the bottom units suggest a relative age of between 16/17 000 BP.

Although the material is still being processed, it would appear that in general, relatively little archaeological material was recovered throughout the excavation (i.e. per volume of excavated deposit - in comparison with other sites in the region). This may suggest that the shelter was occupied mainly by small groups for most of the past 16/17 000 years.

The bulk of the plant remains from near the rear wall comprised mainly grass, twigs, bark and leaves. Towards the front underground food remains increased and included *Freezia Babiana* and *Moraea* spp. *Watsonia* sp. was absent from the site. Other food remains included seeds such as *Pappea capensis*, *Podocarpus*, and *Schotia* sp. pods. *Boophane disticha* was the only medicinal plant recovered. The mammal faunal remains must still be processed.

The raw materials used for the manufacturing of stone tools at the shelter, tell an interesting story. Quartz, which is one of the dominant raw materials during Wilton times at all sites in the region, is

absent from Kleinrivier. The most important raw materials were quartzite and silcrete.

Quartz was dominant in the pre-Wilton units, but dropped away completely in the post-Wilton units. This may represent a boundary signalled by raw material between two group territories because less than 3 km away in the next river valley, quartz is present in large quantities at another site in the Wilton units.

Johan Binneman
Department of Archaeology
Albany Museum
Somerset Street
Grahamstown
6139

MAP AND LOCATION OF THE EXCAVATIONS AT KLEINRIVIER SHELTER

