

9/2/08/19

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY : KLEIN SLANGKOP DEVELOPMENT,
KOMMETJIE

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DATE: MARCH 9TH, 1990

BRIEF

Our brief has been to survey the Klein Slangkop peninsula between the northern end of Bokramstrand and the lower reaches of the Wildevoel estuary, looking for archaeological sites. The objective of finding and plotting sites is to devise ways of minimising damage to the local archaeological record in the development of housing at Klein Slangkop Punt.

METHOD

We have spent three days foot-searching the area. Our walkpaths are plotted on Figure One of this report and constitute in our opinion a nearly 100% sampling of the archaeological remains visible on the surface. We have made no attempt to relate the edges of site scatters to the local trig. beacons and feel sure that archaeological materials continue below the surface beyond the areas of surface indications. We do consider that the evidence we have is adequate to generate mitigatory suggestions.

RESULTS

The sites located are mapped in Figure Two of this report. There is no doubt that we have located a very substantial amount of pre-colonial shell midden in the area to be developed, certainly more than we had anticipated. Our field notes include the following:

SITE 1

A thin and widely dispersed scatter of shell, mostly limpets but with some black mussels, in a sandy disturbed area near the entrance to the Imhoff Park caravan park. We noted one or two flaked quartzite cobbles and at least one associated seal bone, but no potsherds. This is not a very significant locality.

SITE 2

In footpaths through the sand between the sandy ridge and the near-shore hummocks along the western edge of Klein Slankop Punt, we found what might be an archaeological shell scatter. The quantities of barnacle and shingle may mean this is an ancient beach.

SITE 3

In a shallow basin at the foot of the sandy ridge near the point is an ephemeral shell scatter of limpets, which probably represents a largely buried shell midden in this sheltered spot.

SITE 4

Immediately seaward of the concrete stone monolith at the point we found, largely in mole heaps, the remains of a buried shell midden which has winkles, whelks, perlemoen, limpets and mussels. We saw no associated bone but there was at least one double-sided quartzite grindstone on this site.

SITE 5

At the headland of Klein Slankop Punt where the sandy ridge emerges at a boulder-strewn beach there are lenses of limpets and mussels stratified below 3 metres or so of vegetated dune. There is pottery and ostrich eggshell here - as well as much obviously modern refuse. This locality preserves a shell midden that is still largely intact though exposed to gradual erosion down the sandy cliffs.

SITES 6 7

Similar to site 5 but some tens of metres closer to the river mouth.

SITE 8

This site is very easily the largest scatter of shell that we found, extending some 300 metres north west along the inland side of the rocky kopje and some 200m south into the interior of the point. It clearly lies in the shelter provided by the rocky kopje and sand ridges that ring the point. Clearly limpet-dominated this shell scatter has some potsherds and occasional silcrete artefacts. It is so enormous as to represent a focus of human occupation for some hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of years. It is very hard to assess the depth of the site but, assuming a depth of some 40cms, this is one of the largest archaeological sites on the Cape Peninsula.

SITE 9

A very small patch of shell visible along the side of the road skirting the vlel.

SITES 10, 11, 12 AND 13

Scatters of shell - mostly limpets - that look like smaller versions of site 8.

In addition to these pre-colonial sites we located many patches of shell that have clearly resulted from shellfish gathering over the last two decades. As a generalisation we could say that the recent shell heaps, often marked by scatters of old clothing, abandoned foam sheets and other artefacts of metal and glass, are mussel-dominated. They are almost always directly associated with milkwood groves, the trees and branches of which have been used to make shelters. These sites are often atop the sandy ridges. By contrast, the prehistoric sites - which could be anything from 250 to 5000 years old - were always or nearly always limpet-dominated, have occasional stone, ceramic or ostrich eggshell artefacts and lie in an arc on the landward side of the sandy ridges and rocky kopje. Sites 5, 6 and 7 are exceptions to this pattern.

SIGNIFICANCE

It is an irony of the local archaeology that the prehistory of the Cape Peninsula is less well known than areas further afield. Apart from small excavations at Smitswinkel Bay, Hout Bay and Bonteberg our knowledge depends on surveys of site locations and some early and rather unsystematic excavations into caves in the Kalk Bay and Skildergat ridges. Much of this latter is unpublished and unpublishable, whilst the most extensive survey was an honours project at UCT some years ago - and has to be seen as preliminary.

As yet we cannot speak of a history of pre-colonial settlement on the Cape Peninsula because we have very few dates, very small samples of artefacts and foodwaste and no way of generalising about lifestyle or environments. Such a picture will have to be built up from excavations at sites such as those at Klein Slankop, particularly site 8 but also involving the patterning among the sites as a suite. We need to know the occupation dates or ranges of dates for the sites, we need to measure site volumes and sample site contents. Our estimate of the significance of the sites is that in the light of limited knowledge, much could be learnt from a relatively modest sampling and dating programme.

MITIGATION

- a) No earthmoving whatsoever should be allowed north of the jeep track that cuts across the point from the vlei south of the rocky kopje toward the concrete monolith. This will mean that some of the pre-colonial sites will be preserved more or less entirely.
- b) Because the establishment of plots south of this track will destroy more than half of site 8, we recommend a sampling programme to recover spatial information from this locality and to date the occupations that make up this very large site. Such a programme could begin in May 1990 and would involve 3 weeks fieldwork, followed by a month of laboratory analysis. A budget is appended (Appendix A).
- c) There is a strong chance that levelling or trenching will uncover burials which are not visible from the surface. We note that the National Monuments legislation obliges anyone finding burials or other buried sites to report them to archaeologists. We recommend that this procedure is strictly followed throughout the earthmoving phases of the Klein Slankop development.