

A FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF PATERNOSTER BAY, PATERNOSTER

Prepared for

Brandt Crous Steyn & Burger
Town and regional planners

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Report by

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INTRODUCTION

This report contains the findings of a first phase archaeological survey of an area west of the town of Paternoster (portion one of Paternoster 26) adjacent to Bekbaai. Members of the Archaeology Contracts Office at the University of Cape Town were commissioned by Brandt Steyn Crous and Berger (Town and regional planners) to undertake the survey to locate and evaluate archaeological sites that could be endangered by development. The survey has shown that 6 Late Stone Age¹ sites exist in the development area. A further site has been located very close to its border.

BACKGROUND

The Vredenberg Peninsula has been the focus of a number of research excavations by archaeologists over recent years. It is now accepted that the area with its unique granite geology and shore line formations was favoured by prehistoric people. Prior to 1800 years ago the south western Cape was inhabited by hunter/gatherers (San) people whose economy was based on the exploitation of wild animals, marine animals and indigenous plant foods. This changed with the arrival of Khoi herding groups who introduced a new economic order based on the herding of domesticated sheep and cattle. The Vredenberg Peninsula (although rich in sites of early hunter/gatherers) subsequently became a center of the prehistoric herding economy - the local shales and granites providing vital nutrients not available on the Cape Peninsula or the sandstone mountains of the Cape Fold Belt. To this day unresolved questions about the ecology and life style of early pastoralists have attracted the interest of historians, archaeologists and anthropologists alike.

The Vredenberg Peninsula is considered to be particularly rich in cultural resources that need to be conserved or rescued - especially in the light of the increasing pressure on land that is impacting the west coast at this time. The destruction or disturbance of an archaeological site represents a loss of information about the past, which unlike other environmental resources, can never be renewed. The less the disturbance of an archaeological site, the better the quality of information that it will provide.

The best means of conserving archaeological sites is to leave them alone or actively protect them. Should this option not be available, the loss will have to be mitigated through the acquisition of an excavation permit for systematic removal of the site. Such permits are issued by the National Monuments Council to persons qualified in this respect. All middens are explicitly protected by the National Monuments Act (Act No. 28 of 1969, as amended).

The Locations of the 6 sites described in the following pages are plotted on Figure 1. Further information on sites at Bekbaai west of Paternoster is contained in the report titled

¹ A broad term referring to the last 20 000 years of prehistory in South Africa.

"A first phase archaeological survey of Bekbaai, Paternoster" (Hart and Halkett 1992) prepared by this office.

PATERNOSTER BAY 1 (PNB1)

The site is on high ground close to the road. Mole activity and excavations for fence posts have brought archaeological material to the surface. The shellfish remains are highly fragmented with *Choromytilus meridionalis* being dominant. Other species seen are *Burnupena* sp., *Donax serra*, *Patella granularis*, *Patella granatina*, *Patella argenvillei*, *Patella cochlear* and *Haliotis midae*. Artefacts found are a single fragment of prehistoric pottery, a quartz flake, 5 silcrete flakes and some fragments of flaked limestone. Other finds are a single fragment of ostrich egg shell. At least a component of this site postdates 1800 years ago.

Research potential: low. The site has been damaged by human and natural agents.

Suggested mitigation is test excavation and sampling.

PATERNOSTER BAY 2 (PNB2)

Dispersed scatters of shell exposed in some sandy gullies on the slope to the south of the graveyard indicates prehistoric activity. The shell is a highly fragmented mixture of the same species seen on PNB1. Stone artefacts are also present. These consist of many fragments of limestone, 4 silcrete flakes, a silcrete retouched flake and a small silcrete single platform core. It is possible that these finds may be material that has eroded from PNB1 which lies up slope.

Research potential: low. The site has been eroded by natural agents.

A test excavation will suffice here.

PATERNOSTER BAY 3 (PNB3)

This large site has been cut through by the road that leads from the locked gate. Other surface disturbance is the dumping of modern waste on several parts of the site. The density of shell varies across the midden with some areas being particularly rich. *Choromytilus meridionalis*, *Patella granatina*, *Patella granularis*, *Patella argenvillei* make up the bulk of the food remains. Stone artefacts are scarce here with only 2 quartz flakes and fragments of limestone seen.

Research potential: Medium/low. The size and variable density of this site warrants some investigation. Undisturbed material may exist below the surface.

A limited programme of 3 or 4 test excavations (1m²) positioned in different parts of the sites will enable us to check the depth of the deposit, obtain material for a radio-carbon date and sample the midden contents.

PATERNOSTER BAY 4 (PNB4)

The raised area associated with the granite outcrop towards the south end of the beach has predictably attracted prehistoric occupation. Dense midden material has been exposed and deflated on the west side of a coastal dune north of the granites. A small lens of No earthmoving should be sanctioned in any part of the area surveyed here (portion one of Paternoster 26) until excavations to salvage the archaeological remains have been conducted. shell is still visible in a dune on the north side of the site. *Choromytilus meridionalis* (dominant), *Patella granatina*, *Patella granularis*, *Patella argenvillei*, *Patella barbara*, *Patella cochlear*, *Burnupena* sp. and *Haliotis midae* make up the shell. Other finds include several fragments of ostrich eggshell, 9 quartz flakes, 5 silcrete flakes and 2 cores, 1 quartzite flake and a small hammer stone.

Research potential: Medium. Although much of the material has been deflated (disturbed) by wind action, the small lens of undisturbed shell should be explored.

A limited excavation aimed at locating and sampling undisturbed material should suffice here.

PATERNOSTER BAY 5 (PNB5)

This is a lens of ash and shell buried in the littoral dune towards the north end of the bay. The visible portion of this site suggests that a midden of ash, *Choromytilus meridionalis* and *Patella* sp. may be preserved under the dune sand. There is a strong possibility that the site has been protected for many years from wind erosion and human disturbance.

Research potential: High. The site should produce material from a sealed context. Furthermore it could be expected that excavations here will produce both spatial and sequential evidence.

Should development take place in the area of this site it will have to be excavated, sampled, dated and documented.

PATERNOSTER BAY 6 (PNB6)

This site lies in a small sheltered deflation hollow in the vegetated dunes set back from the shore. The shell is highly fragmented and wind blasted. *Choromytilus meridionalis* is the dominant species with *Patella* sp. being present to a lesser extent. Of particular interest is the fact that this site contains large quantities of stone artefacts - many silcrete flakes, 4 cores, 2 thumbnail scrapers, 1 end scraper as well as retouched flakes. Chunks of flaked limestone are also present. Both the setting and the content of this site are characteristic of those occupied by hunter/gatherers some 3 000 years ago.

Research potential: High.

This is the only site we have seen in the searched area west of Paternoster (Bekbaai and Paternoster) that contains a describable sample of stone artefacts.

A surface scrape/collection with possible plotting of artefacts will be required if the area is to be developed.

FISHERY MIDDEN

During the course of the survey we noted the existence of an extensive archaeological site just outside of the northern boundary of the survey area. This midden is well preserved, contains undisturbed material and is of very high research potential. Although construction activities may not encroach directly onto the site, we are anxious that the presence of a nearby development will impact it in the form picnicking, recreational activities (motorcycles etc), dumping and pilfering of artefacts. We would strongly recommend that some action be taken to offset these potential sources of damage. This could involve fencing the site under the guidance of an archaeologist or negotiating an excavation programme.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The finds described in this survey include a range of sites that span the last 3 000 years. Site PNB5 is the earliest which may be attributed to hunter/gatherers who lived in a deflation hollow for a period of time long enough to result in the accumulation of a substantial quantity of stone artefacts. The other five sites described in this report probably post-date the advent of the herding economy some 1800 years ago. We propose these as being short term occupation sites that result from people based at larger inland sites on the Vredenberg peninsula (Kasteelberg) visiting the coast for limited periods to collect shellfish. Verification of this will require accumulated data in the form of radio-carbon and excavated sites.

PNB5 and PNB6 are two sites of importance have been located in the area "portion one of Paternoster 26." A further significant site ("Fishery midden") lies between portion 26 and the fishery. These sites must be excavated if they are to be threatened by development.

PNB4 requires further investigation in the form of an excavation to rescue any in situ material that may exist.

PNB1, PNB2, PNB3 are sites that we have judged to be of minimal research value. Small test excavations on each of these sites should be sufficient to confirm our observations and obtain samples of the site contents.

No earthmoving should be sanctioned in any part of the area surveyed here (portion one of Paternoster 26) until excavations to salvage the archaeological remains have been conducted.

References

Hart, T. & Halkett, D. 1992 A first phase survey of Bekbaai, Paternoster. Unpublished report submitted to Brandt Crous Steyn and Burger (Town and regional planners). Archaeology Contracts Office. University of Cape Town.

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