

## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Transport is at present upgrading, and providing an alternative route to the National Route 2, or the N2. The proposed route begins near Zinkwazi and ends near the Mtunzini Toll Plaza. The route has the potential to negatively affect archaeological sites. The Institute for Cultural Resource Management was contracted to survey this route and salvage sites ahead of the development. During the archaeological survey we recorded several sites, of which some a number had not been previously recorded.

## TERMINOLOGY

Archaeological sites may range from highly significant to insignificant. An archaeological site includes all aspects and artefacts of the site. An assemblage refers to a specific aspect or time period within the site. Sites which are defined as significant require further mitigation in the form of excavation or sampling if they are threatened by development. Significance is judged according to several factors:

- Is the site the only one of its kind so far recorded in the province?
- Does the site have any rare or unusual features?
- Is there good preservation of artefacts and is the site relatively undisturbed?
- Has the site the potential to answer any questions currently asked in the related research and/or literature?

The artefacts from archaeological sites can be dated to the following time periods:

<u>Period</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Approximate Age</u>
Early Stone Age	ESA	2 million years ago to 200 000 years ago
Middle Stone Age	MSA	200 000 years ago to 30 000 years ago
Late Stone Age	LSA	30 000 years ago to the last century
Early Iron Age	EIA	1 700 years ago to 1000 years ago
Late Iron Age	LIA	1000 years ago to AD 1829
Historical period		post-1829 AD

These nomenclatures are, however, used for convenience in dating and when referring to A specific technology and or economy. They do not reflect the subtle differences between each group, nor do they imply some form of lineal social evolution or spatial separateness on the landscape. The people living in this area were hunter-gatherers, Bantu-speaking farmers, and European colonists.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Artefacts were scattered over the ground and concentrated in certain areas. Areas with concentrations of artefacts are defined as archaeological sites. These sites were located by walking the length of the proposed freeway, including areas effected by servitudes. Aerial photographs would not have been viable, since dense cane fields would have hidden these sites. Sites locations were plotted on a 1:50 000 map and with a GPS. These sites were recorded according to the standard Natal Museum archaeology department site record form (see Appendix A for an example). Sites of archaeological significance were either sampled or excavated. The material from these sites will be curated at the Natal Museum.

### **THE ENVIRONMENT**

The sandy soil is typical of the Berea-type red sands that occur along much of the Natal coast. Geologically, the area includes Natal Table Mountain sandstone, Dwyka tillite, the Berea Red Formation and various shales. Primary vegetation in the area would have been Coast Forest and Palm Veld (Moll 1976), although it is likely to have become a mosaic of grassveld, forest and thornbush as agriculturists settled and cleared vegetation for village sites and fields. Numerous large rivers occur along this route, such as the Tukhela, Nonoti, and Matikhulu. Several small streams run towards the coast or larger rivers, ensuring a regular supply of fresh water. Most of the area covered in the survey was hilly, with few flat areas.

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES**

A total of 27 archaeological sites were recorded during the course of the survey and several of these sites were multicomponent sites. Many sites were not archaeologically significant; while four sites

were viewed as being archaeologically significant. These four were either sampled or excavated. The approximate locations of recorded sites is illustrated in fig 1 and listed in Table 1. I discuss these sites below according to their archaeological periods.

### **EARLY STONE AGE SITES**

A total of six ESA sites were recorded. All of these sites, except two, are in a secondary context, probably because of prolonged geological changes. The ESA sites comprise handaxes, cleavers, choppers, and stone flakes, mostly on quartzite, and to a lesser degree indurated shale. Stratigraphically, most of these sites were embedded in the hard clay or were in the process of eroding out of dongas. At one site very crude choppers were found in a brown-grey soil matrix, above a layer of Dwyka tillite, suggesting a relatively old date for the material.

#### **2930BA12:**

This ESA site, which also has a MSA component, was exposed when part of the topsoil had been removed by bulldozers. The site is located on a hill near the Matikulu River. The artefacts included a large scatter of stone tools, such as handaxes, choppers, and cleavers, made from quartzite river pebbles. Several of these stone tools were sampled.

#### **2931BA4:**

This site has been exposed through erosion covering 2 - 3 hectares. The soil is principally a pale grey sand wherein the stone tools occur, however, further upslope there is a main concentration of artefacts in pale grey sand surrounded by the Berea Red. The site comprises ESA stone tools such as handaxes, cleavers, and flakes, and is exceptional in its large concentration of ESA stone tools. This site has been subsequently covered by the sand and concrete utilised for the construction of the freeway.

### **MIDDLE STONE AGE SITES**

A total of six MSA assemblages, often in stratigraphic association with ESA sites, were recorded. These sites were probably in secondary context. Most of the MSA sites consisted of scatters of stone tools, often located on hilltops and in secondary contexts. These stone tool scatters were mostly cores, blades and flakes, (of which several showed signs of utilisation), and a few points (probably used for spears). The raw materials used for the manufacture of the stone tools were mostly quartzite pebbles from the river, while others were made on lydianite and indurated shale.

### **2931BA12:**

Only one MSA site was of archaeological significance, even though bulldozer activity had displaced large parts of the site. The site comprised several areas of concentrations of stone tools. Four 1m x 1m squares at various locations in this exposed area were excavated - these concentrations are viewed as representative of the site. Soil samples of some squares were taken for researchers interested in micro-debitage analysis and possible phytolith analysis for palaeoenvironmental research. Not all squares were sampled for phytoliths since they had been too disturbed to be considered a viable sample. The stone tools included disc and irregular cores, blades, a few utilised flakes, a scraper(?) and waste material.

### **LATE STONE AGE SITES**

Only one LSA site was recorded, 2931AB17, and it was insignificant. The site was mixed with MSA and ESA artefacts, and had been recently blasted by dynamite. The site consists of a sparse scatter of stone artefacts.

### **INDETERMINATE IRON AGE SITES**

Only one Iron Age site, 2931AB22, could not be categorised into a definitive time period. This site was insignificant and consisted of a few undecorated pot sherds. It probably dates to the Historical period.

### **EARLY IRON AGE SITES**

Five EIA sites were recorded during the survey, of which four were significant. Of these four sites, three were sampled and one was excavated. These sites represent the Msuluzi phase (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD), the Ndongondwane phase (9<sup>th</sup> century AD) and the Ntshekane phase (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). These EIA sites consisted mainly of the characteristic pottery decorations, while some sites also had slag, daga and upper and lower grindstones.

### **2931AB17: Zinkwazi River Site and extension site**

The extension site is an extensive scatter of slag, which may be the remains of smelting or furnacing activity dating to the Ntshekane period. Most of this site had been already destroyed by the construction process. The artefacts associated with the main site, or pit, are parts of a fragmented pot, a fragmented upper grindstone, a small 5.5cm flat manuport pebble, charcoal and a few intrusive MSA flakes. This feature is indicative of a pit (fig. 2). The pot has an opening diameter of 22cm, a shoulder diameter of 29cm, and the height between the shoulder and rim is 13cm. There was a plain burnish on the pot, and it was decorated with opposed hatching without an intervening groove - indicative of the Ntshekane period. The broken grindstone was placed above the pot, crushing it between another stone. Below the pot is a consistently dark, clayey soil, containing large lumps of charcoal and a smear of ochre along the southern wall of the pit. Further fragments of a pot and grinding stone were found 50cm and 42cm below surface, respectively, while a broken lower grindstone was found at the base of the pit. The base of the pit is not uniform and is between 55cm - 77cm below the present surface and has several deeper pockets. The pit itself is straight-sided and not very wide. A possible pit a few meters north of this pit was recorded. A soil sample from the pit was taken.

### **LATE IRON AGE**

A total of eight LIA sites were found of which several were sampled. The remains of these sites were mostly undecorated pot sherds, upper and lower grindstones, ochre and glass beads. The sherds varied in thickness and colour. Several sherds were covered in a red burnish, while others had an orange creamy, or dark brown tinge.

### **2930AB20:**

This site had a tuyere fragment covered with slag and some ore, in addition to LIA pottery. Nearby was a concentration of sandstone fragments, suggesting the possible presence of a forge. Two lower grindstones were found that were neither typical of the EIA or LIA. The artefacts associated with the site suggest it is either a smelting or forging site. This site will need full mitigation if threatened by future development.

## **HISTORICAL PHASE**

### **2931BA11, 2931BA13:**

These two sites had several glass beads scattered amongst the pot sherds and dates to the Historical period. The beads are in a range of colours varying from, white, black, navy blue, red, pink, light blue, orange, white on blue, and red on white. The size of these glass beads vary, but most have an external diameter of 3mm - 4mm. Some pottery rims and sherds were recorded in association with these beads, but no decorated sherds were observed.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Early Stone Age**

The large size of the ESA site, 2931BA4, 2-3 hectares, is not common. The many stone tools, predominance of flakes, and several river pebbles, may indicate that this site is part of an ancient quarry or stone tool “factory”. The site has potential to yield information about ESA stone tool manufacture in southern Africa. The site is currently protected from disturbance since it has been covered by sand from the freeway.

### **Middle Stone Age**

The MSA assemblage is an important site since it is probably an area of stone tool knapping. There were several concentrations of stone tools, and only the ESA material appeared to cover the whole area. There are two possible interpretations to the MSA component of the site. First, the area was used as a working area, since several river pebbles are found in the area, and most, if not all, of the stone tools are made from river pebbles. Stone tools would have been made at this site, hence the

large numbers of flakes. Second, this area may have been a living area where people made their stone tools in specific locations, and one would expect to find several cores, utilised flakes, and formally retouched tools. We believe the former option a more likely interpretation, since non-utilised flakes outnumber utilised flakes and formally retouched tools. Non-utilised flakes are by-products of stone tool knapping, whereas utilised tools may imply frequent use after stone tool knapping.

The artefacts collected from the MSA site have the potential for research in MSA technology. The soil samples collected from the test pits can be analysed for micro-debitage. By micro-debitage we refer to the small flakes that are struck from a stone tool during the course of stone tool manufacture. A high frequency of micro-debitage may support the notion that this area was used for making stone tools. The soil samples may have phytoliths (microscopic silicon remains of plants) and other microscopic remains that may yield palaeoenvironmental information.

### **Early Iron Age**

The Zinkwazi River site is the third Ntshekane site to be excavated in KwaZulu-Natal. The Ntshekane period dates to the ninth century AD. The two excavated Ntshekane sites are found near Muden (Maggs and Michael 1976) and Ndongondwane (Loubser 1993; Maggs 1984; Van Schalkwyk 1994). These three sites conform to the EIA settlement pattern of being near a river and on relatively flat, low-lying ground. The pottery and structure of the pit from this site is similar to that of the other sites. The pit contained broken grindstones, pots and a blue glass bead. The pattern of the pit infill from Zinkwazi is similar to other pits recorded in KwaZulu-Natal. Grindstones are broken, many of the pots are whole (although they are broken because of post-depositional factors), and often have ceramic vessels placed on them. These pits are not natural accumulation of deposit, but are rather intentional filling, for either domestic or symbolic purposes.

The people associated with the Ntshekane period were agriculturists, who had domestic dogs, cattle, sheep or goats and cultivated sorghum and millet. They also ate wild fauna such as antelope, bushpigs, and so forth, to supplement their diet. At other Ntshekane sites, there is evidence for smelting or forging. The slag and a tuyère fragment found nearby the Zinkwazi River Site may be in temporal association with the pit. This site has subsequently been destroyed.

## Late Iron Age

The two LIA sites, 2931BA11 and 2931BA13, may be significant. At both sites the majority of glass beads were white, followed by black glass beads, while red glass beads were few in number. The glass beads at Ngungundlovu, were predominantly white, followed by black (Van der Merwe *et al* 1989). Ngungundlovu, Shaka's capital, dates to between AD 1828 to AD 1839. Ondini, Chetswayo's capital, on the other hand, is dated to between AD 1872 - 1879. The glass beads at Ondini are predominantly red. If the frequency of glass beads and the abundance of a colour type allows for a valid relative dating method, then sites 2931BA11 and 2931BA13 may date to the period of Shaka's kingdom. The pottery rims are undecorated, and probably date to the Historical period. This is in accordance with early travellers records (Hamilton 1985) who noted the lack of pottery decoration on ceramic vessels.

According to ethnohistorical records several of Shaka's *izikhanda* (or military outposts) occurred along the coast. Two of these *izikhanda* are archaeologically known on the 2931AB 1:50 000 topographical map. These are in similar positions to the two recorded during this survey - *izikhanda* tend to be located on hills. Site 2931BA13 is in such a location, while 2931BA11 is on relatively flat land. The use of white beads for *izikhanda* is, however, not recorded in the ethnohistorical records, and thus these sites may rather relate to individual homesteads. White beads have symbolic meaning in that they are signs of the ancestral world. *Iinkosi*, and *izangoma*, are reported to use white beads to signify their contact with ancestors, in contemporary society (Frans Prins, pers. comm.). Whether this meaning can be extrapolated back 150 years is debatable; however, the prevalence of white beads is nonetheless interesting.

## CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological survey of the Thukela-Mtunzini section of the new N2 took place during the course of 1994-1995. The survey covered the area affected by the construction of this road. The Institute for Cultural Resource Management, was contracted to record and salvage archaeological sites before road construction.



A total of 27 new archaeological sites were found, and these sites covered a total of 41 separate stratigraphic assemblages. Several of these sites were significant and they were sampled and/or excavated. Many of the samples taken from various sites may provide an increased understanding of the history in KwaZulu-Natal.

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