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A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SENSITIVITY OF THE NOORDHOEK VALLEY

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INTRODUCTION

Our brief has been to assess the archaeological sensitivity of the Noordhoek Valley, and to report on the possible affects of development in this area. We were to produce a synthesis of available reports, together with limited fieldwork if necessary. Detailed site investigations were not required at this stage.

For the purpose of this report, the Noordhoek Valley includes, within its natural boundaries, Kommetjie, Ocean View, Sun Valley and Noordhoek. The objective of this report is to devise a way of minimising the potential damage to the local archaeological record in the development of a site-and-service scheme. Recommendations to this effect are included at the end of this report.

EARLIER ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

The Noordhoek Valley has long been known for its rich archaeological value. Its geographical setting, comprising coastline with occasional intertidal rock zones, drift sands (now stabilised by vegetation and development) and mountains, made it an ideal setting for occupation by the indigenous inhabitants of southern Africa, namely the San (Bushmen) and Khoi (Hottentot). Shellfish, fresh water, plantfoods and terrestrial mammals and reptiles would have been widely available to the early hunter-gatherer-fishers, and to pastoralist inhabitants. The mountains and kopjes of the valley contain numerous small caves and rockshelters, many of which show signs of early human habitation.

Figure 1 plots the known archaeological occurrences in the Noordhoek Valley. It is clear that the vast majority of sites are to be found along the coastline and the boundary separating the coastline from the main road which runs from Noordhoek to Kommetjie. This area is now covered by exotic Port Jackson and Rooikrantz, and has also been substantially altered by human induced processes, making the identification of sites extremely difficult.

The earliest recorded collections of artefacts in the Noordhoek Valley, were made by Col. W.E. Hardy in the 1920s. Later and more detailed collections were made by W.E. Jagger in the Noordhoek area, at certain sites along the lagoon. Amongst other earlier archaeological investigations in the Noordhoek Valley was one by Dr. E. E. Mossop in the Noordhoek Saltpan in 1950 and another by John Goodwin in 1929. Mossop located dense scatters of stone artefacts which we would today classify as Early Stone Age (ESA), Middle Stone Age (MSA) and Later Stone Age (LSA), i.e. at least 2 million years old. A map of the sites located by Dr. Mossop is presently housed in the Fish Hoek Library. The earlier investigation by Goodwin (*Annals of the South African Museum*, Vol. 27, 1929) located the existence of shell or kitchen middens containing pottery and stone artefacts, shell middens being the ancient refuse dumps of the indigenous San and Khoi. In addition to these discoveries, records from the South African Museum and the University of Cape Town Archaeology Department reveal that several human burials of LSA people, and some LSA sites, have also been recovered from the Noordhoek Saltpan and Noordhoek itself.

It is important to note that even by 1950 when Dr. Mossop first drew his map, the area, bare since 1939, had become overgrown by vegetation. Since the early 1970s, this area has been substantially altered by new vegetation and earthmoving activities to such an extent that the sites located by Mossop and Goodwin are no longer visible. The proliferation of dense stands of exotic Rooikrantz and Port Jackson, and shifting drift sands, have also made it difficult to locate any remaining sites.

A more detailed survey of the Noordhoek Valley was undertaken by Andrew Olivier in 1977. Separating the valley into the Kommetjie and Noordhoek Units, Olivier located a number of sites, namely shell middens and stone tool scatters of LSA and MSA origin. Olivier's survey, however, was by no means exhaustive, and undoubtedly many more sites would probably be identified. More recently, detailed surveys have been carried out by archaeologists from the University of Cape Town. These have been carried out in areas which have been set aside for possible development. They have been intensively searched and constitute a nearly 100% sampling of the archaeological remains visible on the surface. In 1989 Parkington and Poggenpoel surveyed the Noordhoek Saltpan, Parkington and Kaplan searched Klein Slangkop in Kommetjie, and Kaplan surveyed part of Chaplin Estate in Noordhoek, where a proposed kaolin mine is to be built. The results of these surveys were given in unpublished reports held by the Archaeology Contracts Office.

The Saltpan survey found very little archaeological material, except for one or two very thin scatters of shell fragments, and some stone flakes and grindstone fragments. All traces of the sites discovered by Mossop and Goodwin have been lost. The Klein Slangkop survey identified thirteen shell middens along the dune cordon, including a large complex of middens further inland. Apart from one or two limpet shells, no archaeological occurrences were found in the Chaplin Estate survey.

FIELD RESEARCH

It was not part of our brief to undertake a detailed survey of the Noordhoek Valley, and this would take many weeks of intensive sampling. Our method has thus been to identify sample areas which, to our knowledge, have not been surveyed before and foot-search those areas in order to comment on their archaeological sensitivity. This has allowed us to grade the Noordhoek Valley in order of most archaeologically and least archaeologically sensitive. This is by no means a comprehensive sampling strategy, but it at least allows us to make reasonably informed impressions.

Two sample areas above the main Kommetjie and Noordhoek Roads were identified (Figure 2). These were then foot-searched in order to identify the visible archaeological occurrences. The sample areas include a stretch of land between Ocean View and Battery Road, near Kommetjie, and Crofters Valley, in Noordhoek. In the first sample area a thin scatter of stone artefacts of LSA and possibly MSA origin were discovered among exposed patches of drift sand. The artefacts include a silcrete scraper and quartz, silcrete and quartzite flakes, some pottery, quartz cores, and an assortment of chunks. Crofters Valley in Noordhoek is presently zoned for private housing. The entire area is one levelled rubbish dump, except for a stretch of land toward Silvermine Road, which is overgrown with Port Jackson. Needless to say the area has been substantially altered by human induced processes. A silcrete core and rose quartz flake, and a few quartz flakes and some scattered limpet and mussel shell is all that was recovered. Artefacts of more recent historical value, however, including porcelain and glass, litter the area.

CONCLUSIONS

We have graded the Noordhoek Valley into two zones: (1) least archaeologically sensitive and (2) most archaeologically sensitive. In accordance with the parameters of this report, the least archaeologically sensitive zone is that area which lies above the Noordhoek and Kommetjie Roads. Few sites were found in the areas sampled by us, except for the light scatter of stone artefacts in the first sample area. The more archaeologically sensitive zone is clearly that area which lies below the two roads, principally the area between the road and the dune cordon along the beach. The vast majority of sites are located here (Figure 1).

RECOMMENDATIONS

As far as the archaeology of the Noordhoek Valley is concerned we recommend that the proposed site-and-service development is not located in the sensitive zone between the Noordhoek and Kommetjie roads and the sea. However, we must emphasise that this does not mean that the area above these roads is necessarily clear of important archaeological sites. Consequently, we recommend that a further, comprehensive archaeological survey be carried out over any site identified for development in the Noordhoek Valley.

Figure 2. Search areas

