HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR PRPOSED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT WINTERHOEK PARK, UITENHAGE

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18 October 2006

Introduction

The National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 makes provision for a compulsory HIA when an area exceeding 5000 m² is being developed (National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999: page 55). This is to determine if the area contains heritage sites and to take the necessary steps to ensure that they are not damaged or destroyed during development. Dr Webley of the Albany Museum was approached by SRK Consulting with a request to undertake an HIA of Winterhoek Park in Uitenhage, Eastern Cape (Fig. 1). The vegetation of the area is described as Sundays Valley Thicket (Fig. 2) However, an examination of the development map (Fig. 1) shows that the vegetation to the north of the fence (grassier) differs from that to the south of the fence which contains more succulent elements.

Terms of Reference

Dr Webley was requested to undertake a phase 1 heritage impact assessment of the proposed 110 ha development at Winterhoek Park after Mr Tony Dold, of the Schonland Herbarium, reported that he had found stone tools during his vegetation survey (Fig.1). Since the preliminary environmental investigation reported the discovery of stone artifacts further research was necessary to determine the nature and extent of the stone artifact distribution.

Archaeology of the Sundays River Area

Ruddock, a geologist at Rhodes University, reported on Early and Middle Stone Age artifacts (see Terminology below) from the river terraces of the Coega and Sundays River Valleys in the 1940s and 1950s. The records of the Albany Museum also include collections of ESA and MSA material made around the old road from Addo to Port Elizabeth in 1936. Various sites were also recorded in 2002 (Cocks et al.) during a cultural mapping exercise in the Greater Addo Elephant National Park. It appears that ESA and MSA stone artifacts are found between the river cobbles and many are weathered, suggesting fluvial transportation. Also, during a number of surveys for the Addo National Park in 2003, prior to the construction of new rest camps and access roads, further scatters of MSA stone tools were found on Addo Heights. These appear to be fresh and are found on top of erosion gulleys. All the indications are that ESA and MSA stone tools are scattered across a wide area in the Addo, Coega and Uitenhage areas.

Field Report

A survey was undertaken on the 16 October 2006. The site of the initial discovery of stone scatters (Fig. 3) was visited first.

Locality 1: There is a scatter of quartzite flakes and flaked cobbles in a pathway leading up a slight incline in a northerly direction. It appears that these stone artifacts are located in red gravel soil, immediately below the brown humic topsoil. They appear to be very fresh and there are little signs of weathering. A single, broken quartzite hammer stone is associated with these remains. There were no diagnostic elements on the tools to indicate to which stone tool technology they belong.

GPS
S 33º44´46,9”
E 25º26´07,9”

Fig. 3 & 4: Locality of the first discovery of stone tools at Winterhoek Park on the left and a broken hammer stone on the right.

Locality 2: Further along the same path, another collection of quartzite flakes was recorded. Although there were no diagnostic elements present on the tools, which appeared to be freshly flaked, there was a single small silcrete flake present which suggested that it had been introduced to the area from elsewhere.

GPS
S 33º44´45,8”
E 25º26´08,6”

Fig. 5: A silcrete flake.

Locality 3: No artefacts were found on the top of the slight rise which is occurs in the centre of the area scheduled for development. The paths at the top of this slight hill are covered in grass. Following a path between the vegetation in a westerly direction, a further scatter of flaked stones was uncovered in the red gravels.

GPS
S 33º44´38,2”
E 25º25´56,7”

Locality 4: Further flakes were found in a gravel pit but here too, the flakes had no diagnostic elements.

GPS
S 33º44´39,8”
E 25º26´03,0”

Locality 5: One walking through the gate which separates the succulent vegetation area to the south from the more grassy vegetation to the north, a further large scatter of stone tools was found in the footpath.

GPS
S 33º44´31,1”
E 25º26´14,0”

Fig. 6: Stone flakes and cobbles in the footpath.

Locality 6: A very large collection of material was recorded from the footpath.

GPS
S 33º44´29,7”
E 25º26´14,8”

Locality 7: Further scatters of stone tools were found on the path which followed the fence in an easterly direction. In particular, this collection of stone tools is of interest as it contains a small flake with a typical Middle Stone Aged prepared platform. This is the only site which provided any indication of the age of the material.

GPS
S 33º44´34,3”
E 25º26´13,1”

Fig. 7: A typical Middles Stone Age flake.

Locality 8: This collection of stone tools in the footpath next to the fence included a retouched silcrete flake (see Locality 2).

GPS
S 33º44´36,1”
E 25º26´16,9”

Locality 9: Stone tools were found in a heap of soil at the side of the footpath.

GPS
S 33º44´43,9”
E 25º26´19,1”

Locality 10: Two further flaked cobbles were found in the footpath.

GPS
S 33º44´45,9”
E 25º26´15,0”

Locality 11: A number of collections of flaked stone tools were found in the footpath running along the lower fence (i.e. close to the Hex River Road).

GPS
S 33º44´50,9”
E 25º26´09,4”

Locality 12: Another dense scatter of stone tools were found in the footpath along the same fence as Locality 11 above.

GPS
S 33º44´50,5”
E 25º26´06,0”

Fig. 8: Stone flakes in the footpath running along the lower fence, close to the Hex River Road.

Discussions

Stone tools are ubiquitous across the area, although they are mainly found in the footpaths because this is where they have been exposed by erosion. However, wherever the top layer of brown humic soil is removed, the red underlying gravels appears to contain quartzite flakes. They appear remarkably fresh. Initially, I was of the opinion that they may be the result of the action of people or animals ("cattle culture"), but there are at least two silcrete flakes which have clearly been introduced, while the hammer stone and the MSA flake cannot have been naturally produced. It is interesting to observe, that where these flakes have been exposed, they are often associated with quartzite cobbles and pebbles as well as fragments of sandstone or calcrete.

It is important to note that the stone tools are not weathered, and therefore their distribution across the landscape cannot be linked to previous river action in the Sundays River and Coega areas. It is difficult to explain this widespread distribution of flaked material.

In terms of the built environment, there is no evidence for farm dwellings or other structures such as sheds or kraals on this portion of the property. There is also no evidence for historical graves, cemeteries or burial cairns. No other archaeological remains such as Khoisan pottery or European ceramic remains were observed.

Mitigation Measures

SAHRA is obliged, in terms of Section 7 of the National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999) to establish a grading system for heritage sites. Grade 1 sites are considered to of national significance; Grade 2 sites of provincial significance while Grade 3 sites are heritage resources which are considered to be worthy of conservation on a local or municipal level. None of the sites discovered during this survey can be considered to be of Grade 1 or Grade 2 significance. They are not

unique nor do they constitute remains which will provide important information on the way of life of the prehistoric inhabitants of this area.

Very little is known of the Early or Middle Stone Age period in this part of the Eastern Cape. They have not formed the focus of any studies or research. Clearly, a research project which focuses on the geology and the archaeology of the Sunday's River Valley could increase our knowledge considerably. However, since the distribution of the stone artefacts is very widespread, the development of 110 ha at Winterhoek Park is unlikely to significant effect possible future research projects in this area.

However, the development of the area for housing will result in considerable earth-moving and landscaping of the terrain. If there are tools flakes which are in primary context and associated with bone remains, they will be destroyed. It is important to remember that archaeological and historical sites are non-renewable. Once destroyed, they cannot be returned to their original state. For this reason, every effort must be made to monitor the site during earth-moving activities and to report any significant finds. Mitigation may be necessary during the earth-moving phase of the development of the site if significant discoveries are made.

Conclusions

All archaeological sites are protected by the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999) and it is an offense to destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or disturb archaeological sites without a permit issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). The Act is particularly clear about the importance of burial grounds and graves and these should be treated with great sensitivity and strictly according to the regulations.

No significant archaeological remains were found during the survey. The widespread distribution of Middle Stone Age material is of interest, but there does not seem to be any associated material and there is no evidence that the stone flakes are in primary context. Mitigation is unlikely to increase our knowledge of the MSA in this area. However, it is possible that important concentrations of stone and bone material may be buried under the soil and grass surface. For this reason every care should be taken during the bulldozing of the area. Archaeological sites, including bone or human remains, should be reported to SAHRA and to the archaeologists at the Albany Museum, immediately.

I would recommend that development of the area can take place but that every care should be taken to avoid destroying potential archaeological sites which may be located beneath the soil surface. When leveling of the soil takes place, contractors should look for the following features:

1. Dense accumulations of freshwater mussel shells – evidence of a prehistoric shell middens.
2. Concentrations of stone tools in association with preserved bone.
3. Concentrations of fossilized bone.
4. Concentrations of blue and white china, pieces of iron, coins, etc.
5. Human remains including burials.

If any of the above are discovered, development should stop immediately and an archaeologist should be called in.

REFERENCES

Cocks, M, de Klerk, WJ, Way-Jones, MF & Webley, L. 2002. Greater Addo Elephant National Park Cultural Mapping Pilot Project. SANParks unpublished report.

Webley, L. 2003. Addo Elephant National Park: Construction of rest camp area in the southern section of the Park – Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment.

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TERMINOLOGY

The prehistory of South Africa is generally divided into 3 periods by archaeologists; namely the Early Stone Age, the Middle Stone Age and the Later Stone Age.

Early Stone Age: the earliest ESA assemblages date from 1,7 million years ago. By around 1,5 million years ago, distinctive stone tools called handaxes appear and this seems to coincide with the appearance of *Home erectus* peoples. These tools appear to have been made to the same pattern until around 200 000 years ago.

Middle Stone Age: Stone tools from this period are often made on fine-grained stone and they reflect a more controlled use of the flaking properties. These tools date between 200 000 and 40 000 years ago. In some circumstances, fossil bones and marine shells have been found in association.

Later Stone Age: LSA peoples were ancestral to the San (Bushmen) and lived in South Africa between 40 000 years ago and colonial times. During most of the Holocene (last 10 000 years) southern Africa was inhabited by small bands of mobile hunter-gatherer groups. Where these groups lived at the shore they generally exploited coastal resources such as marine shell and marine mammals. Sheep and pottery first occur in archaeological sites around 2000 years ago and they point to the arrival of a new economy in South Africa, that of pastoralism. These groups were probably the ancestors of the colonial Khoekhoen. Later Stone Age tools are typically made on fine-grained cherts and chalcedonies, although quartz tools are also very common. They are generally microlithic in size and conform to certain designs, such as scraper, segments and adzes. They are easy to recognize and date.

Burials: Human remains in the Bushman's and Sunday's River area are frequently found under stone cairns, along the river margins. They are generally buried in a flexed position, and may be associated with ostrich eggshell beads and pottery fragments.