

# **AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF PORTION 2 OF THE FARM 1024, SMITSWINKEL BAY (“PARTRIDGE POINT”)**

**Magisterial district: Simons Town**

Assessment conducted in terms of  
Section 38 (8) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)

Prepared for  
**Chand Environmental Consultants**

On behalf of  
**Partridge Point (Pty) Ltd**

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Report by

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# 1.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Location

The Archaeology Contracts Office (ACO) was requested to carry out an archaeological impact assessment (AIA) of parts of Portion 2 of the farm Smitswinkel Bay, No 1024, situated on the eastern side of the Cape Peninsula in an area also known as Partridge Point. To the south, is the Remainder of Farm 1024 on which stands the small cluster of coastal holiday cottages which has come to be known as Smitswinkelbaai. To the north is Farm 1023 while the entire north western boundary is with the Table Mountain National Park (TMNP).

The proponent intends to erect a small number of structures within the property. An existing building behind the point was erected sometime after 1990 following an archaeological assessment by the then fledgling ACO (Parkington et al 1990) attached as Appendix 1. The location of the property is shown in Figure 1. A separate study of the cultural landscape is being compiled by Melanie Attwell.



**Figure 1:** The location of Portion 2 of Farm 1024 (red dotted polygon). Approximate proposed development footprint (blue polygon). Map excerpt from 3418AB\_AD Cape Peninsula<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Supplied by Chief Directorate: Surveys and Mapping

## 2.2 Terms of reference

- Describe and comparatively assess the significance of the potential impact that the development of the proposed alternatives may have upon the archaeological aspects of the site.
- Provide an assessment of each identified potentially significant impact including:
  - cumulative impacts;
  - the nature of the impact;
  - the extent and duration of the impact;
  - the probability of the impact occurring;
  - the degree to which the impact can be reversed; and
  - the degree to which the impact may cause irreplaceable loss of resources;
  - the degree to which the impact can be mitigated;
- Use the methodology provided (per impact) and use the format of the significance table (both attached) (please contact us to obtain an understanding of the methodology if necessary);
- Provide a description of any assumptions, uncertainties and gaps in knowledge;
- Assess the proposal in terms of potential positive and negative impacts, using the methodology provided (per impact) and using the same format;
- Provide mitigation measures where possible per impact, for the design, construction and operation phases;
- Relevant drawings/diagrams/maps would need to be provided to support findings;
- Analyse specialist team findings to ascertain potential areas of conflict (if any), with a possible workshop if necessary;
- Present draft findings to Client Group, I&APs, other specialists and relevant authorities, if required, and finalise your report taking comments into account;
- Should ANY "red flag" issues arise during this phase, please notify us in writing immediately;
- Ensure that your report is in keeping with the requirements of Heritage Western Cape, SAHRA, and the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning Guidelines for Specialist Input Series;

## 2.3 The development proposal

The proponent intends a low density development for which there are two development alternatives. These are respectively known as alternatives 2 and 3.

Alternative 2 consists of a main house cluster and staff residence on the site of the existing cottage. Provision is made for a managers residence and staff quarters towards the southern side of the property. Provision is also made for a gate house close to the access road from the Main Road (M4). All the dwellings are to be constructed on the mountain slope above the 12 m contour (Figure 2).

Alternative 3 (which is the generally favoured alternative) sees the construction of 4 dwelling houses on the property, one of which involves demolition and rebuilding of the existing cottage on Partridge Point (Figure 3). The other 3 cottages are to be built as a group on the southern end of the property on the mountain slope. Provision is also made for a gate house close to the access road from the Main Road (M4).



### **3. METHODS**

The site was visited and data collected on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2009 by Mr D. Halkett and Mr T, Hart and the report was revised in June 2013. As the site is largely infested with alien vegetation, only naturally accessible areas (roads, gulleys, shoreline) and those portions where bush clearing had occurred, could be inspected. Since the development is still in early planning stage, no precise details with regards to number, type and location of the proposed development could be supplied although some possible sites for development have been suggested. The inspection can therefore be seen to a degree as a pre-planning exercise to determine if and where impacts are likely to occur on the site with respect to archaeology. Track paths and sites were determined with a hand held GPS receiver using the WGS84 datum.

### **4. LIMITATIONS**

Visibility of the ground surface was generally poor. Parts of the site could not be inspected due to the thickness of bush. Areas that have been subject to bush clearing could be accessed and although the surface remained obscured by leaf litter, some visibility was at least possible. Visibility along the path immediately adjacent to the shoreline was reasonable and despite the grass covering, the area in front of the house could be easily accessed and interpreted.

### **5. OBSERVATIONS**

Having referred to the earlier study by the ACO, the area was assessed on foot and archaeological sites were identified within the footprint of the proposed development. We noted that the steep slopes that characterise most of the site would not have provided optimal habitation for pre-colonial foragers who are more likely to have identified the rocky outcrops, boulders and shelters along the shoreline as foci for shellfish processing and/or occupation.

A number of small level “platforms” are found in the proposed development footprint and appear to have been places where caravans once stood. We believe that some of these coincide with possible development sites (yellow “stars”). As such disturbance has already occurred but no signs of archaeological material was noted. An old(?) track is clearly present cut into the hillside.

Three areas within or close to the proposed footprint contain archaeological remains in the form of shell middens or scatters. The main area of past human use appears to have been the rocky outcrop and spit of land at Partridge Point where a low shelter below large granite boulder must have offered some respite from the elements. The recommendations of the previous archaeological report suggested that sterile sand should be used to cap the archaeological deposits in the low shelter to prevent further damage, but there is no evidence that this was ever carried out. Similarly, it was suggested that test excavations should be carried out on the flat ground adjacent to the shelter, or that the area should be covered with soil and grassed. There is no evidence that either of those suggestions was followed, but the house was indeed constructed off of the main midden deposit.

A number of small embayments between granite protrusions characterise the shoreline along this part of the peninsula forming ideal shellfish foraging locations. Traces of midden are noted opposite other rocky points to the south of Partridge Point. Although we suspect that there may be boulder focus for PP2, the thick vegetation prevents us from confirming the observation. Traces of shell on the path at PP3 probably represent outlying material from a site that may lie upslope but hidden by the dense vegetation.

The locations of the sites are shown on Figure 2 while sites are described in more detail in Table 1. A series of photographs in Section 5 show aspects of the site in general and archaeological sites in particular.

## **6. IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS**

The development proposal as expressed in Alternative 2 focusses on Partridge Point itself. This is where the biggest archaeological site in the study area is situated. Although archaeological material is mostly concentrated among the granite boulders, there is a possibility that it extends under the densely grassed area on the seaward side of the cottage. If this were the case, increased development on the point could have a negative impact either directly through impact of construction activities, or indirectly as a result of increased amounts of people being focused in that area,

The development proposal as expressed in preferred alternative 3 will not have an impact on archaeological material. All the recorded sites are situated just back from the shoreline out harm's way.

### **6.1 Assessment of impacts**

#### **6.1.1 The nature of impacts to archaeology**

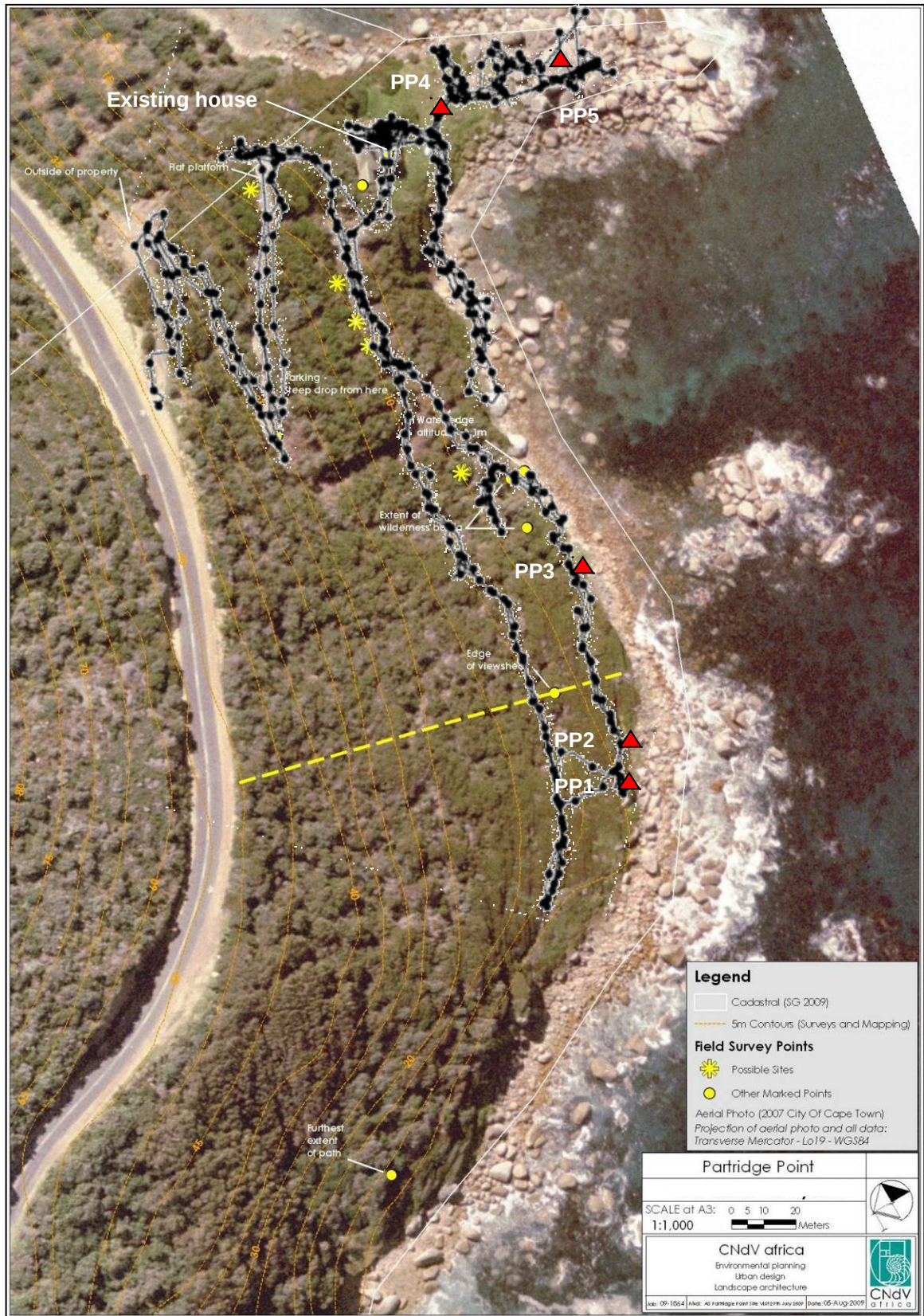
Shell middens are most vulnerable to physical disturbance. This can be trampling underfoot, gardening/landscaping or disturbance caused by construction activities that affect the soil surface or penetrate below ground. Disturbance results in the destruction of natural layering and context. Archaeological sites are not unlike crime scenes in that disturbance of the site affects the information it contains and its ability to ever be interpreted or dated by scientific means. The duration of impacts of this kind is always permanent as once a site is destroyed it can never be reconstructed. The Cape Peninsula has already lost more than 50% of its middens due to urban development; furthermore many of those that have survived are disturbed to varying degrees. Hence the archaeology of the Peninsula is deserving of a high degree of vigilance in terms of on-going protection in that the effects of cumulative impacts are exacerbated by the high rates of loss within this geographically limited area.



**Table 1** Summary of impacts to archaeology

<b>Potential impact on geographical and physical aspects:</b>	Alternative 2	Alternative 3: Preferred	No-Go Alternative
Nature of impact:			
Extent and duration of impact:	Site Specific, permanent	Site specific	n/a
Probability of occurrence:	Possible	Un-likely	
Degree to which the impact can be reversed:	Non-reversible		
Degree to which the impact may cause irreplaceable loss of resources:	Medium	Low	
Cumulative impact prior to mitigation:	Medium (-)	Very low	
Significance rating of impact prior to mitigation (Low, Medium, Medium-High, High, or Very-High)	Medium (-)	Very low	
Degree to which the impact can be mitigated:	High	High	
Proposed mitigation:	Select alternative 3 to avoid impacts, do not do unnecessary landscaping-especially along shoreline, used existing roads and footpaths where possible, actively discourage any activities on shell middens.		
Cumulative impact post mitigation:	Low (-)	Neutral	
Significance rating of impact after mitigation (Low, Medium, Medium-High, High, or Very-High)	Low (-)	Neutral	





**Figure 4:** Archaeological sites (red triangles) shown on an aerial photograph of the site<sup>2</sup>. Walkpaths shown in black.

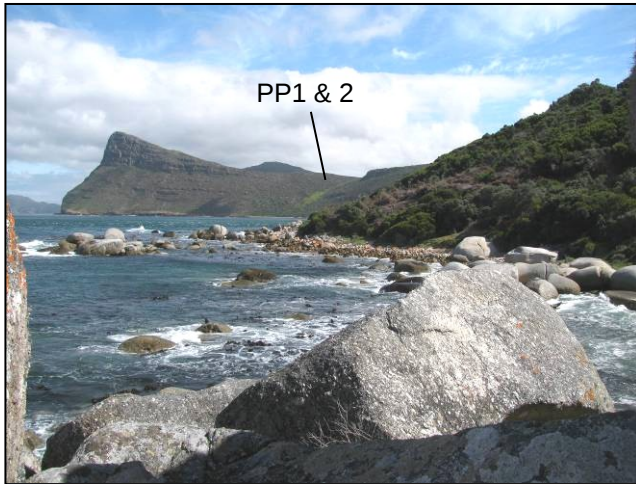
<sup>2</sup> Graphic prepared by CNdV africa supplied by the client

**Table 2:** Description of identified archaeological sites

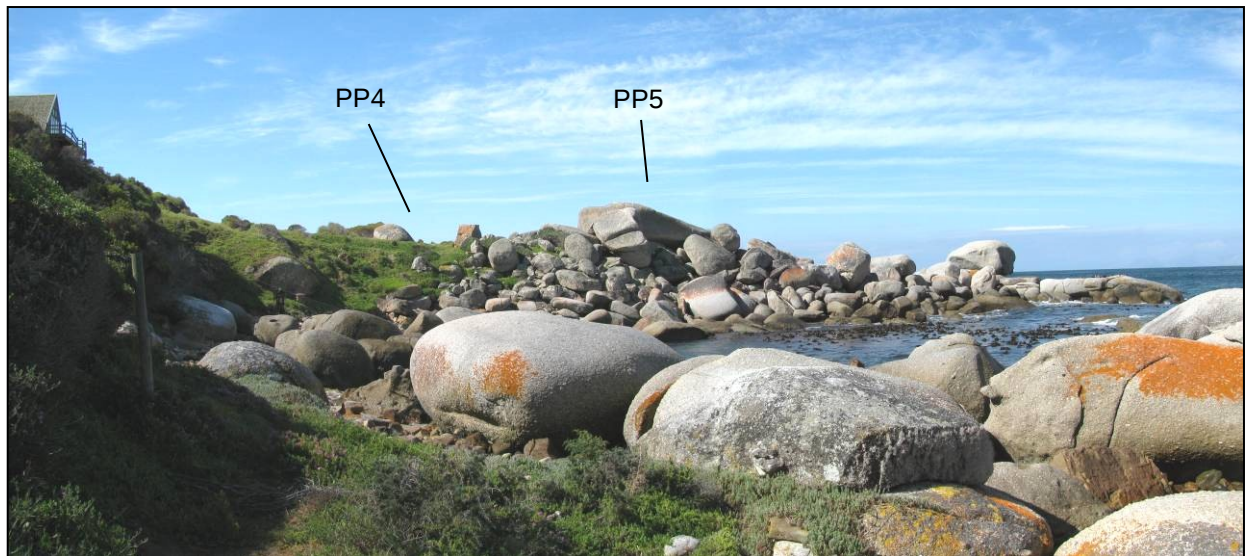
Site	Lat/Lon°	Type	Description
PP1	S34.25637 E18.47598	shell midden/scatter	Shell predominantly Argenvillei, Tabularis, Turbo, Granatina. Stone chunks quartzite. Possibly a small overhang below boulder in impenetrable bush behind
PP2	S34.25625 E18.47605	shell midden	Dense shell predominantly Argenvillei, Tabularis, Turbo, Haliotis. Stone chunks quartzite. Possible in situ shell lens in path cutting.
PP3	S34.25580 E18.47619	shell scatter	Occasional shell fragments amongst vegetation on the path consisting of Tabularis, Haliotis, Argenvillei, Granatina, Whelk. Stone mostly natural but may be some artefactual quartzite. Although not visible, the core of a midden may be hidden by the vegetation.
PP4	S34.25437 E18.47662	shell midden	Large grassy sward in front of existing house on the Partridge Point promontory. Thick midden seen in disturbed areas. Shell predominantly Argenvillei, Turbo, Granatina, Cochlear, Whelk. Artefactual quartzite. Close to rockshelter below boulder. Also seen and recorded in 1990.
PP5	S34.25450 E18.47690	rockshelter and midden	Rockshelter below large granite boulder containing some midden deposit. Deposit disturbed by natural and human elements. Some in situ likely in places. Shell predominantly Argenvillei, Turbo, Granatina, Cochlear, Whelk. Artefactual quartzite. Also seen and recorded in 1990.
PP6	S34.25651 E18.47580	shell midden	Mapped in 1990 before GPS and apparently outside the study area, this position appears in the 1990 report. It is likely that however that PP1 and PP2 are probably manifestations of this midden. PP2 is in fact likely to be the midden in question.

## 7. PHOTOGRAPHS





(l) Looking towards Judas Peak from Partridge Point. The steep heavily vegetated slopes and boulder strewn shoreline are prominent features of the site. Approximate locations of archaeological sites are shown.  
(r) one of the coastal paths showing dense vegetation on either side.



Looking north to Partridge Point. The positions of archaeological sites indicated.





(l) The eastern side of the boulder at PP5 showing the narrow opening into the shelter (r) Erosion gully inside the shelter cutting into archaeological deposit



(l) PP4 lies amongst the boulders on the spit of land connecting the rocky point to the mainland. The house in the background was built after 1990 (r) Midden material is exposed in a path on the northern edge of Partridge Point

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

Our observations were largely consistent with those of Parkington et al (1990). Dense vegetation remains a limiting factor on comprehensive survey although we believe that the steep slopes were not optimal for occupation by pre-colonial foragers. The middens PP2 and PP4/PP5 in particular, are sites that potentially contain stratified archaeological deposits. The nearby midden in Smitswinkelbaai Cave remains the only excavated archaeological site on this eastern side of the Cape Peninsula (Poggenpoel and Robertshaw 1981), and so in the future these sites may provide valuable comparative samples and information.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

A comprehensive survey of the site was prevented by thick alien vegetation. Although recent bush clearing meant that we had slightly better visibility than in 1990, our observations for the most part still correspond with those made then. Given the development proposals some broad recommendations are made based on our current knowledge of the site.

- Although visibility is difficult, we believe that pre-colonial archaeological sites are confined within the proposed development footprint to the immediate shoreline and to Partridge Point;
- No development of Partridge Point beyond seaward of the existing house should be entertained hence alternative 3 is supported.
- Measures should be put in place to protect the remaining deposits on PP4 and PP5 if development proceeds. People involved in construction should keep away from the granite outcrop of the point – cordoning off the rocky point area should be considered.
- Bush clearing may reveal additional sites, and or the true extent of the sites that have been recorded and the development footprint should be inspected once this is completed;
- The coastal path does intersect some midden sites. Removal of vegetation will increase the possibility of erosion and measures for the protection of the middens should be evaluated once the bush clearing is complete.
- It is not necessary to conduct rescue excavations however the conducting of a site visit (with project ECO) should be considered to make sure that existing sites are not impacted and that the project foreman and/or ECO is aware of which areas are sensitive.

## **10. REFERENCES**

- Parkington, J., Poggenpoel, C. & Halkett, D. 1990. Report on archaeological investigations at Partridge Point. Prepared for Dresnes and Zietsman. Archaeology Contracts Office, UCT.
- Poggenpoel, C. & Robertshaw, P. 1981. Excavations at Smitswinkelbaai Cave, Cape Peninsula. South African Archaeological Bulletin 36:29-35.

# **Appendix 1**

# REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT PARTRIDGE POINT

Prepared by:        John Parkington  
                             Cedric Poggenpoel  
                             Dave Halkett

*May 3rd, 1990*

## **1. Brief**

We have been asked to locate any archaeological remains in Portion Two of Smitswinkel Bay 1024 and advise on the protection of such sites.

## **2. Results**

We have plotted our search paths on the large scale map appended here so as to show where we have looked and where not. Our search brought to light three archaeological sites, all of them shell middens, within the boundaries of the property. These are marked on the same map.

## **3. Significance**

There has as yet been no definitive archaeological history written on the Cape Peninsula. A relatively large number of archaeological sites are known, and a few of these have been properly excavated. It is in this context that the significance of the Partridge Point sites need to be judged. All three sites are shallow, probably no more than 0.3m in depth, fairly extensive scatters of shell associated with granite boulders and clearly related to shellfish and other marine resource exploitation. As such the information they contain is an invaluable component of the local archaeological record and should be preserved.



#### **4. Recommended procedures**

##### **a. For site #1**

Under the direction and guidance of an archaeologist the shell midden in the rock shelter at Partridge Point should be covered with at least 0.3m of clean, sterile beach sand so as to blanket and thus protect the archaeological remains. The areas of shell midden immediately east of this rock shelter should be completely grassed and protected from any further disturbance by earth moving.

##### **b. For site #2**

Two alternatives are proposed. One would be to direct all earth moving, building and levelling well away from the area of this shell scatter. The disadvantages of this suggestion are that it relies on the good will and good sense of future generations of owners and users not to site any pits, trenches, holes or other disturbances here. It is dangerous to plan with such optimism. Further, it means that the potential destruction of this site will hang like a sword of Damocles over all present and future owners/users. A second course of action, slightly more expensive, would be to finance a small archaeological excavation into this site, an excavation that would successfully answer the questions we have of the site (how deep is it? what kinds and frequencies of shell fish are represented? are there bones and stone tools? how does it fit into the local archaeological pattern?) This would eliminate the sword of Damocles scenario and would allow housing construction to take advantage of this relatively level platform. We favour the latter and would be happy to be contracted to do the work.

##### **c. For site #3**

As with the outside portion of site #1 this site is a partly grassed shell midden lying among granite boulders at a fairly prominent inter tidal rock outcrop. Our recommendation is that the grass be maintained and extended to cover all of the exposed shell and that no earth moving at all is scheduled for this locality.

##### **d. General**

At the very least all archaeological sites should be buffered by some 50 metres of untouched terrain. This might mean that all service trenches, paths and other access routes, facilities or installations must be specifically scheduled at least this far from the locations we have marked.

