

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF A PORTION OF BEVERLY SUGAR ESTATES, BALLITO

The Institute for Cultural Resource Management was approached by Guy Nicolson Consulting cc to undertake an archaeological survey of a Portion of the Beverly Sugar Estates, Ballito. The affected area is marked for residential development.

A total of three archaeological sites were recorded in the affected area and all would require some form of mitigation. The occurrence of these sites does not imply that no development may occur in the development area. These sites are protected by the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act of 1997. This Act requires the developer to obtain a permit from KwaZulu-Natal Heritage if the site is to be damaged, or altered. It is the onus of the developer to obtain such a permit.

Methodology

All sites have been grouped according to low, medium and high significance for the purpose of this report. Sites of low significance have no diagnostic artefacts, especially pottery. Sites of medium significance have diagnostic artefacts and these are sampled. Sampling includes the collection of artefacts for future analysis. All diagnostic pottery, such as rims, lips and decorated sherds are sampled, while bone, stone and shell are mostly noted. Sampling usually occurs on most sites. Sites of high significance are excavated or extensively sampled. The sites that are extensively sampled have high research potential, yet poor preservation of features.

Significance is generally determined by several factors. However, in this survey, a wider definition of significance is adopted since the aim of the survey is to gather as much information as possible from every site. This strategy allows for an analysis of every site in some detail, without resorting to excavation.

Defining significance

Archaeological sites vary according to significance and several different criteria relate to each type of site. However, there are several criteria that allow for a general significance rating of archaeological sites.

These criteria are:

- 1. State of preservation of:**
 - 1.1. Organic remains:
 - 1.1.1. Faunal
 - 1.1.2. Botanical
 - 1.2. Rock art
 - 1.3. Walling
 - 1.4. Presence of a cultural deposit
 - 1.5. Features:
 - 1.5.1. Ash Features
 - 1.5.2. Graves
 - 1.5.3. Middens
 - 1.5.4. Cattle byres
 - 1.5.5. Bedding and ash complexes
- 2. Spatial arrangements:**
 - 2.1. Internal housing arrangements
 - 2.2. Intra-site settlement patterns
 - 2.3. Inter-site settlement patterns
- 3. Features of the site:**
 - 3.1. Are there any unusual, unique or rare artefacts or images at the site?
 - 3.2. Is it a type site?
 - 3.3. Does the site have a very good example of a specific time period, feature, or artefact?
- 4. Research:**
 - 4.1. Providing information on current research projects
 - 4.2. Salvaging information for potential future research projects
- 5. Inter- and intra-site variability**
 - 5.1. Can this particular site yield information regarding intra-site variability, i.e. spatial relationships between various features and artefacts?
 - 5.2. Can this particular site yield information about a community's social relationships within itself, or between other communities.
- 6. Archaeological Experience:**
 - 6.1. The personal experience and expertise of the CRM practitioner should not be ignored. Experience can indicate sites that have potentially significant aspects, but need to be tested prior to any conclusions.

7. Educational:

- 7.1. Does the site have the potential to be used as an educational instrument?
- 7.2. Does the site have the potential to become a tourist attraction?
- 7.3. The educational value of a site can only be fully determined after initial test-pit excavations and/or full excavations.

The more a site can fulfill the above criteria, the more significant it becomes. Test-pit excavations are used to test the full potential of an archaeological deposit. These test-pit excavations may require further excavations if the site is of significance. Sites may also be mapped and/or have artefacts sampled as a form of mitigation. Sampling normally occurs when the artefacts may be good examples of their type, but are not in a primary archaeological context. Mapping records the spatial relationship between features and artefacts.

Archaeological sites

The archaeological sites are prefixed with BED (Beverly Estates Development).

BED1

This site occurs along the southwestern section of the development area and covers a ± 80 m radius. The site also has a potential archaeological deposit. The main artefacts included pottery, grinding stones, and marine shell.

Two shell middens were observed on the surface of the land. These middens consist of various shell species that include mainly brown mussels (*P. Perna*), oyster (*Ostridaeae spp.*), limpets (*Patella spp.*) and other species in smaller numbers.

The worked stone includes fragments of upper and lower grinding stones, and a pestle.

The pottery sherds vary in size and colour. This suggests that several vessels occur on the site. The pottery is mostly thin-walled with a brown colouring. Some of the sherds have a black or red burnish. Two diagnostic sherds were noted. These had a flat lip with a tapering rim-neck. One of the lips had a groove along the lip.

The site probably dates to the Late Iron Age or Historical Period.

Significance: The site is of low-medium significance due to its variety of artefacts and potential archaeological deposit.

Mitigation: The site requires some form of mitigation. I suggest that several test pits are placed on the site in order to test its full potential and to sample the shell middens and pottery.

Test-pit excavations may require that further work is undertaken. This is determined by the results of the test-pit excavations.

BED2

This site is located along the main hill in the development area (named (i) on the orthophoto). The site is an extensive and dense scatter of artefacts along the entire spur. Several features were observed indicating that an archaeological deposit and spatial parameters exist at the site.

Five shell middens were observed on the surface of the hill. Some of these were extensive suggesting that more, in tact, middens may occur underneath the ploughing surface. These middens include brown mussels, oysters, limpets, bone, grinding stones and pottery. The organic remains are well preserved.

A few areas of daga were noted, mostly along the northern edge of the spur. These areas are indicative of daga floors for either houses or granary bins. The occurrence of these features, in addition to the shell middens, suggests that some spatial features occur on the site.

In addition to the above, iron ore, animal bone, several grinding stones (upper and lower), and a high density of ceramics occur at the site.

If the daga remains are those of hut floors, then there is a possibility of human skeletal remains also occurring at the site.

The site probably dates to the late Iron Age or Historical Period. A cursory description of this site is that it a small settlement of domestic areas and probably a cattle pen on the southern or northern part of the site.

Significance: The site is of medium-high significance due to the spatial component, well preserved features and organic remains, and variety of ceramics.

Mitigation: This site would require at least test-pit excavations to determine the archaeological potential of the site. However, the surface finds indicate that the material from this site has high significance. I suggest that the excavations on this site should be more in line with salvage excavations than mere test-pit excavations.

I suggest that the excavations are undertaken in two phased approach. The first phase would be in line with test-pit excavations. That is the full nature of the site will be explored. The second phase will occur, if Phase 1 determines that further significant information may still occur on the site. **Test-pit excavations may require that further work is undertaken¹. This is determined by the results of the test-pit excavations.**

BED3

This site is located in the northeastern corner of the proposed development area (named (ii) on the orthophoto). The site currently under sugarcane that has not been cleared, resulting in poor archaeological visibility. However, we surveyed along the tracks and open areas of the hill and located various artefacts. The site extends across the entire hill.

The artefacts include upper and lower grinding stone fragments, a high density of pottery sherds in various areas and some marine shell fragments. The site has an archaeological deposit.

Only a few fragments of marine shell were observed on the surface. This would suggest that more (middens) may occur below the surface. The pottery sherds varied in size and colour suggesting that several vessels occur on the site. One decorated sherd was noted. This sherd had +7 rows of circular impressions.

Significance: The site is of low-medium significance due to a possible spatial component, the variety of pottery sherds and the archaeological deposit.

Mitigation: The site requires some form of mitigation. I suggest that several test pits are placed on the site in order to test its full potential and to sample the shell middens and pottery.

Test-pit excavations may require that further work is undertaken. This is determined by the results of the test-pit excavations.

Discussion

Three archaeological sites were recorded in the proposed residential development area. These sites form part of the Late Iron Age, or Historical Period of KwaZulu-Natal. These sites are important as they form part of the origins of Nguni-speaking people in KwaZulu-Natal and/or the Zulu nation - this depends on the date of the sites. Both periods are important in the understanding of the history of KwaZulu-Natal.

The main site, BED2, appears to be the most significant of the sites, and I suggest that it is excavated in more detail than the other two sites. The smaller sites may or may not be related to BED2, and this would be part of the excavation strategy. The smaller sites have archaeological material that needs to be salvaged. They are not of the same significance as the main site, however, they may yield information regarding inter-, or intra-, site patterns.

¹ My experience with sites such as these is that the excavations would normally occur for at least 2 weeks.