

The archaeological survey and monitoring at Richards Bay Minerals

For RBM and KwaZulu-Natal Heritage

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Introduction

Umlando surveyed and monitored several sites in the months of April and May 2005. This report is a summary of the monitoring and the surveys. This report also discussed the option of using a storeroom at RBM Rehabilitation Center to store and curate artefacts before they are sent to Pietermaritzburg for curation.

The surveys and monitoring program

The April surveys occurred at the end of May 2005. No sites were recorded at any of the mining ponds or dry mining areas. TB1 and TB2 were revisited to determine if more skeletal remains had been uncovered. I noted that several artefact concentrations occurred at the site, and that there was a high possibility of more human remains. I suggested that the site be monitored each day, as we were not able to excavate the site. The purpose of the monitoring program was to sample, or collect, material that would be uncovered on a daily basis, as well as potential human remains (a mandible had been recovered from the mine sieves the previous week). If human remains were observed, then we would be able to undertake the necessary mitigation.

The monitoring occurred from the 4th May to the 23rd May; whereafter the bulldozers cleared the remaining parts of the site.

The following were collected during the monitoring phase:

- Undecorated pottery, but with rims and lips
- Pottery with comb-stamped decorations
- Dagga pipe fragment with comb-stamped decorations
- Ceramic lids for pots
- Various faunal remains
- Slag and iron ore

- Various marine shell samples
- Isolated human remains:
 - Mandible from the child at TB1
 - Adult mandible (from mine sieves)
 - Finger bones (phalanges)
- Daga floor fragments
- Hardened clay fragments

During the course of the monitoring program, I revisited TB4. I suggest that TB4 has a few test-pit excavations, as there may be a sub-surface deposit. The Town Board South lease area is important in that it is the southern end of the dune system, and thus the archaeological sites. The southerly area will make comparisons with the more northern sites interesting in terms of inter-site differences in Late Iron Age and Historical pottery. This general area has had “Thembi-Tsonga”, MThiyane and MBonambi people, and thus pottery styles, over the last 400 years. There should thus be differences in pottery styles for each social group of people.

The archaeological study will thus concentrate on this area as well.

The May survey recorded two new sites. Both sites were at AMS North: the other mining areas had no new recorded sites.

AMS5

AMS5 is on top of the first dune cordon from interior. It has several “steps” that eventually form a flat top. The site is large with an extensive scatter of artefacts and features over an approx. 50m radius (if not more). This suggests that there is a small homestead on this hill.

At least four shell middens were observed and these appear to be relatively in tact. The marine shell consists of oysters and black mussels. Pottery is mostly thin-walled and one sherd has comb-stamped impressions. Grinding stones and faunal remains were observed.

This site should have test-pit excavations, and we will undertake this as soon as possible.

AMS6

AMS6 is similar to AMS5, however it has been very disturbed by bulldozer activity. Thus while pseudo spatial patterns exist at AMS6, they are too disturbed to warrant an excavation. I have sampled this site instead, and will monitor it in future surveys.

The artefacts from AMS6 include thin-walled pottery sherds, faunal remains, marine shell and grinding stones.

I also revisited Shark Tooth Midden to determine if the second shell midden was still in tact. The midden has not been disturbed, and will still require excavation in the future.

Temporary store room at RBM

The artefactual material and human remains are currently at the Umlando storage rooms in Meerensee (i.e. the garage of our home). We have discussed the use of a storeroom at the rehabilitation offices for archaeological remains. RBM may allocate one room that will be dedicated to the storage of all artefacts and human remains. Two keys should be available for this room: one set for Umlando, and one as the spare key at the main office of the RBM Rehabilitation Center, i.e. Rynhard Kok's office.

The material will remain in this room until they are returned to the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage offices in Pietermaritzburg once a year. Using this room will also comply with the policy regarding the treatment of human remains. This policy states, amongst other things, that a dedicated room should be made available for the ethical storage of human remains.

We would require Amafa's written approval for this temporary storage room.