The aim of *Southern African Field Archaeology* is to communicate basic data to professional archaeologists and the public.

Manuscripts of original research undertaken in southern Africa will be considered for publication. These may include reports of current research projects, site reports, rock art panels, rescue excavations, contract projects, reviews, notes and comments. Students are encouraged to submit short reports on projects. Southern African Field Archaeology also welcomes general information on archaeological matters such as reports on workshops and conferences.

Southern African Field Archaeology accepts manuscripts in English and Afrikaans but manuscripts submitted in Afrikaans must be accompanied by an English abstract.

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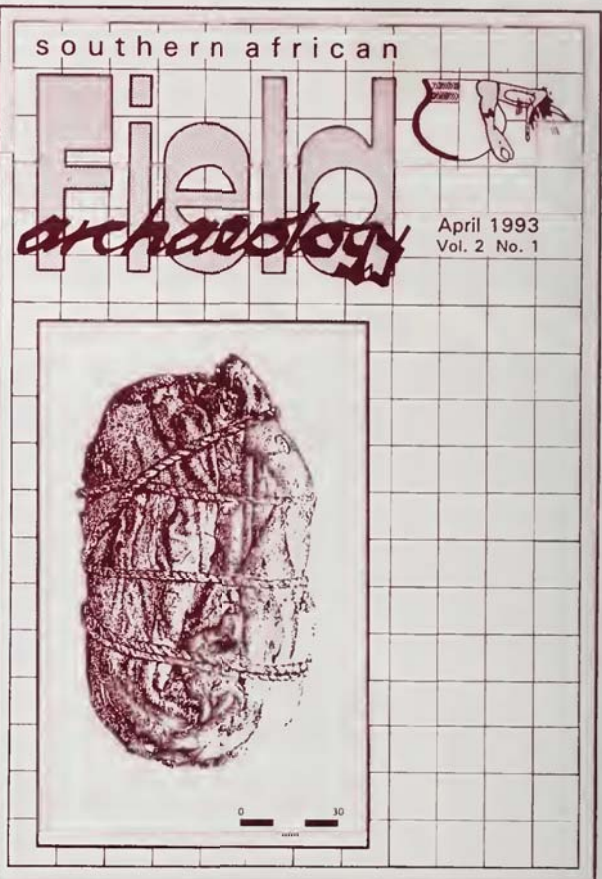

Logo
Decorated pot from an Early Iron Age site in the Great Kei River valley, eastern Cape, and a painting of a 'trance figure' from the same region.

Cover illustration
Leather bundle bound with string from Faraoskop Rock Shelter, south-western Cape, p. 3.

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OPINIONS

RUBBISH OR TREASURE?

Two main issues are usually raised when archaeologists discuss the destruction of municipal rubbish dumps. Is their loss really a problem? If so, what can we do about it anyway?

Archaeologists have been accurately described as "scientific rag-and-bone merchants...poking around in dead people's garbage" (Bahn 1989:5-7). The town dump, a trash pit in the farmyard and an ash/compost-heap at the end of the garden were all produced as a result of people disposing of the unwanted debris of their daily lives.

In early colonial South Africa, householders did not tidily collect their left-overs and wait for a yellow truck to remove them. Things were thrown out of the kitchen door and scattered by scavenging animals and birds, or thrown into the nearest water course (a habit presumably the legacy of Dutch canal-side life). To find a neatly demarcated rubbish pit near a 17th or 18th century dwelling is most unusual. During the 19th century colonists started to consciously confine and control their rubbish as a result of new ideas about orderliness and cleanliness. In Cape Town only in the 1840s were reports taken seriously about an increasing level of insanitary overcrowded backyard conditions contributing to epidemics as well as offending the noses of the burghers. Much fuss was generated and at least a nominal attempt was made to deal with night-soil. It was also during the 19th century that many smaller towns and villages were established throughout the Cape Colony. Along with the new communities came the new communal rubbish disposal system.

The loss of the resultant town dumps and other large open middens which incorporate tangible evidence from the past is the loss of historical evidence. Community dumps provide type collections against which other local sites can be set, especially if their disposal history is well documented and they retain some stratigraphic integrity. As Garth Sampson has described for Middelburg (1992), the original ash-heap "reflects the entirely unconscious picture of the real life and times of the community"; he regards it as an invaluable source of information for his intensive Seacow Valley project where the distribution of

Staffordshire-manufactured ceramics in particular into the far Colonial interior is poorly documented. But dumps belong in the wider scale, the general community level, and thus do not speak of the behaviour of individual housholds. Without a parallel and intimate understanding of the context of use of the artefacts, all a dump tells us is that certain items were available and consumed in general over a period of time.

Middens and dumps, however, have long been seen as treasure chests available to bottle-hunters and hobbyists to explore and exploit. Ethleen and Al Lastovica are possibly the best known collectors in South Africa, because of the excellent reference book they have published (1990). According to them, "[i]n South Africa, small dumps which yield bottles come to light from time to time, but many items owned by bottle collectors throughout the country were unearthed from the extensive dumps at Bellville and Port Elizabeth" (Lastovica & Lastovica 1990:11). Significantly, an amateur bottle-hunter wrote: "It is becoming more and more difficult to find a place to go on "digs". However, in country towns and on farms, there are still unexplored dumps" (Els 1988). That these dumps are already being exploited may be deduced from the increasing number of glass bottles and china doll fragments on sale at small antique shops and craft fairs in the rural areas.

Old town dumps are more seriously and increasingly under threat of redevelopment by the town councils themselves because areas once on the fringes of settlements are becoming engulfed by housing estates. A large rubbish dump dating to the mid-19th century was recently bulldozed in Grahamstown, although the archaeological value of a similar midden underlying Huntley Street had already been demonstrated by excavations by the Albany Museum in the 1980s (Jeppson 1989). One of the remaining pre-1900 dumps in Cape Town lies in the middle of Rondebosch, but is protected more by the plants that overlie it than its intrinsic archaeological value.

Unfortunately, archaeological excavation is becoming increasingly expensive. It is not good enough to moan about the destruction of valuable historic resources without offering to do the work involved. Even if the land-owners are persuaded to foot part of the bill (National Monuments Council 1992), where are the remaining means of investigating those sites under threat? How can digging a dump be justified when other sites are equally important or threatened? Archaeology by and for the community concerned is probably the answer. In Europe and North America amateur archaeologists or members of conservation societies do excavation under professional supervision. Do we have these skills available here yet? Who is to organise and train such people? The Middelburg project was an admirable demonstration of "a different way of recovery", using local and imported student labour. But, how can other sites be tackled without a similar huge expenditure of the scarce resources of money, supervisory personnel and time? Individual researchers have successfully forged a team of amateur archaeologists together for certain projects, but can we always tie community excavations into someone's research interests?

If dumps are a matter of concern, how can their value be expressed? Protection would not seem to require more legislation, as town dumps and other middens can be defined as potential historical sites and protected accordingly (National Monuments Council 1992:1). Rather, the idea that dumps are archaeological sites requiring professional archaeological assessment if under threat needs to be established, and local public and council interest needs to be stimulated through education and cavassing.

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CONTRACT ARCHAEOLOGY REPORT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (ARM), UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

ARM is part of Wits' Archaeology Department specifically created to handle CRM contracts generated by recent environmental and mining legislation. So far, most of the work has involved the identification and evaluation of sites threatened by dams, roads and mining activity.

Kathy Kuman and Gary Kruger continue their analysis of Stone Age sites found during the Taung Dam survey. Kathy is interested in the technological aspects of an ESA quarry, and Gary excavated a rock shelter with a burial at the base and a recent LSA sequence on top of Oakhurst layers. Rock art near the shelter was published in the first volume of South African Field Archaeology.

Another dam survey, Zoeknog Dam near Bushbuck Ridge, yielded more recent sites as well as a few Stone Age localities. There were 3 ESA, 8 MSA, 3 LSA, 7 EIA and 18 recent IA sites in approximately 22 hectares. The EIA pottery probably dates to the second phase of Lydenburg, while most LIA sites were marked by Moloko pottery. Unexpectedly, there was one LIA site with Venda pottery.

Even more recent sites were found along a 36 km roadway between Nigel and Fochville. Although there were a few Stone Age sites (3 ESA, 4 MSA and 2 LSA), the most important were the remains of European structures. The stone foundations of two "bywoner" homes were associated with the more substantial deposit and foundations of the main homestead. Coupled with the finds from an earlier survey in the same area, these buildings form part of a historic sequence encompassing the first trekboers and their living descendants.

In a completely different vein, ARM has been involved with the mitigation of a prehistoric copper mine near Matsitama in Botswana. Dating to the Khami period, some 30 episodes of digging around visible reefs produced a large open cast mine about 30 m wide and 175 m long. We mapped the mine using a new laser theodolite (Easy Ranger 7/50) developed in South Africa by Yelland Drawing Office and Survey Centre.

T.N. Huffman
G. Kruger
H. van der Merwe

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

The editors

The issue raised in the Opinions column of the last edition of SAFA - the question of access to, and payment for the use of, regional archaeological archives - is a sensitive one, but one that is specially pertinent to those institutions whose business it is to build up regional collections and the records and analyses that define them. Such data bases - largely museum-based - often represent decades of input by the host institution, and involve costly on-going collection management, including storage and record-keeping, up-grading of documentation, and, recently, computerisation. When, therefore, requests for information are made, the resulting search and presentation of data (which seldom can be a mere print-out) add to the cost of an already costly exercise.

Museums, as you suggest, are glad to see their collections and data bases used by *bone fide* researchers, and usually go out of their way to accommodate and assist them. But when those who have sought information are engaged in commercial contract work, then surely, like any other commercial users of museum services, one would expect that they should pay for it. That acknowledgement should be made of the source of the data in all publications and work generated from consultancy - commercial or otherwise - is fundamental to research ethics.

It is a fact that some agencies have built up independent data bases ultimately derived from these museum records, but these can be no substitute for the services and local expertise that regional recording centres can provide. Archaeological coverage of a region can never be 100% complete, so that any given corpus of data needs interpretation in the light of experience when supplied. This is not always appreciated and we recently saw an EIA (not compiled by an archaeologist) which suggested that the nearest archaeological occurrence to a given building site was more than 50 km away! This was based on some listing of selected Northern Cape archaeological sites that the agency had acquired and was using in regular assessments. On inspection, the building site itself was found to contain, *inter alia*, a low-density surface scatter of late Acheulian artefacts.

As a final comment, the National Monuments Council requires that the material resulting from any archaeological study, including contract work, be lodged with an acceptable institution for curation - usually a museum. As you suggest, the 'time- and space-consuming component' of keeping a collection is costly (and ultimately not sustainable on the present basis), so that users of these facilities - especially in the case of contract work - need to consider building into project budgets some contribution towards these services as well.

David Morris
McGregor Museum, Kimberley.