

U. SHORES

Field Note U12a1. Archaeology - Fish traps – Overview

Fish traps are enclosures built on rocky and pebbly shores in the intertidal zone (Figure1). The traps are submerged at high tide, allowing fish to swim into, or washed into by the waves. As the water ebbs, the fish cannot swim out of the enclosures and thus can be easily caught by spears or collected in nets.



Figure 1. Typical shores used for the construction of fish traps: top - pebbly shore; bottom - rocky shore with boulders and pebbles.

The traps in the Study Area, totalling about 100, were mostly built in clusters and in some locations between, or next to, pebble spits (Figures 2 and 3) (read about spits in Field Note U11). A few traps are pebbly depressions, round and rectangular, which were created by removing pebbles from the centre towards the circumference.



Figure 2. Satellite image of spits (yellow arrows) and fish traps (white arrows). Top – Suiderstrand; bottom – Martha Point, near Skipskop, along the OTR shore. The traps look as if they were built on sand, but it is not so (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Satellite images of a cluster of fish traps on the OTR shore (at Martha Point). Top – at low tide the rocks on which the traps were built are visible; bottom – at high tide the traps are covered, or partly covered, with sand (the sand fill may not be the result of the high tide - see Field Note U11).


The trap walls are typically built of boulders and pebbles, which are the products of the disintegration of the country rock and subsequent abrasion by wave and current actions. Pebble spits were also used as trap walls (Figures 4 and 5).



Figure 4. Typical fish traps. Dashed lines indicate pebble spits. Arrows points to stone walls.



Figure 5. Satellite image of a cluster of fish traps (at Rasperpunt), showing pebble spits (dashed lines) and man-made stone walls (arrows). Blue arrow marks the point and direction from which the photo in Figure 4 was taken.

<p><i>Secrets of De Hoop and Environs</i></p>	<p>Field notes on the GEOMORPHOLOGY, HYDROLOGY and ARCHAEOLOGY Between CAPE AGULHAS and CAPE INFANTA</p>	 <p>Geomorphological Research</p>
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The traps are generally believed to be ‘ancient’. Suggestions for the traps age range from the Stone Age to mid-Holocene, to prehistoric, to pre-colonial (Figures 6 to 8). The antiquity of the pools was evaluated by PJ Hine (2008) and PJ Hine et al (2010). They found no evidence to support the ‘common knowledge’ that the traps are ancient and concluded that they are a few centuries old.

This conclusion, based on a scientific research, renders many publications misleading (examples in Figures 6 to 8). Read more about Hine’s research in Field Note U12a2.

	<p>It is always a very special moment when you stumble upon something beyond unique which represents our very special South African heritage. The historical Fish Traps at Rasperpunt - Cape L'Algulhas - is dated back to the stone age (as seen below) and a must-visit when exploring the most southern tip of Africa.</p>
<p>The Stone Age Fishing ... alexaitkenhead.co.za</p>	

Figure 6. Snapshot from a website, which suggests the Stone Age as the age of the fish traps.

Source: <http://www.alexaitkenhead.co.za/2018/07/the-stone-age-fishing-traps-at.html>

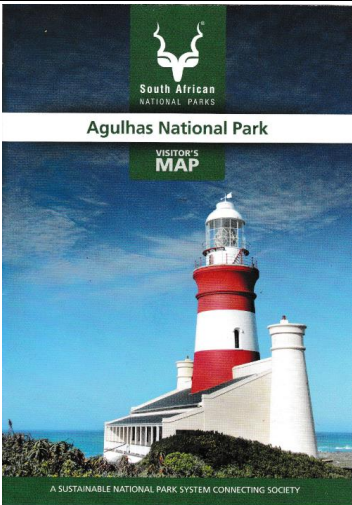
	<p>These fish traps, which can be seen clearly at low tide, date back to the Stone Age and were built by the Khoi. Fortunately these fish traps (or visvywers) are still relatively well preserved and are definitely worthy of conservation. In the past when fish was still plentiful, these traps provided meals for the nomadic visitors.</p>
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Figure 7. Snapshot from an Agulhas National Park brochure, which suggests that the traps can be dated back to the Stone Age and have been built by the Khoi people.

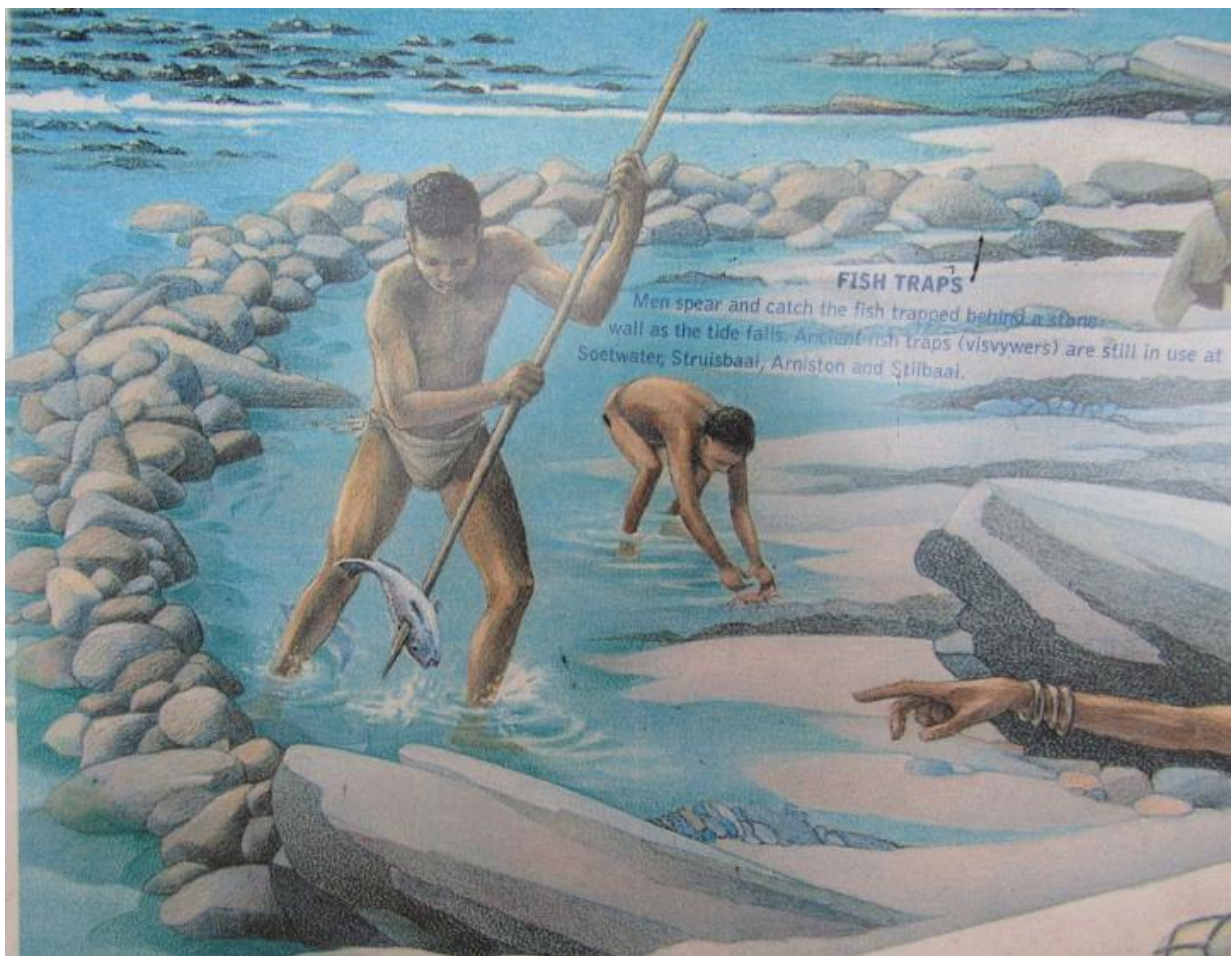
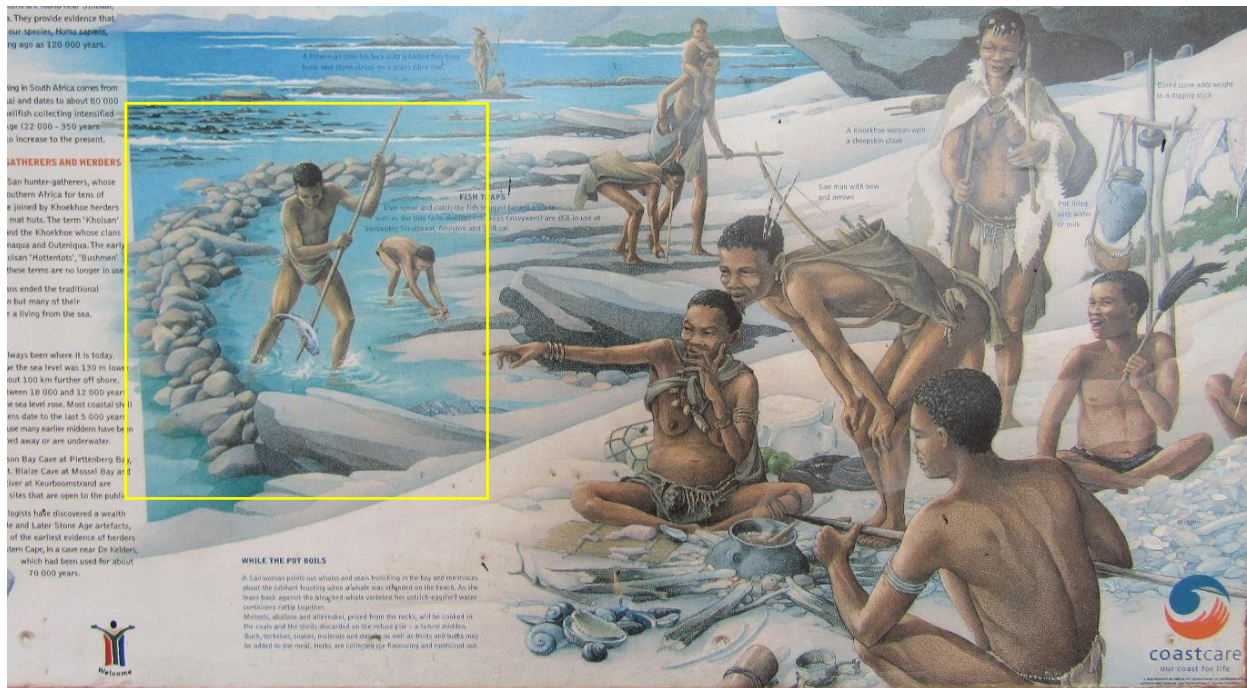


Figure 8. Top and bottom: a placard (displayed in several sites along the coast) showing Khoi people hunting fish in the traps and cook them on the shore. Yellow box in the top figure is enlarged in the bottom figure.

Source: Marine and Coastal Management (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism),

PJ Hine has found in the Cape Archives lists and plans for the construction of fish traps, which were submitted to the Cape authorities by the early settlers and farmers who lived along the shore which support his conclusion (Figures 9 and 10).

Applicant	Date	Location
H. Groenewald Rymerskraal	13.2.1912	700 yards from Marthas Point and 2500 yards from Skipskop Refused
Leonard Jacobsohn Wagenhuiskrantz	5.2.1912	Dimension of 83 yards x 200 yards x 61 yards at Rys Point . Refused.
C. Klynsmith Rymerskraal	17.2.1912	Near Marthas Point and 300 yards from Skipskop. Refused
J. Murtz Wagenhuiskrantz	30.1.1912 30.1.1912	Due south of Beacon at Bulldog Reef or Saxon Reef
H. Murtz Wagenhuiskrantz	5.2.1912	At the Beacon at Bulldog or Saxon Reef. Refused.
Jan Newman	27.1.1912	At the Beacon, commonly called Struis Point. Refused.
John Swart	21.2.1912	At Struis Bay. Refused.
D. Wyngaard Struis Bay	22.2.1912	At Struis Bay. Refused.

Figure 9. The top part of a list of people who applied to construct fish traps in 1912, is kept in the Cape Archives.

Source: PJ Hine MSc Thesis, 2008.

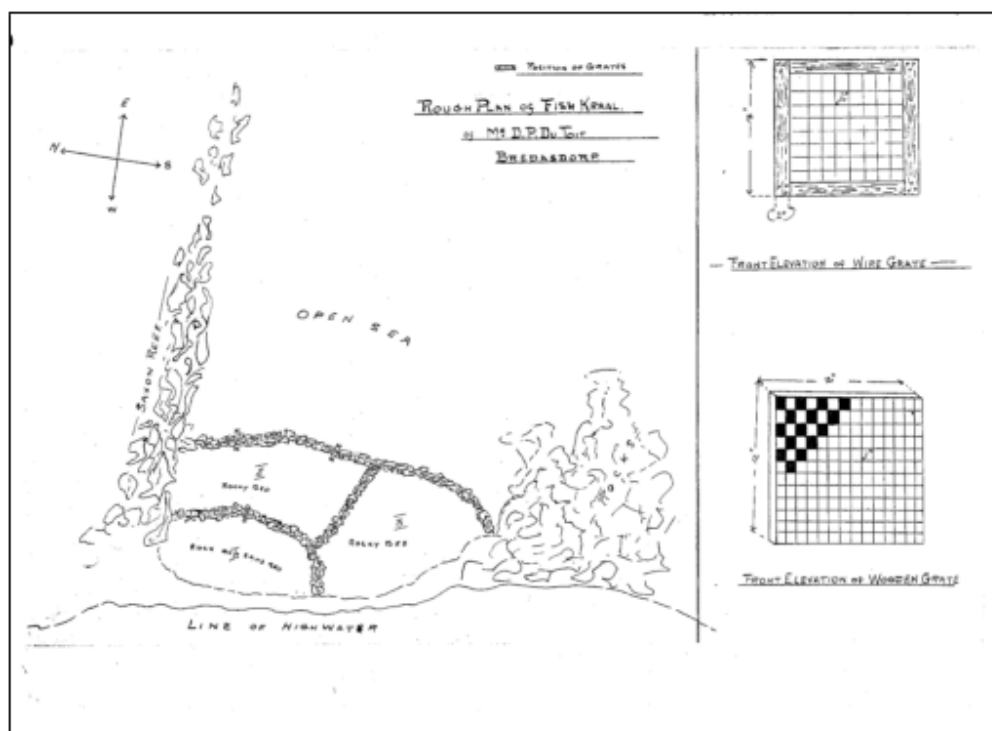


Figure 10. Proposed plan for fish traps in Struis Point, 1913, is kept in the Cape Archives.

Source: PJ Hine MSc Thesis, 2008.

The fish traps have not been systematically documented or mapped and there is no publication, which contains all the information about them. Our knowledge of the traps is based on a few works by researchers, who studied some of them. Two recent studies were carried out by PJ Hine (mentioned above) and LV Kemp, whose MSc Thesis of 2006 is also based on aerial photographs.

The author will investigate some traps, particularly those along the OTR shore, at a later stage of this study. The following Field Notes are descriptions of the traps in the Study Area, using recent, high quality satellite images, which were not available to previous researchers. Unfortunately, access is denied to the traps on the shores of the Overberg Test Range.

The pebble spits, which are unique to the shores of the Study Area, and on which many traps have been constructed, are discussed in Field Note U11.

There are twenty-eight sites of intertidal fish trap clusters along the Cape South Coast, eight of which are along the shores of the Study Area (Figure 11). They are (from southwest to northeast): Suiderstrand, Rasperpunt, Cape Agulhas, Struis Bay, Struis Point, Ryspunt, Skipskop and Breede River, containing in total >100 traps of all shapes and sizes (Figure 12).

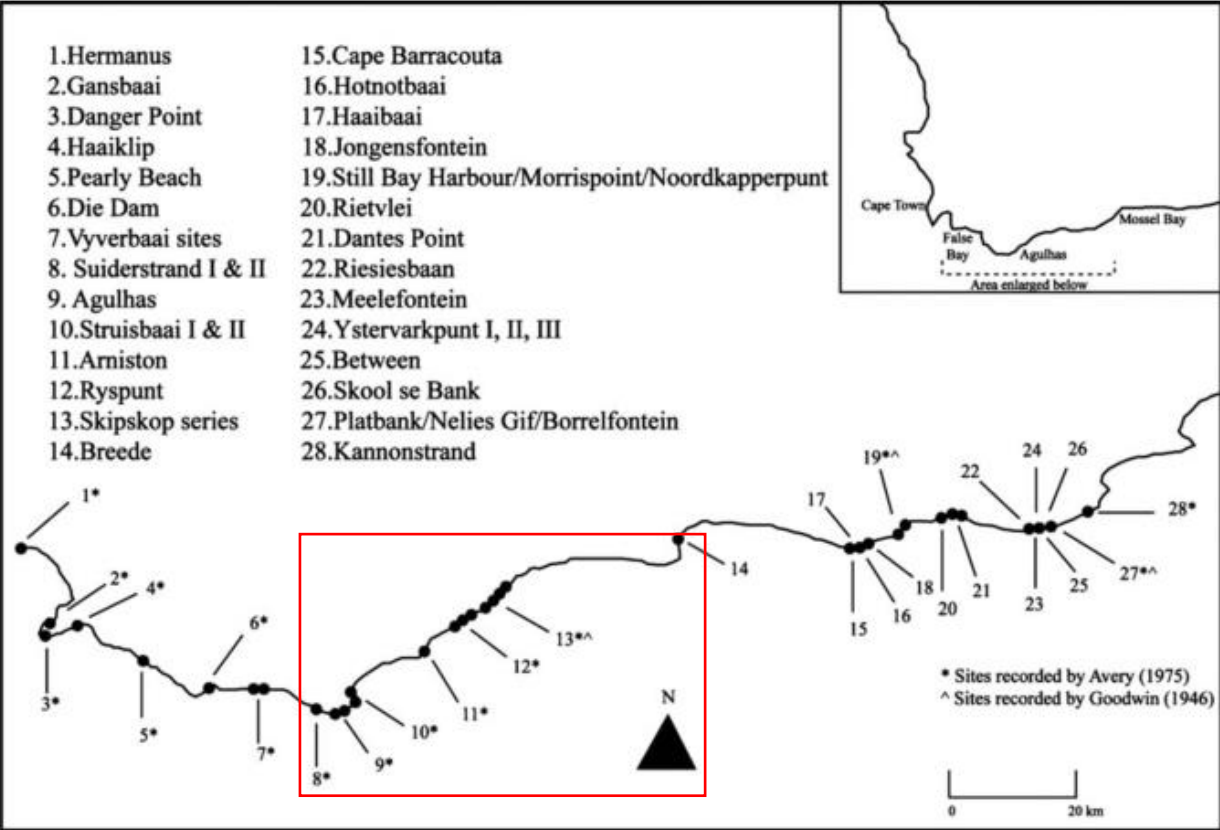


Figure 11. Map showing the locations of fish traps and trap clusters along the Cape South Coast. Box indicates the Study Area.

Source: LV Kemp MSc Thesis, 2006.



Figure 12. Satellite image (rotated) showing the locations of fish trap clusters in the Study Area.