

U. SHORES

Field Note U12a10. Archaeology - Fish traps – Breede River Mouth



The fish trap on the south shore of the Breede River Mouth. View to the west.

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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. They are (from southwest to northeast): Suiderstrand, Rasperpunt, Cape Agulhas, Struis Bay, Struis Point, Arniston, Ryspunt, Skipskop and Breede River, containing in total >100 traps of all shapes and sizes (Figure 1). This Field Note is about the trap at the Breede River Mouth.



Figure 1. Satellite image (rotated) showing the locations of fish trap clusters in the Study Area. Arrow points to the Breede River Mouth.

The fish trap on the southern shore of the Breede River Mouth is located some 600 m west of Kabeljoubank (Figure 2).

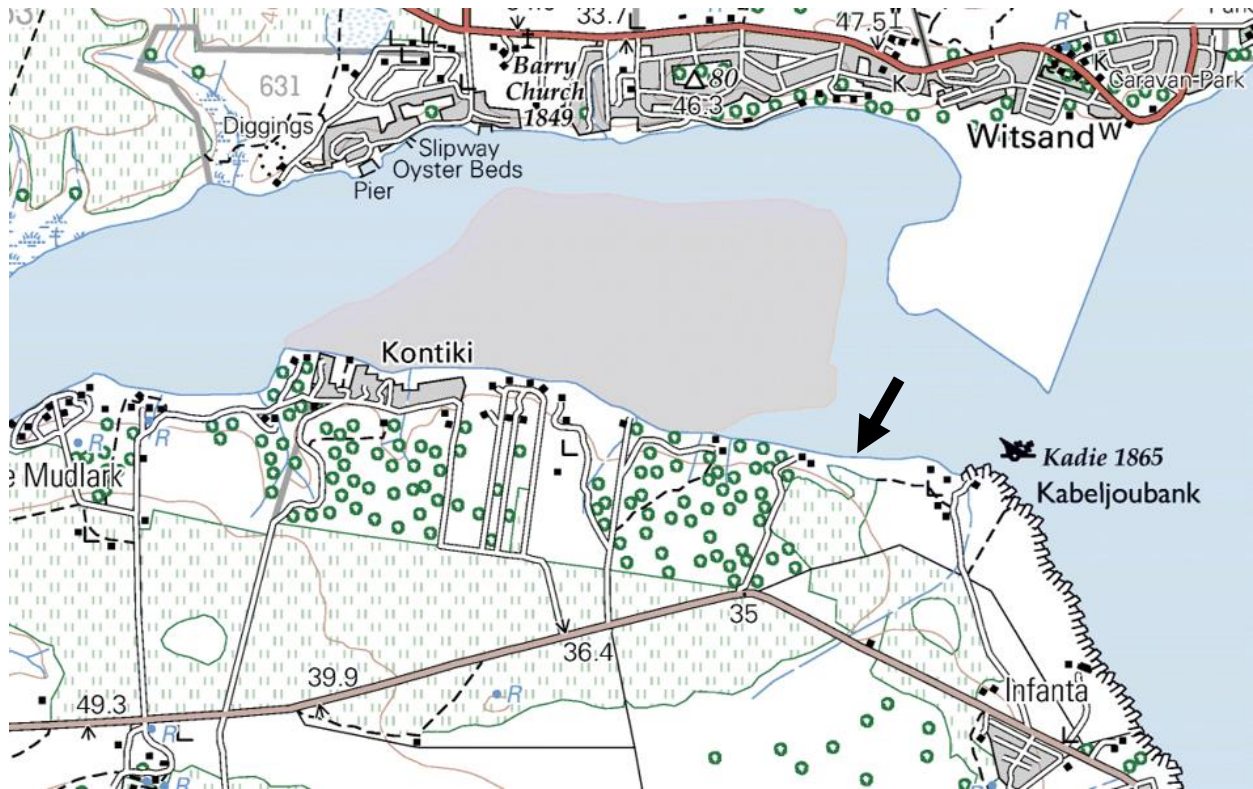




Figure 2. Topography map (top) and satellite image (bottom) of the Breede River Mouth, showing the location of the fish trap (arrow).

This fish trap was noted by other researchers, and described by Lucy Valeska Kemp, in her unpublished MSc Thesis “Ancient stonewall fish traps on the south coast of South Africa – documentation, current use, ecological effects and management implications”, 2006. She shows an old aerial photograph (no date given) with the tracing of this trap (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Aerial photograph of the fishtrap on the south bank of the Breede River Mouth.
Source and annotations: Kemp’s MSc Thesis, 2006.

The fish trap is the smallest, shallowest and least impressive of all the fish traps, which are described in this chapter. It has a trapeze shape, with the north wall about 100 m long, and the

side walls about 15 m long each (it is, therefore, much smaller than that, which was presented in the above photograph: the perimeter is only about 130 m, and the area is less than 2000 m²).

This fish trap is the only one of the traps described in this chapter, which is located in a river mouth. It is, thus, subject not only to waves and tides, but also to the river level fluctuations and relatively strong currents in the flood channel (up to 3 knots, or 1.5 m/sec) (Figure 4).

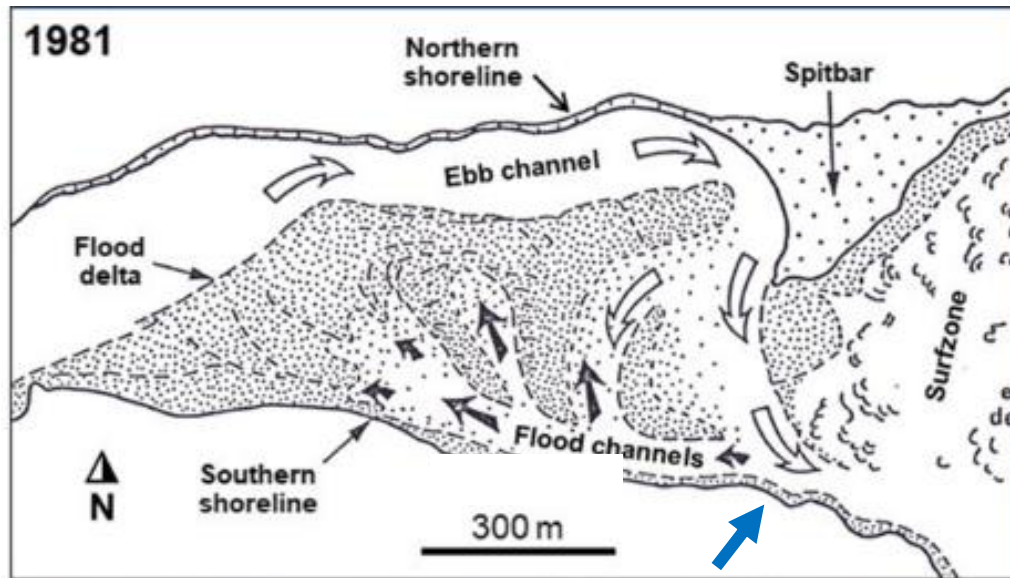


Figure 4. Map of the Breede River Mouth. Arrow points to the location of the trap.

Source: B Flemming and K Martin, 2021.

The traps walls are quite low and protrude the water only in low tide springs. In most available satellite images, the trap is submerged (Figures 5 and 6).





Figure 5. Satellite images of the fish trap on the south bank of the Breede River Mouth (top - 2011, bottom – 2012).



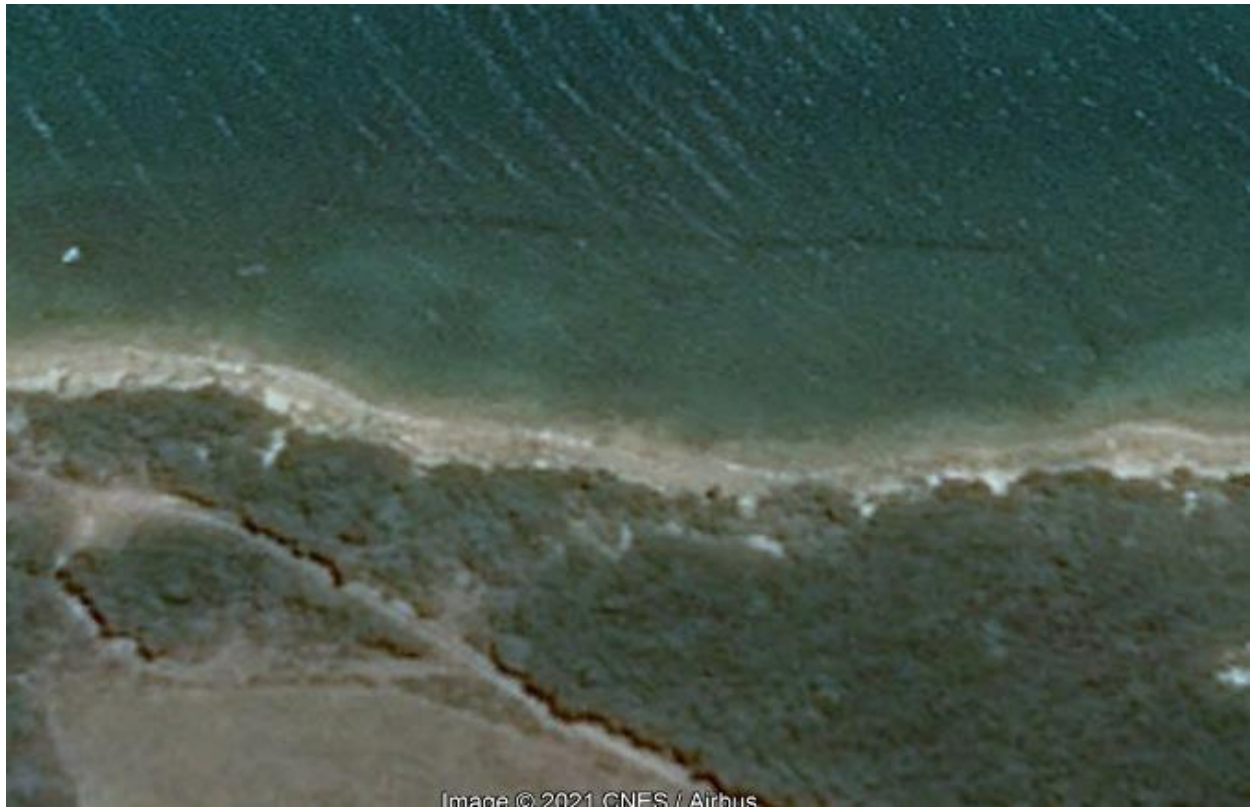


Figure 6. Satellite images of the fish trap on the south shore of the Breede River Mouth (top- 2014, probably taken at very low tide; bottom – 2016).

The trap is very shallow (Figure 7).





Figure 7. Views of the trap. Top – view to the northwest; bottom – view to the east.

A very small, triangular fish trap can be discerned from a satellite image about 100 m east of the east wall of the trapezoid fish trap (Figure 8).





Figure 7. The tiny trap. Top – satellite image (2016); yellow arrow points to the tiny trap; white arrow points to the trapezoid trap. The walls are partly destroyed. Bottom – view to the north. The walls are partly destroyed.

The traps were constructed on a shore with low availability of stones (see Arniston traps).