

uMgungundlovu-related information for 1971–75 derived from KZN Museum records and collections, plus data supplied by the FHYA
Gavin Whitelaw, 31 October 2019

Recording

Oliver Davies created a Natal Museum archaeological site record for uMgungundlovu after a visit there in 1971 with George Chadwick. Davies recorded the date of the visit as '6/4/71'; he dated the back of his photographs from this (probably?) same visit 'May 1971', which might be when he had them processed. He recorded the owner of the site as the National Monuments Commission. He attached a copy of B. Talbot's 1928 map of the site to his site record. Davies writes on his site record:

A number of huts have recently been uncovered, of a regular pattern: beaten clay floors which is fairly well preserved; clay hearth with raised rim, preserved in many cases; in one or two cases the sockets of the posts which formed the hut-walls. Also several depressions which are thought to be collapsed grain-silos, and an area where slag and fragments of copper [actually brass] have been found, probably the site of the workshops. Some low banks with bone-fragments in the earth, thought to be middens.
(my insertion, my italics)

Davies also refers to finds in the Archaeological Survey, Johannesburg: copper slag and copper from the surface (74/51) and brass beads (34/36), and to various finds in the Dundee Museum (iron axes, spears, tongs, brass armring, tuyeres). The accession numbers he gives for the Johannesburg finds are not Natal Museum numbers. If these items still exist, they would be located in the Archaeology storerooms of GAES, Wits University.

The phrase I've emphasized in Davies's report suggests that Chadwick had already exposed hut floors on the site in 1971 and that he might have asked Davies to accompany him to the site to view the work done, just as I think he later asked Maggs (see next section). If so, it suggests he was seeking archaeological approval for the work, probably because he was concerned about the loss of archaeological data.

Notes on the KZN Museum accession 1975/139

The accession register gives the source of this accession as 'M. Hall 1975', but it more probably derives from various collection events/processes.

- (1) Sherds and an *isicoco* polisher collected by Tim Maggs in July 1973. A National Monuments Council communication dated 1 November 1973 incorporates a report from George Chadwick in which he states that in July 1973 he and Maggs had uncovered several floors, collected pottery and beads, and surveyed in detail the floors already uncovered. Two floors were notable: the brewery hut (Hut 11, Parkington & Cronin 1979) and the weapon storage hut (probably Hut 23, Parkington & Cronin 1979). The physical work was apparently undertaken largely by Wally Hyde and his labour team. I think it is likely that Chadwick invited Maggs to visit the site to join in the work being done, a kind of 'Natal orientation' since Maggs had recently joined the Natal Museum (in 1972). (Maggs told me on 28 August 2019 that he was very much a junior newcomer then, and Chadwick very much in charge.) Also, possibly, Chadwick was again seeking archaeological approval. Maggs evidently had the two floors brushed up for formal photography (with a scale) and collected what sherds he could from the brewery hut and brought them to the museum. He also collected an *isicoco* polisher from one of the pot dimples. See slide photo 1978/1/30, which must date to 1973 (along with 1978/1/31 and 32) despite the 1978 accession number. The *isicoco* polisher was identified to Maggs on site by one of the men on the clearance team, a native Zulu speaker. This man also showed Maggs a 'woolly aphid' on local acacia trees

that yielded a waxy substance when squashed (possibly *Ceroplastes* species, wax scales), which men used to polish and shape *izicoco*. Maggs urged Chadwick to initiate a formal archaeological investigation of uMgungundlovu and recommended John Parkington of the University of Cape Town. Chadwick submitted the recommendation to the NMC together with suggested terms of reference for the project (the 1 November 1973 communication). The NMC agreed to support the project financially. Prior to this NMC commitment, and despite Parkington's interest in the project expressed in a letter to Chadwick dated 14 September 1973, Chadwick and a group of teachers and students from the Durban Teachers' College worked on the site 26–28 October 1973, uncovering several floors, weeding, and taking measurements for the production of a diorama to be designed by the College. Note that the caption to Figure 14 in the Parkington & Cronin 1979 Goodwin Series publication labels the brewery hut incorrectly as Hut 12 (although it is correctly labelled in the figure itself). A table of hut attributes in Parkington's 'fieldnotes' (actually mainly a combination of on-site mapping data, counts and measurements, and basic analysis) lists Hut 11 as the only one studied with multiple pot dimples ('potholes' in Parkington's documents). Hut 12 does not appear to have been excavated.

- (2) Small finds (ceramic dagga-pipe bowl (*igudu*), ceramic plug, metal items, figurine fragment, glass fragments, beads, 5 brass (copper?) bangles) from Midden 3 and various *isigodlo* (Section/Area B) and Bheje huts, wooden and charcoal hut-post fragments, charcoal from Midden 3. A context worth noting is Hut Bg ('hut with rows of post holes'), which is probably Hut 23. Another is Hut Bh ('blue bead hut'). It is possible these finds and their more descriptive contexts derive from Maggs's work in July 1973, with the huts then relabelled for Section B during the January 1974 fieldwork. (Maggs spent a lot of time on site during the January 1974 fieldwork.) The recovery of the 5 bangles is described in Parkington's 'fieldnotes' and well covered in his excavation photographs. Unfortunately I cannot see which hut the bangles came from as the relevant data is cut out of the scan. The museum label indicates a hut in the Bheje area. For archival history purposes, note that Gugu Mthethwa wrote the labels in Box 21 (the same box that contains the *isicoco* polisher). She was appointed to the Archaeology Department staff in 1981.
- (3) Plain rim and body sherds from Midden 3 and faunal material from Middens 1, 2 and 3, as well as Trench, excavated in January 1974 and July 1975. Parkington's 'fieldnotes' and context labels on the boxes and bags indicate that Trench and Middens 1 and 2 were excavated in 1974, or at least that the excavations were initiated in 1974. The Midden 3 context labels are different, with material marked according to layers (actually probably 10 cm or 15 cm spits), but similar to context labels from Martin Hall's 1978 excavations at uMgungundlovu and eLangeni. Hall joined the Natal Museum staff on 23 May 1975 and participated in the July 1975 fieldwork at uMgungundlovu. A letter from Maggs to Parkington dated 5 November 1973 states that the museum was looking for a researcher with a 'definite research project in mind'. Maggs asked Parkington for a recommendation and it seems possible that Parkington directed Hall to the museum when he was on sabbatical in Cambridge UK in 1974–75. Whatever the case, Hall did join the museum with a definite project in mind (for his PhD) and evidently initiated it in July 1975 at uMgungundlovu, apparently taking charge of the Midden 3 excavation. His interest was Iron Age economies. A 27 October 1975 letter from Parkington to Hall mentions planned UCT fieldwork at the site in 1976 and offers Hall student labour for his work there, suggesting that Hall's project was distinct from Parkington's. As it happens, Hall returned to the site only in 1978, this time under his own excavation permit. Figure 5 in Parkington & Cronin 1979 includes the Trench (between the *isigodlo* and Bheje) and two unnumbered midden excavations (probably a 1x1 m in the 'Large midden' and probably a 2x2 m inside the upper end of the western *inhlangothi*). I don't know which of these is 1 or 2, or where Midden 3 is, but 3 is conceivably at the southern end of the Trench. My current guess is that Hall excavated the 'Large midden' in 1978; Roodt's published maps show two large middens in Parkington &

Cronin's 'Large midden' area. Note that other material from the Parkington excavations of 1974–75 is apparently stored at the Amafa aKwaZulu-Natali offices in Pietermaritzburg. I have not yet seen this material.