
17 APPENDIX ONE: DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXTS,

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Context 1 (illus 16 and 17)

The uppermost layer encountered was a grey/silver sand which overlay the entire platform area. It showed regular disturbance from sheep, which used the ledge as a path around the cliff face. Within the area of excavation, it reached a maximum thickness of 0.65m and contained loosely distributed limpet shells (*Patella vulgata*) and a lesser quantity of common periwinkle (*Littorina littorea*), as well as incorporating some massive angular blocks, presumably derived from the rock face above. Running throughout, and contained within C1, were sporadic lenses of darkened brown sand (C1a), potentially representing palaeosols. The content and structure of these palaeosols suggested that the entire deposit might have originated from wind-blown erosion, with periods of sufficient stability to allow limited soil formation to occur.

Context 2 (illus 16)

Underlying C1, at a depth of 0.25m and extending along the rock face, lay a lens of reddish/orange ash with a maximum thickness of 0.21m. It contained charcoal, crushed shell, and some stones, both angular and rounded. It did not extend beyond 0.45m from the rock face, at which point it appeared to have been truncated by C1. Much of C2 appeared to have derived from the clearance of two hearths (C3 and C4), each set within clefts in the rock face. It was not possible to distinguish between material from the individual hearths, and it is possible that the two hearths were in use at the same time, or the time between the abandonment of one hearth and the construction of the next may have been too short to allow the two features to be separated chronologically. A few fragments of modern glazed pottery from C2 indicated deposition or disturbance sometime within the last 100 to 150 years.

Context 3

C3 was a hearth within C2, and it was set within the southern cleft in the rock face and consisted of angular flag-like stones. The location of the hearth may have capitalised on using this cleft as a natural chimney within the rock face, as this natural flue still retained sooting from fires.

Context 4

C4 was also a hearth within C2. It was set within the northern cleft in the rock face and was formed on a base of rounded beach cobbles. As in the case of C3,

the location of the hearth may have been dictated by the use of this cleft as a natural chimney, as it also retained traces of sooting.

Context 5 (illus 16 and 17)

Below the hearths lay a reddish-brown sand deposit, which, though relatively sterile, nevertheless contained a small number of complete shells, predominantly limpet.

Context 6

In the northern part of the trench, within C5, a thin lens of charcoal and ash disappeared into the section, perhaps representing the southern limits of a more extensive context lying beyond.

Context 7 (illus 16)

Below C5, there was a brown ash deposit, containing extensive lenses of charcoal and some crushed shell. It extended out from the rock face to a distance of 0.9m.

Context 8

Within C7, and hard up against the rock face approximately 1.0m to the north of the southern cleft, was a hearth. It was defined by an orange/red ash deposit, which incorporated some rounded stones, and it had a truncated domed cross-section.

Context 9

Within C7, and near C8, was a second hearth (C9), 1.5m east of the rock face and approximately 1m from the northern section. It was characterised by a lens of dark soil and charcoal, roughly 0.9m in diameter, centred upon a well-laid bed of beach cobbles, 0.6m in diameter.

Context 10 (illus 16, 17 and 18)

C10 formed another reddish-brown sand layer, comparable in nature to C5 but thicker and much more extensive. It was sandwiched between C5, C7, C8, and C9 above and C31 below, and it was probably accumulated over a long period of time as

it contained a number of deposits of some complexity and varied extent. C10 may have been formed by natural processes, interspersed with some phases of cultural activity. Where such cultural deposits existed, they rose away from the rock face. The rise continued eastwards to a distance from the rock face of at most 1.3m. Approximately 2m beyond this point was the western limit of a north–south trending line of angular boulders (C16). They corresponded to the crest of the talus and, as far as C26 in the southern part of the *sondage* and C30 and C31 in the northern part, all cultural activity appeared to have been contained between these boulders and the rock face.

Context 11 (illus 16)

C11 was a loose shell deposit composed almost wholly of limpet shells (*Patella vulgata*) and fine charcoal lenses within a sandy matrix. It occurred in a hollow in the surface of C10 and abutted the cliff face at its northern limit within the *sondage*.

Context 12 (illus 16 and 17)

C12 was a brown ash layer containing lenses of charcoal and crushed shell, identified as probably limpet (*Patella vulgata*). As it extended upslope towards the east, C12 was gradually lost within C10 at a distance of approximately 1.5m. Within the northern part of the *sondage* it met the rock face. Further south this did not occur, with an earlier accumulation (C10) filling an undercutting of the rock face. The deposit split as it rose upslope to the east. This bifurcation suggests two stages of deposition. This context was notably richer in compacted shell within the north-west corner of the *sondage*, where it extended to around 0.5m from the rock face.

Context 13

C13 was a hearth with a beach cobble base. Its diameter was at most 0.4m. It formed part of C12, and it was located adjacent to the rock face, tucked beneath the northern cleft.

Context 14

C14 was another beach-cobble based hearth. It lay in C12 and had similar dimensions to C13. C14 was partially covered by C9, although its centre lay slightly further to the south.

Context 15

The construction of C15 contrasted markedly with C13 and C14. It was made by carefully fitting several

flagstones, creating a well-crafted oval hearth. It measured 0.9m by 0.4m, with its long axis parallel to the wall-face. It formed part of C12 adjacent to the rock face, slightly north of the southern cleft.

Context 16 (illus 16 and 17)

C16, within C10, is thought to represent debris from a rockfall of angular boulders forming an irregular north–south alignment at between 1.5 and 3m from the rock face.

Context 17

Stratigraphically earlier than C12–15, and situated to the west of the C16 area of angular boulders, lay a surface of beach cobbles. Although forming a relatively coherent surface where present, the cobbles did not extend throughout the excavated area. There was a line of discontinuity at a point approximately 1.4m from the rock face and parallel with it. Equally, the extent of the cobble surface was patchy, more so in the southern portion of the *sondage*; it is unclear whether this reflects the original intention, or whether it was the result of post-depositional activities. Lying on the surface of the cobbles adjacent to the northern section, and at a distance of 2.1m from the rock face, lay an incomplete copper-alloy pin, of later prehistoric type.

Context 18

C18 was a lens of charcoal and burning, probably related to C17. It lay close to the rock face and it was too small to reflect any significant activity.

Context 19

Another small lens of charcoal and burning, possibly related to C17, which also, as with C18, lay close to the rock face.

Context 20

C20 was a lens of shells, possibly related to C17. It was too small to reflect any significant activity.

Context 21

Another lens of shells similar to C20.

Context 22 (illus 17)

Beginning 0.2m from the rock face, and extending eastwards for 2.3m, was a dark brown layer, densely

packed with shell and with evidence of burning. No obvious focus of origin was identified, but it was larger in the southern section than in the northern.

Context 23 (illus 17)

C23 lay within the southern section of C22 in a niche undercutting the rock face. It was an unconsolidated deposit of shells, predominantly limpet. C23 overlay C10.

Context 24 (illus 16)

C24 was a reddish-brown sand layer within C10. The layer was notably darker towards its base. Within the southern portion of the *sondage*, C24 lay below C22, and in the northern portion it lay at the base of C10 and overlay C31. It is possible that C24 is simply a different manifestation of C10 but here affected by leaching from the overlying deposit (C22).

Context 25

C25 was a small lens (0.2m long) of dark-brown burning, containing some shells. It formed the earliest cultural horizon within the C10 layer.

Context 26 (illus 17)

Below C10, in the southern section, lay a black layer with charcoal lenses as well as crushed and whole shells. It extended 2.8m to the east, rising gradually before dipping downslope. The final 0.25m of the layer overlay C29.

Context 27 (illus 17)

Below C10, in the southern section, lay another black layer with charcoal lenses and crushed and whole shells. Within 0.2m of the rock face, C26 and C27 merged, coincident with a deposit of beach cobbles.

Context 28 (illus 17)

C26 and C27 were separated by a fine light sand deposit, incorporating some shells (this layer was only identified as such at the west end of the section; it is unclear whether it represents the same layer as the unnumbered sandy deposit underlying C29 in the centre of the section).

Context 29 (illus 17)

C29 was a rich brown to orange layer incorporating many large angular blocks. Although these blocks

had some similarities to the lower levels of C16, they were distinguished from this upper context by being held within a different matrix.

Context 30 (illus 16)

To the north a brown layer, up to 0.2m in thickness and incorporating many large angular blocks, straddled the talus. To the west, and some 0.8m from the rock face, it merged with the underlying black layer (C31). This possibly represented a variant of C29, as both layers underlay C10. Within the southern part of C30, an apparent semi-circular stone-setting abutted the cliff face (illus 22). The 'walls' of this setting, made of two layers of angular stone, were approximately 0.4m in depth. The significance of this stone-setting, which measured 1.2m by 1m, is not apparent as it is too small to represent a living space and too large to be a normal hearth.

Context 31 (illus 15, 16, 18 and 20)

From this point downwards, the character of the site differed radically from that encountered at higher levels. From the top of C31 to the top of C40 (a depth of at most 55cm), a black 'claggy' and 'greasy' humic layer predominated. Like C10, this deposit incorporated a series of subsidiary deposits. However, where C10 appeared to reflect a largely natural accumulation, C31 clearly did not, and is thought to be the product of anthropogenic deposition. C31 included several shell horizons. This distinctive deposit extended east from the rock face for at least 3.1m, where it was truncated by the erosion of the slope deposit at the base of C1. It appeared higher in the northern section, where it capped a series of natural deposits (C32 and C33). To the south, it dipped below C29 and, although it was not visible in the relevant section, it seemed to run underneath C26, C27 and C28. C31 was excavated in 100mm units from its surface, resulting in a total of 10 spits. These spits were identified by the antefix BB; BB1 represented the uppermost 100mm, BB2 the level 100–200mm, and so forth. BB4/5 represented shell deposit C34, and BB5 deposit C38, both of which were contained within C31. Below these, two other spits, BB6 and BB7/8, continued, with BB7/8 reaching the base of C31.

Context 32 (illus 16)

C32 was a deposit of probably natural reddish-orange sand underlying C31.

Context 33 (illus 16)

C33 was a deposit of probably natural brown sand with shells underlying C31.

Context 34 (illus 15 and 16)

Only one shelly deposit within C31 was visible in the northern section. This layer included unconsolidated shells, some of which had been crushed. Like many other deposits within C31, it contained large quantities of animal bones and lithic artefacts. Only a small part of C34 was visible in the north-eastern corner of the trench, probably representing the southern limit of another midden, the main area of which lay outside, and north of, the trench.

Context 35 (illus 15, 18 and 20)

C35 was an intrusive feature with an archaeologically sterile fill of black silt, *c* 0.75m deep and *c* 250mm in diameter. It appeared to be related to the semi-circular stone-setting, as it underlay one of the angular stones forming part of its 'wall'.

Context 36 (illus 15 and 20)

C36 was a tripartite deposit of loose and crushed shells over a small, thin deposit of black silt. Although, during the excavation, these deposits were all lumped together as C36, it is more likely that they represented different contexts deposited at different times. The main part of C36 consisted of a large, unconsolidated shell midden which rested against the rock face on the west. In the east, it appeared to have been truncated by C35. The main C36 shell midden contained numerous lithic and bone artefacts, pieces of human and animal bone and fragments of charcoal. At the base of the main midden, and directly overlying the basal black silt of C36, was a layer of crushed shell. This layer began at the rock face with a thickness of 50mm. From this point it gradually curved upwards and expanded as it extended eastwards. It was truncated almost to its base by the intrusive feature C35. Beyond this context it continued curving upwards, incorporating several layers of ash and charcoal, and it reached almost 0.6m in thickness. After this point it was apparently cut by C31, finally disappearing 2.45m from the rock face. The C36-like deposit of crushed shell reappeared at the eastern end of the trench, at the same point as C40, which it overlay directly, and it continued for 1.1m to the end of the trench. This represented an earlier deposit than the unconsolidated shell midden above it (another part of C36). Below this, and extending for almost 2m outwards from the rock face, was a thin deposit of black silty organic material (also a part of C36). This layer, which attained a maximum depth of 100mm, possibly represented a deposit which was earlier and separate from the rest of C36.

The C36 column (illus 18)

Within C36, a 0.3m² column was sampled, with 10 samples being taken at 100mm intervals. It was decided to examine a column under the overhang to lessen the chance of seeping contamination between deposits. The sample squares were numbered SA to SJ, and each sample had a volume of *c* 15 litres. SA represented C31, and the remainder came from C36. SB to SH were taken from the main midden, while SI was taken from the lower crushed shell layer. SJ came from the basal black silt layer of C36.

Context 37 (illus 15 and 18)

C37 was a midden area of unconsolidated shells which lay beyond the drip ring from the overhang, beginning 2.6m from the rock face and extending for 1.29m towards the east. There were a number of tip lines within the midden, which contained lithic artefacts, animal and fish bones, as well as a small amount of charcoal fragments. The chronological status of C37 in relation to other contexts is unclear, such as C37 in relation to C31 which overlay it, C40 which underlay it, and in particular C36 with which it had no stratigraphic connection. C37 is thought to be largely contemporary with C36.

Context 38

C38 was a small lens of shells within C31.

Context 39 (illus 15)

Another small lens of shells within C31, the position of which is recorded in plan, from which it appears to be only 0.25m across.

Context 40 (illus 15 and 18)

C40 was an extensive, often fairly thick layer of dark-brown silty soil, containing some angular stones. It extended for 3.85m towards the eastern limit of the trench, but began 1.1m from the rock face. Its limit had been identified as a point where large rocks had fallen and lay against the angular bedrock surface, which is visible further inside the rockshelter. It overlay C41 from its start inside the rockshelter up to the eastern end of C41, after which point it was in direct contact with bedrock. The depth of the C40 deposit varied quite substantially, ranging from a maximum of 0.25m inside the rock-shelter to a point where it petered out altogether as the bedrock rose outside the rock-shelter. Beyond this point, it reappeared and continued to the end of the trench at a depth of between 80 and 190mm. The surface of C40 was fairly level, and the deposit contained numerous lithic artefacts, a small amount of fragmented shell,

abundant animal bones and a substantial amount of charcoal.

Context 41

C41 was the basal layer of the stratigraphic sequence. The dolerite bedrock was uneven and consisted of angular pieces of rock. The deposit which made up

C41 was present in hollows and cracks within the bedrock surface. It was a red clay-like deposit, quite different from the other deposits recognised within the site. C41 extended along the length of the trench for 3.2m from the rock face, until it petered out 0.8m beyond the drip line representing the rockshelter overhang. The C41 deposit contained numerous lithic artefacts and a few pieces of burnt animal bone.