



## FISHTRAPS near L'AGULHAS

**Abstract from P J HINE'S thesis on his MASTERS of PHILOSOPHY in DEPT ARCHAEOLOGY at UNIV CAPE TOWN, 2008**

This thesis investigated whether or not there is an association between Holocene Later Stone Age shell middens and stone-walled tidal fish traps between CAPE AGULHAS and STILL BAY

These features are known to have a wide distribution, BUT, are particularly densely distributed on the south coast, mainly close to historic settlements.

Previous research on the presence of small species of fish from one archaeological site and sea level data, have suggested that stone fish traps could be as old as ca. 5000 B P.

In this thesis, I investigated the antiquity of fish traps by excavating 4 shell middens located adjacent to fish traps at Cape Agulhas, and analysing the contents of these and 2 previously excavated sites at Still Bay.

Furthermore, archival research was conducted to obtain as much info as possible about patterns of use of fish traps in historic times. In addition, the reports on fish- remains from archeological sites in the Western Cape have been re-evaluated. The results of the archaeological investigation indicated NO ASSOCIATION between the Later Stone Age middens and fish traps and none of the archaeological sites in the literature suggest fishing on a scale normally associated with fish trapping.

In contrast, there was a strong link between the building and use of fish traps amongst historic communities along the south coast. Based on the current evidence a pre-colonial age for the practice of fishing with stone-walled fish traps can no longer be entertained.

Chapt 6 of the research summarised it: the archaeological and historic evidence is discussed and summarised. It is concluded that the archaeological evidence for pre-historic age of the fishtraps along the south coast has been overstated and that the origin of most of the fishtraps can be traced to the late 19, and early 20 century.

Evidence from the archival documents summarised in chapter 5, illustrates the dynamism of fishtraps. This chapter (6) clearly highlights that they were being built, used and torn down during late 19th, early 20th centuries, because of the orders to dismantle all operational fishtraps in the area in 1913. The fishtraps visible today between Cape Agulhas and Still Bay are unlikely to date further back than 1920's or 1930's.

