

Acheulean artefacts – South-western Cape, South Africa

An initial report on stone tool anomalies

A misunderstanding by a grader operator resulted in the unearthing of a possible early stone age tool making site where numerous Acheulean hand axes and more were found.

Also found were several shaped stones – and some shapes as part of a tool.



Selection of hand axes unearthed by grader

The shapes in the stones

Among the many hand axes were several ‘tools’ that were not fit for purpose. They did not have any tool-like shape to them. These were initially put aside as manufacturing ‘mistakes’, but after finding a few animal shaped stones the “odd” stones were re-examined and they took on a whole new meaning.

Among the shapes found are seals, birds and snakes [hooded cobras?]. Eyespots are prominent, as are darkened heads [maybe burnt].

With each heavy rain more artefacts were washed into the drainage ditches and road erosion ditches.

Intense studies of the ‘oddly shaped’ stones uncovered by the grader revealed some interesting anomalies. Shapes of birds, snakes, baboons and seals can be clearly seen. Eyespots are clearly present in many of the potential artefacts. These need further investigation as they are too ‘real’ to discard as natural weathering.

Homo erectus art or naturally shaped

The Acheulean tools and the shaped stones are located in the same area, and the same stone type, indicating they may be may well be from the same time period – between 1.5 and 1 million years ago. This would mean, however, that the shapings / carvings were done by *Homo erectus/ergaster* – which would mean that Homo erectus were cognisant artists.

The road has undergone a lot of changes over the past two years due to heavy use and wash from rain but there are many artefacts available for study.

The following are a few examples of the stones found. There are a great deal more shapes:

The Seal



The 'seal stone': unmistakable shaping. The pose is the exact replica of a Cape fur seal pose. These may have been seen daily by the 'artists' – and even killed for food.

There are many stones in the area that show some form of artistic endeavour. Seals, birds, baboons and snakes are all represented. In many cases the heads have been darkened – by fire or some form of colouring. There are too many of these to be discarded as mere natural shapes.

Mongoose? Mammal?



The eyespot is clearly visible – as is the extended 'snout'

There are a number of these anomalies – work on them is clearly visible but no real practical use determined. The snout is blackened. Is this Acheulean art?

Birds in Stone



Bird shapes are the most common among the stones studied. The 'tool' on the left is 70mm in length and initially considered a digging tool but further studies showed it too blunt to be used for digging. The eyespot indicates a possible example of a bird's head. There is visible gouging around the eyespot indicating it was deliberate. The stone on the right is 45 mm long and the eyespot is clearly visible.

Below is one of several bird shaped stones



Shapes with blackened heads / faces



A number of these animal shapes have been found – with many of them having a blackened face or head [not clearly visible in images].

The Baboon face.



Stone that has been worked but with no real use that can be observed. Even as a core stone it is confusing as the knapping is irregular.



The same piece of rock as above from a different angle shows a baboon face. The face has been 'worked' into the stone

Having studied four core stones in minute detail, baboon faces, and other shapes, have been observed which are certainly not natural weathering.



The above is a side facing profile of a baboon face. The eyespot is clearly visible. The 'tool' serves no purpose that can be deduced, aside from an artistic perspective.

Leigh Kemp – 2025