

Archaeological Site Report	SiteNo	9/2/005/0003
	Site Name	Dias Cross Memorial, Kwaaihoek, Alexandria District
	Date	
	Project	
	CaseNID	
	Coords	-33.718576, 26.624046

Page No: 1 **SiteAutoID:** 29488

Site Category: Monuments & Memorials

SiteComments:

Archive Import History: Bartholomew Diaz, the famous Portuguese navigator and discoverer of the Cape, erected a cross or padrao on 12th March, 1488 at Kwaaihoek. A replica of the cross has been erected on the same bleak, exposed spot, high above the waves breaking unendingly on the rocks below. Bartholomew Diaz left Portugal at the beginning of August, 1487, with two small vessels to search for a sea route to India round the southern extremity of Africa. Like his predecessors he kept close inshore, past Cape Cross, north of Walvis Bay where Diogo Cao had erected a cross to mark the turning-point of his voyage three years before. In January, 1488, Diaz was carried round the Cape by the wind without his knowing it, and eventually made a landfall in the vicinity of Mossel Bay. Showing great courage, he continued his voyage past Algoa Bay to the Rio do Infante, identified as probably the Kowie or the Keiskamma River. Here the unwillingness of his crew to proceed further forced Diaz to turn back, and it was on the return journey that he erected the cross of St. Gregory at Kwaaihoek. The historian Barros records that Diaz watched the cross disappear in the distance with a heavy heart, as if he were leaving behind a son in lonely exile. This cross served the Portuguese navigators as a land mark for more than a century and was frequently mentioned in the records of their voyages but there is no evidence that it was seen after the sixteenth century. Even its exact site became a mystery, but Professor Eric Axelson determined to relocate it. After carefully studying the source material both in this country and in Portugal, he undertook a systematic search at Kwaaihoek. On Saturday, 15th January, 1938, he discovered the first fragments of this historic cross, the oldest relic of European activity in South Africa. Patiently and laboriously he continued to search for several weeks during which he found numerous small fragments, many of them buried deep under the sand, and a few larger pieces in the sea below the 30 metre high cliff. The fragments were taken to the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, where the cross was reconstructed and placed in the library for safe-keeping. Several casts were made of it. One of the casts was erected at Kwaaihoek and unveiled on 20th June, 1940, another was presented to the Government of Portugal, and a third was given to the people of Maputo where it is housed in the museum. Other replicas are displayed in several South African museums. In 1948 an original fragment of the cross was donated to the Portuguese Government. According to Professor Axelson, the cross, like most of the Portuguese padraos stood about 2 metres high and was made of coarse, angular white limestone interspersed with pink veins. The arms of Portugal and an inscription, unfortunately no longer legible, were carved on it. The original padrao was proclaimed in 1939, and the site at Kwaaihoek with the replica on it, in 1945. Visual Description: A minor road turns sharply off to the right from the main road that leads from Alexandria to Bushman's River Mouth; it passes Boknes and comes to an end near the coast. About a kilometre further east from the end of the road, beyond the sand dunes, lies Kwaaihoek, also known as False Island, a high promontory that juts out towards the sea. On top of the headland that extends the furthest Bartholomew Diaz, the famous Portuguese navigator and discoverer of the Cape, erected a cross or padrao on 12th March, 1488. A replica of the cross has been erected on the same bleak, exposed spot. Colours: Site Features: Condition: Construction Date: Materials: Catalogue: , No: , Significance Category:

Damage Types: