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PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE ROGGE BAY CANAL
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

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? date ? 2001

Introduction

On the 9th of February 2001, during excavations for the foundations of the newly proposed Rogge Bay canal at the Cape Town Foreshore, several square-shaped concrete blocks were discovered approximately 4m below the present ground level. The site is situated close to the Waterfront end of the canal development, between the Auto Atlantic BMW dealership and the power station (for exact co-ordinates see end of report). The excavator had removed one of the blocks and placed it on the surface and another block was slightly dislodged from its original position. During the following 10 days, archaeological excavation and archival research took place to investigate the nature of the site.

Site description and artefacts

Additional clearing of overburden and excavation revealed two rows of evenly spaced concrete blocks each row made up of three blocks (see basic site plan at the end of report). As mentioned above, one block was placed on the surface and another was disturbed. The blocks had almost identical measurements (length-91cm, width-91cm and height-72cm) and were cast on a section consisting of big boulders. The two rows were 105cm apart and the blocks within each row were 164cm apart. Parallel to this feature, some 150cm from the nearest row of blocks, a 43cm wide stone wall was discovered. Its highest part was measured to be 3.2m above mean sea level and some 1.5m below the present surface. The length of the wall could not be established, since it extends in an easterly direction beyond the boundaries of the development and its westerly section is yet to be uncovered. Attached to the upper end of the wall was a cement floor possibly extending into the overburden in the direction of the power station, once again outside the development boundaries. Towards the base of the opposite (closer to the concrete blocks) side of the wall and adjacent to it, a 46cm wide and approximately 53cm high concrete ledge was discovered. It also seems to have been cast on top of some of the large boulders. An excavation underneath the ledge to establish the extent of the stone wall into the ground failed due to the presence of the large boulders and ground water. On top of the ledge and also adjacent to the stone wall sat a 26cm wide section of brickwork. Its upper end was uneven and was roughly 75cm above the concrete ledge and 45cm below the end of the stone wall. On the eastern side both the ledge and brickwork end in the same place, while on the western side they continue into the overburden together with the wall.

The artefacts mainly recovered from the site were broken up porcelain, glass and animal bones. Some were recovered from the overburden, but the majority came from the small section excavated underneath the concrete ledge to trace the extent of the stone wall. Soil as well as beach sand was recovered from this section. A portion of the ceramic shards showed abrasion as a result of being submerged in the sea.

Relative dating of the porcelain component of the assemblage showed it to be 19th century specific with the majority of it dating to the second half of the 19th century, some to first half and a very small part possibly to the early 20th century. It is common for Cape Town and does not appear to have come from a single household (Close pers. com.).

Preliminary conclusions

The site discovered by the Rogge Bay Canal development and specifically the stone wall, cement floor, concrete ledge, and brickwork represent the foundation of a building erected on top of one of the first sections of land reclaimed from the sea during the end of the 19th century. Sources such as archival documents and map material held in the Cape Archives and the offices of Portnet, Surveyor General, Cape Town City Engineer and the Deeds Office have so far shed some light on the origin of the site.

Most of the first half of 19th century saw no developments in this area. The original coastline was in front of the Amsterdam Battery, the remains of which are presently on the other side of the entrance to the Waterfront near the City Lodge. The 1840's saw the building of a coaling jetty near the battery some of the remains of which would presently be very near if not underneath the discovered building foundations. Contemporary maps show that by the early 1890's, as a result of the expanding harbour facilities, land reclamation had already started taking place in this area and the jetty was possibly destroyed. The Thom survey of 1898 shows for the first time buildings on this site. They are an ice factory, Skead's Office and Stables and several other smaller buildings. This relatively small block of buildings seems to have changed its name to the North Bay Canning Company some time in the beginning of

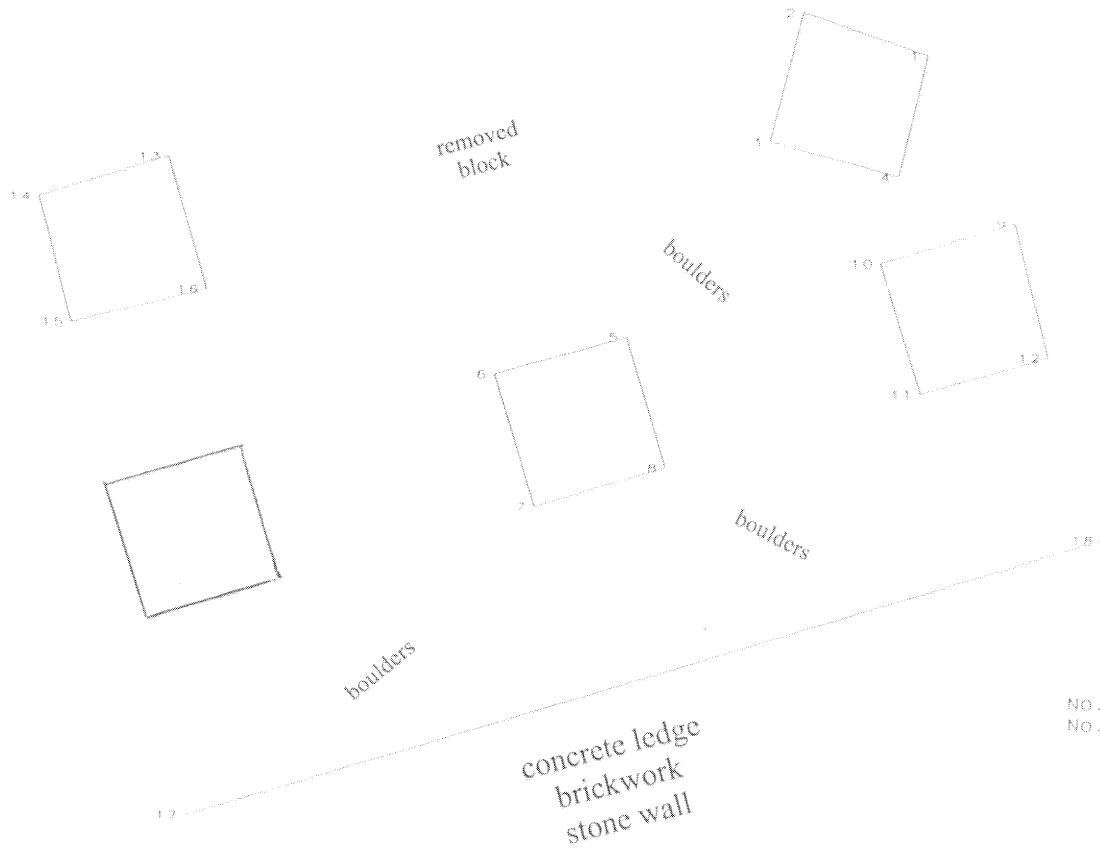
the 20th century and was in existence until the late 1920's and early 1930's when further land reclamation and harbour development took place.

Map overlays and analysis show that the foundations uncovered during the canal excavation most likely belong to the ice factory or one of the smaller buildings. It was built on reclaimed land with its foundations perhaps extending into the old beach-seabed layer. The factory and one of the adjacent buildings was also positioned very close to the newly established water line. The above ties well with the relative dates on the porcelain assemblage, the abrasion and the presence of beach sand. It was common practice for people to discard their household rubbish in the sea or on beaches meaning that the foundations were built on top or in the immediate vicinity of such a dumpsite. The concrete ledge and brickwork possibly represent a more recent patch up job on what might have been a deteriorating foundation (Hart and Halkett pers. com.). The boulders are likely to be part of the landfill. This and the relation between the concrete blocks and the foundations will have to be re-examined as the project progresses and once further excavation takes place on the western side of the site.

Recommendations

1. The site should not be disturbed in any way until further investigation is possible. An exception can only be made in the case of the two remaining concrete blocks of the row, which lies closer to the BMW dealership. These can be removed for the purposes of the canal and placed together with the one already on the surface.
2. As excavation for the canal progresses in a westerly direction, with the assistance of the developer, more investigation should take place to establish the extent of the site.
3. Further historical research should take place in an attempt to acquire more details regarding the factory, offices and smaller buildings.

BASIC SITE PLAN AND CO-ORDINATES



No.	Code	Tag	Y	X
No.	Code	Tag	Y	X
1	nail	statio	53296.650	54201.054
2	1	con	53282.610	54221.963
3	2	con	53283.416	54221.689
4	3	con	53283.642	54222.528
5	4	con	53282.800	54222.752
6	5	con	53284.578	54223.806
7	6	con	53285.441	54224.047
8	7	con	53285.177	54224.922
9	8	con	53284.322	54224.664
10	9	con	53282.047	54223.054
11	10	con	53282.916	54223.318
12	11	con	53282.657	54224.171
13	12	con	53281.827	54223.928
14	13	con	53287.577	54222.631
15	14	con	53288.418	54222.890
16	15	con	53288.199	54223.710
17	16	con	53287.324	54223.496
18	17	wall	53287.453	54226.926
19	18	wall	53281.470	54225.126

DRAWN BY
R. P. ...

FOR
W. B. ...

PROJECT
... ..