

# INITIAL HERITAGE RESOURCES ASSESSMENT OF A PORTION OF LAND AT MILNERTON GOLF COURSE

Prepared for

**Doug Jeffrey**  
**Environmental Consultant**

May 1998



Prepared by

**Archaeology Contracts Office**  
Department of Archaeology  
University of Cape Town  
Private Bag  
Rondebosch  
7701

Phone (021) 650 2357  
Fax (021) 650 2352  
Email [TJG@beattie.uct.ac.za](mailto:TJG@beattie.uct.ac.za)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Archaeology Contracts Office was requested by Doug Jeffrey (Environmental Consultant) to undertake an initial heritage assessment of a portion of Milnerton Golf Course adjacent to Milnerton Lagoon. The area of land that was surveyed comprised the Club House complex to the north of the Light House and about 5 hectares of the Golf Course (Figure1). The area concerned may undergo redevelopment involving cut and fill operations that would negatively impact any buried historical and archaeological material.

## 2. RESTRICTIONS

Most of the area is under cultivated grass. There is also evidence that major earthmoving operations have taken place in the past. The shoreline and coastal dunes are degraded by encroachment of the beach which has moved inland about 90 m in recent years due to changes in ocean current and wave action caused by harbour development in Table Bay. Milnerton Lagoon has undergone periodic dredging with the resulting sediments dumped on land. Major impacts to buried archaeological material may have already taken place.

## 3. METHOD

The area was searched on foot, and historic records as well as work of colleagues were consulted to obtain historical information that may assist with this assessment.

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1 Built structures

These include the recent club house and golfing facilities. None of these are protected by heritage legislation nor are they conservation worthy on architectural or historical merit.

### 4.2 Shipwrecks

Many hundreds of shipwrecks lie in the shallow waters of Table Bay, especially on what used to be Woodstock Beach and extending northwards around the edge of Table Bay towards Milnerton. At that time the Milnerton Lagoon was part of the massive Salt River Estuary and Paarden Island complex. According to Durden (1992) this water body stretched from what is now Duncan Dock to Rietvlei. It was semi-navigable and ships were careened in the mouth of the river. Unfortunately the lagoon close to Milnerton was dredged to a depth of 2 m in 1985 and the resulting material used to raise the Woodbridge Island development. Any material in the lagoon is likely to have been destroyed.

The historic shipwreck database housed at the Offices of the National Monuments Council has records of 5 ships having been wrecked on Milnerton Beach in the vicinity of the survey area. Most of these are well off the beach and will not be impacted by development activities. The only possible exception is the wreck of the *Nieuw Haerlem* (1647) which was stranded at an unknown location on the east shore of Table Bay. The survivors built a camp and fortification where they resided for almost a year before being transported back to Holland. It was as a result of good reports about the Cape by these survivors that the Dutch decided to set up a permanent station at Table Bay under Jan Van Riebeeck. Despite the efforts of historians and archaeologists, the site of the camp and the wreck has never been found.



Any development activity between Milnerton and Rietvlei has the potential to impact this extremely important site.

### **4.3 Graves**

The shores of Table Bay are peppered with graves of shipwrecked sailors and aboriginal Khoi Khoi or San people. Archaeologists from both UCT, the South African Museum and Cultural history Museum have had occasion to disinter a number of un-marked burials, especially in the vicinity of the mouth of the Milnerton Lagoon. There is a very real possibility the buried graves may be encountered during earthmoving operations in this area. In the event of this happening the material should be disturbed as little as possible until an archaeologist is immediately appointed to remove human skeletal material.

### **4.4 Prehistoric sites**

Shell middens are more common close to rocky shorelines. There is a possibility that some may exist below dune sand in the development area. It is more likely that they may have been impacted by previous earthmoving on the site.

### **4.5 Palaeontological material**

Extinct marine shell species were observed from sediments dredged from Milnerton Lagoon. Furthermore, there is a Pleistocene beach level preserved under the shoreline dunes extending inland (Avery pers comm). Deep cuttings will expose this material and impact palaeontological sediments.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

It would appear that parts of the land in question have already been subject to major impacts. There is a possibility that palaeontological material, graves, shipwreck material and possibly middens may have survived provided that they have been deeply buried enough to escape previous impacts. To mitigate this it is suggested that the following measures be put into action to minimise any possible damage that may take place during development activities:

1. An archaeologist should be appointed to monitor all periods of the construction phase that involve bulk earthmoving operations.
2. A contingency budget should be aside to bring an archaeological/palaeontological team on site to rescue any material that may be exposed during the earthmoving. This should be in the order of R 50 000.00 in terms of 1998 costs.

## **6. REFERENCE**

Durden, T. 1992. An assessment of the maritime archaeological potential of Table Bay 1806 - 1900. Unpublished BA (Hons) thesis, University of Cape Town.

## **7. PROFESSIONAL TEAM**

Survey and Report

Tim Hart  
Belinda Mütti

I would like to thank Dr G. Avery (South African Museum) and Mr J. Gribble (National Monuments Council) for their input.