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**DESK TOP ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY
MILNERTON LAGOON MOUTH TO
DOLPHIN BEACH**

Prepared for

OVP ASSOCIATES

By

Agency for Cultural Resource Management
P. O. Box 159
Riebeeck West
7306
Ph/fax: 022 461 2755
Email: gillker@iafrica.com

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Executive summary

Only two archaeological sites have been mapped along the beach front from the Milnerton Lighthouse to the Dolphin Beach Hotel. The area, however, has not been systematically searched for archaeological sites.

It was reported in the late 1960's that numerous sites occurred in an almost continuous stretch among a large dune ridge from Paarden Eiland to Melkbosstrand. It is estimated that more than 90% of these sites have since been destroyed as a result of recreational and residential development.

At least four human burials have been excavated in the study area, or have been exposed as a result of dune erosion.

Fossils of Miocene and Pliocene age, and Early Stone Age tools have been recovered from the beach at the Milnerton Lagoon Mouth.

Late Pleistocene fossil shells have also been recovered from the calcareous platform at the base of the primary dunes at Milnerton Lagoon Mouth.

Shipwreck remains dating to the time of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) rule have been found washed up on the shore at Milnerton Lagoon Mouth and Milnerton Beach.

The remaining archaeological and palaeontological heritage of the beach front from Milnerton Lagoon Mouth to the Dolphin Beach Hotel is a sensitive, fragile and non-renewable cultural resource. Once this heritage has been destroyed, it can never be recovered. Proposed land-use must therefore be controlled in order to minimise further destruction and damage to cultural resources, by the integration of protective measures into the planning and development policies, and the active participation of the public.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and brief

The Agency for Cultural Resource Management has been requested by OVP Associates to identify archaeological and historical aspects to be considered in the preparation of a beach front management plan from the Milnerton Lighthouse to Dolphin Beach.

The aim of the desktop study is to assess the archaeological significance of the coastline extending northwards from the Milnerton Lighthouse to the Dolphin Beach Hotel.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference for the desktop archaeological study were:

1. to provide a general description of archaeological sites in the area under discussion, and
2. to assess the archaeological sensitivity of the area under discussion.

3. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE STUDY AREA

Four types of archaeological site are likely to occur in the study area. These include shell middens, open sites, fossil sites, and human burials. Shipwrecks also occur, but these are located offshore.

3.1 Shell middens

Shell middens are predominantly located on or close to exposed rocky headlands and dunes. They vary in size from hundreds of square meters in extent and several meters deep, to a small pile of shell and one or two pieces of stone. They represent the accumulation of food debris from groups visiting or living close to the coast and exploiting the abundant marine resource, predominantly shellfish. Human burial remains are also occasionally found in midden deposits.

The majority of shell middens are attributed to the Later Stone Age¹ (LSA).

3.2 Open sites

Open sites attributed to the LSA are usually found between dunes or behind dune ridges (which afforded protection), and are often referred to as deflated sites. They are usually fairly large in extent, with artefacts and features including stone tools, pottery,

¹ a term referring to the last 20 000 years of pre colonial history in southern Africa.

beads, and occasionally bone, shell and hearths. Structures such as grass huts would not have survived. Open sites have been located south of Milnerton Lagoon Mouth (Kaplan 1995).

Rudner (1968) reported numerous shell middens and open sites in an almost continuous stretch among a large dune ridge from Paarden Eiland to Melkbosstrand. It is estimated that more than 90% of these sites have since been lost as a result of land reclamation, and residential and recreational development.

3. 3 Fossils

According to Avery (1995), for decades the mouth of the Milnerton Lagoon has yielded fossil bones and Early Stone Age² (ESA) tools, which have been washed up. A number of important fossil occurrences are preserved on this region of this coast. Current sea level is also eroding a hard calcareous platform at the base of the primary dunes at Milnerton Lagoon mouth and a variety of Late Pleistocene marine mollusc fossils have been recorded.

Fossils of Miocene and/or Pliocene age (12-3 million years), when the sea level was over 40 m above the present, have been recovered from the beach at the Milnerton Lagoon mouth (Avery 1995).

3.4 Burials

At least four indigenous and non-indigenous human burials have been recovered from the dunes at Milnerton and south of the Milnerton Lagoon mouth (Abrahams 1983; Graham Avery, South African Museum, pers. comm.).

3.5 Shipwrecks

According to Bruno Werz (pers. comm.) of the Department of Archaeology, University of Cape Town, up to 15 early shipwreck sites are located in Table Bay, and north of the mouth of the old Salt River. These include the wreck of the Nieuw Haerlem (1647) and the Oosterland (1697). Although wrecks are obviously located offshore, cultural artefacts originating from wrecks have been located at Milnerton Lagoon mouth, and south of the lighthouse (Bruno Werz, pers. comm.).

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND PALAEOANTHROPOLOGICAL SENSITIVITY

The archaeological and palaeontological sensitivity of the beach front from the Milnerton Lighthouse to the Dolphin Beach Hotel is considered to be high.

² a term referring to the period between 2 million and 200 000 years ago.

5. LEGISLATION

All archaeological, palaeontological and historical sites including shipwrecks are protected by the National Monuments Act (Act No. 28 of 1969 as amended). It is an offence to disturb, remove or destroy from its original site, or excavate any such site without a permit from the National Monuments Council.

Human burial remains are also protected under the National Monuments Act, and the Human Tissues Act.

6. CONCLUSION

The remaining archaeological and palaeontological heritage of the beach front between Milnerton Lagoon Mouth and Dolphin Beach is a sensitive, fragile and non-renewable cultural resource. Once this heritage has been destroyed, it can never be recovered. Proposed land-use must therefore be controlled in order to minimise further destruction and damage to cultural resources, by the integration of protective measures into the planning and development policies, and the active participation of the public.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

With regard to the preparation of a management plan from the Milnerton Lighthouse to Dolphin Beach, the following archaeological recommendations have been made:

1. Archaeological and palaeontological aspects must be considered in all urban development and recreational planning proposals for the study area.
2. A systematic search for archaeological and palaeontological sites should be made along the beach front from the Milnerton Lighthouse to the Dolphin Beach Hotel.

8. REFERENCES

- Abrahams, G. 1983. the report on human skeletal remains and associated artefacts from Milnerton beach, Cape Province. South African Archaeological Bulletin 38:33-35.
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