

PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE “EK GREEN BLOCK”

Erven 493, 484, 485, & 486 Somerset Road, Green Point, Cape Town

Prepared for

Paradise Creek Inv (PTY)

June 2006



Prepared by

**Genevieve Dewar
Tim Hart**

Archaeology Contracts Office

Department of Archaeology
University of Cape Town
Private Bag
Rondebosch
7701

Phone (021) 650 2357

Fax (021) 650 2352

Email gendewar@mweb.ca.za

TJG@age.uct.ac.za

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
2. Method.....	3
3. Results.....	7
3.1 Trench A – the Glassfit Centre	7
3.2 Trench B – the Bronx	8
4. Conclusions	11
5. Recommendations	11
6. Field Team.....	11
7. References	12

1. Introduction

The Archaeology Contracts Office of the University of Cape Town was contracted by Paradise Creek Inv (Pty), to conduct an archaeological assessment of the “EK Green block” bounded by Somerset road, Napier, Dixon, and Jarvis streets in Cape Town. (Figure 1). The property is on potentially archaeologically sensitive land that falls within the provisionally protected Green Point Burial Area (Government Notice 1808 of 2005), which requires a Phase 1 archaeological impact assessment to be submitted to SA Heritage Resources Agency (SARHA) for their endorsement. A full HIA for the site was conducted by CS design Architects and Heritage Consultants in January 2006, which was submitted to Paradise Creek Inv (PTY). A phase 1 archaeological assessment of the EK Green site was conducted between the 12th and 14th of June, 2006 and involved the excavation of two test trenches (trench A and trench B) down to bedrock (Figure 1).

2. Method

Since the entire block is currently leased to active businesses, there were very few areas that were available for trial excavation. After an initial site inspection in the company of Mr Paul Moxley, it was apparent that only two possible sites were available. These were the Glassfit premises on Somerset Road, and in the Courtyard of the Bronx Action Bar on the corner of Somerset and Napier Streets. Being as close as we could get to Somerset Road (an area of known sensitivity), we felt that these localities provided the best chance of establishing if there were human remains on the site.

Test trenches A (Glassfit) and B (The Bronx) were capped with a thick layer of fine-grained cement, requiring jackhammers to remove. The trenches measured 1 x 2 meters in length and were excavated to bedrock using picks and spades (Figure. 2). The profiles were recorded and photographed, afterwhich the excavations were made good.

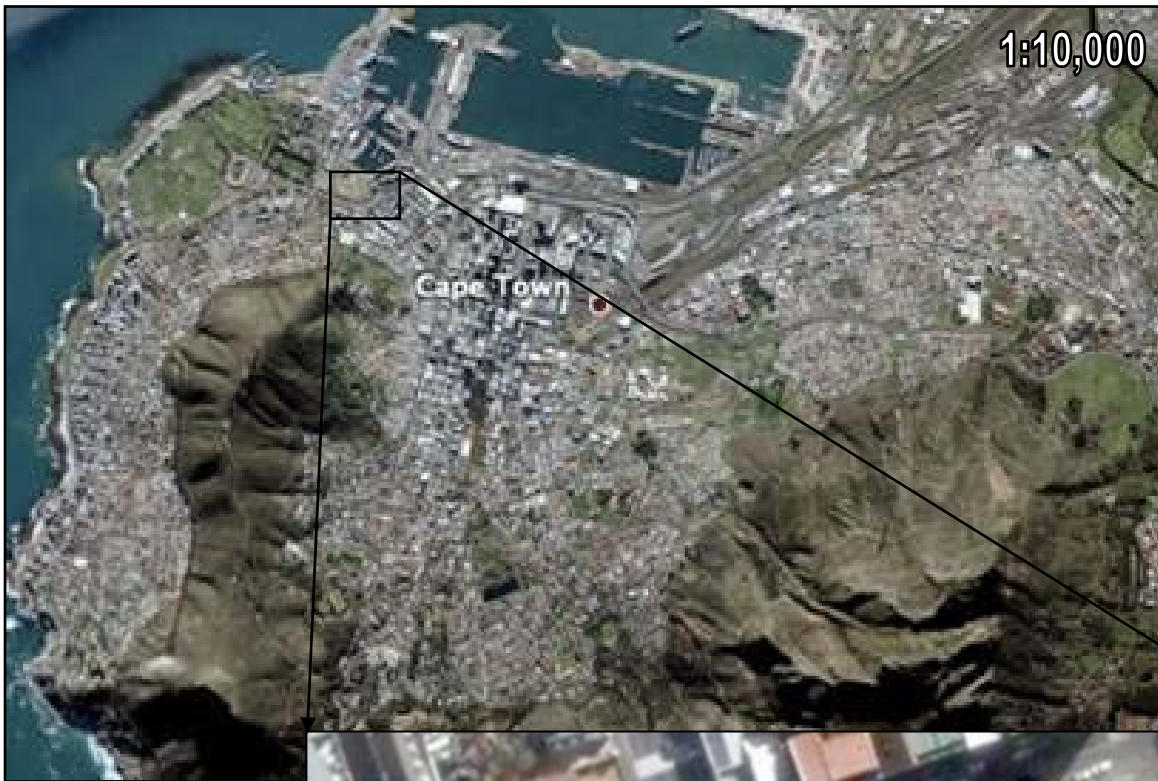


Figure 1

Map showing EK Green site, bounded by Somerset, Napier, Dixon, and Jarvis streets (within the dashed lines). The right-hand photo points to the position of trenches A and B. Nearby is the site of Prestwich Place, which turned out to be an informal burial ground. (Photos taken from Google Earth)





Figure 2.

The trenches were excavated by hand using picks and spades.

The top photo was taken facing southwest looking into trench A, just after using the jackhammer to get through two layers of cement. The photo on the right was taken facing northeast looking into trench B, excavating through the gravel and sand immediately beneath the cement cap. (Photos by G. Dewar).



Figure 3.

The top photo is a picture of one off the red clay bricks with grey mortar removed from the brick fill in trench A. The photo on the right was taken facing south, and shows the position of trench A, on top of a 05m rise, that slopes down towards Somerset road, which is directly to the left in the photo. (Photos were taken by G. Dewar).



3. Results

3.1 Trench A – the Glassfit Centre

This is located in the interior to the entrance of the Glassfit Centre at 27 Somerset Road with the length of the trench running parallel to the street. The trench is positioned on a raised floor, 0.5m above street level (Figure. 3). The concrete cap is 10 cm thick on top of a thin layer of builder’s sand and gravel (Figures 4&5). Immediately beneath the concrete flooring is a fill constructed of red clay bricks, grey mortar, and builder’s sand. The fill consists of three layers of bricks and is poorly constructed as there are many large pockets of sand (Figures 4&5). The brick fill was built on a sloping floor (Figures 3&4), but levels off at its surface: it is 29 cm thick on the east side of the trench and 18 cm thick on the west side of the trench (Figures. 4&5). The grey colour of the mortar places the raising of the floor level after 1920, (when local Portland cement came into use). The bricks are a standard size at 23 x 11 x 9.5 cm, and there is no evidence of a frog. Beneath the brick fill is another old cement floor 21 cm thick. In fact, the old floor is made up of a 9 cm fine-grained cement cap on top of a 12 cm crude and coarse concrete layer with slate and brick inclusions. The old concrete floor also slopes down towards Somerset road, with a difference of 6 cm between the east and west sides of the trenches (Figure. 4). Below the old floor is a layer of red brown sandy clay with brick and quartz fragments. This red brown layer is 14 cm on the east side of the trench and 17 cm on the west side of the trench. The final layer is decomposed Malmesbury shale bedrock, a streaky hard layer of yellow, red brown and grey clay. The bedrock is also on a slope so that 25 cm on the east side and 33 cm on the west side of the trench were excavated. The floor of the trench is 1.01m in depth from the surface.

Figure 4.

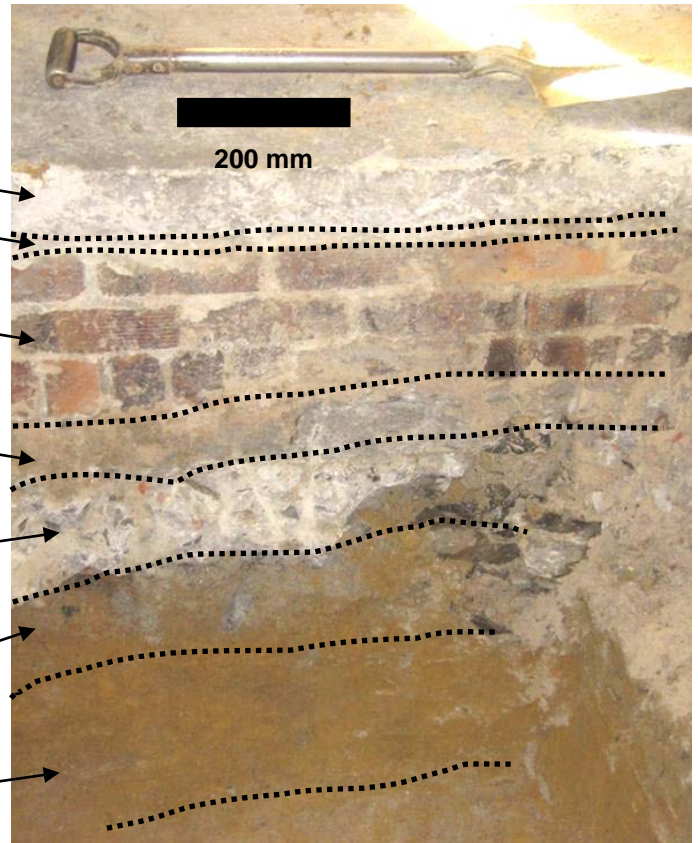
The south profile of trench A. Note the downward slope in the lowermost layers. The total depth to the floor of the trench is 1.01m from the surface.

East side		West side
10cm	Concrete cap	12cm
2cm	Gravel and Sand	4cm
29cm	Brick mound	18cm
	Fine concrete	4cm
9cm		11cm
	Coarse concrete	
16cm		17cm
	Red brown sandy clay	
14cm		
	Bedrock	
25cm		33cm



Figure 5. The east profile of trench A shows the three layers of bricks that constructed the mound. The total depth to the floor of the trench is 1.01m from the surface.

Concrete cap	10cm	→
Gravel and sand	2cm	→
Brick mound	29cm	→
Fine concrete	9cm	→
Coarse concrete	16cm	→
Red brown sandy clay	14cm	→
Bedrock	25cm	→



3.2 Trench B – the Bronx

This is located in the back yard of The Bronx Action Bar at 31 Somerset Road. The trench is also 1 x 2 meters in length, running parallel to Somerset road. The concrete surface was fairly thin at 5cm (Figure. 6). Immediately beneath the concrete was a horizontal layer of sand and gravel 15 cm thick, most likely laid as base material for the concrete surface (Figures. 6&7). Following the sand and gravel is a dark fill layer of decomposing red brick within a dark brown organic matrix that is 17cm thick in the east profile (Figure. 7), but is interrupted by a pocket of red rubble fill in the north profile (Figure. 6). The bricks in the organic layer do not form a structure, and probably arrived as refuse during construction or demolition, or were used as fill to level off the yard. Only four complete red bricks were identified, measuring 22.5cm x 10.5cm x 7cm, lacking frogs, similar in form to those bricks removed from trench A. There was no evidence of mortar, suggesting that the bricks were never used and may be remains of excess bricks from a previous construction event. The red rubble pocket identified within the organic layer with brick fragments is 4cm thick and consists of extensively decomposed red brick, building rubble, and pieces of thin metal amongst sand and clay (Figures. 6 & 7). Beneath these layers is yellow beach sand, most likely a remnant of the Holocene sand dune, referred to in the Historical Impact Assessment (CS Design Architects & Heritage Consultants 2006). The beach sand is 60cm thick at the north end of the trench, however the east profile shows a thin layer of intermixing between the sand dune and a second, more substantial red rubble fill that truncates the sand dune (Figure. 7). This substantial red rubble fill has the same matrix as the small pocket found 14 cm above. A hole was excavated into the sand dune and the building refuse was dumped

inside. Eventually, the red rubble layer merges into grey/yellow clay with quartz and ferricrete nodules and quarried shale blocks. Finally, bright yellow streaky hard clay/ bedrock (decomposed Malmsbury shale) was reached at 97 cm beneath the surface and verified by excavating a further 8cm into it.

Figure 6.

The north profile of trench B. The total depth to the floor of the trench is 1.1m from the surface. The layers were laid down horizontally unlike trench A.

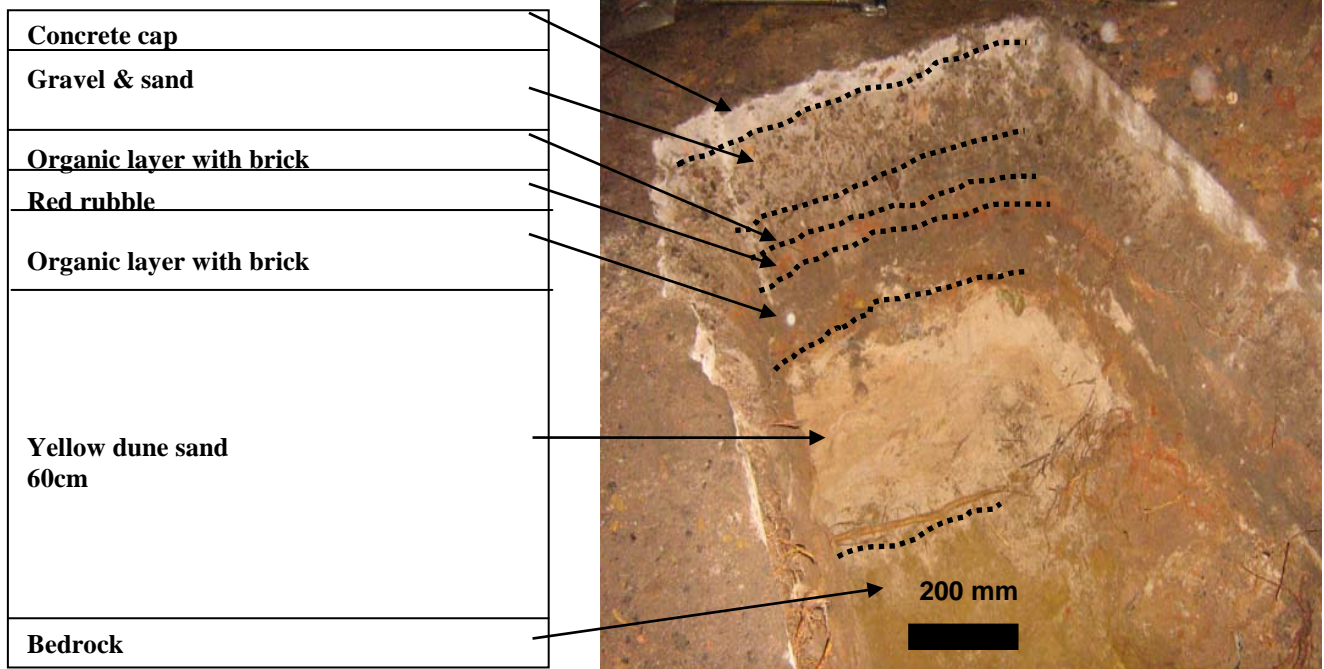
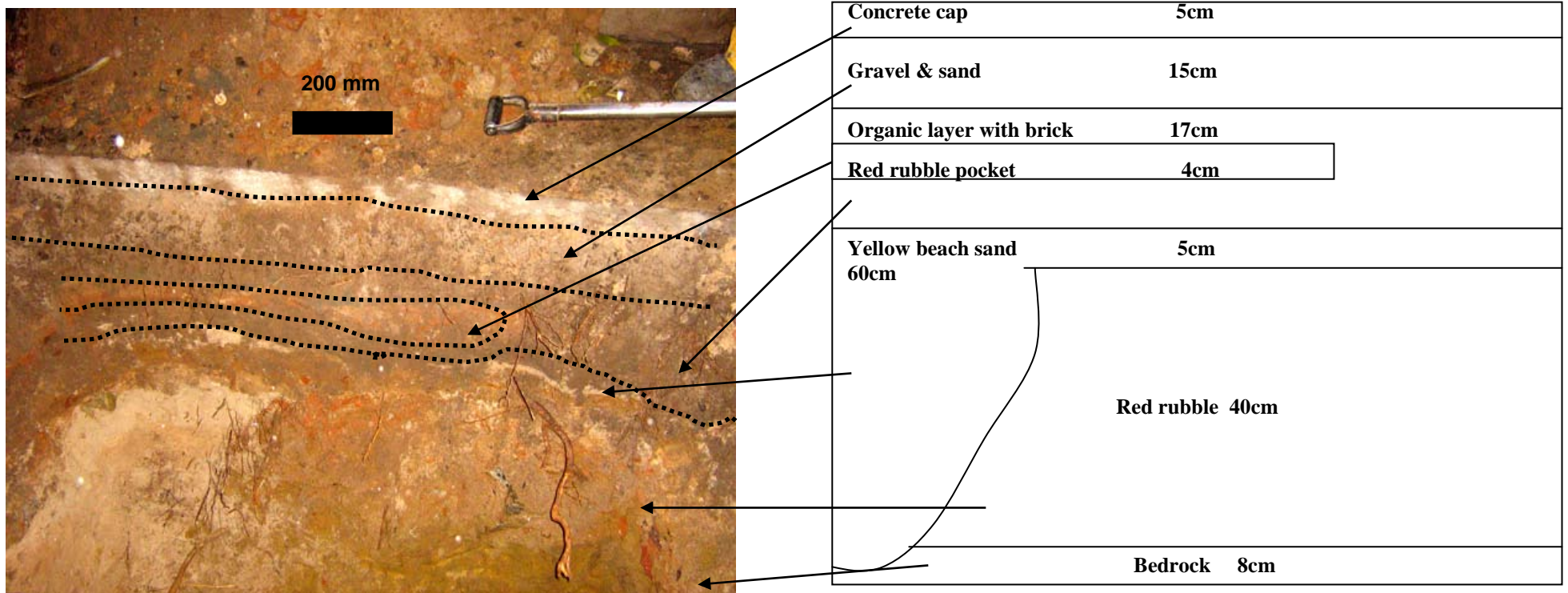


Figure 7. The east profile of trench B. The total depth to the floor of the trench is 1.1m from the surface.



4. Conclusions

The excavation of trench A identified a layer of building rubble intermixed with sand and clay on top of the bedrock, which was superimposed by an old concrete floor. The old concrete floor is at the same level as the currently exposed floor at the Glassfit centre, although the old floor slopes down towards Somerset road. On top of the old floor is a brick rubble fill, which is covered with gravel and sand and capped with a second concrete floor. The fill acts to level out the floor and may have been constructed for just that purpose.

Trench B identified numerous layers of building refuse, with a large component of decomposed brick, hence the red colour of the trench. A large red rubble deposit truncates the Holocene sand dune that lies directly on top of the bedrock. There are at least two other layers of building refuse on top of the sand dune. These deposits could have been laid down minutes or years after each other. The topmost rubble layer has an organic component, most likely due to the trees growing beside the trench. Eventually, the back yard of the Bronx Action Bar was covered in a cement floor.

The test excavation of two trenches failed to identify anything of archaeological importance at the EK Green site. In particular, there was no evidence of human burials. Of interest is the fact that decomposed shales occur at shallow depths and that there are no substantial sand bodies. This contrasts with the lower parts of Green Point where sand bodies were more extensive, and clearly used in historical times as convenient places for establishing grave yards.

This, and other work that has taken place in De Waterkant area above Somerset Road demonstrates that these areas do not appear to be archaeologically sensitive due to the shallow depths of hard clays and bedrock. It is clear that the dominant factor that dictated the presence of the informal burial grounds in Green Point were old dune bodies and beach sands that were easily dug by hand.

5. Recommendations

Trial excavations have shown that the block does not appear to contain any human remains or any other archaeological material. Given that the areas where trial excavations could take place were very restricted, it is not possible to guarantee this fact, but it is certainly appropriate to conclude that the level of sensitivity is far less than in the lower areas of Green Point adjacent to Prestwich Street. The shallow levels of hard clays in both excavations support this finding. It is suggested that SAHRA permit the proponent to engage in bulk excavation where needed provided that:

- an archaeologist is appointed to monitor bulk excavation and if necessary be allowed to apply for an emergency exhumation permit if any human remains are identified.

6. Field Team

Field work: Genevieve Dewar and Tim Hart
Report: Genevieve Dewar

7. References

CS Design Architects & Heritage Consultants January 2006. Erven 493, 484, 485, & 486
Somerset Road Cape Town. HIA stage 1: Heritage Statement & Design Informants. Cape
Town