PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF

Alfred Street and Prestwich Street, Green Point, Cape Town

Prepared for

Municipality of Cape Town

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Prepared by

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1. Introduction

The Archaeology Contracts Office was approached by the Municipality of Cape Town to conduct a test survey ahead of trench work to install electrical lines for new high-rise buildings in the area. Proposed routes include Somerset road between Buitengracht and Alfred, the south side of Alfred from Somerset to the overpass, and the west side of Prestwich Street from Alfred to Buitengracht (Fig 1). Currently, the plan is to install the lines at 600 - 800 mm below surface, however there are previous service trenches following the exact route (against the curb). As the likelihood of hitting 11kv cables in the old service trenches is high, the use of previous trenches was avoided when doing the trial excavations. Previous archaeological excavations in this neighbourhood identified the area as an informal burial ground (Hart 2003), now called the Green Point Burial Area. The area has been subject to provisional proclamation as a National Heritage Site requiring Phase 1 archaeological impact assessments to be submitted to SA Heritage Resources Agency (SARHA) for their endorsement ahead of any major work (Government Notice 1808 of 2005).

2. Method

Recent archaeological test excavations conducted by the Archaeology Contracts Office at the St. Andrews church yard and the EK Green building site on Somerset road (Dewar & Hart 2006) from Buitengracht Street to Napier Road, have indicated that Somerset Road is relatively clear of burials (mostly un-articulated remains). This work focussed on Alfred and Prestwich Streets which we anticipated in the light of our recent findings to be the most sensitive. Three test trenches per road were excavated by pick axe and shovel (Fig. 2). The test holes were excavated down to one meter below surface when possible, recorded photographically, and backfilled.

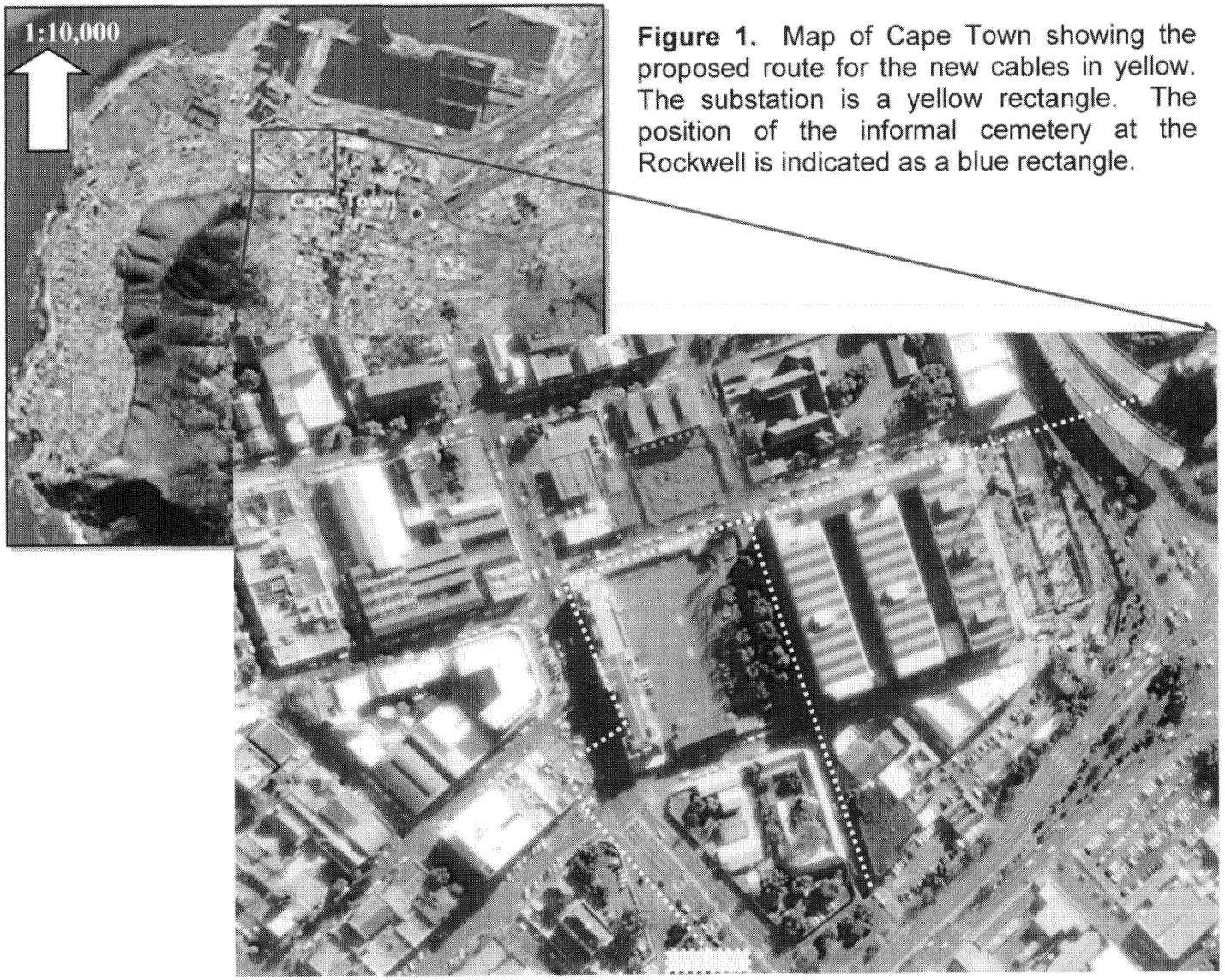


Figure 1. Map of Cape Town showing the proposed route for the new cables in yellow. The substation is a yellow rectangle. The position of the informal cemetery at the Rockwell is indicated as a blue rectangle.

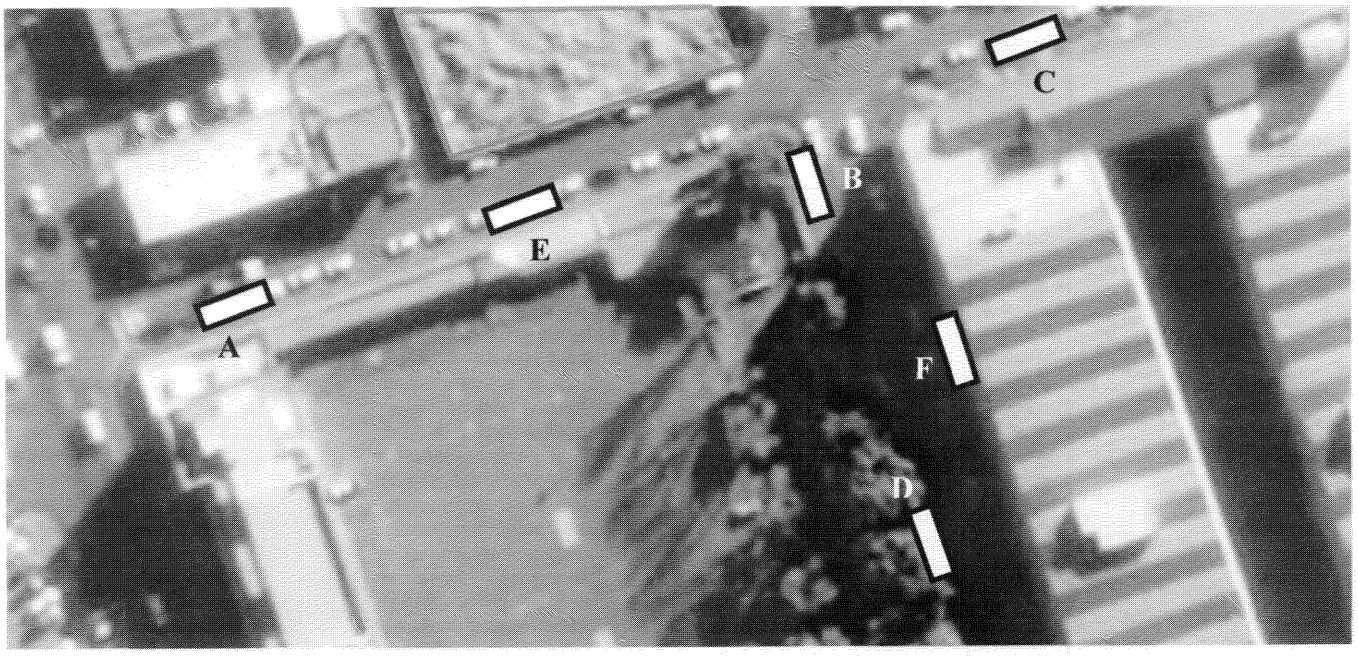


Figure 2. The picture below is a close up picture of the above area in Green Point. The photo shows the position of the test trenches. Trenches B, D, and E contained human remains.

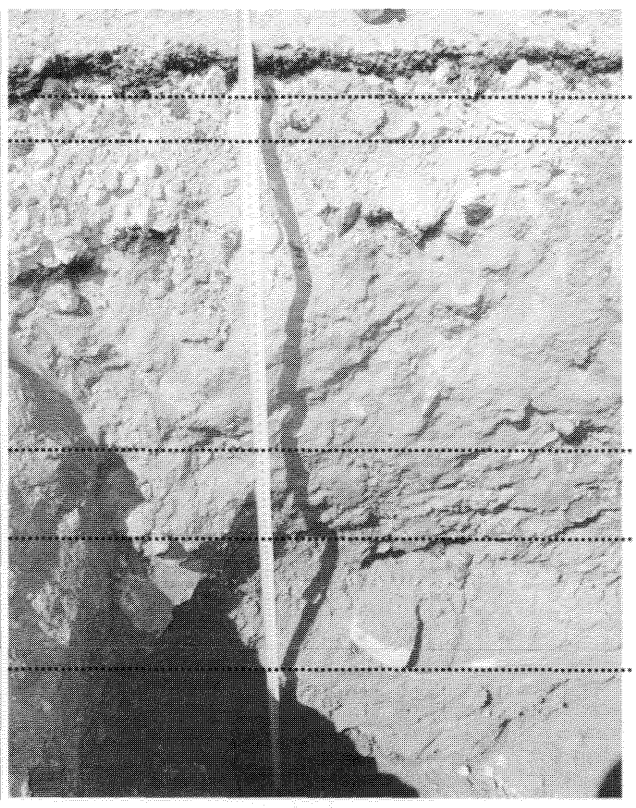
3. Results

Test trench A

The first test hole is 2 x 1 meter trench located in the pedestrian sidewalk on the south side of Alfred, 12 m east of Somerset Road, and 1 meter from the old service trench at the curb (Fig 3). The trench is capped by tar and gravel. Below the sidewalk materials is a layer of brown sand with fragments of gravel, tar, and coal. Subsequent to this disturbed layer is an intrusive layer of bedrock, or hard yellow clay with ferruginous nodules. At the base of the intrusive bedrock, is a layer of cobbles and a horizontal footing, suggesting that the bedrock was thrown on top of an old cobble walkway or street? Below the cobbles is red brown sand that continues all the way to the base of the trench at 1 meter below surface.

Figure 3. The south section of test trench A.
The total depth is 1.0 meter.

Tar and sub-base	80 mm
Fill with fragments of tar, coal and rubble	400 mm
Yellow clays	100 mm
Cobbles and rubble	80 mm
Red brown sand	340 mm



Test trench B

The second test hole is a 2 x 1meter trench located on Prestwich Street, 8 meters south of Alfred (Fig 4) and one meter west of the old service trench and the curb. The top of the trench was capped with a tar and gravel layer, followed by the same layer of brown sand with gravel, tar, and coal identified in test trench A. Immediately beneath the red sand is a layer of light brown sand. This particular sand layer is a southerly extension of the same Holocene dune sand that the majority of the informal burials were located within, only 20 meters to the north (Hart 2005). Indeed, we identified a disturbed burial at the interface with the next layer, a grey sand layer with shellfish fragments. The edge of the burial that was visible consists of legs, a pelvis, and some finger bones, oriented in an east-west direction, with the head to the east. The burial is in the southwest corner of the trench and seems to continue the wall, if intact. Beneath the grey sand, we hit bedrock.

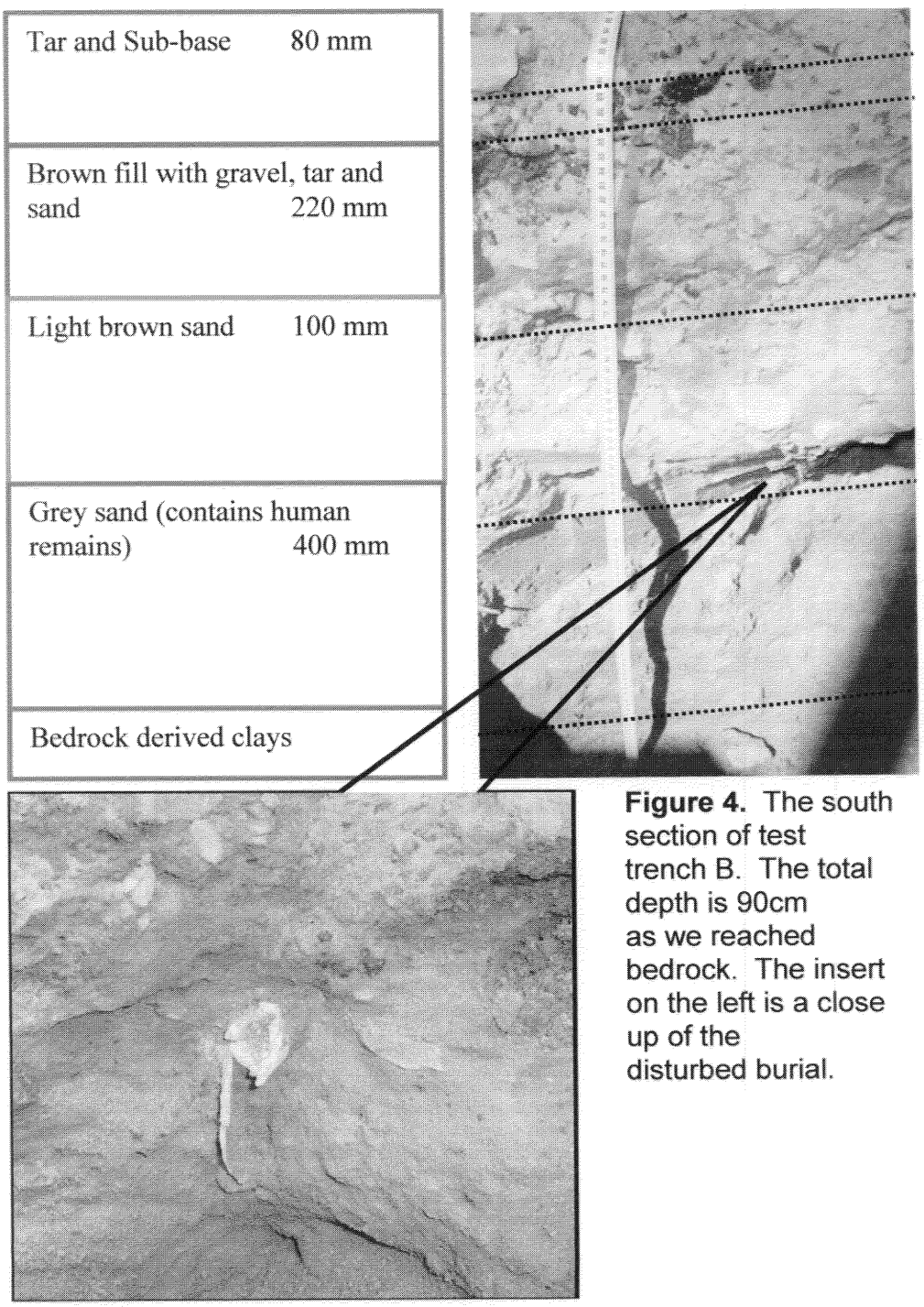


Figure 4. The south section of test trench B. The total depth is 90cm as we reached bedrock. The insert on the left is a close up of the disturbed burial.

Test trench C

Tar and sub-base	80 mm
Brick red sand and gravel	150 mm
Yellow clay	180 mm
Gravel	50 mm
Red brown sand	500 mm
Services	

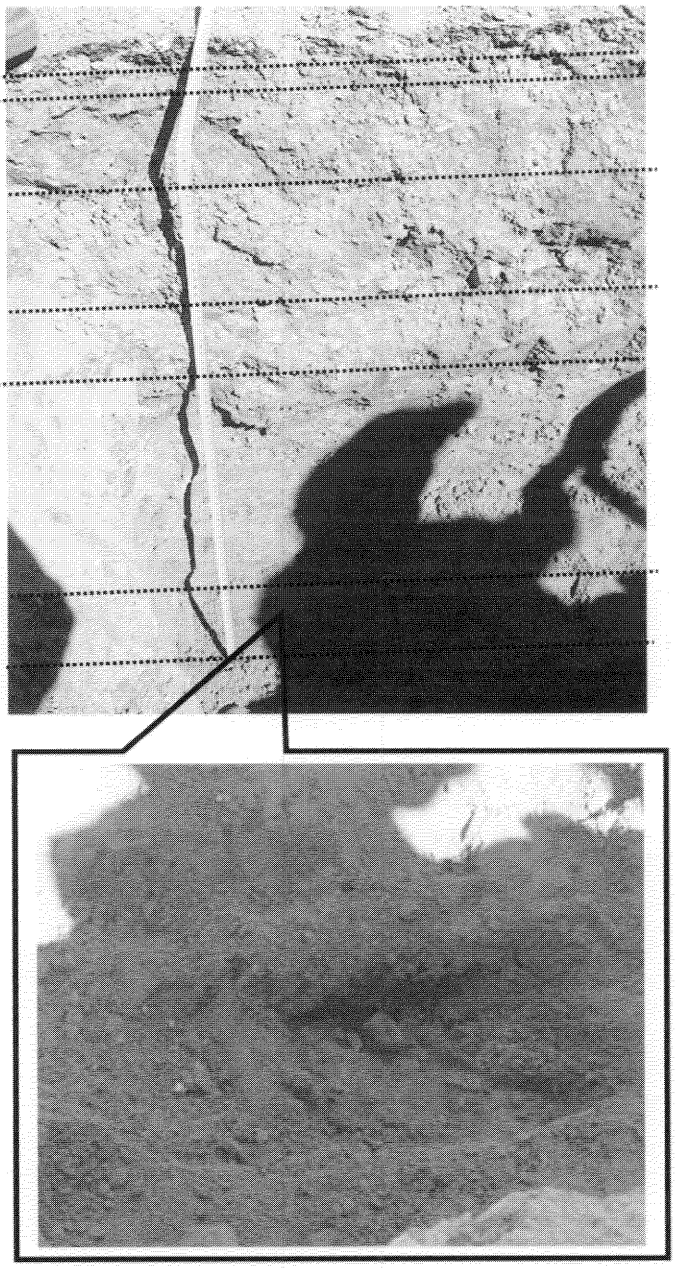


Figure 5.

The south section of test trench C. The total depth is 1.06 meters. The pictureon the right is a close up of the metal pipesfou nd at the base of the trench.

The third test hole is a 1.5 x 1.5 meter trench located on Alfred Street, 10 meters west of Prestwich Street, on the south sidewalk, 0.5 meters from the curb, against the old service trench. The sidewalk consisted of tar and gravel layers, followed by brick red sediment with gravel fragments (Fig. 5). This red layer was followed by a reversal layer of yellow clay bedrock and a layer of gravel. This reversal suggests that the sidewalk has been excavated in the past and we are seeing the results of backfilling. Below the clay and the gravel layers is a red sand layer that had a pocket, 50cm x 50 cm of fine gravel, sheep bone, and refined earthenware. The ceramic is transfer ware with an indigo flower pattern. At the base of the red sand layer, we identified two old water pipes running in an east-west direction. The presence of the pipes explains the reversal of the sediment, why the bedrock is above a disturbed layer of refuse. Further survey of the area identified a manhole at the corner of Alfred and Prestwich Street.

Test trench D

The fourth test hole is a 2 x 1 meter trench located on Alfred, 20 meters west of Prestwich Street, on the south sidewalk, 0.5 meters from the curb and touching the edge of the old service trench. This sediment in this trench is heavily disturbed (Fig. 6). The sidewalk consists of a tar and a gravel layer. The following layer is the same brown sand with gravel, tar, and coal seen in test trenches A and B. At the base of this layer are cobbles, similar to test trench A. Beneath the fill is the grey sand layer found in test trench B. In the grey sand, a pair of in situ human legs was identified, laying in a north-south orientation with the head to the north. This indicates that if intact, the torso and head of this burial is under the old service trench.

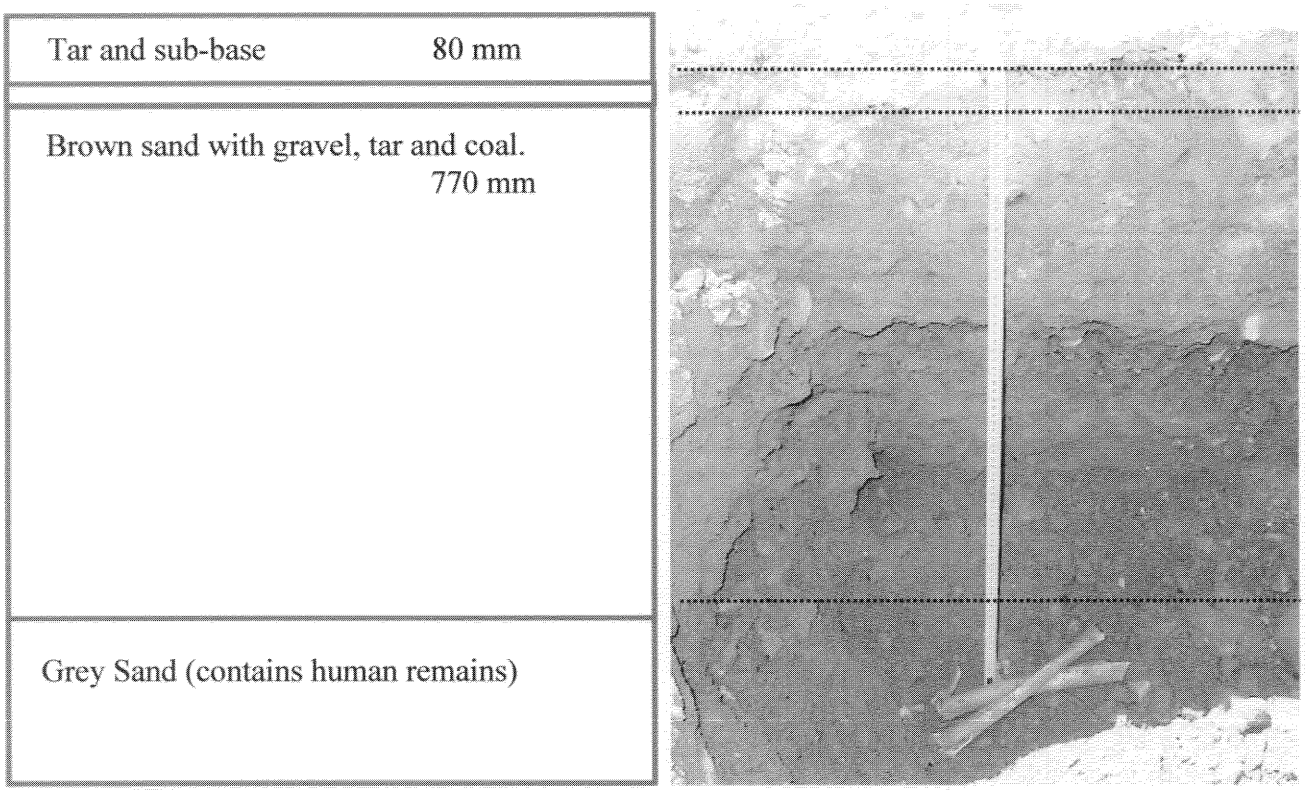


Figure 6. The east section of test trench D. The total depth is 90cm, as we found a burial at this depth. The legs of the burial are clear in the photo of the section

Test trench E

The fifth test hole is a 2 x 2 meter trench located on Prestwich Street, 40 meters south of test trench B, and 1 meter west of the curb. The sidewalk consists of the typical tar and gravel layers (Fig. 7). Beneath the sidewalk is the same brown sand with gravel, tar, and coal identified in trench A, B, and D. Following the fill layer is brown sand with fragments of shale, similar to the material used to build the old cemetery wall beside the trench. Eventually, the brown sand grades into sterile sand, followed by the grey sand identified in trenches B, and D. An in situ burial was identified in the northeast corner of the trench. A human skull was found surrounded by a coffin line and in situ coffin nails. The burial is oriented in an east-west direction with the head to the west. If left intact, the majority of the burial is beneath the old service trench.

Tar and sub-base	80 mm
Brown sand with gravel, tar and coal	300 mm
Brown sand with shale fragments	100 mm
Sterile brown sand	90 mm
Grey sand (contains human remains)	470 mm

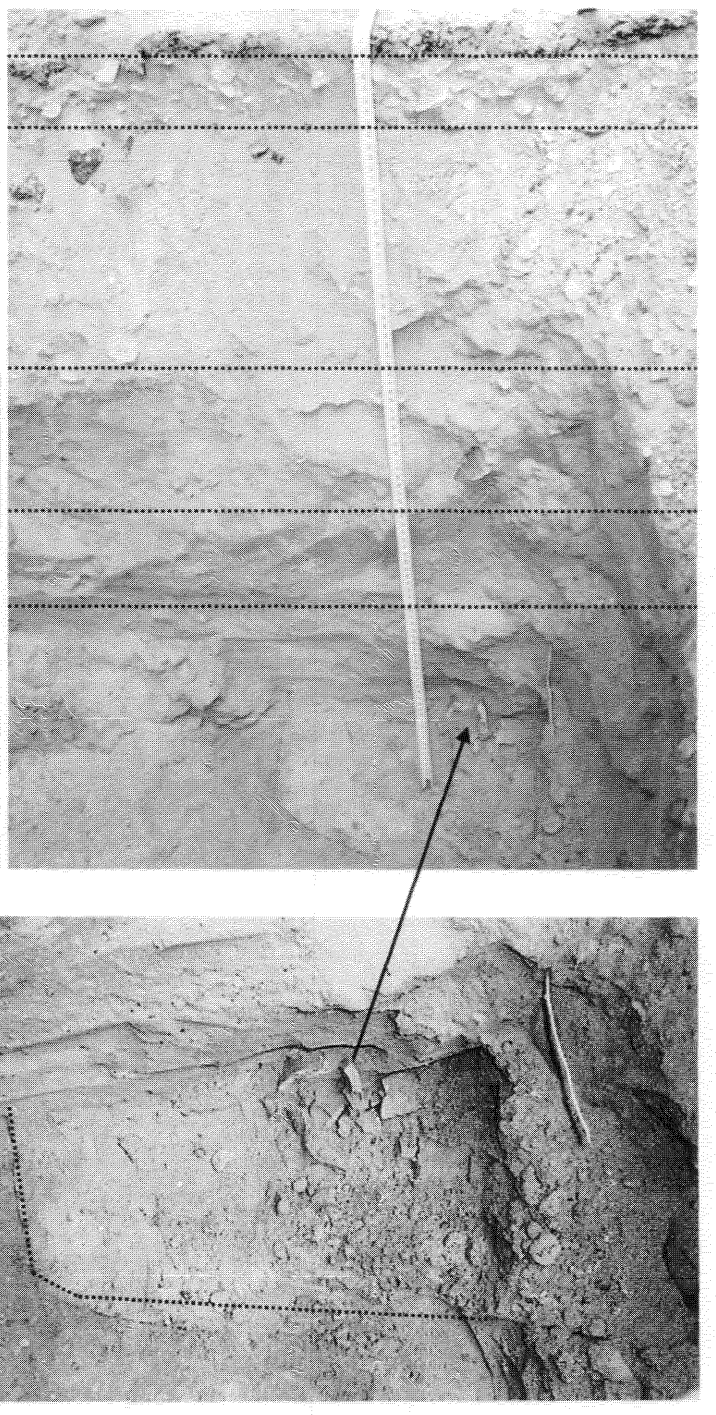


Figure 7. The north section of test trench E. The total depth is 1.04m. The coffin line and burial is evident in the picture on the right, which is a close up of the floor of the section photograph.

Test trench F

The sixth test hole is a 1 x 1 m trench, located on the east side of Prestwich Street, 30 meters east of test trench B, but on the opposite side of the road. This trench is up against the Provincial police building, 1 meter east of the old service trench. The sidewalk is the typical tar and gravel layers, but beneath the sidewalk is the same brick red sand and gravel layer found in test trench C (Fig. 8). Only 3 cm into the red layer we hit "builders' sand" surrounding a cable and abandoned the trench. There are no photos of trench F, however a schematic section is presented below.

Figure 8. The south section of test trench F. The total depth is 14cm due to the presence of white builders sand and a cable.

Tar	3cm
Gravel	5cm
Brick red sand and gravel	3cm
Builders sand and cable	3cm

4. Conclusions

These trial excavations have demonstrated that the human remains are concentrated in a sand body which is likely to have originated from an old coastal dune system. This is consistent with historic reports that indicate that the dunes (*duinen*) which fringed Table Bay were used for disposal of the dead. Areas above Somerset Road which contain none of the grey sand body do not appear to have been favoured as a place of burial, probably because the clays and shales was too hard. The grey sand body is present along the length of Prestwich Street, and so too are human remains. While we only excavated between Buitengracht Street and the Alfred Street intersection with Prestwich Street, the presence of humans remains in Cobern Street and the adjacent block points to the fact that a considerable length of Prestwich Street in sensitive.

Three trenches werec dug on Alfred street (trenches A, C, and D), all on the south sidewalk between walling and the curb, stretching from Somerset road to east of Prestwich Street (Fig. 2). All three trenches showed extensive disturbance beneath the sidewalk tar and gravel layers. There is a layer present in all three trenches consisting of brown sand with fragments of gravel, tar, and coal, indicative of a fill event, although the layer is red in trench C. Both trenches A and C show evidence of a reversal of sediment, with bedrock/yellow clay appearing above red-brown sand fill. Only in trench D, which seems to be more disturbed than trenches A and C, is there evidence of the Holocene sand dune, in which the human burials are found. However, the grey sand layer only begins at 85 cm below surface. There is evidence for multiple excavation events on Alfred street. the only evidence of *in situ* sand dune is in the lower half of Alfred, west of the Rockwell site..

There are three trenches on Prestwich Street (trenches B, E, and F) with two on the west sidewalk and one on the east sidewalk. Trenches B and E exhibit a similar stratigraphy with the tar and gravel sidewalk sitting on top of the brown sand with fragments of tar, gravel, and coal, identified in the Alfred street trenches. Beneath the fill, trench B has intact light brown and grey sand deposits at 30cm and 40cm below surface respectively. At the boundary of

these sand layers is a disturbed human burials. In trench E, the grey sand appears at 57cm below surface and the human remains appear at 1.04m below surface. Trench F on the east side of the road has evidence of a large cable immediately beneath the sidewalk.

5. Recommendations

Somerset road seems to be clear of evidence for human burials and the laying of cables in that road seems to be safe.

The south sidewalk of Alfred Street is safe as long as the grey sand is not penetrated. This means that the trenches must be excavated to a maximum depth of 80cm. However, caution will need to be used when excavating the corner of Prestwich and Alfred as the grey sand comes up to 30cm below surface only 8 meters south of the intersection. Otherwise, the other option is for the electrical cables to be laid down in the pre-existing old service trench that runs along the curb.

The west sidewalk on Prestwich Street is a different story. It will be safe if the cables can be installed without penetrating the light brown or grey sand layers which start at 30 cm below surface. Otherwise, the cables will have to be interred in the pre-existing old service trenches, against the curb. Another option is to excavate trenches on the east sidewalk of Prestwich Street, but there are services very close to the surface already.

As a way forward it is suggested that:

- Alfred Street and Somerset Rd may be excavated by the contractors provided that an archaeologist is present at all times. Excavations where possible must be routed close to/in existing service trenches. The excavations must not exceed 800 mm in depth.

- Prestwich Street is highly sensitive from 300 mm downwards. Where it is possible existing service trenches must be used. In any other areas that need to be excavated, surface and sub-base may be removed and from thereon all digging must be done by hand. Contractors labour may be used, however, at all times an archaeologist and an assistant must be present as it is anticipated that some exhumation of human remains will be necessary.

- The guiding principle with respect to human remains will be that where ever possible impacts to articulated remains in or out of coffins will be avoided. Where this is not possible, the remains will need to be exhumed using normal archaeological procedure. Only complete sets will be removed, even if this means broadening the excavations to recover the full extent of the burial.

6. Field team

Fieldwork: Genevieve Dewar and Tim Hart
Report: Genevieve Dewar

7. References

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