

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL BASELINE STUDY OF MILLERS POINT

Prepared for

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on behalf of

South Peninsula Municipality

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Millers Point study area lies on the False Bay coast between Simonstown and Smitswinkel Bay as shown in Figure 1.

At present the area under study is used for various recreational activities. The northern end consists of a caravan park, part of which is taken up by fairly permanently located mobile homes, and the Black Marlin restaurant. The central part of the site is taken up by a beach (reserved for users of the caravan park) and a slipway built and maintained by the South Atlantic Fishing Club. The connecting road and parking area were also constructed by the club. A large public parking area, picnic facilities and a tidal pool are also located towards the center of the area. At the southern end is another slipway, parking area and clubhouse of the aforementioned fishing club. There are currently no overnight camping facilities apart from those at the caravan park. A large pile of dumped soil and rock, presumably emanating from the construction of the slipway, parking area and roads is found between the slipway road and path to the picnicking area.

Only a small part of the area has not been modified and this is found to the west of the tidal pool in the form of a large vegetated dune.

The South Peninsula Structure Plan identified this area as a node for potential upgrading of the existing recreational and tourist facilities.

1.2 Brief

- Survey the study areas for archaeological sites and mark them on A3 overlay transparencies to the provided aerial photographs;
- Assess the significance of the identified sites within the regional context (Cape Peninsula);
- Identify, with reasons, zones or areas of varying archaeological sensitivity to development e.g. high (no go), moderate, and low, within the study areas and mark these onto the overlay transparencies. Criteria for identifying these categories of sensitivity should be explained;
- Suggest ways in which identified archaeological sites could be integrated into further development of the sites;
- Recommend mitigation measures that should be applied in the event that development of the Millers Point site was to proceed, and areas where further investigation is required.

2. METHOD

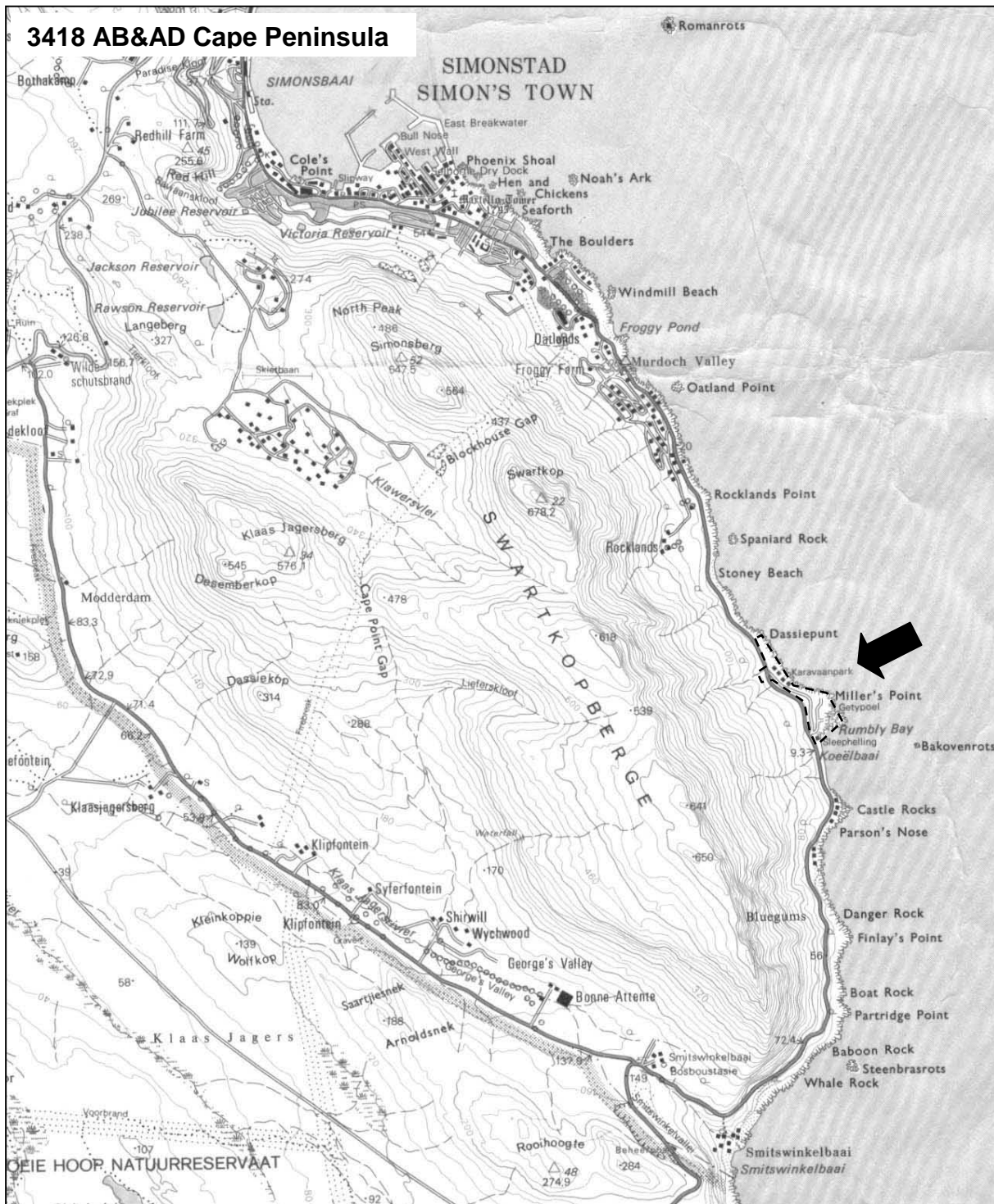
2.1 Approach

A previous archaeological/historical survey looked at the area (Olivier 1978). This report was consulted and aspects were verified by way of fieldwork.

2.2 Limitations

No limitations were experienced in carrying out fieldwork.

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3. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Three sites comprising of one shell midden and two structures were located and are shown on Figure 2, as well as on the overlay transparencies.

3.1 Pre-colonial sites

3.1.1 Shell middens

These features are accumulations of shellfish, bone and stone artefacts which mark places where humans either stayed or prepared food.

SM1 as it is identified on the aerial photo, is made up of several patches of exposed shell debris, both on top, and around the edges of the large dune (see also Plate 1). Lenses of shell lying below the surface are exposed in places where they have been exposed by erosion of the numerous uncontrolled footpaths crisscrossing the site (Plates 2 and 3). No archaeological excavation of the middens has ever been undertaken. The presence of some early 18th century colonial artefacts mixed in with shell deposits suggests that part of the midden was deposited fairly recently (Plate 4).

3.1.1.1 Significance

The only excavated site on this part of the peninsula is the cave at Smitswinkelbaai. Many other open shell middens however have been destroyed by development of the coast between Muizenberg and Rocklands Point south of Simonstown. As such the Millers Point middens are some of the few remaining sites of this type found in the immediate coastal context. The presence of colonial artefacts on shell middens is rare and makes the site all the more important as this may represent evidence of contact between indigenous groups and early colonists.

3.2 Historical sites

3.2.1 Buildings

Two structures of interest have been identified.

B1 is the remains of a demolished structure consisting of the lower parts of the walls and foundations, located close to the vandalised kiosk (Plate 5). Building materials consist of dressed Table Mountain Sandstone and shell lime plaster. No artefactual material was located around the ruin to assist with determining an age, but it is certainly older than 50 years.

B2 is the Black Marlin restaurant, the architectural details of which suggest an age of Late 19th century.

3.2.1.1 Significance

At this stage it is difficult to comment fully on the significance of the demolished structure B1. An archival investigation will have to be undertaken to determine the origin and purpose of the structure. The remains will be protected by the National Monuments Act of 1969 (as amended).



B2 is rated by the National Monuments Council as a Grade 2 building which means it has regional significance. No alteration or demolition may occur without permission from the NMC.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In his survey of the archaeological sites of the Cape Peninsula in 1978, Olivier had noted two sites in the Millers Point area. One of the sites was relocated by us and designated SM1. His other site according to his description, comprised of two parts, namely a fragmented shell midden and stone feature. While we have relocated the stone feature and designated it as B1, we have not found traces of the midden. This may have been lost when the picnicking area was landscaped or it may still be below the grass.

The shell midden, SM1, is an important site and no development should take place here until some form of mitigation takes place, as described in Section 5.

In general, the remaining archaeological/historical sites do not pose any major constraints on upgrading of the recreational facilities.

5. MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

At present, most archaeological sites, and buildings (including ruins) older than 50 years are protected under the National Monuments Act of 1969 (as amended). This act will shortly be replaced by new heritage legislation and will be known as the National Heritage Resources Act of 1999. This will substantially reinforce the protections of heritage material.

Sites which require management or mitigation are presented below.

5.1 Shell middens

5.1.1 SM1

SM1 has been identified as a site with research potential. By virtue of its context, (soft dune sand), we see no way to incorporate this feature into the development unless one is prepared to spend a large sum of money to erect a building over the site. Leaving the site exposed will lead to further damage by both natural and human agencies. Drawing attention to the site in its current state will undoubtedly lead to accelerated damage through vandalism. The preferred method of incorporation would be to use signage to inform the public of the presence of the midden and explanation of the history of the feature. The levels of vandalism of the existing facilities on the site however suggest that uncontrolled use of the site will lead to degradation of any facilities including displays of archaeological material.

As the surface traces of the shell are patchy, a program of test excavations should be carried out across the site to determine which sections are worthy of conservation and which areas could be developed if necessary after mitigation.

If there is no intention to undertake any major landscaping it may not be necessary to undertake test excavations. However, some control over the proliferation of foot paths on the site will have to be instituted to prevent ongoing erosion and loss of archaeological material. As the dune is the only high point on the site, members of the public will always tend to want to climb to the top. A more formal system of pathways should alleviate the problem but must not be built without consultation with an archaeologist.



5.2 Buildings

5.2.1 Ruined structure (B1)

At this stage we know nothing of the history of this building. It is recommended that an archival study needs to be undertaken to determine the age, origin and use thereof. If it is determined through the archival study that the building has heritage value, then it should be investigated further by way of archaeological excavation.

The ruin has a prime location within the picnic area and if it is established to have an interesting history, it may be possible to reconstruct it (provided that this would be acceptable to the National Monuments Council), and relocate the ablution facilities and shop here.

5.2.2 The Black Marlin Restaurant (B2)

Still to determine

5.3 Zones of sensitivity

These are marked on the transparent overlays. Sites of high archaeological sensitivity (no-go areas) are colored green. Moderately sensitive archaeological sites are marked blue. The area surrounded in red shows areas which could be developed without any impact on archaeological sites.

6. REFERENCES

Olivier, A.M. 1978. The archaeological survey of the Cape peninsula. Unpublished B.A. Hons. thesis