

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF PORTIONS OF LAND IN DIDO VALLEY, SIMONSTOWN.

Prepared for

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Archaeology Contracts Office of the University of Cape Town was appointed by Jessica Hughes and Associates on behalf of their client, the South Peninsula Municipality, to conduct an archaeological assessment of 8 portions of land in Dido Valley, Simonstown. These are indicated on Figure 1 (A-H). The terms of reference required that the study area be searched for archaeological sites and that zones of sensitivity should be identified. Furthermore, suggestions for mitigation or management actions for sensitive areas should be indicated. The following pages contain a background history of the area, a statement of method and the findings of the survey.

1.2 GENERAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE PENINSULA

1.2.1 The Early Stone Age

People have been living on the Cape Peninsula for least half a million years or more. Ancient stone artefacts dating to the earliest period (called the Early Stone Age by archaeologists) have been found at various locations in the Cape Point Nature Reserve. The humans who lived on these archaeological sites are believed to have been members of the species *Homo erectus/homo ergaster*. They were capable of making a variety of stone and wooden artefacts but differed from modern humans in terms of their cranial morphology.

1.2.2 The Middle Stone Age

During the first half of the 20th century a number of amateur archaeologists excavated several large rockshelters at Kalk Bay and in the Fish Hoek valley discovering Middle and Late Stone Age deposits. Unfortunately the standard of excavation practised by these early archaeologists was not adequate - lots of important information was lost and some of the finest sites on the Peninsula were destroyed. Middle Stone Age people lived between twenty thousand and two hundred thousand years ago. It is known that they made complex forms of stone artefacts. They hunted animals, collected plant foods and shellfish, lived in rockshelters and camped on open sites. The few human bones that have been found from this period indicate that Middle Stone Age people may have been an early form of *Homo sapiens* who were very similar to modern humans.

1.2.3 The Late Stone Age

The most recent phase of prehistoric occupation of the Cape Peninsula is known as the Late Stone Age. This period has been subject to detailed study by archaeologists. Late Stone Age people lived between twenty thousand years ago up to the arrival of European colonists at the Cape. Late Stone Age people were the ancestors of the San (Bushmen) and Khoi Khoi (Hottentots) who were present throughout the South Western Cape and Northern Cape during the historic period. Throughout most of the Holocene (last 10 000 years) the Peninsula was inhabited by San hunter gatherers who resided in small groups which were highly mobile. They hunted with bows and arrows, snared small animals and gathered shellfish. They used digging sticks to find a variety of vegetable foods. The San had complex belief system, aspects of which are represented in many of the rock paintings sites of the South West Cape. It is now broadly accepted by archaeologists that shortly after 2000 years ago, a new economic system was introduced to Southern Africa. Certain groups of people (the Khoi Khoi) adopted transhumant pastoralism (in this case with herds of fat-tailed sheep and later

cattle) instead of hunting and gathering which was universally practised in South Africa before this time. At the same time the art of making clay pottery was introduced. The origin of early stock keeping and pottery in Africa is still unclear.

1.2.4 The historical contact period

When the Dutch colonists arrived to set up a replenishment station at the Cape in 1652, they encountered several Khoi Khoi groups. Some of these lived on the Cape Peninsula while the larger groups grazed herds of sheep and cattle in the Tygerberg Hills and Cape Flats. First contact between Europeans and indigenous southern African pastoralist groups had occurred much earlier when Portuguese mariners sailing down the coast in the 15th and 16th centuries had bartered supplies of meat from the Khoi Khoi that they encountered at places such as Saldanha and Table Bay. With the increase of shipping rounding the Cape, it was inevitable that some vessels would be wrecked. Shipwreck survivors often recounted meeting and trading with the indigenous groups so that by the time that Van Riebeeck arrived to set up a permanent station in 1652, a history of contact had already been established.

During the early days of the colony, the relationship between the Dutch and the Khoi Khoi was one of uneasy co-operation, with a great deal of bartering taking place primarily to get regular supplies of fresh meat. However, as the colony grew and free burghers were granted lands further away from Cape Town, grazing lands previously available to the Khoi Khoi were encroached upon. The conflict for land began a process of attrition which when accompanied by several deadly smallpox epidemics broke down the indigenous population and its political structures. Those who survived were pressed into service as farm labour or settled around several large mission stations that had been established in the Cape.

There is no doubt that groups of Khoi Khoi herders were active on the Peninsula during the early colonial period. The diary of Jan van Riebeeck makes mention of the fact that cattle stolen from the VOC (Dutch East India Company) were driven by the "Hottentots" to Hout Bay and various parts of the Peninsula. The "Hottentot" *Kaptein*, Herry and his people, the *Caepmans* apparently spent the summer months with their cattle at Hout Bay and refused to visit Van Riebeeck at this time because of the lack of grazing for his cattle in the Table Valley. When the *Cochoqua* were in conflict with the *Peninsular* Hottentots in 1661, they took measures to cut the *Peninsulars* off from the "valuable pastures" at Hout Bay. Although Hout Bay is specifically mentioned in historical texts and would have been favoured by people who kept cattle due to the granite soils of the area, there is good archaeological evidence to indicate that prehistoric people were herding sheep in other areas as well. Remains of sheep and Cape Coastal Pottery have been recovered from archaeological excavations at both Smitswinkel Bay Cave and at Bonteberg Cave in the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. The high frequency of Late Stone Age sites and shell middens on the Peninsula at large indicates that the area was consistently inhabited by prehistoric hunters and herders before, during and shortly after the advent of European settlement.

1.3 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY HISTORY OF THE SOUTH PENINSULA

European expansion on the Peninsula accelerated after 1659 by which time the European colonists were beginning to exert control over the indigenous inhabitants. Muizenberg was permanently garrisoned from circa 1670 onwards. Simonstown was an area of naval importance since the earliest European settlement, but was only given official anchorage status after 1743. From this time onwards the area was equipped with a garrison and the North and South gun batteries to protect shipping in the bay. At the same time, the first

official land grants were made to a few free burgher farmers (Imhoffs Gift, Poespaskraal and Schusterskraal (Wildschutsbrandt) on the South Peninsula, the motivation being the need to re-victual ships which called in at Simonstown during the winter months. The pass at Muizenberg and later on, the Ou Kaapseweg was the beginning of a difficult access route onto Peninsula, which became even more treacherous south of Simonstown. For this reason, the DEIC government was reluctant to make many formal land grants to people on the Peninsula due to difficulties of administration. A few quitrent grants were awarded to farmers near Cape Point in the late 18th century, however, indications are that much of the land use was probably informal - ad hoc stock posts set up by "squatter farmers". Furthermore, there are accounts indicating that groups of indigenous San still inhabited parts of the Peninsula as late as 1790 indicating that early farmers, indigenous San and/or displaced Khoi Khoi were exploiting the same landscape.

Simonstown was declared a permanent naval port by the British in 1809, and has served as a port ever since. This has been one of the prime motivators of the development of the town, which today contains a large number of important historical structures, sites and fortifications.

2. METHOD

All the areas (A-H) were surveyed by members of the ACO. This involved walking the landscape and looking for surface evidence of prehistoric and historical artefacts, structures or buildings of heritage significance. Areas of sensitivity were marked on the accompanying overlay. Attention was also paid to potential heritage sites just outside the boundary of the study area, as it is possible that they could be indirectly impacted by redevelopment of the valley.

Our first assessment of the valley was severely impeded by the dense growths of alien vegetation, however the recent fire effectively cleared the area. We took the opportunity to revisit areas that were previously difficult to access. After the fire surface, visibility was excellent and no restrictions were encountered.

3. FINDINGS

No prehistoric archaeological material was found in areas A-H, apart from a few isolated water rounded stones that appeared to be out of place in the landscape. A few sherds of 19th century refined earthenware ceramics were found in area H, however this ephemeral scatter is not considered significant. A complex of military buildings in area G are considered significant, while the barrack style buildings in area C are not considered to be of architectural merit. The mountainside to the immediate south of Dido Valley contains a number of military structures and gun batteries, which are potentially important in terms of military history and future tourism. These may be indirectly impacted by an increased public exposure as some of the installations are no longer maintained or patrolled by the Navy. Details of areas of significance are presented below.

3.1 Military Observation Post

This complex consists of 4 buildings and an access road on the northern side of Dido Valley. The styles of the structures are typical of other WW2 fixtures such as those found on Robben Island.

The main building is a double storied concrete structure, with a concrete roof. Openings into the building are protected by steel armoured shutters, which are badly corroded. The top story contains an observation room with an excellent view of the bay. Wiring culverts in the floor indicate that the building may have contained radar or communications equipment. Camouflage paint is still visible on the exterior. Other buildings on the site include a toilet block, a generator room, and a small wooden dwelling structure which, was almost completely destroyed by the recent fire. It is most likely that the structures played a role as fire control point for the three 9.2" naval guns at the upper North Battery.

Significance: Military structures will be protected by the South African Heritage Resources act of 1999, which comes into effect in April this year. Furthermore, a fledging tourism industry has begun to develop focussing on the Cape's many, but comparatively unknown military installations. The site is therefore considered significant for these reasons, and as a material reminder of this country's involvement in WW2.

Potential impacts: The remaining structures (cast concrete) are mostly very sturdy and have suffered little impact apart from that caused by the natural environment. In recent years since the security fence around the complex has not been maintained, the interior of the building has been used for informal camping and has become covered in graffiti.

Mitigation: One of the best ways to preserve a structure such as this is to allow it to be re-used for a suitable purpose (adaptive reuse) such as a stop off point for specialised tours. The view of False Bay offered by the observation post is excellent and to this end it would make an ideal whale watching position. In this way, hopefully it will receive some minimal regular maintenance.

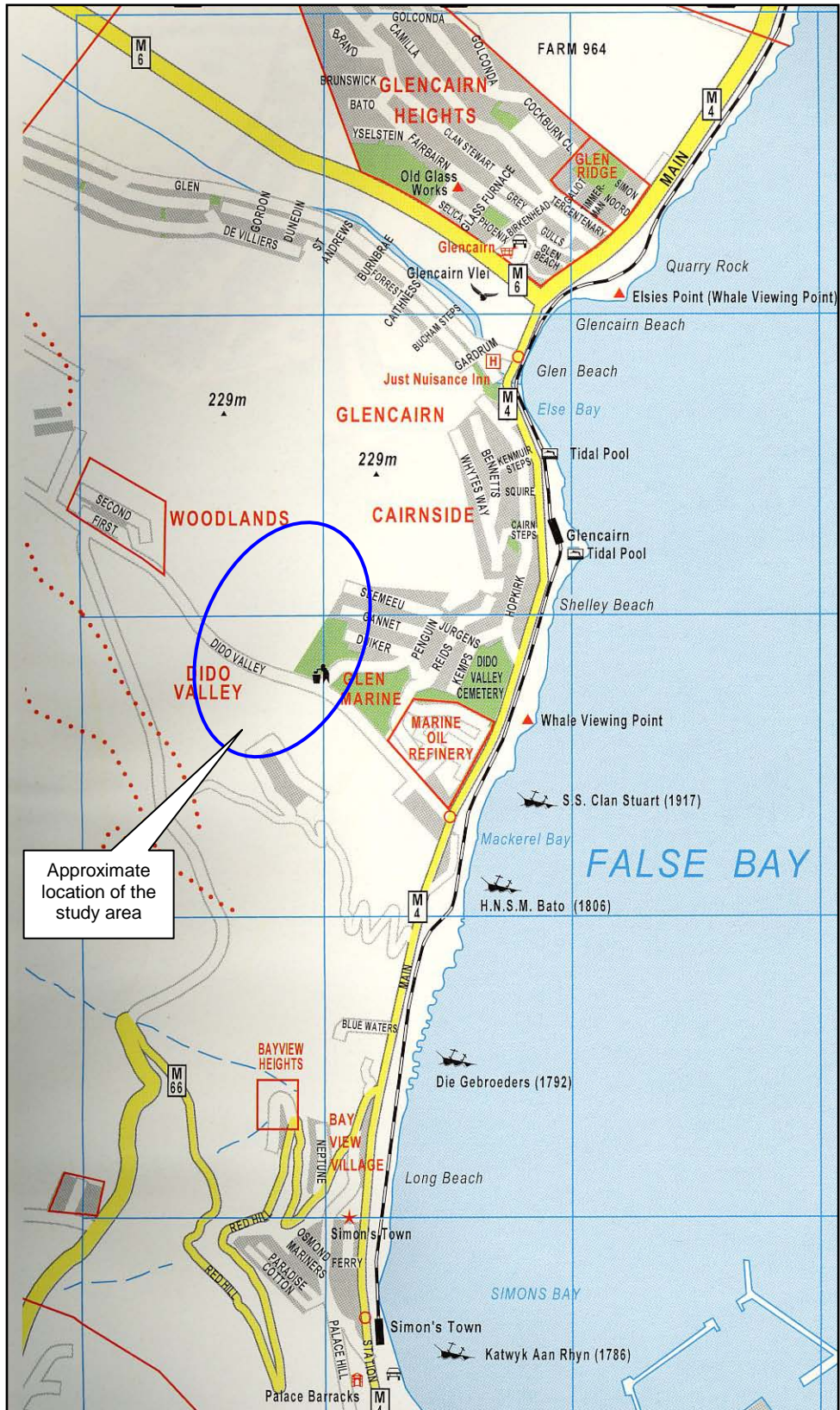
3.2 Indirect impacts to Upper North, Middle North and Scala Batteries.

Although these structures lie outside of the area of this study, it would be appropriate to mention them because at least two important sites have been severely vandalised as they are no longer patrolled or actively maintained. The 9.2" naval gun and magazines close to Red Hill have had every removable fitting stolen from them. Although installed during WW2, the guns themselves were built in the 1890's for installation in the pre-Dreadnought type battleships of the time, and are military artefacts of high significance. The small Victorian barrack building close to the 1865 rifled muzzle loading cannon has been vandalised virtually beyond repair despite the fact that the site is a declared National Monument. Increased development of the surrounding area can (but not necessarily) result in increased impact to the historical sites. Impacts can be positive and desirable if members of the community or organisations (societies) within the community are able to take responsibility for ensuring that local heritage features are adequately cared for. Unfortunately the reality is that with redevelopment of the area, greater numbers of people will become aware of the sites and the potential for theft and vandalism will increase. It is strongly suggested that the authority in charge of the land on which these sites are situated, take cognisance of the possibility that potential impacts to the sites will increase, and commission a heritage conservation plan to find ways to protect them.

4. CONCLUSION

All the areas (A-H) have been searched with the result that only one site of heritage importance has been identified. It is not expected that further work in the area will produce

any additional significant archaeological material. Dido Valley is an exposed area subject to high wind speeds and was probably not particularly attractive to prehistoric people. There are virtually no habitable rock shelters in the study area that could have provided people with shelter. There is a strong likelihood that shell middens did exist along the immediate coast, however, development activities in this area will have obscured or destroyed them. The military observation post in area G is potentially important and protected by legislation. Any plans to alter, or demolish it must be approved by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (National Monuments Council). The historical gun emplacements above Simonstown may be affected by indirect impacts of increased urbanisation. With careful control of access to the sites, and their use as tourism destinations, such impacts could be positive for their conservation.



Approximate location of the study area