

# Archaeological and Historical Survey for The Point, Durban

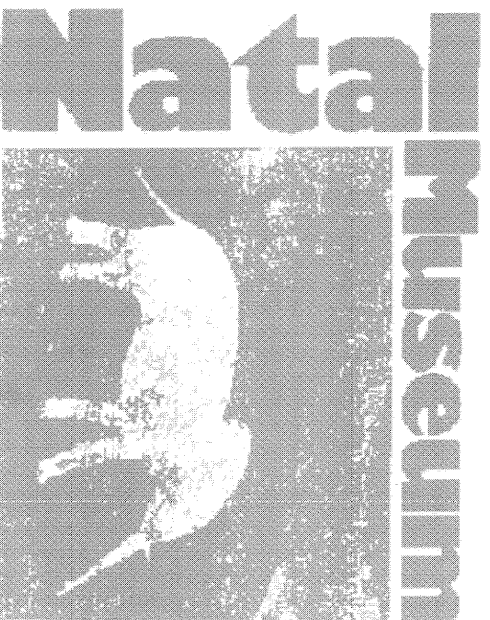
For Moreland Developments. Pty (Ltd)

By

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## INTRODUCTION

Moreland approached the Institute for Cultural Resource Management (ICRM) to undertake an archaeological survey of the next phase of development for The Point. The ICRM included a full historical survey for those areas/topics not covered in the previous scoping report. This brief Historical Report can be viewed in Appendix A.

This report is a brief outline of areas that may have potential historical archaeological material underneath the current surface. A management plan is set out for future development. This management plan excludes existing buildings that may or may not be listed or protected by the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act. The report only deals with areas that are currently undeveloped and not with any of the current buildings.

The archaeological component of this report is based on the historical findings. As with most historical archaeology surveys, the written records have been consulted prior to the archaeological survey or excavations. In addition, this report also uses the findings from a previous survey, monitoring program, and archaeological excavations as a basis for its conclusions (Anderson 2003).

The Point appears to have been an area of high historical activity since the first colonialists landed. Apart from several battles, there was Durban's first *squatter camp* (referred to as Bamboo Square), several industrial landmarks, shipwrecks, a gallows, railway lines, piers, and buildings. Most of these have been damaged due to previous developments. This project has the potential to recover the last vestiges of a very important part of Durban's history.

## FINDINGS

The provided map has been laid out in a grid, and important areas have been noted in the Appendix. In general, all undisturbed areas have the potential to reveal material. By undisturbed I specifically refer to those areas that do not have current buildings. The foundations of many of these buildings would have damaged most of the archaeological

material. Those areas that are currently grassed, under parking lots and/or roads have the potential to yield much information. Furthermore, the areas that have been reclaimed may also yield material (approximately 5-7m below the current surface).

### **Bamboo Square**

Bamboo Square was partially excavated in 2002. However, much of the site still exists. The squares B – G and 3 – 8 are areas of high sensitivity. These areas still have the remains of Bamboo Square under the current surface. I estimate that Bamboo Square is approximately 1 – 3 m below the current surface. Much of Bamboo square has been damaged by previous and current development, however, previous excavations have revealed that *in situ* material still occur on the landscape.

#### **Significance:**

Bamboo Square is of high archaeological and historical significance. Kearney (2003) describes it as follows:

“Bamboo Square was one of the earliest, if not the earliest, informal settlement in the country and, in numerous ways was Durban’s District Six. It had commenced as a Tonga ‘kraal’ for migrant Tonga harbour workers in the 1860’s. Thereafter it became a refuge for marginalised peoples including Indians released from plantation indentureship, Chinese, Malays East Coast Africans and St Helenies. The sense of refuge was found not only in the site which was situated between high sand dunes and thus obscure, but also in that the place was owned by the War Department, in far off London. Thus it fell outside the Borough of Durban for whom it was a perpetual social and sanitation nuisance and eventually became to be administered by the Natal Harbour Board and the Natal Harbour Department after 1880. Their administration included many instances of shack removals and demolitions in the 1880’s and 1890’s. They also made numerous attempts to replan the settlement, moving it progressively closer to the ocean beach by the end of the nineteenth century. Much of the information about the settlement derives from the extensive reports of the Harbour Board officials, the Water and Borough Police and the Inspector of Nuisances ( early Heath Department ).

The community was fairly homogenous, drawn as they were by their common marginalisation, and they lived largely in either wattle and daub huts and shacks or later in small wood and iron cottages. By the mid

1890s the population numbered several thousand. It also seems that the inhabitants provided accommodation in very small shacks for the growing number of 'togt' workers who sought periodic work in the nearby docks. The community supported a few shops and a school whose fortunes fluctuated depending on the attractions of harbour work. Other occupations included fishing and this was probably the ancestral branch of the seine fishing community of the twentieth century. After the Durban Town Council skilfully took over ownership of the land in 1898, along with the adjacent Addington Lands and commenced a formal sanitation and renewal programme. This was interrupted in 1902 by the outbreak of Bubonic Plague, whose origins were traced to Bamboo Square and the settlement was completely demolished early in 1903. The population were dispersed to other informal settlements including Island View, Clairwood and South Coast Junction.”

#### Significance:

Bamboo Square is of high archaeological and historical significance. Little is known about the lives of the general people who lived there, and many of the written records are from municipal and police records. The previous, and limited, archaeological excavations recorded a better picture than one of squalor that was officially portrayed.

#### Mitigation:

There are three options for this area. First, the area should be declared a no-development zone and it should be preserved for the future. Second, excavations should be undertaken with the purpose of developing the site as an open-air museum. This implies that the area is still a no-development zone. Third, the remaining parts Bamboo Square need to be systematically excavated and recorded. The artefacts and photographic material should be used for displays within the development and the area should be commemorated. I personally believe that the site is integral to the formation of Durban as a city, and that this heritage needs to be saved as a matter of priority.

If excavations do occur then they should begin with test-pit excavations to determine the extent of the whole of Bamboo Square.

#### Transport routes

Roads, piers, tramlines, and railway lines should form under the heading of industrial archaeology. These lines occur throughout the proposed development, however it is unlikely that the physical remains still exist.

Significance:

The use of transport to and from a harbour to the city is important features in the development of any city. The ways in which roads are changed, through time, for increasing traffic in goods is linked to the economy of that city.

These features should be considered as being medium significant.

Mitigation:

It is unlikely that these features still exist. If this area is developed, then all construction work would need to be monitored.

### **Stables and Domestic Housing**

Many of these buildings do not exist anymore as they have been damaged by previous developments. However, several areas have not been developed, and may yield subsurface features. These are located in squares G7, H10, J8, L10, O7, O10, O11, P7, and P11.

These features include the locations of the Port Captain's Indian compound, stevedore's compounds, pilot's housing, a prison, and stables.

Significance:

These features vary from medium to high significance.

Management:

It is unlikely that the remains of these features occur above the ground. However, subsurface features may still exist. Test-pit excavations should occur in these areas to determine if subsurface features do exist.

## **Cemeteries**

Cemeteries refer to areas that have been formally proclaimed as burial grounds, and thus exclude isolated burials such as the one excavated at Bamboo Square (Anderson 2003). Cemeteries were situated in squares I9, I10, J9, J10. The written records indicate that many of the graves were exhumed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century and removed to other locations in Durban.

Significance:

Cemeteries are of high significance.

Mitigation:

It is unlikely that human remains still exist in these older cemeteries. However, there is a possibility that a few individuals were missed. All development in these areas should be monitored.

## **Shipwrecks**

Much of the eastern side of the development has the potential to yield the remains of shipwrecks. These can be located in squares J –S and 3 – 8. This area is currently part of the reclaimed land and the original surface is approximately 4 – 8 m below the current surface.

According to the historical records, many of the shipwrecks were reused by local inhabitants, and thus it is unlikely that a complete shipwreck would be found.

Significance:

All shipwrecks are of high significance and may yield information regarding maritime activities.

Mitigation:

This area needs constant monitoring during the development phases. No earthmoving should occur unless an archaeologist is on site.

### **Recreational areas**

The general beach has been used for the last few millennia. No direct evidence for Stone Age and Iron Age occupations have been recorded previously in this area, nor did I observe such sites during the 2002 stage of the project. However, isolated artefacts have been observed.

The area has been extensively utilised over the last 150 years for social events. These events can be colloquially referred to as "beach braai" areas. Several of these were observed during the monitoring stages in 2002.

**Significance:**

These sites are of low significance.

**Mitigation:**

This area should be monitored during the earthmoving stages. Excavations may be required during the earthmoving stage.

**Fishing activities:**

Several areas have been noted for their seine fishing activities. These are concentrated in O7 and P7. While this specific area post-dates 1903, similar activities have occurred since the 1870s, specifically with the arrival of Indian fishermen.

### **Landfills**

The area of the proposed development has been largely reclaimed. Much of the landfill is beach sand and the remains from previous rubbish dumps. The occurrence of bottles, ceramics metal objects, wood, etc. attest to this. While these artefacts are in a secondary context, they are still valuable as they can be accurately dated and yield information.

**Significance;**

I believe that the landfill is of medium to high archaeological significance.

**Mitigation:**

All landfill areas require constant monitoring during the earthmoving stages. A collection depot for bottles should be made and all bottles should be stored in this area for later retrieval. Furthermore, security regarding possible theft of these bottles, and other artefacts, needs to be upgraded and stringently enforced. I believe that the current security measures are inadequate, and that there is little regard for the loss of these artefacts. More security personnel should be employed for this purpose.

Increased security should entail the constant monitoring of all vehicles without exception. All vehicles should be searched when leaving the premises. This is a standard procedure at most construction and mining sites and should occur for this development as well. All employers and employees on the site should be informed both verbally and in writing that artefacts may not be removed.

#### CONCLUSION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Point area has high archaeological and historical significance with the formation of Durban harbour and city. Much of this heritage has been inadvertently destroyed by previous developments. The current development has the potential to allow for the salvaging of this heritage. All mitigation should thus occur timeously ahead of any development. In this case I would think 6 months ahead of schedule would be adequate for test-pit excavations.

The brief historical survey and archaeological excavations and monitoring have already yielded a wealth of information. This is however only a small part of what still remains.

The remains included subsurface features of buildings, Bamboo Square, transport systems, industrial areas and cemeteries. Most of these are older than 100 years and are thus protected by the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act. Buildings older than sixty years are also protected. The developer will need to liaise with KwaZulu-Natal Heritage regarding the built environment and other historical features that have not been covered by this report.



The following squares would require test-pit excavations: G6, H6, J7, K8, L8, M8, L9, M9, P8, and Q8, O10, O11, and P10. The rest of the development should be monitored, especially those in squares H4, columns I to R, and Rows 1 to 6. If current development plans are to change in the future, then the archaeological component needs to be evaluated.

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