

PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SOMERSET HOSPITAL PRECINCT, GREEN POINT, CAPE TOWN

ERF 1559 AND PORTION OF ERF 1056 GREEN POINT

Prepared for

NM Associates

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Archaeology Contracts Office (ACO) of the University of Cape Town was appointed by NM Associates to undertake a Phase 1 Archaeological Assessment of the Somerset Hospital Precinct in Green Point, Cape Town. The study was necessitated by the declaration of an area in Green Point as a special conservation area due to the possible presence of human remains. The area which is the subject of this study lies in the peripheral zone of the declared conservation area.

Findings:

- Somerset Hospital Precinct is a historically significant area containing grade 2 and grade 3 buildings. Besides being the site of the country's oldest surviving hospital, parts of the site were used as a South African War POW camp and military barrack.
- Exhaustive trial excavations (some 110 individual tests) throughout the study area have revealed that soils are shallow with hard Malmsbury shale being present in most instances less than 1000 mm below surface.
- Archaeological material in the form of a deeply buried old wall footing was found at precinct 3h in a single trial excavation.
- Human remains consisting of a lone phalange and rib were found in one trial excavation behind the Medical Museum. They are considered to be out of context and in all likelihood relate to specimens disposed of by the hospital in the distant past.
- The entire precinct is considered to be archaeologically insignificant and mostly sterile. Very few restrictions are presented to development activities.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that development activities continue as planned.

The study area is not considered sensitive in terms of the Green Point protected area.

A second phase of excavation is only required in one specific location in the study area where a wall foundation was found just south of Wynyard Road in precinct 3 h. This requirement will only need to be implemented if the development framework changes and the find site is impacted.

An archaeologist should be appointed to the project during the development phase to make site visits from time to time to check basement excavations. In the very unlikely event of a find, he/she will need to sample and rescue any finds made during the construction phase.

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1 Introduction

The Archaeology Contracts Office of the University of Cape Town was appointed by NM Associates on behalf of the Department of Public Works to conduct archaeological trial excavations on the Somerset Hospital precinct in Green Point, Cape Town (Figure 1). This study is being undertaken in fulfillment of the requirements of the "Green Point Protected Area" which has been provisionally declared as a National Heritage Site by SAHRA due to the number of human remains found in the area. The State wishes to develop the property. This will potentially involve new structures, some with basements and underground parking. An initial study completed by the ACO in 2003 alerted the proponent to the possible presence of human remains and other archaeological material. The proponent now wishes to commence with rezoning applications which require fulfillment of section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 which requires a Heritage Impact Assessment.

The study contained in these pages follows on from a preliminary assessment completed by this office in 2003.

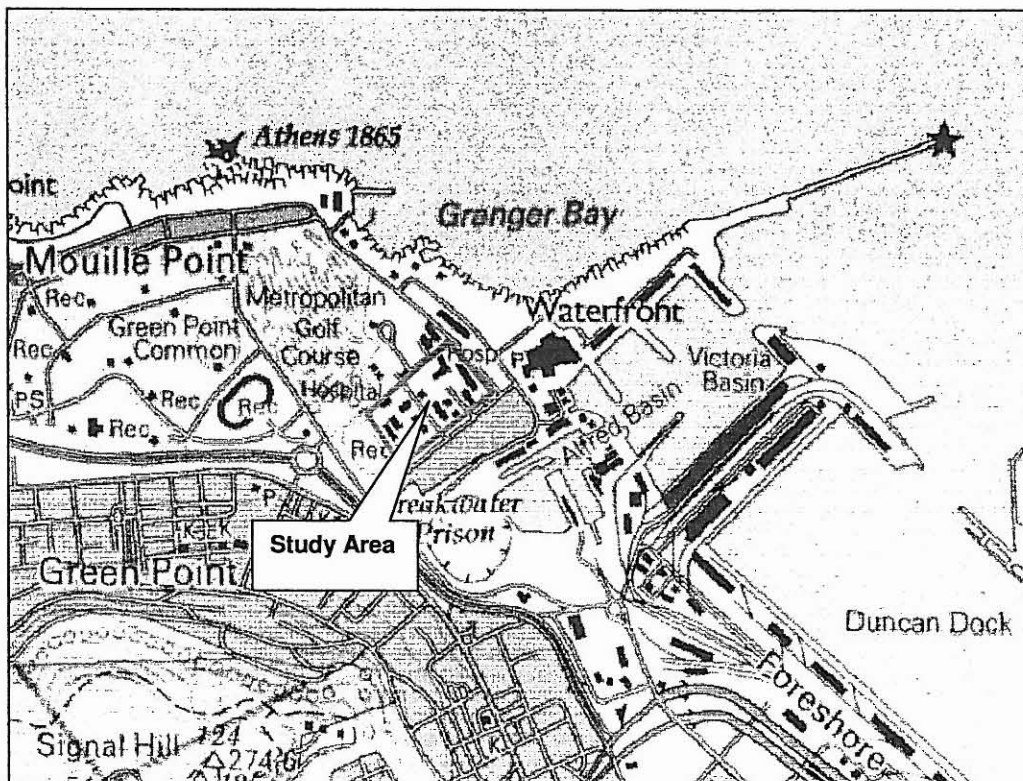


Figure 1. The study area

(Mapping information supplied by: Chief Directorate: Surveys and Mapping. Website: w3sli.wcape.gov.za
Map 3318CD Scale 1:50 000)

1.1 Scope of work

ACO was appointed by the proponent to apply for excavation permits from both SAHRA and HWC, and thereafter sink a pattern of trial excavations throughout the study area to check for the presence of human remains protected by section 36 of the NHRA and archaeological material protected under section 35. ACO was required to attend the necessary meetings and submit a report documenting the findings. A formal excavation permit was issued by HWC while SAHRA gave permission for the work to take place (as it was outside the Green Point core area) without issuing a formal excavation permit.

1.2 The receiving environment

The study area consists of three precincts (1-3) situated between Portswood Road (south east) and Fort Wynyard and the Metropolitan Golf Course (north west). Figure 1 in Appendix A shows the various precincts and the location of trial excavations.

Precinct 1 contains the Helen Bowden Building (nurses home, hospital administration, offices of the Red Cross) and parking areas. It abuts the large mound on which Fort Wynyard is located. At some future date the proposed Granger Bay Boulevard will divide precinct 1 from precincts 2 and 3.

Precinct 2 consists of the Somerset Hospital (1970's building), helicopter pad, the historic Somerset Hospital building, crèche, mortuary, historic nurses home and other structures – some of which are leased to small enterprises or are vacant.

Precinct 3 is divided from precinct 2 by Wynyard Road. The main occupant of the precinct is the National Health Laboratory, the Medical Museum (old superintendent's house), residences of the Peninsula University of Technology as well as buildings leased to small business. The proposed Granger Bay Boulevard runs up the north western side of the precinct.

In essence all three precincts make up a developed site with a long history. Open areas between buildings and parking area, gardens and lawns provided a reasonable opportunity to complete the archaeological assessment without undue disruption of parking traffic flow or pedestrians.

2 Historical Background

2.1 The 17th century

Green Point consisted of a flat coastal plain in front of Signal Hill, punctuated by some prominent dunes. A large *vlei* existed close to the present site of Green Point Stadium, while seasonal swamps characterized much of the Common. The granite and Malmsbury shale geological substrates of the area would have provided trace elements necessary for the raising of domestic animals. Early maps describe Green Point as being the location of a "*hottentot* village" on the outskirts of Cape Town.¹ These people were probably the remnants of indigenous groups who would have grazed their herds on the Common but had become displaced by European settlement. In 1997 the remains of 4 human individuals displaying Khoi Khoi characteristics were found buried in traditional style (with

¹ The journal of Robert Jacob Gordon, 1777 - 1786, Cape Travels.

pot and broken grindstones) under 19th century houses in Cobern Street, Green Point.² Dated to about 1000 years before present, these archaeological finds testify to a long history of use of the area.

According to Picard, Green Point Common was the grazing area of the Dutch East India Company cattle herds.³ The Dutch referred to the area as the Waterplaats or Waterfront – the true coast of the Atlantic Ocean. By the end of the 17th century there appears to have been no permanent structures or settlement in the area.

2.2 The 18th century

During the early 18th century Green Point was undeveloped, the closest permanent structures being the Chavonnes Battery (built in 1715) and the execution ground (Gallows Hill) situated behind where the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront is today. In 1743, the Dutch attempted to build a mole (hence the name Mouille point) out into Table Bay to protect the anchorage. Funding was supplied through extra tax levies and labour provided by convicts, slaves and Dutch East India Company employees. The mole was not a success and quickly destroyed by the Atlantic storms.⁴

A part Green Point, just west of the city and close to where Somerset Road is today was a bleak area characterized by the graveyards of the Dutch Reformed Church and the informal graveyards of slaves, paupers, criminals and smallpox victims. The gallows and place of torture (situated on a prominent sand dune) was an ever-present reminder of the brutal justice system of the time.⁵ It was not until 1795 that further development of the area took place. When the British fleet landed in Simonstown heralding the commencement of hostilities, the Dutch hastily built a small Gun Battery on a prominent hill on Green Point Common. Named *Kyk in die Pot* Battery, this small irregular redoubt was armed with 4, 24 pounder brass cannons.⁶ After the British took over the Cape, the Battery was abandoned for almost 60 years.

2.3 The 19th-20th Centuries

The British occupation of the Cape in 1806 saw expansion of the city towards Green Point as result of the development of the harbour, increased commerce and population. It is this period that has left the greatest range of heritage sites that could be impacted by development activities.

Burial grounds: The precedent set by the Dutch East India Company for using the west side of the city as a burial area was continued. This initially took the form of expansion of a mass of multi-denominational burial grounds, which were later closed, or exhumed and moved to Maitland shortly after 1900.⁷

Defences: In 1812-13 a laboratory (ordnance magazine) was built on the flats to the south west of the *Kyk in die Pot* Battery. In 1862 *Kyk in die Pot* Battery was upgraded using convict labour from the nearby Breakwater Prison and armed with 68 pounder muzzle

² Cox, G. 1999. Cobern Street burial ground: investigating the identity and life histories of the underclass of 18th century Cape Town. Unpublished MA dissertation, Dept Archaeology, University of Cape Town.

³ Picard, H.J. 1969. *Gentlemen's Walk*. Cape Town: Struik.

⁴ Malan, A. 1993. *Historical Assessment of Granger Bay and Mouille Point*. University of Cape Town: ACO.

⁵ Hart, T.J.G. 2001. *A Conservation Plan for the Chavonnes Battery*. University of Cape Town: ACO.

⁶ De Vries, G and Hall, J. *The muzzle loading cannon of South Africa*. Privately published by Durr Cannon Research.

⁷ Halkett, D.J. 1995. *Phase 1 archaeological assessment of Victoria Junction, Green Point*. University of Cape Town: ACO.

loaders and renamed Fort Wynyard. It was remodeled and re-armed in 1889, re-armed again in 1900 and achieved its present configuration by the end of the First World War. For much of the 20th century it served as the Examination Battery for ships entering Table Bay. It fell out of active service in 1958 with the closure of the coastal artillery batteries.⁸

New Somerset Hospital: Sir George Gray laid down the foundation stones of the New Somerset Hospital in 1859. Designed to accommodate 100 patients it was completed by 1862. This hospital replaced the notorious "old" Somerset Hospital (South Africa's first civil hospital) built further to the South East near Prestwich street in 1818 and introduced modern changes in medical care and sanitation brought about by Florence Nightingale's ideas.⁹ The hospital was surrounded by a formal garden. Maps of the area do not indicate the presence of any burial grounds associated with the hospital.

Fever Hospital: Built in the latter half of the 19th century, buildings of the old fever hospital have survived in the City Hospital complex.

South African War Military Camp and POW camp: During the South African War Green Point common, due to its proximity to the Victoria and Alfred Basins, was used as a vast military transit camp (see Figures 3 & 4) for British and Colonial troops who were housed in temporary bungalows.¹⁰ Of particular interest is that the Green Point Track was used as a Prisoner of War Camp for Boer captives who were housed in tents.¹¹ Photographer Arthur Eliot's earliest images include several taken at the Green Point Camp.¹²

2.4 Current status of heritage sites

2.4.1 Precinct 2 - New Somerset Hospital (erf 1559)

This turreted Victorian building is intact and continues to function as part of the Somerset Hospital complex. Additional buildings have been added over the years; with the result that what was once the formal garden has now been occupied by more recent structures (the nurses residence, emergency section and crèche). The main hospital building is an outstanding structure of its type while the site represents a landmark in South African Medical History. The site is a declared National Monument (in terms of the old National Monument Act) and protected as a grade 2 provincial site by the National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 (NHRA).

2.4.2 Precinct 3 - City Hospital (erf 1955)

Original structures of the old Fever Hospital have survived along with the old Medical Superintendents house which is now the Medical Museum, albeit enclosed by a plethora of 20th century structures that make up the City Hospital Precinct (precinct 3). The older structures are protected by the NHRA act of 1999 and are considered to be of exceptional importance. Significant sites bordering the study area

⁸ Bisset, W.M. Undated. A short History of Kyk in die Pot Battery and Fort Wynyard. *In Fort Wynyard Museum of Coastal and Anti-Aircraft Artillery*. SA Navy Museum.

⁹ Laidler, P.W. and Gelfand, M. 1971. South Africa: its medical history 1652-1898. Cape Town: Struik.

¹⁰ Cape Archives, J3431

¹¹ Virtual Museum of the South African War

¹² Cape Archives, Elliot collection.

2.4.3 Green Point Track (erf 1056)

The track lies on land that is currently owned by the City of Cape Town and is therefore historically part of Green Point Common. Its layout has changed very little since the turn of the century, albeit some of the Victorian structures no longer exist. Green Point Track is possibly one of the oldest formal sports grounds in the country having been in use for over 100 years. Its significance as a "heritage place" is further enhanced by the fact that it was the POW camp section of the larger military camp at the beginning of the 20th century. The cricket pitch to the west of the track was where the tent camp for POW's was erected. While it is not expected that any artifacts of the South African War will have survived *in situ*, the *place*, which has changed very little since the late 19th century, is of historic importance. The track, by virtue of its age, is protected by the NHRA act of 1999.

2.4.4 Fort Wynyard and Laboratory (erven 1252, 1536, 1253)

Fort Wynyard (also incorporating the 1813 laboratory) has remained the property of the South African National Defence Force. The South African Navy converted the facility into a museum¹³ in the early 1980's however; its maintenance has been severely neglected in recent years.¹⁴ While Fort Wynyard is not technically part of the study area, it remains a significant heritage site that could be both directly and indirectly impacted by development activities. The Fort had its origin in a prominent dune or small dune sea that that provided a raised area where a gun emplacement could be built. In the ensuing years the dune sands were shifted around to create earth walls, gun emplacements bunkers and a courtyard. While the sandy mound that makes up Fort Wynyard is of natural origin, its current form is mostly man-made and qualifies as a protected structure – a point to be born in mind when planning development activities close by.

2.5 Buried Archaeological Sites

2.5.1 Graves

Lost and unmarked graves dating to both the colonial and pre-colonial period have come to light in the Green Point area on several occasions. The nearest being the mass grave located at British Petroleum Head Office which as the crow flies is less than 200 m from the study area.

Archaeological work has revealed that the vast majority of working class Capetonians, slaves and non-members of the Dutch Reformed Church did not have access to proper burials grounds were buried in massive unregulated and informal graveyards on the outskirts of Cape Town, and particularly Green Point. Most of these are now covered with buildings – the humble graves being lost to popular memory by the early 19th century. While formal regulated cemeteries were mapped on council plans and most exhumed at the beginning of the 20th century, it is the informal graves that are impacted on fairly frequently during the course of development activities. Graves and human skeletal material are specifically protected by the NHRA act. The frequent finding of human remains in the area motivated the declaration of the special conservation area of which Somerset Hospital forms a part of.

¹³ Bisset, W.M. Fort Wynyard Museum of Coast and Anti-Aircraft Artillery. SA Navy.

¹⁴ Bisset, W.M. Pers Comm.

3 Method

3.1 Consultation

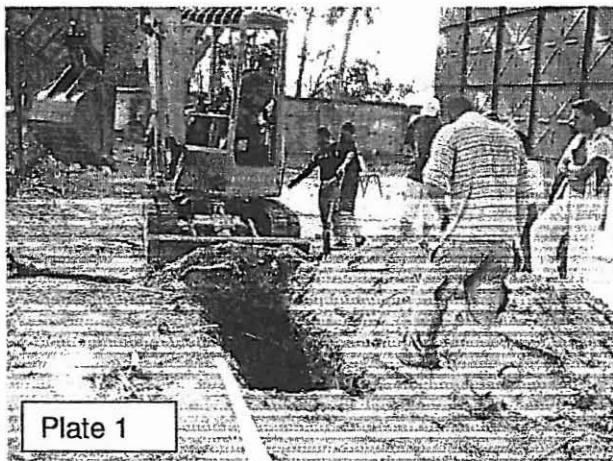
Consultative meetings were held with the Medical Superintendent of Somerset Hospital and the management of the National Health Laboratories. This was followed up with preparation and distribution of an information document (Appendix B). This was hand delivered and emailed to tenants of buildings in the study area, Somerset Hospital and Department of Public Works. A lunch time meeting was held with hospital staff at which NM Associates briefed I&APs as to general progress of the development project. ACO was afforded the opportunity to present the method to be adopted for trial excavations along with a plan indicating the position of such excavations. Once hospital staff and I&AP's had been fully informed, the ACO team commenced work on site.

3.2 Excavation method

It was initially envisaged that the bulk of work would be done utilizing a mechanical excavator; however as a precaution the first trial excavations were done by hand.

Excavations were not randomly positioned, but governed by the availability of areas where activities would not disrupt the daily operation of the hospital, inconvenience staff or tenants of buildings. Fire hydrants and manhole covers indicated that the grounds were riddled with services – all of which presented a potential hazard to the team and environs. Enquiries among hospital staff revealed that the maintenance staff were relatively new at their posts and did not have sound knowledge of active and/or critical services. It was therefore decided that all services had to be avoided which meant that the bulk of the work had to be done by hand rather than by a mechanical excavator.

Every area on the precinct that was not used as a parking area, walkway or covered with concrete surfacing was subject to some form of trial excavation over a three week period. Once a solid knowledge of the location of services had been obtained, a mechanical excavator was brought onto site (Plate 1). This was used to dig deep trial excavations on each of the precincts until refusal on the shale substrate was achieved. Profiles of selected trial excavations representing all three precincts are presented in Appendix A.



4 Findings

4.1 Precinct 1

Situated adjacent to Fort Wynyard, this area was extensively excavated, both by hand initially and later by mechanical excavator. To the surprise of the team, there was hardly any soil depth in that dense clay was encountered immediately with shales being reached within 500 mm of surface. No archaeological material or human remains were found.

It is possible that when the fort was remodeled in the late 19th century, all available loose soil in the surrounding area was transported to increase the size of the earthworks leaving the surrounding areas denuded.

The precinct is considered archaeologically insensitive and may be developed without any need for further mitigation.

4.2 Precinct 2

Excavations were positioned in the gardens in front of the old hospital, on the edge of the helipad, in open land around the crèche, the old nurses home, the mortuary, disused buildings, and pavements around the hotel school and in the premises of the film studios (Portswood Road side) as well as in open ground at the back of the new hospital building.

Reasonable soil depth (900 mm) was encountered in the gardens in front of the old hospital, however the sands were ancient and highly compacted. After 1000 mm these gave way to very hard Malmsbury shale derived clays. Apart from odd fragments of plaster, the substrate was sterile.

The only area where undisturbed sands (originally on site) were encountered was behind the new hospital building in the lawned areas. Shales were encountered at a depth of 800 mm. No artefactual material of any significance was encountered. Areas around the mortuary and crèche has been disturbed by services, however shales were also encountered at depths of 800-900 mm. Similar applies to the hotel school and premises along the Portswood Road side.

Indications are that precinct 2 is devoid of archaeological material and may be developed without any further need for mitigation.

4.3 Precinct 3

Precinct 3 afforded many opportunities to sink trial excavations due to abundance of open spaces. All lawns, islands, and other open areas other than active parking areas were subject to excavation.

In general soil levels were shallow with shales being encountered between 700 and 1200 mm. Archaeological material was encountered in two localities, all other excavations were sterile.

Medical museum (precinct 3b)

Excavations produced a single human phalange (finger) and a rib fragment in the upper layers. These finds were associated with early 20th century domestic garbage close to the surface. As a result of this find, the area was extensively tested to check for evidence of disturbed burial shafts, however only sterile clays were encountered. The presence of these human remains is anomalous and cannot be linked to any identifiable burial. The most likely explanation is that they may have been specimens which were un-wittingly discarded in domestic rubbish from the superintendent's house. Since this area is to be

conserved during the proposed development on account of the architectural significance of the medical museum, the find was reburied.

Old wall between residence building and Wynyard Road (precinct 3h)

Fragments of soft red brick and lime plaster characteristic of 18th century building materials were found at a depth of 500-600 mm in open land between the residence building and the Wynyard Road boundary. Further excavation revealed what is assumed to be a crumbled wall of limited extent (7 trials were done at 3h and the find was not replicated). It is possible that this feature may be material associated with the "Kyk in de Pot Battery" which stood where Fort Wynyard is today. The significance of this find is unclear, however it appears to be of very limited extent. Area 3h is the only part of the whole study area for which further exploratory excavation is recommended.

5 Conclusion

All three precincts (1-3) represent a highly modified environment subject to years of development and activity. Soil depths throughout are shallow with the result that the land was unattractive for use as a burial ground because sufficient depth could not be achieved without mechanical assistance. All three precincts (including land to be incorporated in to the proposed Granger Bay Boulevard) are considered to be archaeologically insensitive and may be developed.

5.1 Recommendations

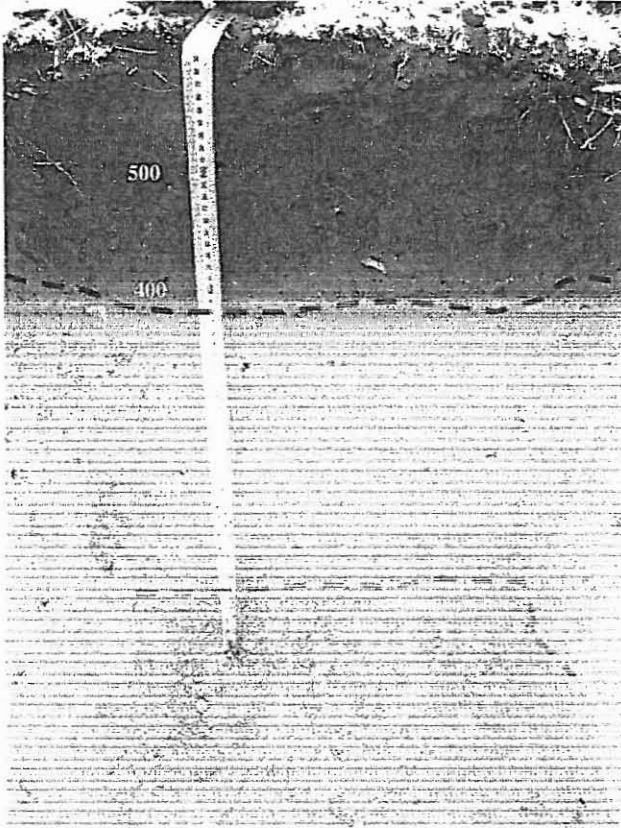
Further exploratory work is required in only one area – namely precinct 3h where 3 days of work will be needed to open up the area where the fragment of wall was found. However, if development activities will not affect the "find site", this action is not required.

Monitoring of excavation of basements is not required, however any material found during development should be reported to an archaeologist immediately.

An archaeologist should visit the site on a weekly basis while bulk excavation for basements is in progress to make sure that no impacts are taking place. In the unlikely event of a find, the material may need to be collected and recorded. This may cause brief delays or temporary diversion of building/mechanical excavation.

6 Appendix A

A plan of the study area (after NM Associates) showing locations of trail excavations and selected section diagrams representing the Precincts 1-3. Callouts on Figure 1 indicate the trial excavations for which section photographs are presented in the following pages.

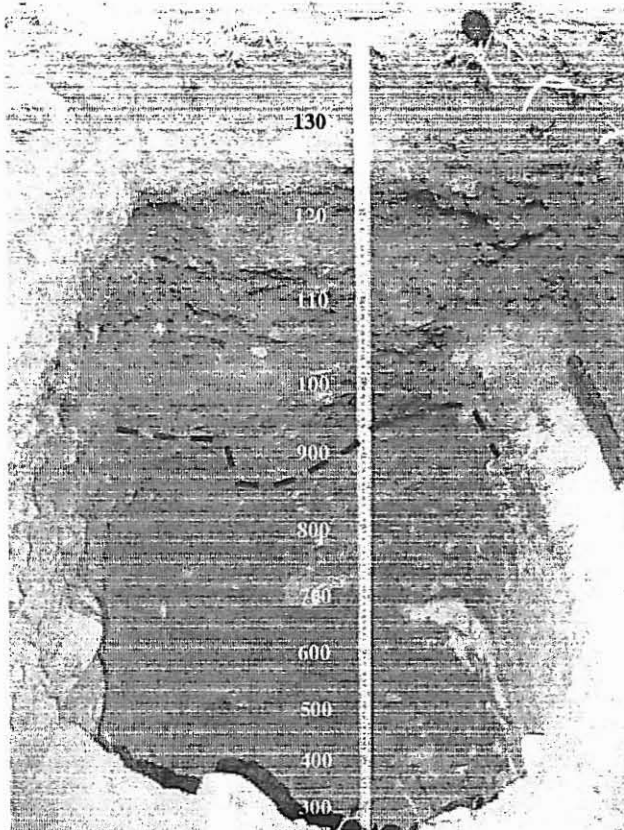


PRECINCT 2E-2F (Excavation G13)

Topsoils with modern garbage.

Compacted ancient sands and clays.

Hard clays and Malmsbury shales.

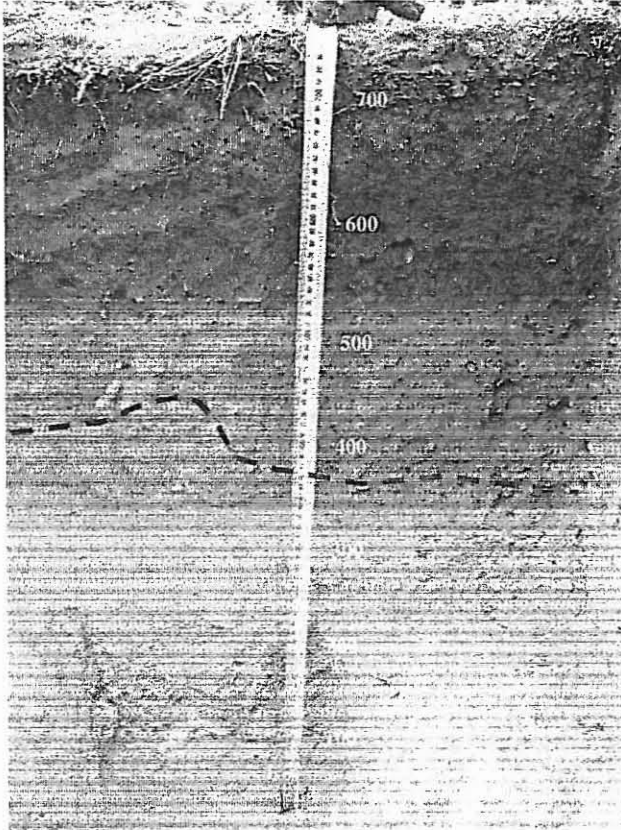


PRECINCT 2H (Excavation H4)

Upper layer contains building rubble and is disturbed by services (see cable right).

Mixture of clay and building rubble (early 20th century) indicates area has been subject to extensive disturbance and possible demolition of hospital out-buildings.

Building rubble and clay above shale.

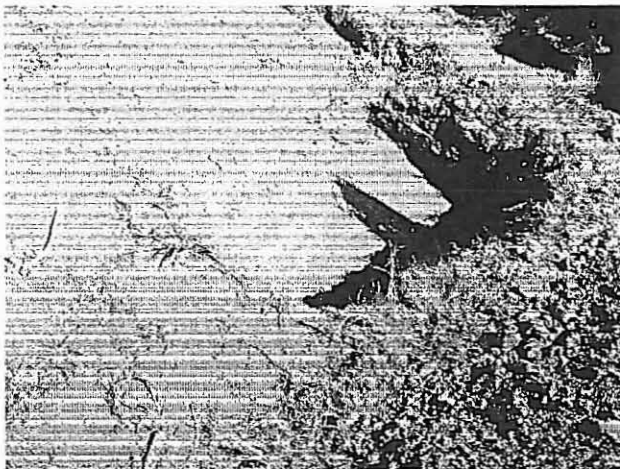


PRECINCT 2A (Front garden old hospital) Excavation I1.

Soils mixed with flecks of building rubble, plaster, charcoal and cinder.

Building rubble and clay mixed with plaster and cinders indicates years of soil disturbance by gardening etc.

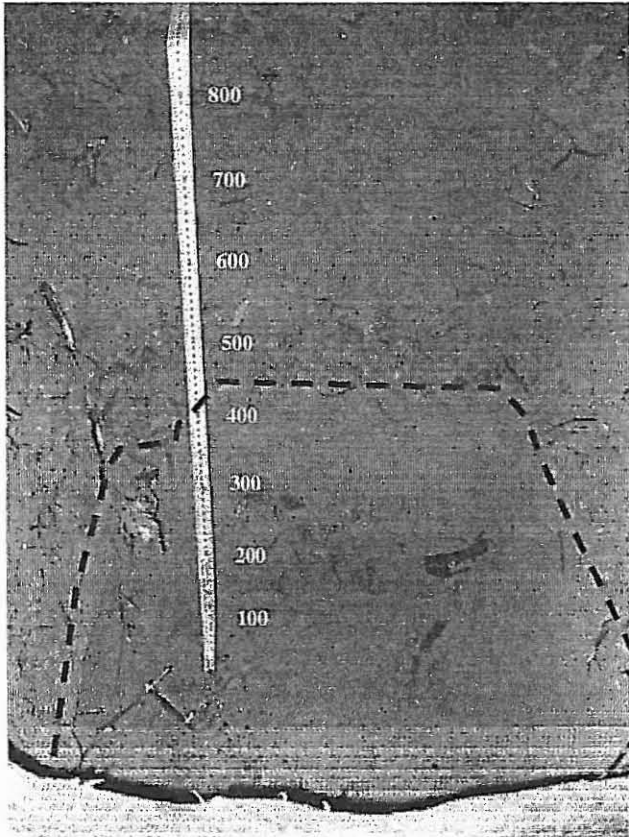
Cinder layer above hard clays and Malsbury shales.



PRECINCT 2C (Helipad) Excavation A4

Shallow excavation (approx) 600 mm through sterile sand, clays.

Compact shales and shale derived clays at bottom of excavation at 500-600 mm.



**PRECINCT 3B (Excavation L2)
Medical superintendents house.**

Upper 450 mm consists of successive layers of fill and topsoil containing early 20th century garbage including a human phalange and rib fragment. The remains are considered to be in secondary context due to their inclusion within disturbed and transported soils.

Ancient compacted sterile sands overlie compact shale derived clays.



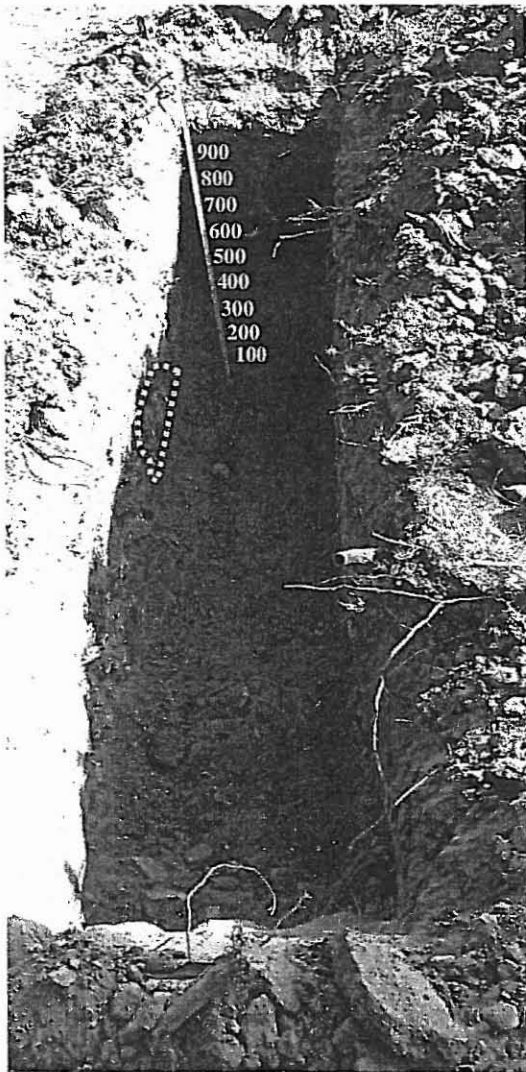
PRECINCT 3C (Excavation M2)

Topsoils and rubble.

Compacted sterile sand.

Compacted sterile sand and ferricrete nodules.

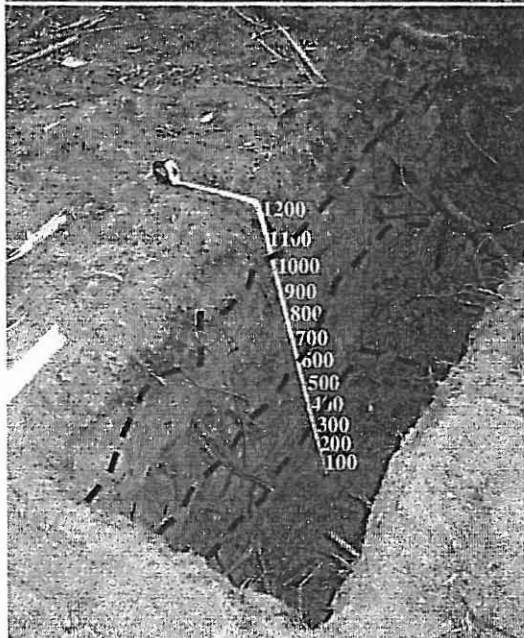
Compact clays and shale bedrock.



PRECINCT 3H (Excavation N2) Lawn in front of residence.

The deepest soil levels were encountered here with bedrock being reached at a depth of 1200 mm.

The yellow dotted yellow line area indicates the presence of a pile of rubble (lime plaster and 18th century style bricks) in section. The feature was not located in any other of the 8 trial excavations in this precinct indicating that it is a find of highly localized extent. According to the proposed precinct plan, the area will not be impacted.



PRECINCT 31 (Excavation O2) Behind watertank adjacent to Green Point track.

Sandy surface with humus and litter.

Sandy powdery soils with bluegum routes, 20th century artefacts.

Dense compacted sands with ferricrete nodules.

Very hard clays and decomposed Malmsbury shale bedrock.

7 Appendix B

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL EXCAVATIONS AT SOMERSET HOSPITAL

SOMERSET HOSPITAL REDEVELOPMENT: GREEN POINT BURIAL PROTOCOL

In the past several years, urban renewal and redevelopment have exposed human remains at a number of construction sites in the Green Point area. These sites opened a series of windows into what we now know is an extensive 'informal burial' horizon just beneath the network of streets and blocks of the Green Point, de Waterkant, and the V&A Waterfront area.

National Legislation and the Protection of Human Burials

Burials older than 60 years and archaeological remains over 100 years are protected in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act No. 25 of 1999.

After human remains were uncovered at Prestwich Street in 2003, the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA), provincial heritage authority Heritage Western Cape (HWC) and Cape Town City Heritage Resources Section jointly formulated the '**Bo-Kaap, de Waterkant, Green Point, and V&A Waterfront Burial Protocol**'. This interim document was designed as a guideline for developers and other interested parties in case of "accidental discovery of known and previously unknown burials and key historic sites which may have had associations with burials" within the boundaries of a demarcated 'burial area'.

In September 2005, provisional protection was granted for the historical human burials situated in Green Point and West City area for a period of 6 months for purposes of further investigation in terms of burials generally protected under section 36 of the National Heritage Resources Act.

Who are buried beneath Green Point?

The establishment of the Cape settlement in the 17th century brought a diversity of peoples, cultures and traditions via the VOC global trade routes to the tip of southern Africa. Various European cultures merged with immigrant, convict, exile and slave cultures of: Bengal, Borneo, Ceylon, China, India, Japan, Java, Persia, Madagascar, numerous African (Bantu-speaking) peoples, and the indigenous Khoekhoen groups in the creation of an urban community.

During the early period of VOC control of the Cape, if one was not part of the military or the Dutch Reformed Church, burial in the 'official cemeteries' was not an option. There were many people who fell outside these 'official' categories, and burial space had to be located for their interments. The sandy dune cordon from the foot of Signal Hill to the harbour shoreline was a preferred area for the disposal of the dead. This area was considered a wasteland by authorities until it was developed in the early 19th century. During the colonial period, the dunes of this area also provided easy disposal for small pox fatalities, executed criminals, suicide deaths, and shipwreck (or shipboard) victims.

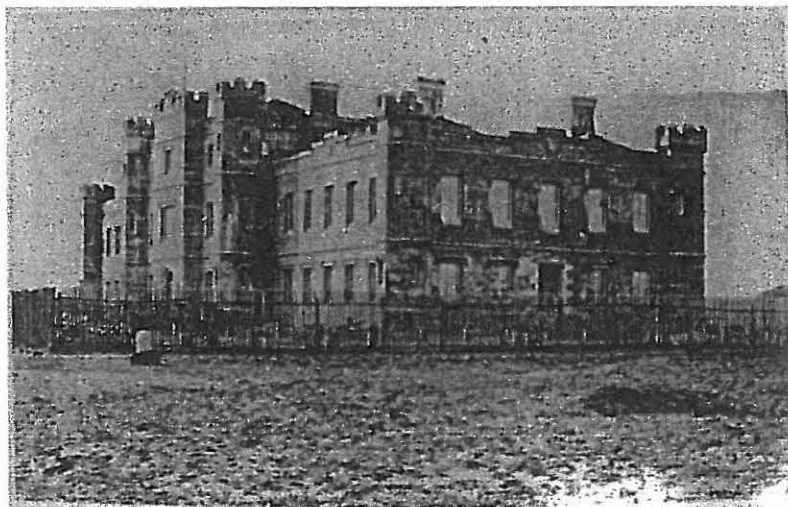
The historical human burials of Green Point are of great importance because they represent the social complexity of the *labouring classes* and can contribute towards greater understanding of the life conditions of the historically under-recorded of Cape Town.

As Green Point was developed in the 19th century, other religious denominations such as the Lutherans, Catholics, Anglicans, also established their cemeteries in the Green Point area. These burial grounds were eventually closed and the remains exhumed and relocated to Maitland. These 'official' burials were identified on the surface by headstones or other markers, but archaeologists have noted that sometimes the headstones were moved, but the remains left behind.

What are the chances human burials will be found during the redevelopment of Somerset Hospital?

Construction of the 'new' Somerset Hospital began in 1859 during the first phase of urban development of Green Point and expansion of the city to the west. The photo below shows what may be numerous gravestones just inside the peripheral fence encircling the hospital. While clearly indicated graves such

as these may have been exhumed and relocated, it is possible that some remains were left in the ground. It is also likely that there may be unmarked 'informal' burials in the vicinity as well. These burials may be associated with hospital fatalities but may also pre-date the construction of the hospital.



What will happen if human burials are discovered during the redevelopment of Somerset Hospital?

Plans are now in place to re-develop the Somerset and City Hospital precincts. Since this work involves much demolition and earthworks, it is necessary for archaeologists to come onto site at the very beginning before the start of development activities. They will need to dig trial excavations in as many places as they can so that they can establish if any bodies were buried in the area. If they find any bodies, they will not move them at this stage but will cover them over again so that the legislative process regarding human remains can be invoked.

A period of public consultation will commence between all stakeholders, as according to section 36 of the NRHA, to determine the best way forward to deal with remains and seek the input from any relatives or communities that may be associated with the deceased. Once all the necessary permits are in place they will be exhumed.

Our apologies for the inconvenience!

In the next few weeks we (UCT Archaeology Contracts Office) will be doing trial excavations throughout the precinct. This means we may have to dig in some parking areas, but we will try to inconvenience you (residents, businesses and tenants) as little as possible. We therefore ask for your co-operation and assistance in this matter. Please feel free to ask any member of the archaeological team any questions, but please stay clear of their work areas as they will need to dig holes up to 2m deep or more.

Thanks you for your co-operation.

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