

**The Archaeological Survey Of Durban South Point Whaling
Station**

For Arcuss Gibb (Pty) Ltd

Date: 6 September 2005

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Background

eThekwini Water and Sanitation (hereafter “EWS” except where otherwise specified) is responsible for the provision of water and the collection, treatment and disposal of sewage wastewater for the eThekwini Municipality. As such they are also responsible for the sub-aqueous tunnel and associated services infrastructure that underpasses the Port of Durban entrance channel (hereafter referred to as “the Port Entrance”). Apart from the large water and wastewater pipelines, the tunnel also houses a number of other services.

The proposed deepening and widening of the Port Entrance affect the existing tunnel. Consequently, the tunnel and its associated services need to be replaced with a deeper and ‘wider’ facility.

The National Port Authority (NPA) are planning to widen and deepen the existing Port Entrance to improve safe handling of vessels and to enable the entry of larger vessels in keeping with international shipping trends. This would promote the overall competitiveness of the Port.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs (DAEA), in delegation from the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), have authorised the proposed widening and deepening of the Port Entrance through a Record of Decision issued on 27 July 2004 (hereafter referred to as “the RoD”). The RoD was based on an Environmental Scoping Study that was conducted as part of the formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process that was registered with DAEA under the number EIA/4107. This authorisation included the removal and/or relocation of the sub-aqueous tunnel services.

The RoD is underpinned by a number of conditions. These conditions include the requirement for all relevant permits for the demolition of historic buildings to be obtained from Amafa-AkwaZulu-Natali / Heritage KwaZulu-Natal (Amafa).

Amafa furthermore and subsequently issued a letter on 23 August 2004 in which they acknowledge that an archaeological impact assessment of the site for the northern shaft has already been undertaken and need not be repeated. They however indicated that in addition the following is required:

- An archaeological assessment of the area demarcated for the southern shaft
- An archaeologist must be present during the proposed developments of the shafts
- Archaeologist to apply for a collection permit from Amafa prior to construction of the shafts.

Findings

I attended the preliminary excavations at the Durban Bluff Whaling Station. The aim of this visit was to monitor the excavations that were trying to locate previous servitudes, and to supervise the excavations of the new servitude line.

On my arrival, I noticed that the new servitude line had already been excavated to the south of the railway line. I suggested, to the contractor, that the excavations for the location of the old servitudes occur in the area where the south entrance of the tunnel would occur. In this way, we could notice any potential sites and/or artefacts. I had the understanding that a mechanical excavator would undertake the required work, however I was informed that this would be undertaken manually for safety and practical reasons.

Further on-site discussion with the contractor also noted that the cobble walling mentioned in my initial survey report may be affected in future excavations (possibly December). The contractor also stated that the excavations for the south entrance tunnel would occur later this year, and not during the course of my proposed monitoring.

During my site visit, I noticed that the whaling station appears to have undergone several phases of rebuilding. The indirect evidence of this is that there is differential preservation of metal objects along the slipway. In some areas the metal rings are severely corroded, whilst along the upper parts of the slipway, the ballasts are hardly corroded. This suggests that parts of this slipway may not be older than 60 years, and thus, technically not classified as a historical site.

Having stated the above, I did notice that there are several concrete slabs towards the hill. These slabs may date back to the early 20th century. The normal process for this feature is to map it accurately. The contractor has undertaken this already (Fig. 1). I do not believe that an archaeologist is required during the process of locating the old servitudes. These servitudes have already affected the subsurface features and it is unlikely to affect "new" features. That is, the damage has already occurred several years ago. It is thus also unlikely that the process of locating these servitudes would damage parts of the concrete slabs. It is in only one area that this may occur (fig. 1). I do not foresee that this area has much significance to the interpretation of the slipway, and it may be younger than 60 years.

Since the excavations for the older servitudes did not require an archaeologist, I stopped the archaeological monitoring.

Conclusion and Management

The following should apply for the rest of the project:

(1) An archaeologist should be on site when the main subaqueous tunnel entrance is excavated. I suggest that a mechanical excavator be used to expose the layer of sand below the original concrete floor of the slipway. If any significant material would be located, it would probably occur below this floor level. I do not believe that an archaeologist would be required during the location of servitudes. If any remains or artefacts are located then they should be reported to the archaeologist.

(2) Other activities that may damage the slipway should be restricted to those areas for the relocation of the servitudes. This area occurs along the southeastern part of the slipway, and the impact should be minimal.

(3) The cobble stone wall is an historical architectural feature and the built environment committee (via Amafa KZN) should be approached regarding its partial destruction. A permit will be required for this walling to be damaged.

(4) It is unlikely that this program will result in any delay in the construction of the tunnel. I do not believe that any remains of much significance would occur below and around the whaling slipway (barring the occurrence of a mass grave). We are likely to locate only the individual relics and these can be salvaged during the construction activities.