

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: PROPOSED  
ROBBERG HOTEL ON ERF 12529, BEACHY HEAD DRIVE,  
PLETTENBERG BAY, WESTERN CAPE.**

(Assessment conducted under Section 38 (1) of the  
National Heritage Resources Act, No 25 of 1999 as well as an  
ROD issued by Heritage Western Cape on 26/05/2009)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Archaeology Contracts Office at the University of Cape Town was appointed by Richter Architects to undertake a Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment of Erf 12529, Beachy Head Drive, Plettenberg Bay with a total surface area of 5, 449 m<sup>2</sup>. The property was created through the consolidation of former erven 1675, 1676, 1668 and 8786. There are 3 houses on the property, all more recent than 60 years, and they will be demolished to make way for a 50 bed boutique hotel.

The Heritage Impact Assessment was submitted to Heritage Western Cape who issued an ROD (26/05/2009) asking for an Archaeological Impact Assessment due to the fact that there are undisturbed areas between the houses.

A surface survey was conducted of the property on the 11 June 2009. The limitations are that the site is covered in impenetrable coastal shrub and some alien rooikrantz. While there are some footpaths which cross this erf, the height of the vegetation exceeds 2m in some areas and is extremely dense. In addition, the fact that there are three houses with landscaped gardens covering at least half the property means that a surface survey of the entire area was virtually impossible.

No archaeological remains (whether pre-colonial or colonial) were discovered on the property. However, a small collection of animal bones with evidence of metal cut marks, and a rough quartzite “core” was discovered on the property. It is possible that the stone was used to chop the bones to extract the marrow and it is likely that the remains are very recent.

It is recommended that the development of the property may proceed without mitigation. There would be little point in attempting to do shovel tests prior to development due to the density of the bush. The hilly nature of the terrain means that sites could be buried up to 2 metres below the soil surface and they would be unlikely to be discovered during test excavations.

An archaeologist should monitor the earth moving of the property in order to ensure that there are no buried archaeological remains (including human burials) beneath the soil surface.

The developer needs to be aware that construction will have to cease in an area if significant archaeological remains are uncovered. The archaeologist on duty will need to apply to Heritage Western Cape for a permit for excavations and the costs of excavations will be for the developer.





Figure 2: The position of Erf 12529 on Beachy Head Drive. The 3 dwellings which will be demolished are shown on the map.

### 3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The aim of the archaeological impact assessment is to:

- Identify any possible archaeological sites in the undisturbed areas between the three houses which currently exist on the property;
- To determine their significance;
- Determine whether the development would have a negative impact on heritage resources;
- To make recommendations for mitigation if this is required.

### 4. LEGISLATION

The National Heritage Resources Act, No 25 of 1999 (Section 38 (1)) makes provision for a compulsory notification of the intent to development when any development exceeding 5000 m<sup>2</sup> in extent, or any road or linear development

exceeding 300m in length is proposed. Section 38 (8) of the NHRA relates to impact assessments undertaken as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment.

The NHRA provides protection for the following categories of heritage resources:

- Landscapes, cultural or natural (Section 3 (3))
- Buildings or structures older than 60 years (Section 34);
- Archaeological Sites, palaeontological material and meteorites (Section 35);
- Burial grounds and graves (Section 36);
- Public monuments and memorials (Section 37);
- Living heritage (defined in the Act as including cultural tradition, oral history, performance, ritual, popular memory, skills and techniques, indigenous knowledge systems and the holistic approach to nature, society and social relationships) (Section 2 (d) (xxi)).

*The initial Heritage Impact Assessment was submitted to Heritage Western Cape who issued an ROD with the following comments on 26/05/2009:*

- 1) *An AIA was recommended in the Heritage Statement*
- 2) *Various undisturbed areas exist between the three houses which may contain Archaeological and Palaeontological material*
- 3) *The development will impact a Palaeontologically sensitive area*
- 4) *The application is currently being assessed by BELCOM for impacts on the cultural landscape.*

## **5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Robberg Peninsular contains numerous caves with shell midden material relating to the prehistoric occupation of the area. Nelson Bay Cave on Robberg is crucial to our understanding of the Middle and Later Stone Age periods. The area adjoining the peninsula is potentially of great interest as it may contain shell middens of prehistoric settlement.

Previous archaeological surveys have been conducted on Portion 57 of the farm Brakkloof 443 in 2001 (Webley 2001). This property, adjoining the coast, contained two localized scatters of marine shell but no archaeological materials (such as stone artefacts or pottery) of significance. A few flaked stone tools were found during a survey of Erf 2074 Marine Way, Plettenberg Bay in 2005 (Webley 2005) and on portion 6 of Ladywood 438 in 2004 (Webley 2004). Both of these areas are at a substantially higher elevation than Beach Head Drive. Surveys of Portions 50 and 51 of Brakkloof 443 in Plettenberg Bay, which are on a tributary of the Piesang facing east failed to identify any archaeological remains (Webley 2007).

The general area between the Robberg peninsula and the Piesang River is of interest because of the settlement by the survivors of the wreck of the Sao Goncalo in 1630. The Portuguese ship, the Sao Goncalo, laden with pepper and porcelain on her return trip from India, was wrecked in the bay formed by the Robberg headland. The 100 survivors built various buildings of wood, including a church, and lived on the coast for approximately 8 months before sailing back to Portugal in two smaller vessels which they had built from the timber of the wreck.



Phase 1 and Phase 2 archaeological (Binneman & Webley 1996) work on Portion 44 of the farm Brakkloof 443 (in 1981, 1986, 1993 and 1996) produced artefactual remains from the wreck, including blue and white porcelain of the Ming period, glass and carnelian beads, lead balls, fragments of incense, coins, medals and home made mother-of-pearl spoons. These remains relate to the camp of the wreck of the survivors of the Sao Goncalo. In addition, during the development of Portion 44 of the farm Brakkloof 443, a Khoisan burial was also uncovered.

The area therefore has the potential to be extremely important with regards our pre-colonial and colonial heritage.

## 6. METHOD

Previous archaeological research and consultancy work in this area informed the scope of the work. The survey work was undertaken on 11 June 2009. The area was covered on foot, where this was possible, and digital photographs taken of the terrain and existing houses. A Garmin GPS was also used during the field work to record the co-ordinates of possible sites.

### 6.1 Limitations

There are three residential dwellings on the Erf. They are large and cover a substantial portion of each of their grounds. At least two of the houses have landscaped gardens and large swathes of kikuyu lawn. It was not possible to examine the surface terrain of these properties (Plates 1 & 2).

The vegetation between the three houses on the Erf comprises impenetrable coastal shrub and some alien rooikrantz. While there are some footpaths which cross this erf (Plates 5 & 8), the height of the vegetation exceeds 2m in some areas and is extremely dense. This made an examination of the soil surface virtually impossible.

## 7. RESULTS

The three dwellings on the Erf were probably built within the last 20 years.



Plate 1: Dwelling 3. Plate 2: Dwelling 1. See Figure 2 for their location. Note the landscaped gardens with very little of the original soil surface still visible.



Plate 3: Dwelling 2 on Cordovan Crescent.



Plate 4: View of the dense bush on the vacant land adjoining Dwelling 2 on Cordovan Crescent.  
 Plate 5: View of some of the little footpaths which cross the vacant land. They provide the only access to the middle of the Erf.



Plates 6 & 7: A single quartzite "core" found in association with some recently discarded animal bones on a vacant section of Erf 12529. The bones exhibited cut marks made with metal implements.

Close to the fence on the vacant land adjoining dwelling 2 on Cordovan Crescent was a small collection of animal bones. They had cut marks made with a metal

implement (i.e. knife). Lying with the bones was a single quartzite “core” (Plates 6 & 7). The flaking on the quartzite cobble appeared fairly recent and it is possible that the stone was used to chop the bones to extract the marrow. In other words, there is no other evidence to support a pre-colonial date.

The GPS co-ordinates for this stone “core” are:

S 34° 04 33.2

E 23° 22 10.9

The survey revealed no other evidence for shell middens (i.e. fragments of shells), stone artefacts, pottery, bone, or graves, cemeteries or any other remains which would be impacted by the development.

## **8. SIGNIFICANCE, IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION**

There were significant limitations with regard a comprehensive survey of the property. The extremely dense coastal bush (Plate 9) meant that only selected areas, accessible by footpaths (Plates 5 & 8) across the property, could be examined for any surface archaeological remains. The survey did not identify any archaeological sites on the property with the exception of a single flaked stone cobble which could be a “core”. There are doubts about the origins of this core and it may be recent.

The development will therefore not damage or destroy any above ground archaeological remains. It is possible that there may be sub-surface archaeological remains but these will only be uncovered during development.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

No archaeological remains were discovered during the survey of Erf 12529. It is recommended that the development of the property may proceed without mitigation. There would be little point in attempting to do shovel tests prior to development due to the density of the bush. The hilly nature of the terrain means that sites could be buried up to 2 metres below the soil surface and they would be unlikely to be discovered during test excavations.

An archaeologist should monitor the earth moving of the property in order to ensure that there are no buried archaeological remains (including human burials) beneath the soil surface.

The developer needs to be aware that construction will have to cease in an area if significant archaeological remains are uncovered. The archaeologist on duty will need to apply to Heritage Western Cape for a permit for excavations and the costs of excavations will be for the developer.



## 10. REFERENCES

Binneman, J & Webley, L. 1996. Final Report on the Phase 2 Archaeological Investigation of Portion 44 of the Farm Brakkloof 443, Plettenberg Bay.

Deacon, J. 1979. Guide to Archaeological sites in the Southern Cape. Prepared for the Southern African Association of Archaeologists excursion June 1979.

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Webley, L. 2007. Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment of Portions 50 and 51 of the farm Brakkloof 443, Plettenberg Bay.

Webley, L. 2008. Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment of Erf 2098, Plettenberg Bay.

Webley, L. 2008. Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment: Portions 24 and 29 of the farm Brakkloof 443, Piesang River Valley, Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape.

## ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PROPERTY



Plate 8: A footpath through the dense undergrowth. Plate 9: A view from the top of the property towards the Robberg Peninsula, showing the dense bush in the foreground.

