

**AN INVESTIGATION OF A HISTORICAL RUBBISH DUMP ON
THE CORNER OF MINNAAR AND BOSMAN STREETS, PRETORIA**

For:

PRETORIA CITY COUNCIL
P O Box 3242
PRETORIA
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Investigation done and report prepared by the:

NATIONAL CULTURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
P O Box 28088
SUNNYSIDE
0132

Telephone - (012) 3411320
Telefax - (012) 3416146

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NASIONALE KULTURHISTORIESE MUSEUM
NATIONAL CULTURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

SUMMARY

An investigation of a historic rubbish dump on the corner of Minnaar and Bosman Streets, Pretoria.

During construction work on the new Pretoria Museum Mall, employees of the construction company Strydom Bouers BK found some artifacts dating to the late 19th to early 20th century on the corner of Minnaar and Bosman Streets. The National Cultural History Museum were duly contacted and asked to investigate the site. It was found that the artifacts come from an old rubbish dump, possibly used during the late 19th to early 20th centuries.

From the investigation, it is concluded that the site is of much scientific, historical and cultural significance, specifically in relation to the history of Pretoria.

Some recommendations are made in Section 7 of this report, i.e

- It is recommended that no future construction work be carried out on the site without prior notification of the National Cultural History Museum.
- That some form of site interpretation being done on the spot so that visitors to the Museum Mall can be informed about the history of the site and its surroundings.

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AN INVESTIGATION OF A HISTORIC RUBBISH DUMP ON THE CORNER OF MINNAAR AND BOSMAN STREETS, PRETORIA

1. BACKGROUND

The National Cultural History Museum were called on to investigate a historical archaeological site situated on the corner of Minnaar and Bosman Streets, Pretoria. This site was located by construction workers who found some artifacts (old bottles, porcelain, etc.) while working on the Pretoria Museum Mall. After the preliminary investigation, which uncovered numerous artifacts dating to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was concluded that the site had some historical value. It was then recommended that work at the site be temporarily stopped so that no further damage to the site and artifacts occur. The City Council was contacted, and it was agreed that a historical and archaeological investigation of the site be conducted. The Museum was duly contracted, and work started after careful planning and structuring.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference for the project were the following:

- to determine the extent and value of the site through a superficial, preliminary investigation.
- to retrieve as much cultural material as possible through archaeological investigation, in order to determine the historical value of the site.
- to preserve the material from destruction.
- to date the material and the site through analysis and documentation of the artifacts.
- to store data and material for future research.
- to use all information gathered during the project in order to contribute to a greater understanding of the history of Pretoria.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The site is located on the (north west) corner of Minnaar and Bosman streets, right at the front entrance of the Ambulance Services. Although the full extent of the original rubbish dump could not be determined, it must have been fairly large, with material found in an area approximately 30m in length and 10m to 15m in width. The area excavated was a

2m x 2m square, the square being almost in the center of the site. The site is located on a busy traffic and pedestrian route, which also makes it very accessible and visible - a number of interested people visited and expressed interest in the site while the investigation was being carried out.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Preliminary investigation

Researchers of the Museum surveyed the area in order to determine the extent of the site and locate the most suitable area for excavation. Artifacts were then retrieved from the site in the following manner:

The construction company were digging square pits for pylons with a back-actor and because, they fall in the investigation area, three of these pits were chosen for sampling. While Museum archaeologists gathered artifacts from each scoop of the machine, another would rescue artifacts from the hole before the next scoop from the machine.

4.2 Archaeological excavation

The whole site was divided into 2m x 2m squares, using an artificial grid. One of these, square B5, being close to the centre of the deposit, was chosen to be excavated. The square was excavated in a combination of natural stratigraphy and arbitrary layers down to sterile soil. Six layers were identified. The soil from each layer was carefully sieved, and artifacts were recovered and packed layer by layer. After each layer was completed, black & white and colour slides were taken for identification and documentation purposes. Some artifacts were also photographed in situ.

4.3 Historical research

This was done by reviewing literature on the history of Pretoria, as well as by conducting an archival search. The emphasis was on finding information regarding Minnaar Street and its immediate surroundings during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

5. RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 Preliminary investigation

During this part of the investigation, masses of material were "rescued". The material included bone, metal, porcelain, ceramics and glass. Many complete and broken bottles, parts of porcelain cups, plates and saucers, metal objects such as horse shoes and belt buckles, etc., were found. Some material was, however, destroyed by the back-actor and a great deal of material was discarded on-site in order to cope with the sample-size.

From analysis of the material, it was found that it dates from the late 19th to the early 20th centuries. Some artifacts even dates to the late 1940's. From this analysis, it was decided that a formal excavation was needed in order to determine the real historical value of the site, and to see if a chronology for the site can be determined.

5.2 Archaeological excavations

Six layers were excavated, to a total depth of approximately 1.4 metres. Artifacts were retrieved and packed per layer, in their separate categories, i.e. glass, porcelain/ceramics, metal, bone and various.

In layer 1, a hard, yellow, stony layer, pieces of bone, metal, glass and porcelain were found. Complete artifacts were scarce, but a few buttons, bottle stoppers and other miscellaneous artifacts were found. The top part of this layer was very hard, becoming softer and ashy lower down. It also seemed as if material in this layer was mixed, in that artifacts with old and more recent dates were found together.

Layer 2 is a non-ashy layer, with many more complete artifacts discovered than in the previous layer. Part of the layer is compacted, and this created difficulties in the excavation. Large bones, as well as whole bottles, porcelain fragments, metal objects, etc. were found. Interesting artifacts include the lower jaw of a warthog, clay pipe stems, a knife haft of ivory or bone, buttons and the arm of a small porcelain doll.

Contrary to the previous, layer 3 is very ashy. A great deal of interesting artifacts were found in this layer, including three clay pipe bowls with makers' marks. These will be useful in dating the site and the associated artifacts.

In layer 4, clay pipe bowls with makers' marks were again found, as well as a great deal of bone, glass, metal and porcelain. Artifacts include glass bottle stoppers, buttons, belt buckles and a possibly Iron Age potsherd, as well as many complete bottles. A lot of ash and charcoal occurs. Material from layers 2, 3 and 4 seem not to be mixed, as opposed to the case of layer 1. With detailed analysis, it may therefore be possible to determine a chronology for the rubbish dump.

Layer 5 was completely covered by a sheet of corrugated iron. Glass, porcelain, metal and bone were still found in great quantities.

Layer 6 produced a very small amount of material, and the sterile layer lies just beneath this layer. The sterile layer is identified by a layer of red clay.

5.3 Historical Research

This section of the research is still to be completed. However, the following can be said. Bosman street was known as Koch Street before 1942, while Minnaar Street still retains its old name. The Ambulance building on the corner of Bosman and Minnaar Streets was referred to in 1913 as the New Firebrigade Headquarters. In 1903 a wood and corrugated

iron building on the corner of Schubart and Minnaar Streets was used as a fire station. Between 1899 and 1913 the following houses were situated in Minnaar street (east to west from Koch[Bosman] to Schubart):

G.F.Raubenheimer (with a garden)
 J.Massijn
 D.J.Robbertse
 J.Berning
 A.A.Le Roux
 J.A.Venter
 A.J.van der Walt
 H.Javis
 H.B.Kruger (with a garden)
 D.de Beer (with a garden)

On the right-hand side of the road, where the excavations were carried out, in an east-west direction, the following were found in 1913:

an open erf
 municipal sewage works
 the New Fire station

According to Longland's Directory, Middelburg Butchery was located in Minnaar Street west, but the exact location is not given. At this stage, no correlation can be drawn between the excavated material and the environment in which the site is situated. Further research will therefore continue as the rest of the material is analysed.

6. DISCUSSION

For the purposes of this report, a brief discussion of some of the artifacts found during the investigation will suffice. Bone, metal, glass, porcelain/ceramic and a variety of other artifacts were found in great quantities.

6.1 Faunal material

The bone founded included those of domestic and non-domestic animals, such as cattle, sheep and warthog. Identifiable and unidentifiable bones were retrieved. Skeletal parts included skull, vertebrae, ribs, teeth, femur, etc. Bones with cut or saw marks were identified, and a lot of the bones were visibly burnt. For expert analysis, the bone material will be taken to Dr Ina Plug of the Transvaal Museum.

6.2 Porcelain/Ceramics

Porcelain/ceramic pieces were abundant, and were put into the following categories: decorated and undecorated ware; pieces with makers' marks or registration numbers; complete artifacts; pieces identifiable as part of cups, saucers, plates, etc. The pieces with

the makers' marks or registration numbers were used to date the material, and the dates range between the 1860's and 1940's. French, German, Dutch and English ware were identified. Some of the artifacts are similar to material found during excavations at Melrose House in 1995 by the National Cultural History Museum. Stoneware artifacts, such as gin bottles and ink-containers, were also found. Two possibly Iron Age potsherds were also found. Their age and association with the other artifacts and the rubbish dump are uncertain at present.

6.3 Glass

This category included complete bottles, broken bottles, pieces of glass, parts of wine and other drinking glasses, glass bottle stoppers and other glass artifacts. Although most bottles were unmarked, some did have registration numbers or makers' marks, which helped in their dating. The dates were mostly in the early 1900's. Two very rare square case-gin bottles from Schiedam in the Netherlands were found, but the precise age of the bottles is still unknown. Liquor, medicinal, soda/mineral water and condiment (Worcestershire sauce) bottles were found.

6.4 Metal

This material was found in abundance, mostly in the form of scrap pieces of metal, although some very interesting artifacts were found. The types of metal include iron, copper, brass, lead, and zinc. The artifacts include buttons, a number of horseshoes, a spoon, a bucket, an axe blade, nails and screws, bullet shell casings (Martini Henry), a ring, etc.

6.5 Diverse material

The following material-types fell into this category: plastic, leather, (sea) shells, clothing, stone, kaolin, cork, etc. The artifacts include parts of shoes, cork bottle stoppers, clay pipes and other artifacts. The clay pipes were a tremendous find, in that they are very scarce at these sites. All of the pipe-bowls have their makers' marks and it was possible to determine that they were all made in Holland and probably date to between 1850 and 1900. Further research will, however, be carried out on the pipes.

7. CONCLUSIONS

After completion of the archaeological investigation and the preliminary analysis of the excavated material, we have come to the conclusion that the Minnaar Street site have much scientific, historical and cultural significance for the understanding of the history of Pretoria and its inhabitants.

Such large quantities of material was retrieved, that the full analysis thereof will still take some months to complete. It is hoped that through the analysis of the material, the real value of the site and the artifacts will be understood.

To ensure that no further damage to the deposit takes place, it is recommended that no future construction work be carried out on the site without prior notification of the National Cultural History Museum.

It is also recommended that some form of site interpretation be done on the spot so that visitors to the Museum Mall can be informed about the history of the site and its surroundings, see how the investigation was carried out, and view some of the artifacts that were recovered.

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9. PROJECT TEAM

J van Schalkwyk
A Pelsler
F Teichert
C Meyer
S Moifatsane
A Mtombeni
S Smith
J van den Bos