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ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY: FARM PLATTEBOSCH 56/485, STILL BAY COAST

Prepared for

CODEV

On behalf of

THE KNIKKERBAAI TRUST

By

Agency for Cultural Resource Management
P.O. Box 159
Riebeek West
7306
Ph/Fax 02246 855

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Executive summary

Six archaeological sites were located during a baseline study of the farm Plattebosch 56/485, west of Still Bay on the Cape south coast, the site for the proposed Knikkerbaai Trust development.

The planned development consists of ~~eight~~ six properties located above and behind the steep vegetated frontal dunes on the coast.

The archaeological sites located in the study area comprise two Later Stone Age shell middens probably dating to between 3000 and 2000 years, three Middle Stone Age sites older than 20 000 years, and one tidal fish trap (visvywer).

Most of the sites have already been disturbed as a result of natural processes such as wind erosion, and more recent human disturbance, but some do retain archaeological integrity.

Two of the sites have been given low significance ratings, two have been given medium significance ratings, and two have been given medium-high significance ratings.

The proposed development will impact on one of the shell middens located behind the steep frontal dunes. As a result some archaeological mitigation will be required.

Secondary impacts such as the siting of work camps, and increased human activity during implementation of the project, may possibly disturb one of the open sites. If such impacts cannot be avoided, some archaeological mitigation may also be required.

The proposed siting of the properties behind the frontal dunes may also potentially impact on human burial remains. Burials will need to be treated sensitively if uncovered during implementation of the project. An archaeologist will need to intervene in the event of burials being disturbed. An archaeological contingency fund should be set aside in the event of this occurring.

A shell midden located close to a coastal hiking trail above the high water mark on the property will not be impacted by the proposed development, but may in time be disturbed by increased visitation. The erection of an information board close to the shell midden is recommended.

The northern portion of the farm comprises a heavily vegetated driftsand system, resulting in extremely low archaeological visibility. No sites were found in this area.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and brief

The Agency for Cultural Resource Management (ACRM) has been requested by Coastal Conservation and Development Facilitation Services (CODEV) to undertake a baseline archaeological survey of the farm Plattebosch 56/485 west of the town of Still Bay on the Cape south coast, the site for the proposed Knikkerbaai Trust development.

The proposed development comprises eight properties situated above and immediately behind the steep vegetated frontal dunes on the coastal portion of the property.

The remaining portion of the site, comprising a large driftsand system (now severely vegetated by exotic Rooikrans) will be set aside by the owners of Plattebosch as a private conservation area (Chris Gaigher, Coastal Conservation and Development Facilitation Services, pers. comm.).

The aim of the archaeological study is to locate, identify and map archaeological sites that may be impacted by the planning, construction and implementation of the proposed project and to propose measures to mitigate against the impact.

2. Term of reference

The terms of reference for the archaeological study were:

1. to determine whether there are likely to be any archaeological sites of significance on the site;

2. to identify and map any sites of archaeological significance;

3. to assess the status and significance of any impacts resulting from the proposed development; and

4. to identify mitigatory measures to protect and maintain any valuable archaeological sites that may exist.

3. The study site

The study site for the proposed development is the farm Plattebosch 56/485, west of Still Bay on the southern Cape coast (Figure 1).

The study site comprises a stretch of mainly rocky coastline about 0.8 km long, characterised by steep stable vegetated frontal dunes. The inland portion of the site consists of a large driftsand system severely infested with exotic (Rooikrans) vegetation, resulting in extremely low archaeological visibility. Foot paths and sand tracks also occur on the site.

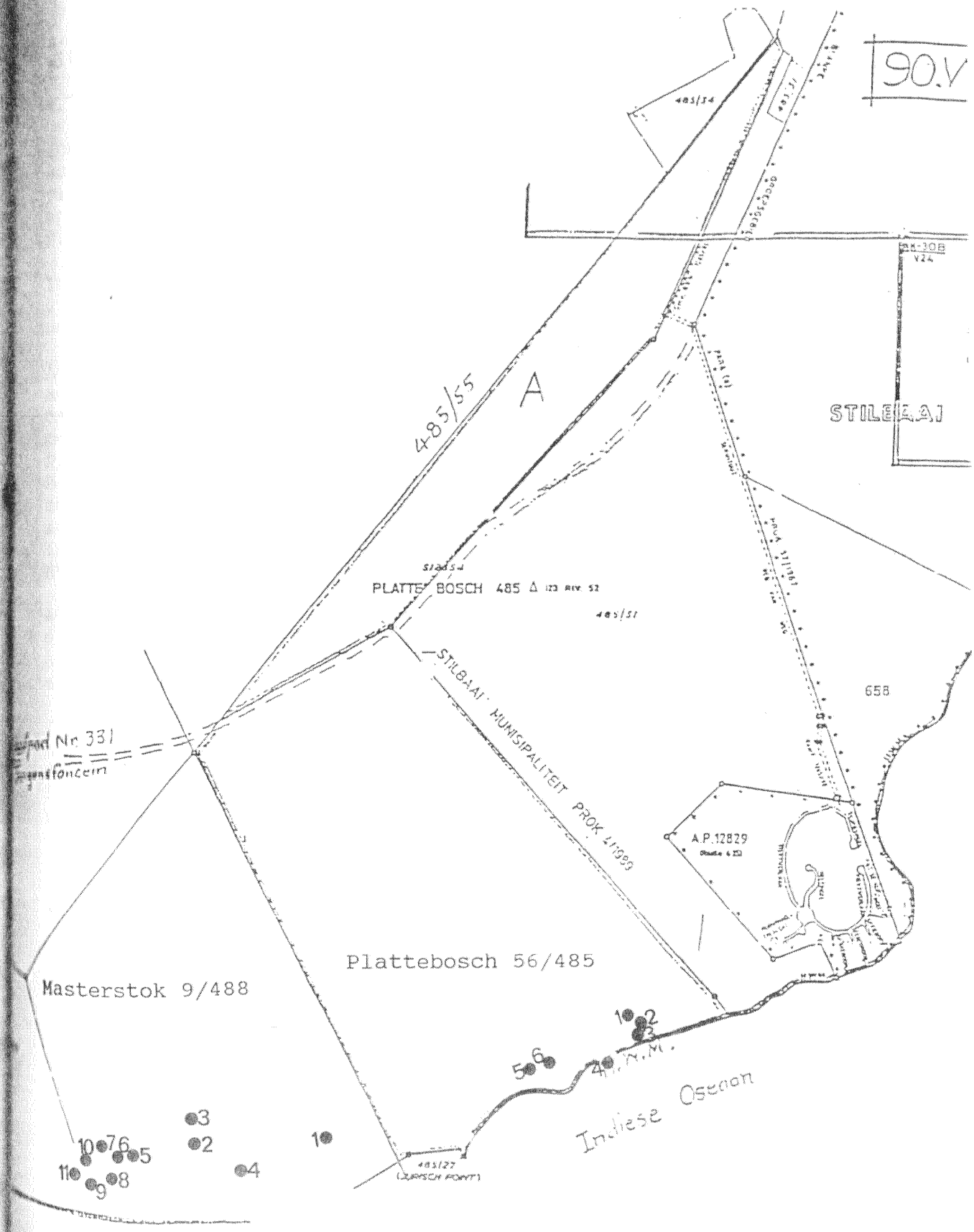

Figure 1. Masterstok 9/488 and Plattebosch 56/485 Archaeological Study: study area and location of archaeological sites.

4. Study approach and documentation of archaeological sites

4.1 Method of survey

The approach followed in the baseline archaeological survey entailed a detailed foot survey of the farm Plattebosch 56/485. The baseline study also included the split remainder of privately-owned land between Plattebosch 56/485 and the farm Masterstok 9/488.

In addition to the field survey an examination of the existing records in the South African Museum was also undertaken.

According to the records of the Archaeological Data Recording Centre at the South African Museum, no sites have been recorded in the affected area, but sites have been recorded at Morris Point, Kleinplaatjie, Still Bay, Platbosfontein and Masterstok (Goodwin 1946, Rudner 1968; Hart & Parkington 1991; Kaplan 1993, 1997). These include shell middens, open (deflated) sites, burials, and ancient tidal fish traps (visvywers). Shell middens, open sites, and tidal fish traps have also been recorded at Jongensfontein (Kaplan 1993).

ACRM also noted the remains of number of severely damaged sites at Noordkapperpunt that have occurred as a result of the private residential development of Bosbokduin adjacent to Plattebosch 56/485.

There is strong evidence for the correlation between the distribution of coastal archaeological sites and physical features in the coastal zone (Kaplan 1993). For example, land forms and features such as rocky headlands, wavecut rocky platforms and dunes acted as magnets in the distribution of sites. These features acted as foci that attracted Stone Age people as they offered greater opportunities for the exploitation of marine foods, particularly shellfish. The Still Bay/Jongensfontein coastal zone is characterised by such features.

Visvywers or tidal fish traps typically consist of stone-walled enclosures built in either gullies or low-energy bays with an abundance of loose boulders. The dams range in size from a few metres in diameter to as much as 100 metres. The low piled stone walls are assembled with gently sloping seaward sides and almost vertical interior walls - thus entry of fish at high tide was facilitated while their exit at low tide was prevented. A number of south coast complexes comprise several tiers of enclosures extending from the high water mark to spring-low areas to ensure catches through a range of tidal situations (Kaplan 1995).

Archaeologists have proposed that the concept of tidal fish traps may have originated among Later Stone Age (LSA) people about 2000 years ago (Avery 1975). Archaeological deposits attributed to the LSA, like shell

middens, contain far more fish bone than deposits of greater antiquity. Archaeologists have therefore concluded that LSA people invented a fishing method that enabled them to effectively exploit large quantities of vertebrate fish - mainly by means of fish traps at suitable locations along the coast (Goodwin 1946). "Ownership" of some south coast fish traps has continued through to the historic period with some families maintaining the devices and achieving catches to the present day.

4.2 Documentation of archaeological sites

The archaeological sites located in Plattebosch 56/485 are described according to accepted archaeological recording techniques. These include a written description of all the sites recorded. All the sites have been plotted on the 1:10 000 orthophotos (3421 AD 18 & 19 Jongensfontein). A photographic record of the important sites have also been made. In addition, Global Positioning System (GPS) readings have been taken.

5. Results of the impact assessment

Six archaeological sites were recorded in the baseline study (Figure 1). Except for the immediate coastal portion of the property, and the disturbed portion behind the steep frontal dunes, archaeological visibility in the study area is extremely low, where the major portion of the site is infested with exotic Rooikrans. The steep frontal dunes, where the proposed development will occur, are also heavily vegetated resulting in low archaeological visibility.

In addition to the Plattebosch 56/485 study, a string of archaeological sites (scatters of fragmented shell and occasional stone implements) were located on the portion of privately-owned land between Plattebosch 56/485 and Masterstok 9/488. These sites were located immediately behind the vegetated frontal dunes on the property. A large shell midden was also noted on the rocky point between Knikkerdraai and Sandhoek, where a small dwelling has already been constructed.

PLTB refers to Plattebosch

PLTB 1. GPS reading S 34°24.17' E 21°24.21'

PLTB 1 is possibly a workshop site comprising a high density scatter of mainly Middle Stone Age (MSA) implements older than 20 000 years, including quartzite, quartz and silcrete flakes, chunks, cores, hammerstones, and split and whole cobbles, located in an open area on consolidated wind-blown red sands behind the steep frontal dunes, very close to the planned development (Figure 2).

MSA implements were also found in and close to the sand track which cuts through the site behind the vegetated dunes, and on a large south-facing slope overlooking the sand track. Some LSA implements including flakes, chunks, a scraper, a miscellaneous retouched piece, one piece of ochre and one piece of ostrich eggshell were also found. Some fragmented marine shell (limpet and turbo) also occur on the site.

Although this site has been disturbed by natural processes, and the cutting of the sand track, it does retain some archaeological integrity.

Significance of finds: medium

Suggested mitigation: If project impacts cannot be avoided, a controlled archaeological collection is required

PLTB 2. GPS reading S 34°24.20 E 21°24.13

PLTB 2 comprise the remains of a shell midden on a south-facing vegetated dune immediately behind the steep fontal dunes, and within the area of the planned development (Figure 3). A high density scatter of fragmented and whole marine shell (limpet, turbo, brown mussel and perlemoen) is eroding down the slope. Some in-situ shell is visible at the top of the dune.

A high density scatter of fragmented shell (limpet, turbo, mussel and perlemoen) and some LSA flakes and chunks occur at the base of the dune, and in the wind-deflated slope below the dune, as well as above an eroding consolidated calcrete surface.

A low density scatter of fragmented marine shell and about eight pieces of ostrich eggshell were also found about 25 metres west of the main concentration of material.

Significance of finds: medium-high

Suggested mitigation: a small controlled archaeological excavation is required

PLTB 3. GPS reading S 34°24.25 E 21°24.09

PLTB 3 comprises the relatively undisturbed remains of a shell midden near a foot path at the bottom of the steep frontal dunes above the high water mark and about 30 metres south of PLTB 2 (Figure 4). The foot path forms part of a well used coastal hiking trail, but the midden has remained relatively intact.

The midden comprises a dome-shaped flat sand dune with a high density scatter of fragmented marine shell (limpet, turbo, mussel and perlemoen) and a fairly high density

scatter of large quartzite flakes, including split and whole beach cobbles and a core.

Significance of finds: medium-high

Suggested mitigation. An information board to be erected close to the midden to inform hikers and residents of the existence of an archaeological site and the need to protect sites along the coast

PLTB 4. No GPS reading taken

PLTB 4 is an ancient tidal fish trap about 20 metres in diameter, located along the rocky coastline of the property (Figure 5). The fish trap has not been maintained in recent times and will eventually fall apart due to wave action.

Significance of finds: medium

Suggested mitigation: none required

PLTB 5. GPS reading S 34°24.34 E 21°23.88

Some fragmented marine shell and several pieces of ostrich eggshell were located in a steep foot path on the western boundary of the property. The site is severely disturbed. A thin layer of in-situ shell occurs in the dune face alongside the foot path.

Significance of finds: low

Suggested mitigation: none required

PLTB 6. GPS reading S 34°24.30 E 21°23.85

A low density scatter of fragmented marine shell (limpet and turbo), and some quartzite, quartz and silcrete flakes were located on windswept consolidated calcrete at the top of the steep foot path on the western boundary of the farm. A similar occurrence of shell and stone implements were located about 30 metres east along the sand track.

Significance of finds: low

Suggested mitigation: none required

In addition to the Plattebosch archaeological study, scatters of fragmented shell and stone implements, and a large shell midden were located on the private property between Knikkerdraai and Sandhoek. In a recent study eleven sites were also located on the farm Masterstok 9/488 (Kaplan 1997).

Figure 2. Archaeological study Plettenberg Bay: PLTB 1

Figure 3. Archaeological study Plettenberg Bay: PLTB 2

6. Impact statement

Except for the immediate coastal portion on the property, and the portion immediately behind the steep frontal dunes, the study site is well vegetated, resulting in extremely low archaeological visibility.

The proposed development of ~~eight~~ six properties above and immediately behind the vegetated frontal dunes will impact directly on one archaeological site (PLTB 2).

Secondary impacts such as the siting of work camps, and increased human activity during implementation of the project, may impact further on PLTB 1. Increased visitation and the continued use of the coastal hiking trail may result in long-term damage to PLTB 3.

Human burials and shell middens may also be uncovered during earthmoving activities and the laying of services.

7. Legislation

All archaeological sites including human burials are protected by the National Monuments Act (Act No. 28 of 1969 as amended). It is an offence to disturb, remove, or destroy from its original site, or excavate any such site without a permit from the National Monuments Council.

8. Recommendations

With regard to the proposed development of the farm Plattebosch 56/485, the following recommendations are made:

1. A controlled test excavation of PLTB 2 is required. The siting of one of the properties behind the frontal dunes will impact directly on this site.

2. If project impacts cannot be avoided, a controlled collection of material from PLTB 1 will be required. Secondary impacts such as the location of work camps, and increased human activity during implementation of the project may result in long-term damage to the site.

3. The proposed siting of the residential properties behind the steep vegetated frontal dunes may potentially impact on human burial remains. Burials will need to be treated sensitively if uncovered during implementation of the project.

Appropriate strategies aimed at recovering human burials, should they be encountered during earthmoving activities, will need to developed and applied. An archaeologist will need to directly intervene in the event of burials being disturbed. An archaeological contingency fund should be set aside in the event of this occurring.

4. An information board to be erected close to PLTB 3, to inform hikers and residents of the existence of an archaeological site and the need to protect sites along the coast. Increased visitation and the continued use of the coastal hiking trail may result in long-term damage to the site.

The above recommendations are subject to the approval of the National monuments Council Archaeological Plans Committee.

9. References

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