

PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE AREA OF THE PROPOSED SOETWATER MARICULTURE FACILITY

Prepared for

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Prepared by

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Archaeology Contracts Office of the University of Cape town was asked by Erica van den Honert Environmental Consulting cc. to visit the site of the proposed Soetwater Mariculture Facility and undertake an archaeological assessment of the area (Figure 1). An earlier archaeological survey of the surrounding coastline was conducted by a University of Cape Town honours student (Andrew Olivier) in 1977 and he noted that the Witsandsbaai coastal dune strip had been vastly modified for recreational purposes. He concluded that little, if any, of the area is in its original state. The area is crisscrossed by many tracks cutting deeply into the surrounding sands and is covered in places by dense alien vegetation. Olivier's survey did however note the presence of a single site, which we believe to be to the east of the proposed development. He does not describe any other sites. A number of pre-colonial fish traps have been identified within the tidal zone adjacent to the proposed development area.

2. METHOD

A site visit was undertaken and the area searched on foot.

2.1 Limitations to the study

Thick Port Jackson vegetation made much of the area impenetrable. However, we managed to walk through some areas where the vegetation was less dense and the area along the power line was passable. Open areas were probed and molehills checked for archaeological material. We do not believe that these limitations seriously affect our overall impression of the site.

3. RESULTS

Four archaeological sites were located in the survey area. One of these is an ephemeral shell midden occurrence with stone artefactual material, and the other three are precolonial fish traps. These sites are described below along with ratings of significance. The locations of the sites are shown in Figure 1.

3.1 Site 1

Traces of midden material have been observed in molehills immediately west of the powerline as indicated on Figure 1. Three pieces of artefactual stone were identified. These include one quartz chunk, one silcrete flake and one quartzite flake. No bone or other organic material was observed. Probing revealed no major shell lenses below surface.

Importance: Low

Mitigation: None

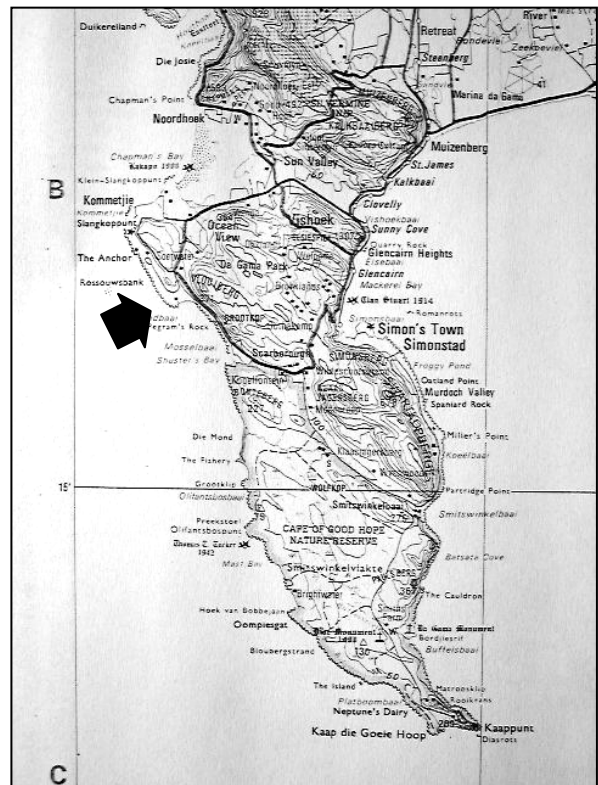
3.2 Sites 2, 3, 4

These sites have been identified as tidal fish traps constructed to trap fish during receding tides. These features appear to be consistent with pre-colonial tidal fish traps which are evident elsewhere along the coastline and which have been well documented in published and unpublished reports (Avery 1975). The location of the fish traps is shown in Figure 1 and the traps themselves are shown in plates 1-3.

The intertidal zone along this part of the coastline is composed largely of rounded boulders of varying sizes underlain by a substantial rock platform. In places the smaller boulder



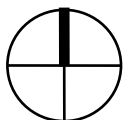
- Tidal fish traps
- ▲ Shell midden
- ⊙ Area of survey



1

Location of survey and archaeological sites

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material has been moved and piled to create fairly large pools in which the fish could be trapped.

Sites 2 and 3 are unmistakably fishtraps of pre-colonial age whereas site 4 is in a slightly different location and we do not see any clear evidence of the piling of boulder material. Despite these discrepancies, we feel that this is in all likelihood a fish trap.

Importance: High

Mitigation: None-these should not be disturbed by any building related factors.

3. CONCLUSION

A lot of marine shell is visible in the immediate coastal sector. Whilst some may be associated with archaeological midden material, much of it would seem to be the result of natural beach processes. There are odd patches of large whole shells, but most is very fragmented and rounded as a result of wave action. Recent wind-blown sand and dense vegetation has led to the obscuring of possible archaeological material. However, probing and the checking of molehills and revealed very little substantial midden material and virtually no lithic or non-lithic materials.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The only site to have shown any clear human association is site 1. We do not feel it to be of any real importance, and therefore do not suggest any mitigation.

4.2 Fish traps are often accompanied by middens in close proximity. Whilst we have seen no clear evidence of such, it may be that they are deeply buried under drift sand. A site visit should be made during any major earthworks which may take place on site to establish whether this is the case or not.

4.3 It is not anticipated that the three tidal fish traps are going to be directly affected by any proposed development. Their locations must be taken into account if any outfalls are planned.

5. REFERENCES

Avery, G. 1975. Discussion on the age and use of tidal fish traps (visvywers). *South African Archaeological Bulletin* **30**:105-113.

Olivier, A. 1977. The archaeological sites of the Cape Peninsula. Appendix A. Unpublished BA Hons dissertation, Department of Archaeology, University of Cape Town

6. PROFESSIONAL TEAM

Fieldwork and Report

Belinda Mütti
Dave Halkett



Plate 1: Tidal fish trap (2) at low tide.



Plate 2: Tidal fish trap (3) at low tide



Plate 3: Tidal fish trap (4) at low tide