

DESKTOP ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE STATION SITE, Erf 148638 FORESHORE, CAPE TOWN

(Assessment conducted under Section 38 (8) of the
National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999) as part of an EIA)

Prepared for
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ACO Associates CC appointed by Eris Property Group to undertake a desktop archaeological assessment of land in Cape Town Erf 148638 (part of Cape Town Station) for which redevelopment is proposed. Redevelopment of the site will involve the construction of a basement.

The study has revealed that the proposed development is situated in what used to be the shallows of Roggebaai just east of the Old Central Jetty, and later the Adderley Street Pier. Possible impacts that could occur relate to:

- Shoreline shipwrecks of Table Bay
- Potentially parts of the jetty, and remains of the Pier
- Maritime debris on the seabed of Roggebaai
- Fill material from early land reclamations

The site is considered archaeologically sensitive but not fatally flawed. It will be necessary to monitor all bulk excavation, and a contingency needs to be built into the development process to allow for the recovery of archaeological material if need be.

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1 Introduction

ACO Associates was commissioned by to prepare an archaeological assessment of Erf 148638 which forms part of the Cape Town Station. The land is question is developed with structures pertaining to the Cape Town Station and the adjacent long distance bus station. The following pages contain a review of the known history of the area, and comments on the impacts of the envisaged development on any archaeological material that may exist in the proposed project area. Appendix A contains report by David Halkett of the ACO on archaeological excavations on an adjacent portion of land. Appendix B contains copies of reports by other consultants who have done background research in the area. This history is fairly well understood since a strong body of heritage related work with respect to the foreshore has been generated as a result of various project that have taken place there since the implementation of the National heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999. Figure 1 shows the location of the study area.

While detailed development plans have not yet been made available, the proponent has indicated that the new commercial development that is proposed for the site is likely to have a basement 5 m deep (below street level).



Figure 1. location of the study area

The study area was in the past situated in Roggebaai – the most protected and shallow area of Table Bay which was historically used as a landing area and fishing harbour. Roggebaai has been completely reclaimed. It exists in name only as a postal zone in the central city. The following pages describe the historic

background to the site, and the various events that led to current geo-physical character of the city.

1.1 Scope of work and terms of reference

According to the National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 development activities that exceed stipulated parameters require a heritage impact assessment. These studies, which normally proceed in phases, examine the impact of development activities on heritage. Broadly defined, the term “heritage” includes everything from geology, palaeontology and archaeology to built environment, landscapes and traditions. This study deals only with the archaeological sensitivity of the site as the broader HIA is being conducted by another consultant. ACO (ACO Associates) was requested by the proponent to:

1. Review all existing available information on the archaeological issues that may affect the site, and report accordingly on the findings and present measures that will need to be taken should the site be developed.
2. Scrutiny of existing heritage findings and familiarisation with the intended development area.
3. Interface with other professionals where their input is required.
4. Presentation to the development team of any significant findings which might impact the project.
5. Assisting the project’s appointed heritage consultant, Claire Abrahamse, in the preparation of any motivation documents required.

1.2 Method

This study has been examination of historic maps, texts and secondary sources of information.

1.3 Historical Background

1.3.1 The 17th century

In pre-colonial times Khoekhoen herders, and before them San hunter gatherers would have exploited the easily accessible marine resources of the Table Bay shoreline. Artefactual material indicating their presence has been found under the Kat balcony of Castle of the Cape of Good Hope, at the Golden Acre site and more recently, on two building sites in Green Point.¹

Roggebaai was a broad curved shallow bay sheltered from the southeasterly winds in summer but affected by heavy Atlantic swells during the winter months. Most of the time it was a quiet sheltered bay and an easy landing area for small boats. The deeper waters further out in Table Bay provided an anchorage for visiting shipping. There were no formal harbour facilities apart from the wooden jetty that was eventually built close to the castle (known as the south jetty). Larger ships would

¹ David Halkett (ACO) pers com., Graham Avery (Iziko) pers com., Alan Morris (UCT) pers com, ACO in progress.

moor in deeper water, while goods and passengers were ferried to the shore and back with lighters and longboats. Table Bay was however, exposed to heavy seas and wind which occurred from time to time during the winter months. The history of the bay is punctuated with a number of severe gales which resulted in ships being driven onto the Table Bay shoreline with Woodstock Beach claiming the highest numbers of casualties. During the 17th century the study area was just outside the surf zone of Table Bay.

1.3.2 The 18th century

During the early 18th century Roggebaai began to assume a number of functions. It was the point from which fishing boats departed or were pulled up onto the beach, Fish were landed here where they were cleaned and sold. Together with the local whaling industry these activities made the bay a busy part of the city, but also contributed to polluting the waters of the bay, which being shallow and sheltered gained a reputation for being thoroughly unsavory. Being immediately adjacent to Strand Street, the Roggebaai beach was a heavily used area. Indications are that the shallow waters of the bay were gradually reclaimed by the dumping of the cities' domestic waste and unwanted building rubble which meant that the jetties had to be lengthened from time to time to allow for the receding shoreline.

In 1783 in response to growing political tension, two gun batteries were built by the French to supplement the defenses at Cape Town. Known as the Roggebaai Batteries, these were designed to supplement the firing arcs of the Imhoff and Amsterdam Batteries. It is not clear when these batteries were demolished, however their remains may yet lie under the edge of reclaimed land between Adderley and Long Streets.

Shipwrecks during the violent northwesterly storms were a regular occurrence with sailing vessels dragging their anchors in heavy swell and ending their lives on the beaches of Table Bay. Remains of vessels have been found under the site of the Table Bay power station, the Civic Center, and apparently under the Caltex service station at the entrance to the Waterfront. In February 2012 the remains of a sailing schooner were found near the Grain Elevator in the Victoria and Alfred Waterfont.

During the 18th century the study area was in or close to the surf zone of Table Bay.

1.3.3 The 19th century

During the 19th century Roggebaai began to play an increasingly diverse role. By that time its use as a fish market, small boat landing area, whale processing area had become very much a tradition of the City. The commencement of the British occupation (1806) and the abolition of slavery saw Cape Town becoming a crowded place short of accommodation for a growing underclass – slum landlords

hired out backyards and privately owned alleys to people desperate for a roof over their heads. Pollution was severe in parts of the city and health conditions poor. Roggebaai was a dirty bustling back-water, where boats were pulled up on to the beach. Along the polluted shore were houses of the underclass, over crowded and unhealthy but made worse by the offal and sewage from the city that found its way into the shallow bay. Table Bay's pollution became more serious once mechanically powered vessels called in regularly with the water being polluted by oil and coal dust. By 1870 the Alfred Basin and Breakwater had been completed to make the bay safe for shipping during the winter storms, while fishing boats still used Roggebaai, now in the lee of the basin.

From the Mid 19th century onwards the study area was reclaimed from the sea. A 1890 map indicates that the Sea Point railway company built its station on the study area. Expansion of the railway network eventually saw more railway lines constructed.

By the end of the 19th century several large jetties had been built into the bay and a small boat harbour (fishing boats) was established between 1870 and the first land reclamation in 1920. The remains of the North Warf situated at the bottom of Bree Street were located by archaeologists in 1987² while the coaling jetty was found by Navradinov and Sharfman at the commencement of excavation of the Roggebaai Canal.³ Hart located a portion of walling under reclaimed land that was identified as part of the old Fishing Harbour during excavation for services of the Clock Tower Precinct of the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront while most pertinent to this study Halkett (2010), working on Cape Town Station land located the old sea wall of Roggebaai and portions of a jetty that we assume to have been the Central Jetty that was built at the bottom of Adderley Street. Interestingly, timbers the early phases of the jetty were preserved. These have now been backfilled over, but they remain in *situ* (plates 1 – 2).

² Saitowitz, S and Zeeman, U. The North Warf. Unpublished Report

³ Pers comm.



Plate 1: The location of the timber features in relation to the stone wall. The timber plank immediately east of the wall lies exactly parallel to it and suggests some acknowledgement and links between the structures.



Plate 2: Detail of the timber elements and showing metal fixtures.

The central jetty was built at Roggebaai in the mid-19th century to take pressure off the old South Jetty (It was situated at the end of Adderley Street with Roggebaai beach on the north side of it). The old fish market, established in the 19th century was at the bottom of St Georges Street at Roggebaai.. The central jetty is clearly depicted on the Snow Survey of 1862

The following map series estimates the location of the study area with reference to the Snow Survey of 1862, a survey of 1890 and the 1926 aerial photographic series of Cape Town and environs (Director General Surveys and Mapping). The incremental “northwards creep” of the shoreline is clearly visible if one takes one points of reference as the Grand Parade and the Castle of the Cape of Good Hope. Between 1862 and 1890 the shoreline had crept forward by at least the breath of three city block. By 1926 land that was once Table Bay, was already in use as marshaling yards for the Cape Town Station. During this time there was an incremental process of lengthening the central jetty until it was replaced in 1913 by the Adderley Street Pier.