

**PHASE 1 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT: CARAVAN PARK
DEVELOPMENT AT VAN STADENS RIVER MOUTH, CACADU
DISTRICT, EASTERN CAPE.**

Assessment conducted under Section 38 (1) of the National Heritage Resources Act No 25 of
1999

Prepared for:
Prosperito PTY (Ltd)
Tygerberg Office Park
Platteklouf

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Archaeology Contracts Office was asked to undertake a Heritage Impact Assessment, on behalf of Prosperito Pty (LTD), at the Van Stadens River Mouth (some 28 km west of Port Elizabeth) on the Eastern Cape coast. The development will involve the:

- construction a new caravan park on the eastern banks of the Van Stadens River Mouth;
- the upgrade of the existing caravan park to accommodate more luxurious chalets and five star accommodations.

The *new caravan park* will be situated between the road and a high cliff of consolidated dune and calcrete, overlooking the ocean. The area is densely covered in alien and indigenous vegetation which hampered the survey. The *existing caravan park* has been in operation for many years, there are stands for caravans and tents which are covered in kikuyu lawn. There are also some dated chalets.

Archaeological sites (i.e. shell middens) are the most significant heritage resource which will be threatened by the development. At least two middens were identified at the new caravan park and another two middens were identified under the kikuyu lawn of the existing caravan park. There are no houses or structures on the proposed or existing caravan parks which are older than 60 years. There are no historical graves in this area, as it has functioned as a holiday resort for approximately the last 100 years. However, prehistoric human remains may be found in proximity to the archaeological sites. The development of the resort is in keeping with its original function (a holiday destination) and therefore it is unlikely that living heritage will be impacted.

Since it is anticipated that the development of the *new caravan park* will take place over a relatively short period of time, it is recommended that mitigation involves the following procedure:

- An archaeologist is present during the leveling of the site and the installation of the sewerage and water infrastructure;
- Work will have to stop if an archaeological site is uncovered and the archaeologist will need to determine whether excavations are required;
- If a grave or any human remains are accidentally uncovered, work should cease immediately and SAHRA must be informed;
- A permit will be required from SAHRA if further mitigation (excavations or exhumations) are required.

Presently, the chalet development at the *existing caravan park* is taking place incrementally and it may not be feasible for an archaeologist to be present while all the chalets are being constructed as this may take several months. *A two phase mitigation procedure is therefore proposed. During the first phase:*

- A number of trial trenches are excavated across the existing caravan site to establish site density and preservation of sites.

During the second phase:

- Targeted excavations of identified sites are undertaken;
- This will require a permit from SAHRA.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Archaeology Contracts Office was approached by Pieter Badenhorst to undertake a Heritage Impact Assessment for Pieter Badenhorst, on behalf of Prosperito Pty (LTD). The development involves constructing a new caravan area on the eastern bank of the Van Stadens River Mouth and upgrading of the existing caravan park to accommodate more luxurious chalets and five star accommodations. The river mouth is 14km south-west off the R102 and 28km west of Port Elizabeth on the Eastern Cape coast (Figure 1).

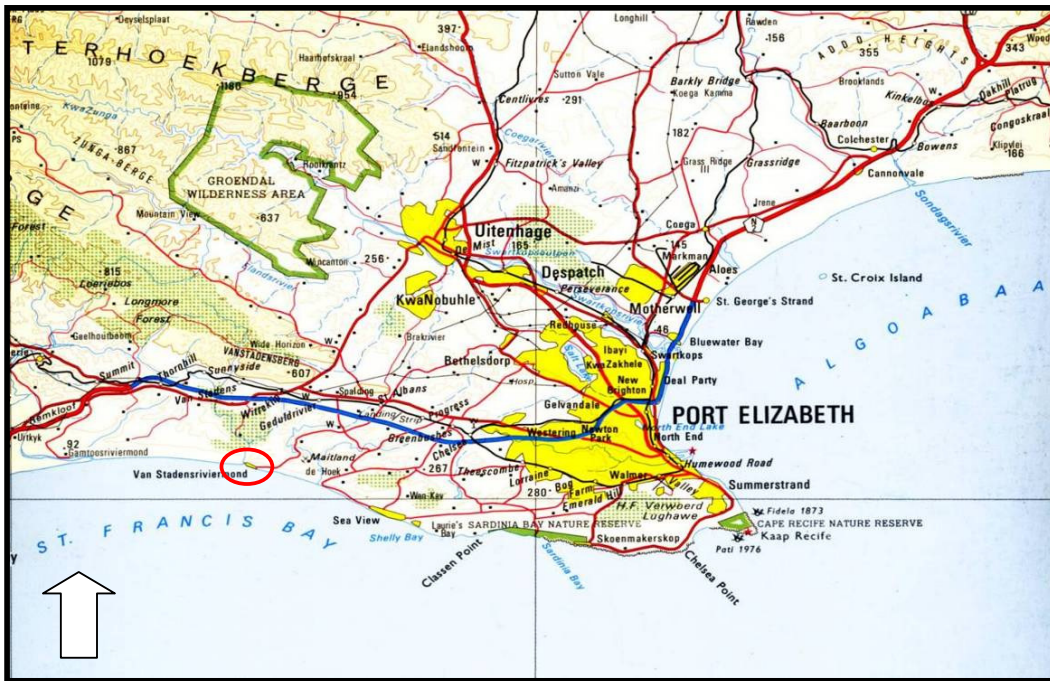


Figure 1: Location of the Van Stadens River Mouth in relation to Port Elizabeth.

2. DESCRIPTION OF AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Van Stadens River flows in a southerly direction into the Indian Ocean, and forms a lagoon at the mouth. The river is navigable by small boats up to the gorge. There are tall dunes to the west of the river mouth and there are numerous archaeological sites in these dunes (Binneman & Webley 2000). Apart from cottages and camping sites to the east of the lagoon, there is no other development in the immediate area (Figure 2). The property to the north of the river mouth is called Yellow Woods Estate 493. Some 3km to the east of the mouth is the seaside resort of Blue Horizon Bay (Figure 2). A further 4km to the east is the Maitland River mouth, which formed the focus of a similar heritage investigation by Webley in 2003.

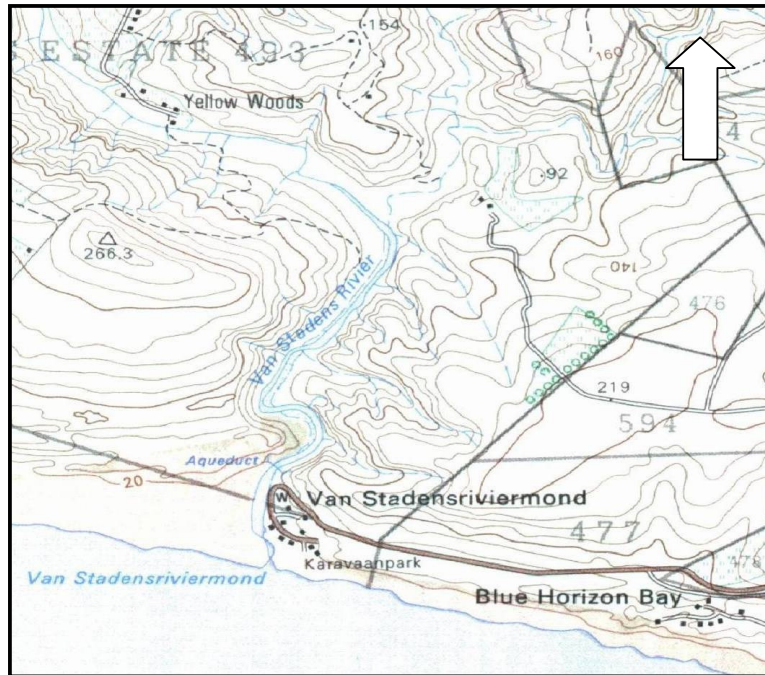


Figure 2: 3325 CC (Mapping information supplied by - Chief Directorate: Surveys and Mapping. Website: w3sli.wcape.gov.za). .

3. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

There are two aspects of the development proposal:

- The first involves moving the existing caravan park from its present location at the mouth of the river, to a new location above a steep cliff on the southern section of the tar road (i.e. between the tar road and the sea). This is in accordance with a tender proposal and requirements set out in the agreement of lease entered into between the Lessee, Buhlebendalo (Pty) Ltd and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality. One hundred new caravan sites will be developed. This will involve bulldozing of the area to create platforms for the caravans (Figure 3 at the end of the report).
- The second involves constructing a number of new chalets and five star accommodation facilities (not a hotel) on the existing caravan park. Currently this contains sites for tents and caravans, as well as some chalets (Figure 3).

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The specific terms of reference were not supplied prior to the survey but as a general statement would include the following:

- To undertake a site survey to determine if any heritage sites will be negatively impacted by the development;
- To record any possible sites and to ascertain their significance;
- To make recommendations for mitigation;
- To submit reports to SAHRA and the Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Resources Agency.

5. LEGISLATION

Section 38 (1) of the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999) requires that when constructing a road or similar linear developments exceeding 300m in length or developing an area exceeding 5000 m² in extent, the developer must notify the responsible heritage authority of the proposed development and they in turn must indicate within 14 days whether an impact assessment is required.

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)).

While the exact size of the new development was not provided, it is likely to exceed 5000m².

6. BACKGROUND

6.1 Archaeological Background

Rudner (1968) reported “there are middens among the dunes west of the river mouth and also on the eastern side at the high water mark” (1968: 542). He describes the stone tools as a “Mossel Bay industry with giant crescents, crude quartzite industry and also small blade tools, probably Wilton”. During a survey (for the Western Districts Council) of the coast between the Van Stadens River mouth and the Gamtoos River Mouth, Binneman and Webley (2000) recorded in excess of 50 shell middens.

Due to the absence of a rocky shoreline, the majority of middens consist primarily of white mussel (*Donax serra*). Many of the middens are characterised by the presence of large quartzite flakes (some still with a cortex) and quartzite cobbles. Artefacts on fine-grained raw material are rare but do occur (some thumb nail scrapers were observed). A few upper grindstones were also found. Some middens have a concentration of stone artefacts of a similar raw material in one area suggesting possible stone knapping on site. The giant crescents referred to by Rudner (1968) could be the Kabeljous segments described by Binneman further west at Jeffrey’s Bay and Cape St Francis. They date between 4000 to 1800 BP (Binneman pers. comm.).

Many of the middens contain bone and have evidence of hearths. Of interest is the number of middens which contain fragments of metal slag and some appear to have iron artefacts. Ostrich eggshell beads are not commonly on the surface of middens as they are small and frequently percolate down the deposit. However, a single large bead (> 6mm) was discovered on one midden. A number of middens contain pottery; some of the sherds are very fine-grained with a red slip. Rudner (1968) reported on approximately 4 pots from the middens at Van Stadens River Mouth and two could be partially reconstructed.

The middens are predominantly of Later Stone Age period, but a single Middle Stone Age flake was discovered on a deflated *Donax* sp. midden, suggesting the area may have been occupied over an extended time period.

6.2 Historical background

Thunberg met Gonaqua Khoekhoen groups at this river in 1773 as did Sparrman in 1775 (Rudner 1968:542). According to Maingard (1931) this was the eastern border for the Damaqua Khoekhoen.

On Gordon's Second Journey (December 1777 – March 1778) he reported finding the kraal of the Gounaqua chief, Nouka in the vicinity of the present-day Port Elizabeth (Cullinan 1992). He described: "Found here the kraal of the Gounaqua chief, Nouka who had ten straw huts belonging to the people with him, among which were some true Caffers. Asked for some milk, giving beads and tobacco in return. Nouka complained that he always behaved well to the Hollanders, fetching their runaway slaves from the Caffers and that they had now driven him from Van Stadens River where he had always lived" (Cullinan 1992: 53).

Maitland Mines: A number of early travellers crossed this area after the first discovery of lead in South Africa. The mine workings are on the farm Buffelsfontein, some 8km from the mouth of the Maitland River which is 4km to the east of the Van Stadens River mouth. The deposits were first mentioned by John Barrow in 1797 and later in 1804 by Lichtenstein and de Mist although the first records of the analysis of the ore go back to 1782. Lichtenstein described how he travelled along the Maitland River to the farm of a certain Christian Vogel, which had been destroyed by "Caffres" and was uninhabited. "An old slave, who lived in the ruins, taking care of the owner's cattle, said we only had to go to the hill and we should see the shining earth".

This excerpt and the one above, both refer to the presence of Dutch farmers as well as their slaves, in the Van Stadens River area by the end of the 18th century.

Upper Van Stadens Dam Water Supply and Forts: The provision of water to Port Elizabeth from the Van Stadens River, some 35 km to the west, was first mooted in 1862. This was an ongoing process of development, the Upper Van Stadens Dam and caretaker's cottage being completed in 1893. This was much higher up on the Van Stadens River and is not impacted by this development. Construction continued early in 1899 on the provision of a pump house, with engine and pumping weir, about 3 km downstream from the Upper Dam complex.

The Port Elizabeth Town Guard was formed in February 1900 but interest soon flagged. However, the activity of Boer commandos in the Colony soon precipitated action and at a parade in 1901 the Base Commandant called for volunteers to raise a mounted company which would guard the waterworks at Van Stadens. The Guard was divided into two, one party to protect the pump house and the other, the dam. The men remained at the dam for three months, building two small forts in the hills to the west and south-west. They returned to Port Elizabeth on 14 April, with the exception of some staff who had volunteered to stay behind. Although it is not known how long the forts and waterworks were garrisoned, the Town Guard was disbanded in October 1902, five months after the end of the war. They have been abandoned since this date and are in a state of disrepair.

7. FIELDWORK METHODS

Dr Webley visited the area on the 29 January 2009. *The area which has been ear-marked for the new caravan development lies between the road and the sea, above a very steep cliff of consolidated dune and calcrete.* The ribbon of land next to the road is covered in Port Jackson/rooikrans and has been extensively disturbed as it appears to have been used as a rubbish dump, possibly by the caravan park at the river mouth. The gravel road ends in a small depression, which appears to have been scraped into the sand some time in the past to accommodate the rubbish dump. This area, as well as the surrounding bush, is littered with rubbish including many bottles. The short gravel road into the bush has been closed off to the public by the erection of a short fence along the road.

However, close to the edge of the cliff, the alien acacias make way for thick indigenous vegetation. This area was surveyed on foot, with an attempt to reach the edge of the cliff unsuccessful due to the dense vegetation. The cliff face was approached from the sea side in order to determine whether it would be possible to climb up the cliff to the tent camp site. This was not possible due to the steepness of the cliff and the density of the vegetation.



Left: view of the area identified for the new caravan park, showing kikuyu grass in the foreground and dense stands of rooikrans close to the cliff edge. Right: view of the rubbish dumped on the site.



Left: View of the depression which been bulldozed to accommodate the rubbish. Right: view of the cliff face from the coast, the development will take place on top of the cliff.

After completing the foot survey of the new caravan park, a brief survey was conducted of the existing caravan park which is to be upgraded. The current tent and caravan stands will be covered with chalets and five star accommodations (not hotels). Chalets are currently being constructed on the south-eastern edge and the foundation trenches of these chalets were examined to see if any middens were located under the soil surface. The caravan and tent stands are covered in kikuyu lawn.



Left: View of the lagoon at the mouth of the river, with the sand dunes on the western edge. Many archaeological sites have been recorded in these dunes. Right: View of the caravan park at the mouth of the lagoon, with the sea in the background.



Left: The new chalets being constructed to the south-east of the estuary on the site of existing caravan and tent stands. Right: Kikuyu lawn covering the tent and caravan stands.

7.1 Limitations

The alien acacia and the indigenous vegetation on the site of the new caravan park made it difficult to conduct a comprehensive survey. The existing caravan park is covered in kikuyu lawn and this was easier to survey.

8. RESULTS

8.1 New Caravan Park

1) In the banks of the man-made depression, there is clear evidence that a machine (such as a bulldozer) was used to excavate a depression for the rubbish which has been dumped on the

site (Figure 4). This depression has cut through an archaeological midden. The remnants of the midden are visible in wall of the depression. The midden consists of fragments of *Donax serra*.

GPS

S 33 58 11.2

E 25 13 36.6

2) On the other side of this depression, is another deposit of white mussels. There are also a small number of brown mussel (*Perna perna*) fragments in this general area. It is difficult to determine whether this is *in situ*, or disturbed material. It is associated with glass and plastic fragments.

GPS

S 33 58 10.9

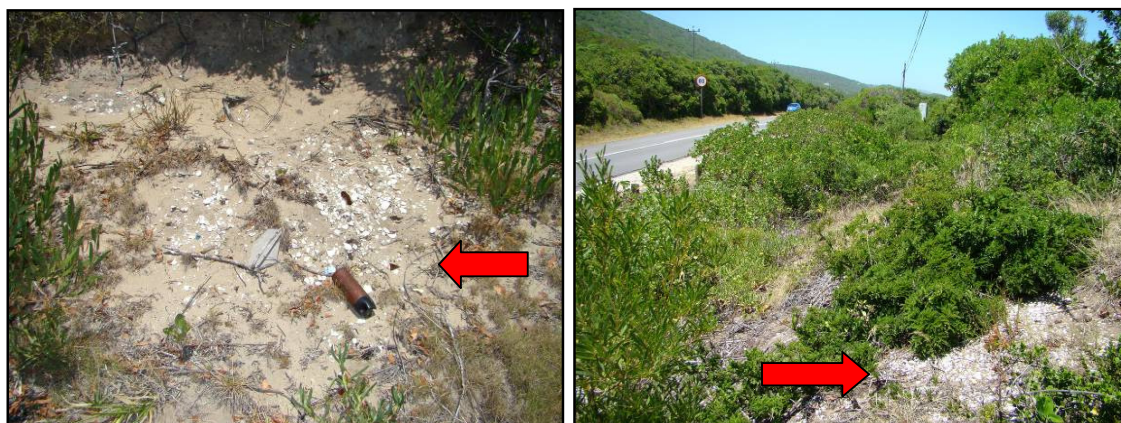
E 25 13 37.0

3) This shell concentration appears to continue further into the bush, at:

GPS

S 33 58 10.4

E 25 13 35.9



Left: the disturbed shell midden exposed by the rubbish depression. Right: the midden at the edge of the road leading down to the existing caravan park.

4) Close to the tar road, a cutting into the embankment at the side of the road (some 5m from the road) is a concentration of white mussel and two flaked quartzite cobbles at:

GPS

S 33 58 09.5

E 25 13 37.8

It was not possible to determine whether this midden extended into the other side of the dune due to the dense vegetation.

8.2 Existing Caravan Park

The brief survey of the existing caravan park shows that there are archaeological sites at the estuary of the river, many hidden by the kikuyu grass which covers the caravan and tent sites (Figure 4).

1) There is a very large midden, some 15m in length and at least 1,5m in thickness, underneath camping spot 51. It is a very dense *Donax serra* midden, containing 2 quartzite cobbles and at least 1 fragment of grit-tempered pottery.

GPS

S 33 58 02.9

E 25 13 22.1

2) There is another one close to the gate of the caravan park, at:

GPS

S 33 58 00.6

E 25 13 17.6

The presence of these sites suggests that there are archaeological shell middens hidden beneath the kikuyu grass and that more will be uncovered when foundations are excavated for the chalets and accommodation upgrade of the site.



Left: The midden on camping spot 51. Right: a potsherd lying on the surface of the midden.

9. SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

9.1 Archaeology

Archaeological sites (i.e. shell middens) are the most significant heritage resource at the Van Stadens River mouth. They represent the occupational debris of the Khoekhoen (pastoralist) and San (hunter-gatherers) who occupied the coast during the last 2000 years and more. Very little archaeological work has been undertaken along this part of the Eastern Cape coast. Binneman (Albany Museum) has excavated shell middens at Kabeljous River Mouth and St Francis Bay. Nothing, however, is known of the coastal archaeological record between the Kabeljous River Mouth and East London (a distance of about 400 km). The archaeology of

this stretch of the coast has the potential to inform us about the arrival of the pastoralists and their impact on the hunter-gatherer communities.

It is highly likely that a number of shell middens will be uncovered during the development of both sites. The destruction of these middens, without proper mitigation, may result in the loss of important information relating to the prehistory of the KhoeSan.

9.2 Built environment

There are no houses or structures on the proposed or existing caravan parks which are older than 60 years. *The built environment is therefore not under threat.*

9.3 Graves

There are no historical graves in this area, as it has functioned as a holiday resort for approximately the last 100 years. *However, prehistoric human remains may be found in proximity to the archaeological sites.*

9.4 Living Heritage

The present manageress of the caravan park, Mrs Lavinia Phaal, told me that an elderly woman had told her of visiting the Van Stadens River mouth in 1924, by wagon. This particular spot has always been a camping spot. Since access to the mouth is restricted to visitors on holiday to the area, aspects of living heritage would have to be collected by interviews with visitors, and this is not feasible. *The development of the resort is in keeping with its original function (a holiday destination) and therefore it is unlikely that living heritage will be impacted.*

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The mitigation measures discussed below relate to the archaeological heritage of the site. No significant heritage sites relating to the Built Environment or Living Heritage are threatened.

10.1 The new caravan park

The most significant restriction to this survey was the dense growth of both alien vegetation and indigenous vegetation in the area of the new caravan park. Lack of visibility meant that it was only possible to examine those areas which had already been disturbed. The presence of at least 2 middens, however, indicates that more middens will be discovered when the vegetation is cleared and the site is leveled for the caravan and tent stands and ablution facilities are installed. It is also possible, at this stage, that the graves of the prehistoric inhabitants of the coast may be exposed.

Since it is anticipated that the development of the site will take place over a relatively short period of time, it is recommended that mitigation involves the following procedure:

- It is recommended that an archaeologist is present during the leveling of the site and the installation of the sewerage and water infrastructure;
- Work will have to stop if an archaeological site is uncovered and the archaeologist will need to determine whether excavations are required;
- If a grave or any human remains are accidentally uncovered, work should cease immediately and SAHRA must be informed;

- A permit will be required from SAHRA if further mitigation (excavations or exhumations) are required.

10.2 The existing caravan park

At least 2 middens were observed underneath the kikuyu grass of the caravan and tent stands. These sites have been preserved despite the fact that people have camped on top of them for the last 100 years. The proximity of the area to the river estuary suggests that numerous middens are likely to be located under the existing caravan park and they will be uncovered when the foundations of the new chalets, and associated bulk infrastructure, are excavated.

Presently, the chalet development at the existing caravan site is taking place incrementally and it may not be feasible for an archaeologist to be present while all the chalets are being constructed as this may take several months. *A two phase mitigation procedure is therefore proposed. During the first phase:*

- A number of trial trenches are excavated across the existing caravan site to establish site density and preservation of sites.

During the second phase:

- Targeted excavations of identified sites are undertaken;
- This will require a permit from SAHRA.

11. REFERENCES

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TERMINOLOGY

Shell Middens: Heaps of discarded shell debris found all along the South African coast, but especially plentiful near rocky shores. The shells represent the remains of shellfish gathered by people living along the coast or visiting the coast on a periodic basis. These people can

include San hunter-gatherers as well as Khoekhoen pastoralists. Shell middens may also contain the bones of animals hunted by the occupants of the site. Middens may contain hearths (fireplaces), stone tools, ostrich eggshell pieces and beads, and the most recent middens include pottery remains.



Figure 3: The development plan, showing the outline of the new caravan park in green on the right, and the existing caravan park at the mouth of the estuary.



Figure 4: An approximate image overlay of the development proposals over the aerial map of the area with the location of shell middens shown as white circles. The red circle shows the current construction of new chalets.