

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*A preliminary survey at the proposed Southgate Industrial Park indicated that two archaeological sites were significant. Archaeological mitigation was in the form of a salvage excavation. One of the excavated sites is representative of a particular phase within the early Late Iron Age (MBG4a), while the other site (MBG2) represents the Historical period (MBG refers to the nearby Umbokodweni River). The older site was considered to be significant since little is known about this time period and only three other sites, Blackburn, Mpambanyoni and Moor Park, have been recorded in KwaZulu-Natal. The historical site is significant since few agriculturists' sites of this time period have been excavated south of Durban.*

## INTRODUCTION

AECI intends to develop 280 hectares of land adjacent to the present industrial park for light and general industry, as the Southgate Industrial Park. The Institute for Cultural Resource Management conducted a preliminary archaeological survey of the area to assess any archaeological sites that may occur in the proposed development area. During the course of this survey, two archaeological sites were considered to be significant and needed to be excavated.

The Southgate area is potentially significant from an archaeological point of view since the land is located close to a major river and the coastal strip. Several archaeological sites have been found along this coastal strip and they consist of Stone Age and Iron Age shell middens and areas of domestic activity.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The archaeological sites are about 35km south of Durban, 1.5km from the sea, and 1km from the Umbokodweni River (fig. 1). The vegetation in this area, prior to any development and/or farming was most probably coastal forest (Moll 1976). Thornbush and grasses most probably became more abundant as indigenous agriculturists changed their landscape through farming and bush clearance. A small stream provides freshwater in the immediate area during summer.

MBG4 is located halfway up a hill and did not appear to be more than 50m in diameter. MBG2 was mainly on the top of the hill, where the densest occupation debris occurred, and was about 100m long and 50m wide.

## EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

The aim of the excavations was to salvage as much of each site and acquire a representative sample of the cultural material before development started. All squares at MBG2 (fig. 2) and MBG4a (fig 3) were 3m X 3m, apart from four at MBG2 which were 2m X 2m. The larger squares allowed a greater area to be opened, making it easier to follow and excavate features such as the pit at MBG4a. The 2m X 2m squares were used only when determining the edge of a living area.

Initially areas with a high concentration of sherds on the surface were excavated at MBG4, however, these turned out to be eroded areas with little deposit. At MBG4 squares 3 and 4 indicated that the cultural horizon was about 30cm below the surface and further upslope. These areas of denser occupation were noted and subsequent excavations centred around these squares. *Lantana spp.* made it difficult to excavate in many areas at MBG4a, and soil erosion had washed parts of the site away. More of the site may exist outside the development area, however this has been probably destroyed by formal and informal housing. The roots of the larger bushes had in places disturbed parts of the site.

Each square was excavated stratigraphically. The natural stratigraphy of this area was similar at both sites. The differences between the two sites was evident in the cultural horizons where people had lived. These differences were in the depths of the horizon, density of artefacts, and location on the hill. Deep single layers were excavated in 10cm spits. Features were excavated and bagged separately from the main square and spit number. The artefacts recovered from this excavation have been minimally curated, allocated a museum accession number, and now form part of the archaeological research material at the Natal Museum.

## STRATIGRAPHY

### MBG2:

Directly below the present vegetation, or surface, there is about 10 to 15cm of topsoil. This topsoil is sandy and includes rootlets and a few sherds. The main cultural horizon starts below this sandy layer and contains most of the artefacts. Nonetheless, the main cultural horizon begins from 20cm to 25cm below topsoil, and ranges in depth from 10cm to 15cm. The main cultural horizon is mostly a dark brown soil flecked with pieces of charcoal. Below this horizon the soil becomes a light brown for 10-cm to 15cm. While artefacts are found in the light brown sand, these are most probably intrusive from the upper layer, and have filtered down through time. Below the light brown sand is a hard dark red clay-like layer. In this layer the Middle Stone Age and Early Stone Age stone tools were situated. There was no stratigraphic separation between these two stone age horizons and excavations stopped at the beginning of this horizon. The ESA and MSA material was not significant and therefore ignored in this excavation.

#### **MBG4a:**

The vegetation on the surface was not as dense as at MBG2, with consequently less disturbance from *Lantana spp.* bushes. The topsoil was 10cm deep. Below this layer was the main cultural horizon that ranged from 10cm to 20cm in depth below the surface. It was a dark brown sandy matrix with some charcoal fragments. This horizon contained the Late Iron Age (LIA) artefacts. Below this horizon the soil became a reddish-brown colour, with a few artefacts that had filtered down from the above layer, followed by a deep sterile light brown sand interspersed with thin red sand lenses of about 0.5cm. The hard dark red clay layer occurred below this.

#### **MBG2:**

#### **Excavated features:**

Several features were found at this site. A single broken vessel occurred within a cluster of sherds in both squares 10 and 20. Both were found in the historical horizon, except for square 10 where the vessel extended into the light brown sand.

Two features were found in square 17 (fig. 4). The first feature was a small depression filled mainly with charcoal and some sand. The depression ranged from 26cm to 44cm in width and was 19cm deep. The whole feature was not excavated since few artefacts came from this feature and it extended beyond the excavated square.

The second feature in square 17 was a small pit (fig. 4). The top of this pit began near the base of the historical cultural horizon and extended into the red clay layer. The pit ranged from 56cm to 70cm in diameter and was 32cm deep. The pit was roughly oval, and narrowed to 27cm on the one side. Many sherds were found inside this feature, either from several pots or bowls, or from a large bowl/pot. Near this pit was a small hollow containing yellow sand. It was 21cm in diameter and 5cm deep.

### **Small finds:**

Diagnostic artefacts found at MBG2 and MBG4a are listed in table 1 and table 2, respectively.

Daga: A total 59 fragments of daga were excavated at this site. The daga was relatively sandy, as opposed to a clay-like structure. A few fragments were burnt black.

Bone: Three pieces of bone were found. One piece of bone was an adiagnostic fragment of a fibula. Two molars from a sheep/goat occurred in nearby squares.

Glass: Three glass fragments were found at this site. Two pieces were dark green colour, and the other was a translucent light green colour. Older glass bottles tend to have more flaws in their structure than the recent factory produced bottles. All the fragments from this site have several air bubbles in the glass, possibly indicating that they were made some time ago. It is, however, uncertain whether these fragments are contemporary with the site or intrusions within the cultural horizon.

Worked Metal: The metal part of a knife with a ?wooden handle was found in square 20. This artefact is probably more recent than the other artefacts from this site.

Ochre: One piece of red ochre was found. There were no signs of utilisation on this fragment.

Utilised Stone: Several whole and fragmented grindstones and rubbers/smoothers were found at this site. The upper grindstones (n = 20) varied in size and shape and probably in their utility as well. They tended to be made on fine grained quartzite beach pebbles, but a few coarse grained quartzite pieces of stone were also used. The lower grindstones (n = 5) varied in size, but were made on a fine grained quartzite. The wear patterns on both the upper and lower grindstones are distinctively those of the Late Iron Age and Historical periods. One small beach pebble with traces of ?ochre had been used as an upper grindstone. One utilised piece of stone was made on shale and is probably a whetstone. This pebble was about 5cm long and 3cm wide.

Sherds: A total of 46 rim sherds were recorded and have the following characteristics:

- i. Flattened lip with horizontally incised grooves along a slightly everted lip (fig. 5.1);

- ii. Rim with square notches on lip (fig. 5.2) and/or circular impressions in a slightly curved design on body (fig. 5.3);
- iii. Flat rims with slightly everted lips (figs 5.4, 5.5, 5.6);
- iv. Flat rims with slightly everted lip and a small notch under lip (fig. 5.7);
- v. Rounded rim (figs 5.8, 5.9);

Decoration in the assemblage includes:

- i. A raised band, externally applied, below the rim. Has two rows of semi-circular impressions (fig. 5.10);
- ii. Semi-circular externally applied lug directly below rounded rim (fig. 5.11);
- iii. Single small circular boss below rim (fig. 5.12);
- iv. Vertical row of three circular bosses below the rim (fig. 5.13);
- v. Oblong externally applied boss directly below the rim (fig. 5.14);
- vi. Rows of narrow curving grooves overlaid by a row of 'fingernail' impressions (fig. 5.15);
- vii. Sherd with two small incisions, probably from a stylus being dragged across the surface

#### MBG4a:

#### **Excavated features:**

Only one feature was excavated from this site: a small pit in square I (fig. 6). The feature was found at the bottom of the LIA level and went into the light brown sand. The pit was approximately circular in shape, 105cm in diameter and 56cm deep. Beneath the pit was a thin red clay lens that forms part of the light brown sand strata. Two 30cm X 30cm X 30cm test pits failed to detect other features or cultural horizons in the square.

The pit contained a brown-black soil with many charcoal fragments but few sherds. A broken lower grindstone occurred in the middle of the pit. The

grindstone was made from shale and had broken lengthways along a natural fracture. Directly beneath the grindstone was a dense charcoal layer of about 8cm deep.

### **Small finds:**

Daga: Ten pieces of daga were recorded. There were no impressions on these fragments to indicate their use. One fragment appeared to have been burnt black in colour.

Utilised Stones: Twenty-eight upper grindstones and fragments were recovered. The upper grindstones were made from quartzite river pebbles. These upper grindstones are distinct from those at MBG2 since some have several facets on them - LIA/Historical upper grindstones tend to have only one or two utilised sides. One fragment was made from shale and may be a whetstone. Five lower grindstones were recorded - three of these were broken in half, while the other two were fragments. The lower grindstone from the pit feature and the two faceted upper grindstones are important, since they can provide a relative date for the site. The lower grindstone had a narrow groove along the middle. This type of grindstone is commonly associated with agriculturist sites that predate 1100 AD, a period referred to as the Early Iron Age. The faceted upper grindstones are also associated with this time period. These upper and lower grindstones are indicative of people using softer grains such as sorghum and millet, as opposed to maize.

Sherds: Forty rim sherds (with and without decorations on the lip) and four decorated sherds were recorded. Several sherds occurred as small localised clusters within the excavation and probably comprise the remnants of individual vessels although I have not tested this through reconstruction.



The rims have a few basic designs with a slight variation often according to the size of the bowl or pot. The rims can be described as:

- i. Tapering at the end (figs 7.5, 7.6);
- ii. Tapering at the end but slightly everted (figs 7.4, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9)
- iii. Slightly everted flat rims (figs 7.2, 7.10, 7.11, 7.12, 7.18)
- iv. Everted notched rim (figs 7.13);
- v. Rounded rim (figs 7.14, 7.15);
- vi. Notched lip (figs 7.2, 7.14, 7.16, 7.17).
- vii. Slightly everted rim with a notch below the flattened lip (fig. 7.19).

Decoration consisted mostly of rows of circular to square-like impressions on the neck or body of the pot. They are described as follows:

- i. Four horizontal rows of tightly spaced circular to square-like impressions 1cm below the notched rim (fig. 7.1);
- ii. Single row of square-like impressions 0.5cm below a rim with thin vertical grooves (fig. 7.2);
- iii. Five vertical rows of tightly spaced circular impressions at a right angle to five horizontal rows of tightly spaced circular impressions, on a sherd with a red burnish (fig. 7.3);
- iv. Double horizontal row of circular impressions 1cm below a possibly notched rim (fig. 7.4).

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### DISCUSSION

The occurrence of decorated sherds at MBG4a and bossed sherds at MBG2 are important finds regarding stylistic patterns in the LIA and Historic period. The LIA spans 900 years, and a discussion of other excavated and dated LIA sites is needed to place MBG2 and MBG4a into context. Table 3 lists these sites and their (estimated) age. I only describe the pottery since these are common to all sites and provide an accurate relative dating technique for the two Umbogintwini sites.

### Ngabeni:

This is found between the White Mfolozi and Mzinyathi Rivers to the west of Babanango and dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century. The pots are mostly open mouthed bowls, U-shaped to incurved bowls, and pots without necks or with poorly defined necks (Hall and Maggs 1979). Most of the sherds are undecorated and were fired evenly in a grey, buff or orange colour. Bowls tended to be decorated, rather than pots. Bowls that had been decorated tended to have a red burnish. When decorations do occur they are simple in design consisting mainly of applied bosses and rows of fingernail impressions. The bosses are either round or elliptical, widely spaced around the vessel and below the rim. There is normally only one boss, while two or more bosses occur occasionally.

### Mgoduyanuka:

This site overlooks the Tugela River in the Bergville district. It dates to the terminal Iron Age, i.e. late 18<sup>th</sup> century to early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The ceramics were divided into U-shaped pots, bag-shaped pots, globular pots, open-mouthed bowls and U-shaped bowls (Maggs 1982a). Bag-shaped pots tended to have poorly defined necks, while the small bag-shaped pots had most of the decorations. Decorated sherds are predominantly in the form of fingernail impressions placed in vertical rows. Less common decorations include comb stamping, finger pinching and cross hatching. Applied bosses were not found. The rims have mostly round lips, while the pointed/tapered and flattened lips occur less frequently.

### Mabhija:

This site is about 20km from Colenso on the Tugela River. It probably dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sherds had been fired and were buff to orange in colour (Maggs 1982b). Four main shapes of ceramic vessels were found: U-shaped bowls, open mouthed bowls, U-shaped pots, and bag-shaped pots. There is

hardly any decoration and burnishing on the vessels. The sherds from Mabhija are similar to those sherds at Mgoduyanika.

#### Mpambanyoni:

This site is located south of Scottburg and about 2km inland from the south coast. It dates to the early Late Iron Age of the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century (Robey 1980). The site has many sherds but few are decorated. Some bowls were deep and had notches on the rims, often with a slightly everted or internally tapered lip. Small hemispherical bowls had notchings in straight lines on the lip and discontinuous incisions below the rim either in angled lines or in circular impressions. The circular impressions were probably made from a small reed or bone. Several bowls had "broad incisions running around the circumference of the lip" (Robey 1980:156). The pots are more varied than the bowls and several had a row, or rows, of parallel incisions directly below the rim. The neck of these pots were poorly defined. A variation in this pattern was dentate stamping between the parallel broadline incisions. Some of these vessels were burnished in ochre or graphite. A different decoration technique is a series of shallow discontinuous incisions, made by dragging a reed or twig across the surface. The rims of this vessel-type are slightly everted, and sometimes flattened. A variation of this vessel-type is one of rough, deep parallel incisions forming a band of chevrons. Bossing occurs on some vessels where it occurs in externally applied bands, depressed at irregular intervals. The last vessel-type has uneven bands of small round punctates. Rim-notching does occur on this vessel mainly with V-shaped incisions on the lip.

#### Blackburn:

This site, near the Umhlanga Lagoon, dates from the late 12<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Several pots and bowls were burnished with red ochre. The pottery decoration and rims are similar to those described for Moor Park and Mpambanyoni.

### Moor Park:

This site, near Estcourt, has a long occupation of 150 years, or two phases of occupation, probably starting in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and ending in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. There is no burnishing on these pots and rims are tapered or slightly everted. Decorations are not varied and consist mainly of single or double rows of circular or square impressions underneath the rim. A few sherds have a circle of these impressions beneath the double row of impressions below the rim. Several rims have single or double rows of impressions on the lip. These impressions are either square or rectangular in shape. A few pots have lugs.

### MBG4a:

Of the sites described above only Mpambanyoni, and to a lesser degree Blackburn and then Moor Park, have some similarity to MBG4a. These are in the notching on the rim and the small circular incisions on the neck or body of the pot. There is no evidence for fingernail impressions, bossing and a graphite burnish on the sherds. Moreover, the neck of one decorated sherd is well defined, as opposed to the terminal Iron Age and Historic sites which have poorly defined necks.

Stratigraphically there is only one cultural horizon that occurred across the whole site. This cultural horizon was consistently above and below the same natural horizons throughout the whole excavation. More importantly the pit feature from square I, began in this cultural horizon. The occurrence of upper and lower grindstones, of the type more commonly associated with the Early Iron Age, in the pit and elsewhere on the site suggests that this site dates to the early Late Iron Age, and not the terminal Iron Age. These grindstones were used for the smaller, fine grained grains, as opposed to maize, which was imported into the region at a much later date.

Since few decorated sherds were recorded during this excavation, a more precise date for this site is at present not possible. However, charcoal samples

were taken from the pit feature and various squares, and these should allow a radiocarbon date to be processed. The importance of this site lies in the fact that it is only the second site of this period south of Durban to be excavated. This site also has different decorations on its vessels than previously recorded elsewhere. The transition from the EIA to the LIA is not yet clearly understood by archaeologists. If a radiocarbon date confirms my speculation then this site may increase our knowledge of this transition period and the sociopolitics between different geopolitical areas.

### MBG2:

This site is slightly easier to place in our chronology than MBG4a. The bossing on several sherds is similar to those found at Nqabeni and Mgungundlovu. This would date MBG2 to anywhere from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. These features still occur on certain pots today. In other words, this site may date to just before the rise of the Zulu kingdom, or after Shaka's death. Unfortunately the material from Mgungundlovu has yet not been published and further comparisons cannot be made. The occurrence of old? glass and its geographical position, however, places MBG2 closer in time to Mgungundlovu than to Nqabeni.

As with MBG4a, few sites of this time period have been systematically excavated. The increased data base of pot sherds and other finds will allow archaeologists to understand the complex relationships between pottery styles and changing sociopolitics in a time period of increasing European colonisation and changes occurring internally in Zulu society after the death of Shaka.

## CONCLUSION

Two archaeologically significant sites were excavated over two weeks as part of a cultural resource management project at the proposed Southgate Development

Park. These sites probably date to the early LIA and the early Historical period. Both are periods from which few sites have been excavated.

MBG4a yielded a different pottery decoration not yet recorded in LIA sites in KwaZulu-Natal. The association of EIA grindstones date this site to the early part of the LIA. A more detailed ceramic analysis in comparison with sites such as Moor Park, Mpambanyoni, and Blackburn may yield interesting results. The transitional period between the Early and Late Iron Age, in other words MBG4a, is presently the focus of research in KwaZulu-Natal. The charcoal samples from the pit feature will be sent to the CSIR for radiocarbon dating, since these results may further present research.

Although MBG2 was not as old as MBG4a, it was probably occupied at a transition period as well. This site in conjunction with archival sources, historical ethnographies and a detailed comparison of pottery sherds, glass, and so forth, from Mgungundlovu should yield interesting results.

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**Burnish:** The colouring or shading of an artefact such as ceramic vessels.

**Daga:** Thick layer of clay used to line floors.

TABLE 1: LIST OF SMALL FINDS FROM MBG2

ARTEFACT DESCRIPTION	SQUARE	QUANTITY
Bone - adiagnostic	19	1
Bone - sheep/Goat molar	10	1
Bone - sheep/Goat molar	12	1
Daga	5	7
Daga	7	2
Daga	8	5
Daga	9	1
Daga	10	1
Daga	20	1
Glass: Dark green (contemporary?)	19	1
Glass: Dark green (contemporary?)	20	1
Glass: Light green and transparent (contemporary?)	9	1
Grindstone - lower	1	1
Grindstone - lower	8	1
Grindstone - lower	16	2
Grindstone - lower	19	1
Grindstone - rubber/smoothen	18	1
Grindstone - rubber/smoothen	19	1
Grindstone - upper	surface	2
Grindstone - upper	1	5
Grindstone - upper	5	1
Grindstone - upper	7	1
Grindstone - upper	12	1
Grindstone - upper	16	3
Grindstone - upper	17	1
Grindstone - upper	18	4
Grindstone - upper	19	1
Grindstone - upper	20	1
Iron knife handle (recent)	20	1
Ochre - red	11	1
Rim Sherd - rim	6	2
Sherd - decorated rim	12	1
Sherd - decorated rim with punctates on lip;	2	1
Sherd - decorated rim with single striations on lip	13	1
Sherd - decorated rim with small boss	5	1
Sherd - decorated sherd with double row of circular impressions	2	1
Sherd - externally applied lug	10	1
Sherd - externally applied lug	13	1
Sherd - rim	Surface	4
Sherd - rim	2	2
Sherd - rim	3	3
Sherd - rim	4	7
Sherd - rim	7	1
Sherd - rim	8	2
Sherd - rim	10	4
Sherd - rim	13	4
Sherd - rim	15	1
Sherd - rim	16	2
Sherd - rim	Pit in sq. 17	3
Sherd - rim	18	3
Sherd - rim	19	1
Sherd - rim	20	7



**TABLE 2: LIST OF SMALL FINDS FROM MBG4a**

ARTEFACT DESCRIPTION	SQUARE	QUANTITY
Daga	A	4
Daga	D	1
Daga	E	3
Daga	J	1
Daga	K	1
Decorated rim and neck	E	1
Decorated sherd	E	1
Decorated rim with square notches on lip	C	1
Grindstone fragments	G	2
Lower grindstone	D	3
Lower grindstone	I	1
Lower grindstone (EIA)	Feature in Sq. I	1
Rim sherd	A	2
Rim sherds	C	2
Rim sherds	D	7
Rim sherds	E	11
Rim sherds	F	3
Rim sherds	H	2
Rim sherds	K	5
Rim sherds	Surface	8
Upper grindstone	B	1
Upper grindstone	C	1
Upper grindstone	I	1
Upper grindstone and fragment	A	2
Upper grindstones	E	2
Upper grindstones	F	5
Upper grindstones	J	2
Upper grindstones	K	4
Upper grindstones	K (spit2)	3
Upper grindstones	Surface	5
Utilised/Smoothed stone	Pit in I	1

**TABLE 3: RADIOCARBON AND CALIBRATED DATES FROM EXCAVATED LATE IRON AGE SITES IN KWAZULU-NATAL:**

SITE	RADIOCARBON DATE (years Before Present)	CALIBRATED DATE	RANGE	ESTIMATED AGE
Mpambanyoni	900 ± 40 BP	1204AD	1168 - 1235 AD	early 13 <sup>th</sup> century
Mgoduyanuka	180 ± 45	1689AD; 1733AD; 1813AD; 1939AD	1674 - 1920 AD	17 <sup>th</sup> - 18 <sup>th</sup> century?
Mabhija	115 ± 50	1893AD; 1911 AD	1693 - 1934 AD	early 19 <sup>th</sup> century?
Nqabeni*	not given	-	1850 - 1915 AD	18 <sup>th</sup> century?
Blackburn	900 ± 40	1204 AD	1168 - 1235 AD	12 <sup>th</sup> - 13 <sup>th</sup> century
Moor Park	600 ± 50; 660 ± 50 750 ± 50	1408 AD; 1317- 1389 AD; 1289 AD	1273 - 1424 AD	13 <sup>th</sup> to 14 <sup>th</sup> century

\* The radiocarbon date falls into a time period of great carbon-14 fluctuation and should be disregarded. Other artefacts have dated this site more accurately.