SPECIALIST ARCHAEOLOGICAL NID COMMENT:

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT MAIDENS COVE BETWEEN CLIFTON AND CAMPS BAY

Prepared for

Vidamemoria

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INTRODUCTION

This comment is prepared as part of the NID being submitted by Vidamemoria. It is based on a preliminary desktop review of readily available archival resources. We cannot exclude the possibility that other archaeological heritage resources may exist, but we believe we have identified the main issues in this regard.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Pre-colonial resources

The Peninsula contains ample evidence in the form of archaeological remains that demonstrate it use by pre-colonial people over many thousands of years. Rapid development of the areas nearer to the city largely occurred prior to the legislative requirements that nowadays protect environmental and heritage resources, and as a result, the archaeology of some areas can for the most part only be speculated. The exceptions are where more tangible evidence comes to light during construction, or as a result of Heritage Impact Assessments.

On the face of it, the rocky promontory lying between Caps Bay and Clifton, contains several archaeological heritage indicators which would lead to the conclusion that the remains of pre-colonial settlement there would have been prolific and distinct prior to development. The indicators include the basement rocks extending into the sea and forming small embayment’s and tidal pools that would have supported intertidal marine mollusca and other marine resources. The numerous granite boulders also provided sanctuary from the wind and sun, and in some cases formed habitable shelters that provided protection from a range of environmental factors. The use of similar shelters has been described elsewhere on the peninsula. Fresh water would have been found in a number of small streams coming off the mountain such as the one that still runs out at nearby Glen Beach. Although there is no comprehensive published survey of the archaeology of the Peninsula, an attempt to record the remaining information was undertaken by Andrew Olivier (1977) as an Archaeology Additional project at UCT. While he concentrated on the less developed areas, he briefly considered the area of which Maiden’s Cove forms a part.

Olivier (1977: Appendix A – Oudeschip unit) notes that there were dense intertidal shellfish resources at Camps Bay, Bakoven and Clifton at that time. He recorded 3 sites on the near shoreline below Victoria Road between Logies Rock shelter at Llandudno and the old Clifton Hotel\(^1\). The only map of use in the report is a coarse one of peninsula which suggests that one of the sites of relevance to this assessment is a midden in the corner of Glen Beach at the mouth of the stream (1977: 88).

Resources from the colonial period

It would appear from the Wilson survey map c1878 Figure 1 (Jordan 2003), that development of the Maiden’s Cove area had not yet begun except for some possible indications of informal structures, and a military fort that was known as the Camps Bay Battery that can be seen in the small wedge of land between Victoria and Lower Kloof Road just to the south east of the proposed development area. This can be seen in more detail in Figure 2.

What we know about the fort comes from the writings of John Barrow (1804), who published a map of the peninsula showing the various defensive works (Figure 3) in his book “An account of travels into the interior of Southern Africa in the years 1797 and 1798, Vol 2” (1804: 203).

He indicates that the map was drawn up by a French engineer, and later refined by Officers in Dutch service and later “examined corrected and verified with great care and accuracy by Captain (now Lieutenant-Colonel Bridges, Royal Engineers)” (Barrow 1804:204). He describes the fortifications thus:

\(^1\) Only incomplete versions of Olivier's report survive, one of which is a copy in the ACO’s possession. We lack however the detailed map of the Oudeship Unit to show more accurately where the sites (other than Logies Rock) were located. No geospatial co-ordinates are listed.
"At Camps Bay on the western coast of the Peninsula, there are also a few small batteries and a military post on the height above it between Table Mountain and the Lion’s Head." (Barrow 1804:208).

Barrow does not indicate however who built the forts and exactly how many there were, but two structures are evident on the map (Figure 3) and are possibly corroborated by the Wilson Survey (Figures 1 and 2). Seeman (2010) notes: “The American war of Independence (1775-1783) drew France and the Netherlands on the side of the American colonies. The Cape became strategically important as a supply station, as it was breaking the British blockade of the United States. French guns were shipped on VOC vessels, via the Cape to St Eustacius in the Caribbean and from there on American vessels to the rebel colonies. The existing coastal defences at the Cape had been rather neglected, but this situation was to change after the arrival of the French fleet in June 1781.

Figure 1: A section of the Wilson Survey of c1878 with the Maidens Cove development area (red) and present road infrastructure superimposed. The old Camps Bay Battery is circled in yellow.

Figure 2: Detail from the Wilson survey showing the Battery (circled) and some other structures/tracks. Structures to the north may be additional military buildings as indicated on Barrows map.
Figure 3: Military plan of the Cape Peninsula (late 18th c) – drawn by order of the Dutch government and revised and corrected by Lt Col Bridges, Royal Engineer. While this map seems to indicate two (possible military) structures near Maidens Cove, no other written account mentions more than one. The Wilson survey may corroborate the information.

Preparing against a British take-over (1781-1795)

In July 1781 the Cape was nearly taken by the British, who saw it already then as an important strategic place in military and economic terms. During the renewed Anglo-French war (1781-1783) when the Netherlands were allies of the French, the authorities at the Cape were aware of a real threat of a British invasion. A French fleet was urgently put together and arrived ahead of the British to assist with the defence of the settlement. This initiated the first large-scale intensive fortifications building program in Table Bay, Simon's Bay and also in Hout Bay. The work was supervised by a Dutch fortifications engineer, Colonel G.H. Gilquin, trained in the ‘Old Dutch Fortifications System’. In Table Bay the Amsterdam Battery was erected between the Castle and the Chavonne Battery. It was a massive work, the only fully casemated fort, and armed with twenty two 24-pounder cannon. Its primary function was the defence of the Company's anchorage, the approach - together with the Chavonne Battery - to the landing beaches, jetty, Castle and ultimately the town itself.

Smaller earthen forts were erected between Camps Bay, further south along the coast, and the Castle. A line of defence works were thrown up by French soldiers, fortifications workers employed by the VOC, artisan slaves and local convicts, together with a small corps of "halfbreeds" and "Hottentots" from Fort Knokke (at the northern end of Table Bay) up Devil's Peak. These "French Lines" were connected by a rampart and ditch and for many years formed the boundary of the expanding town.”

As the political and military situation changed over the years the need for extensive coastal fortifications diminished and according to Frescura (nd), the Camp’s Bay Battery was handed over to the Colonial Government on 1 July 1879 and was not occupied in 1880. This was shortly after Wilson had completed his survey.
Figure 4: A battery is still indicated on a map of the South Western Districts: 1880 -1900 and is roughly consistent with the map in Barrow

On the “Heritage Cameos” blog (http://www.campsbaywatch.org/en/news/news/heritage-cameos.html), Sarah Meder points out that two mounted cannon on a small platform opposite Camps Bay High School mark the position of a part of the fortifications built by the French in the 1780's (Plates 1 and 2). She says that “the battery subsequently disappeared, probably as a result of the building of Victoria Road during 1887. There were originally four guns. Two were unearthed in 1911 and removed to the garden of Linda Vista in Van Kamp Street. The two larger cannon were only rediscovered in 1962 by pure chance, after a bulldozer struck something heavy and massive – the guns and the remains of old buildings. They were cleaned and mounted again on the original site with a plaque reading: Unearthed here in 1962, these guns were once part of the Camps Bay Battery erected on this site in 1782 against the threat of British invasion.

Plates 1 and 2: Mounted canons unearthed at the site during the 1960’s mark the position of the old Camps Bay Battery built in the 1780’s

Quite by chance, the unearthing of the canons was recorded by the press (www.digitalcollections.lib.uct.ac.za/independent-newspapers-archive) and are seen lying amongst the signs of obvious construction possibly on Lower Kloof Road (Plate 3).
Plate 3: This photograph, c1962 in the Independent Newspapers Archive documents the canons that were unearthed and that are likely to have been from the old Camps Bay Battery.

The Topographic map of 1934 (Figure 5) shows how “development” had proceeded since Wilson’s survey. Numerous structures (probably the Clifton bungalows) have sprung up behind the Clifton beaches ending in a distinct row just to the south of Ridge Road along the edge of the remainder of Erf 148. Three or so structures are located within the proposed development area, including a Church. We are uncertain however what religious denomination was represented, and if any cemetery was present. There is no sign of any military structures and so it is likely that construction of roads may indeed have severely impacted that resource.

Figure 5: The 1934 topographic map shows that the Maidens Cove point was largely devoid of development except for a few small structures and a church. A large number of bungalows were now present at Clifton. (Dept of Surveys and Mapping).

The 1944 aerial photograph (Figure 5) is not very clear but does not indicate any particularly visible structures other than those on the 1934 topographic map. A number of tracks criss-cross the site and some areas (especially to the south) suggest some form of earthworks (?).
Other heritage resources in the area

The São José Paquete Africa was a Portuguese slave ship that ran aground wedged between two rocks off Cliftons’ 3rd beach in 1794. She was on a voyage from Mozambique to Brazil to deliver a cargo of slaves. Although the Portuguese captain, and crew survived, of the 400-500 slaves on board, an estimated 212 are believed to have drowned as the ship went under. Although local divers had identified a wreck at the site in the 1980’s, it had been misidentified as a Dutch merchant vessel. Between 2010 and 2011, Iziko Museum archaeologist Jaco Boshoff discovered an account of the wreck lodged by the captain of the ship, which rekindled interest in the site. Discoveries in archives in South Africa and Portugal, as well as identification of specific artefacts such as shackles and iron ballast carried on slave ships, confirmed in 2015 that the ship was in fact the São José slave ship. On June 3, 2015, along with the formal announcement of the find, a memorial service was held for the lost. (http://www.ollava.co.za/blog/shipwreck-in-cape-town/, http://edition.cnn.com/2015/06/01/africa/portuguese-slave-ship/, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%A3o_Jos%C3%A9_Paquete_Africa

According to Jaco Boshoff (pers comm), it is unclear if any of the victims of the disaster were interred in the vicinity, or were transported to and buried in the cemeteries on the outskirts of the town.

CONCLUSIONS

Pre-colonial resources

Given the range of heritage indicators at Maidens Cove, we would expect to find numerous open shell middens, as well as occupation debris below suitable Granite boulders across the entire promontory. Development of the area over the years will however have significantly have impacted these resources.

While there is the possibility that some pre-colonial material in the form of shell middens (and possibly associated human remains) may survive where development and landscaping has been lighter, the chances of finding large quantities of pre-colonial resources remains low. Although some rock shelters may still be present, these are often used for informal habitation and disturbance of any underlying pre-colonial material is an ever present eventuality.
The shell midden identified by Olivier (1977), although not precisely located, is likely to lie outside the proposed development area.

**Colonial resources**

There do not appear to have been significant colonial period structures within the proposed development area.

The old Camps Bay Battery appears to have been positioned just outside the area between Victoria Rd and Lower Kloof Road. It is possible that some associated remains may exist in the vicinity of the old fort however, and some vigilance may be required where development comes close to the site.

At this time, it is unclear if any burial ground was associated with a church shown on the 1934 topographic map and only a more a detailed archival survey may clarify this.

Although it remains speculation, we cannot exclude the possibility that human remains related to the wreck of the São José Paquete Africa may be found on the site, although there is no unequivocal evidence supporting this.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Since there is a small possibility that some pre-colonial material may survive on the proposed development site, we believe that the area should be subject to an archaeological impact assessment based on a site visit. This survey would also serve to consider the possibility of the likelihood of colonial heritage resources having survived on the site.

Any archaeological material that could be identified would be of high significance due to the fact that most sites along the developed peninsula coastline have largely been obliterated by development activities.

Buried material will not be identified in a surface survey and it is likely that some form of watching brief will be required during construction if the development proposal is authorised.

**REFERENCES**

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