



STIGTING VOC - VOC FOUNDATION - UMBUTHO VOC

Die Stigting VOC het op 16 September 1995 tot stand gekom met Bewaring, Opvoeding en Kultuurtoerisme as doel. Dit is die wettige eienaar van die historiese VOC-handelsmerk in Suid-Afrika.
The VOC Foundation was established on 16 September 1995 with Conservation, Education and Cultural Tourism as its aims. It is the legal owner of the historic VOC trade mark in South Africa.

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The Chief Executive Officer
Heritage Western Cape (HWC)
Cape Town

29 December 2021

Dear Sir

History of VOC beacon, Geelbeksfontein, district Hopefield, Western Cape

The text of the NMC's declaration of the VOC beacon at Geelbeksfontein as a National Monument in May 1981 (Government Gazette entry no. 1125, dd. 29.5.1981) contains several elements of incorrect 'history', no doubt due to poor research. Since the artefact's heritage status was since downgraded to that of 'provincial heritage', we present you with this more professionally researched history to replace SAHRA's information on your files.

GPS position: 33.191391 S, 18.128294 E (See attachments please.)

Function: To show VOC's claim to the fresh water source in the vicinity.

Date of manufacture: The sober style and simple 'coffin' shape of the artifact point to a date of manufacture in the seventeenth or early eighteenth century.

Source: The stone of dark blue Malmesbury shale very likely originated in the Company's slate quarry on the south side of Robben Island, where slate for building, paving and gravestones was mined.

Inscription: The inscription consists of a VOC monogram surmounted by the letter G. It means: *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, Geheel*. (United East India Company, Entire). 'Geheel' shows that it represents the whole Company and not one particular Chamber. [O.F. Mentzel: *A geographical and topographical description of the Cape of Good Hope, part One*, p.46 Cape Town, 1921. Van Riebeeck Society, First series, no, 4.]

Date of erection: The date of placement of the beacon is not recorded. VOC soldiers were first posted at the fresh water fountain at Geelbeksfontein in 1666. Their post or outstation was moved to the site called Oude Post in 1669 and to the site called Nieuwe Post in 1730. Skipper J. de Koninck noticed VOC beacons at several places around the bay in 1726. In 1734 the Council of Policy ordered postholder Steenmetz to write a report on the various beacons in the bay. There were then beacons at Hoedjes Bay, on the four islands in the bay, at the posthouse (Nieuwe Post) and at the salt pan west of Geelbeksfontein. Postholder JG John saw a beacon at Geelbeksfontein in 1760. J. Heufke rented the farm from the Company in 1762, built a house and discovered the main fresh water spring near the house. To demonstrate the Company's ownership and authority over it, the beacon was then moved closer to this spring. [D. Sleight: *Die Buiteposte*, pp. 458-459. Pretoria, 1993; P. Schoonees: *Inscriptions on padroes, postal stones, tombstones and beacons*. Cape Town, 1991.]

In 1734 governor De la Fontaine ordered VOC beacons to be placed at two other watering places north of Saldanha Bay, namely at the mouths of the Berg River and the Olifants River. [GC de Wet (red.): *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad, deel VIII, 29.4.1734*, pp. 346-347.]

Several of the above-mentioned stones are kept by Iziko Museums at the Slave Lodge Museum, Cape Town.

Yours sincerely
R. Rode



Secretary: VOC Foundation

PS: The VOC Foundation offers its assistance with any queries that your office may have about proclamations involving the VOC period (1652-1795) of Cape history.

