

COLLECTION FEATURE · WATERWORKS

Water, carried through timber

A City-catalogued teak pipe offers a material glimpse of Cape Town's early water network. Its date and exact findspot remain unconfirmed.

TEAK WATER PIPE · CTCC\88\174 · DIGITAL VAULT RECORD 321

Independent tender-stage article sample; not an official City publication.

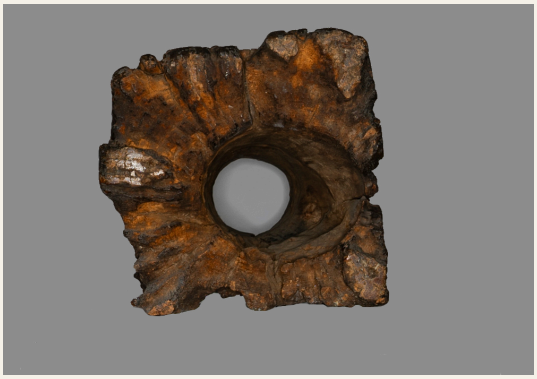
At first glance, the City-catalogued teak pipe is a single length of timber.[1] Its circular bore and tapered end connect it to a much larger story: the movement of water through Cape Town's early settlement.[1] The catalogue identifies the object as ***Teak Water Pipe***, item ID CTCC\88\174, record 321.[1] It lists teak, dimensions of 1,770 × 410 × 345 mm, an unknown producer and no date.[1]



Long profile view of the teak pipe. Photograph: City of Cape Town Digital Vault, record 321.[1]

The City's catalogue narrative describes an early water network of canals and wooden pipes carrying water from mountain streams to the settlement and ships at Table Bay.[1] It notes that teak was imported because local woods were considered too soft for the purpose; the pipes were made in sections and joined with copper collars.[1] The narrative records cast iron becoming standard around 1812.[1] These details describe the network, not a confirmed date or installation for this specimen.[1]

A hollow conduit



End view showing the circular bore. No scale is present in the photograph.[1]

The three catalogue photographs show the pipe from an angled view, along its length and through the end.[1] The end view reveals a circular bore within a roughly squared exterior.[1] The profile records a long, uneven timber section; the angled view shows its tapered end.[1] None of the photographs includes a scale or a visible maker's mark.[1]

The City record gives dimensions of 1,770 × 410 × 345 mm.[1] The record identifies its material as teak, but does not name a maker, watercourse or structure.[1] The visible form supports its catalogue identification as a pipe; it cannot, by itself, establish where or when this section was used.[1]

No installation view accompanies the record, and no installation is documented for this specimen.[1]

> ***"an early water network of canals and wooden pipes carrying water from mountain streams to the settlement and ships at Table Bay."***

A provenance note

The City's text associates a pipe of this kind with restoration work at Tuynhuys in the 1960s, while qualifying whether the recovered pipe was this specimen.[1] No reference has been found confirming that the present object was the pipe recovered there.[1] Its exact findspot, date and original installation remain unconfirmed.[1]

The Tuynhuys note supports an association with a pipe of this kind, not a confirmed findspot for this specimen.[1] The item record names no specific watercourse, building or excavation as its origin.[1]

A separate waterworks history

The City's Woodhead Dam Museum presents another strand of Cape Town's water history, with construction-era objects including a steam train, tools, instruments and flow-measuring equipment.[2] Engineering historian J. Murray examines Woodhead Dam as a distinct infrastructure project and its place in the expansion of water supply.[3] The Teak Water Pipe record does not connect this specimen to the dam.[1]

Together, these records show the range of material evidence associated with Cape Town's water history.[1][2][3] They do not establish that this pipe belonged to a particular dam, watercourse or later municipal project.[1] The catalogue records the material, dimensions and form; it provides no date, maker or precise provenance.[1]

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Photographs: City of Cape Town Digital Vault, record 321.[1] Reproduction terms for the images have not been confirmed; confirm permission before publication.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. City of Cape Town. "Teak Water Pipe." ***Digital Vault***, record 321, item ID CTCC\88\174. Accessed 26 October 2026. Catalogue record.
2. City of Cape Town. "Explore Cape Town's water history at Woodhead Dam Museum." Accessed 28 October 2026. City article.
3. Murray, J. "The Woodhead dam on Table Mountain, Cape Town, South Africa." ***Engineering History and Heritage*** 164, no. 1 (2011): 27–33. https://doi.org/10.1680/ehah.9.00041.