



Battle of Varshedrift which resulted in the death of
Francisco d' Almeida, Viceroy of India

In 1510 a squadron of ships under the command of the Portuguese Viceroy of India, Francisco d' Almeida, called at Table Bay to take on water, firewood and hopefully establish trade for fresh meat with the local Khoekhoen herders. In this a disagreement arose and several Portuguese returned to their ships having been beaten up by the Khoekhoen.

Deciding to teach the perpetrators a lesson, the viceroy proceeded with a reported 150 men to the Khoe village at what we know today as Varshedrift. In their arrogance they took lances and swords but no projectiles - which would prove their undoing.

At first the Khoe retreated with the result that the Portuguese were able to capture several children and a good number of cattle. They then proceeded with their spoils to the mouth of the Salt River where they had left their boats.

Unknown to them the sea had risen and those left in charge of the boats had moved them to the more sheltered mouth of the Fresh River (near the present day Grand Parade) about 5 km. away.

Trained to answer the call of their owners the Khoe cattle broke away as the Portuguese retreated to the shore. The Khoe then turned the cattle on their adversaries all the while throwing fire-hardened spears over the animals. By the time the remaining Portuguese Reached their boats Francisco d' Almeida and no less than 60 of his officers and men lay dead along the shore of Table Bay.

Left in no doubt that the Khoe were not be trifled with these shores were avoided by the Portuguese and other foreign callers for nearly a century.