

Archaeological Site Report	SiteNo	9/2/009/0025
	Site Name	St Mary's Church, Cuylerville, Bathurst District
	Date	
	Project	
	CaseNID	
	Coords	-33.493286, 27.013731

Page No: 1 **SiteAutoID:** 29456

Site Category: Building

SiteComments:

Archive Import History: A party of 256 settlers under Lieut. John Baillie R.N. established themselves here in 1820 and named the place Cuylerville. On this site they built a church and school. which also served as a fortification against the repeated attacks of the Xhosas. The present building was erected in 1840. On 30th April, 1820, a party of about 250 British Settlers with ninety wagons led by John Bailie outspanned here after a trek from Port Elizabeth which lasted thirteen days. They were accompanied by the 59th Regiment under the command of Col. Jacob Cuyler, the Landdrost of Uitenhage. They called the place Cuylerville in appreciation of Colonel Cuyler's friendliness and helpfulness. The land was allocated to Thomas Adams in the same year, but it eventually became the property of the well-known Robert Godlonton in 1838. From 1825 onwards this place was a meeting-place for the new community. A small building was erected in which the Rev. William Boardman, the Rev. George Porter and Charles Bailie held services and conducted a school; it was rebuilt in 1831. In 1834 the Sixth Xhosa War broke out and 20 000 Xhosa stormed across the Fish River. The people of Cuylerville drew up a laager round the church, but were forced to abandon the church to the enemy and fall back on Bathurst. By 1838 the community had recovered sufficiently to begin collecting funds to build the present church. Godlonton donated 15,4 hectares of land for this purpose. Col. Fienry Somerset laid the foundation stone on 17th June, 1839, and work commenced on the building of a church and a school under one roof. It was completed a year later and formally opened on 15th September, 1840. In 1843 conditions along the eastern frontier again began to deteriorate. In anticipation of renewed trouble, stone walls were built round the church to strengthen its defences and a strong stone enclosure for the cattle was built nearby. In 1846 the expected attack took place and the Settlers withdrew to the fortified laager. This bee hive, as the Xhosa called it, suffered repeated attacks. The first came on 1st May when fourteen men under arms, faithfully supported by the women, beat off the deter mined assaults, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. The Xhosa had brought 200 oxen with them to carry away the booty they expected; instead they had to use them to bear away their dead and wounded. Nevertheless the church and school could not resume their normal functions until 1847. This little building has continued to serve the congregation and the community ever since. Visual Description: A gravel road from Bathurst runs parallel with the coast and leads to the mouth of the Great Fish River. About halfway to the Fish River, on the right side of the road, there stands a modest building amongst thick bushes and overshadowed by a giant blue-gum. This is the historic little Cuylerville Church and a few hundred metres away, on the bank of a small stream, is its picturesque church yard. Colours: Site Features: Condition: Construction Date: 1840 Materials: Catalogue: , No: , Significance Category:

Damage Types: