

Archaeological Site Report	SiteNo	9/2/060/0010
	Site Name	Groote Post, Malmesbury District
	Date	
	Project	
	CaseNID	
	Coords	-33.447222, 18.404167

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Site Category: Building

SiteComments:

Archive Import History: In this area Henning Huising had the right to graze his cattle for he was one of the few who had a meat contract with the Company. These contracts were valuable monopolies and considerable sums were paid for them. It became necessary to establish guards or "posts", at convenient points where the animals were quartered for the time while the grazing was good. The biggest and most important of these posts was just below the Kapokberg and was known as "Groote Post". Situated on high ground among the gentle slopes of the low hills it commanded an excellent view of Table Mountain and the land falling away to the Groene Kloof. When, on 21 February 1803, the Cape was transferred to the Batavian Republic, Commissioner-General Jacob Abraham de Mist was instructed to install Lieutenant— General Jan Willem Janssens as Governor. The ceremony took place in the Castle on 1st March 1803. Although considerable changes in the administration took place De Mist was keen on the continuation of the scientific farming methods which had been introduced by the British. To enable this to be carried on with greater effect, he established a board of commissioners for agriculture and granted to their an area of 40,000 morgen of land around the Groote Post. William Duckitt had elected to remain in the Colony and was appointed as agricultural superintendent. At various times Duckitt also acted as secretary to the Board of Commissioners. When a small flock of merino sheep arrived from Holland they were sent to Groote post and to this place also were sent a stud bull and cows together with some thoroughbred horses. The Commission now, in 1808, decided to build a "good substantial house and outbuildings" which were valued at 61,555 rix dollars. The British, when they re—occupied the Cape in 1806, made but few changes and the Board of Agriculture remained in existence. On the 27th and 28th 1815, the agricultural meeting was held at Groote Post; the public being invited to view the stock and the agricultural implements. In 1814, Lord Charles Somerset had arrived as Governor, and as was usual practice, he was invited to become the patron of the Board. He was however not the usual type of patron and immediately set out about making changes. When this action was resented by some of the members he dissolved the Board and took direct charge of the establishment. At the same time Groote Post became the country residence of this Governor who, though autocratic and quick—tempered, was nevertheless a most capable and industrious gentleman. He had been born an aristocrat, lived a life of a gentleman and was a close friend of King George III and loved nothing better than the hunt. Horses was his passion. At great expense he imported bloodstock and these horses were kept in the stables at Groote Post which he visited whenever opportunity offered. The "good substantial house" the Board of Agriculture had built at considerable expense was added to by Lord Charles. It is presumed that some of these additions were the outbuildings and stables to house the string of horses he owned. Groote Post is a lovely house, a gracious home, standing high on sloping ground with the coach house running the full length of the building under the front rooms. A dwelling with nine rooms could be termed large — but this house has twenty—nine rooms. Lord Charles carried on as Governor four fourteen years. Soon after his departure Groote Post was, in 1827, divided into seven farms, and the leases, each for seventeen years, were auctioned. The lease of the farm containing the homestead was not to run the full period for on 20 January 1836, His Excellency Sir Benjamin D'Urban, Governor and Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Castle, Town and Settlement of the Cape of Good Hope, granted to Philip Johannes Rens the farm Groote Post, in extent 2,672 morgen and 388 square roods. Rens had purchased the farm at a public auction for the sum of £1,062.10sOd. Rens was the owner for but two years. He sold at a public auction on 18 April 1838 for £2,752.10s to Mrs J.M. Hill, who however sold the farm "at first

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cost” on the some day to Frederick Duckitt. The transfer was registered on 21 December 1838. Frederick was the second son of William Duckitt who had come to the Cape as Super intendent of Agriculture in 1800. He was born in Esher in Surrey on 28 November 1799 and in due course married Miss Hillegonda Johanna Versveld of Claassenbosch in the Cape. They had ten children: to the sixth child, a daughter Hildagonda, we owe a deep debt of gratitude. Apart from her cookery book “Hilda’s Where Is It” which made her one of the country’s best known women, she also wrote “Hilda’s Diary of a Cape Housekeeper”. In this book she recorded, with charm and affection her feelings about the “old home”. Unlike many of our old houses we were made aware of the history of Groote Post by Hildagonda. She tells of her life that she and her family led, the amusements, the daily farm routine, the holidays and the social life at the Cape. The farm which belonged to the Duckitts for over fifty years, passed in strange hands when Jacob, Hildagonda’s brother, took his own life. Pieter Johannes Steyn bought Groote Post for £4,100 and took transfer on 23 September 1891. He remained the owner for ten years then sold to Jan Willem Janssens Versveld on 17 May 1901 for £6,500. The price had gone up by £2,400 but what was more remarkable was that Groote Post had returned to the “family”. The new owner was Hilda’s uncle. Prices remained fairly constant for many years with the result that Alexander Jacobs Versveld paid £7,250 when he took transfer on 24th December 1930, but the next owner was not so fortunate. World War II and the devaluation of currency that followed put the price up to £18,000 when the next owner Pieter Alexander Versveld took transfer from his father’s estate on 5 November 1957. Even so, that was a nominal figure for he had to pay duty on the Divisional Council valuation which was “34,776. Pieter Alexander Versveld, and his wife who was a Miss Duckitt from Waylands, corn on the traditon of hospitality and friendliness for which their home was so famous. On 19th September 1972 the farm was sold to Nicolaas Petrus Pentz in his capacity as Trustee of a Company in the course of formation, which company was duly incorporated on the 16th October 1972 under the name of Groote Post Farm (Proprietary) Limited. The selling price was noted as R165 000,00. It is indeed an experience to visit this lovely farm, to gaze upon the soft lines of the hills to the east and north and the bold outline of Table Mountain in the distant south. The beautiful homestead with its thatched roof, yellowwood floors and ceilings are an everlasting reminder of its gracious past. Visual Description: Colours: Site Features: Condition: Construction Date: Materials: Catalogue: , No: , Significance Category:

Damage Types: