

Archaeological Site Report	SiteNo	9/2/018/245
	Site Name	South African Astronomical Observatory, Erf 26423, Cape Town
	Date	6/08/2018 - 08:33
	Project	
	CaseNID	
	Coords	-33.934253, 18.477404
Page No: 1 SiteAutoID: 128564		

Site Category: Place, Structures

Directions:

The SAAO is located on a raised hill - a corner site between two landmark developments, the Valkenberg Psychiatric Hospital (east) and The River Club (west). It is placed on the extension of Station Road, Observatory, which terminates as Observatory Road adjacent to Valkenberg Psychiatric Hospital. Observatory Road is essentially a dead-end that converges into a pedestrian bridge which spans both the Black River and Black River Parkway to give access to the Maitland Garden Village, the Oude Molen Estate and the Alexandria Hospital precinct. West and northwest of the site the Black- and Liesbeeck River confluence creates a wetland with remnants of indigenous plants, reed and wild grass. The site is further bracketed by Liesbeeck Parkway to the west and Black River Parkway to the east.

SiteComments:

Architecturally, there are several buildings of historical value reflecting both changing architectural styles over the 19th century and notable scientific contributions to the field of astronomy. The groups of buildings, patterns of planting and routes have intrinsic social, aesthetic and scientific significance and contextual significance in regard to developing an understanding of the two river's confluence inherited landscape qualities, its history and associated memory. The key buildings on the sites are the south-facing Main Building and the Observatory Building which houses the McClean telescope. The Main building was designed by a British naval architect, John Rennie and completed in 1828. The building is a neo-Classical building reflecting a Georgian and Greek reference with symmetrical with two double storied wings extending to the front with two large windows with detailed surrounds within which it is set. Some of the windows on the wings facing onto the courtyard at the rear were false arising from an incorrect assumption by the architect that a window tax was applicable. The central room initially had a centralised lantern placed there in 1824. To the rear of the main elevation, a square tower now rises upward, currently housing some of the services of the building. Internally the building has retained some of its original fireplaces, teak joinery and two staircases. The McClean Telescope building was designed by Herbert Baker and houses the unique telescope donated by Frank McClean.

Damage Types: