

HERITAGE STATEMENT HOUSE NUMBER ONE IRISH TOWN; ROBBEN ISLAND

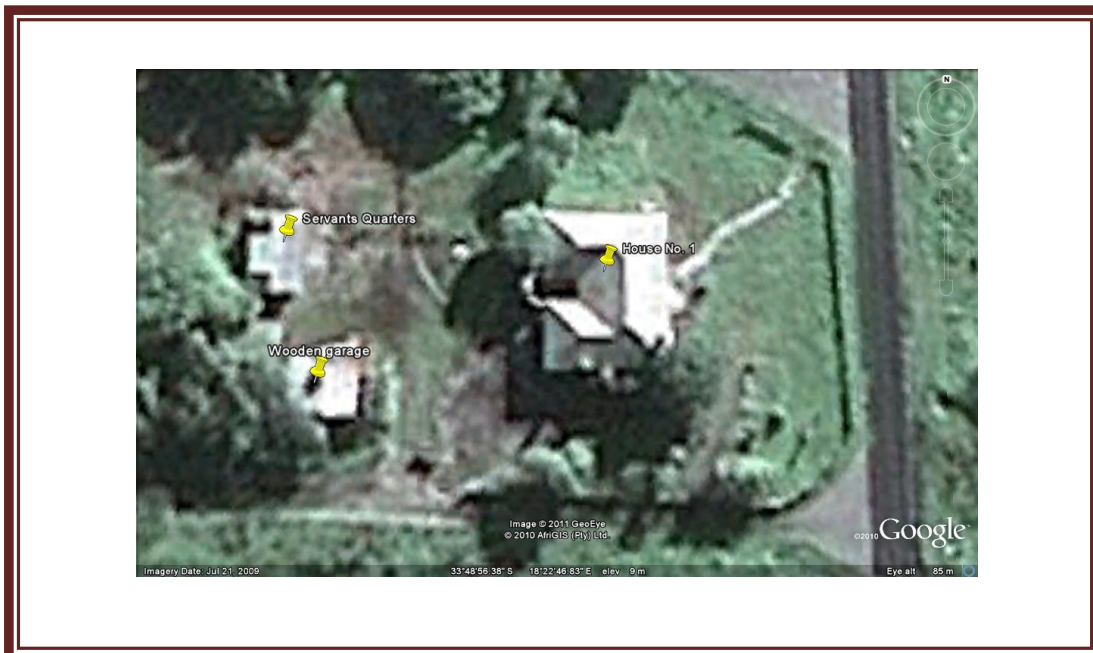
1. INTRODUCTION

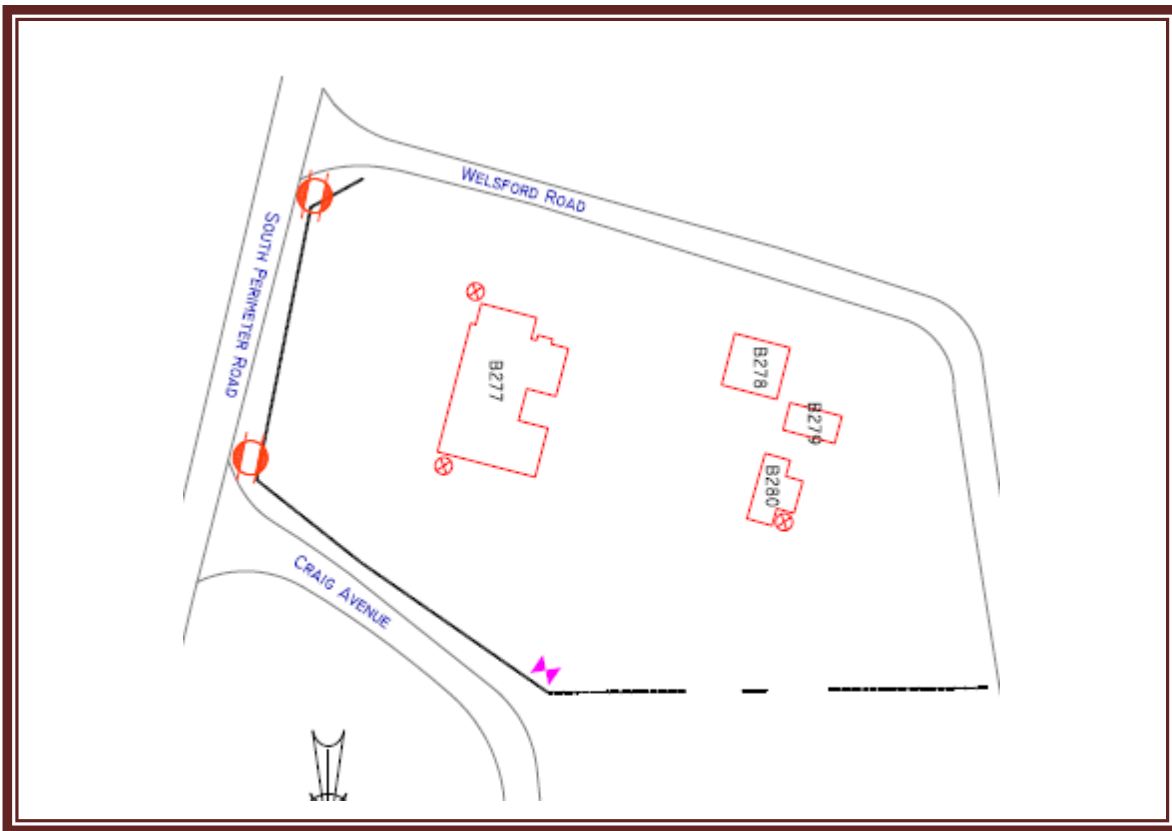
The heritage statement was commissioned to supplement the permit application to SAHRA in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act, 25 of 1999. Time constraints have not permitted for more in depth research.

2. LOCATION

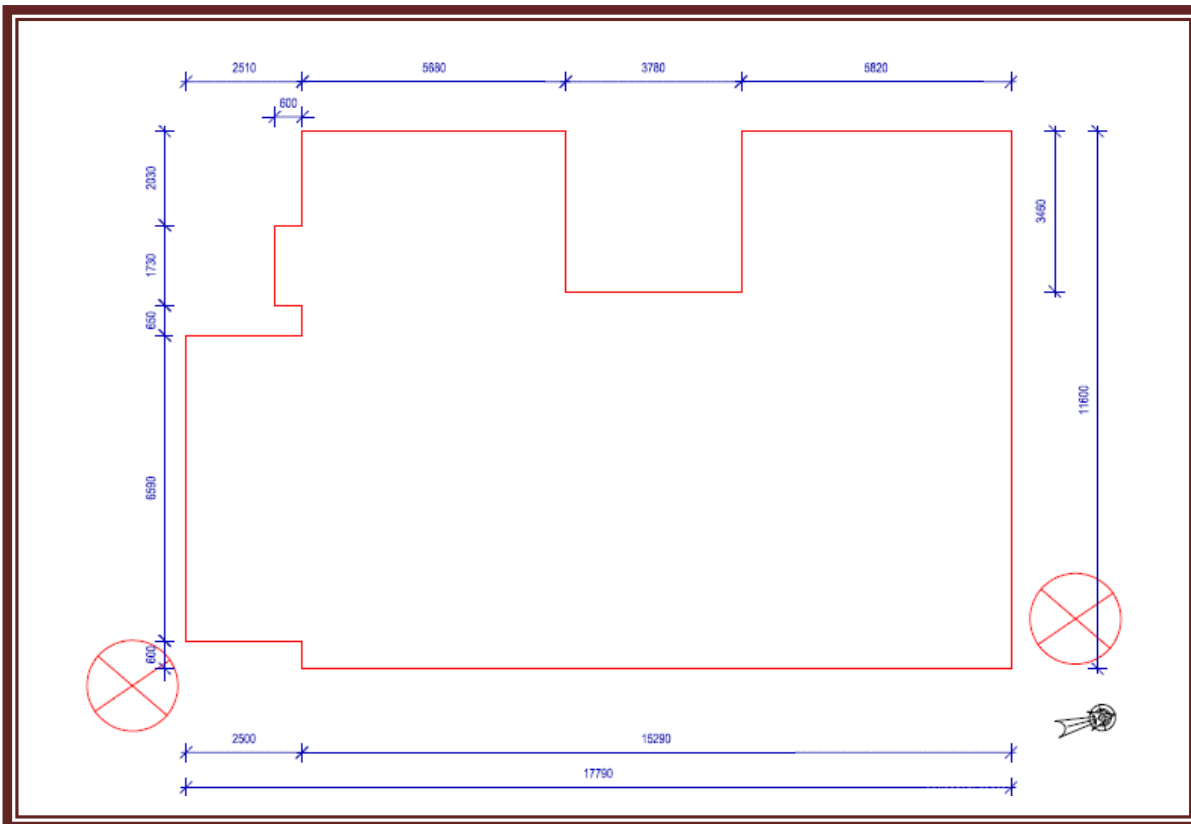


3. SITE PLAN





4. FLOOR PLAN



5. DESCRIPTION

Refer to Expanded Statement of significance.

6. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE

Residence built ca 1940 presumably for senior officers of the military during WWII.

7. EXPANDED STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE

7.1. AESTHETIC

The building is the last residence on South Perimeter Road before reaching Alpha One on the SE tip of the Island. It generally stands alone in its own unique setting and has a view across Table Bay to Table Mountain, Blouberg, to Minto Hill and the lighthouse. A good view of Alpha One can be had from the verandah roof.



Fig.7.1.1.View to Table Mountain



Fig.7.1.2. View towards Blouberg

7.2. ARCHITECTURAL

This house is unique architecturally as it is the only example of its kind on the island.

7.2.1. EXTERIOR

Typical for the period in its opulence where materials were available that later on in WWII had become scarce. The simple square structure has remained relatively intact from its original design. The verandah on the south face was later enclosed and during the 1980's a braai was added at the back on the west face.

Roof, gutters and downpipes appear to be the original WWII asbestos fixtures and cladding. Each corner of the house had asbestos water tanks on low plinths to catch rain water. The verandah roof is precast concrete.

The original wooden [meranti] window frames from WWII are still in place. These have not been painted and retain the original wood clear varnish look although a varnish stain was used by the prisons which has in most places peeled off. When the verandah was enclosed during the prison period wooden SA pine window frames were used.



Fig.7.2.1. Front, facing east towards Table Mountain.



Fig.7.1.2. Front door



Fig.7.1.3. SE corner with enclosed verandah



Fig.7.1.4. Rear facing west.



Fig.7.1.5.SW corner



Fig.7.1.6. NE corner

7.2.2. INTERIOR

Wooden Oregon pine floors with skirting. Typical picture rails running along walls. 1920's style doors. Cast iron bath. Pantry in kitchen and linen cupboard in passage. Fire place in living room. Space in kitchen for coal/ wood burning cast iron stove of the 'Fawcett' type.



Fig.7.1.7. Wooden floors



Fig.7.1.8. Wooden window with SA pine pelmet



Fig.7.1.9. Interior of enclosed verandah



Fig.7.1.10. Light fittings.



Fig.7.1.11. Doors with painted fanlights



Fig.7.1.12 Alcove for coal stove in kitchen. Cupboard is later addition after removal of stove.

7.2.2. ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPE

Outbuildings

Consists of servants quarters with washing/ toilet facilities. Toilet cistern still the high flush cast iron and chain typical of the period.

A wooden garage hidden by corrugated iron cladding. The garage is contemporaneous with the house, the corrugated iron being added later. This has to a large degree protected the original structure.



Fig.7.2.1. Servants quarters and garage



Fig.7.2.2. Original toilet system in servants.



Fig.7.2.3. Interior wooden garage



Fig.7.2.4. North face, garage original entrance clad with tin. Original wood exterior can be seen on inside of later tin extension.

Boundary walls

Consist of Vibracrete from the 1970's. In very poor condition.

Garden

Extensive landscaping still discernable. Older trees and vegetation still remain.

Other features

Braai from ca. 1980's at rear built as courtyard. Built from Robben Island cement brick.



Fig.7.2.4. Braai courtyard.



Fig.7.2.5. Remains of landscape features and vibracrete wall

7.3. HISTORICAL

The general area where the house stands has been known as Irish Town since the late 1800's. Limited time frames have not allowed for any research other than dating the building to early 1940. More research is required on who occupied the house over time, as well as the history of Irish Town itself. Most of the buildings pre-1939 no longer exist. Historical photograph's and drawings could not be accessed at the time of this report.

8. PROPOSED CONSERVATION POLICIES

Appropriate minimal intervention. [do as much as is necessary and as little as possible]

Appropriate and sustainable alternate use strategy. [‘use it or lose it’]

Appropriate, effective, efficient and sustainable maintenance.

Use of appropriate construction materials, paint and cladding to fit historic fabric.

Appropriate interpretation and presentation within the associated landscape.

9. PRESENT STATE OF CONSERVATION

9.1. EXTERIOR

The main body of the original house is in reasonable condition. The later additions are in a worse state. The braai is detaching itself from the main house where it was latched in. The enclosed verandah window frames are rotten and will need to be replaced in the near future. Some of the plates of the asbestos roof have vertical cracks in the valleys of the corrugation. The roof leaks and attempts appear to have been made to repair these at some later date. Windows were varnished with a stain during the prison period. This has peeled down to the raw wood in most places.

The precast roof of the enclosed verandah is spalling, the waterproofing has disintegrated. Some asbestos gutters missing.

9.2. INTERIOR

Some water damage to ceiling and interior from leaking roof.

10. CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

10.1. THREATS

Weather and weathering

The house and its associated landscape is subject to severe weather conditions because it stands alone in the face of the winter and summer weather. The vibracrete wall and the SA pine window frames present evidence of the severity because of their present condition.

Plants

Some trees are growing next to the main house, as well as vegetation close to the outbuildings. Care should be taken in their maintenance to avoid blocked gutters and roots damaging walls and foundations.

Animals

No discernable threat.

Fire

The potential for a veldt fire to damage the structure and its associated landscape is high. Human agency outside [braai] and inside have the potential to cause damage if care is not taken.

Humans

Not under threat from visitors as house not open to public. Vandalism and theft need to be dealt with appropriately.

Poor or no maintenance by both RIM and DPW pose a substantial threat to the fabric.

Pollution

Vehicle emissions may pose a long term threat considering the high lime content of the fabric.

10.2. OPPORTUNITIES

Tourism

Would provide for an excellent B&B facility.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1. The varnish stain on the exterior of the wooden windows should be removed and the windows returned to their original clear varnish.
- 11.2. The water tank on the roof of the verandah should be removed and replaced on its historic plinth next to the verandah and kitchen chimney.
- 11.3. Repairs and renovations must be done in accordance with the specifications of the conservation architect.
- 11.4. The interior must also be renovated at the earliest opportunity.
- 11.5. It would be appropriate to reinstate the garden and its landscaped elements.
- 11.6. The vibracrete wall may be removed and replaced provided that a representative sample of the original is retained and interpreted.

- 11.7. The wooden garage is contemporaneous with the 1940's style of the house and should be retained. The means must be found to protect the fabric immediately because the corrugated iron roof has rusted and some sheets are missing. The structure must be restored as soon as is practicable.
- 11.8. An alternate use strategy must be provided.
- 11.9. SAHRA must ensure that the maintenance management plan is implemented and monitor its implementation

12. REFERENCES

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Informal discussions with Andre vom Hagen 17 January 2011.

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Maps

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Secret map copy number 7, 1939.

Copies of maps dated 1942, 1948, 1962, 1972, 1988/89, 1994, 2001.