

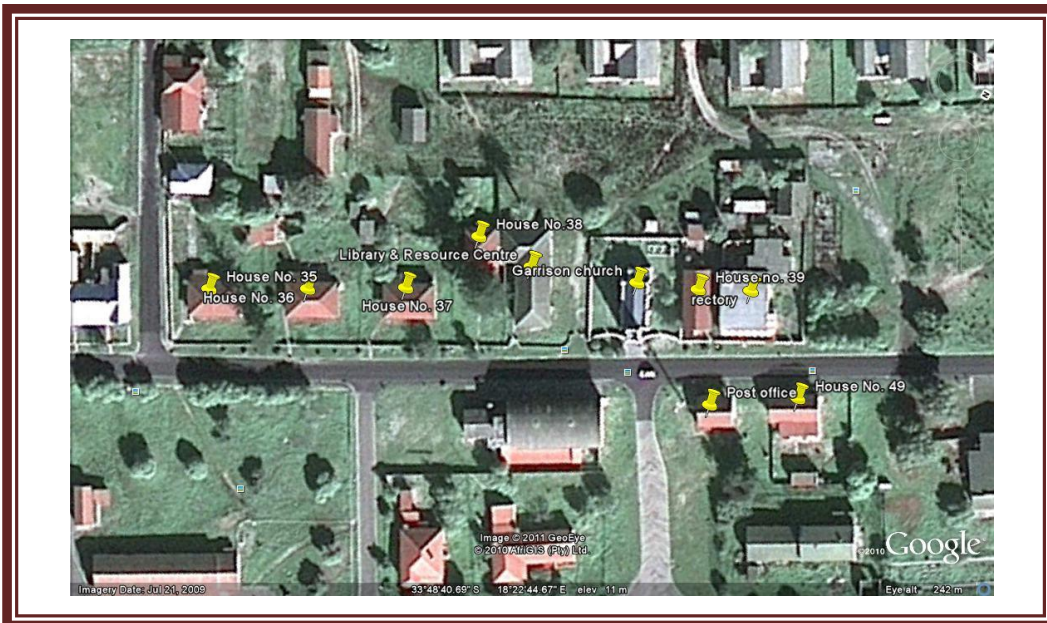
HERITAGE STATEMENT HOUSES NUMBERED 35, 36 AND 37 CHURCH STREET ROBBEN ISLAND

1. INTRODUCTION

The heritage statement was commissioned to supplement the permit application made to SAHRA on 28 January 2011 in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act, 25 of 1999. Time constraints have not permitted for more in depth research and analysis.

2. LOCATION

Three houses dating from WWII on the western side of Church Street and towards the southern side of the Garrison Church.



3. SITE PLAN



4. FLOOR PLAN

No floor plans could be traced in the limited time available.

5. DESCRIPTION

Three simple squares, asbestos roofing, gutters, water tanks and down pipes. Only no 35 retains its original chimney, the other two having been removed. All three still have there faux granite fireplaces. Wooden window frames, except for enclosed verandahs which are later steel. The masonry square above each front door that was used for the military ‘T’ numbering system is on the inside of the enclosed verandah. Each has a boundary wall added later and each wall has a different decorative finish. Each also has separate servant’s quarters. Two large pine trees, at house 35 and at house 38 are also present.



Fig.5.1. View from Church tower facing south.

6. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE

The three houses of the earliest of the WWII houses to be built and housed the Women’s Naval Auxilliary Services [WANS or SWANS]

7. EXPANDED STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE

7.1. ARCHITECTURAL

The three houses are architecturally unique as the only examples on the island. They may be contemporaneous with house number 1 in Irish Town because; firstly, the finishes are similiar and their once open verandah’s face in the same direction. They were more than

likely built soon after WWII started ca. September 1939 as residences for military personnel.

7.1.1. INTERIOR

The interior was not examined in depth, except for taking note of ceiling decorations, flooring and the fireplaces for dating purposes. Of note are the early 1940's faux granite fireplaces. As mentioned the masonry square above the front door for the 'T' number is still in evidence.



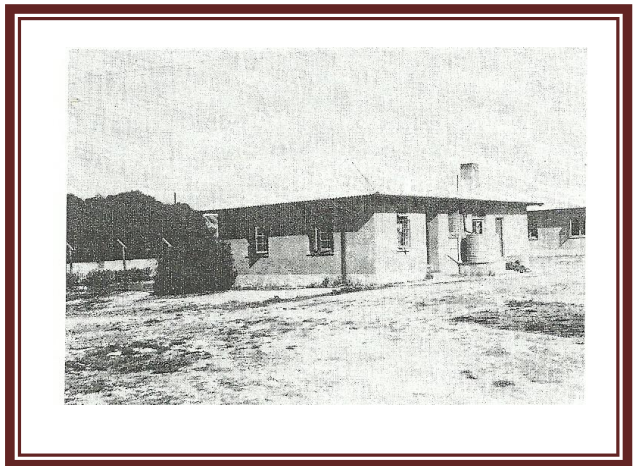
Fig.7.1.1.1. House 35 fire place.



Fig.7.1.1.2. House 36 fireplace

7.1.2. EXTERIOR

Water tanks were originally positioned for rainwater catchment. This is not the case at present. Considering the Island's and South Africa's severe water shortages it may be prudent to reinstate the tanks in their original positions.



7.2. ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPE

Outbuildings

No survey was done on the outbuildings.

Walls

Each house has a unique wall built during the prison period. House 35 has Malmesbury shale cladding on the southern side similar to that of the prison. The same cladding is on the eastern side but with a geometric pattern of squares made from round beach pebbles. House 36 has cladding similar to the prison. House 37 has been plastered with alternating geometric diamonds and squares in the plaster.

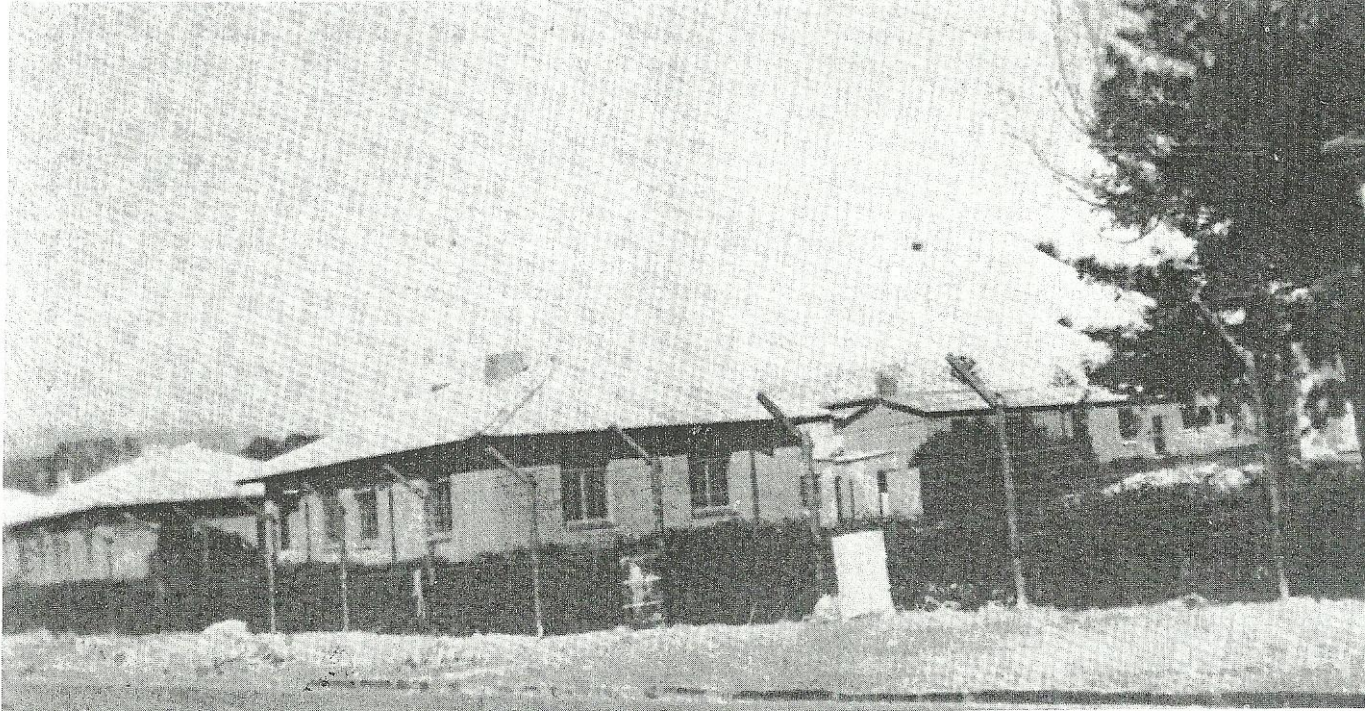


Garden

No survey was done on the gardens.

7.3. HISTORICAL

The houses appear to be of the first military residences to be erected along with house number one in Irish Town. Designed to house male army staff and their families originally they were later converted for use by the women's services. House 35 served as the infirmary for the Women's Auxilliary Army Services [WAAS] and 36 and 37 housed the SWANS. The houses formed part of the SWAN compound along with the houses in Shearer Avenue. A barbed wire fence ran around the compound. The houses presumably housed warders and their families but no research was conducted on this aspect. The houses are now occupied by RIM staff.



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

Roofs are leaking and general maintenance and repairs are required.

10. CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

THREATS

Weather and weathering

Normal Robben Island weathering although the houses are protected from the more extreme weathering that House number one has in Irish Town.

Fire

No threat from veldt fires.

Humans

Theft and vandalism need to be appropriately monitored. Poor or no maintenance is also a potential threat.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A more thorough survey is needed on the use, surrounding landscape [especially the servants quarters] and interiors of the houses.
2. Repairs and renovations to the outside are cosmetic only and should be approved.
3. RIM and/or DPW need to attend to the interiors as the ceilings and walls of all 3 houses have been damaged by water from the leaking roofs.

12. REFERENCES

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Informal discussions with Indawo site foreman, Mr Bowers, and his colleague, Mr Booysen, 17 January 2011.

Informal interview with the Post Office Manager, Ms Charlet Nel, 18 January 2011.