

HERITAGE STATEMENT RUGBY CLUB

INTRODUCTION

The document is supplementary to the application for a permit by the Department of Public Works to the South African Heritage Resources Agency in terms section 27 of the National Heritage Resources Act, 25 of 1999.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Used as a club house for the warders who played rugby on the island.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prior to the 1900's the area on which the rugby club stands may have been open space. By 1905 the area is clearly used as a cricket ground but no structures are present. A pathway from the Medical Superintendent's house [now the Club House] bisected the grounds diagonally at the time. From 1939 on the fields are still extant but appear not to have been used during the war. This needs more research.

It is more than likely that the present structure was erected some time after 1972. The rugby club closed at some time after the warders had left. The fields were then used as soccer fields. It is not known if the club house was used at that time.

In the short time frame it was not possible to research the social history of the club. The one interviewee who was approached knew very little as he himself did not play rugby. More thorough oral research is required.

ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPE

A large precinct containing the tennis club and courts, the Jukskei fields, Rugby club house and fields, athletics track, bowling green, the Club House, the post office, the old power station, a single dwelling next to the post office and a number of WWII dwellings on the eastern edge of the sports fields.

PROPOSED CONSERVATION POLICY

Appropriate minimal intervention.

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

Appropriate, effective, efficient and sustainable maintenance.

Appropriate interpretation and presentation within the associated landscape.

CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

Weather and weathering.

The structure is well inland but subject to the south easterly winds. Rain, sun and temperature differences affect the structure to varying degrees.

Plants and animals.

Plants do not pose a major threat to the structure but to the rugby field itself. Birds may fly into windows that are transparent. Pigeons nest inside the structure. Rabbits are evident further away at the power station but need to be monitored. Penguins are not evident. Rodents are a problem for insulation and electrical wiring.

An urgent threat is the very large colony of seagulls that have invaded the sports fields and terraces over the last three years. Guano builds up into a very hard layer that becomes difficult to remove. It also contains chemicals such as urea and ammonia which corrode building materials.

Fire.

Fire poses a threat from activities within the buildings. Very little threat is evident from bush fires.

Appropriate alternative use strategy.

No alternative use strategy has been provided. This poses a major challenge as often structures that are not occupied are left to deteriorate.

Vandalism and theft.

Appropriate action to be taken.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A permit should be issued for the necessary repairs, alterations and maintenance on the structure and its associated components as specified by the project architects. The structure has through neglect over the last decade been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that urgent work is required to save the historic fabric.
2. That the structure must not be treated in isolation but placed within its associated landscape. This will require a determined effort by Robben Island Museum and Department of Public Works to produce and implement a management plan for the entire sports and recreation precinct.

3. The seagulls need to be removed from the sports fields and terraces as a matter of urgency. The terraces and sports fields must then be cleaned up and maintained.
4. An alternate use strategy must be provided.
5. Plants and weeds must be removed from the perimeter of the walls and kept in abeyance.
6. The contractor appointed to do the work must adhere to sound environmental practice for the disposal of waste and not damage culturally significant vegetation.