
Old Bethlehem – Homestead

RESTORATION –
MOTIVATION FOR
HWC REV 1

Elisabeth Davies Architect

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This is an application to **HWC** to obtain approval for work to be carried out to **the Homestead** of Old Bethlehem Farm in the Dwars River Valley, near Franschhoek. It forms part of a greater werf comprising a wine cellar and a stable building, originating from the 18th century.

The architect Elisabeth Davies, has been appointed to restore the building by the new owners, Reside Properties.

The Bethlehem Werf has not been inhabited by any of its owners since 1960 when it was incorporated into Anglo American Farms, and has therefore not been very well looked after or much altered. The new owners have acquired the farm largely to breed horses. **There is no immediate need to inhabit the buildings, and they will potentially be used as a private residence in future.** The intention is to gradually restore all the buildings to protect them from further decay.

This process began in 2012 with the repair of the wine cellar, which is now complete. Approval was obtained from HWC for these restorations and they were overseen by Elisabeth Davies Architect, with the conservation architect Graham Jacobs as an occasional consultant.



View of Old Bethlehem Homestead from Wine Cellar side

2.0 **ARCHEOLOGICAL REPORT BY HENNIE VOS (2010)**

In order to establish the significance, history and condition of all the buildings on the property, the new owners commissioned the archeologist, Hennie Vos, to do an Archeological and structural investigation. An extensive and thorough report was produced in 2010. The discovery of some ruins led to a further archeological report by Ms Hilary Clift. (Both reports attached in full on CD)

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The entire werf was also measured and drawn up by Dennis Moss Architects, whose drawings appear in reduced form in the archeological report.

3.0 **ARCHEOLOGICAL REPORT BY HENNIE VOS (2013)**

In order to inform the design decisions of the sketch plans, a further investigation was done, focussed specifically on the Homestead Building. (See Report attached.)

4.0 **PERMISSION REQUIRED FROM HWC TO:**



Existing Gutters to be retained

4.1 **REPAIR ROOVES**

Replace the corrugated roof sheeting of the Homestead, Stables and lesser outbuildings in the complex. This needs to be done urgently before the winter rains, independently of any other works. Gutters and fascias will also be replaced.

- 4.1.1 **Roof Sheeting:** 0.8mm galvanized corrugated iron in single lengths. Fixed to existing roof structure with 'Leak King' roofing screws. Painted light grey to match wine cellar.
- 4.1.2 **Gutters and fascias:** Rotten fascias to be replaced with same matching profile 32mm thick SA Pine fascias. Retain existing galvanized gutters. Replace perished or missing pieces with custom bent matching lengths, as previously done on Wine Cellar. Custom made 80mm dia galvanized downpipes. Brackets made up to match existing. All painted dark grey.
- 4.1.3 **Hurricane clips:** Fit hurricane clips to secure all purlins to rafters to protect rooves from strong winds in the area.

5.0 **OBTAIN HWC PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TO MAKE HOMESTEAD LIVEABLE**

- 5.1 The sketch plans attached outline the current proposal to make the homestead liveable for a contemporary family. There are no major structural changes proposed. All original ceilings and pre 20th century joinery will be kept. The intention is to reuse the house with minimal alterations.
- 5.2 The kitchen will be moved to its original position and the hearth restored as a fireplace. Original beam and chimney remain. Bakoond was destroyed late 1800s when the leg of the 'T' was extended and now serves as a lobby link.
- 5.3 The late 19th century lean to service spaces will be reorganised to accommodate bathrooms and a scullery.
- 5.4 Inappropriate, large, late 20th century windows will be removed and replaced by sash windows to relate to the spectacular mountain view in the new bedroom position. The ones on the side will be replaced by Sash Windows and simple French doors to open out onto the outdoor living area and the garden.
- 5.5 The existing low grade meranti pergola and afdak, on the garden side, will be removed. A covered stoep in keeping with the later Victorian 'layer' of the homestead is proposed instead.
- 5.6 The front facade will remain as is with all its mouldings etc. Replacing the front door is proposed. Evidence of a previous wider door was found on the existing lintol.
- 5.7 The wide stoep will be retained but the badly spaced late 20th century columns will be removed and the front steps reconfigured to later detail.
- 5.8 Electrics and plumbing will have to be updated. Chasing of walls to be kept to a minimum.



Existing Front Facade

6.0 RESTORATION APPROACH IN THE LARGER CONTEXT

The overall restoration approach was established with the wine cellar application and remains the same: (See also report by Hans Fransen attached)

Old Bethlehem forms part of a set of similar Farmsteads originating from the mid 18th century, spread out along the Dwars River Valley. (Zevenrivieren, Zorgvliet, Goede Hoop, Boschendal, Bien Donne etc) Most retain or have been restored to the typical form of that time: Steeply pitched thatched roof, whitewashed walls with symmetrical fenestration around a central entrance door and distinctively moulded gable etc. The uniqueness of the gable to each building, even when it could be seen to form part of a type eg. holbol, rectilinear etc, is what gives each building its identity, its face.

As the Vos report illustrates in detail, Old Bethlehem changed, largely due to rebuilding after several fires. In about 1880 the thatch was replaced with corrugated iron and the eaves of all the buildings were raised by about a metre. This was common practice in the Cape after the introduction of corrugated iron in 1880, to deal with the constant

problem of fire. The proportions of the buildings were often adversely affected and many old gables were adapted or lost.

It has been the trend in the past years to remove the raised eaves and restore the thatch roofs, eg Meerlust, Ida's Valley, in order to recreate the particular beauty of the mid 18th century style that forms the essence 'Cape Dutch' architecture.

The temptation to recreate the 1770's period is strong, but unlike the examples mentioned above, Old Bethlehem has lost most of its 'face' from that time: All the gables were adapted and there is very little original joinery. So to attempt to reconstruct it to the 1770 period would at best be an exercise in creating a **generic version of a typical building** of that time, rather than a reconstruction of Old Bethlehem at that time. Unless we find some pictorial or physical evidence of what the buildings looked like then, particularly the face, the front gable, there is not a strong enough argument for such a major intervention.

The buildings now demonstrate quite consistently a later form, albeit slightly awkwardly proportioned in places, which has persisted for a hundred years, and has now come to represent their authentic identity.

So in the greater context of the werf, the current attitude is to **restore it largely as it is** and **concentrate on the 1880 period**, taking a view on keeping the mouldings put in place by Hill in about 1900, but removing any further additions after about 1907, which are out of character or of low quality.



Garden Side View



View of Hearth to be reinstated as open Fireplace



View of Lean To service structure on Kitchen Werf side



View Of Kitchen Werf – Potential House keepers cottage



View of Stable Building – Roof sheeting to be replaced



Wine Cellar Before Restoration



Wine Cellar after Restoration (First Application made to HWC in 2012)