

**RECORDING OF HISTORIC DWELLING AT STEENKOOLSPRUIT (SITE 2) AT
IMPUNZI MINE DEVELOPMENT
(WITBANK – NKANGALA DISTRICT – MPUMALANGA PROVINCE)**



M. NAUDE

Assessment of historic sites and buildings

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**Recording: M. Naude
Date: November 2016**

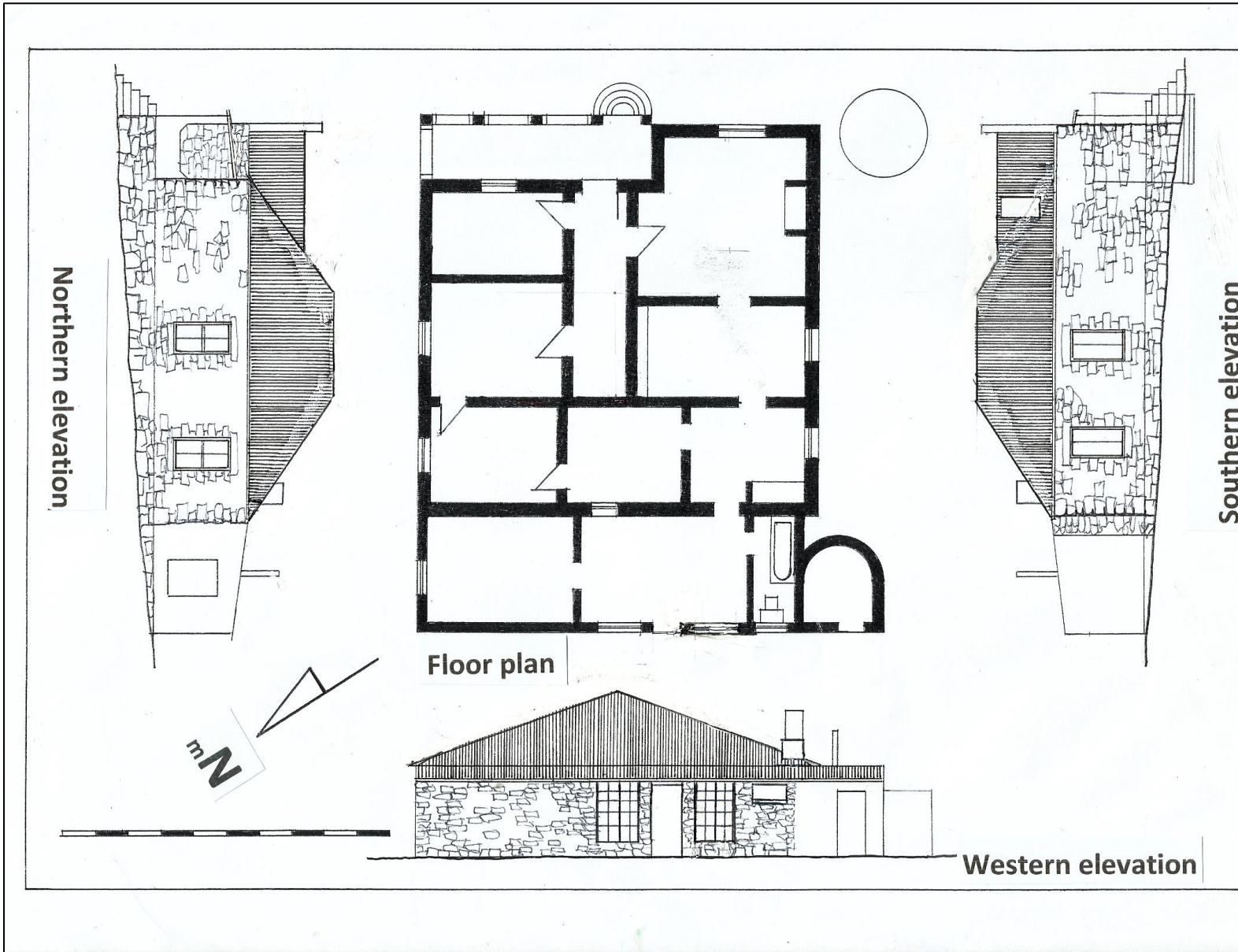
RECORDING OF THE FLOOR PLAN AND ELEVATIONS OF THE DWELLING.

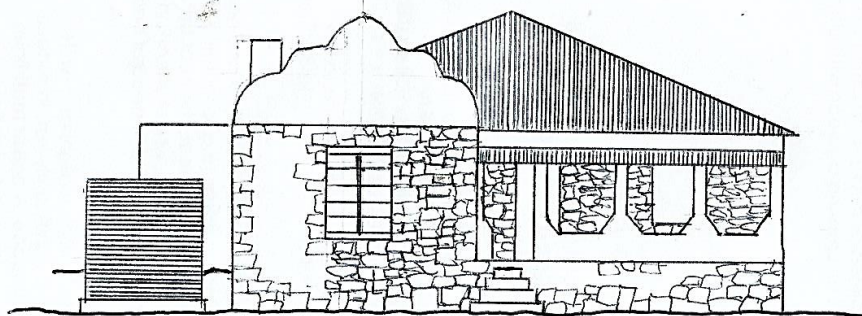
General description

The building is a small sandstone farm dwelling set on a slight slope with its principle façade facing eastwards, towards the Steenkoolspruit (downhill). In comparison to other sandstone farm dwellings in the region this dwelling is relatively small in scale. The building still had a roof when it was recorded in November 2016. It also had all its windows but the doors have been removed. The core and original part of the dwelling was constructed with neatly dressed sandstone blocks. The sandstone is abundant in the region and could have been quarried from any of the sandstone outcrops on the farm and the steel banks of the Steenkoolspruit. The later extensions to the western elevation were also done in sandstone and some effort was made to blend the stone masonry with the original stone coursing. The interior was plastered with clay plaster and have remained intact.

The floor plan does not resemble the typical vernacular character of farm dwellings except for the presence of a core section with later extensions and additions. The original exterior is defined by solid sandstone walling constructed with sand and lime mortar. It has a hipped roof with a projecting stoepkamer gable protruding downhill towards the east. The floor plan indicates that the gable side of the building - usually considered the more public facade and main entrance - was located downhill and the dwelling was originally entered from this side. The dwelling was entered along a low set of stairs, underneath small verandah and the central passage formed the spine for movement inside the dwelling. All the interior walls were constructed with sundried clay bricks and these have melted away making it difficult to determine the exact internal arrangement of spaces. The dwelling also had a back verandah but was later closed-off becoming a room, most likely a dining room as it is located directly adjacent to the room that contains evidence of having a chimney suggesting that it could have been a kitchen. The functions of the various rooms remain difficult to determine as all detailing (floors, doors, ceilings and roofs) have been removed. Later additions to the floor plan seem to be irrational and wrongly placed such as the bathroom and toilet. When the front verandah was closed –off it became a bathroom and a smaller room assumed to be a toilet was added where the front door used to be, resulting in a small protruding room constructed with red bricks in the centre of the original principal façade.

Little is known about the building materials of the original building. The sandstone exterior was left unplastered while the interior was plastered with clay and was redone with a cement and sand mixture. Some technical detailing can still be seen and contributes to the little knowledge available about the dwelling and also contributes to the data regarding early farm dwellings in the region dating to the first years of the 20th century. Most of the simple gable (triangular section above the ceiling) has been removed or broken off but a small section has remained intact. This indicates that the gable was not constructed with sandstone but with sun dried bricks of which some have remained on top of the sandstone walling. It may also imply that the gable was a later addition. The bricks used for the gable were laid as a single course 4 inch wide, rendering the gable rather flimsy. An outstanding element is the presence of a large protruding sandstone window sill in the eastern façade. For such a simple dwelling this sill is quite monumental and indicates some level of sophistication in the masonry. The dwelling reflects no other decorative elements except for this detail. Some effort has been made with the stone window sill. All the lintels were done with timber. No lintels were done with sandstone.





Eastern elevation

STEENKOOLSPRUIT

LEGEND:

Province:	Mpumalanga Province
District:	Witbank
Farm:	Steenkoolspruit
Recorded:	M. Naude
Date:	November 2016
Scale:	1:100cm
Building type:	Stone farm dwelling

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDING OF HISTORIC DWELLING (FARM STEENKOOLSPRUIT AT IMPUNZI MINE):

Elevations

<p>1.</p>	<p>Northern elevation</p> 	<p>The building is not orientated according to the exact north-south axis but is set slightly off this coordinate. This elevation is also a side elevation and indicates the slope at which the building is set. The original core dwelling is clearly indicated with the lean-to located at the side. This elevation only contains two windows in the core of the structure and a single steel frame window in the lean-to.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Eastern elevation</p>	<p>This seems to have been the principle facade of the dwelling and faces downhill towards the Steenkoolspruit valley and flood plain. The most significant feature is the original protruding sandstone stoepkamer type room with simple gable and the small veranda. The</p>



veranda originally had a timber support structure for the roof which was later replaced with plastered brick columns. This may have been altered during the 1020s or 1930s.

A significant feature of this elevation is the large corrugated iron water reservoir.



3. Southern elevation



This elevation contains no entrances. The entire elevation was constructed with sandstone. The only extension to this elevation is a small room. Where the 'donkie' (the hot water tank and hearth) was located. Two steel frame windows occur in this elevation.



4. Western elevation



The entire western elevation has been extended with the lean-to section. This lean-to was first added as a back stoep and veranda and the space created, was closed-off in sections over time. A central part of the stoep was left as a veranda while an additional bedroom was added on the northern side and a bathroom and toilet were added on the southern side. The veranda was later closed-off with walls and became a dining room. The coal cum boiler room or 'donkie' room was added at the extreme end of the extension next to the bathroom serving the kitchen and bathroom with hot water.



	<i>Building elements</i>	<i>Photograph</i>
1.	<p data-bbox="249 1291 401 1320"><u>Foundations</u></p> <p data-bbox="249 1356 1297 1414">The original core section of the building was constructed with sandstone and the stone rises directly from the foundation upwards to ceiling height.</p>	

No excavations were done during the investigation to expose the foundations of the exterior or interior walls. The stone base on which the structure is set is best exposed at the northeastern and south eastern corners. At the north eastern corner the variation of the building materials is best exposed indicating that the base of the dwelling is sandstone while the walling of the stoep was executed in plastered brick.



Figure 1. Exposed sandstone base of the front veranda indicating the difference between the sandstone base of the structure and the more recent introduction of baked bricks for the low veranda wall and supporting columns (Photograph: M. Naude 2016)..

2.

Floors

Although no evidence could be found of a cavity timber floor it is assumed that the dwelling originally had a cavity floor. No evidence could be found of any air vents in the walls serving the cavity timber floor. The current floor is a concrete slab covered with linoleum and all floors are completed with timber skirting boards. The evidence of rising damp in the lower part of the interior walls must be the result of the introduction of the concrete floor slabs without damp coursing in the exterior walls. The concrete slabs allowed rising damp only one way of escape – through the mortar joints of the stone masonry walls



Figure 2. Floor of the front room facing the front stoep - note the rising damp problem just above the skirtings (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



Figure 3. Floor of the lounge with wooden skirting boards (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).

3. Stairs and staircases

The dwelling is set on a slight slope rising from east to west. This resulted in the front façade facing east – downhill - towards the spruit. A small stoep is located on this side and also serves as entrance to the front door. The stairs leading to the stoep level are unique as they do not form part of the foundation neither part of the stoep floor. They were constructed with large semi-circular granite slab-shaped blocks. Four layers of granite define the height of the staircase – rising into a staircase with each layer smaller than the original. These blocks were not cemented but each is large and heavy enough to support its own weight and to retain its position once placed.

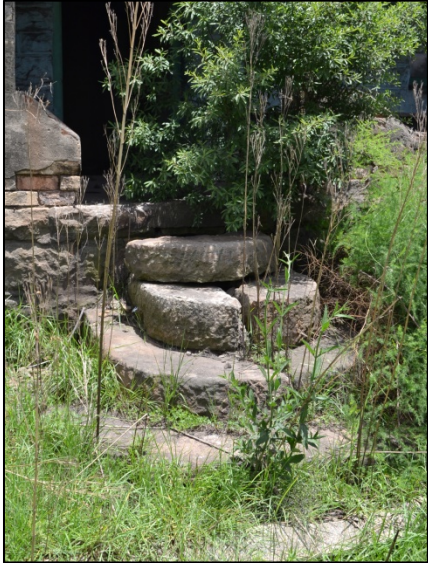

		 <p data-bbox="1325 797 1906 850">Figure 4. Stacked granite blocks shaped to serve as stairs towards the front stoep (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).</p>
4.	<p data-bbox="249 914 323 943"><u>Walls</u></p> <p data-bbox="249 979 1295 1281">The building consists of a core structure with extensions along the western elevation. The core was constructed with dressed sandstone and the walls are about 400 to 450mm in diameter. Some effort was made to construct the extensions with sandstone and to blend the stone masonry of the recent additions with the original sandstone of the core structure. The dwelling also has a front gable with parapet projecting parapet constructed with plastered brick in a crude and unrefined fashion. The building may have had a gable previously and it may have been hit by lightning that toppled the parapet top part. The building may have burnt down resulting in severe damage to the top layers of the sandstone. The entire northern elevation has been retouched and the top four to five layers of coursework has been rebuilt. The stone coursing has been done in a different style than the original stonemasonry further down.</p>	



Figure 5. Front facade with gable room executed in dressed sandstone with the parapet front gable done in plastered brick (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



Figure 6. View on the front veranda (east elevation) with whitewashed exterior sandstone walling (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).

A significant feature of the building is that the exteriors of the front stoep cum veranda and the



Figure 11. The columns of the front veranda were replaced with plastered brick columns while the foundation of the stoep is the same as the rest of the core structure (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



Figure 12. The back veranda was eventually closed in to accommodate a bathroom and an additional bedroom.

back stoep were white washed. Only the sections covered by a lean-to roof were whitewashed and the sandstone of the side elevations was left bare and unpainted.



Figure 7. White washed sandstone wall at the back of the dwelling where a veranda was later added (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



Figure 8. In-fill row of bricks directly underneath the roof, suggests some alterations to the walling to accommodate the roof (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).

these walls were constructed with plastered brick walling (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



Figure 13. Interior of the lounge with clay plastered walling (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).





Figure 9. One way to distinguish between the sandstone masonry of the core dwelling and that of the more recent additions is the prominent pointing of the more recent walls (Photograph: M. Naude 2016)..

The interior walling was constructed with sundried bricks of about 200mm in diameter. The stone masonry walling was left unplastered on the exterior while plastered along the interior. Some sections still have the original mud plaster while other sections were plastered with a sand and cement mixture.



Figure 10. Rising damp in the room adjacent to the front veranda (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).

Figure 14. Careful effort to blend the more recent sandstone extension (right) with the original sandstone walling (left) (Photograph: M. Naude 2016)..



Figure 15. The most recent addition was this boiler room. The small extension was also constructed with stone but applied in a different style. The new room was clearly demarcated but the pointing was applied to blend with the pointing of an earlier addition (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



	<p>5. <u>Fire places and chimneys</u></p> <p>Three chimneys are visible above the roof level. The fire place in the lounge is best defined fire place in the building. The mantelpiece and fire place front cover has been ripped from the wall and no evidence of what it looked like, exists. Its chimney is a plastered brick structure – similar to the parapet gable wall.</p> <p>The second fire place is located in the kitchen and consists of a small floor area that is raised about 100mm from the kitchen floor with a half brick low wall directly next to the kitchen entrance from the backdoor. This area must have contained a coal stove with a cylindrical galvanized sheet iron chimney leading towards a large funnel shaped exit where the chimney entered the ceiling cavity. The chimney was constructed with plastered brick but has deteriorated extensively.</p>  <p>Figure 16. Simple plastered brick chimney leading from the fireplace in the lounge (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).</p>	 <p>Figure 19. Remains of the small alcove created for the coal stove in the kitchen. The stove has been removed, but the funnel leading the chimney out of the kitchen is still in situ (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).</p>
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Figure 17. General position of the three chimneys and chimney pipes (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).

A third chimney occurs at the most southwestern corner of the building - penetrating through the roof of the boiler room – a small room that was entered only from outside. The chimney pipe projects about 1,5m above the roof.



Figure 18. Sheet iron chimney pipe leading from the boiler room (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



Figure 20. Protruding fire place in the lounge. the mantelpiece has been removed (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).

6. Roofs

Both the original core building and the extensions have roofs of corrugated iron sheeting. The roofs have been painted red



Figure 21. General condition of the corrugated sheet iron roof (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



Figure 22. The roof of the back veranda has no ceiling and transparent glass-fibre sheeting was installed to allow light into the closed area (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



Figure 24. Side elevation of the front veranda roof indicating its 'lean-to' character (Photograph: M. Naude 2016)..



Figure 23. The corrugated iron sheets were loosely mounted on a simple timber frame for the front veranda (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).

7. Ceilings

It is suspected that the dwelling originally had no ceilings and the current ceilings are only recent additions. All the rooms have gypsum board ceilings mounted to the roof trusses with strips of pine. The ceilings were painted with high gloss enamel paint which is coming loose and peeling due to rainwater dripping through the roof.



Figure 25. Gypsum boarding with pine planking and sealed with molded cornices (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).





Figure 26. Gypsum boarding mounted in the passage, with pine planking in the foyer (Photograph: M. Naude 2016)..



Figure 27. Gypsum boarding mounted with pine planking in the kitchen (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



		<p>Figure 28. Gypsum boarding with pine planking in one of the bedrooms (Photograph: M. Naude 2016)..</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p><u>Doors</u></p> <p>All the doors have been removed from the structure but the frames have remained intact. The interior door posts of the original part of the dwelling were clad with wood and framed with architraves. It is suspected that the mantel piece of the fireplace in the lounge also had a timber frame similar to the architraves.</p> <p>The back door of the western extension had a standard commercial steel frame but the door has been removed.</p>  <p>Figure 29. All the interior entrances have timber door frames with simple molded architraves. All the doors have been removed (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).</p>	 <p>Figure 30. The back door leading from the closed back veranda has a standard steel frame - the door has been removed (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p><u>Windows</u></p> <p>The original windows and frames were made of wood. Two of these have remained intact in the</p>	

core part of the dwelling; a small hinged window on the verandah at the back and a sash window on the front veranda. Some timber frame windows were replaced with steel frames and have remained intact.



Figure 31. Steel frame window in the pantry cum breakfast room(Photograph: M. Naude 2016).

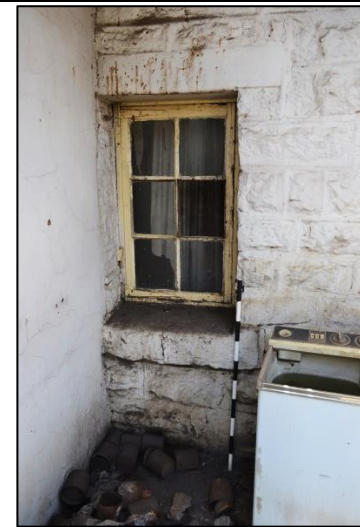


Figure 34. One of the original wooden frame windows that remained intact at the back veranda (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



Figure 32. One of the original wooden frame sash windows - room facing the eastern elevation with the window on the stoep (Photograph: M. Naude 2016)..



Figure 35. Steel frame window in the southern elevation (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).





Figure 33. Fifteen pane steel frame window in the stoepkamer along the western elevation (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).

Figure 36. Steel frame window hidden behind a creeper in the northern elevation (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



Figure 37. Steel frame window in the lounge, facing east (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).

10. Toilets, bath tubs and wash basins

The dwelling originally did not have a bathroom or toilet and this facility was later added when a small space was closed-off under the back verandah to fulfil this need. A bath tub and toilet were installed in the same room.



Figure 38. Bath tub - now covered in black coal dust (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



Figure 39. Porcelain toilet mounted along the exterior wall (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).

11.	<p><u>Light fittings</u></p> <p>No evidence of any light fittings was found inside the structure.</p>	
12.	<p><u>Cupboards and shelving</u></p> <p>No cupboards occur in the building. The only evidence of shelving and racking is located in the room adjacent to the kitchen and it is assumed that this room was used as breakfast room cum pantry or as a dining room.</p>	

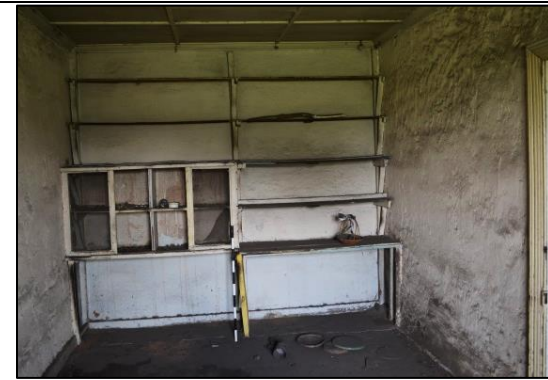


Figure 40. Shelving and racking in the pantry. this room may have been used as a breakfast room (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).

13. Other elements

Gutters were mounted along the roof of the western extension. No downpipes were installed. A gutter was also installed along the southern elevation and the water drains into a large circular corrugated iron water reservoir.



Figure 41. Some effort was made to mount gutters but without downpipes. Water was directed to a single detached corrugated iron water reservoir (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).





Figure 42. Box gutter along the western elevation and extension (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).

Figure 43. Down piping was discarded and water from the gutter flowed directly into a water reservoir (Photograph: M. Naude 2016).



References.

Fleming, J., Honour. H. and Pevsner, N. 1980. The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture (3rd ed). England: Penguin Books.

