

# TWENTY FOUR RIVERS FARM, LIMPOPO PROVINCE HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – PHASE 1

## 1. TWENTY-FOUR RIVERS FARM

This was originally a portion, Portion 1, of the farm Vier-en-Twintig Riviere no. 102 Reg. Div. K. R. of the old Transvaal and although original title deeds indicate a sales transaction before the advent of the South African War (1899-1902) title was transferred only after the War. A further deed of transfer in favour of Edith Anne Fawcett was made on 27 September 1919, another in favour of Mary Davidson, nee Fawssett on 31 March 1942, and in favour of Jane Gaylard, nee Davidson on 10 March 1976. A right of way in favour of The Pretorian Diocesan Trustees for access to Portion 3 [the Property of St John Baptist] was registered in 1941 (Deed of Transfer No. 7279/1941). Subsequent transfers have been in favour of the Jane Gaylard Trust.

### 1.1 GENERAL

Jan [Johan] Adam Enslin (1800-1852), a Voortrekker leader of particularly strong religious persuasion, had elected to lead a group of followers to Jerusalem. Their objective was to find the source of the Nile after which it was assumed that to then find their way to Egypt would be straight-forward, and then so from there to reach the promised land, Israel. To this end they used as aid the maps at the back of their Bibles. Enslin, it seems, died of the fever before the pilgrimage had commenced.

Undeterred however, his followers set off, believing steadfastly that if they travelled long and far enough, they would find the Holy Land. The chancing on a pyramid-shaped hill [to-days 'Pyramid' near Pretoria] strengthened their conviction that they had crossed Africa and reached Egypt. They found a north-flowing river and, believing it was the Nile, christened it the Eye of the Nile (De Nyl Zyn Oog), which is close to present day Modimolle (Nylstroom). The river was known to the locals as Mokgalakwena ('fierce crocodile'). It is believed that that this party did not get beyond the Waterberg area.

The Boer settlers named that area of the north-western Transvaal the Waterberg as in times of good rains there are many streams, fountains and waterfalls. A series of mountain ranges of the Waterberg forms part of an almost continuous mountain barrier that stretches to the east and marks the beginnings of the Lowveld.

In the 1850s Boer settlers started to trickle into the southern part of the Waterberg. Despite the encouragement by the Kruger State in the 1880s in regard to settlement in the Waterberg, particularly 'behind the mountain', burghers mostly sold their allotted lands to speculators and land companies since agriculture 'over the hills' offered no great incentive.

"In the 1880's the entire region was from a European point of view still considered a pestilential corner of Africa that mostly harboured fractious chiefs, foolhardy hunters, desperate criminals on the run from the law".

It is possible that the pioneer farmsteads, much altered and mostly now subsumed into enlarged structures that one encounters down the Vier-en-Twintig-Riviere Road were once owned by these trekkers. This would need to be researched.

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## 1.2 BACKGROUND

Twenty-Four Rivers Farm was in those days a four-day ox-wagon journey from Nylstroom through the Sandrivierspoort.

Eugene Marais who was fascinated by the Waterberg and spent many years there writing and carrying out research projects, recounting tales he had heard from school pupils from the Waterberg region who spoke of the settlers' fear of Mapela whose impi's would move down on farmhouses in the dark of the night, burning, pillaging and driving off cattle while women and children hid in the fields.

Some of the English pioneers had personal experience of frightening vigils in the bush. The Peacocks and Edith Fawssett were by then already established in the Waterberg vicinity, Edith having accompanied her sister Katherine from England in the 1880s to a cattle farm near Blaauwnbank, Ellisras which Katherine's husband Arthur managed for the Transvaal Land and Exploration Company, an enterprise belonging to his cousin, Cecil John Rhodes. The runderpest epidemic of the 1890s led to the failure of the endeavour. Their niece Mary Fawssett joined them in 1899. The three women had hastily packed up their wagon and abandoned their isolated farmhouse, taking refuge in the bush on hearing rumours that marauding tribes were on the rampage. Arthur was away at the time on commando with the Boers by whom he had been commandeered.

Edward Davidson, a British soldier who had come from the then Rhodesia to South Africa to fight in the War had met and fallen in love with Mary at Warmbaths where he was stationed during the South African War, and where the three women were brought from the lonely farmhouse for their own safety on the instructions of Kitchener.

He then threw in his lot with the Peacocks and Fawssetts and accompanied them to the farm at the end of the War.

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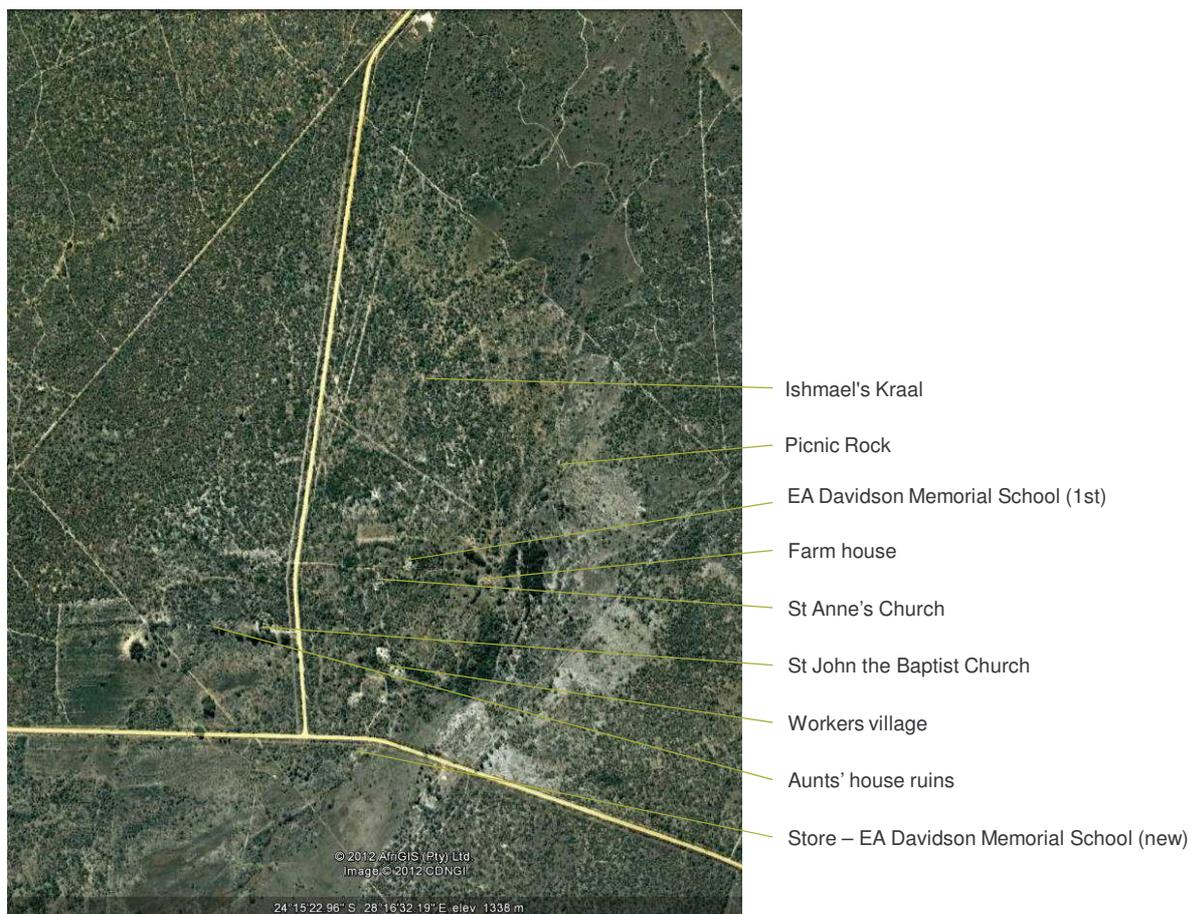
## 2 HERITAGE ENTITIES OF THE FARM TWENTY-FOUR RIVERS

The entire **Twenty Four Rivers Farm** can be regarded as a **CULTURAL LANDSCAPE**. A cultural landscape is a complex of fixed or static heritage resources with associated movable objects and/ or oral traditions having more than a single aspect of heritage value.

In the case of **Twenty Four Rivers Farm** In terms of the National Heritage Resources Act Act (25 Of 1999) CHAPTER I 3 (2) the following aspects can be identified as Heritage Resources in the National Estate:

- (a) places, buildings, structures and equipment of cultural significance;
- (b) places to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage;
- (c) historical settlements ...;
- (d) landscapes and natural features of cultural significance;
- (e) geological sites of scientific or cultural importance;
- (f) archaeological;
- (g) graves and burial grounds, including-
  - (i) ancestral graves;
  - (ii) graves of traditional leaders;
  - ...
  - ...
  - (v) historical graves and cemeteries;
  - ...
- (i) movable objects, including-
  - ...
  - (ii) objects to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage;
  - (iii) ethnographic art and objects;
  - ...
  - (v) objects of decorative or fine art;
  - (vi) objects of scientific or technological interest; and
  - (vii) books, records, documents, photographic positives and negatives, graphic, ...

Each of the above will be discussed specifically in terms of examples found on the Farm Twenty Four Rivers.



## 2.1 PLACES, BUILDINGS, STRUCTURES AND EQUIPMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE [Act 25 of 1999 I:3.2(a)]

### 2.1.1 Farm Store and Twenty-Four Rivers Postal Agency

(demolished 2008)

When the Edward Davidson ('Gabbo' to the family) came to the farm after the Anglo-Boer (South African) War he initially lived in a rondavel on the northern side of the main dirt road that crosses the farm east to west. When he wed the god-child and niece of Edith Anne Fawcett, Mary Elizabeth Fawcett ('Molly' to the family) their first home was a rectangular thatched mud brick and clay-plastered cottage here. This later became the first trading store when the main house was built in 1910, later a store-room, particularly for wooden coffins when the larger store and postal agency was built. All are ruinous and only foundations remain.

The second AE Davison Memorial School now stands proximate to the site.

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### 2.1.2 Twenty Four Rivers Farm House



The farm house, built as the family home for the newly married couple Ted and Molly Davidson in 1910, follows what had become a Transvaal vernacular style, having the same planning principles of the earlier then extant homestead of the 'Aunts' located to the west of the farm, built on the ruins of an earlier pre-war [Anglo Boer/ South African War] Boer dwelling. While the other was thatched, this is roofed in corrugated iron. It was the last of a sequence of dwellings, the first being a rondavel, the second a small cottage for the newly-wed couple. The planning is typical with quartered square floor plan bisected by a walk through pantry, some of the rooms inter-leading but also all opening to the cat-slide verandah to four sides. The main house is under the typical pyramid roof. The substructure is of sundried mud bricks, with smeared clay in the fashion of the indigenes, and maintained in this fashion by Onica Mosima, the resident domestic worker, and her assistants and children, to this day. Windows and doors are of timber, and as with the roof sheeting, door and window furniture and fittings are

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imported, as is typical of the era, but in places the folk practices prevail, such as turnbuckle catches, curtained corner cupboards and suchlike. A fireplace is centrally located between living room and main bedroom so while opening directly to the living area, shares heat with the bedroom behind. It penetrates the roof at the ridge. Unusual is the canted ceiling over the living room with main tie beams exposed.

The stoep once had a post and stickwork exterior support but this has been disguised by columns of local rough-cleaved sandstone bedded in sand-cement mortar, which is also used for 'crazy-paving' flags on the stoep. Typical of the period, the house is orientated with main living areas to the south, and a free standing kitchen and dairy room to the north. These were typically separated from the main house because of the dangers of fire and to have the activities of servants remote from the occupants of the house.

In time two 'stoepkamers' were inserted to the north east and north west of the verandah, being used as a library/study and spare bedroom respectively.

Planning can be understood as a climatic response where the volume of the roof kept the living areas cool and the stoep the mass of the building and openings shaded. The pantry at the centre was the most protected from temperature extremes.

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