



File No: 912/003/0002

**PHASE 1 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF ORNIE COTTAGE,
BOTANICAL GARDENS, GRAHAMSTOWN**

Prepared for:

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Introduction

Dr L Webley was approached on the 18 January 2007 to undertake a Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment of the restoration and development of Ornee Cottage, as well as the construction of an Environmental Centre, in the Grahamstown Botanical Gardens. Initially, the intention was to undertake a single HIA of these two sites, but as a result of discussions surrounding the building of the Environmental Centre on the 26 and 29 January 2007, it was decided to separate the HIA into two (2) separate reports. The budget for the HIA of developments in and around Ornee Cottage was approved on the 26 January 2007 and the authors instructed to commence research.

Terms of Reference

Ornee Cottage was a declared a National Monument in 1984 in terms of the National Monuments Act No 28 of 1969. This Act has subsequently been replaced by the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) of 1999.

The legislation requires a Heritage Impact Assessment prior to the alterations or restoration of Ornee Cottage. The restoration involves removing a small lean-to and replacing it with a more substantial store room to the north-west of the existing building. This will involve the excavation of foundations. New brick paving will be installed around the building and there will be some landscaping of the soil surface to the front (south-west) of the building. Construction of a retaining wall behind the cottage (north-east) will also impact on the soil surface. Trenches will have to be excavated to provide for drainage and electrical ducting. It is intended to build a toilet block some 15m to the north-west of the cottage (Fig. 1).

- a) The investigation includes a desk top review of the historical information on the cottage to verify that the restoration complies with the regulations of the NHRA.
- b) The budget makes provision for a site visit so that construction of foundations and the digging of service trenches can be monitored. This will allow possible buried features and historical artefacts to be identified and recovered.

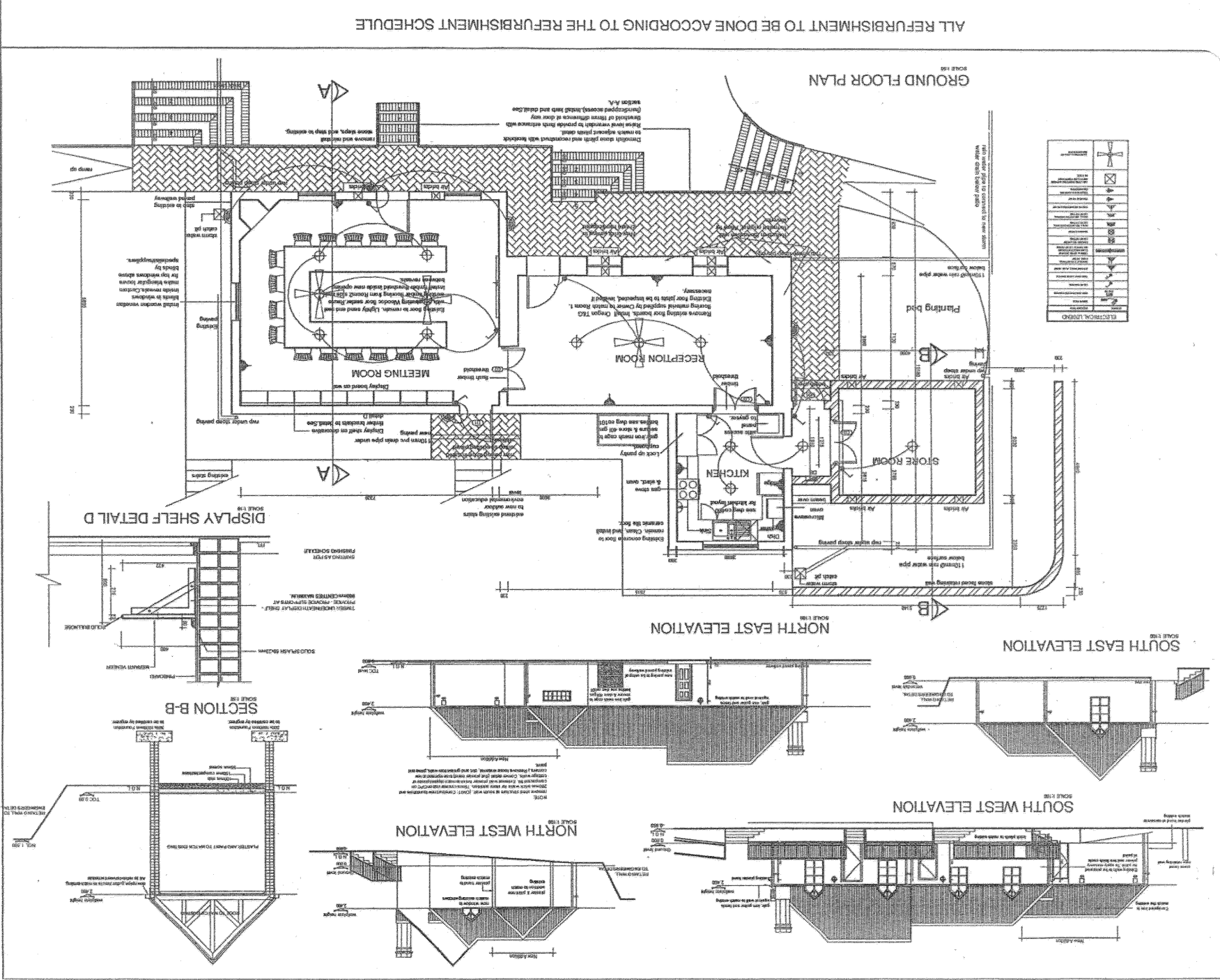
National Heritage Resources Act

The National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 Section 34 stipulates that no person may alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure, which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant provincial heritage resources authority. Section 38 of the Act clearly indicates that any person constructing a road or similar linear developments exceeding 300m in length or developing an area exceeding 5000 m² in extent is required to notify the responsible heritage resources authority or SAHRA. SAHRA will in turn advise whether an impact assessment report is needed before development can take place.

With regard burial grounds and graves, Section 36 (3) of the Act clearly stipulates that no person may, without a permit issued by the relevant heritage authority or SAHRA, (a) destroy, damage or exhume the grave of the victim of conflict; (b) destroy, damage or exhume any grave or burial ground older than 60 years which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority.

Fig. 1: Plan of restoration of Ormeo Cottage.

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GENERAL NOTE 1. ALL DIMENSIONS AND LEVELS TO BE CHECKED ON SITE AND WHERE APPROPRIATE TO MATCH EXISTING STRUCTURE. 2. ANY DISCREPANCY OR CONTRADICTION TO THIS DOCUMENT SHALL BE REFERRED TO THE ARCHITECT. 3. DIMENSIONS NOT TO BE SCALE. 4. LIFT SHAFT IS LOCATED AT REAR OF BUILDING FOR BOUNDARY COMPLIANCE AND IS TO BE MAINTAINED TO THE BOUNDARY AND SHALL BE OPEN TO THE SKY. 5. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE LIFT SHAFT SHALL BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS. 6. ALL DIMENSIONS ARE SHOWN FROM THE FINISHED SITE AT ALL TIMES. 7. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE LIFT SHAFT SHALL BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS. 8. ALL DIMENSIONS ARE SHOWN FROM THE FINISHED SITE AT ALL TIMES. 9. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE LIFT SHAFT SHALL BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS. 10. ALL DIMENSIONS AND LEVELS TO BE CHECKED ON SITE AND WHERE APPROPRIATE TO MATCH EXISTING STRUCTURE. 		
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COTTAGE ORNIE PLAN, SECTION & ELEVATIONS 		



Under the definitions of the Act, “archaeology” includes “features and artefacts associated with military history which are older than 75 years and the sites on which they are found”.

Section 24 of the Act makes provision for provincial heritage resources authorities to maintain a register of heritage resources and to set up management plans for their preservation.

Definition of Ornee Cottage

The name “Cottage Ornee”, refers to an ornamental cottage or summer house, which was popular with the gentry in the early nineteenth century, where they could play at being peasants and entertain their guests. The building is in an early 19th century English architectural style known as “cottage ornée”, hence the name Ornee Cottage.

An integral part of the ‘cottage ornée’ was its landscape setting; ‘Embowering it with shrubs, creepers and flowering plants...renders it highly interesting, provided the design is favourable and the situation appropriate to its object...thatched with reeds as the most rural and picturesque covering’. In such buildings the veranda played an important role, especially in linking the living rooms of the house to the garden. To provide easy access between the garden and the house, the low-silled Regency windows soon became French windows. The French windows thus transformed the landscape garden from a scene framed by the drawing-room windows into an integral part of the living area.

Description

While there are examples of Ornee Cottages from other parts of the world, the one located in the Botanical Gardens in Grahamstown is unique in the Eastern Cape. It is unusual because of the peaked Gothic style dormer windows projecting above the eaves. The building is two-roomed with a single storey and kitchen at the back. The corrugated iron roof was probably originally of thatch, see the discussion above. It has an unusual octagonal Georgian chimney located in the corner of the main room. Inside the roof is brought down to below the ceiling level. There is also the suggestion above that the cottage would have had a veranda (see above) but photographic evidence of this has not been found.

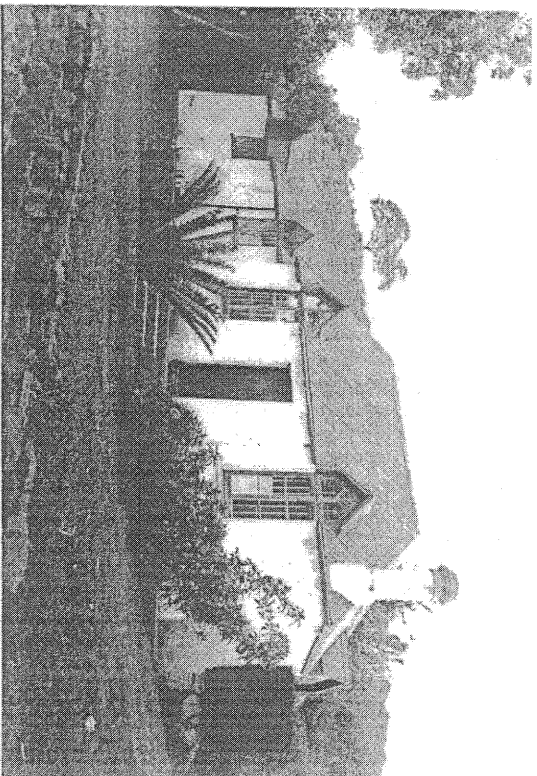


Fig 2: The front of the Cottage (circa 1950s)

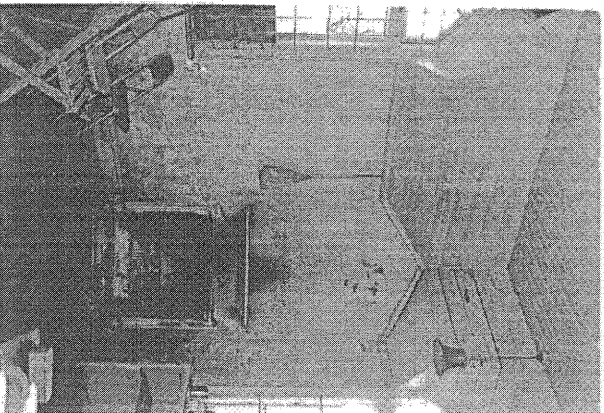


Fig 3: the interior of Room 1, showing the unusually located fireplace.

History of Ornee Cottage

According to Scott (1991) the establishment of a small garden in the Drostdy or Government Gardens was proposed as early as 1846 but was delayed by the outbreak of the 7th Frontier War. At the close of the War a number of Grahamstown citizens approached the Governor, Sir George Catcart, for a site on which to establish a botanical garden. A grant of 3 morgen was made to the Committee in 1853, being bounded on the north by the Ordinance Property, on the east by the Kowie River and Howse's Property and on the south-west by Government Ground.

“Attached to the Deed of Grants is a diagram of the land granted in 1853 (Fig. 4). It shows an established orchard on the west bank of the Kowie River, a deserted garden, and an avenue of trees where the present oak avenue is today. A house, fronting onto the avenue, is marked, and the site of this house corresponds exactly with the cottage which stands there today” (Scott 1991:27). The cottage which Scott refers to is that of

Ornee Cottage. However, this same map also shows a “ruin” located near the position of the “deserted garden” and it is not clear what this “ruin” refers to (Fig. 4).

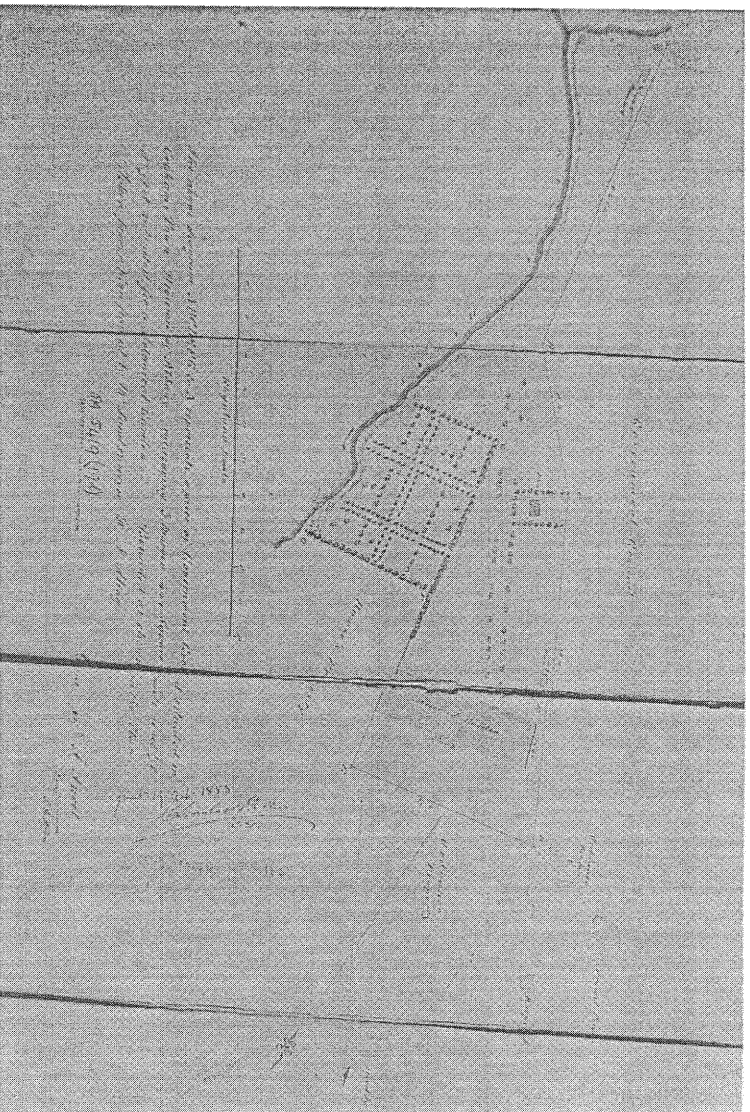


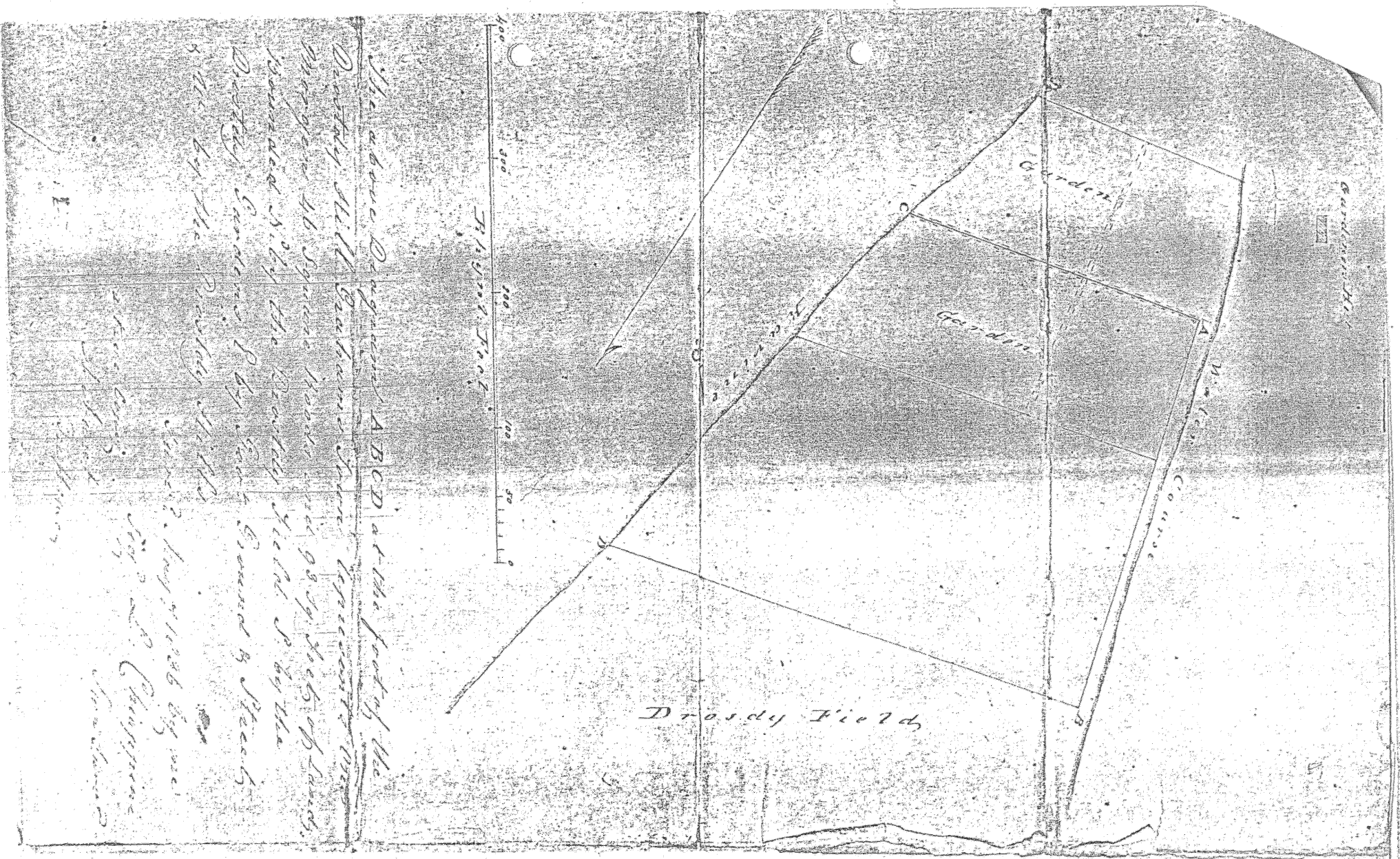
Fig. 4: A map of 1853, showing the location of the Provost Prison, the Deserted garden and Ornee Cottage.

There is some evidence that the cottage may predate 1853. There is a small square building, called a “Gardener’s Hut” in a similar position on the Drostdy Hill, just to the west of the Drostdy Gardens in a Deed of Transfer belonging to Captain Henry Warden, dated 1 July 1836 (Fig. 5).

This early map suggests that the Cottage was used (or occupied) by the gardener, and later accounts suggest that it was used as the Curator’s Office. There are some references which would support this. In 1878, the Curator of the Gardens, Mr Tidmarsh, reported “The roof of the small cottage, which is at present used as an out-office and seed-room, is in a very leaky condition, and should at once be made good, in order that the books and seeds may not be damaged”. In 1879, Mr Tidmarsh remarked: “The office and seed-room, which I spoke of in my report for 1878 as being in a bad condition, are now put into a good state of repair, and will need little else than painting for some years; nevertheless an additional room or two are much needed”. This suggests that the cottage may have consisted of only two rooms, and that the kitchen may have been added at a later date.

Later reports indicate that the cottage was used as a meeting place where a military band played in summer afternoons for the entertainment of the Grahamstown populace. For many years in the 1940s and 1950s the Grahamstown branch of the Red Cross served inexpensive teas in it and on its shaded porch, mostly by Miss M Stormont, a missionary’s daughter and Training College teacher. In Figure 2 the words ‘Tea House’ is clearly visible on the roof of the building. It was much

Fig. 5: Map of the Deed Of Transfer to Capt Warden (1836). Note the Gardner's Hut on the top left.



frequented by Rhodes University students in later years, and became a restaurant, named the Monkey Puzzle, during the 1990s.

In addition to the Cottage, the Minutes of the Committee administering the Botanical Gardens, also mention that the Drosidy Hill "ground on the west and south-west of the old garden is now (1875) enclosed with a substantial stone wall, to keep out cattle. Further, apart from the various glass-houses and the Fordyce Conservatory, the Minutes also mention the construction of a "rustic garden shed", but its location is not indicated. The historical records therefore seem to point to a number of other stone structures in the vicinity of Ornee Cottage that are no longer visible.

Discussion of results and sensitivity of the area

Historical research confirms that the Cottage dates to at least 1853 and perhaps even earlier to 1836. The structure is significant because of its unique architectural design and therefore every attempt needs to be made to retain the original features of the building. Unfortunately, a cursory examination of the literature does not provide any early drawings or photographs of the Cottage and it is not possible to determine the original design of the building. Suggestions that the ornée style cottage in Europe dated to the early nineteenth century (Regency Period) could support an early date for the example in the Botanical Gardens. However, it is also possible that the dormer windows, for example, relate to later renovations. Further archival research in the early copies of the Grahamstown Journal and the Grocott's Mail may help to throw light on the building. The time available for the report did not allow for detailed research into the early history of the building.

From an historical perspective both the Cottage and the area around the Cottage itself are sensitive because they may provide information on the age and use of the building. A careful photographic record of the restoration work needs to be undertaken to provide information on the nature of the original structure, for example whether the building was originally two-roomed and whether the kitchen was added at a later date. It is also important to examine and photograph the fabric of the walls, the original wall surfaces, the windows and flooring, as well as the fireplace.

Further, the excavation of trenches around the building provides a potential opportunity to examine the foundations of the original structure and possibly to obtain artefactual material (such as ceramics) which could provide information on the age of the structure.

Significance of the site, impact of development and mitigation measures

The impact of the proposed restoration of Ornee Cottage and the development of the surrounding area has to be considered in the light of the history of the Botanical Gardens. There is some evidence to suggest that the cottage may have been built originally as a kind of gardener's tool shed, at least in 1853, but perhaps earlier in 1836. Soon after its construction, it was being used as an office and seed room for the Curator of the Gardens. There is nothing in the early history of the gardens to suggest that it was deliberately built in the style of cottage ornée as a type of summer house for the entertainment of visitors to the gardens. This function seems to have developed at a later date, when the military band played in or around the cottage on summer

recommended
distortion

afternoons. In view of the uncertainty surrounding the original style and function of the cottage it is difficult to recommend mitigation measures for the possible impact of restoration and development of the cottage.

The development surrounding the cottage (including the underground electrical cabling, waterborne sewage systems, municipal water supplies and the up-grading of the roads) is likely to disturb the sub-strata and this may result in the exposure of hidden features of an historical and architectural nature. Further landscaping the area around the cottage will affect a much larger area than the construction of the additional store room and it will therefore potentially have a greater impact on buried remains. The duration of the impact of development on the cottage will be of a permanent nature. This is because archaeological and historical sites are non-renewable. Once destroyed, they cannot be rebuilt or recover. **Every effort should therefore be made to proceed cautiously and to stop with the restoration work if an unexpected feature is uncovered, so that it may be researched thoroughly.**

Conclusions

The National Heritage Resources Act, No 25 of 1999 Section 34 stipulates that no person may alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure, which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant provincial heritage resources authority. All archaeological sites (which in terms of the definition include features and artefacts associated with military history which are older than 75 years and the sites on which they are found) are protected by the National Heritage Resources Act and it is an offense to destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or disturb such sites without a permit issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA).

The history of Ornee Cottage has been reviewed and the restoration of the building is recommended. Uncertainty around the original form and function of the building would support carefully documenting the restoration process so that the history of the building may be uncovered.

There is a possibility that features and artifacts may be buried under the soil and grass surface. For this reason every care should be taken during the landscaping and bulldozing of the area. Any artifacts, including possible human remains, should be reported to SAHRA and to the archaeologists at the Albany Museum, immediately.

a) I would recommend that restoration of the building and development of the area around the cottage can take place but that every care should be taken to avoid destroying sub-surface material. Contractors should look for the following features:

1. Old foundations, suggesting previous buildings.
2. Concentrations of blue and white china, pieces of iron, coins, etc.
3. Human remains including burials.

References

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Archaeology
SAHRA
W. J. G. J. J.
S. van der
N. van der

- test pits
- trenching
- auguring

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Scott, P. 1991. Grahamstown's Botanical Gardens. *The Phoenix* Vol 4(3): 25-33.

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Title Deeds of Transfers relating to the Grahamstown Botanical Gardens.

<http://thesaurus.english-heritage.org.uk>