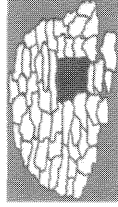


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FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE ESKOM URBAN RETICULATION PROJECT AT RHODES, EASTERN CAPE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The village of Rhodes had been identified for urban reticulation. The town was visited and inspected for the remains of any cultural and historical material that could be damaged by the installation of electricity.

Except for a number of new houses, which have been erected recently, the rest of the town contains buildings that are clearly very old.

The town also contains sandstone pavement kerbs dating at least sixty years ago.

I recommend that any disturbance of these kerbs and water ditches should be avoided at all costs.

INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

INVESTIGATION

The village of Rhodes was visited on 27 to 29 April 2005. An inspection was done on foot of the streets and buildings to ascertain if any damage would be caused during the installation of an electricity network in the town of Rhodes.

The town was examined for possible archaeological and historical material and to establish the potential impact on any cultural material that might be found. The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is done in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), (25 of 1999) and under the Environmental Conservation Act, (73 of 1989).

LOCALITY

The town of Rhodes lies in a very remote part of the Drakensberg mountain range to the south of Lesotho, between Zastron in the Free State, Lady Grey, Barkly East, Maclear and Matatiele (Map1).

The land is mountainous with a thick grass cover with hardly no indigenous bush, shrub or tree cover. The area is exposed to extreme cold with severe frost and frequent spells of snow in winter.

METHODOLOGY

1. A site visit was made.
2. An investigation was done on foot.
3. A literature study was performed.
4. Personal interviews were performed with knowledgeable residents of the town.

RESULTS

Rapport building was accomplished through interviews with a number of residents in the town. In particular, Mrs. Hanna Reeders, the author of the book on the centenary of Rhodes (Reeders 1991) proved to be of great help. Some permanent citizens, to whom we spoke, were all very keen about the prospect of the proper installation of an enduring electricity scheme. It seemed that the present system does not serve all the houses in a satisfying way. People also related that the "foreigners" and "the weekend and holiday people from Gauteng" were initially against the installation of an electricity supply in Rhodes. These new residents were allegedly complaining about the possible disturbance of the untouched peace and tranquility of the town, which they were afraid the lights would bring about.

In spite of the constant physical deterioration of the Rhodes during certain periods of economic catastrophes in the past, it seems that the unauthorised demolition of houses created a constant problem for the Town Council. This situation forced the authorities in 1949 to forbid the demolition of houses. In this regard, Mr Thomasse was even instructed to rebuild the garage, which he had broken down (Reeders 1991:119). However, in 1955 the Council members were

again confronted by the reality to decide on the re-occupation of dilapidated residential houses. Many of the residential houses had increasingly been transformed into cowsheds and other types of outbuildings without any official authorization (Reeders 1991:95). From the above it is clear that many of the old houses have been demolished and have disappeared into posterity.

Except for a number of residential houses that have been erected during the last couple of years (Figs.24-26), most of the remaining buildings and houses in Rhodes are older than sixty years. In this regard, the Dutch Reformed Church, dating from 1893 is a fine example (Figs.1&2).

The old school is located somewhat out of town (30°47'55"S. 027°58'02"E Altitude 1855m) and was erected in 1924. Designed by Sir Herbert Baker, this fine sand stone building is of high significance (Fig.5). The school closed down in 1978 and the building is presently in use as a guesthouse.

The first farmhouse on the farm Tintem where the town of Rhodes had officially been proclaimed on 16 September 1991 is still in use, although no longer in its original state (Fig.6). This building is located opposite the Walkerbouts Guest House on the outskirts of town. The Walkerbouts Guest House (30°47'53"S. 027°57'43"E Altitude 1823m) used to be the school hostel in earlier years (Fig.11).

After several delays in its the construction, the Magistrate's Court and Post Office Building on the corner of Naude and Church Streets, was eventually completed during 1900 (Fig.3).

The Rhodes Hotel (Fig.8) is situated between Muller and Sauer Streets (30°47'42"S. 027°57'52"E Altitude 1824m).

The present Public Library building used to be an old residential house (Fig.9).

Two general dealer shops are individually run in old buildings (Figs.12&13).

Two fine examples of a telephone booth of yesteryear are still to be found in Rhodes and should be preserved (Figs.4&12).

Old irrigation furrows, which are no longer in use for the distribution of irrigation water, now work as storm water ditches during thundershowers. The pavement kerbs, which were skilfully made from sandstone (Figs.20-23), also date from very long ago. These features are likewise protected by law and should be avoided during the installation of the new electricity scheme.

The camp of the South African Police Services is located to the east and on the outskirts of town (30°47'37"S. 027°58'00"E Altitude 1829m)

The graveyard (30°47'49"S, 027°57'30"E Altitude 1808m) which contains graves from as early as 1814 is in a good state of conservation and are well maintained (Fig.23). Several graves also date from the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). One grave contains the remains of a South African soldier who died during WWII (1938-45) (Fig.24).

All these structures are older than 60 years and are protected by the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), (25 of 1999). These buildings and structures should not be damaged during the installation-work in town.

FINDS

The following features were identified and recorded on camera and plotted by GPS (Cape) coordinates:

Sandstone water furrow in Sauer Street (Erven 119,120,123) (Figs.21-23).

Old Magistrates Building (Post Office) (Figs.3&4). Erf 223 c/o Naude and Church Street.

Sandstone pavement kerb in Naude Street from west of DRC Church.

Naude Street also contains a kerb on the eastern side from Church Street.

Sandstone pavement kerb on both sides of Muller Street. It is documented that the pavement kerb at the Old Parsonage on Erf 155 (Fig.7) had been installed in 1947 (Reeders 1991:100).

Sandstone pavement kerb on the northern side of Sauer Street.

Sandstone kerb in Church Street opposite the church (west side).

Sandstone kerb on the corner of Church and Muller Street (30°47'42"S, 027°57'54"E Altitude 1811m) (Fig.20).

Vorster Street contains kerbs on the west side with old irrigation furrows.

Northern portion of Ross Street contains a sandstone kerb on the east side.

In Main Street no kerb or irrigation furrow was found.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

NATURE OF IMPACT

The impact of the electricity installation at Rhodes will be of minor impact on the cultural heritage remains in town. The unlawful demolition of some of the original houses and other buildings has been mentioned.

EXTENT

The impact of the proposed electricity installation on the cultural heritage remains at Rhodes will only be limited to the old buildings and sandstone pavement kerbs.

DURATION

The threat to the historical buildings and sandstone kerbs will only be through the installation of the electricity network. If the planning is done properly and the necessary precautions are taken, the damage could be limited to the minimum.

INTENSITY

The impact will mainly be limited to the sandstone pavement kerbs along the streets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The necessary precautions should be taken to avoid any damage to the old buildings and the sandstone pavement kerbs during the installation of the electricity network at Rhodes.

Every archaeological and historical site is unique and should be treated as a non-renewable commodity. All efforts should be made to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or destruction of the buildings and kerbs.

In case of the discovery of any other archaeological or historical material during the course of further work, all activities should temporarily be stopped in the specific area for inspection by the archaeologist.

MITIGATION

Concerning the area for the proposed development, mitigation measures are limited to the old buildings and the sandstone pavement kerbs in the streets of Rhodes.

No obvious reasons could be found to delay the commencement of further planning and development of the installation of the electricity network at Rhodes.

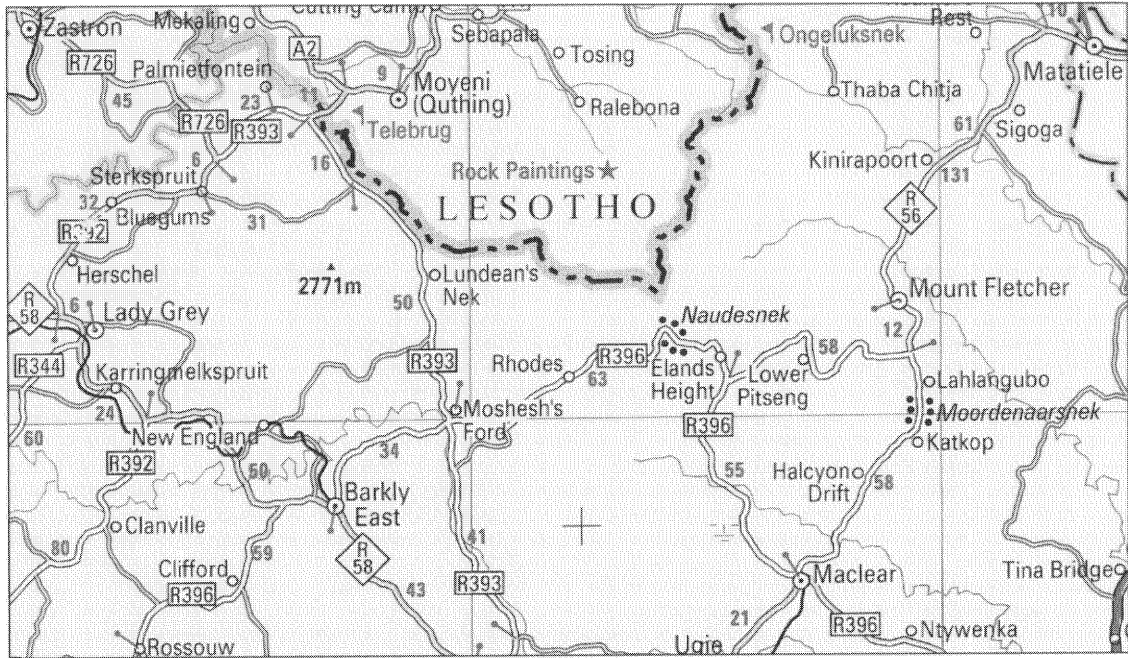
After examination by the archaeologist, it is recommended that the proposed developments may proceed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Lindelwa Ngcaba of Eskom, East London, for liaison and the people at Rhodes for hospitality and information on the project.

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Map1 Locality of Rhodes (in the centre) in relation to Lesotho and the towns of Zastron, Matatiele, Maclear, Barkly East and Lady Grey.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

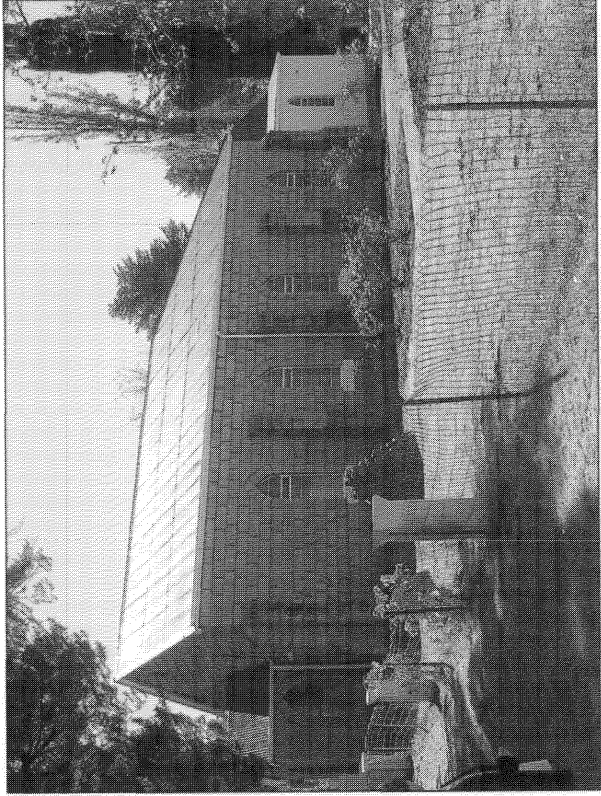


Fig.1 Southern view of the Dutch Reformed Church at Rhodes completed in 1893.



Fig.2 Corner stone of the Dutch Reformed Church at Rhodes laid in 1892.

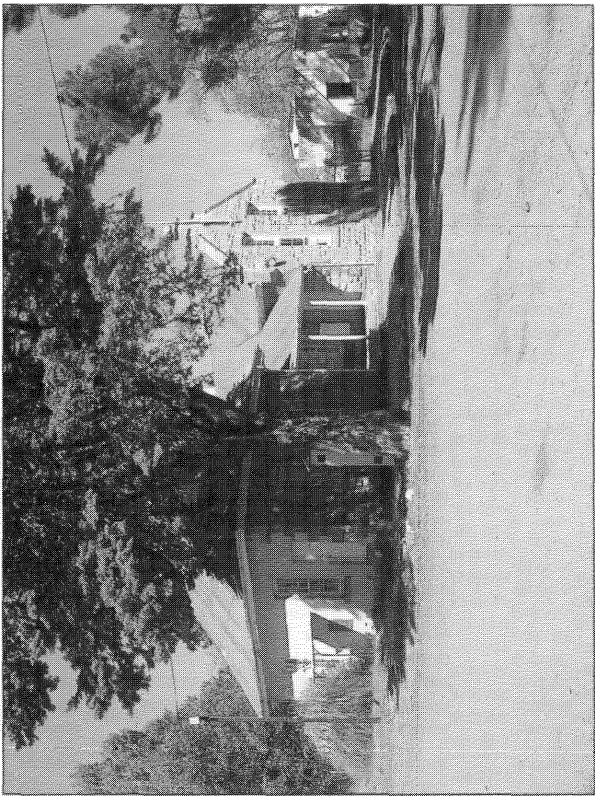


Fig.3 Magistrates Court and Post Office Building.

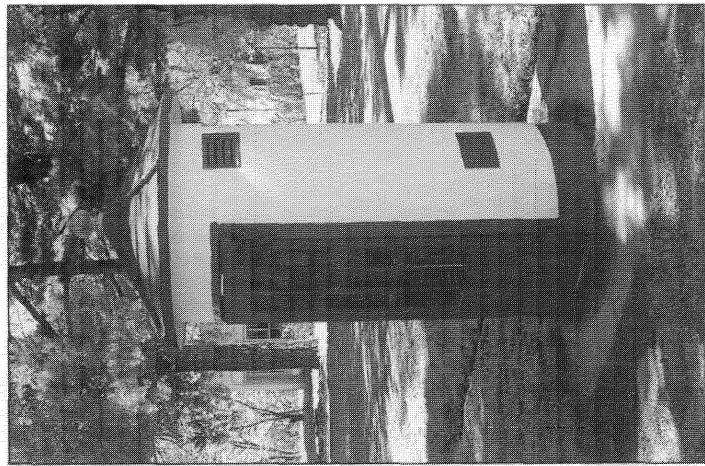


Fig.4 Fine example of a telephone booth of yesteryear.

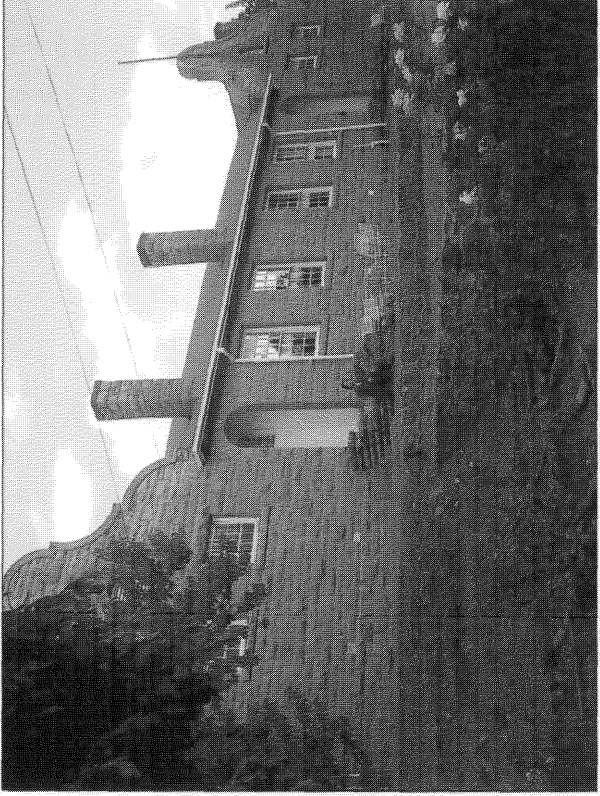


Fig.5 The school at Rhodes built in 1924, is claimed to have been designed by Sir Herbert Baker. It is presently used as the "Rubicon" guesthouse.

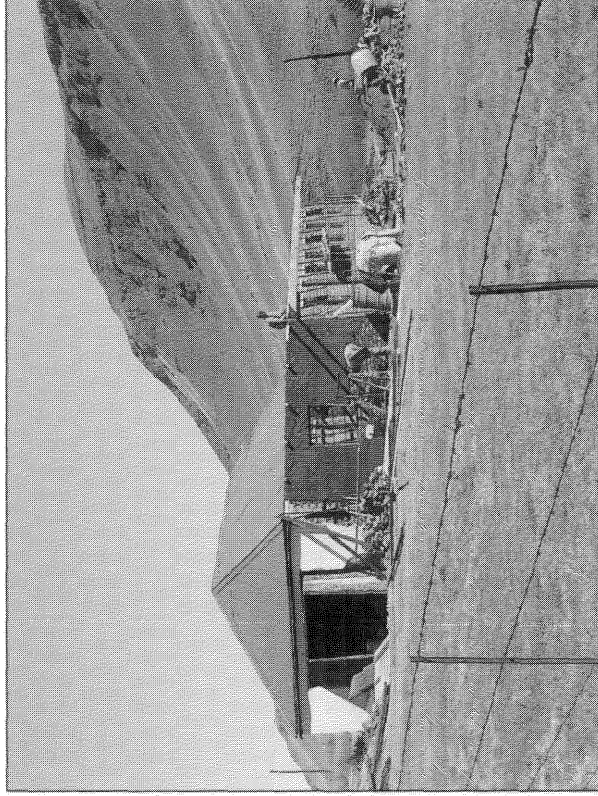


Fig.6 The first house on the farm Tintern where the town of Rhodes was proclaimed on 16 September 1991. This building is located opposite the Walkerbouts Guest House.

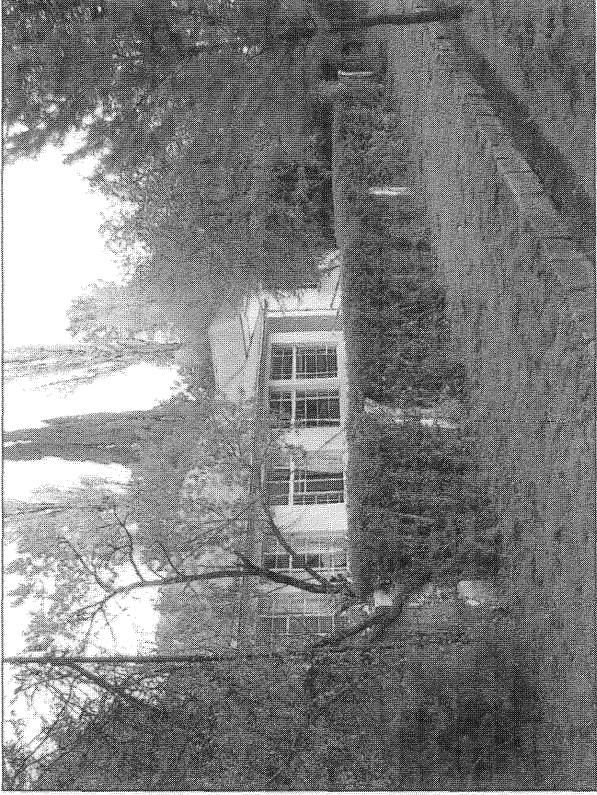


Fig.7 The Old Parsonage on Erf 155 in Muller Street.



Fig.8 Rhodes Hotel.

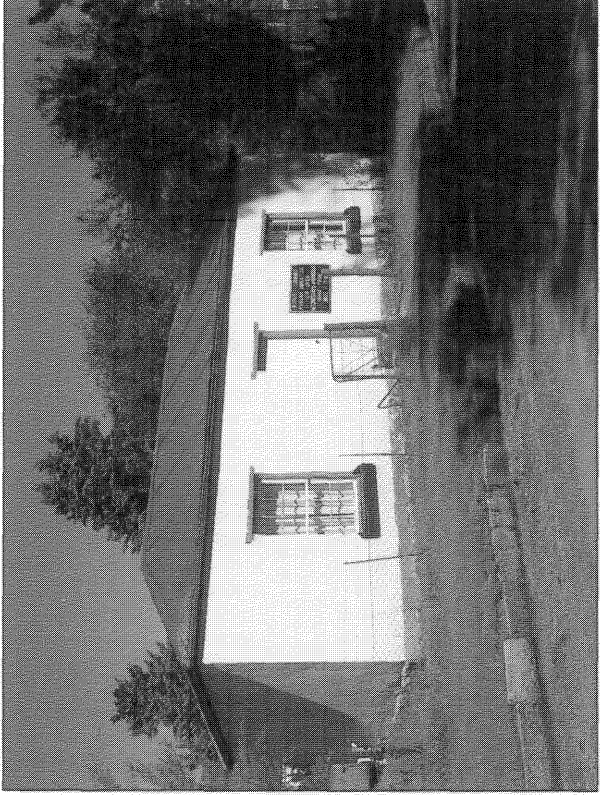


Fig.9 The building presently used as Public Library.

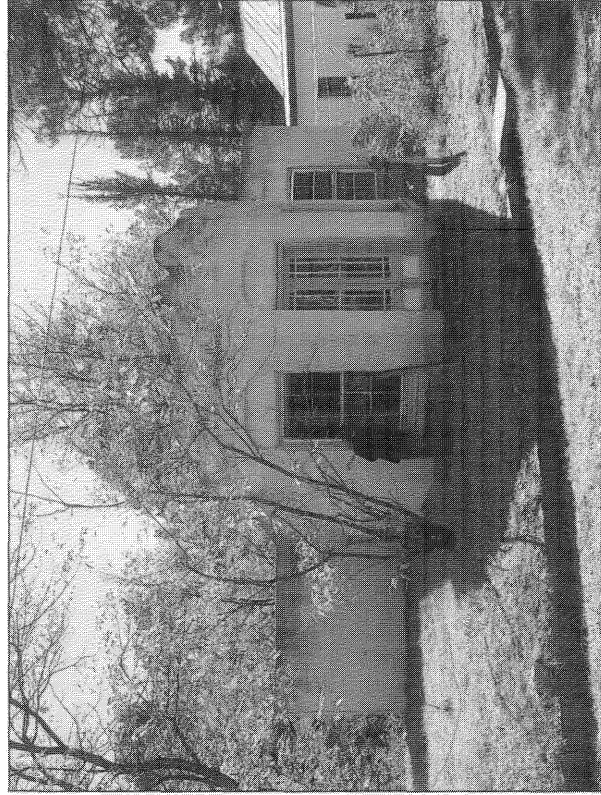


Fig.10 Old house opposite the Post Office under restoration.

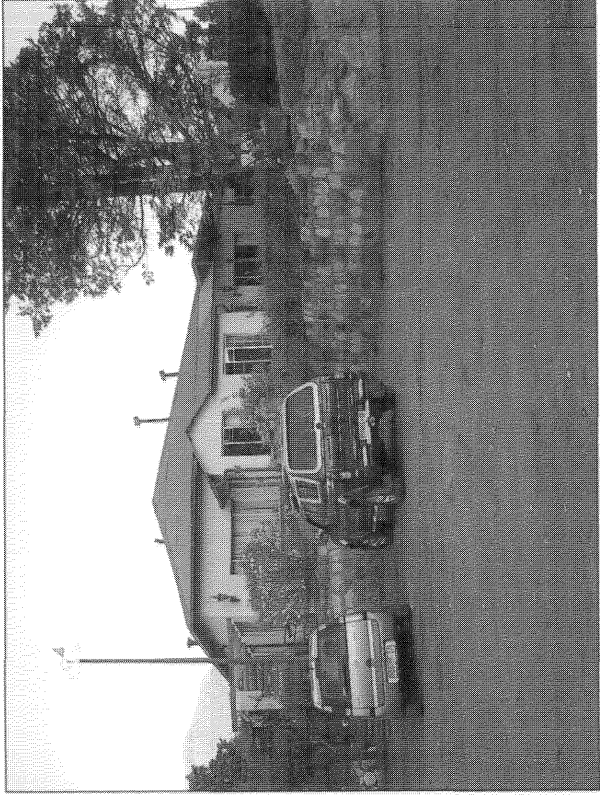


Fig.11 Walkerbouts Guest House.

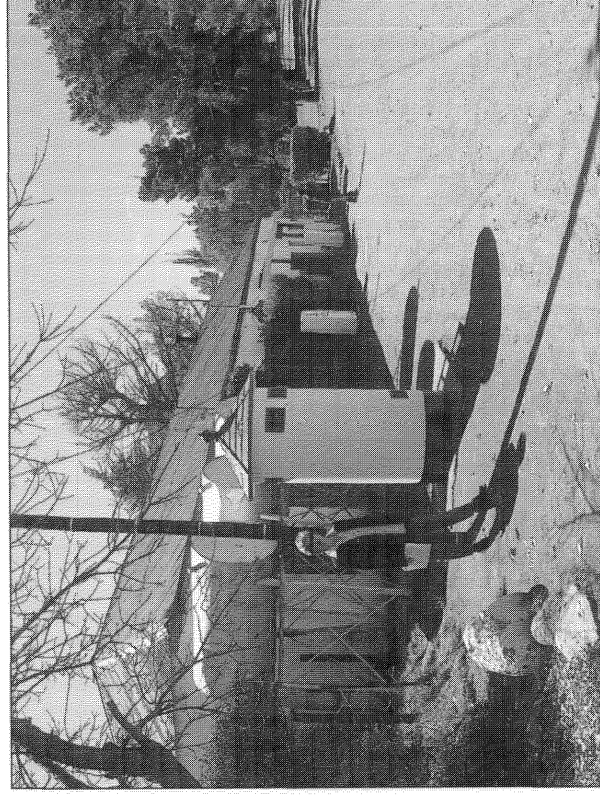


Fig.12 General Dealer shop next to the Rhodes Hotel.

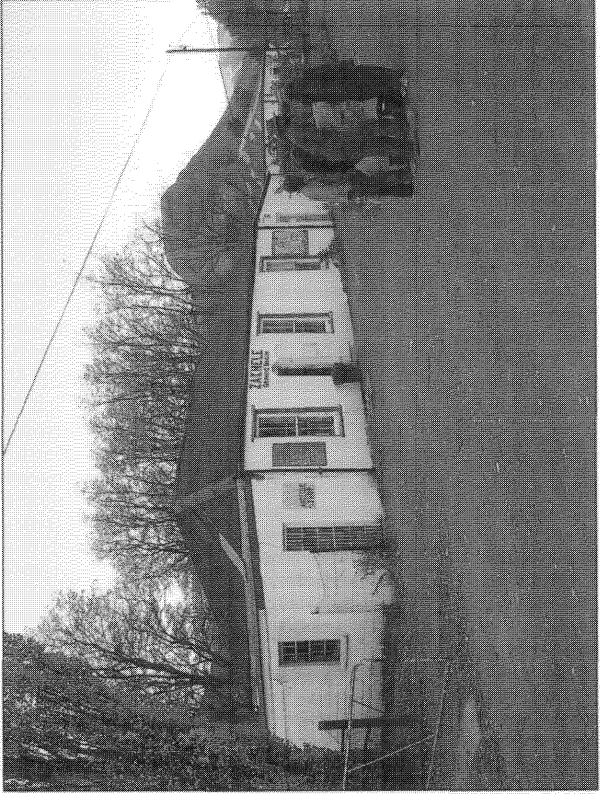


Fig.13 Another general dealer in lower Muller Street.

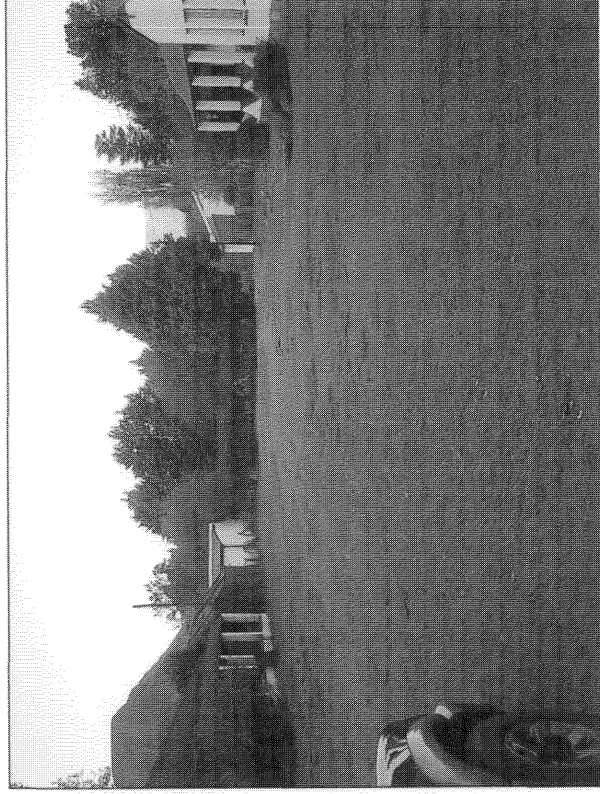


Fig.14 View down Naude Street. Caravan Park at the back.

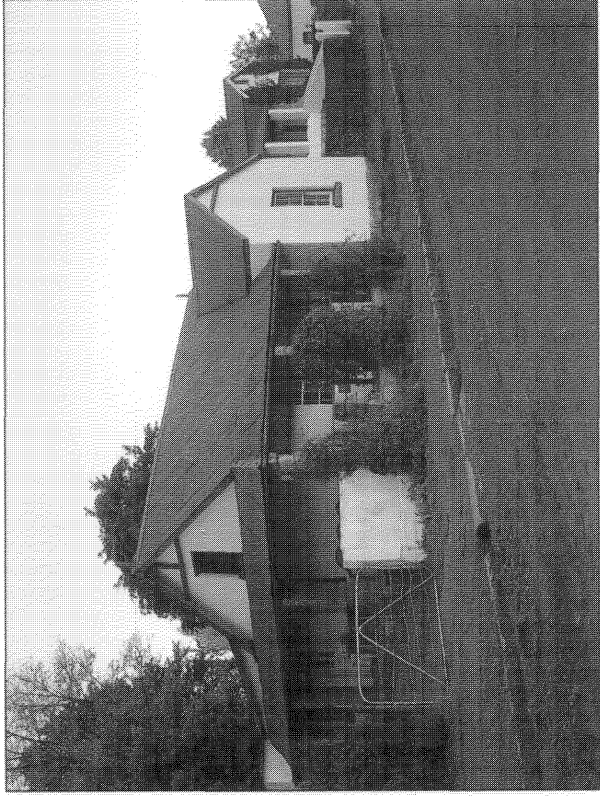


Fig.15 Residential houses opposite the Rhodes Hotel.

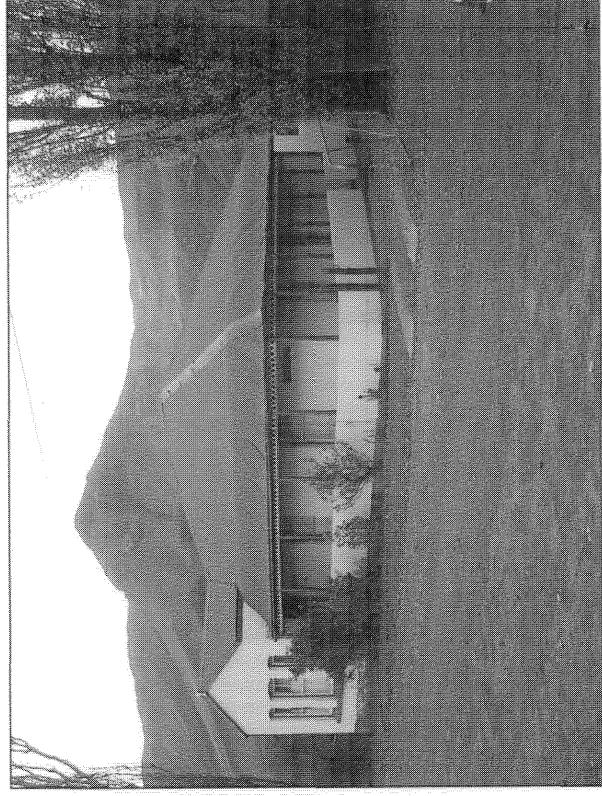


Fig.16 Well restored residence named "Groendakkies" (Little Green Roofs).



Fig.17 Leeds House.

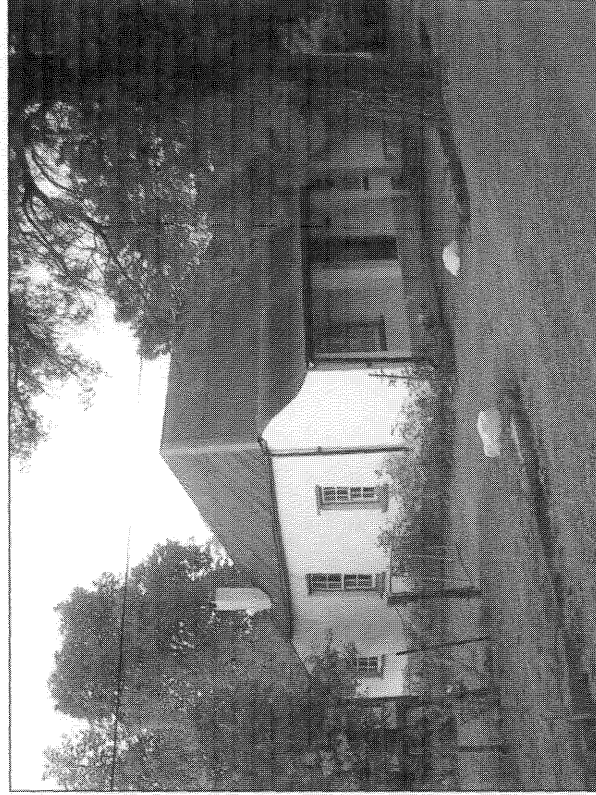


Fig.18 Fine old residence at Rhodes.





Fig.19 Another example of the finely restored houses at Rhodes.

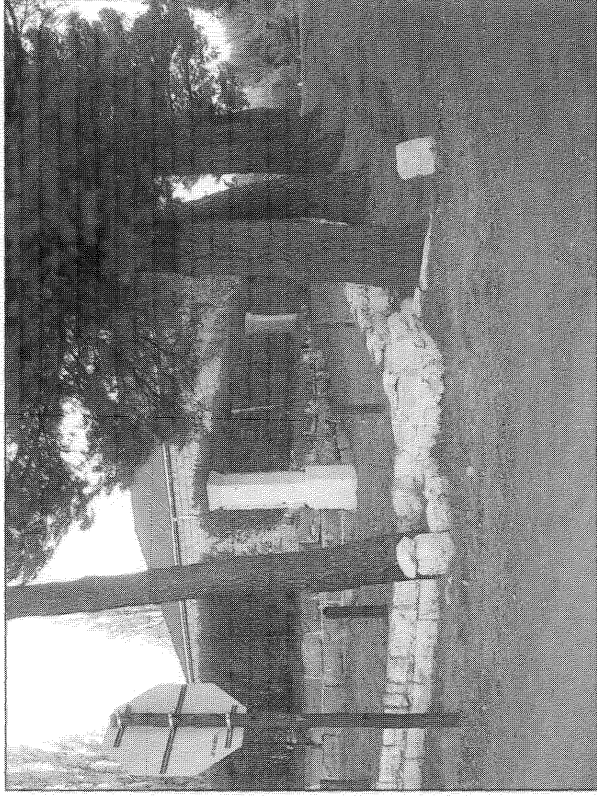


Fig.20 Sand stone pavement kerb on the corner of Church and Muller Streets.



Fig.21 Sand stone storm water furrow in Muller Street.



Fig.22 Sand stone kerb and storm water ditch.



Fig.23 Sand stone kerb and storm water ditch in Vorster Street.

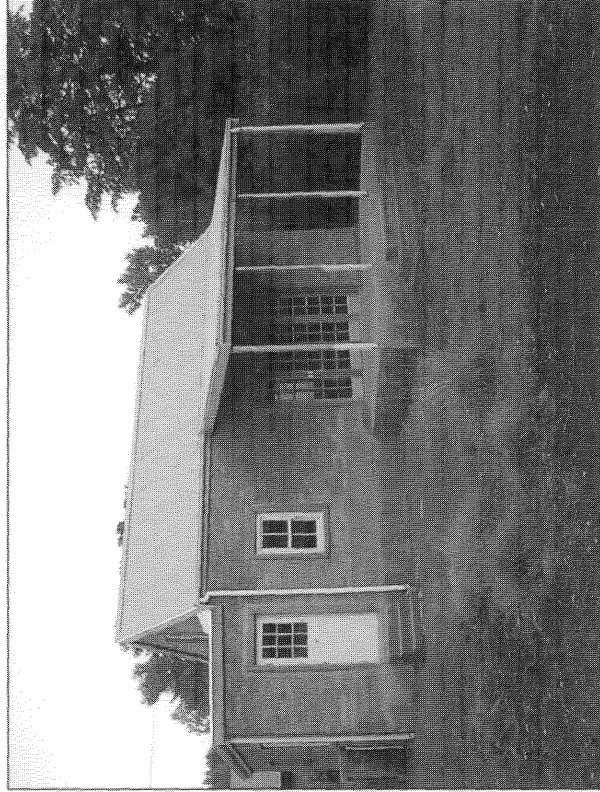


Fig.24 Fine little cottage which was only recently completed.

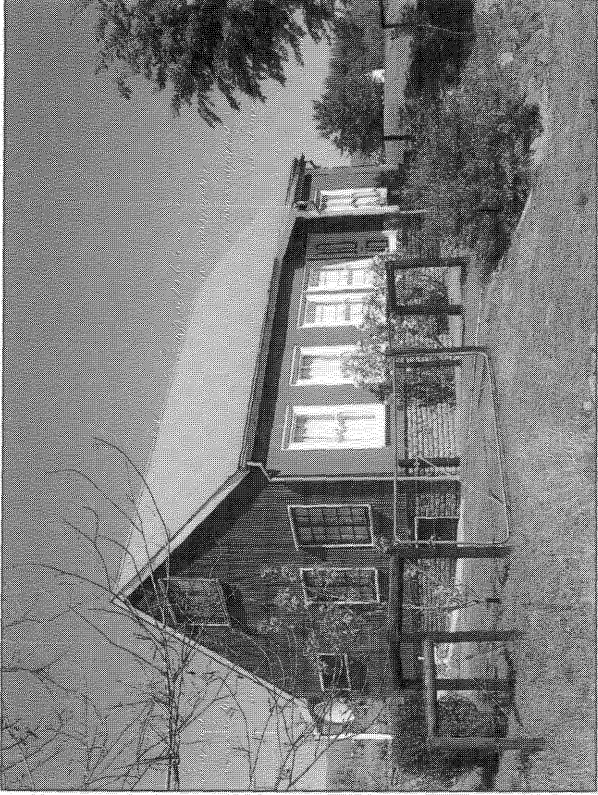


Fig.25 A modern version of a corrugated iron house at Rhodes.



Fig.26 Another example of a recently built cottage at Rhodes.

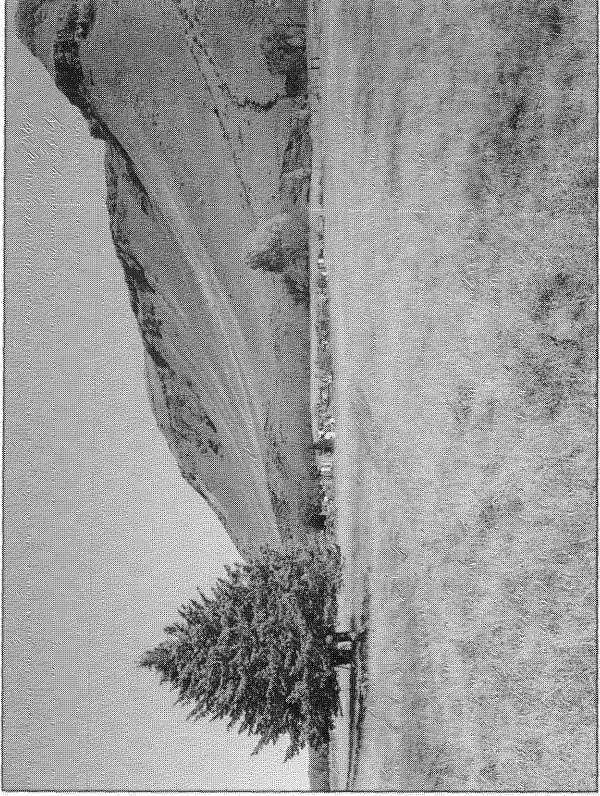


Fig.27 The well kept graveyard at Rhodes.



Fig.28 Grave of a South African soldier who died during WWII.