

SCOPING HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF FARM HOOGKRAAL 182 WILDERNESS LAKES AREA, SOUTH WESTERN CAPE

Prepared for

Hilland Associates
on behalf of **Pebble Resorts**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Archaeology Contracts Office of the University of Cape Town was instructed by HillLand Associates to carryout a Scoping Heritage Impact Assessment of the farm Hoogekraal 182 situated at the Wilderness Lakes Area, South Western Cape. The findings are summarised as follows.

- Much of the study area is of low sensitivity in terms of heritage resources protected by the National Heritage Resources Act. However specific foci will require detailed Heritage Impact Assessment before development proceeds.
- The Lakes farm will require a focused Heritage Impact Assessment and Conservation Study to inform the conservation and future development of the homestead, barns and immediate surrounds.
- One historical site (a boundary wall and indigenous hedge) will require further research conservation, while basic mitigation measures have been proposed for other sites before they may be destroyed.
- Specific attention needs to be paid to evaluating visual impacts before finalizing the planning of future development activities.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Archaeology Contracts Office of the University of Cape was appointed by Pebble Resorts to conduct a heritage impact scoping assessment of the Lakes Eco and Golf Reserve situated at the Wilderness Lakes District, Western Cape Province. The work has been co-ordinated through Ms Cathy Avierinos of HillLand Associates (Environmental Managers).

The land in question is some 1000 hectares in extent being the farm Hoogekraal 182. No development activities have commenced on the land pending the outcome of the required environmental assessments, however the proponent intends to develop the area for residential, commercial and resort purposes. The client requested that the ACO conduct a preliminary scoping assessment to identify possible areas of sensitivity as well as opportunities and constraints that would affect any future development. This assessment has been carried out taking into the consideration of the requirements of section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999. Since this is a preliminary assessment no archival or in depth historical research has been carried out at this stage. The methods and findings of the study are detailed in the following pages.

1.1 Description of the study area

The area lies immediately adjacent and inland of the Wilderness Lakes National Park incorporating the eastern shore of the Swartvlei inlet, the escarpment and a strip of land extending some 6km inland. A steep sided densely wooded river valley bounds this on the eastern side. Grazing lands lie on the bordering farms to the northeast, while the southwest section is bounded but a deep rock sided ravine with permanent water and pools.



According John Urban (previous owner) the land was largely undeveloped until his family took over the farm in the 1950's. They established the cultivation of hops, forestry and farmed with pigs and cattle. The human-made environment consists of a complex of buildings and a disused factory at "The Lakes", a number of abandoned ruins, several dams, cleared lands (disused fields) and an extensive network of forest roads. The flatter higher lying ground has been used since the 1950's (John Urban pers. comm.) for commercial forestry activities (since discontinued) while the low lying land to the south adjacent to Swartvlei has been used for agriculture, including the cultivation of hops (since discontinued). The views from the escarpment over the Wilderness Lakes are dramatic - lakes, green meadows and rolling hills.

2 METHOD

The object of the study was not to undertake a detailed site survey, but to gain an overall understanding of the heritage sensitivities of the area and indicate how they may be impacted or enhanced through development activities. The survey took place over two full days during which a wide range of environments that could be reasonably easily accessed were visited and inspected (some 44 km of forest tracks were followed). Any sites found were photographed, described and plotted using a hand-held Garmin GPS3 Plus set on map datum WGS 84.

2.1 Restrictions

Restrictions were severe on account of the dense vegetation in the study area. The deforested areas are taken over by dense stands of alien trees (Black Wattle) and there is hardly a patch on the land surface that is not covered in a thick layer of leaf litter or pine needles. The valley sides and bottoms are covered with impenetrable indigenous forest. This means that we had to restrict our search to accessible areas such as forest clearings, settlements areas, jeep tracks, and road cuttings where we could examine the surface geology. Furthermore the surface geology of the study area consists of sandy sediments which overly Pleistocene land surfaces with the result that Pleistocene archaeological material is only visible in areas where surface soils have eroded or been removed.

3 FINDINGS

3.1 General observations - pre-colonial heritage sites

No Late or Middle Stone Age archaeological material was observed in any part of the study area that we were able to search. This may be due in part to the lack of surface visibility, but also the fact that caves and rock shelters that could have formed foci of prehistoric habitation appear to be very limited. Some rock shelters may exist in the ravines that run through the study area, however these areas were difficult to search due to dense vegetation. As a precaution, any ravine with rocky sides, which may contain overhangs or shelters, should be considered archaeologically sensitive until such time they are field verified by an archaeologist.

A single occurrence of very old Acheulian (Early Stone Age) artifacts (see specific observations section) was located in an area where topsoils have been removed for the construction of a dam. This material was found in the red stony sediments that underlie the white sandy topsoils that occur throughout most of the study area. The implication of this is that the depositional

environment created by past indigenous forest cover has resulted in the burial of Pleistocene land surfaces and any associated archaeological material. Early Stone Age material is likely to occur anywhere within the study area but will only be exposed in areas where the topsoils are displaced through erosion or development activity.

3.2 Colonial period heritage sites

These were the most easily identified given the restrictions that were encountered while doing the study. The majority of the material found relates to 19th century agricultural activities, specifically the remains of dwelling houses. Other than the complex of buildings at “The Lakes” settlement, most of the structures we are identified are poorly preserved and not of any special significance. The oldest feature located is a hedge and boundary wall, which may date to the late 18th century. It is worthy of further study and complete conservation (see specific observation section).

The Lakes settlement represents the historic center of activities on the farm in that it contains a collection of buildings and features that reflect the development of the place and the range of activities that took place over time. This area is one of the most sensitive in the study area on account of not only the quality of some of the buildings but also the landscape qualities such as roads, trees, gardens and meadows that contribute to the “sense of place” and historical identity of the farm. The Lakes factory, while not unique or protected in terms of its built structure, is has some significance on account of its role in the local history of the area since the 1960’s. It is important that the historical links between people, places and structures be explored in a focused conservation study so that any policy with respect to the future development of these assets can be informed by a full understanding of their historical importance.

3.3 Intangible heritage

Since the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 includes “landscape” (and other intangible elements) as part of the National Heritage, it is appropriate to comment on these aspects. The study area is situated on the immediate boundary of a National Park and wetland area of national significance. Furthermore the scenic qualities of the Wilderness Lakes area (woodlands, meadows, valleys and water bodies) are among the most significant qualities that characterize the Garden Route and make the area desirable as a holiday and tourist destination.

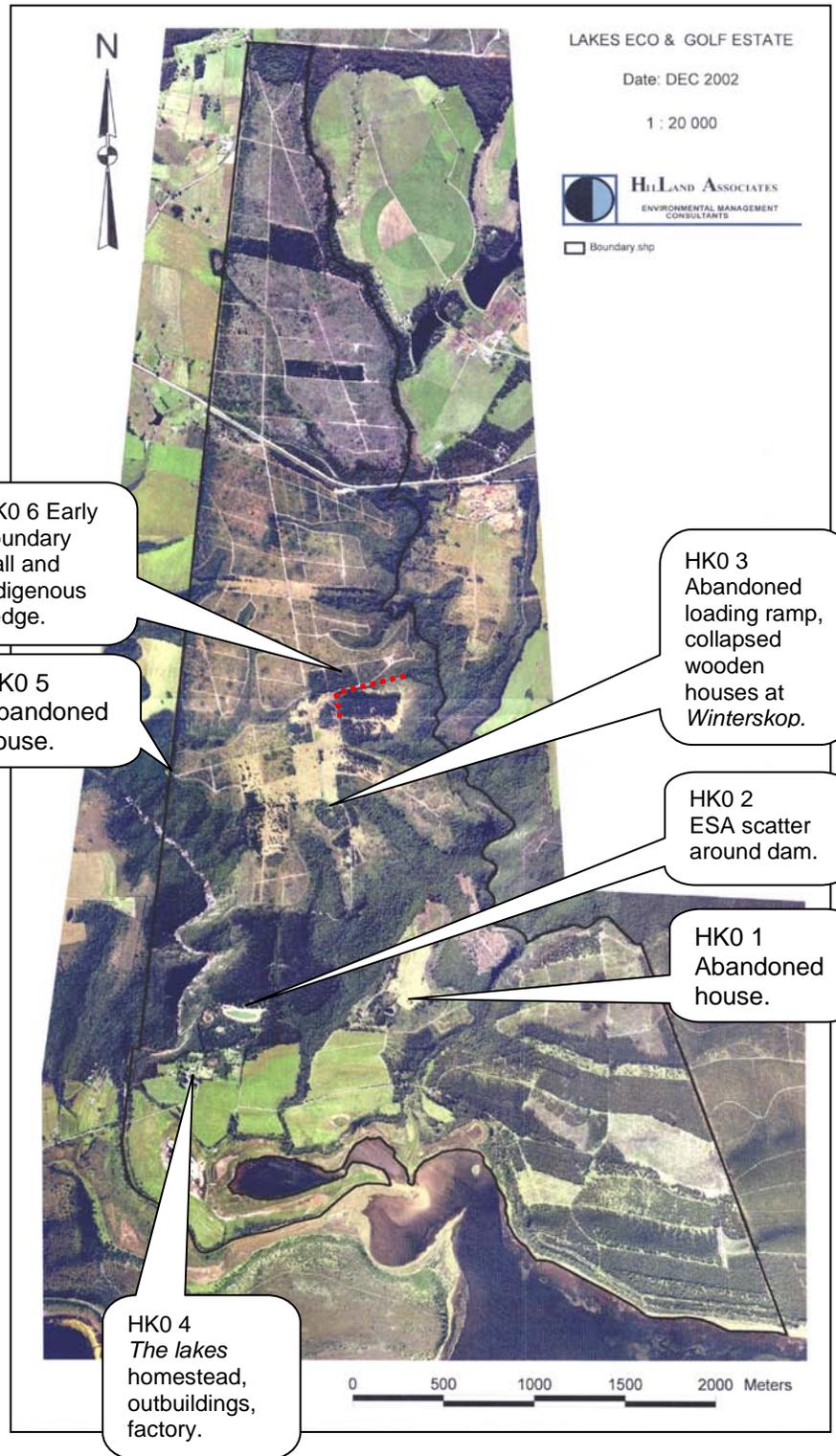


The study area presents a number of scenic vistas from within the property while the

escarpment is visible from Swartvlei, parts of the N2 and the National Park. From this point of view the study area is highly sensitive as inappropriate planning and insensitive placement of facilities has the potential to impact the public memory and sense of place on a regional level.

3.4 Specific observations

The locations of these sites are indicated on Figure 2 (right). Detailed descriptions are contained in following pages.



Site ref: HKO 1

Position: 33° 58' 21.0"S 22° 44' 09.0"E

Type of site: Abandoned dwelling house

Period of use: Late 19th – 20th century

Description: A bungalow in a poor state of repair. Pitched corrugated iron roof, wooden floor, most window frames (casement) and joinery (floors and ceiling boards) have been removed. There is a hearth in the kitchen and two water cisterns at the rear. Structure is built of mostly fired brick with stone foundations. Presence of unfired mud bricks in some of the central walls indicates that this building has been heavily modified over time. While its current form probably dates to the early-mid 20th century, its origins may be a small vernacular building of the late 19th – early 20th century. Surrounding the building are trees and shrubs, the remains of a field (now overgrown).

Use: A sign placed outside the front indicates recent use of the building as a supply store, however it appears to have been designed as a dwelling house.

Sensitivity: Moderate. The structure is in a poor state of repair and not particularly unique.

Protected by legislation: The site is technically protected by the National Heritage Resources Act in that it is over 60 years old. A permit must be obtained from the regional office of SAHRA (South African Heritage Resources Agency) for its alteration or demolition.

Mitigation: If the site were better preserved, adaptive reuse would have been a desirable option, however the poor state of preservation warrants little more than systematic recording of the building should application be made for its demolition.

Related features: Not established

Site name: HKO2

Position: 33° 58' 22.6"S 22° 43'38.8"E

Type of site: A dispersed scatter of Early Stone Age artifacts.

Period of use: Between 200 000 and 1 000 000 years ago.

Description: A dam that has been excavated into the slope on the top of the escarpment has penetrated the top soils exposing various geological strata. A number of Acheulian artifacts have been exposed on the cutting



behind the dam as well as along its earth wall. The artifacts exposed here include a number of large quartzite flakes, a discoid core and a pick-like sub-classic hand axe.

Use: Stone artifacts left by early humans have become included within the geological strata and exposed during earthmoving operations when the dam was built.

Sensitivity: A moderately sensitive site representative of local subsurface conditions. Acheulian material probably exists in many parts of the development area, but is only visible in places such as this where the top soils have been moved. The site will be disturbed if further work takes place in the area of the dam. The artifacts are vulnerable to illegal collection by souvenir hunters.

Protected by legislation: The site is technically protected by the NAHRA legislation. A permit must be obtained from SAHRA for its excavation, alteration or demolition.

Mitigation: If this area is to be developed, earthmoving will need to be monitored and the artifactual material will need to be collected and curated.

Related features: Not established.



Site name: HKO3 (Winterskop)

Position: Ramp 33° 57' 46.6"S 22° 43' 55.8"E, Cottages 33° 57' 47.6"S 22° 43' 53.6"E

Type of site: Settlement – remains of 3 wooden cottages and a stone loading ramp adjacent to the road.

Period of use: Mid 20th century (?)

Description: The remains of three small collapsed wooden cottages in a forest clearing. The structures were elevated on concrete supports. One of the cottages had a brick fireplace and chimney. Close to the road is a stone loading ramp.

Use: Unknown, possibly temporary accommodation for forestry purposes.

Sensitivity: Low due to very poor preservation.

Mitigation: None required.

Protected by legislation: Age of structures is unclear, but may be protected if over 60 years of age.

Related features: Cleared area which may have been fields as well as remains of barbed wire fencing.



Site name: HKO 4

Position: 33° 58' 34.0"S 22° 43' 24.4"E

Type of site: Residence, barns, factory and staff housing

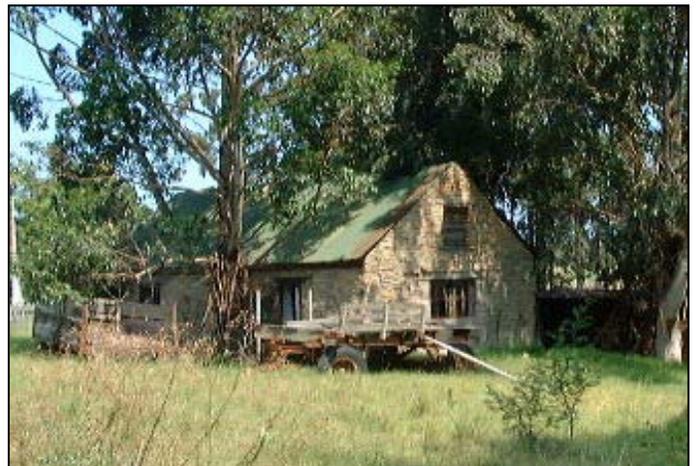
Period of use: 19th century – late 20th century

Description: A collection of structures, facilities and landscapes composing "The Lakes" settlement. The history of the site has not yet been subject to any detailed archival or historical research, however it appears to be the historic focus of settlement on the farm. The most dominant aspect is the Victorian homestead and the hops processing factory (disused). There are also two stone "barns" (which may pre-date the Victorian homestead), outbuildings as well as several contemporary wooden staff houses. The various elements of the site are detailed below.

Homestead: A large double storied Victorian homestead built of dressed stone dating to 1883. The building has a simple rectangular layout with a pitched corrugated iron roof. The upper story has a wooden roofed balcony extending across both side and front elevations. It is possible that the balcony was added to the building in the early 20th century. The building is in good condition and preservation of the both joinery and interior is excellent. Indigenous woods that grew on Hoogekraal farm were extensively used in its construction (Urban pers. comm.) The building represents a good conservation opportunity, however its original state and quality mean that it is unlikely the SAHRA will grant permits for *extensive* alteration in the interests of conserving its character and historical qualities.



Barn 1. The closest barn to the residence is a vernacular stone structure which appears to have been adapted for habitation in the late 20th century. It has since fallen into disuse and has been damaged by weather. Notwithstanding this, it is conservable and could be sensitively adapted for reuse. It is quite possible that the barn may predate the main homestead. The structure is protected by legislation.



Barn 2. A vernacular stone structure with a high pitched roof and very low stone walls. This building is also in a poor state of repair and a mud brick divide down the interior of it has collapsed. Elements of original joinery have survived. Adaptive reuse of the structure is possible and is encouraged. The building is also protected by legislation.



Factory. This factory for drying hops was built by the Urban family in the 1960's. Now stripped of most of its fittings the factory consists of a large concrete block and steel frame structure that has grown organically in response to the machinery that has been housed in it over time. A large smoke stack still remains however the boilers have been removed (boiler tubes and other items are to be seen lying about the yard). Remaining equipment within the factory includes various steam pipes, a condenser, some electrical equipment and a conveyor belt system. While certain industrial structures do have conservation merit, this particular building does not include any unique physical elements and is less than 60 years old. It is situated very close to the homestead and tends to dominate the landscape. While we do not advocate conservation of the physical remains of the factory, the story of its reason for being, the technology involved, and the regional economic role it played needs to be documented.



Barn near factory. Associated with the factory is a large contemporary barn containing pipes, valves and agricultural equipment. It is of little conservation value (other than being an element of the local agricultural industrial landscape).

Other structures. A number of wooden staff houses (not documented in this report) are to be found around the precinct. All of these appear to be less than 60 years old and are not protected.

Historic landscape. A garden still survives around the homestead as do fences, gates, access roads, trees, and disused fields.

Sensitivity: Certain elements of the site are highly sensitive, with particular reference to the homestead (possibly of regional architectural significance), the two stone barns and local landscape in which they are situated.

Mitigation: The “Lakes” farm needs to be subject to a focused Heritage Impact Assessment and Built Environment conservation study (in terms of section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act) before any solid plans are drawn up for its redevelopment.

Protected by legislation: The homestead, stone barns are protected. The factory is not protected by the National Heritage Resources Act.

Related features: Roads, fields, dams, and staff houses.

Site name: HKO 5

Position: 33° 57' 40.2”S 22° 43' 18.8”E

Type of site: Ruins of small residential cottage

Period of use: 19th – 20th centuries

Description: Cottage consisted of 4 inter-leading rooms with no corridor. These are arranged around a square, but may have initially started as an “L” shaped arrangement. Large unfired mud bricks have been used in its construction however modern plaster is evident in places. The corrugated iron roof has collapsed. Artefacts laying around suggest that the building was used a labourer’s cottage but vacated and allowed to fall into disrepair during the last 20 years. There are also early 20th century artifacts (bottle glass) in evidence.



Use: Residential

Sensitivity: Too damaged to be readapted or considered conservation-worthy.

Mitigation: Measured drawings and photography before demolition.

Protected by legislation: Technically protected by National Heritage Resources Act.

Related features: Not established

Site name: HKO 6

Position: 33° 57' 24.6”S 22° 44' 00.9”E

Right angle turn 33° 57' 25.5”S 22° 43' 53.8”E

Type of site: Boundary wall and indigenous hedge.

Period of use: Late 18th- 19th centuries.

Description: An extensive length of boundary wall associated with and enclosed by a well-established hedge of indigenous trees and shrubs. The wall, built with large mud bricks is eroded in places but well preserved under areas of dense vegetation. The size of the trees contained within the hedge are good evidence that this is a very old feature, which in style and form are characteristic of boundary walls typical of the Dutch East India Company period at the Cape.

Use: Wall to demarcate a field or property.

Sensitivity: A highly sensitive feature vulnerable to erosion if hedge is damaged, illegal demolition.

Mitigation: The wall, together with the hedge should be conserved. Archival research will be need to determine its history. Focused fieldwork (informed by archival research) will be needed to determine if there are any related structures/features in the area.

Protected by legislation: Protected by National Heritage Resources Act.

Related features: Not yet established.



4 OPPORTUNITIES, RESTRICTIONS, IMPACTS

In general terms, there are large portions of the study area (especially the flat lands above the escarpment and forestry areas) that are not sensitive in terms of heritage sites, the development of which will not result in major impacts. Within the study area there are several foci, which are sensitive and will require special consideration.

Steep sided valleys and ravines. Access to these areas is very limited at the moment due to dense vegetation, however rock shelters and overhangs within the valleys could contain archaeological deposits which are very vulnerable to damage (trampling, erosion) should people gain access to them. Should the proponent ever wish to develop hiking trails and access routes into the ravines, a focused study will be needed to determine if there will be any impacts, and secondly, if archaeological sites are present, assist in developing educational information (signage, pamphlets) that would enhance the visitor experience.

“The lakes” farm. Careful redevelopment of this precinct will result in an asset of interest and value to any future development, however this will have to be done within the confines of any restrictions that SAHRA or the Western Cape Heritage Authority may require. The Lakes farm precinct will require a focused Heritage Impact Assessment and Conservation Plan to indicate the best possible way forward in terms of the adaptive reuse of the homestead, barns and surrounding landscape. Such a study will have to include archival research as understanding the early history of this site will be central to the process of its conservation/re-development. The

history of the site could be incorporated into its redevelopment through making information available to visitors to the precinct in the form of small displays, exhibits and pamphlets.

Visual impacts. This is an area of great concern as the entire geographical setting of the study area is within or very close to the Wilderness Lakes area and National Park. Densification of the built environment on the escarpment above the lakes will have a negative visual impact of long duration and high intensity on the wider surroundings if the planning of any future development is not done without consideration of these aspects as a cornerstone in the process. It is strongly recommended that a landscape architect with experience in this particular field be consulted.

5 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Steep sided valleys and ravines are subject to a focused heritage impact assessment if any development is planned in these areas.
- The Lakes settlement will require a focused Heritage Impact Assessment and Conservation Plan to inform its future development (including general archival research of Hoogekraal farm).
- The visual impacts resulting from any proposed development be assessed and be given priority in the planning of any development. An independent visual impact assessment is commissioned (if this has not been done already).
- Heritage sites HKO 1, HKO 3 and HKO 6 are not conservation-worthy but should be photographed, measured and documented before demolition is planned. (Their archival history should be researched as part of the general history of the farm).
- The Early Stone Age site at HKO 2 may be typical of sub-surface conditions in the study area. An archaeologist should be appointed at commencement of development activities to monitor any deep earthmoving or cut and fill operations to mitigate the destruction of this material (if necessary).
- The hedge and boundary wall (site HKO 6) needs to be researched and conserved. This site should not be impacted in any way unless the outcome of focused research finds it to be insignificant.
- The recommendations of this report are subject to the comment and approval of the Provincial Heritage Authority.