

PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF TWO AREAS OF THE CASTLE MOAT

Prepared for

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August 1996



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Archaeology Contracts Office was asked to examine two portions of the moat at the Castle where new works are to take place. The first investigation involved locating the structural remains of an historic building in the old moat to the north of the main entrance, and the second involved the assessment of the moat's inner walls to the north-west of Oranje bastion where the moat is to be excavated and re-flooded. For the purposes of clarity I will refer henceforth to these two separate investigations as the "old moat investigation" and the "Darling street moat extension".

Archival work conducted by the architect revealed that a building had existed on the old moat site in earlier years. As the plan is to re-establish the new building on the foundations of the old, it was necessary to establish what remained of the earlier building and the state of the remains if any were found. No additional archival work has been undertaken by the Contracts Office for this investigation.

The purpose of the investigation of the Darling street moat extension was to ascertain whether the moat walling still existed and if so, that it duplicated the construction revealed in other parts of the moat. The depth and nature of the foundations of the walls was to be ascertained as well as the artefactual content of the deposits if any.

2. BACKGROUND

During the period of the major restoration of the castle in the 1980's, the Archaeology Contracts Office looked fairly extensively at the moat system which surrounds the castle. The history of the moat is complex and has been described elsewhere^{1,2} and will not be dealt with in detail here. Some points which cast light on the age of the structure in the old moat are discussed below.

In the latter part of the 17th and early part of the 18th century, the moat in the vicinity of the front entrance (the Van Der Stel gate) was arranged fairly symmetrically with the portion to the north duplicating that to the south. With the construction of the Imhoff Battery on the seaward side of the Castle in c1740, it presumably became necessary to re-evaluate the positioning of the moat to the north of the gateway as it would seem that it interfered with access to the new fortification. Archaeological evidence suggests that this part of the moat was filled in at about this time. To maintain the defences, the moat was extended in a triangular form around a ravelin on the town side of the gateway, a configuration which has remained to the present.

Archaeological excavations in the original section of the moat alignment to the north of the gateway showed that a portion of the fill at the base of the ditch consisted of garbage that we believe originated partly from within the Castle's walls. Other fill consisted of soil and clay from the surrounding area probably from the ravelin moat site which may have been under

¹ Hall, M. et al 1990. A 'Stone Wall out of the Earth that Thundering Cannon Cannot Destroy'? Bastion and Moat at the Castle, Cape Town Social Dynamics 16:1

² Hall, M. (and Halkett, D.) 1990. The Castle moat: a report. Unpublished report prepared by the Archaeology Contracts Office, University of Cape Town for Gabriël Fagan Architects.

construction at that time. Analyses of the artefactual material suggested deposition prior to c1750 and seem to confirm the historical chronology as we understand it.

After the portion of moat behind the ravelin was filled, a cobbled track was laid on it leading from the Van Der Stel gateway towards the north. We assume that this provided access to the Imhoff Battery. Portions of the cobbled track were recognised during the excavations adjacent to the Van Der Stel gateway, and the current excavations which are to be discussed in this report have also revealed further evidence of this feature.

3. EXCAVATIONS

3.1 The Old Moat

As this project represents a preliminary investigation of the structure, it has been the intention to establish through a series of strategically placed trial excavations rather than full scale excavation, if any part of the old structure remained, and if so, to make sure that it corresponded with archival information interpreted on the architects plan. A drawing of the area showing the location of trial holes is presented in Figure 1.

Prior to beginning the excavations it was necessary to remove an earth ramp built at the time when the area was used for a construction camp during the restoration of the castle interior. The use of the area for the stockpiling and subsequent removal of soil has resulted in destruction of the old structure where it was not covered by the earth ramp. The approximate area of disturbance is also indicated on Figure 1.

The stratigraphy was much the same across all the holes that were not subject to disturbance. This consisted of an overburden of recently deposited soil left behind when the soil ramp was removed, on average 500mm thick. This was underlain by a layer of cinder, on average 100mm thick and almost certainly representing the old parking area surface which existed before the restoration. Immediately below lie the remains of the old structure. These foundations are sunk into old moat deposits probably of similar age and content as the deposits in the garden of remembrance (c1700-1740).

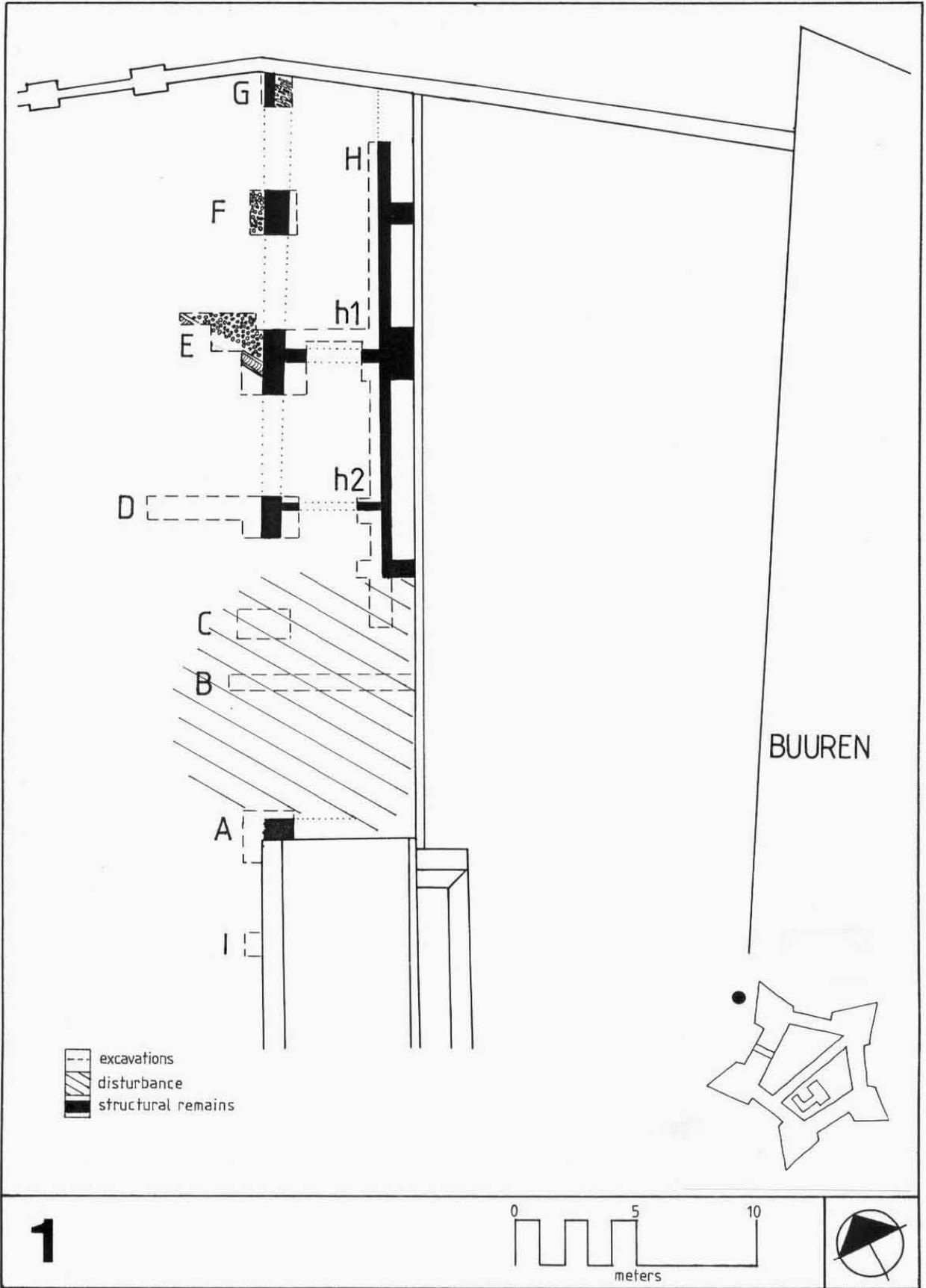
A brief description of the features in each of the trial holes follows below:

3.1.1 Test hole A

Portions of a substantial stone foundation consistent with those in test holes abutting the moat wall were exposed. The foundation is approximately one meter in width and is constructed with shale blocks. A modern cement lip some 130mm in width is cast on top of the stone foundation abutting the embankment wall (see plate 1).

3.1.2 Test holes B and C

Trench B was sited to intersect both walls of the building. No structural remains were located and the modern content of the deposit indicated that disturbance had occurred. The test hole at C encountered similar evidence of disturbance.





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3.1.3 Test hole D

A trench was positioned to intersect the outer wall as well as the remains of any cobble track. A substantial foundation approximately 900mm in width was exposed. Shale blocks had been used as the construction material. A patch of red clay lay at right angles to the stone foundation extending towards Buuren bastion. Closer inspection indicated that these were degraded sun dried bricks (degraded as a result of high soil moisture). The opposite corner of this brick "wall" was later picked up again in test hole h2. Due to the degraded nature of the structure it was difficult to assess actual width at this point but we can probably assume that it would have been the same as the wall in holes E and h1.

3.1.4 Test hole E

This excavation was sited on the line of the wall that had been found in test hole D and opposite the brick wall corner that was located in hole h1. The stone foundation existed here and again was approximately 900mm in width. A brick wall approximately 360mm in width was found to adjoin the wall and ran towards the opposite foundation where it was again exposed in hole h1. In addition to foundation, cobbles were found abutting the foundation on the west. These were partially disturbed by the addition of a cement channel, the positioning of which indicates that the structure was probably in use until fairly recently (c1940/50). The foundation can be seen in Plate 2.

3.1.5 Test hole F

The excavation was located on the line of the wall as seen in other holes. Stone foundation of approximately 900mm width was found with cobbles abutting on the west.

3.1.6 Test hole G

This excavation was located adjacent to the wall along Strand Street at the point where a change in angle is noted. A somewhat different set of observations was made here. A small fragment of brick wall has survived on top of stone foundation. The brick wall is approximately 330mm wide while the stone base is 440mm wide. To the south of the remaining bricks the floor is plastered and suggests that an opening existed here. Cement plaster has survived in patches on the inner edge of the Strand Street wall as well on the inner edge of the surviving brick. A floor surface of brick has also survived. These bricks are laid on the diagonal from north to south and are staggered (the investigation of this hole was somewhat perilous due to the presence of an active beehive in a cavity in the stone wall). It was not possible to determine the nature of the foundation abutting the existing stone wall as a result of the brick surface.

3.1.7 Test hole H

An initial test trench established a wide stone platform abutting the moat embankment wall. A trench was then dug parallel to this wall in such a way as to expose the outer edge of the stone foundation and cutting in towards the moat wall at intervals to confirm that it continued to abutt the moat wall. We were prevented from continuing all the way to the Strand Street wall to the north as a tree is present in the corner. In addition a mound of overburden had built up behind the tree which could not be removed with the mechanical excavator.

Nevertheless we would assume that this foundation will continue right the way through. To the south it was found that the platform had been removed by disturbance. We have similarly not been able to get into the southern corner because of a tree but have picked up the stone again in hole A. Two brick walls were found at positions h1 and h2 as described. A portion of the brick wall where it joins the foundation in h1 is shown in Plate 3.

3.1.8 Test hole I

No stone foundation material was observed here.

3.2 Darling Street Moat Extension

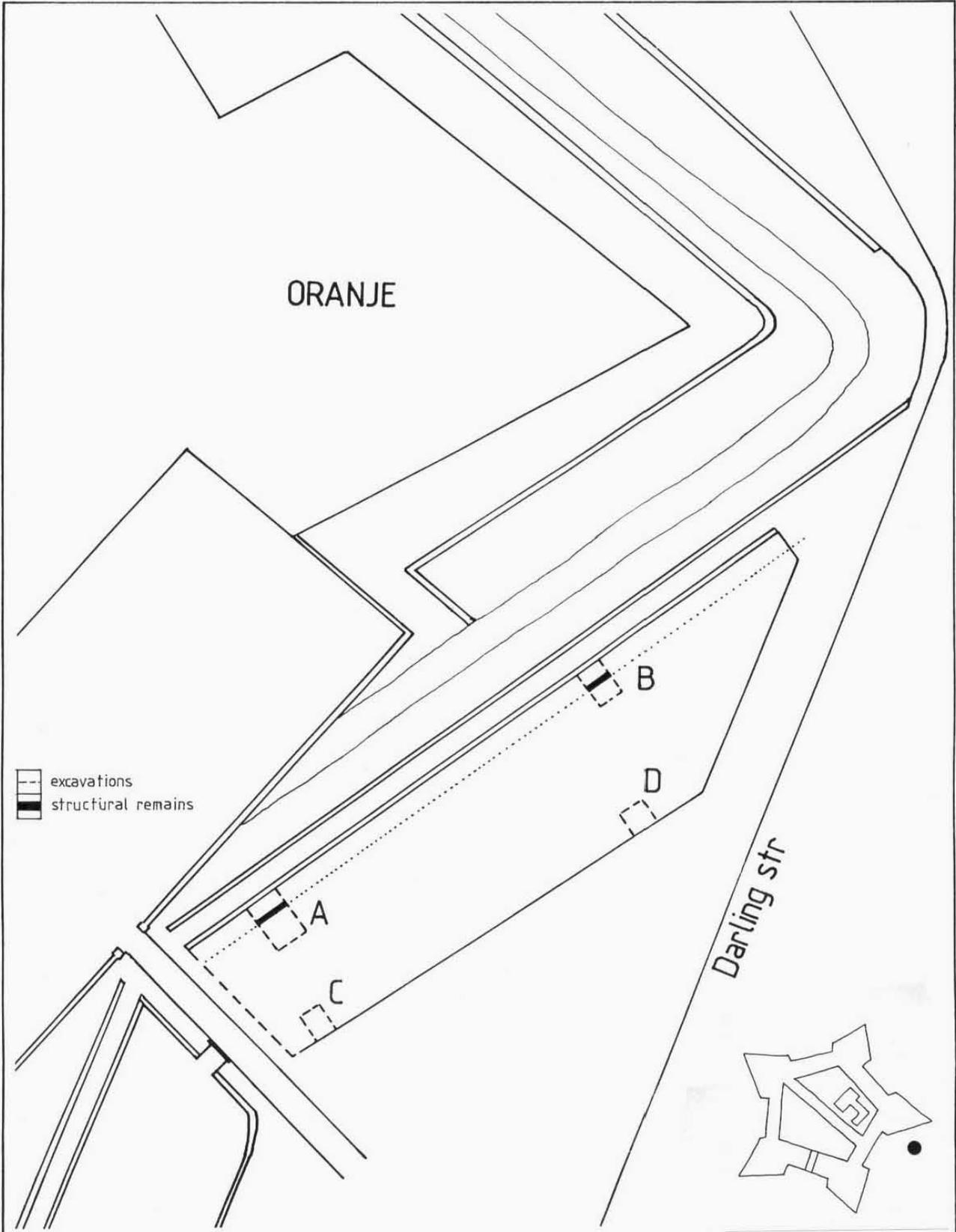
The location of the area under discussion here is shown in Figure 2. As the configuration of the moat walls had previously been established, this latest phase of excavation has been undertaken to ascertain that this pattern persists as well as to determine the depth of foundations. In addition, excavations would show if any rich artefact deposits were located in this area. A mechanical excavator was used to dig the initial large holes to a point short of the foundation. From here on digging was done by hand to avoid any damage to the structure.

3.2.1 Test hole A

As we were expecting to find a platform running parallel to the exposed moat wall, a small trench was initially dug by hand to establish that this was indeed present. The platform was located and the width approximated previous observations (Plate 4). Foundations, consisting of rounded Table Mountain Sandstone boulders support the structure (Plate 5). The soil stratigraphy is straightforward with the uppermost material consisting of fairly recent introduced fills of great variability, the middle deposits are fairly uniform clayey sands containing a moderate amount of artefactual material dating to the 19th century (mostly sherds of refined earthenware with transfer print patterns). The lowermost deposits consist of a band of yellow clay seeming to cap the foundation and was probably used to seal the bed of the moat. Lying immediately above the yellow clay is a layer containing rounded pebbles and cobbles in a granular sandy matrix which probably marks the original base of the moat. Minimal artefactual material was noticed here. The yellow clay eventually grades into a more grey variety. This clay was not penetrated other than to confirm the width of the foundation. The various features are shown in Figure 3.

3.2.2 Test hole B

We expected the structural configuration of the walls to be the same as in Test hole A. Once again a small trench was excavated to locate the edge of the inner wall. We were initially prevented from running the trench all the way back to the upper embankment wall by a substantial concrete foundation. This and traces of cement surface covering portions of the adjacent parking area confirm that a building stood here in the fairly recent past. Part of the foundation was later broken through and the base of the embankment wall exposed (Plate 6). On reaching the top of the inner wall it was clear that blocks were missing. The reason for the damage was evident from the north section which indicated that a rubbish pit had been dug here at some stage and it contained both humic material as well as builders rubble. As there was no sign of this material in the south section we must conclude that damage to the wall is present at this location as well as to the north but is probably fairly limited and can be



2

0 5 10 15 20
meters



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4



5



6



7

easily restored. The damaged section of wall can be seen in Plate 7. The wall below this is undamaged and the foundation is intact. Structural details are presented in Figure 3.

3.2.3 Test hole C

This is one of two holes which tested the west moat wall. Previous observations indicated that the configuration of this wall differs from the eastern one in that no additional embankment wall is present. Excavation followed the wall down to the foundation which turned out to be relatively narrow (Plate 8). One feature of note is a small water outlet with a lip set in the lower portion of the wall which probably drained Darling Street at some stage. Once the wall in the excavation had been cleaned it became obvious that the upper portion of the wall is a later addition. Although dressed shale has been utilised, the style of laying and shape are different to the original (Plate 9). The later addition to the top of the west moat wall was noted in other sections of the moat as well. These features can be seen in Figure 3. The stratigraphy is uniformly similar to the middle layers of Test Hole A, i.e. a clayey sand. Artefactual material is present in moderate quantities throughout this soil body but no obvious layering is present. This would be consistent with a fill of the 19th C. The level around the foundation is marked by a change to whitish clay. Some silty material is noted above the clay.

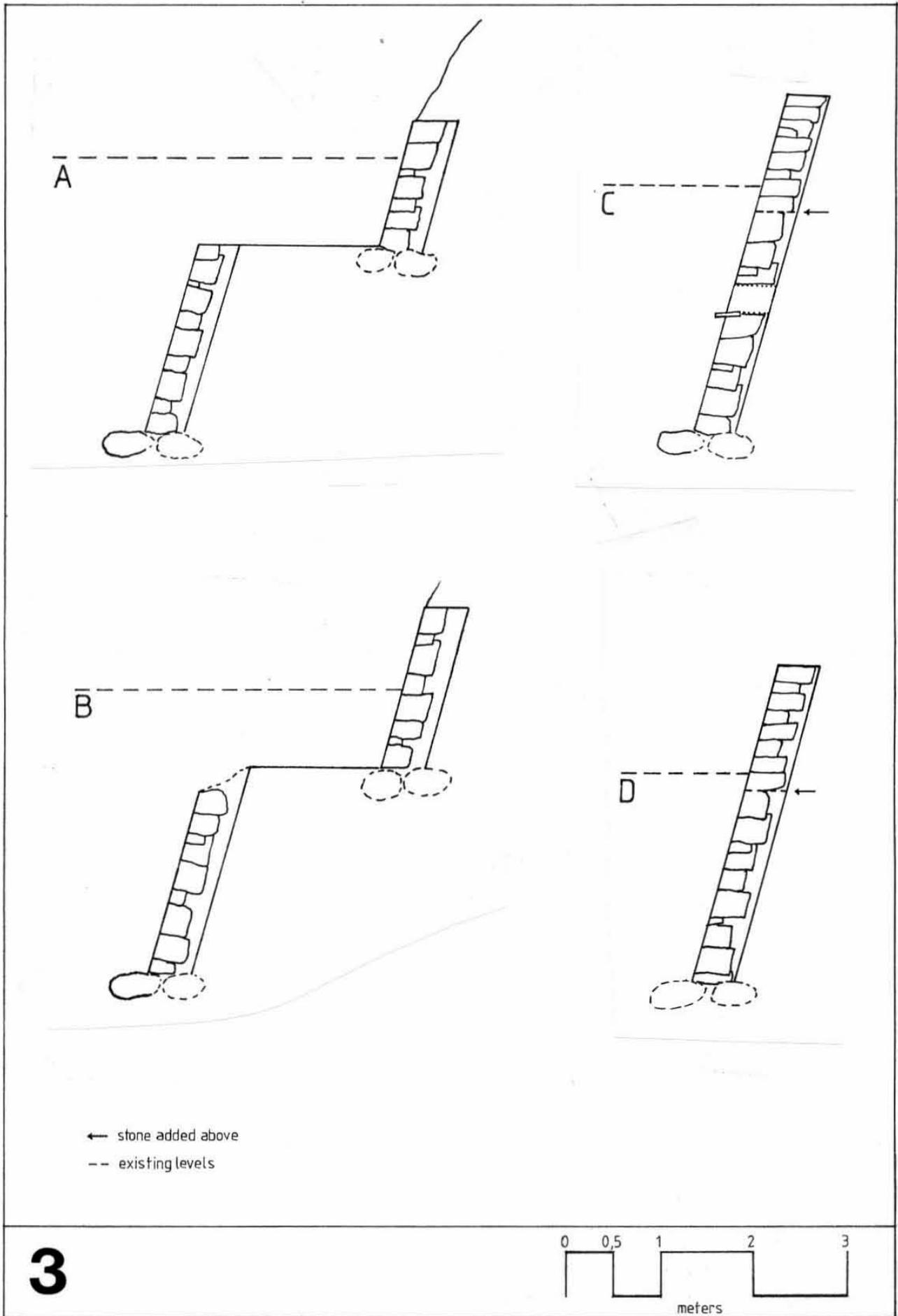
3.2.4 Test hole D

Also located along the west wall excavation followed a featureless wall down to a point just above the foundation. It was not possible to fully expose the foundations in this particular hole due to the fragile nature of the sections particularly the northern one. The central portion of the deposit contained a large mass of old sheet iron and drain pipe (Plate 10) which had probably been dumped in a pit. A smaller hole was dug into the lower deposits and an iron probe was hammered in at points parallel to the wall to establish the width of the foundation. We assume that the structure and material used will be the same as in other holes. Additional courses of stone were evident here too and these are clearly visible in Plate 11.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The old moat

Archaeological excavations confirm the presence of a building that has dimensions largely duplicated on the architects plan. Surveying does however indicate that a slight convergence of the structural remains is noticed to the north east. In most instances only the foundation has been observed and consequently no information can be provided about the upper part of the structure. At least two brick cross walls have been recognised. While it is tempting to suggest that these walls demarcated a smaller central room, the absence of structural remains to the south as a result of disturbance makes it impossible to confirm. Some additional details are preserved at the north eastern end of the structure. A floor paved with brick and the presence of some cement suggests that this may be recent. Traces of cobbling on the western side suggest a continuation of the track/path that was first recognised in excavations alongside the Van Der Stel gateway. As the structural remains lie immediately below a recent cinder surface, no associated artefacts have been observed though the foundations themselves have been dug into artefact rich fills.





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4.2 Darling street moat extension

It is clear from the test holes that no deviation from the established pattern has occurred. The inner moat wall is made up of an upper embankment supporting wall separated from the moat wall by a narrow walkway. The outer wall consists of a single uninterrupted wall to which additional stone courses have been made over the years probably in an attempt to cope with changing landscape. Foundations consist of boulders of Table Mountain Sandstone and do not appear to be as wide as in other parts of the moat. Some limited damage to the inner wall has occurred as a result of mechanical excavations in the past. While artefactual material is present, these are most common in the uppermost fills and date to the 19th century.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The foundations of the “old moat” building lie on fills which have earlier been demonstrated to contain artefactual material dating to the early part of the 18th century as well as some material as early as the 17th century. These deposits are rare and even though in a secondary dump context provide valuable information about ceramics and smoking pipes. The excavation of any service trenches or tree holes must be monitored by an archaeologist. It is possible that deposit removed from the holes will need to be sieved.

5.2 Large scale excavation of the moat extension at Darling Street should also be monitored to record any additional structural detail that is uncovered. Collection of artefactual material should be made in as far as the circumstances of mechanical excavation allow. Some finances have been set aside in the original budget for this purpose.

6. PROFESSIONAL TEAM

Fieldwork

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Report