

9/2/018/93

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BELLEVUE
(ST JOHN'S HOSTEL)
GARDENS, CAPE TOWN

9/2/018/93

LOCATION OF NINETEENTH CENTURY BURIAL GROUND

REPORT COMPILED FOR

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MAY 1996

INTRODUCTION

The brief was to establish where a nineteenth century burial ground was located on the property owned by St John's Hostel (previously the Bellevue estate), and to assess whether remnants of the feature still exist and/or would be affected by developments taking place in the upper area of the grounds. This report puts the site into historical context, describes and gives illustrations from the sources used, and suggests where the burial ground is located on the present landscape.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The existence of the burial ground was already known from an architectural history compiled by Paul de Villiers as part of the academic requirements of the Architecture Department, University of Cape Town. De Villiers's report was found to be very thorough and competent. He covered the property transfers and architectural history with the use of title and transfer deeds, contemporary pictures and photographs. A fuller use of historical maps and survey plans of upper Table Valley should be made, however, if any further research is planned for Bellevue.

The burial ground is associated with the family of Michiel Smuts, who owned and occupied the property Belvedere for a century, from 1760 to about 1850. It then passed into the hands of the Hofmeyer family through the re-marriage of the fourth Michiel Smuts's widow, Gerharda Weigh, to Hendrik Johannes Hofmeyer.

According to de Villiers, the burial ground was established by the second Michiel Smuts (registered owner 1793 to 1824).

An interesting detail ... is the mention of a portion of the property ... that had been set apart by the second Michiel as a "place of Sepulchre for the family" which has to remain without hindrance.

De Villiers supposed that 'this graveyard has since disappeared', though the sepulchre is marked on a survey diagram as late as 1929.

LOCATION OF THE BURIAL GROUND

The method used for locating the burial ground was to find the original documents and survey diagrams, filed in the Surveyor General's Office either with grants or with transfers of registered title. It is our experience that the copies made for filing and reproduction may leave out small details and lose the clarity of the original, often coloured, manuscripts. Illustrations from these documents are included in the last section of this report.

The burial ground was first surveyed in 1850 (SG diagram 553/1850 attached to transfer deed T351 dated 30 May 1855). The diagram shows a plot of just over 44 square roods with a 'sepulchre' within the area. It adjoined the north side of the 'Road from Camps Bay' near the intersection with a 'Cattle Road' coming from the south. It is also plotted on the survey diagrams made in 1856 and 1929, which show clearly its relationship to the main dwelling and the roads.

By making overlays, to about the same scale, from the survey diagrams and modern plan, it was possible to see that the burial ground must have been located between

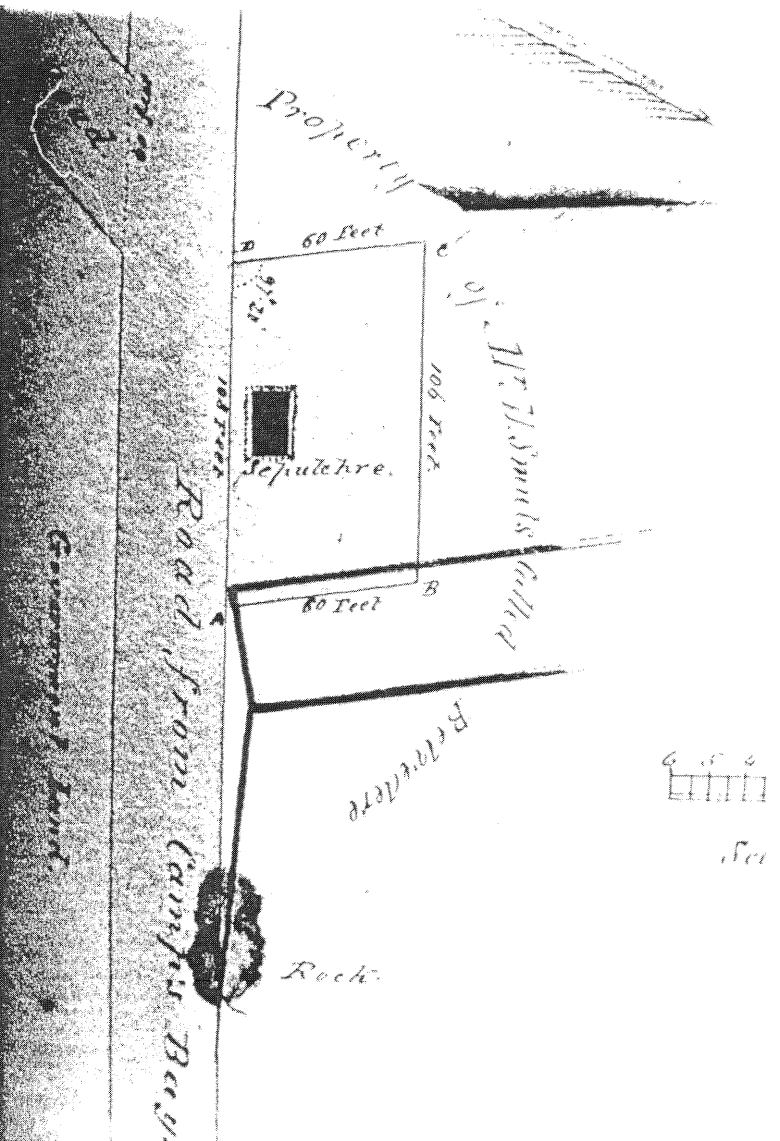
the back of St John's Hostel main complex and across the south end of the building lying behind (south-west). The rough location of the sepulchre itself is marked in a figure at the end of this report.

DISCUSSION

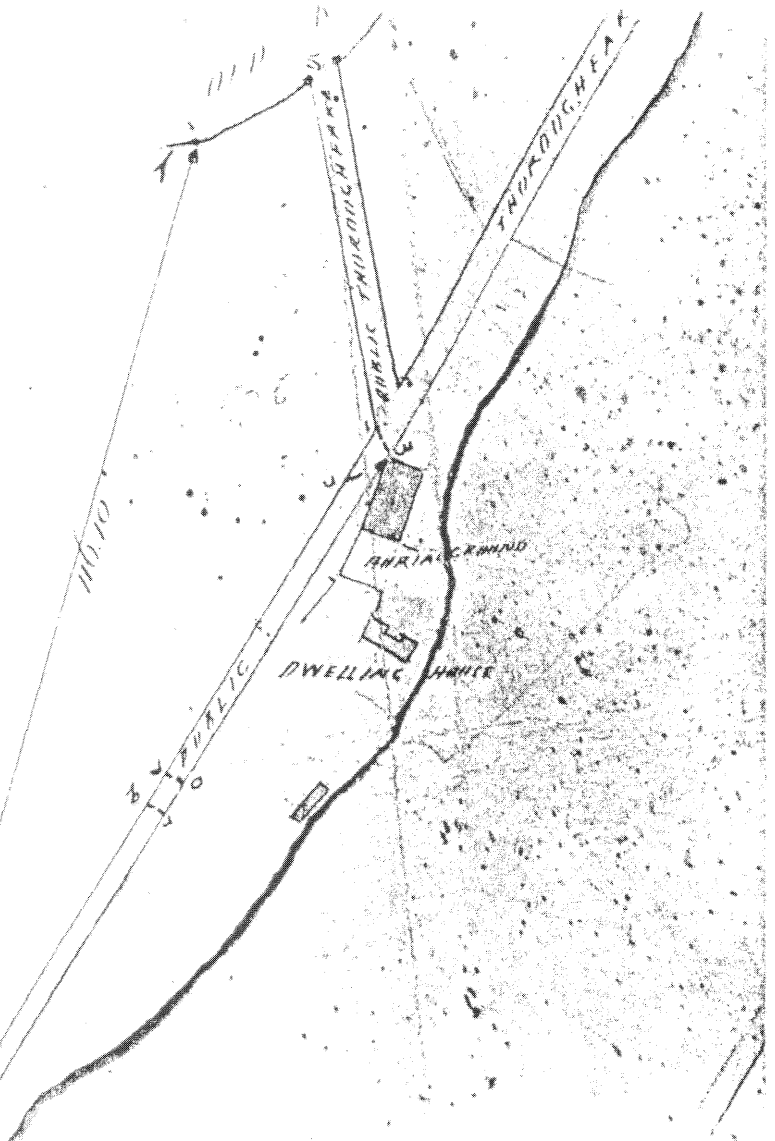
It was originally supposed that the burial ground lay beneath the sports field in the southern area of the property. It has now been demonstrated that, if there are still remains to be found, they will be discovered behind the main buildings. It is probable that the sepulchre was destroyed when the rear parts of the hostel were built, and there may be references to this on the builders' plans of the 1920s onwards or in the Hostel's files. If any redevelopment work is proposed in this area, it should be noted that preliminary archaeological investigation would be advisable.

A careful scrutiny of the survey diagrams of 1856 and 1929 shows the buildings in existence at those times, though these may only include the major structures. Of particular significance is the route of a river running through the centre of the property. Rubbish was often thrown in water courses near dwellings, and so these are archaeologically sensitive areas. The feature of relevance to the current development, however, is a rectangular structure on the river beside Higgs Avenue. This is coloured blue on the manuscript, and was possibly a water storage tank. It is recommended that the location of this feature is pointed out to the developer so that it can be investigated and recorded if it is exposed.

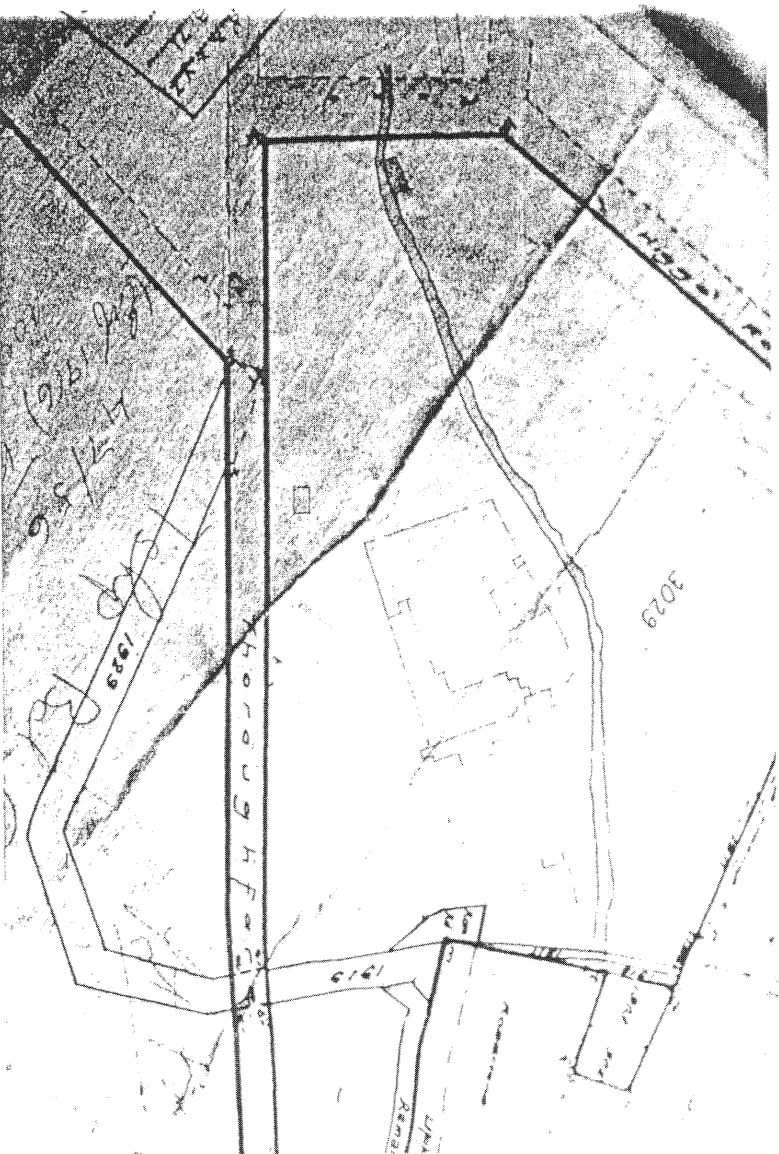
ILLUSTRATIONS IN CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE



Survey diagram of burial ground and sepulchre, 1850
(SG 553/1850 filed with T351 30/5/1855).



Survey diagram showing 'dwelling house' and 'burial ground', 1856
(SG1075/1856 filed with re-grant, Cape Freehold vol.15, no.17, 19/11/1856).



Survey diagram showing river and rectangular feature, buildings and re-routed 'thoroughfare', 1929
(filed with Certificate of Amended Title, 5/7/1929, document no.6789).



Modern plan with old road and rough location of sepulchre shown.