

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF WORTELGAT FARM, STANFORD, WESTERN CAPE.

Prepared for

Environmental Evaluation Unit

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1 Executive summary

The ACO of the University of Cape Town was appointed by the EEU to undertake a heritage impact assessment of Wortelgat Farm, Stanford, Western Cape Province. An initial inspection of the area has revealed that in general terms impacts to protected heritage resources will be low. The property however, contains part of a Historic Landscape (a past impact caused by subdivision) on which there are several structures and features of local historical significance. Positive benefits will be derived from proper historical research and the continued informed conservation of standing structures and features.

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3 Approach

The Archaeology Contracts Office of the University of Cape Town (UCT) was appointed by the Environmental Evaluation Unit of UCT to conduct a heritage impact assessment (as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)) of land adjacent to the Kleinriviersvlei at Hermanus, Western Cape Province. The land in question, which is owned by the Wortelgat Outreach Trust, has been subject to low-key development involving cottages and camps. A further phase of work (phase 3) is envisaged involving the construction of cottages for the proposed family camp, further cottages at the existing Stables camp, a playing field, a swimming pool and changes to access roads. Both the existing outreach activities as well as the construction of further facilities have the potential to impact on heritage resources of the area (pre-colonial period and colonial period archaeological sites, structures, historic landscapes and landscape features). These need to be identified and potential impacts mitigated.

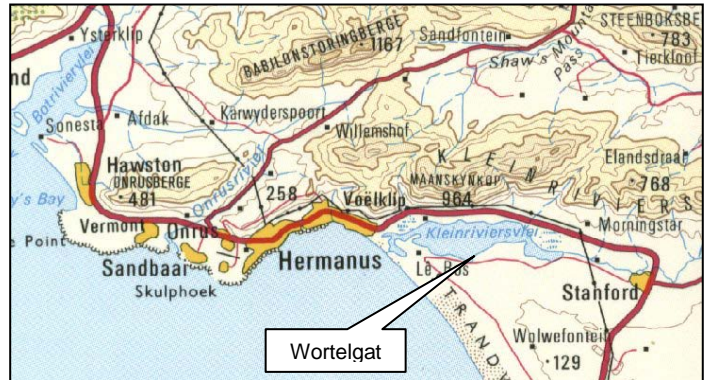


Figure 1 location of Wortelgat

3.1 Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the specialist archaeological study are as follows:

- Identify any areas of historical or archaeological significance on the designated site such as the wagon tracks and possible middens.
- Make recommendations to prevent or mitigate possible negative impacts during the operational phase.
- Make suggestions about what information could be included in an introductory history lecture for campers using Wortelgat.

3.2 Method

Members of the ACO visited the study area on 26 February 2002. The manager, Mr Pat Diederichs, indicated the areas that were to be developed. These were searched on foot for indications of archaeological material. Standing structures were examined for their heritage significance in terms of the provisions of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999). Time constraints did not permit a detailed search of the entire property so a decision was made to focus on parts of the study area that would be exposed to most human activity as a result of the existing and proposed developments. This involved searching areas close to existing paths and activity areas. The camp manager kindly provided ACO with his local knowledge and directed us to places of significance such as

the wagon road on the ridges south of the property. All sites found were plotted using a Garmin GPS3 Plus (datum WGS84).

3.3 Restrictions to the study

Dense vegetation and ground cover on many parts of the site decreased ground surface visibility. The amount of time set aside for the fieldwork, namely 1 working day allowed for the completion of a focused site inspection rather than comprehensive survey. Archival research into the local history of Wortelgat and surrounds was not included in the Terms of Reference.

4 Description of the affected environment.

The study area lies on the south side of the Kleinriviersvlei about 8 km due east of Stanford in the south Western Cape Province. The land is currently uncultivated (although there are signs of past fields), once being part of the larger farm Wortelgat. According to the manager about 50% of the area is infested with alien vegetation; however the edge of the vlei is vegetated with dense Milkwood groves, and fynbos. The local geology is mostly limestone and calcrete of the Bredasdorp formation. Past experience has shown that the pre-colonial coastal sites of the mid-late Holocene (last 4000 years) are fairly common along the rocky shorelines of the South African Coast. They are prevalent close to shallow rocks shelves (exposed at low tide) as well as close to sheltered bays where marine food could be collected with ease. Estuaries were not as attractive due to the decreased amounts of shellfish species that were available to prehistoric people. It is also known that shell middens of the late pre-colonial period are occasionally found associated with Milkwood thickets, some of which are old enough to have provided shelter to prehistoric people who camped under the canopies, however due to the lack of easily exploitable food sources, it was anticipated that few sites would be located in the study area.

The many farm buildings in the Western Cape often consist of very old buildings that have been altered over the years to the extent that on outward appearance they are often aesthetically un-appealing and of little historic interest. The reality of the situation is that very often the cores of such buildings contain fine examples of vernacular architecture that can be brought to the fore by careful redevelopment. For this reason the standing structures that were once Wortelgat farm needed to be examined - in particular Stables camp and the nearby structures on the adjoining property (Spookhuis).

5 Impact identification and assessment

5.1 Pre-colonial material

No pre-colonial archaeological material was found associated with the developed and proposed phase 3 area. This however does not preclude the possibility that such sites do exist on the property. Direct impacts from the proposed development are unlikely.

5.2 Structures and other sites

The Wortelgat farm/Historic landscape complex (34° 25' 37.5" S 19° 21' 13.1" E) dates to the late 19th century according to the manager, Mr Pat Diederichs. This observation is further verified by the architecture of the early structures on the site. The farmyard (*werf*) has been unfortunately sub-divided with the result that a boundary fence appears to divide the historic farm complex into two portions, the eastern most of which is owned by the Wortegat Outreach Trust. This is an unfortunate past impact which has placed a divide through a historic landscape of local significance. In all, the farm complex east of the boundary consists of: -

The Barn - This is a conservation-worthy vernacular structure (stables), which has been very nicely readapted to provide accommodation and a kitchen area for Stables Camp. Its continued use in its current form is a benefit in that the fabric of the structure remains conserved and cared for.

Wortelgat - a large person-made hole (34° 25' 41.5" S 19° 21' 11.0" E) within the Milkwood grove excavated into the limestone, which provided the farm with fresh water. The hole is now filled with humus, but according to the manager is still capable of providing fresh water. The site is important, as it is this feature that gave rise to the name of the place, having enabled the settlement of the area in the past.

On the west side of the boundary fence is the: -

Spookhuis - A well preserved but deserted industrial structure built from local limestone. Built at the end of the 19th century this was apparently a cheese factory. All openings into the building have been bricked up (no doubt to protect the interior from vandals). The structure which represents a regionally unique aspect of industrial heritage, would benefit by informed and carefully managed redevelopment. On the other hand, a badly informed and poorly researched "restoration" would have a negative impact on the significance of the site.

Small house - a small vernacular structure currently in use. This is older than 60 years of age and is therefore protected. Being part of the Wortelgat complex, the building is significant in terms of its group value. Neglect, vandalism or illegal alteration or demolition will negatively impact not only the building but also the site as a whole, while sensitive redevelopment will conserve the fabric and contribute to the group value of the place.

Wagon Road - a disused wagon road (34° 25' 54.0" S 19° 21' 9.0" E) is visible on the north side of the main access road along the edge of the property. The old road, although overgrown with vegetation, is clearly visible as it cuts into the limestone ridge. The wheel ruts of the wagons can be clearly seen where they have worn tracks into the limestone. The site has been somewhat impacted by natural deterioration, however there no evidence that it is frequently visited which could result in accelerated erosion.

6 Legislation

The South African Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 protects structures, historic landscapes, significant places, archaeological sites, artifacts, graves and palaeontological sites. It indicates the *significance criteria* by which they are assessed and graded. Alteration, demolition or disturbance may only take place in terms of a permit issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency.

7 Mitigation

7.1 Structures

With respect to the Wortelgat property, it is not expected that further development will have a negative impact on heritage resources, unless improper decisions are made with respect to alterations to standing structures and features that are over 60 years old. (Assessment of Impacts is summarized on Table 1). Positive and neutral impacts will be achieved through the careful management and mitigation of the human made elements of the environment. To this end the following guidelines are offered.

- Removal of the fence dividing the elements of the Wortelgat farm near Stables Camp would be a positive impact in that it will bring together the different elements of the historic farm.
- Redevelopment of historic buildings must take place under a permit issued by South African Heritage Resources Agency. Rigorous archival research and photographic recording by a suitably qualified professional must be an integral part of any redevelopment.
- A sound guideline in terms of the treatment of historic buildings and fabric is: *"change as little as possible, but as much as is necessary"*.

7.2 Wortelgat

The water hole is currently uncelebrated in any way. Apart from natural processes, impacts are neutral.

- A policy of non-intervention is recommended although erecting a small storyboard explaining the significance of the feature will be of benefit.
- Possible impacts could occur if trees become uprooted, and in so doing crack or collapse the sides of the hole. This needs to be monitored.

7.3 Wagon tracks

Like Wortelgat, the wagon tracks are uncelebrated. Their historic significance is unclear without an archival study into the historic routes of the area.

- Impacts to the tracks are currently neutral, however some benefit may be obtained by obtaining enough oral and written information to include them as a topic in the outreach education.
- Should a decision be made to bring people onto the site, they must be restricted to a formal viewing area or platform to limit erosion of the soft limestone (caused by the cumulative impact of people walking).

7.4 Pre-colonial sites

No pre-colonial sites have been identified close to the camps, cottages and other activity areas. Sites may exist in buried context or hidden by thick vegetation. To mitigate possible impacts to as yet undiscovered archaeological sites it is important that some simple guidelines are followed:

- Avoid opening new roads where possible, rather attempt to re-use or restore existing road alignments.
- Do not allow 4x4 vehicles to leave established routes.
- Objects found in the veld (excluding litter) should be left where they are found, and a record should be made of their position. If in doubt, contact an archaeologist for advice.

8 Educational potential

There is enormous potential to further the understanding of the environment by educating people about the history of the way that humans have lived in it and utilized it in the past. A lot is known about the history of the Stanford region with important archaeological excavations having taken place at Byneskranskop (near Gansbaai) and Die Kelders archaeological site just south of Gansbaai. Aspects of education could focus on how prehistoric people lived in the landscape, the places they favoured and the food they collected - shellfish, fish, hunted animals and wild edible plants.

Similarly the local history of Wortelgat is a topic that could be researched in detail - where did the wagon road go to and who used it? The general history of Stanford region is another theme - the way in which first Khoi Khoi, then trekboers moved their animals from place to place in response to grazing needs. Why did the town develop? Did the Wortelgat cheese factory make cheese for Hermanus - how was it made and who did the work? Did dairy farmers change the local landscape with their activities?

These few ideas presented above could be a basis for an educational opportunity. It will be necessary to collect and collate the known local history sources, and if necessary obtain primary archival information. An archaeologist or historian could be approached to put together an educational package that teachers could present to visitors at the camp. Both UCT, and the South African Museum could be approached in this regard.

9 Key references

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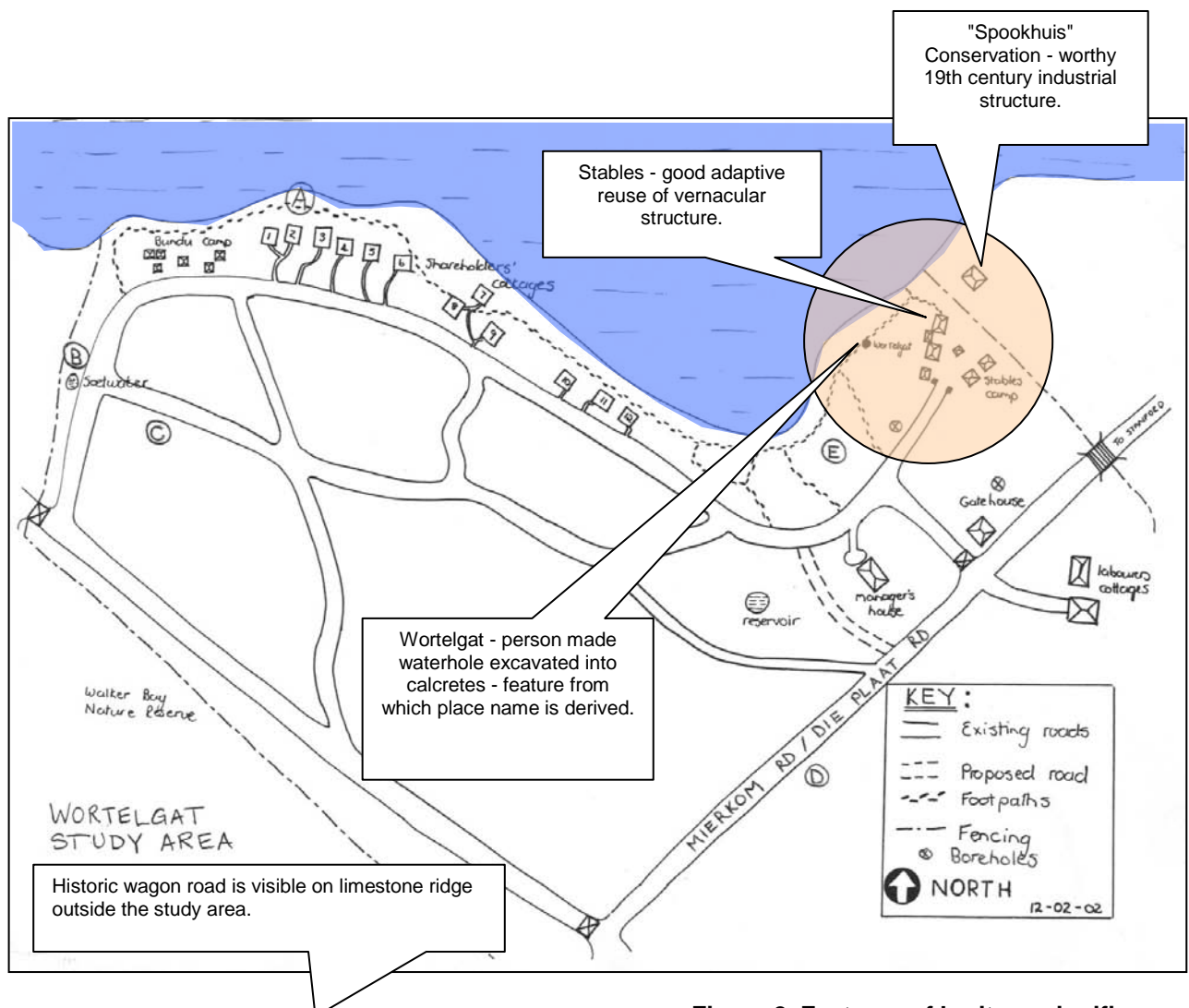


Figure 2 Features of heritage significance

Feature	Timing	Extent	Duration	Intensity	Magnitude	Probability
Pre-colonial	Operation	Local	Long-term	Low	Low	Improbable
Stables	Operation	Local	Long-term	Low	Low	Probable
Wortelgat	Operation	Local	Long-term	Low	Low	Improbable
Historic Landscape Incl. Spookhuis	Operation	Local	Long-term	Low	Low	Probable

Feature	Significance	Without mitigation	Significance	With mitigation	Confidence
Pre-colonial	Low	Negative	Medium	Positive	High
Stables	Low	Neutral - negative	Medium	Positive	Medium
Wortelgat	Low	Neutral	Medium	Positive	High
Historic landscape Incl. Spookhuis	Medium	Neutral - negative	High	Positive	High

Table 1 Impacts and assessment significance during development and operation - Wortelgat Heritage.