INVESTIGATION OF STONE STRUCTURE: LANGEBAAN COUNTRY CLUB

Prepared for

Langebaan Country Club

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Prepared by

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1. INTRODUCTION

On the 22nd of June members of the Archaeology Contracts Office inspected a feature, believed to be a well, which had been discovered during the landscaping of the golf course at the Langebaan Country Club. Prior to its discovery the structure had been hidden below a large stand of bush which had no doubt prevented the shaft from being filled by sand and other debris since the time of its abandonment. The top of the shaft at the time of discovery was level with the prevailing ground. Extra courses of stone were added for safety when it was subsequently incorporated as a feature of the tee of hole number 4 on the golf course. The location of the country club and the approximate position of the structure are shown in Figure 1.

2. INSPECTION

A schematic section of the structure is presented in Figure 2. With the use of a long ladder a descent was made into the shaft after an inspection from the surface satisfied us that the sides were stable. The shaft which has a diameter of approximately 1.3 meters is constructed with limestone chunks, none of which appear to have been specifically dressed for the construction. It would appear however that flatter faces or edges have been selected to face onto the shaft. No mortar is observed between the blocks in the original part of the shaft. The addition of blocks at the surface, and the platform surrounding the shaft have been built with cement.

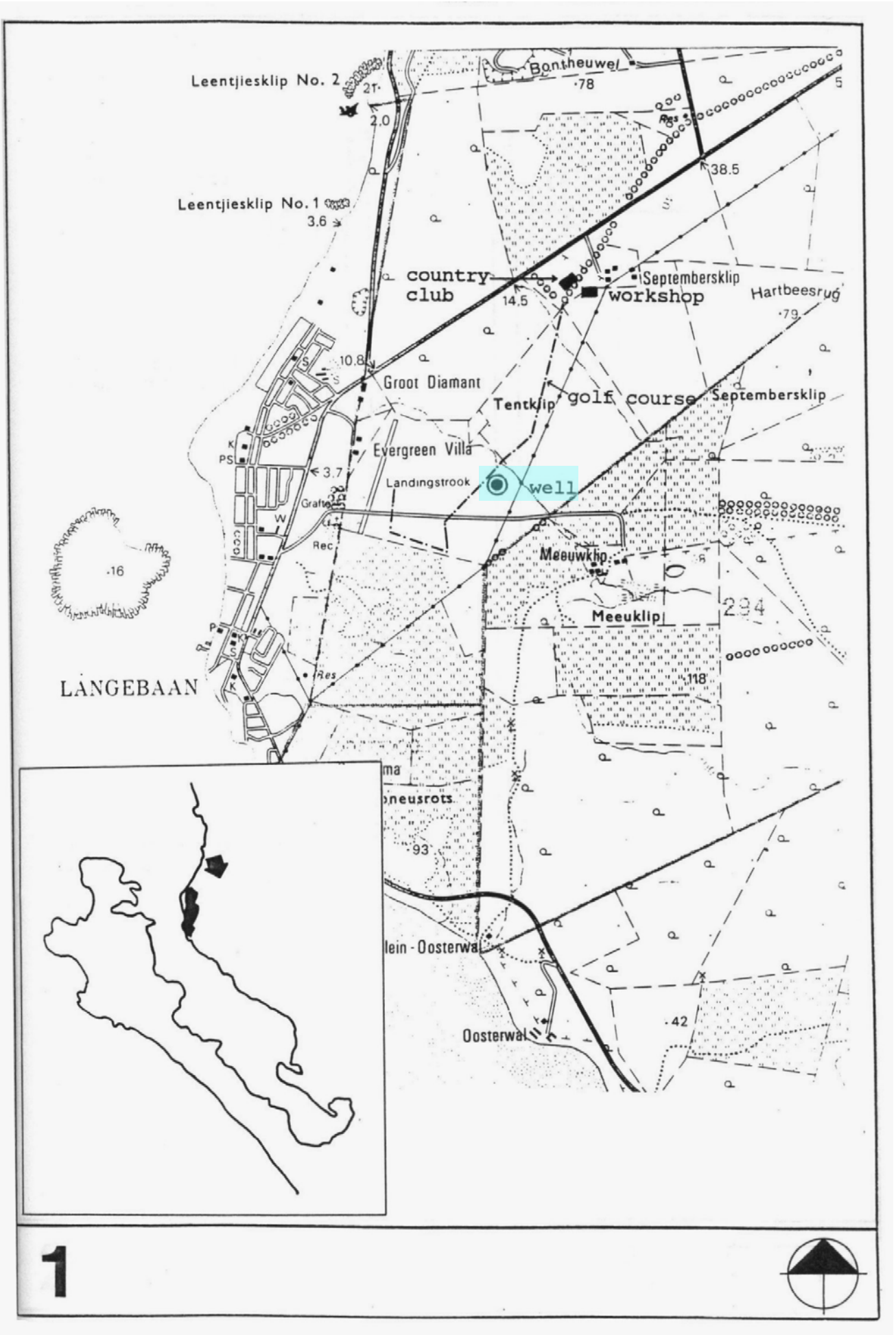
Because the blocks are not dressed, large gaps occur between the stones. Through these gaps more stone is visible. It appears that this is a rubble packing behind the facing stones in the shaft. The groundsman had earlier commented to us that while building the addition at the top of the shaft he had noticed that a "pavement" of limestone chunks extended some distance around the perimeter of the shaft. This may have been the top of a surrounding rubble packing which extended the length of the shaft but it is not possible to confirm this without conducting more substantial excavations. There were no indications that any fixtures had been attached to the walls of the shaft.

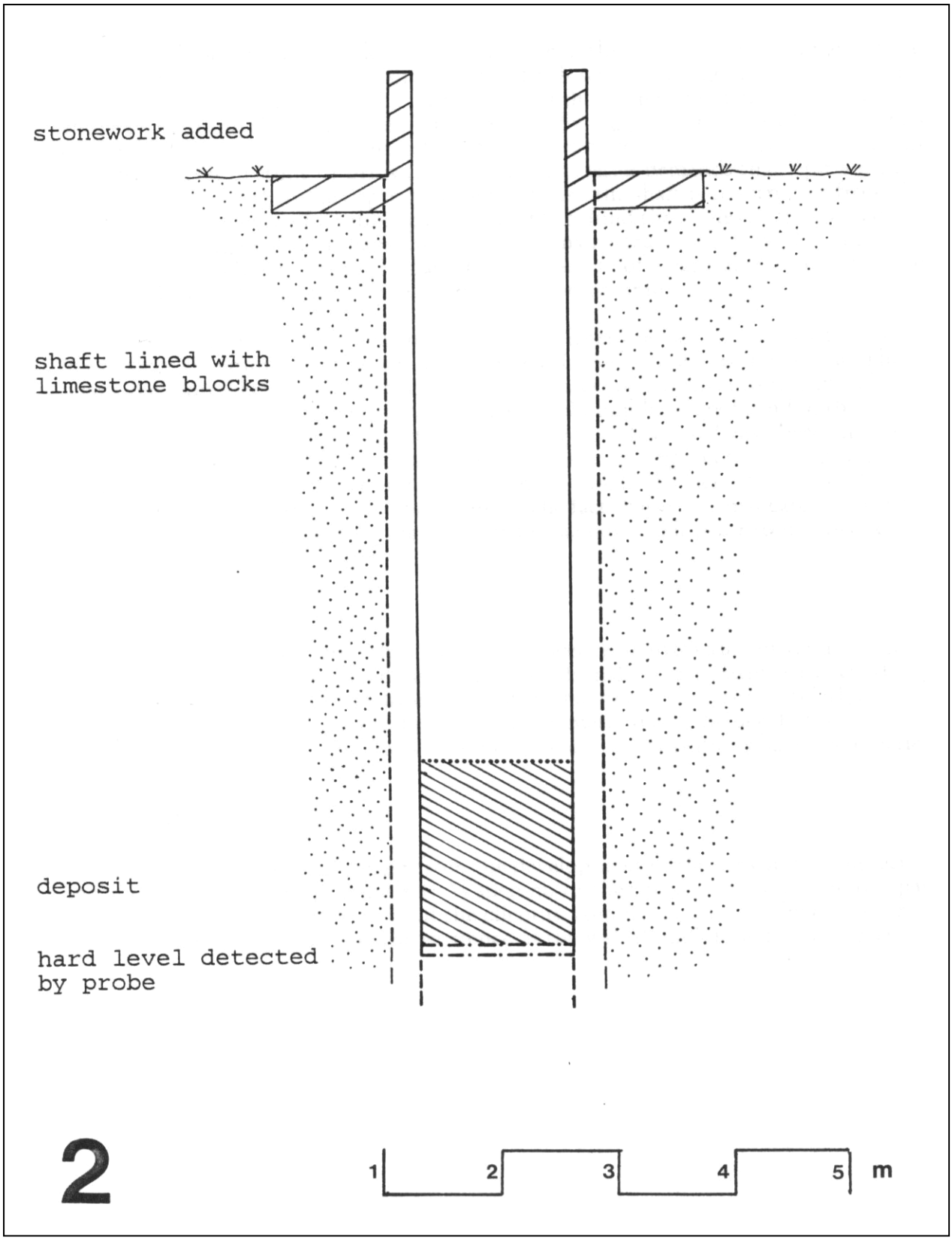
Deposit was encountered in the shaft at a depth of 6 meters from the present lip. Two small test pits were dug to a depth of approximately 0.5 meter to reveal a uniform, light gray, sandy deposit. From this point a steel probe was pushed down into the deposit at various places to try and establish an approximate depth of the feature. On four occasions we had refusal at depths ranging between 1.6 and 1.7 meters below the upper part of the deposit. When the probe was withdrawn on all these occasions no indication of a water table was evident although dampness was detected. This dampness is probably due to precipitation from the surface not being evaporated in the depths of the shaft. Probe refusal was against a hard surface or objects. It is not possible to say with absolute certainty that this is the stone base of the structure without more excavations being conducted in the shaft.

No artefactual material was noticed in the deposit in the shaft or at the surface in the vicinity of the shaft.

3. DISCUSSION

According to Mr. Preston who notified us of the presence of the feature and who is a resident of the area, none of the locals had any knowledge of the feature. The only wells which are known about today are found close to the edge of the Langebaan lagoon. The lack of


Leentjiesklip No. 2
Bontheuwel
78
2.0
38.5
Leentjiesklip No. 1
3.6
country club
14.5
workshop
Septembersklip
Hartbeesrug
79
10.8
Groot Diamant
Tentklip
golf course
Septembersklip
Evergreen Villa
3.7
Landingstrook
well
Graf
Rec
Meeuwkop
Meeuklip
204
16
LANGEBAAN
118
Res
93
Oosterwal
42
1


stonework added
shaft lined with limestone blocks
deposit
hard level detected by probe
2
1
2
3
4
5
m

artefactual material makes it difficult to make a quick assessment of relative age. Similarly the use of locally quarried limestone for the construction denies us the opportunity of assessing age through the type of construction material used. (In larger centers brick types are an important indication of age while the use of dressed stone was more common in the Dutch period.)

The sandy deposits which make up the substrate in this area would presumably have made it rather difficult to dig a shaft of this depth without using one of two methods namely the caisson-method or the pit-method. In the former the structure is built above ground and slowly lowered into the earth by digging out deposit from the base of the shaft. The structure is usually seated on a wooden base of some sort to stabilise the first courses of stone or brick that are laid. The latter demands that a pit with a large diameter is dug to the depth required and then the shaft is constructed from the base up. The presence of rubble packing visible behind the stones of the immediate shaft would suggest that perhaps this well was constructed in this way. We cannot exclude the possibility that in the past this was the site of a natural seep, which if used by animals would have caused a pit to have formed naturally.

The fact that no water is present may mean that either the base of the structure is lower than we estimate or that the water table is lower than it was in the past. This seems the more likely of the two as a source of water such as this is unlikely to have been "lost" unless it no longer served a purpose. No buildings are found in the immediate vicinity at present and it would appear that this has always been the case. The lack of domestic buildings close to the water source suggests that perhaps the water was being used to water animals. This may explain the lack of artefactual material either in the shaft or in the vicinity. The fact that no animal carcasses were found in the shaft suggests that the dense bush that covered it prior to its discovery has been in place for some time.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This structure is almost certainly a well. The absence of artefactual material in the test holes as well as the informal building materials make it impossible to assess the age without conducting a more detailed study of the history of this area. Similarly, although we have speculated on the construction method and the depth, these conclusions can only be confirmed once more extensive excavations have been carried out.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The structure is not in any danger from the development of the area and has in fact become a feature of the tee at hole 4. As such no further mitigatory action on our part is necessary. It remains the option of the client to commission further investigation of the circumstances surrounding the existence of the well should it be deemed necessary.

6. PROFESSIONAL TEAM

Fieldwork and report	Dave Halkett Tim Hart