

**AN INITIAL INVESTIGATION OF ERF 23346,  
FORMERLY THE CEMETERY OF THE ST STEPHENS  
ANGLICAN CHURCH, PAARL.**

Prepared for

**The Survey Partnership**

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Prepared by

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Erf 23346 is a portion of erf 23347. These two properties were once owned by the Anglican Church and portions of it were used as a private burial ground (mostly on erf 23347), while in later years a school, a hall and some residential buildings were erected (on erf 23346). The last burials in the cemetery took place c1938 and an application to close the cemetery was granted in June 1973 after the intention to close was advertised in accordance with Provincial Ordinance 19 of 1951<sup>1</sup>.

Between 1973 and 1975, exhumation was undertaken at the site, in preparation for sale of the land by the church to the Dept. of Community Development. Both the Paarl municipality and the Anglican Church believed all human remains had been removed during this exercise and their views are reflected in letters to that effect<sup>2,3</sup>. The municipality also indicated that some form of excavations took place in the graveyard in the 1960's. No further information is however available about this.

It is not clear why no development of the site took place at that time but extracts from the "lêefis" of the Paarl Municipality on 19 April 1995, seem to indicate that the land was owned by Community Development who had allowed the buildings on the site to fall into a state of disrepair. By 1978 the school had been demolished.

Proposals have recently been put forward to develop the site and the developers were requested to carry out an investigation of the site by the local authority following the discovery of human remains in a services trench on erf 23347. The Archaeology Contracts Office was contacted in this regard and following a site visit, undertook an investigation of a portion of the site. A permit to undertake the investigation of the site was applied for as required by the National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 and the go-ahead to begin was given pending issue of the permit.

The part of the site that was investigated was identified by older members of the St Stephens congregation who visited the site with the current parish priest, Father R. Cox prior to our commencing excavations. An enlargement of a portion of a 1945 aerial photograph shows the site<sup>4</sup>, as it appeared after the last burials were made. The presence of graves on the portion of land that is now erf 23347 is clearly visible, and an apparently walled portion of land on erf 23346, consistent with what has been pointed out by informers, is also visible. The location of the property is shown on Figure 1.

## 2. METHOD

Having identified the most likely position of the graveyard on erf 23346, a mechanical digger was used to cut a series of trenches across a portion of the site as shown in Figure 2. Mechanical trenching went down to depth at which there were detectable signs of grave shaft after which digging was undertaken by hand to avoid significant disturbance. Trench width was limited on average to the width of the mechanical digger's bucket (approximately 80cm), but one trench was doubled in width to facilitate easier access to graves. Only a small area of each grave was opened to see what was present and was then recovered with soil.

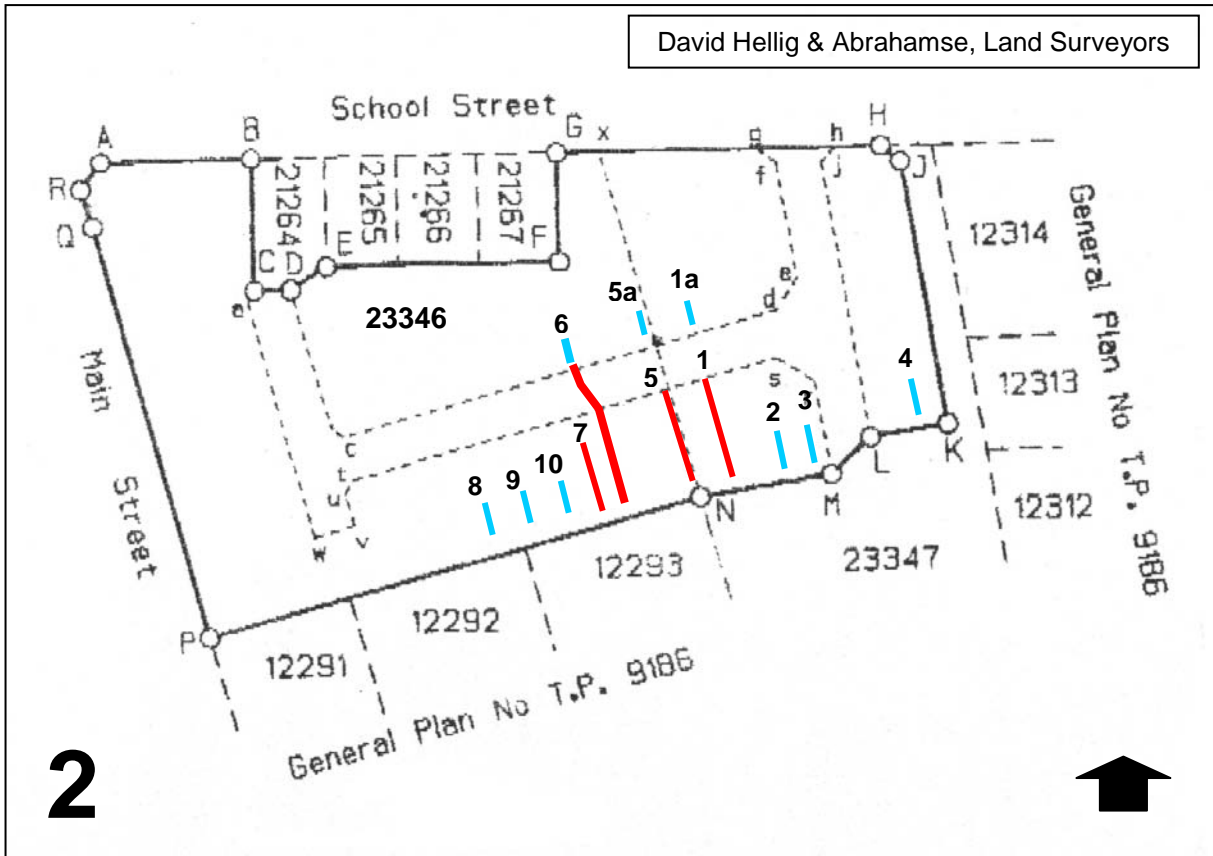
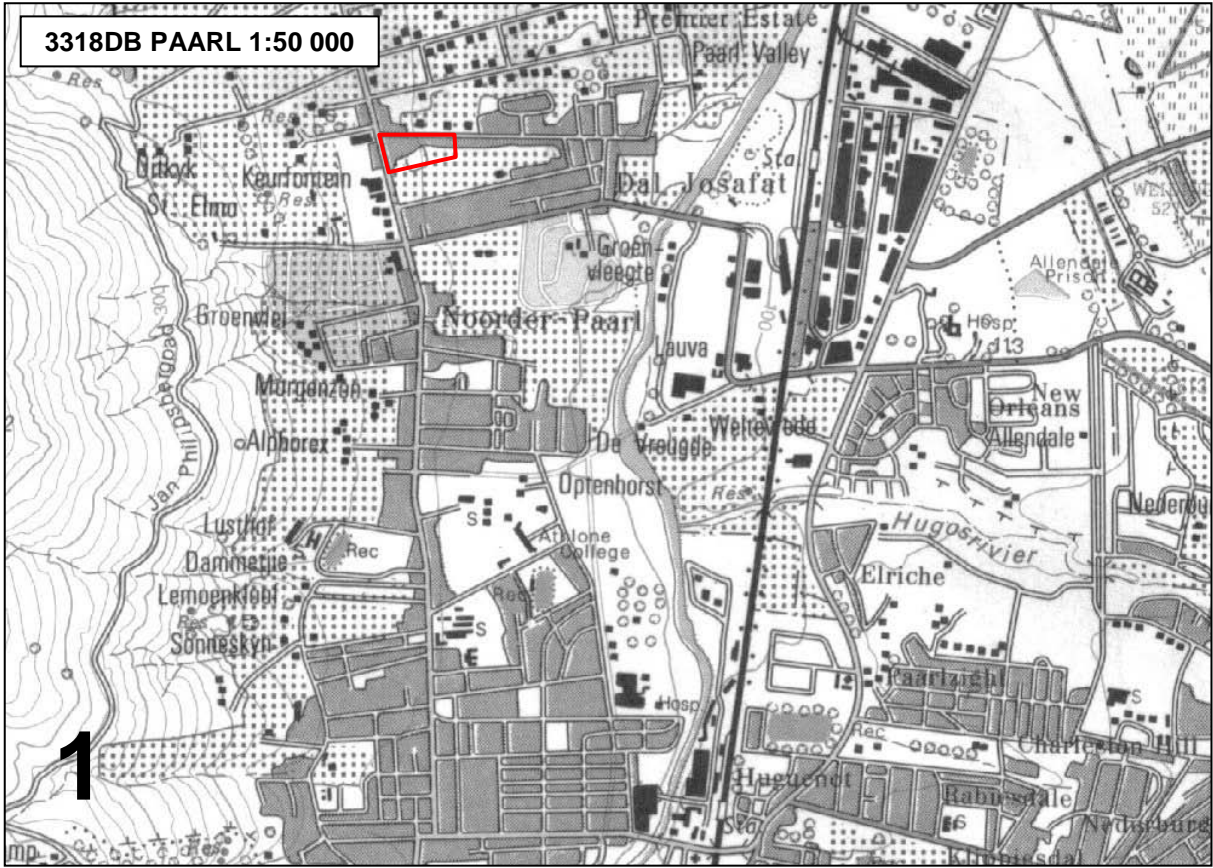
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<sup>1</sup> Section 213(2)

<sup>2</sup> Dept of Community Development – letter from Paarl Municipality ref: G.3/3, 20 May 1976

<sup>3</sup> Dept of Community Development – letter from St Stephens Church, 29 January 1975

<sup>4</sup> Chief Directorate of Surveys and Mapping – Job No. 204, Strip 10, Photo No. 533, Date 1945



### 3. OBSERVATIONS

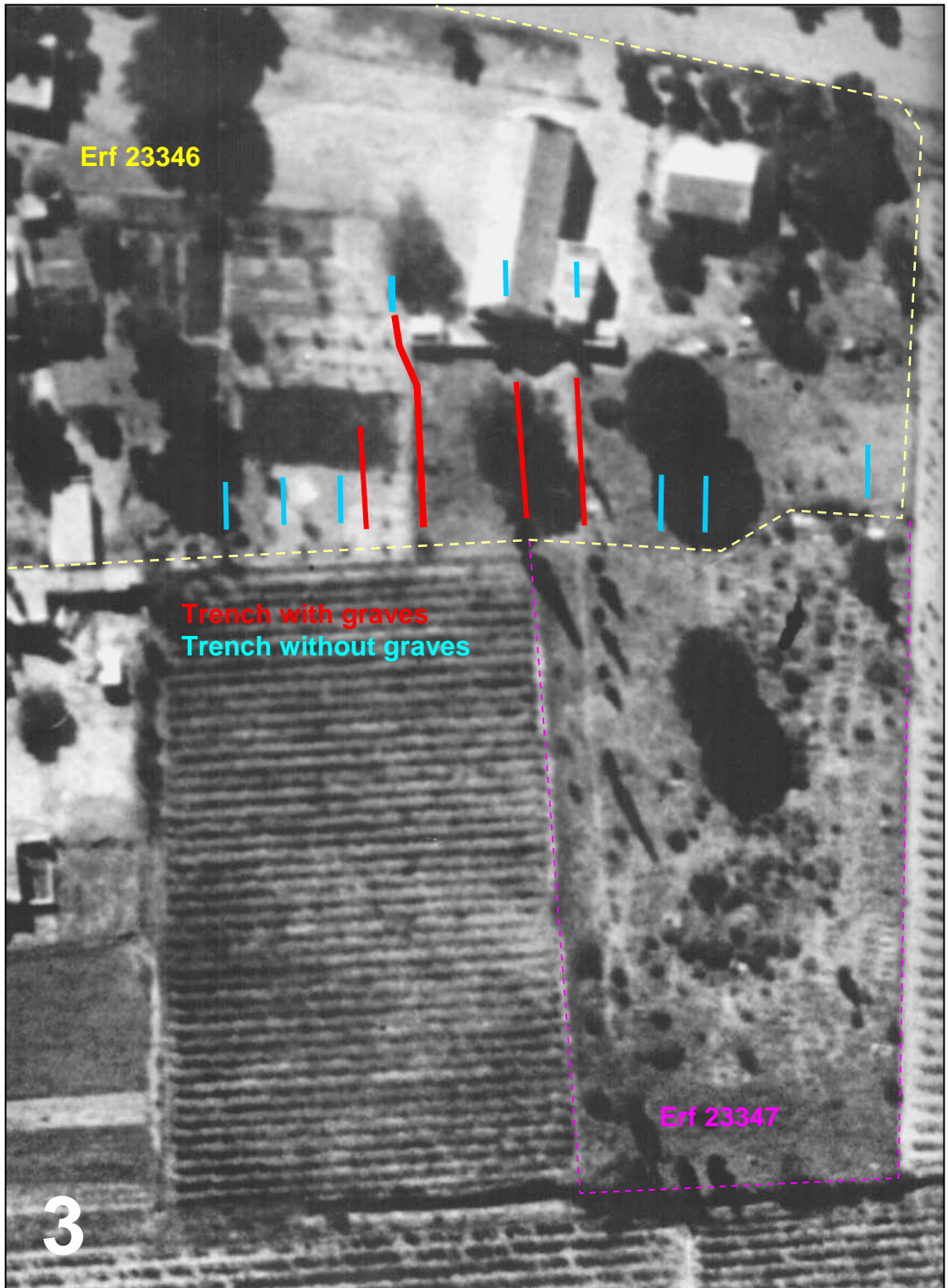
Ten trenches were excavated in a north-south direction over the area identified by informants, as well as beyond (see Figure 2). In this way we were able to identify the area of the old burial ground fairly accurately. The superimposition of the survey diagram and the trench locations over a portion of the aerial photograph shows clearly where this area is (Figure 3) in relation to structural features that existed at that time (1945). Trenches that produced evidence of graves are coloured red, while trenches in which no evidence of graves were encountered are coloured light blue. It must be noted that the trench orientations and positions as they appear on both Figures 2 & 3 are very close approximations rather than accurately surveyed features. Our measurements were made with 30m tape measures from various points on the vibracrete wall. It is nevertheless probably a reasonably accurate placement.

It seems clear from these observations that the subdivision between erf 23346 and 23347 has been made along the northern extent of the main graveyard. No burial evidence was found on the northern side of the vibracrete wall that now marks the boundary (trenches 4,3,2) adjacent to erf 23347. Similarly, trenches dug to the west towards Main road, (trenches 8,9,10) have also produced no evidence of burials.

Trenches 1,5,6 & 7 have all produced evidence of burials as shown in the table below.

TRENCH	# of graves	Contain bone	Coffin remains	Empty
1	14	6	12	?
5	16	10	15	?
6	29	0	28	1
7	4	0	3	1
<b>total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>2</b>

We have not exposed whole graves but rather have identified the edges of shafts all of which lay at right angles to our trenches i.e. in an east-west direction with heads apparently on the western side. One grave appeared to have been oriented in a north-south direction but we cannot be absolutely sure because of disturbance in the area. The spacing between grave centerlines roughly measured is between 80 and 100cm. The deepest grave base was at 160cm below surface while the shallowest was encountered at 70cm. The variation in depth is clearly due to the loss of topsoil over the years due to various building and landscaping activities. Coffin remains were without exception in a highly decomposed condition. This is probably due in part to highly acidic groundwater and age of the material (the majority probably in excess of 70-80 years). No *in situ* stone grave surrounds or headstones were observed. Fragments of 2 marble headstones (with partial inscriptions – but no surnames) were found in trench 7, while dressed granite grave surrounds and fragments of monumental work were found at the northern ends of trenches 1 and 7 appearing to have been dumped in pits.



Extract from a 1945 aerial photograph

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Observations made during the investigation show:

- That burials on were contained within a very defined and relatively small part of erf 23346;
- That there is evidence of an incomplete exhumation process. Some graves are empty while others still contain human remains;
- That no gravestones have been preserved *in situ* to assist with immediate identification of burials. Although fragments of headstones and granite grave surrounds have been located in some trenches they appear to have been dumped.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ In terms of the legislation<sup>5</sup>, Section 36, Paragraph 5 states:

*SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority may not issue a permit for any activity under subsection (3)(b)<sup>6</sup> unless it is satisfied that the applicant has, in accordance with regulations made by the responsible heritage resources authority—*

*(a) made a concerted effort to contact and consult communities and individuals who by tradition have an interest in such grave or burial ground; and*

*(b) reached agreements with such communities and individuals regarding the future of such grave or burial ground.*

In terms of fulfilling these requirements, the Anglican church, more specifically Father Cox, is probably best placed to make contact with IAAP's.

- If possible, the church should supply a layout plan of the cemetery to assist with possible identification of graves;
  - If possible, the church should also provide a list of those people who were exhumed during in the 1970's to eliminate possible erroneous objections or claims;
  - Failing documentation of the above being provided to allow identification of individuals, a proposal should be presented to the IAAP's suggesting reburial of all remains to be exhumed at a single cemetery. The choice of cemetery should be decided by general consensus. The nature of a grave marker should similarly be decided by consensus;
  - All costs connected with exhumation and re-interment will be borne by the developer of erf 23346;
  - Consideration should be given to the planting of a tree of remembrance (or erection of another appropriate marker) at the site of the cemetery.
- In terms of the regulations of the NHRA, a period of advertising of the intent to exhume is required as set out in the following extracts:

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<sup>5</sup> Full copies of the legislation and regulations can be found on the SAHRA website : <http://www.sahra.org.za/>

<sup>6</sup> (3) *No person may, without a permit issued by SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority—*

*(b) destroy, damage, alter, exhume, remove from its original position or otherwise disturb any grave or burial ground older than 60 years which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority;*

**CHAPTER XI**  
**PROCEDURE FOR CONSULTATION REGARDING BURIAL GROUNDS AND GRAVES**  
**(SECTION 36 (5))**

38.(1) *This chapter applies to any person with the intention to destroy, damage, alter, remove from its original position or otherwise disturb any grave or burial ground older than 60 years which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority.*

39.(1) *The applicant must make a concerted effort to identify the descendants and family members of the persons buried in and/or any other person or community by tradition concerned with such grave or burial ground by*

- (a) archival and documentary research regarding the origin of the grave or burial ground;*
- (b) direct consultation with local community organisations and/or members;*
- (c) the erection for at least 60 days of a notice at the grave or burial ground, displaying, in all the official languages of the province concerned, information about the proposals affecting the site, the telephone number and address at which the applicant can be contacted by any interested person and the date by which contact must be made, which must be at least seven days after the end of the period of erection of the notice; and*
- (d) advertising in the local press.*

*(2) The applicant must keep records of the actions undertaken under sub-regulation (1), including the names and contact details of all persons and organisations contacted and their response, and a copy of such records must be submitted to the provincial heritage resources authority with the application.*

- As the exhumation undertaken in the 1970's was advertised at the time under the requirements of the Exhumations Ordinance, SAHRA must be approached to give opinion on the necessity of re-advertising as per the regulations;
- If required, the advertising should be done as soon as possible to avoid delays to development in 2003.