

CRM report on Uitkyk Farm, Stellenbosch

1. Introduction

The brief received from Mr Heyneman was to undertake an initial study of the cultural resources and historical significance of Uitkyk as a guide to planning the restoration of the property. In this Phase 1 report we provide some guidelines for restoration and conservation. The focus of the report is on the homestead and this has been mapped in some detail. Only general comments are made on the werf and the outbuildings as a fuller survey was beyond the scope of this study. A Phase I study aims at identifying what features and elements of an historic property are preserved and are of cultural significance. With such information available decisions can be made on planning how to proceed with restoration or with gathering further relevant information. This study in including a room-by-room inventory of features of the homestead goes beyond the usual scope of a Phase 1 study. Floors, walls, doors, windows and ceilings in the homestead were assessed and the results are recorded on the accompanying plans.

The recommendations that follow out of this Phase 1 investigation are given below. Comments on the historical research results obtained thus far as well comments on the homestead and werf are made in further sections.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Uitkyk is a prestigious property and thus merits appropriate conservation. It has suffered from neglect and thus the proposal to restore the property is timely. The following recommendations are made to aid the programme of restoration.

A holistic approach needs to be taken to the restoration and conservation of the property. The homestead is not more important than its context in the werf. The outbuildings with which it is associated are parts of the same whole. All historical structures and features of the werf and surrounds are conservation worthy. Not all these have been identified at this stage but in particular the homestead serves as an example what can be learnt and what information is necessary to make decisions.

2.2. The historical records relating to Uitkyk prior to 1845 are not available in the deeds office or the archives. This means that piecing together the early history of the property will be a major task. It is recommended that an historian be contracted to take the archival research further allowing us to concentrate our efforts on the material remains.

2.3. The homestead has undergone various changes over time. Standard international conservation principles recommend that any restoration retain a record of change as part of the history of the dwelling and its owners. The guiding principle is restoration minimize impact on the historic fabric as now preserved.

2.3.1. The homestead is an aggregate of features which have significance in themselves. These are considered below. It suggested that immediate attention be given to protection of the contents of the house (furniture and paintings) though drapes or UV screening on the windows. It is also suggested that the preservation of the exterior woodwork be given high priority (see below).

2.3.1.1. Floors: Plans of the flooring are provided. Board width is an indication of age and boards of 300 mm width are the oldest. Some evaluation needs to be made of the flooring history, what rooms were floored with tiles, what with boards and what with clay. It may be appropriate to floor some of the back rooms with a synthetic earth floor substitute rather than boards. In the entrance hall (A2) there are Batavian floor tiles. These are of obvious significance and need proper patching. In the room to the left in the front (A1) boards next to the fireplace have rotted due to damp and need attention. Much of the renovation history of the building is contained in the deposits below the boards and where the boards are to be lifted the deposits should be examined and excavated if necessary.

2.3.1.2. Wall Paintings: based on limited possibilities for observations there are probably wall paintings in the entrance hall (A2) and gallery (A5). It would be necessary to remove the different layers of paint from sample surface areas of about 500x500 mm in appropriate positions to confirm this. Scalpels can be used to carefully scrape away the layers of paint to reveal any decorative patterns and the painting sequence. The information has a direct relevance for the redecoration of the walls. Replastering will destroy any wall paintings and decisions about stripping existing plaster need to take this in to account. Wall paintings and painting sequences need further investigation.

2.3.1.3. Wall plaster: parts of the homestead have been replastered but there are parts, which retain an older yellow plaster. Plaster work in the left rear room (A10) and top rear left room (B11) has been negatively affected by damp.

2.3.1.4. Woodwork: this needs the attention of a wood restorer and here the advice of a specialist in the field is necessary. A suggestion here is to obtain the services of Ms Madelon Tussenius. The carved front door and the shutters at the front of the house are in a very poor state and require urgent conservation.

2.3.1.5. Windows: the top storey double casement windows are modern as are the fittings. These windows appear to occupy the original positions. It is possible there were sash windows rather than double casement windows in these positions but this can only be established by plaster removal. If the top storey was added in the later rather than in the earlier nineteenth century then sashes would be more likely. This question needs to be resolved.

2.3.1.6. Doors: the interior doors are in good condition and are mostly conservation worthy.

2.3.1.7. Glass: the glass panes in the windows on the ground floor are original. All the glass and not only that in the entrance hall (A2) and front left room (A1) with signatures is conservation worthy.

2.3.1.8. Roof beams and ceiling boards: these are indicated on the accompanying plans and are mostly in good condition. The exceptions are in the gallery (A5) and the pantry (A9). Rooms with later ceilings (A6 and A8) may have the original ceilings preserved above together with older wall decorations.

2.3.1.9. Exterior walls: there is an obvious structural problem with the east wall of the house, removal of exterior plaster will answer the questions about whether the homestead was built as a double-storey and the form of the window openings, where older plaster is present on the exterior walls this should be examined for plaster types and painting sequences.

2.4. Outbuildings and features: an assessment like that made for the house needs to be made for all the outbuildings,

the outbuildings are reasonable repair but the so called "kraal" to the side of the werf is suffering collapse - the walling is old as indicated by the bricks (broad, flat clay bricks) and should be given immediate attention. A lime plaster capping on top would serve as a temporary measure to stabilize the walling and prevent the core and mortar from washing out,

features which need to be located are structures indicated on the Surveyor General's map outside the werf but still on the property,

features that may be expected to have existed on the werf, a well, mill stream or water furrow, a mill, a threshing floor need to be sought as well the foundations of the ringmuur.

3. Historical research

A 1930 diagram of the consolidated farm of Uitkyk (Appendix A) was obtained from the Surveyor General's Office. On this diagram the original 60 morgen freehold granted to Jan Oberholster in 1712 is shown. It is apparent that the present homestead and the other buildings are situated outside the boundaries of the freehold grant. The conclusion is that none of the standing buildings relate to the early part of the eighteenth century.

It is known that the property of Uitkyk was purchased by Martin Melck in 1763 and in 1776 he transferred it to his son-in-law Johan David Beyers (Appendix B). The gable the house indicates it was built in 1788 but as the date is on the second storey, a later addition, there must be some doubt as what this date implies. The second storey can be shown to be a later addition because the walls are thinner than the bottom storey. Wall thickness is an indication of age and thicker walls indicate older constructions. In this case wall thickness suggests the top storey was a later nineteenth century addition. It is possible that the house grew from a single storey U-shape to its present form. The design of the house, has been attributed to Thibault and the carved front door has been considered to be the work of Anreith. This cannot be confirmed on the basis of the present investigation. Such claims need verification in historical research if they are to be presented as fact to the public.

There is a reference to an earlier diagram contained in Stellenbosch Quitrents (5.35) and this reference has to be investigated further. Thus far it has been possible to trace the list of owners back to 1845. There is a gap in the archival records covering the period relating to the earlier owners. Sources other than the deeds office and archives will have to be consulted and this may prove to be very time consuming.

4. Plans of the homestead

The cultural elements of the homestead are shown on a series of plans. There are separate plans for the floors, walls, doors and windows and ceilings on the ground floor and first floor. There is much detail on these plans and they can serve as a basis for discussion of the restoration proposals. More detail can be added to the plans as the work progresses. The plans are an inventory and an assessment of what is conservation worthy in the homestead.

5. General comments on the werf

The outbuildings on the werf have not been mapped in the same detail as the homestead and this needs to be done. In need of conservation attention is the "kraal" and it would be of assistance if the vegetation in the "kraal" area could be sprayed with a selective weed killer to make it easier to examine and trace the walls. A feature can be made of the "kraal" even without reconstruction. There are a number of buildings outside the werf indicated on the Surveyor General's map which have to be located in the landscape. The mill stone lying behind the house is suggestive that there was a mill and perhaps the water furrow at the rear follows the course of the mill stream. There are unanswered questions like where did the homestead obtain its water and whether there was an early well. Older maps and excavations may help to answer such questions. It should be possible to trace the foundations of the original ringmuur by limited excavations and there is some interest in the original approach to the house. Here again earlier maps will be useful.

There is a quantity of porcelain in the rose garden and it may be that this is where kitchen refuse was disposed. There may other middens to be discovered and interest in them is the small finds they include. Small finds, porcelain sherds, pipe stems and the like, are a very tangible link with the past owners and can be used in displays.

6. Conclusion

The phase 1 investigation of the Uitkyk homestead and werf has shown a number of points of note. It seems unlikely that the homestead was constructed as a double storey. The conservation status of the homestead is good but it can be improved considerably. The detail given on the floor, wall and ceiling plans will make it possible to plan the improvements. There are a number of features that might be expected on the werf that are missing. Traces of these may yet be found. There is follow up work, indicated in the recommendations, that needs to be undertaken. We would be in a position to do this if required but suggest that further archival research be treated as a separate brief.