

ASSESSMENT OF THE MAIN HOUSE AT MORGENHOF

Prepared for

Wessels Albertyn Du Toit Architects

August 1993



Prepared by

Archaeology Contracts Office

Department of Archaeology

University of Cape Town

Private Bag

Rondebosch

7700

Tel (021)650 2357

Fax (021)650 2352

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. INVESTIGATION	3
2.1 Room FR	6
2.2 Room FL	6
2.3 Stoep	6
3. CHRONOLOGY	6
4. CONCLUSION	10
5. INVESTIGATION TEAM	10
APPENDIX A	13

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1987 an initial Archaeological investigation was conducted on the werf at Morgenhof.¹ This investigation concentrated on locating the foundations of a demolished building so that it could be restored. A deeds and archival search was also undertaken but again concentrating on those specific areas which were contained in the architects brief. The house which forms the subject of this report was not included in that brief.

A plan of the Morgenhof werf (Figure 1) shows the location of the dwelling which is currently undergoing extensive renovation.² The National Monuments Council has not yet approved the plans submitted, on the grounds that no justification of these plans, particularly the location, size and number of windows, was forthcoming. The Archaeology Contracts Office has been commissioned by Wessels Albertyn Du Toit Architects to assess the fabric of the building with a view to clarifying this issue.

2. INVESTIGATION

A preliminary visit to the site showed that renovations were in an advanced state. In some areas brickwork was exposed while in others it was covered by both new and old plaster. Brickwork that was exposed showed that in some parts of the house the building materials were of some vintage. Most of the older fabric was preserved at the front and sides of the house. At the time of this visit some of the existing windows and doors had already been removed while new window and door frames had been added in places. The least work had been conducted on the facade with only one French door having been removed. Consequently, this facade was isolated for further study.

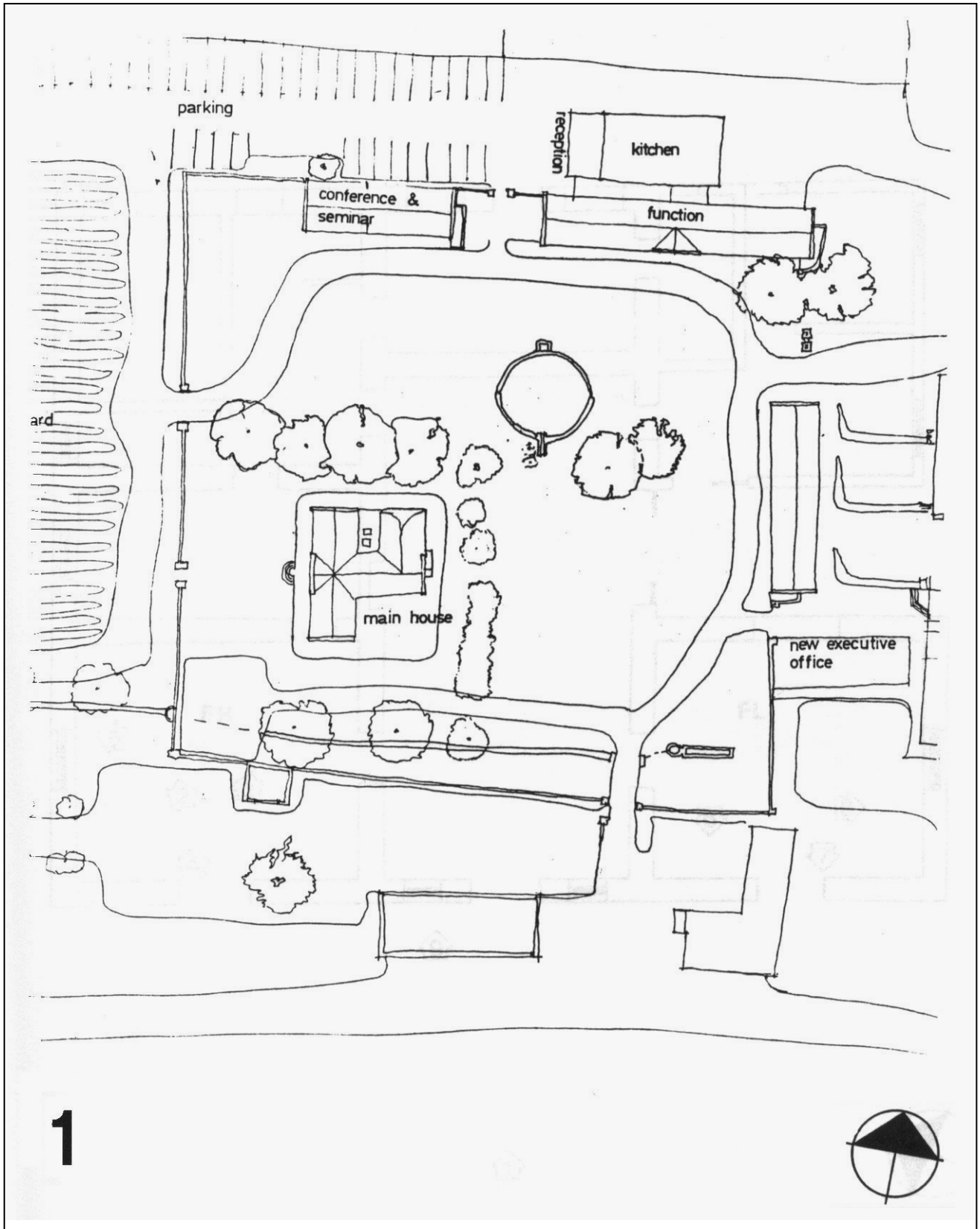
The contractor was requested to remove a strip of plaster approximately 400mm wide along the length of the front facade of the house to facilitate study of the brickwork around the windows and doors. The contractor was also requested to remove a similar strip of plaster down the gable located above the mid-point of the front door. The architect requested that we conduct plaster removals inside as the heavy rain which was being experienced could have caused erosion of the old mud mortar and unfired bricks. The architect informed us that the gable consisted of new brickwork and had been built some time previously to replace one that was structurally unsound. At this time a pitched asbestos tile roof had been replaced with thatch and extra courses of brick had been added to the walls at the level of the tops of doors and windows (Plate 1). As a result of this information plaster was not removed from the gable.

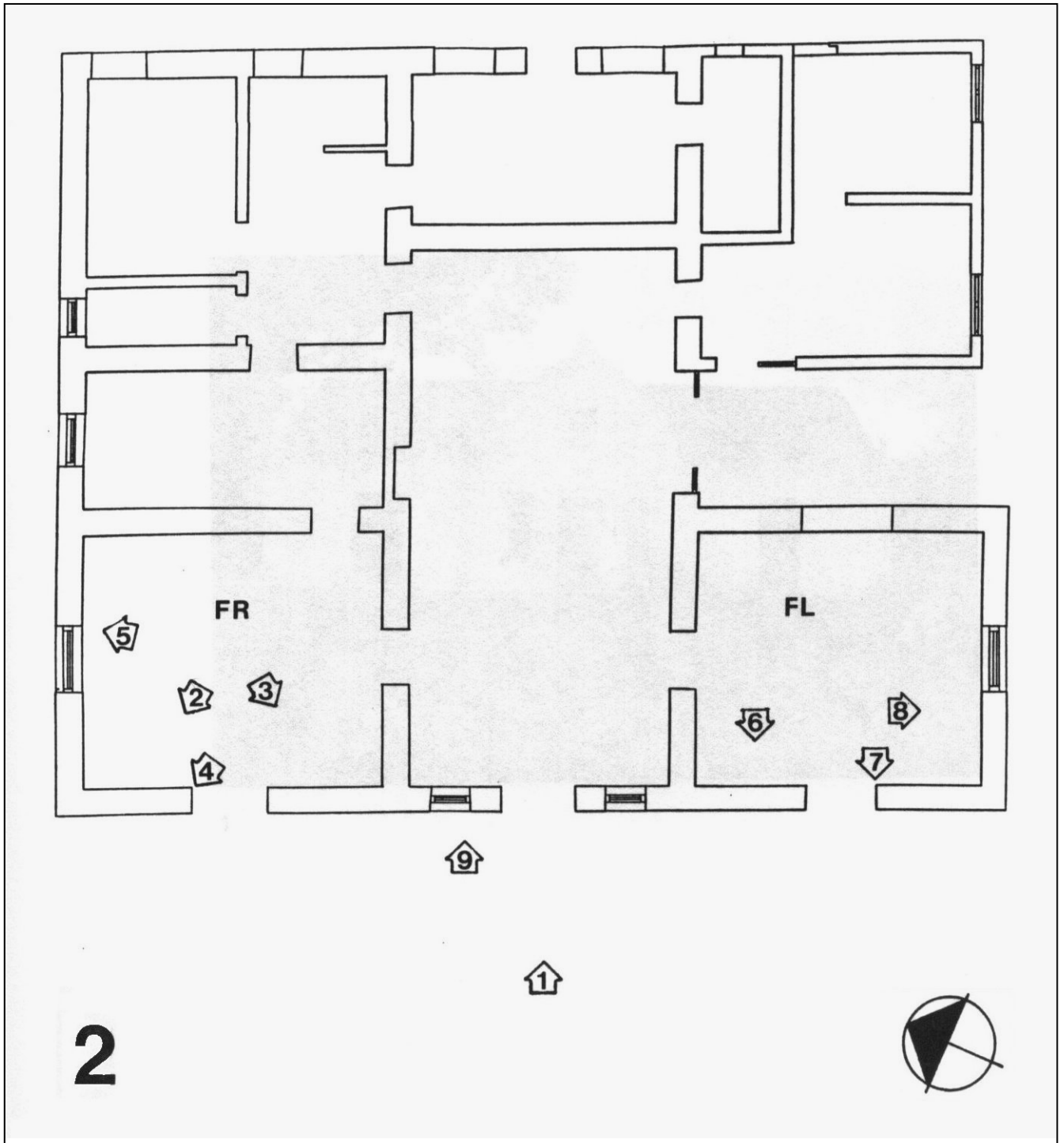
A plan of the house as it appeared prior to renovation has been used to annotate the results of the fabric examination³ (Figure 2):

¹ Morgenhof: An historical outline. Report prepared for Wessels Albertyn Du Toit Architects by the Historical Archaeology Research Group, UCT. December 1987.

² Plan courtesy of the architect.

³ This plan is undated and was supplied by the architect.





2.1 Room FR

(a) The brickwork exposed on either side of the French door (removed), shows no signs of variation which would suggest any bricked in apertures (Plates 2 and 3). Mud mortar is used throughout this section and no variation in the colour or type is noticed. The bricks used consist of a mixture of reddish, fired and brown sun dried varieties. A detail of the bricks are shown in Plate 4.

(b) The brickwork exposed on the side of the window shows no sign of variation. Mortar and type of brick is the same as the exposures described in (a). (Plate 5)

2.2 Room FL

(c) Brickwork on the right hand side of the French door shows no signs of variation (Plate 6). That on the left hand side however shows that the French door has been fitted into a wider aperture (Plate 7). Soot is present on some of the bricks of the original edge. Some whitewash is also noticeable. The original aperture was approximately 1420mm wide whereas the French door frame is 1280mm wide. New brickwork at the base, as well as at the top of the frame makes it impossible to determine whether the door was fitted into an aperture that originally held a window.

(d) Brickwork around the side window shows no signs of variation (Plate 8). Clearly visible is the stone footing of the wall. The variation in the brick is similar to other locations.

2.3 Stoep

(e) Variation in the mortar used is discernible on the right hand side of the sash window. The mortar here is yellowish and does not crumble like the mortar in most of the rest of the house. No variation in the mortar adjacent to the front door frame is noticed (Plate 9).

3. CHRONOLOGY

An examination of the ground surface around the house was almost completely devoid of any artefactual material. Some fragments of English refined earthenware (shell edged with green glaze) was found on the northern side of the stoep. It would appear that considerable landscaping has taken place and may have removed all traces of artefacts over the years. The most likely place to have found a domestic dump would have been where the pool is now located. No material is visible in the vicinity of the excavation suggesting that perhaps no dump existed. In the absence of artefactual material we must look to other means of estimating the possible age of the building.

The plan of the house suggests that it may originally have taken the form of an "H" or a "T". House plans of this type are common in both the 18th and 19th centuries which means that they cannot be used for precise dating.⁴ The fired bricks which are used in the building are very large having dimensions of 290x130x85mm. The only other house where we have seen

⁴ Fransen, H. and Cook, M.A. 1980. The old buildings of the Cape. Cape Town: Balkema.



1



2



3



4



5

large bricks is at Elsenberg. The bricks there measured 305x155x70. While the Morgenhof bricks are slightly smaller it nevertheless suggests that the style of brick developed by Martin Melck could have found its way into the 19th century. Although the brick bond used in the main house is the same as in the outbuildings, the bricks in the outbuilding appear to be smaller and of more conventional size.

The archival record is rather sparse. A short search continuing the work conducted by the Historical Archaeology Research Group⁵ has been conducted. The additional information is included in Appendix A. The archival search attempted to establish a date for the building of the main house. Unfortunately, through lack of documentation, the first indication of a building at this location is on a deed of transfer dated 7th June 1882 (see appendix).

In the original historical outline,⁶ it was suggested that sometime between 1818 and 1843, during the tenure of Hermanus Christoffel Esterhuizen, the farm buildings were extensively modified with the main living area being separated from the other farm buildings and aligned to conform with established manorial traditions represented in many farms of the period. It certainly appears that wine production on the farm reached its peak around 1830 and it probably follows that the main house was built during this period of prosperity. The property valuation conducted between 1880 and 1890 shows that "Harmony" did not appear at this time to have been a particularly grand house (see appendix), but occupied medium position along with some other properties.

4. CONCLUSION

Examination of the original fabric (concentrated mainly along the facade of the building) has indicated that no additional windows were ever inserted or closed up along the front facade or on the side walls of the facade. There is evidence that the French doors were fitted into wider apertures which probably contained windows at some stage in the past. It is not possible to say what form these windows would have taken. The small sash windows on either side of the front door are presumably later than other modifications as the mortar is different. These may also have been added to existing cavities which certainly never contained windows much bigger than those which exist.

Very little artefactual material has been observed and there seems to be no indication that any major dumps exist in proximity to the house.

Archival evidence for the main house is scant and does not give any accurate indication of when the house may have been built. Neither the archival nor archaeological evidence is able to provide information about the form of the gable in this case. Archival evidence does seem however, to indicate that by the late 19th century the house was average when compared with other estate houses at that time. Through a process of deduction it would seem that the most likely period for the erection of the building would have been the early part of the 19th century when wine production on the farm appears to have been at its peak during the tenure of Hermanus Christoffel Esterhuizen.

5. INVESTIGATION TEAM

Principal investigator
Archival research

Dave Halkett
Kathy Rubin

⁵ see footnote 1.

⁶ see footnote 1, page 19



6



7



8



9

APPENDIX A

ARCHIVAL WORK: MORGENHOF, STELLENBOSCH

Commissioned by
Archaeology Contracts Office, UCT
August 1993

Introduction

The following archival work can be seen as a continuation of the archival investigation undertaken by the Historical Archaeology Research Group, UCT, in December of 1987. At the time that this investigation was undertaken the dwelling house was excluded and efforts were concentrated on other aspects of the werf which were to undergo restoration.

Archival information

A brief re-examination of the Deeds did not reveal any wills or inventories. At the end of the Esterhuisen occupation in 1848 the land had been acquired was listed on the deed of transfer ⁷ in favour of the next owner, Nicolaas Gabriel Vos. This land is listed as follows:

1. Harmonie measuring 5 morgen 141 sq roods (Acquired in 1811 by Willem Esterhuisen for 3370 guilders and previously loaned by Onrust).
2. Onrust measuring 32morgen 420 sq roods (formally granted in 1781 to Willem Esterhuisen senior).
3. Quitrent land measuring 201 morgen 383 sq roods and a further piece of quitrent land measuring 77 morgen 61 sq roods (Granted in 1818 and 1843 respectively).

The purchase price of this land was £1500 sterling.

Nicolaas G. Vos also registered a bond for the full purchase price of the farm the mortgagor being Hermanus Christoffel Esterhuisen, the previous owner.

In 1887 August Henry Peterson bought the property from the insolvent estate of Pieter Johannes Rossouw-Retief for an amount of £1 200. He paid a further £150 for movables. The papers for this estate could not be found in the Archives.

On the 21 February 1894 Abdoola Hoosen became the new owner and paid £1450 for the same property.

⁷ 1108/1848

Comparative data : Land sales

Kromme Rhee was sold in 1771 for 7000 guilders

Elsenburg was sold in 1781 for 10 000 guilders (a deceased estate, therefore an appraised valuation)

Nooitgedacht only had transactions in 1761 and 1800. However the 1761 sale was for 11 000 guilders, for a larger tract of land.

Onrust was sold in 1782 for 1000 guilders. Even taking into account that this was a family sale, it is not to scale with "elite" farm prices at the time.

It does not appear to be in the bracket of 18th century gabled houses.

No inventories could be traced for any of the owners in the archives.

A letter was found⁸ in which Willem Esterhuisen senior is selling the farm Onrust together with loan land to his son Willem for the amount of 300 guilders. This is dated 3rd August 1762. The loan land was planted with 800 vines and fruit trees. The sale was never legalised. There is no mention of buildings in the letter.

A look at the valuation roll of buildings in the Stellenbosch area revealed the following comparative data.⁹ The entire Klappmuts area is reported.

Date of evaluation: 1880 - 1890

Muldersvley	£1200
Elsenburg	1200
Klappmuts	1200
Nooitgedacht	1100
Cloetesdal	1000
Weltevreden	900
Groenhof	900
Uitkyk	900
Harmony	750 ¹⁰
Patrys Valley	750
Knorhoek	750
Good Success	750
Koelenhof	700
Kromme Rie	600
Mariendal	500
Vierkant	400
Calcutta	100

(spelling as per valuation roll)

⁸ CA MOOC 8/14 No 2

⁹ CA 1/STB 12/104. Although all buildings on the land were appraised, this list presents only the valuation of the main dwelling houses.

¹⁰ Owned by Dr A.H. Petersen but leased to a Dr Hahn. Another building is valued at ø350 and a labourers cottage is valued at ø25. No mention is made of "Onrust".

During a flood in 1822 extensive damage was reportedly done to Hermanus Christoffel Esterhuisen's lands and a wall of the smithy's building collapsed. No damage to other buildings on Onrust and Harmonie was reported.¹¹

The "opgaaf roll" for Stellenbosch in the archives ends in 1838. On examination of the roll, it appears that Onrust and Harmonie had a steady growth of vines ending with 100 000 vines in 1838. The farming activities seemed to be relatively unimportant. The Klapmuts valley was regarded as being highly suited to growing vines and most of the farmers in this valley had large numbers of vines on their farms. The numbers of slaves was proportionally low for the area, but it is possible that labour was shared with neighbouring Esterhuisens. Onrust and Harmonie also produced brandy (3 leagers in 1838). Certainly the farm peaked during the ownership of Hermanus Christoffel Esterhuisen.

Summary

From the scant archival and deeds survey it does appear that Onrust and Harmony prospered as a wine farm during the early part of the nineteenth century

¹¹ CA 1/STB 19/126. Many houses lost their gables during this flood.