

AN ASSESSMENT OF STONE RUINS AT THE SITE OF THE PROPOSED EXTENSION OF BORROW PIT DR01264/9.8/L/75 ON THE FARM “THE REQUEST” 547, CALEDON

(In terms of Section 38 of the NHRA of 1999)

Prepared for

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1. INTRODUCTION

Following identification of “structures” at the site of the proposed borrow pit during the desktop NID assessment (Halkett 2012), and on the consultant’s recommendation, Heritage Western Cape requested that a field assessment of the site be undertaken (Figure 1). This assessment was subsequently undertaken by Ms M Tusenius of Natura Viva cc and a report of her findings was presented to HWC in November 2012 (Tusenius 2012).

Following adjudication of the report, HWC in its interim comment noted inter alia that “no historical assessment of the ruins was submitted” and that “no proposed grading (of the ruins) was provided”.

This report is an attempt to address those shortcomings in as far as is possible.

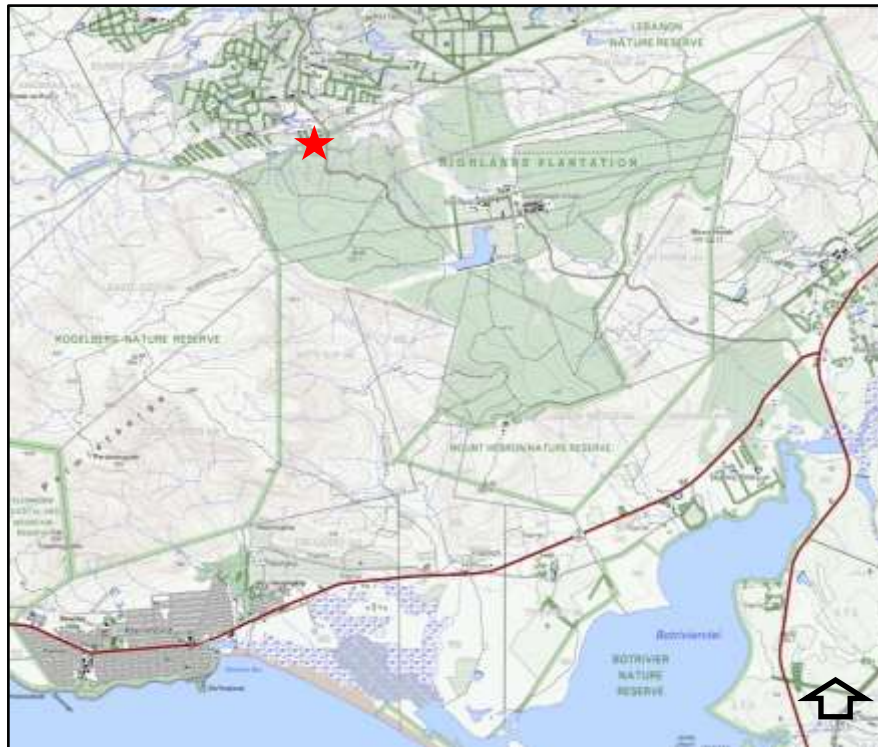


Figure 1: Location and context of the site, marked by the red star (3419AC Hermanus: Chief Director of surveys and Mapping)

2. METHOD

Structures had been detected on the land identified for the borrow pit by examining aerial photographs on Google Earth. Ms Tusenius was able to confirm the presence of the two structures on the ground. A site visit was undertaken by Mr D Halkett on the 29th March to examine the structures in order to further assess and address HWC’s concerns. The two “structures” and their immediate surroundings were each inspected for evidence of age and possible use.

While the ruined structure close to the DR01264 road was easily visible, the ruined wall alignments some 160 meters to the south west, are heavily obscured by vegetation, both growing, and dead. By walking the alignments and marking points along areas where stone alignment was visible, I was able to demarcate the approximate shape and size of the “structure”.

In order to determine approximate age, we examined older aerial photography (1938 and 1953) to determine if the structures were visible. We also examined the title deed to determine if any features were marked¹.

¹ SG CQ 9-13: 29.11.1898. Dgm 21/1876

3. OBSERVATIONS

The positions of the two structures are shown to approximate scale in Figure 2 (insert).

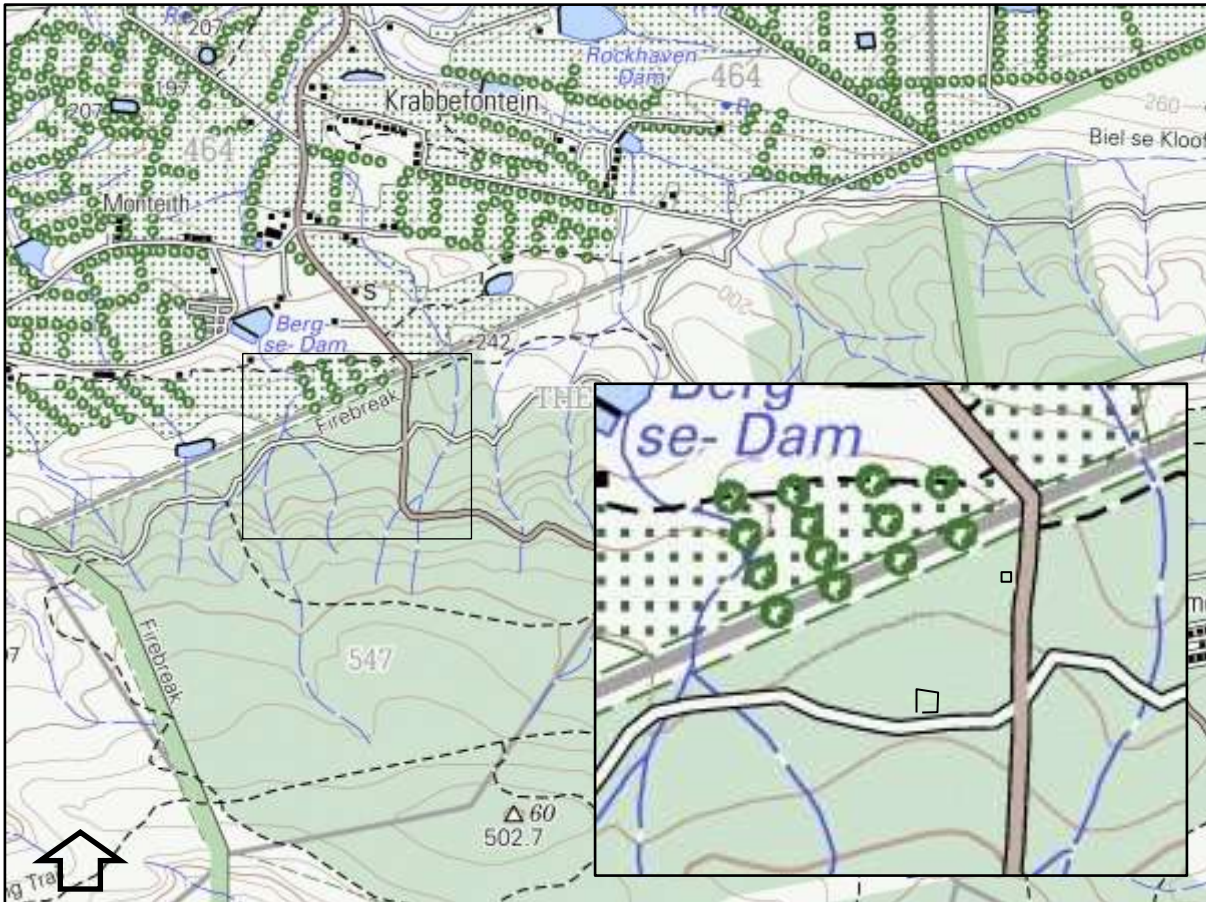


Figure 2: The approximate position of stone structures on the site shown on the inset

3.1 Structure 1

3.1.1 Dimensions and building materials

The smaller of the two features (see Plates 1-3) is a stone structure, set into the ground to at least a depth of ~1.5 meter (but as the lower part is filled with a mixture of rock and soil, we have not determined how deep the foundation actually is, or if any formal floor surface is present below the infill. We have hammered down a steel probe which resists at ~630mm below the infill material. We cannot however determine if this is bedrock or floor surface. Walls are made from locally available dressed sandstone held in place by mud mortar. There is a complete absence of any formal cement and the nature of the walls where they protrude above ground, suggest that they extended higher than what is now present. While some displaced stones from the walling are in evidence about the area adjacent to the structure, mounds of the interior wall packing are also noted (rubble and clay). This suggests that at least some stones have been removed and taken elsewhere and indeed suggesting walls of greater height.

A rough plan of the structure is presented in Figure 3 showing the approximate shape and dimensions.

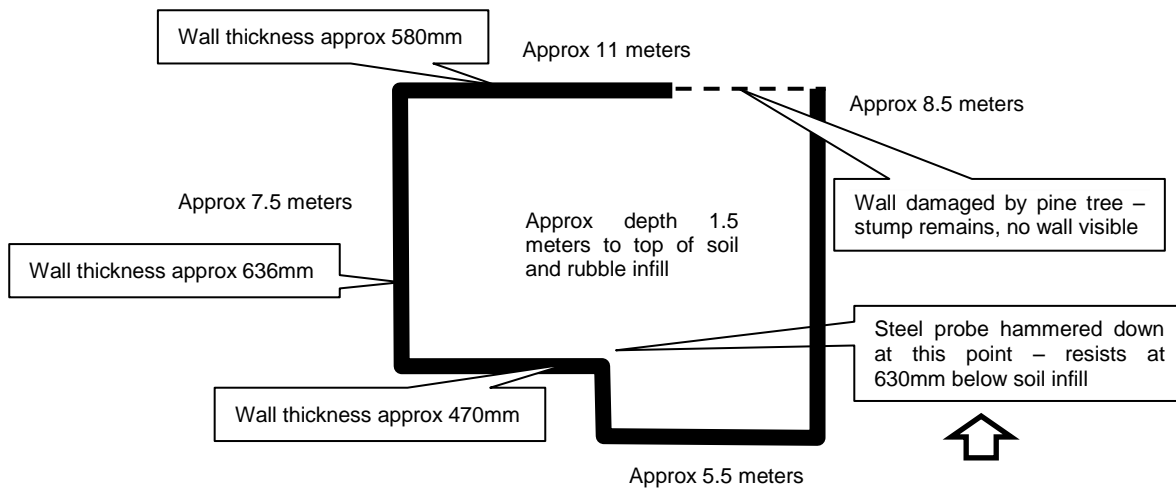


Figure 3: Sketch plan of the possible industrial structure

3.1.2 Context

Today the site lies within the Highlands Plantation, in an area that has been under plantation from at least 1938. There is little evidence of agriculture to the south of the powerline servitude and firebreak which separates forestry from the agricultural areas of the area to the north. The title deed implies that some form of farming was perhaps intended, but there is little other than that document to suggest what or where. No road is shown in the immediate vicinity of the structures on the SG diagram, but the DR 01264 (Highlands Road) is clearly present in the 1938 aerial photograph.

None of the usual refuse that one associates with a dwelling could be found in the area surrounding the structure. An isolated old zinc bath found on the interior is unlikely to have any association with the original use of the structure. The complete absence of cultural material is highly unusual, and even if this represents some sort of industrial facility, as we are beginning to suspect, glass and metal are usually present in abundance.

The shape does not conform to what we would generally identify as a dwelling. For example, there are no dividing walls, it has a very deep foundation, and the dimensions are somewhat inconsistent with vernacular buildings.

The presence of the structure within an area primarily used for forestry, along with the dimensions and style, suggests perhaps it is associated with forestry activities. We have considered that it may have been a saw pit, but cannot find any photographs or plans of similar local structures to compare it with.

3.1.3 Age

No structures are shown on the 1875 SG diagram (Figure 4), and our first confirmation of structures in the study area comes from the 1938 aerial photograph², where both features can be clearly seen (Figure 5), coinciding exactly with the ruins that have been recorded on the ground. Pine trees can already be seen growing in the area and although the structures are visible, the lack of paths or clearings in the vegetation does not suggest they were in use at that time. No trace of structure 2 can be seen on the 1953 aerial photo (Figure 6), and only a faint trace of structure 1 is present, likely to be due to the increased tree canopy by that time. It suggests that both structures had been abandoned by 1953 and possibly as early as 1938. Resolution is just not adequate to be more conclusive.

² Dept of Land Affairs And Mapping: 126_100_12754_1938

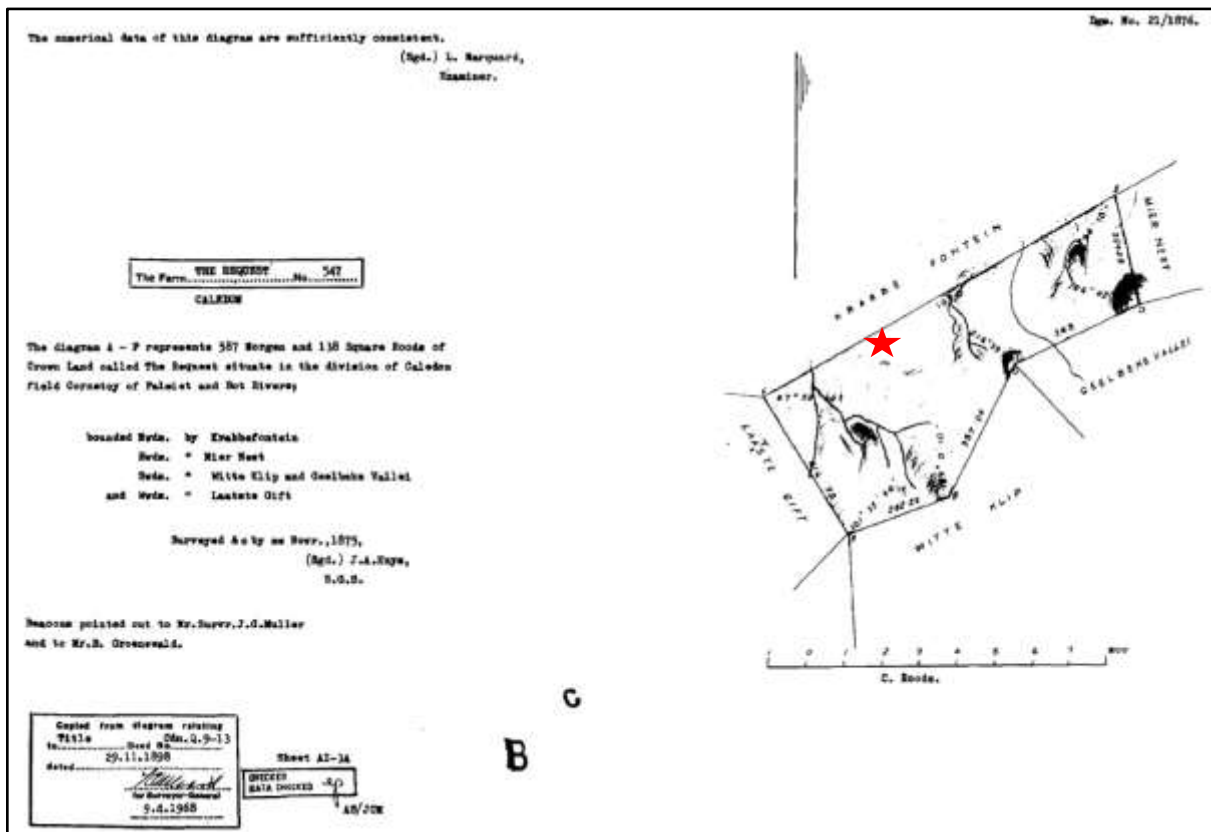


Figure 4: Surveyor general diagram with approx. position of structures indicated by red star (CQ 9-13: 29.11.1898. Dgm 21/1876)

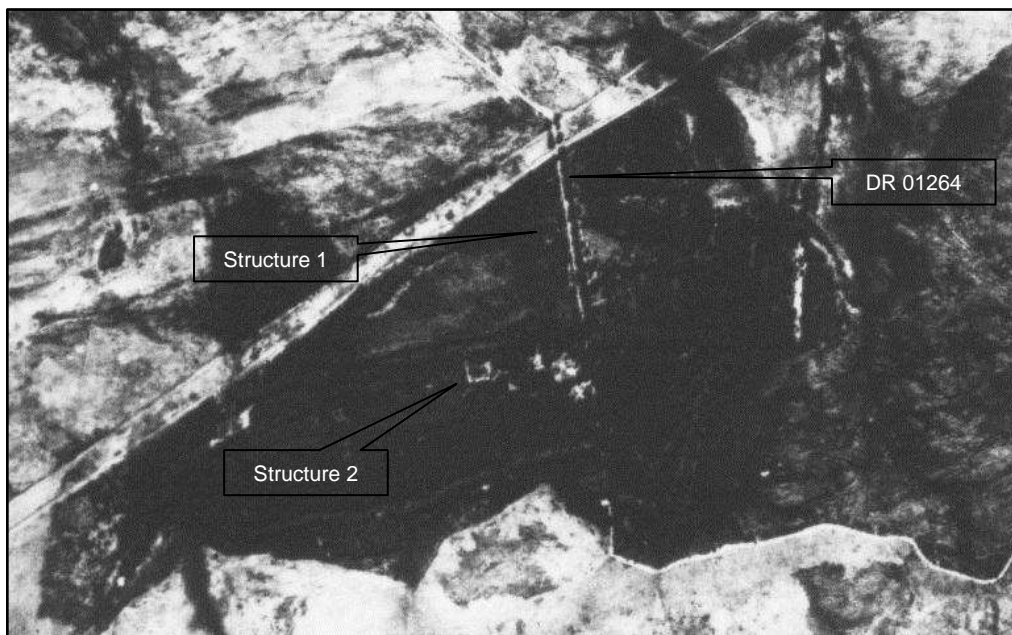


Figure 5: Structures are indicated on an excerpt from the 1938 aerial photo. No forestry track can be seen to the south of structure 2.



Figure 6: New track and structure 1 are visible on an excerpt from the 1953 aerial photo

3.2 Structure 2

3.2.1 Dimensions and building materials

Some 160 meters to the south west of structure 1, over a low hill, are the remains of a number of wall alignments forming a rectangular structure/enclosure with the long axis in more or less, north-south orientation (see Plates 4 and 5). The walls are constructed with locally available sandstone slabs and using rubble and clay infill. No cement was observed. Vegetation obscures most sections of the walls and some sections are poorly defined. The shape and dimensions were established using a gps track by following traces of walling debris on the ground.

The 1938 aerial photo suggests a four sided structure, and we have only been able to identify these for the most part on the ground. The south wall can be traced to some degree though a gap occurs on the west which may represent some sort of opening (?).

While the dimensions are approximate, quite a large feature is suggested. The length of the north wall measures some 28 meters, while the east/west walls measure approximately 45 meters. The wall thickness is ~700mm.

3.2.2 Context

Our comments in respect of structure 1 apply similarly to this feature. There is no refuse in the surrounding area to give any indication of age or use. There is no obvious track leading to it from Highlands Road in 1938, and the forestry track that is there now, only appears on the 1953 aerial image. Perhaps the lack of a track suggests that perhaps it was not a shed (?) or other form of agricultural or forestry building. Perhaps a kraal?

3.2.3 Age

There is no refuse in the surrounding area to give any indication of age, nor does the structure itself lend us any clues (other than being built of stone, with mud mortar – neither of which narrows the time range much). Aerial photography is the only possible dating mechanism.

4. CONCLUSIONS

At this time it is difficult to understand if the two structures are linked, let alone try and make some definitive assessment of use, and not knowing the definitively the age and possible use makes assessing significance difficult. To make a more thorough assessment would however require additional costs for further archival research, but given that we may not find more information, we would not recommend work. If the pit was of crucial strategic value, we would suggest archaeological excavations to determine more precisely the nature of the buried interiors of Structures 1 and 2, prior to use.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the absence of clear information about the origin, use, relationship and significance of the structures, we must recommend thus:

- If the pit is to be used, its overall size must be reduced to avoid the two structures. Suitable buffers around the structures must be established and adequately marked during the construction and rehabilitation stage to ensure that no impacts occur;
- If it is not possible to accommodate the ruins as suggested above, we recommend that an alternative borrow pit be used.

6. REFERENCES

Halkett D. 2012. Desktop assessment of borrow pits – Batch 9. Prepared for Vidamemoria Heritage Consultants on behalf of Nadeson Consulting Services and Aurecon. ACO Associates cc.

Tusenius, M. 2012. Archaeological impact assessment of the proposed extension of a borrow pit on The Request 547, Caledon, Overberg District, Western Cape. Prepared for Vidamemoria Heritage Consultants on behalf of Nadeson Consulting Services. Natura Viva cc.

7. PHOTOGRAPHS



Plate 1: The site context. The DR 01264 can be seen in the background



Plate 2: The site context. The other ruined walls lie beyond the top of the hill in the background

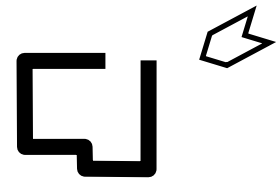
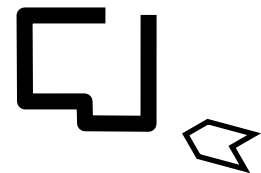


Plate 3: The interior of the structure is filled with debris although the carefully prepared walls protrude.





Plates 4 and 5: The walls of structure 2 are substantially overgrown and damaged by subsequent plantation growth. In places however the foundations are well preserved.