

Boekenhoutskloof, Franchhoek Historic Farm

Phase 1 Impact statement - historical archaeology assessment

Introduction

At the request of Messrs Rennie and Goddard Associates a survey of the Boekenhoutskloof werf and surrounds was undertaken. The purpose was to identify, record and assess any features on the werf of historical interest and to contribute any archaeological information of value for the restoration and interpretation of the homestead and main outbuilding (barn or cellar).

Survey of the werf and surrounds

Mr Lloyd Rossouw undertook a survey of the werf. The farm manager Mr Lamont, the former owner, Mr Lotter, and a farm labourer with many years service, Mr Boetman Hendricks, provided helpful information. In addition to the homestead and barn there are four features of note on the werf.

The remains of the original kraal lie about a 100 m due east of the homestead. On a pioneer or humbler werf like Boekenhoutskloof, the kraal, as part of the male domain, is usually positioned in front of and within sight of the homestead. The position of the kraal is less prominent and usually behind the homestead on the large estates that belonged to the landed gentry. Unfortunately the Boekenhoutskloof kraal is in the middle of a fruit orchard and has been largely destroyed in the course of farming activities. According to Boetman Hendriks, it was a rectangular stone structure with walls some 2 m high. No attempt was made to expose what remains of the kraal foundations at this stage. As the kraal is an important element that gives structure to the werf consideration can be given to physically marking its position on the ground and excluding that patch from further disturbance. There is little merit in reconstructing such a feature but there is potential to use what traces have survived as the basis of an interpretative display. This could take the form of an information board saying what was there and why it was located in this position. It is left to the visitor to visualize the feature from the information given. He or she

About one kilometre south south west of the homestead is a site marked by five oak trees. Boetman Hendriks remembers this location being used as a veepos or kraal some forty years ago. There were walls of mud brick covered by clay plaster that stood until recently. This kind of construction and the trees are more consistent with a dwelling than a veepos. Mr Lamont refers to the site as the "mission" and there should be some historical documentation that is relevant. The vegetation cover is such that none of the walls are visible. It is a further trace of activities on the farm that can be considered for incorporation in the concept of development of the property. It is remote so the priority is low but if the site is cleared of vegetation care will need to be taken not to obliterate what remains are preserved. Depending on what historical information is available there may be potential for an interpretative display.

About 250 m east of the homestead, at the stream, there are the remnants of a feature comprising part of a wall and a heap of clay. The wall has a cobble and pebble footing and is truncated by the stream. It is 2,3 m high and 550 mm thick. The area is overgrown and what remains are visible, are not sufficient for interpretation. It is an older structure and thus worthy of conservation. The historical documentation may be a source of further information.

Hendriks pointed out the "wolwehok". It is on the edge of the terrace some 150 m south of the homestead and approximately 3 x 3 m in size. It is built of stone against the natural outcrop. The

mortar is coarse cement. There are a few red bricks like those in the kitchen incorporated in the structure. It possibly dates to the same time as the renovation of the kitchen or later.

The walling on the south side of the homestead is associated with a series of stone terraces. They are overgrown. There are layers compacted dung on the surface consistent with a kraal function. The walls are the standard 500 mm thickness capped by cement plaster. The walling is probably the same age as the "wolwehok".

It is to be expected that small finds in the form of porcelain fragments and the like will occur around a homestead. These can be some indication of the age and duration of occupation of a homestead. In the case of a homestead like Boekenhoutskloof, built on a steep slope with a stream running past it, small finds may be few. A total of 17 pieces of 18th and 19th century porcelain were collected from the slope below the house. These include both Chinese and English wares. In addition there was a gunflint found. Chinese porcelain was imported in quantity during the rule of the Dutch East India Company but with British occupation the Cape became a market for various English soft paste wares.

Archaeological excavations in the house

Part of the history of a building is preserved below the floors. Older simpler dwellings had dung or lime plaster floors that built up over time. It was expected that there would be a considerable thickness of old floors in the Boekenhoutskloof homestead if it had been occupied from the 18th century. Informants indicated that up to 300 mm of floor deposits may have been dug out when the board flooring had been laid. The material was used as fill on the front terrace and may be the source of the small finds made.

One consequence of raising the floors is the windows have to be raised. This has happened at Boekenhoutskloof and explains why the windows rest on bricks. Small excavations were made in the voorkamer, the first room on the right, the second room on the right, and the kitchen to clarify details of the history of the house. No attempt was made to investigate the room on the left, which has 50mm thick cement cover. The results are given below.

Voorkamer

Excavation showed a 70 mm thick layer of clay and dung floor materials resting on *in situ* ground. This is not a particularly thick accumulation and may only represent the oldest floor levels. The original window height would have been relevant to this floor level. Overlying the floor is a 200 mm layer of loose fill. Four pieces of English porcelain were recovered from the lower part of the fill. These are Staffordshire and annular wares and date to the latter half of the 19th century. The thickness of the fill is the order of height the windows have been raised.

First room on the right

There are traces of a chimney in the brickwork of the north wall in this room. This raised the possibility that the room was the original kitchen. Informants have subsequently confirmed this. An attempt was made to relocate the base of the hearth in an excavation as a possible feature interest for display. It would seem that when the kitchen was moved to its present position in the 1880's the older floor deposits were dug out. Excavation to *in situ* ground at 700 mm below the surface, showed no older floor levels.

Second room on the right

Excavation in this room again showed that during the Lotter renovation of the house the floor deposits in this room had been removed. The excavation was taken down through a series of fills to the original ground surface at a depth of 800 mm. Two pieces of Chinese porcelain were recovered on the original surface. By good fortune one of these has a Kylin Dragon motif. This is a very specific motif that was popular around 1750. That date is a *terminus post quem* for the age of

this room and for the homestead. If the Roux family lived at Boekenhoutskloof from 1784 (J Louw pers. comm.) the homestead was built sometime between 1750 and 1784.

Kitchen

The stone foundations of the older cross wall were examined to see if they confirmed the suggestion that the kitchen is in what was originally a separate building. This does seem to be the case. The foundations correspond to the break in the stone footing on both the south and the north wall. The termination of the brickwork against the stone footing and the two layers of clay plaster on the stone footing leave no doubt that an existing outbuilding was connected to the house to form the T shape. There are also differences in the floor deposits.

Some additional information gained from the previous owner may be of interest. The voorkamer originally had a peach pip floor. The house did have a gable. The stoep was originally restricted to the front door area.

Barn

The investigation of this building was limited to an examination of the floor. It has a dung floor that overlies a well-laid brick floor. As an old stone building, functionally a wine cellar and barn, it is major element on the werf. It is too cluttered for proper assessment.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Boekenhoutskloof homestead is important because it is well preserved and has been little altered. It is a humble "pioneer" dwelling and is in stark contrast to grander homesteads that were built in the valley as symbols of wealth and power.

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