

PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT DIE BALKE, STELLENBOSCH (portion 3 of farm 104

Prepared for
Prosperito Pty Ltd
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Executive summary

The Archaeology Contracts Office of the University of Cape Town was appointed by Prosperito Pty Ltd to conduct a phase 1 archaeological assessment of a focused area on the Farm "Edgbaston", Stellenbosch. The land in question was identified during the course of an HIA and historical investigation as being the possible site of a 19th century Vernacular homestead.

The site inspection has concluded that there is material on site that could represent a part of the 19th century homestead, however because it is apparent that much of the area was scraped to below foundation level, not much original fabric is likely to have survived *in-situ*.



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1 Introduction

The Archaeology Contracts Office of the University of Cape Town was appointed by Prosperito Pty Ltd to conduct a phase 1 archaeological assessment of a focused area on the Farm “Edgbaston”, Stellenbosch (Figure 1). The land in question was identified during the course of an HIA and historical investigation as being the possible site of a 19th century Vernacular homestead. Vos (2008) has completed a comprehensive historical review and analysis of surviving standing structures and made certain recommendations. This study follows up in part of Vos’s findings.

1.1 Background

The building known as Die Balke, consists of a large vernacular barn, which lies on what used to be the farm Patryse Valley (granted in 1690). The barn (which used to be part of complete farm *werf* with dwelling house and a twin barn) was built in the early 19th century, served as part of a hotel complex during the 20th century. The farm was subdivided in 1959, regrettably across the *werf* which resulted in the separation of the two twin barns that existed on either side of the dwelling house. It is probable that the dwelling house was also demolished at this time. Today the barn known as Die Balke is the only surviving remnant on the property. On another *erven* to the west on the other side of a high wall, its twin structure also survives incorporated with a complex of packing sheds. The area where the dwelling house used to stand (it is unknown what form this building took) is represented by a shallow hollow, interpreted by the author of this report as being evidence that demolition below foundation level took place.

Die Balke was until recently a pub and events venue popular among the Stellenbosch student community. Today it is un-occupied and in very poor condition. The surrounds have been neglected for some years and vegetation growth is fairly prolific obscuring surface visibility throughout. Odd remnants of past landscape features are visible in a number of places – a line of oak trees stands in front of the barn.

1.2 The development proposal

The proponent wishes to construct a boutique hotel on the site (Figure 2). The proposal sees the retention of the Barn and resumption of its use as a restaurant/pub. The focus of the accommodation units falls within what used to be the old *werf* between the two barns. The units are to be organized around a courtyard garden and swimming pool (Figure 2). The implications of the development proposal could result in impacts to archaeological material, notably the possible footprint of the dwelling house that was identified by Vos (2008) to potentially exist below surface.

This study was conceived as an attempt to explore sub-surface conditions in the development area.

2 Method

The proponent requested that the study be done in such a way as to avoid the waiting period associated with obtaining an excavation permit from Heritage Western Cape. Hence the study was somewhat restricted in that it had to focus on obtaining negative evidence, rather

than explore obvious areas of possible sensitivity.

Vegetation and shallow overburden was judiciously cleared using a micro-mechanical excavator (Yanmar SV08) and sub-surface conditions examined. Three cuts were made across the study area (Plate 1)) and subsurface conditions examined. No archaeological material of any kind was disturbed or affected. Visual inspection revealed an alignment (under thick grass) of stones in the area estimated to have been occupied by the dwelling house. As these constituted archaeological material, they were not disturbed.

3 Findings

The three cuttings were excavated to depths of 300-400mm at which point in-situ clays were encountered that were hard enough to cause excavator refusal. The shallow soil depths containing recent debris are indicative that the *werf* area has been scraped by mechanical excavation in the past.

Stone foundation fabric that exists on the site represents, in all likelihood is a remnant of the footings of the dwelling house. A stone alignment is visible for approximately 4m as well as possibly a corner (dense grass cover restricted its visibility). It is anticipated that much of the archaeological signature of this structure has been previously disturbed (Figure 3)

No archaeological material greater than 100 years of age was encountered within the cuttings or observed within the *werf* area, other than the wall afore-mentioned wall footing.

The surviving wall footing that exists on site will be impacted by the development proposal.

4 Future requirements

Further work requirements are subject to the deliberations of the APM committee at Heritage Western Cape, however to inform the decision making process, the following is offered:

- Indications are that extensive disturbance has taken place on site in that 20th century demolition has in part involved footing removal. Further archaeological work, if required by HWC may not be able to produce a meaningful or cohesive building foundation layout.
- It is not possible to further explore the footings that have survived without obtaining an excavation permit from Heritage Western Cape.
- The proponent should continue to establish a liaison/protocol with an historical archaeologist, as during the development process it remains possible that material of significance could be encountered. Experience has shown that incorporation of historic fabric and artefacts within a development such as this can do a great deal to add value context and human interest.

5 References

Vos, H 2008 Patrys Valleij Stellenbosch. Historical and Structural Invesitgation of the Farm Edgbaston, portion 3. Unpublished report prepared for Western Crown Properties 86 Pty Ltd.

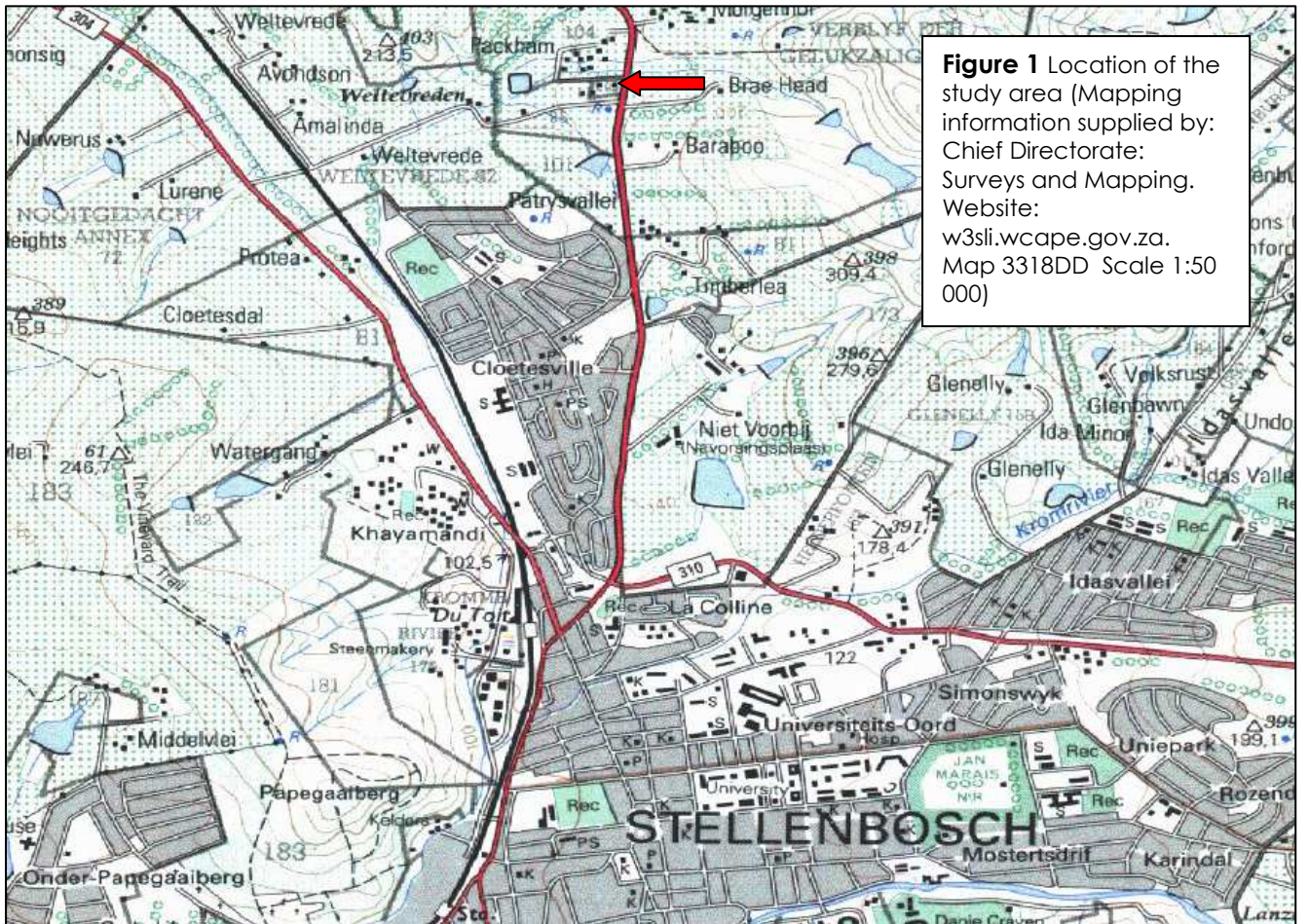


Figure 2. The development proposal. The identified area where old foundations will be impacted is indicated.



Plate 1 Checking the status of sub-surface soils using a micro-excavator.