

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT OF THE QUEENSTOWN SHOPPING MALL

A Phase I report prepared for Seaton Thompson and Associates
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Executive Summary

The project area was examined in June 2011. Only one building is sufficiently old to warrant further attention. A portion of the old craft hall needs to be recorded before demolition.

INTRODUCTION

Tintswalo Property Group intends to establish a shopping mall on the old show grounds in Queenstown, Eastern Cape. Known as the Royal Mall, the development will cover some 1000m² bordering the light industrial area. The development will include paved parking as well as the normal shops and banks.

Seaton Thompson, the Environmental Coordinators for the project, commissioned Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to examine the area for sites of archaeological and historical value in terms of Sections 35 and 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 25 of 1999). In particular, it was ARM's duty to examine the existing buildings.

BACKGROUND

Sir George Cathcart established Queenstown in 1853 as a settlement and military outpost to protect British subjects. The centre was built in a hexagon, with streets radiating from each node to provide a line of fire.

Shortly afterwards, the Border Agricultural Society received a land grant outside of the main settlement where they could host an annual agricultural show. Over the years, the show grounds included stables, stock pens, craft halls, a stadium and tea room. In the 1980s and 90s, various boxing matches took place there.

Beginning in 2000, the Agricultural Society subdivided the property and sold it in two portions (in 2000 and 2004). They have since relocated to Queendustria.

METHOD

One ARM staff visited the project area on 29 June 2011 in the company of the developmental team. The team traversed the small area by foot. All sites were recorded with a hand-held GPS instrument calibrated to WGS 84. Sites were then transferred to the 1: 50 000 map sheet 3126DD Queenstown (Figure 1).

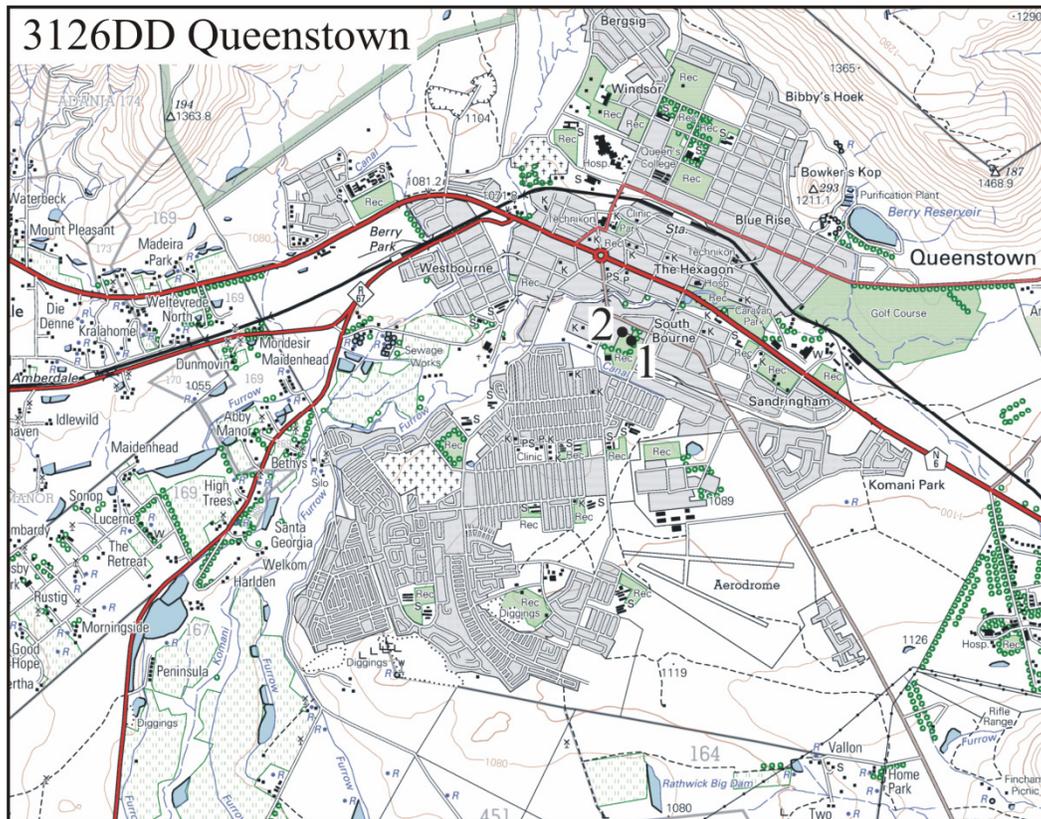


Figure 1. Location of sites on 1:50 000 map.

The South African Heritage Resources Agency recognises National and Provincial Monuments for conservation purposes. None of these exist in the immediate project area. For the rest, site significance is based on five main criteria: (1) primary versus secondary context; (2) amount of deposit; (3) number and variety of features; (4) uniqueness; and (5), potential to answer present research questions. Sites with no significance do not require mitigation, low to medium sites may require limited mitigation, and high significance requires extensive mitigation,

while outstanding sites should not be disturbed at all. Recognizable graves have high social value regardless of their archaeological significance.

Remains of historic homesteads that are 100 years or more have high importance, while standing buildings over 60 years, regardless of their aesthetic appeal, need to be recorded by an architectural historian.

RESULTS

Most of the buildings associated with the show ground were dismantled some years ago. Besides the remains of the stables and stock pens to the southwest, a small section of railroad track marks where a BAS coach was once on display at the west end.

A few structures remain. The most imposing is the outdoor stadium (Figure 2). Located at 31 54 09.2S and 26 52 25.6E, architects submitted the plans in 1954 and then it was built by 1958. Secondly, a tea room (Figure 3) built in about 1972 stands behind the stadium. It now serves as a church for The City of David Congregation (the pastor—Mr Clements Maho—is one of the new owners).



Figure 2. Outdoor Stadium.



Figure 3. Tea room.

The craft hall was largely demolished for the construction of the Cash Builders warehouse to the north. One building still remains (at 31 54 6.0S 26 52 20E), however, and it is now used as the church office. The roof, brickwork and sash windows show that it dates to the beginning of the last century (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Remains of the craft hall.

LEGAL PROVISION

According to the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999), a 'structure' means any building, works, device or other facility made by people and which is fixed to land, and includes any fixtures, fittings and equipment associated therewith (definitions page 12). Further, no person may alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant heritage resources authority (section 34 page 58).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The stadium and tea room are less than 60 years old and are also of no historical value. They therefore do not require further attention.

The church office, on the other hand, is probably close to 100 years old. Since it is only a portion of the craft hall, there seems little value in preserving it. Rather, it needs to be properly recorded before it is removed.

If the building is protected in the meantime, there is no heritage reason why development should not begin.