

# HERITAGE STATEMENT FOR PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON ERF 20, ST HELENA BAY, VREDENBURG MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT

(Assessment conducted under Section 38 (8) of the National Heritage  
Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999) as part of an EIA)

Prepared for

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Archaeology Contracts Office was requested by Advanced Projects to conduct an assessment of erf 20, St Helena Bay, in the Vredenburg Magisterial District. A residential development has been planned comprising erven zoned single residential and general residential along with public roads and public open space. The 17.79 ha site is currently zoned agriculture.

The site is predominantly old agricultural land in a wide valley behind the town of St Helena Bay. Vegetation cover in the low-lying areas was quite thick but molehills allowed examination of the soil in places. The upper slopes had more indigenous vegetation and there visibility was not an issue. Several small watercourses drain the slopes and a few small exposures of granite bedrock occur on the upper slopes.

A single Later Stone Age artefact scatter of very low significance was encountered. Three ruins dating to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were present. Two have components greater than 100 years of age and require a destruction permit under Section 35 of the NHRA. They are of medium local significance but their condition makes them not worth preservation. A scatter of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramics and glass was associated with the ruins and this is of low significance. Three cultural landscape features were noted with all being of low significance. They include a gum tree plantation, a granite quarry and a gravel pit. Visual impacts are not considered significant in the context of this rapidly developing area.

It is recommended that, subject to the approval of Heritage Western Cape, the proposed development be allowed to continue. However, the following should be noted:

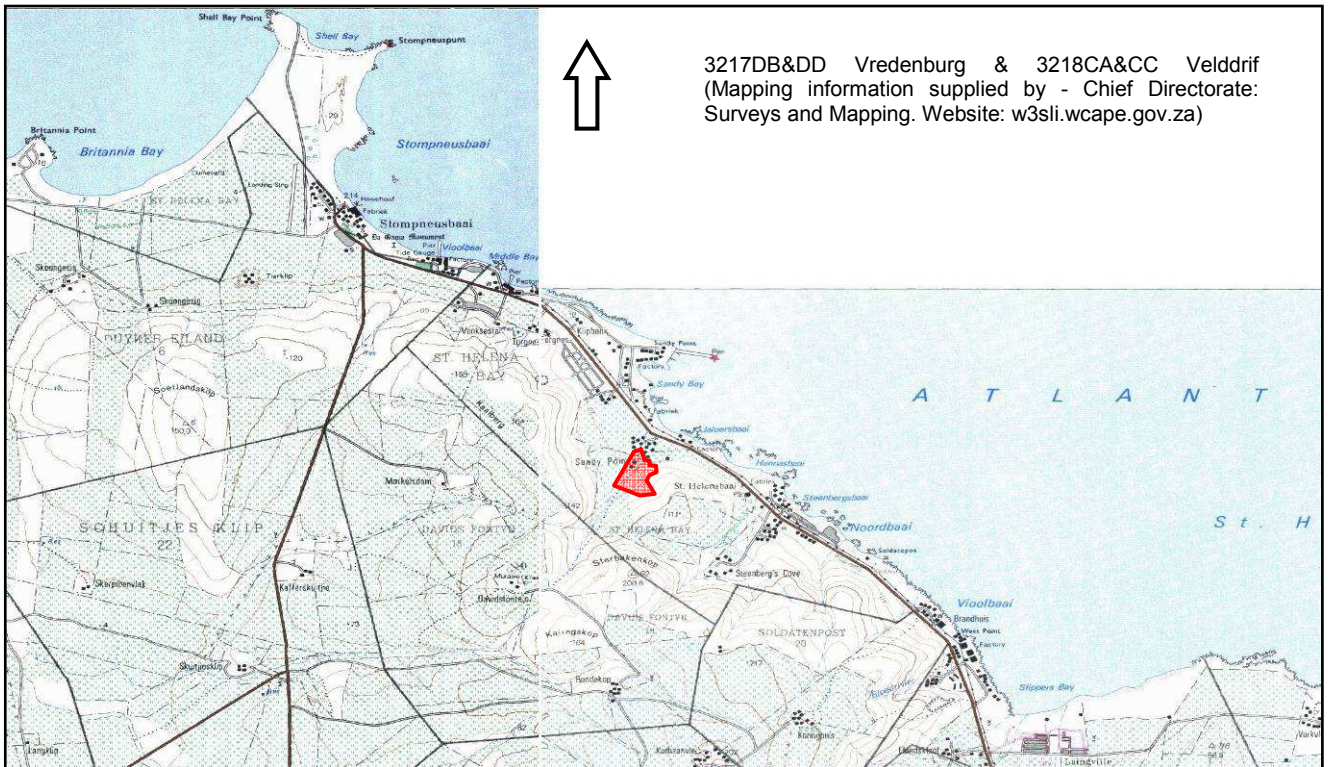
- A destruction permit is required for the two oldest ruins (SHB20-2 and SHB20-4). There is no reason why this should not be granted;
- The proponent is advised to develop architectural guidelines that are sympathetic to the scenic qualities of the area.
- There is always the chance that unmarked prehistoric burials could be present. Should such a find be made at any stage during the development it should be reported to Heritage Western Cape (021 483 9685) or the South African Heritage Resources Agency (021 462 4502) and an archaeologist should be contracted to remove the remains.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Archaeology Contracts Office was requested by Advanced Projects to conduct an assessment of erf 20, St Helena Bay, in the Vredenburg Magisterial District. A residential development has been planned comprising erven zoned single residential and general residential along with public roads and public open space (see Figure A1 in the Appendix). The 17.79 ha site is currently zoned agriculture. The assessment is for the purposes of submission of a Notification of Intent to Develop.



**Figure 1:** Map showing the location of erf 20, St Helena Bay (red polygon). See Figure 2 for further detail.

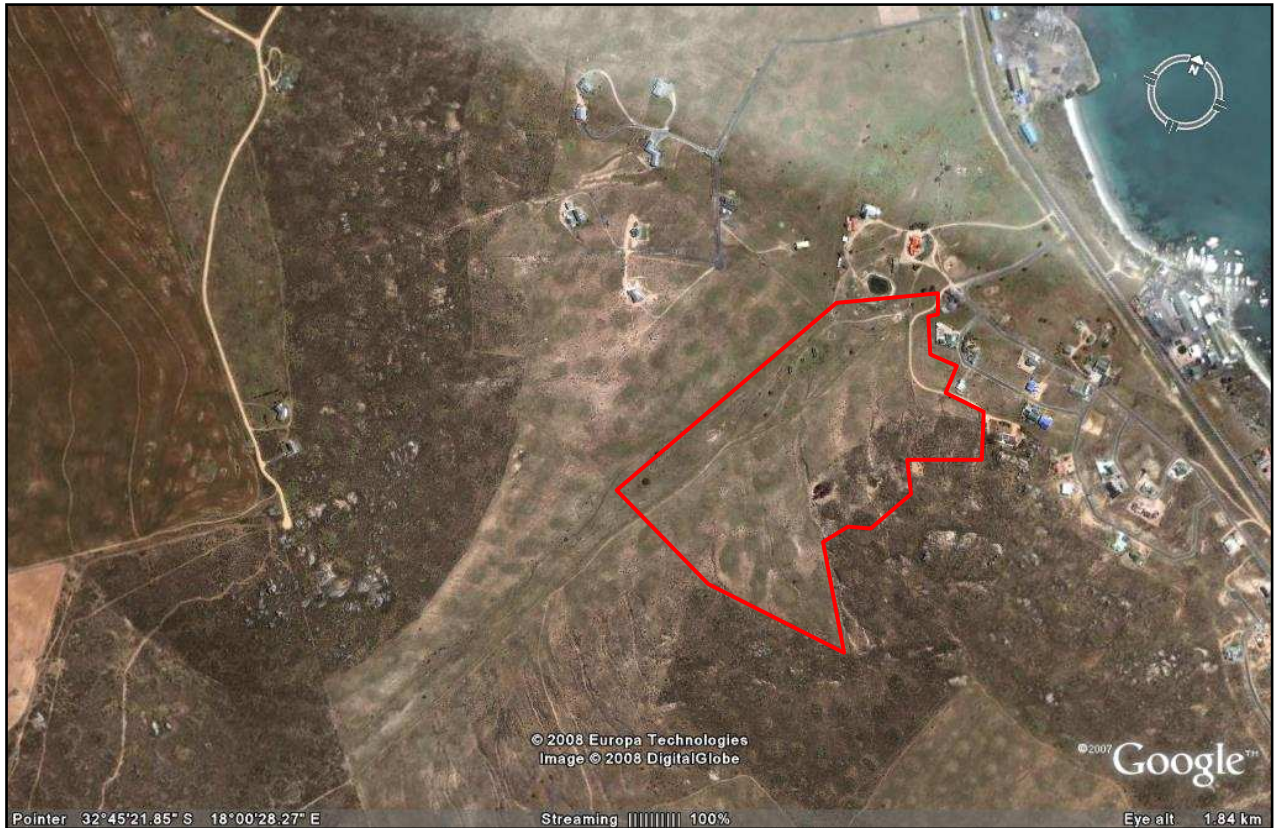
# 2. HERITAGE LEGISLATION

The National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) No. 25 of 1999 protects a variety of heritage resources including palaeontological, prehistoric and historical material (including ruins) more than 100 years old (Section 35), human remains (Section 36) and non-ruined structures older than 60 years (Section 34). Landscapes with cultural significance are also protected under the definition of the National Estate (Section 3.1d). Under Section 38 (1) of the act the site required heritage assessment based on its size of greater than 5000 m<sup>2</sup>.

Since the project is subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, Heritage Western Cape (HWC) is required to comment on the proposed project in order to facilitate final decision making by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEA&DP).

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The site lies behind the currently developed area of St Helena Bay on the west-facing slopes of a granite hill (Figure 2). It is predominantly old farmland covered by grasses and weeds (Figures 3 & 4; see Figure A2 in the Appendix). A farm track traverses the site (Figure 5) while several small watercourses drain the slope and a larger one runs down the middle of the valley along the north-western edge of erf 20.



**Figure 2:** Aerial photograph from Google Earth showing the St Helena Bay area with the approximate boundaries of erf 20 marked in red.



**Figure 3:** Vegetation cover over much of the site is grass and weeds.



**Figure 4:** Another view showing dense grass and weed cover.



**Figure 5:** The farm track that runs across the site.



**Figure 6:** One of the small watercourses draining the upper slopes.

The surface is generally composed of granitic sand although small, low outcrops of granite bedrock do occur in places on the upper slopes. Exposed calcrete was also seen near the ruins that lie on the site. Several low mounds, probably old heuweltjies, were noted on the slope. A formal gravel road crosses the northern part of the site to service some local houses (Figure 7) and a pool of water stands in front of the northern-most of the three ruins (Figure 8).



**Figure 7:** The gravel road on the northern edge of the site.



**Figure 8:** The pool of water in front of one of the ruins.

## 4. HERITAGE CONTEXT

The site lies in a valley behind the main part of the town of St Helena Bay. This valley is largely undeveloped, although much of the area to the northwest of erf 20 has already had roads laid out and services installed for new developments (see Figure A3 in the Appendix). The coastline around St Helena Bay is generally developing rapidly with housing developments springing up in many areas from Stompneusbaai in the west to Dwarskersbos in the north.

Much Stone Age archaeological research has been done on the Vredenburg Peninsula with much of it concentrated around the coastline (e.g. Berger & Parkington 1995; Buchanan et al. 1978; Hine 2004; Klein & Cruz-Urbe 1989; Orton 2008; Robertshaw 1977, 1979; Sadr *et al.* 2003; Smith 2006; Smith *et al.* 1991; Stynder *et al.* 2001).

Historically, farming has been the primary activity over much of the Vredenburg Peninsula with several old farm complexes present in the area. Many of those along the coast have been subjected to development in recent times though. All reasonably flat areas with no granite outcrops have been ploughed, including those on this site. However, on erf 20 agriculture has not been practiced in many years and the vegetation has recovered quite well.

## **5. METHODS**

The site was covered by two archaeologists on 24 August 2008. All finds and features were photographed and described and GPS co-ordinates of sites were taken using a hand-held GPS receiver on the WGS84 datum.

### **5.1. Limitations**

The site was visited in late winter and dense grass and weeds made examination of the soil surface very difficult, particularly in the centre of the valley. There we were restricted at times to checking molehills to see whether any subsurface archaeological material might be present. On the higher slopes the vegetation was more natural with many gaps allowing adequate surface examination. The granitic soil will have deposited far more slowly than the aeolian sands typically present on other parts of the coastline and it seems likely that if shell scatters were present then they would be visible at the surface. It is thus likely that the conclusions of this report will not have been significantly affected by the limited visibility.

## **6. FINDINGS**

### **6.1. Archaeology**

Five archaeological sites were recorded. One is a Later Stone Age artefact scatter, three are historical ruins and the last an historical artefact scatter associated with the ruins. Each site will be described in turn. The site numbers are prefixed with SHB20 for erf 20, St Helena Bay.

#### **6.1.1. SHB20-1**

This site was located at 32° 45' 19.9" S 18° 00' 45.5" E. This site was a light scatter of quartz and silcrete artefacts located alongside an exposure of granite (Figure 9). It was also noticed that there was a general increase in the frequency of isolated artefacts as one moved upslope towards the eastern edge of erf 20. Most were in quartz but occasional silcrete artefacts were also present.



**Figure 9:** Stone artefacts from site SHB20-1. Scale bar is 5 cm long.

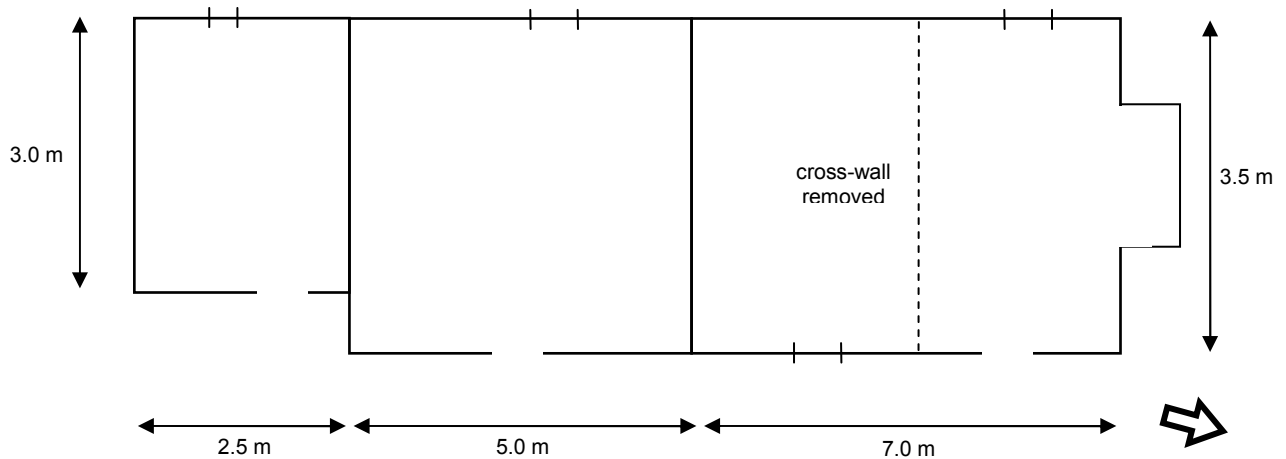
#### 6.1.2. SHB20-2

This site was located at 32° 45' 14.9" S 18° 00' 37.7" E. It is a ruined structure and, with the oldest component almost certainly being greater than 100 years of age, the site is covered by archaeology (Section 35) rather than the built environment (Section 34). It is a vernacular two room cottage which has had two further additions to its southern end (Figures 10 & 11).



**Figure 10:** View of the ruin at SHB20-2 taken from the northwest.





**Figure 11:** Schematic plan of the ruin at SHB20-2 (not to scale). Gaps in the walls denote doorways while pairs of short lines show windows. The oldest component is on the right and the youngest on the left. The block arrow indicates north.

### Oldest component

- The oldest part of this ruin, the northern end, has been built with a combination of stones and mud bricks. The rear wall has stone all the way to the top (Figure 12) while the front and north walls only have stone up to approximately 1 m (Figure 13). The southern wall was rebuilt at the time of the first addition. The cottage is approximately 7 m by 3.5 m.
- Gaps in the internal plaster showed that a cross-wall had been present but this was completely missing at the time of inspection (Figures 12 & 13).
- The mud bricks are very interesting in that they have been made using material raided from a shell midden. The weathered bricks contain shell fragments and flaked stone artefacts (Figure 14) and a patch of palaeobeach deposit was also visible in one place inside the front wall (Figure 15).
- A hearth and chimney stack is attached to the northern end (Figures 16 & 17).
- The floor is of cement but there was so much soil (about 10 cm thick) on it that it was not possible to ascertain its age. It might well have been relatively recent though.
- The window and door frames, all painted blue, and the lintels are of wood (Figure 18).
- The cement along the top of the walls shows that the most recent roof was of corrugated iron (Figure 19). It was not possible to tell whether the original had been different or not.
- The interior walls have had several coats of paint over the years and the visible sequence showed first red followed by grey applied to the upper half only, followed by blue over the whole wall then finally white (Figure 20).
- It is likely that this structure dates to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.



**Figure 12:** The point at which the cross-wall once met the front wall. Note stones to ~1 m only.



**Figure 13:** The point at which the cross-wall once met the back wall. Note stones to full height.



**Figure 14:** Fragments of shell and flaked stone artefacts embedded in the mud bricks.



**Figure 15:** Chunk of palaeobeach deposit included within the wall. It is visible at the bottom in Figure 12.



**Figure 16:** The hearth and chimney stack on the northern end of the building.



**Figure 17:** View of the hearth from the inside.



**Figure 18:** The wooden window frame and lintel in the back wall of the northern room.



**Figure 19:** Detail of cement on top of the back wall showing the imprint of corrugated iron.



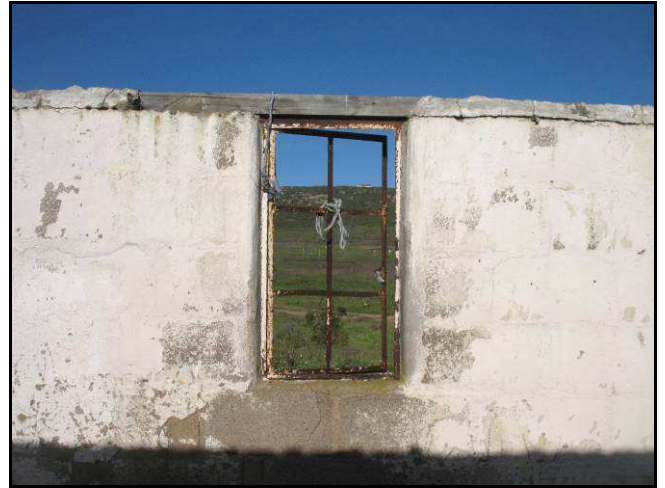
**Figure 20:** Detail of the interior paint. Part of the broken door is also visible.

### First addition

- All four walls are made of cement breeze blocks indicating that the southern wall of the original cottage was demolished and rebuilt at the time of this addition. This room is approximately 5 m by 3.5 m.
- The door frame in the front wall is of wood (Figure 21), while the window in the rear wall has a steel frame (Figure 22). The lower half of the door is still present. The door and window are not perfectly opposite one another.
- As with the oldest component, the cement on top of the walls indicates that a corrugated iron roof was present.
- The northern wall of this room is painted blue while the rest have remnants of white paint.
- It is likely that this component of the building dates to the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.



**Figure 21:** Front view of the 1<sup>st</sup> addition.



**Figure 22:** The window as seen from the inside.

### Second addition

- This addition is made of decorative breeze blocks which are characteristic of the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. However, they have been painted on their flat side and the fact that the blocks have not been placed facing the same way shows that the blocks had been scavenged from elsewhere and reused here. The cement is completely modern. This room is approximately 2.5 m by 3 m.
- Both the door and window frames are of wood but the window has been bricked up with modern cement bricks. Again the door and window do not align across the room.
- It seems that this addition was probably added quite recently.



**Figure 23:** View of the 2<sup>nd</sup> addition from the east.



**Figure 24:** Interior view of the bricked up window.

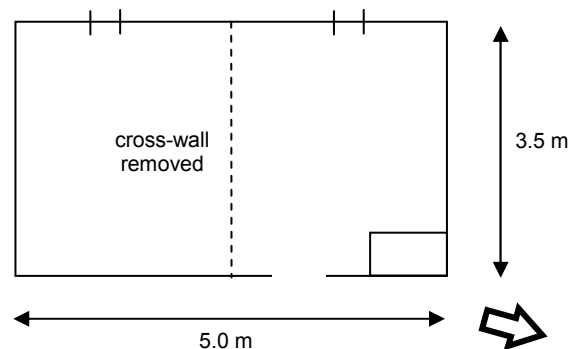
### 6.1.3. SHB20-3

This site was located at 32° 45' 15.7" S 18° 00' 37.0" E. It is a vernacular style two-room cottage (Figures 25 & 26). While this building may be less than 100 years of age, it has been included here to be safe.

- The walls are made of cement bricks but they are not modern. The mortar used in the walls is mud. The cross-wall, which was just a single brick-width thick, has been removed (Figure 27).
- The door frame is of wood and only wooden lintels are present in the two window openings in the back wall (Figures 27 & 28). The southern window has been bricked up with modern bricks and cement.
- An internal chimney stack is located in the northwest corner (Figure 29).
- Most of the inside has been painted in white but blue and red paint are present around the hearth and chimney stack (Figure 29).
- Again, cement on the top of the wall above the northern window shows that a low-angled corrugated iron roof used to be present (Figures 28 & 30).
- This ruin probably dates to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



**Figure 25:** View of the ruin at SHB20-3 as seen from the north.



**Figure 26:** Schematic plan of the ruin at SHB20-3 (not to scale). The block arrow indicates north. Gaps in the walls denote doorways while pairs of short lines show windows.



**Figure 27:** The bricked up southern window and the scar where the cross-wall used to be.



**Figure 28:** The northern window.



**Figure 29:** The internal hearth and chimney stack.



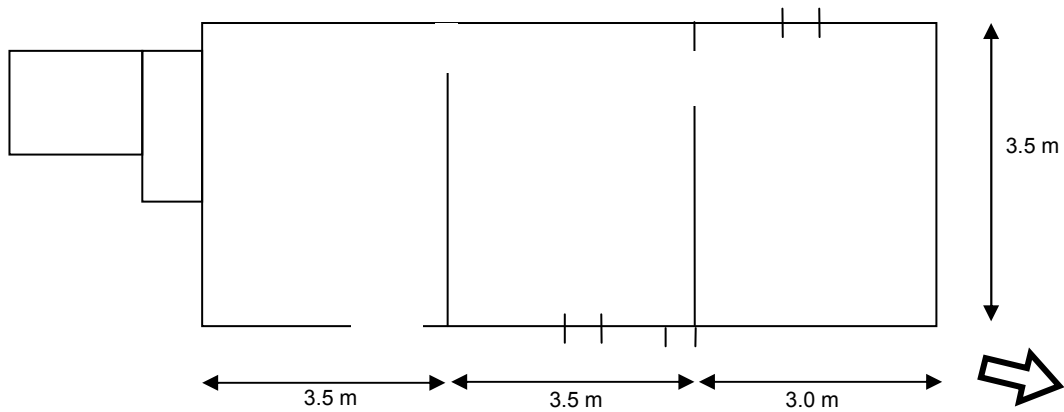
**Figure 30:** View of the rear, west facing aspect of the ruin. SHB20-2 can be seen in the background.

#### 6.1.4. SHB20-4

This site was located at 32° 45' 16.5" S 18° 00' 36.4" E. It is a vernacular two room cottage with an additional room added to its northern end (Figures 31 & 32).



**Figure 31:** View of the ruin at SHB20-4 from the east.



**Figure 32:** Schematic plan of the ruin at SHB20-4 (not to scale). Gaps in the walls denote doorways while pairs of short lines show windows. The right-hand room is made from the youngest materials. The block arrow indicates north.

- This structure was made from stone while the addition to the northern end was done with breeze blocks giving a more even surfaced wall (Figure 33). All walls are still intact up to roof level. A chunk of palaeobeach deposit was also noted in the front wall.
- Three windows penetrate the wall with all having been bricked up. A fourth “window” is visible only on the outside and extends all the way to the top of the wall (Figure 33 & 34).
- The external door has a wooden frame (Figure 34), while the northern internal door used to have one. The southern door had no frame and the plaster was rounded off on the edges (Figure 35).
- A hearth and chimney stack are attached to the southern end and an oven is attached to this (Figure 36). No entrance is present on the outside and it is assumed that the entrance to the oven is low down within the hearth – it is now obscured by rubble and mud from the collapsed chimney (Figure 37).
- The sequence of paint on the wall in the entrance room is as follows from oldest to youngest: red / green / red / red / layer of newspaper / white / blue / mint green. The newspaper was probably not more than a few decades old. The mint green colour can be seen in Figure 35 while the paint around the hearth was different (Figure 37)
- The roof was of corrugated iron with some still present above the hearth. The more modern materials above the iron show that this was a more recent replacement though (Figure 38).
- A further feature to note is the presence of a thick “step” along the lower half (Figure 39). This may have been for strengthening purposes.
- The original structure is almost certainly late 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the addition is early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.



**Figure 33:** View of the front of SHB20-4 showing the differing walls of the original (left) and newer (right) parts.



**Figure 34:** The central part of the front wall showing the peculiar bricked-up “window” alongside the other bricked-up front window.



**Figure 35:** The northern (far) internal door has a wooden frame while the southern one (foreground) has a lintel but no frame.





**Figure 36:** View of the external hearth and chimney stack with attached oven on the southern end of the ruin.



**Figure 37:** The inside of the hearth filled with rubble from the collapsed chimney.



**Figure 38:** The remaining section of corrugated iron roof with modern bricks and cement above.



**Figure 39:** View from the northern addition through the doorways and showing the recently bricked up rear window and the buttress along the original northern wall.

#### 6.1.5. SHB20-5

This site represents the historical artefact scatter located in the general vicinity of the three ruins described above. While most of the material is clearly of 20<sup>th</sup> century origin, there are a few items that do date to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 39). A single fragment of late 19<sup>th</sup> century blue and white willow-pattern ceramic was noted and the brown stone ware could date to the late 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

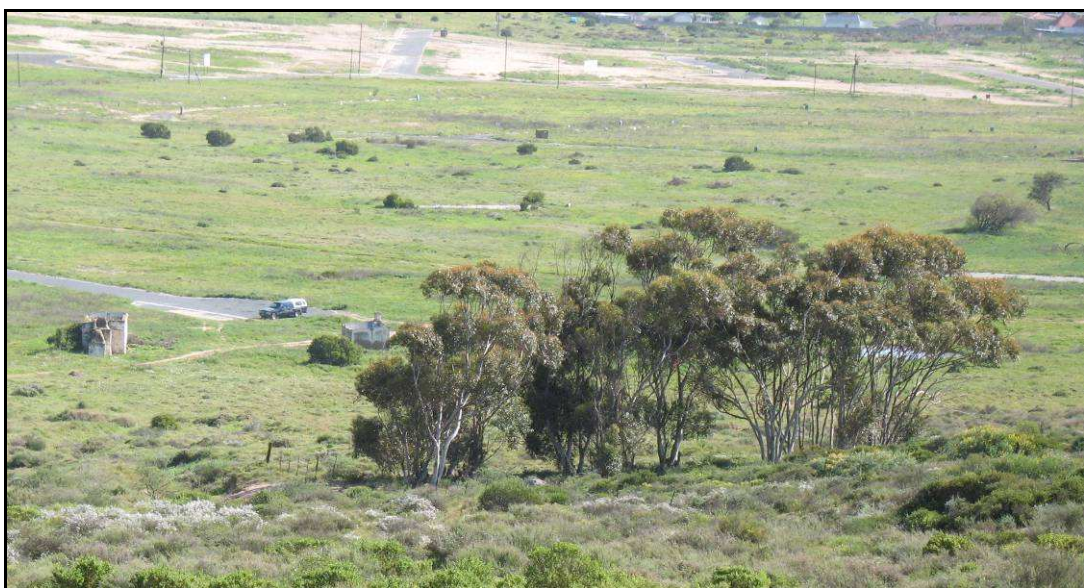


**Figure 39:** Historical and modern artefacts from the scatter around the three ruins.

## 6.2. Cultural landscapes

### 6.2.1. SHB20-6

This site was located at 32° 45' 21.6" S 18° 00' 41.6" E. It is a grove of gum trees that pertain to an earlier farming use of the landscape when most farms had their own small grove of gums to provide poles for construction and fencing (Figure 40). This grove showed much evidence of having been harvested intensively in the past. It is considered an element of the past agricultural landscape, although it no longer retains any tangible connection with this land use. No evidence of any ruin was found in close proximity to the trees.



**Figure 40:** View of the gum tree grove with the historical ruins in the background.

### 6.2.2. SHB20-7

This site was located at 32° 45' 20.7" S 18° 00' 43.7" E. This a small, informal granite quarry where rock has been excavated from the hillside, possibly for use in construction. It is well weathered and likely to be quite an old feature (Figure 41).



**Figure 41:** View of the old informal granite quarry.

### 6.2.3. SHB20-8

This site was located at 32° 45' 19.1" S 18° 00' 46.5" E up on the west-facing slope. It is an old borrow pit where granitic gravel was removed in the past. It is well overgrown (Figure 42). This site may be located just outside the western edge of the property.



**Figure 42:** View of the old borrow pit with the ruins at the foot of the slope in the background.

### 6.3. Visual impacts

The main concern here is the densification of buildings in an area which has traditionally been used for agriculture and with the fishing industry operating from the harbour. However, St Helena Bay is steadily developing into a more substantial residential town with houses even appearing on the crests of the surrounding hills and no doubt many more houses will appear within the next few years. The visual impact will be a progressive one as houses are slowly added to this and the neighbouring developments.

The main road through the area skirts the southern coastline of St Helena Bay and can be considered a scenic route. Given the comments above, there will be an increased visual impact on this scenic route.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

A total of eight heritage sites and features were located during the survey. Five are archaeological and three are elements of the past cultural landscape. None are of much significance in their local context (Table 1) and no mitigation can be suggested for any of them. It is unfortunate that the ruins, particularly sites SHB20-2 and SHB20-4, are in such poor shape, since they would otherwise have been conservation-worthy. Such vernacular architecture is steadily disappearing with many structures simply suffering the ravages of time and weather as seems to be the case here. It is important to note that these two ruins, by virtue of their age of greater than 100 years are protected by the heritage legislation (Section 35) and that a destruction permit would be required for their removal.

**Table 1:** List of heritage sites and features indicating their significance.

Site number	Brief description	Significance in local context	Comment
SHB20-1	LSA artefact scatter	very low	
SHB20-2	late 19 <sup>th</sup> C ruin	medium	Permit required for destruction.
SHB20-3	early 20 <sup>th</sup> C ruin	low	Not protected.
SHB20-4	late 19 <sup>th</sup> C ruin	medium	Permit required for destruction.
SHB20-5	historical artefact scatter	very low	
SHB20-6	gum tree grove	very low	
SHB20-7	informal granite quarry	very low	
SHB20-8	informal borrow pit	very low	

The visual impacts are only those to be expected with a developing town. Since St Helena Bay (and other neighbouring small towns) is being developed as a residential area these impacts are not considered significant. However, it is important that some measure of control is exerted on the style of buildings. The proponent is advised to develop architectural guidelines that are sympathetic to the scenic qualities of the area. Use of earthy colours or white in combination with a more-or-less vernacular construction style is recommended.

Absolutely nothing was seen in the molehills on the low-lying parts of the site so it is very unlikely that any prehistoric sites are present in this vicinity. Also, given the fact that the site had been ploughed in the past, there would certainly have been shell exposed at the surface if sub-surface sites had been present.

With the hard granitic soils of the area it is also very unlikely that unmarked prehistoric burials would be found. They are usually associated with occupation sites. However, this possibility can never be ruled out completely.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that, subject to the approval of Heritage Western Cape, the proposed development be allowed to continue. However, the following should be noted:

- A destruction permit is required for the two oldest ruins (SHB20-2 and SHB20-4). There is no reason why this should not be granted;
- The proponent is advised to develop architectural guidelines that are sympathetic to the scenic qualities of the area.
- There is always the chance that unmarked prehistoric burials could be present. Should such a find be made at any stage during the development it should be reported to Heritage Western Cape (021 483 9685) or the South African Heritage Resources Agency (021 462 4502) and an archaeologist should be contracted to remove the remains.

## 9. REFERENCES

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## **10. INVESTIGATION TEAM**

Fieldwork: J. Orton  
K. Smuts

Report: J. Orton





**Figure A2:** Panoramic view of the site from across the valley to the west. The approximate area of erf 20 is indicated by the white dotted line.



**Figure A3:** Panoramic view of the site from the high corner in the south-western part of the site. The white dotted line indicates the western and southern boundaries of erf 20. To the right it disappears behind the hill.