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FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HERITAGE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS ON THE REMAINDER OF THE FARM WESSELSHEIM 1793, BETHLEHEM

INVESTIGATION

The proposed residential development is located on the remainder of the farm Wesselsheim 1793, Bloemfontein (Surveyor-General O.F.S. 1973). The site had been visited and inspected on 7 June 2005 in the company of Cedric Nelson from Environmental Consultants, Bloemfontein.

The area had been examined for possible archaeological and historical material to establish the potential impact on any cultural relics that might be present. The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is done in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), (25 of 1999) and under the Environmental Conservation Act, (73 of 1989).

LOCALITY

The site for the proposed residential development is located on subdivision 2 of the farm Tredenham 2153, Bloemfontein (29°02'57"S. 026°13'43"E. Altitude 1393m). The property lies east of the N1 main route and along the R700 road to Bultfontein, opposite the well known farm of Berghof (2926AA 1993). The entrance to the land is from the T185 tertiary road (Figs.15-16) (29°03'12"S. 026°13'44"E. Altitude 1398m).

The area for development lies against the hill in the north west corner (29°02'57"S. 026°13'43"E. Altitude 1393m) and contains a thick grass cover and a scatter of Acacia karoo (Soetdoring), Olea africana (Wild Olive) and other indigenous tree and shrub species (Figs.1-3,14). The western boundary is at 29°03'03"S. 026°13'38"E. Altitude 1387m (Fig.9). The highest point on the hill above the house (Fig.13) lies at 29°03'06"S. 026°13'43"E. Altitude 1397m.

FINDS

A soil dam wall (29°03'00"S. 026°13'43"E. Altitude 1390m & 29°03'01"S. 026°13'42"E. Altitude 1390m) indicate previous farming activities (Figs.4-5).

The remains of a house foundation of unknown origin with associated midden are found just outside the security fence near the existing house (29°03'01"S. 026°13'47"E. Altitude 1388m) (Fig.8.).

The walls of a dilapidated house (Fig.6) is also found below and some distance from the main house (29°03'03"S. 026°13'40"E. Altitude 1403m). The remains of stone terracing are present here (Fig.7).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS

On the high area to the south facing the R700 road (Fig.10) the remains of several stone walled structures (29°03'08"S. 026°13'43"E. Altitude 1391m) and stone paving (29°03'06"S. 026°13'42"E. Altitude 1396m) were found (Figs.11-12).

It is presently not clear which part this area will eventually play in the planning of the development.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The old ash heap and wall foundations are clearly in association, but of unknown origin. The ash heap produced a number of recognisable objects, such as a damaged 1952 South Africa ¼ penny ("oortjie"), one 9mm short revolver bullet, a variety of safety pins, nails, wood screws and the odd piece of metal. Despite these object it is unlikely to connect the site to any possible group of occupants. Judging from the single room and limited size of the house, it is clear that it had been occupied by farm labourers previously.

The dilapidated house was initially occupied by tenants on the property and the stone terracing was probably made as part of their flower garden. The house could be older than 60 years. However, it had clearly been deliberately neglected by the owner of the land and allowed to deteriorate into its present state. Therefore, there will be no sense in any effort to preserve the building for re-use.

The origin and purpose of the paving and stone walling on the ridge is unclear, but could possibly date from an earlier period of occupation by some of the early inhabitants of the area. However, we have no records of early Basotho people who had been living in the vicinity of Bloemfontein during pre-colonial and even

during pre-difaqane times (1822-1830). Similar structures with a fair amount of associated decorated pottery had been recorded during a survey in the National Botanical Gardens at Bloemfontein in 1975 (Dreyer 1976). In the present case, clay ceramic ware was totally absent.

The finds are damaged and incomplete and do not appear to be very important or an exceptional discovery. Every archaeological and historical site is unique and should be treated as a non-renewable commodity. All efforts should be made to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or destruction. It is stressed that in case of the discovery of any archaeological or historical material during the course of further work, all activities should temporarily be stopped in the specific area for inspection by the archaeologist or other specialists from the National Museum, Bloemfontein.

The soil dam wall is in a bad state of neglect and does not serve any purpose at present.

According to the finds described above, it is only in the case of the stone walls and paving on the ridge that preventative measures will be needed. The builders of these walls and occupants of the site cannot be identified with certainty. No potsherds could be retrieved to give an indication of the builders or occupants and considering the damaged state in which these walls and paving are at present, the structures cannot be considered as unique and will not be worthwhile to be protected and preserved.

MITIGATION

Concerning the area for the proposed development, mitigation measures will not be needed in the proposed areas of development, excluding the stone walling on the ridge.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Niel Devenish for taking me to the site.

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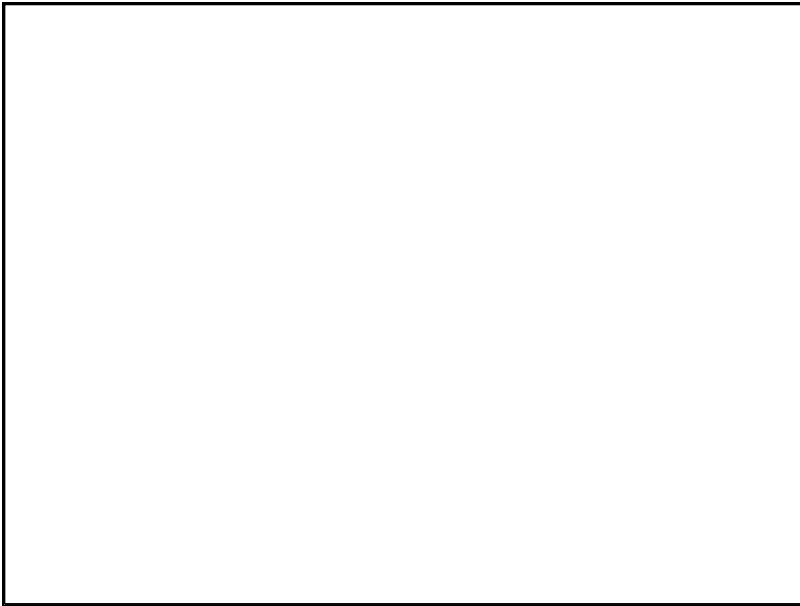
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:

Fig.1 General view of the site in the north west corner facing south east.

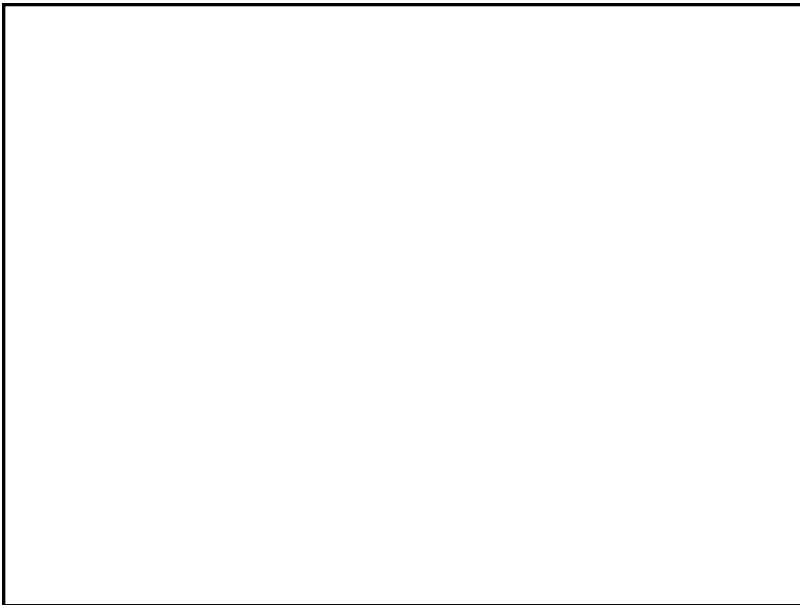


Fig.2. Another view of the site. Existing house on the left.

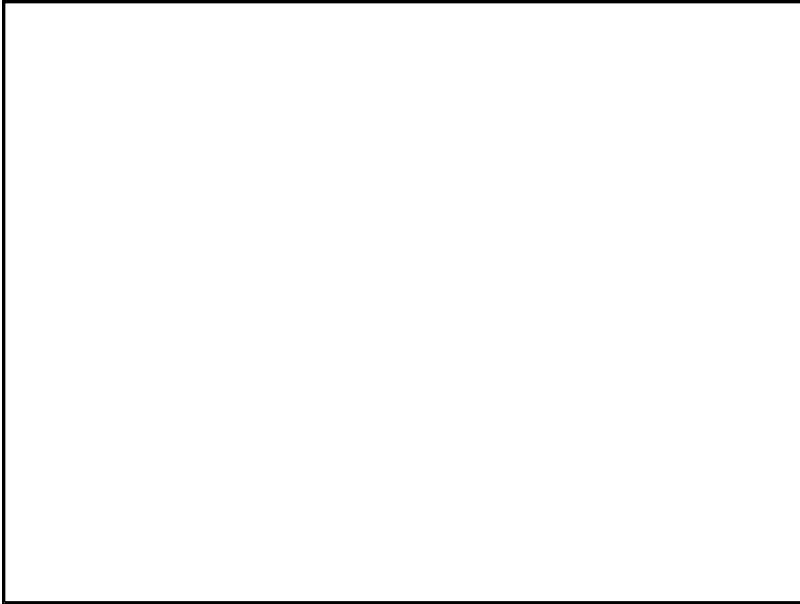


Fig.3 Quad bike tracks run through the property.

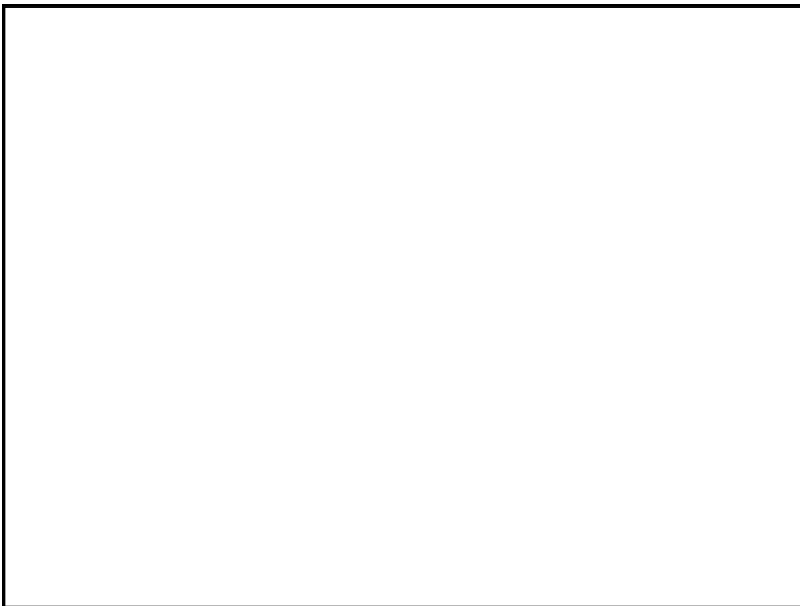


Fig.4 A dam wall had been built some years ago.

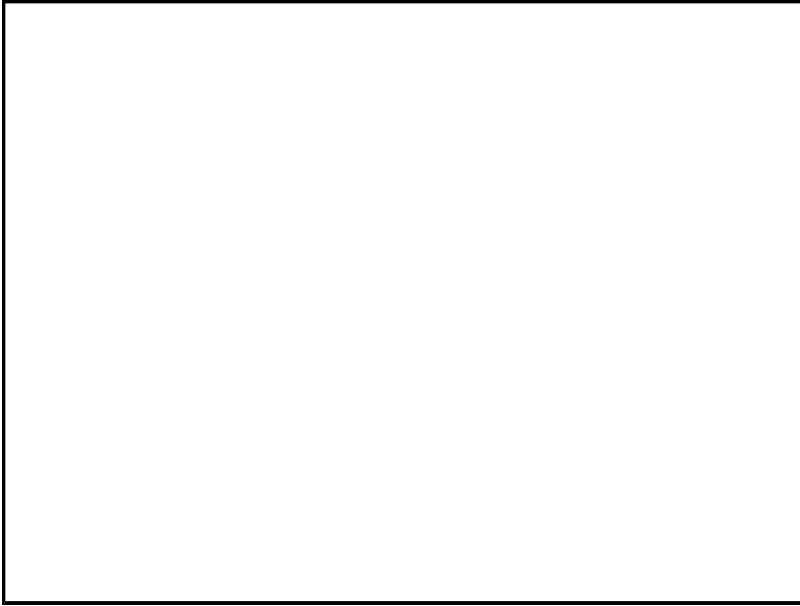


Fig.5 Another part of the dam wall.

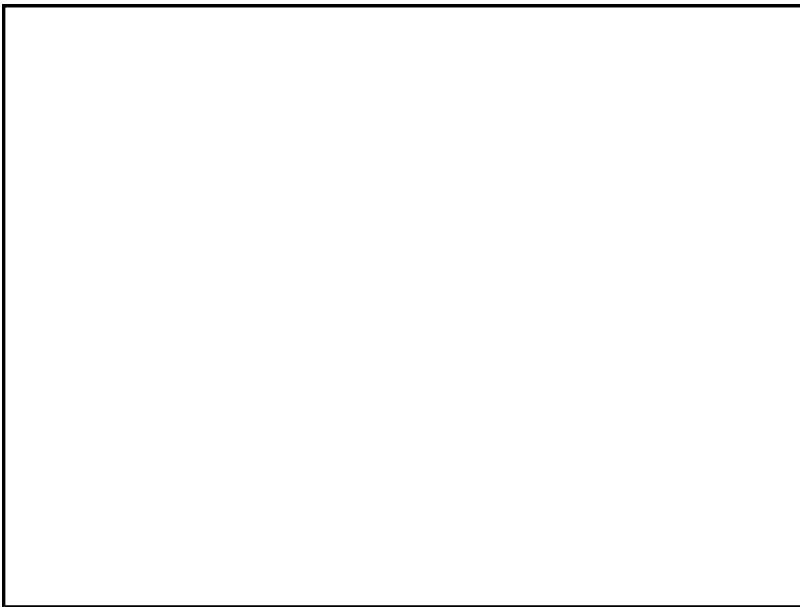


Fig.6 Delapidated building on site.

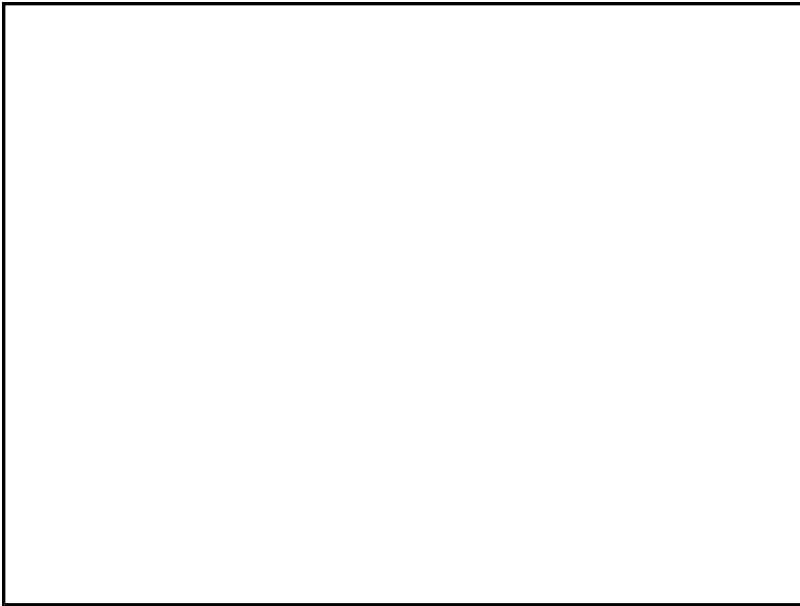


Fig.7 Remains of an old terrace wall near the house.

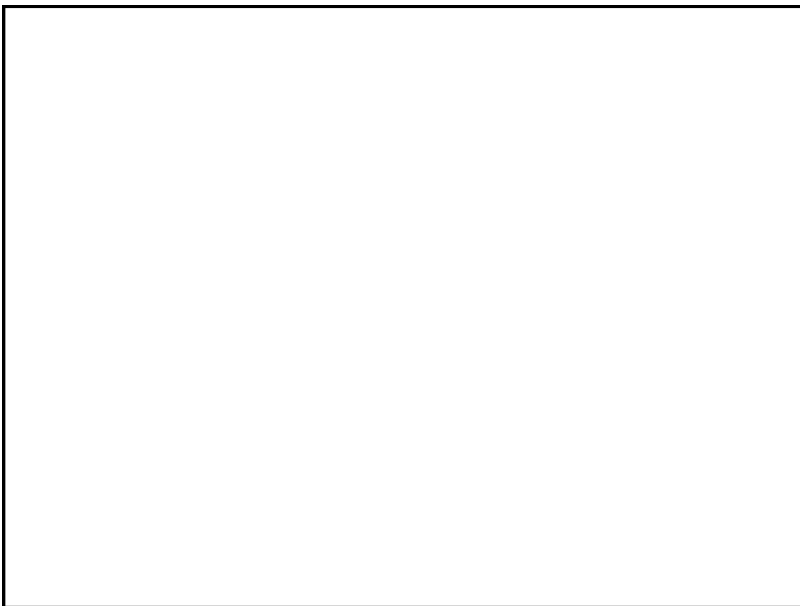


Fig.8 An old ash heap outside and foundation stones near the house could be the remains of a labourer's house.

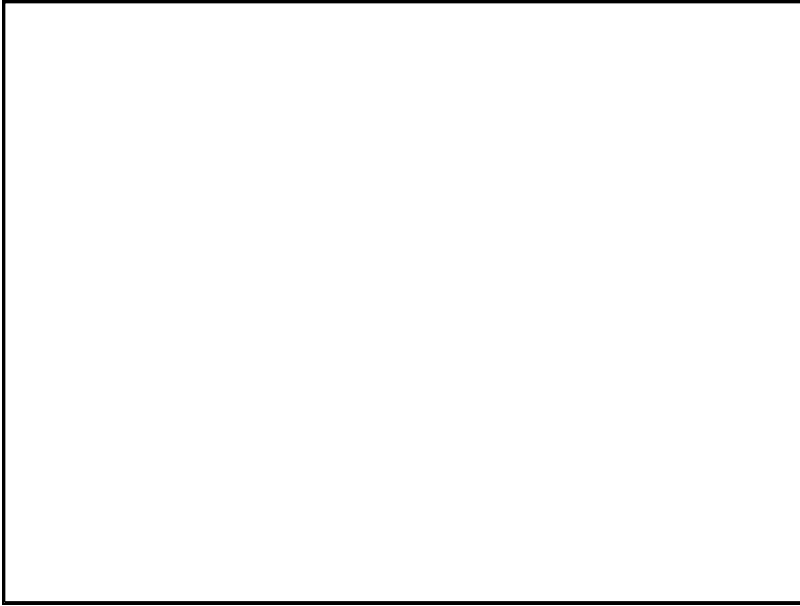


Fig.9 A view of the western corner of the property, facing south.

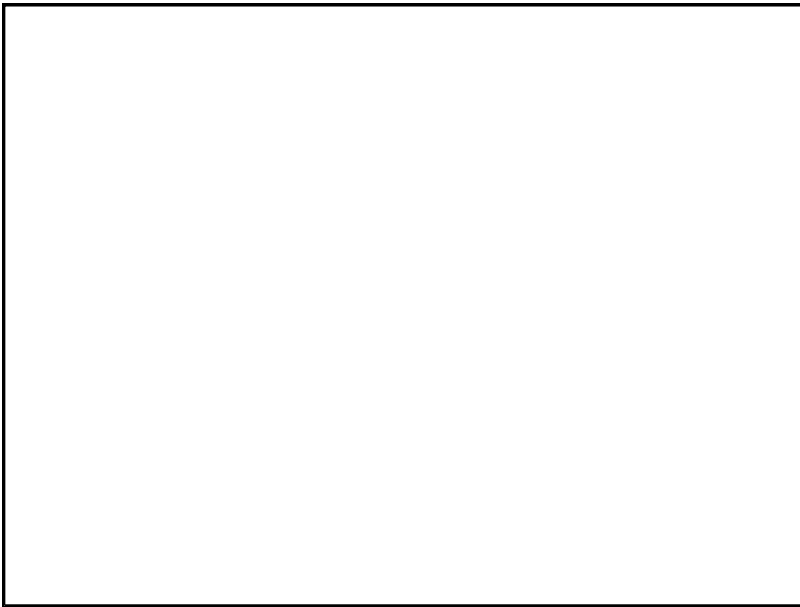


Fig.10 View on the ridge facing south towards the R700 main road.

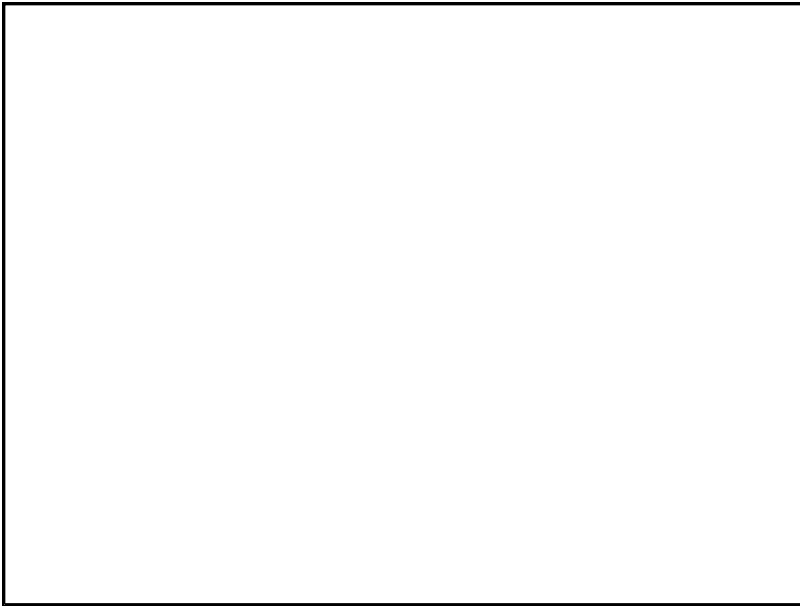


Fig.11 Stone structures on top of ridge.

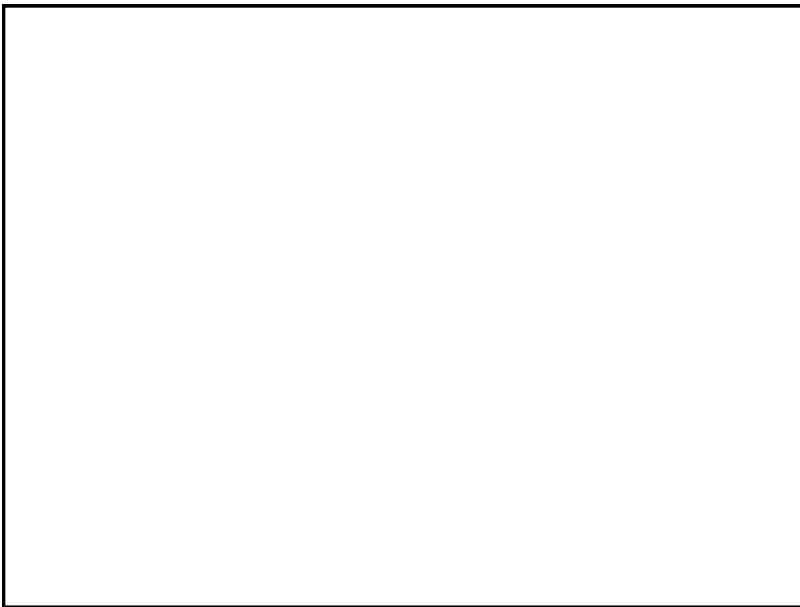


Fig.12 Another view of the stone structures on top of ridge.

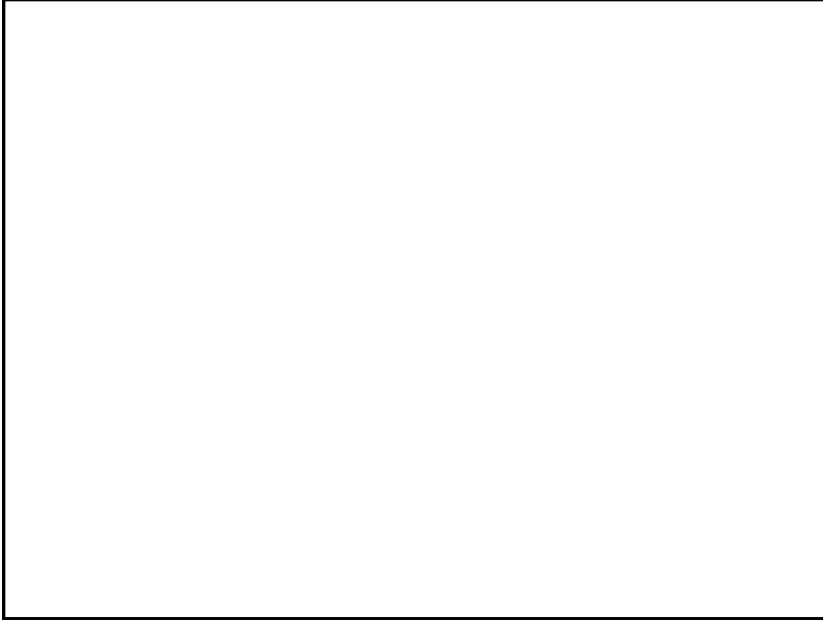


Fig.13 View along the fence facing east towards the house.

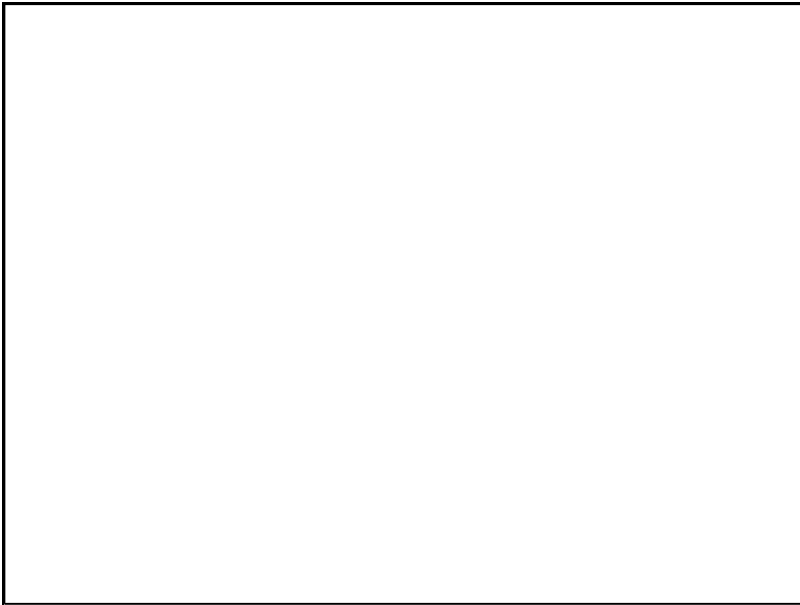


Fig.14 View along the western fence of the property.

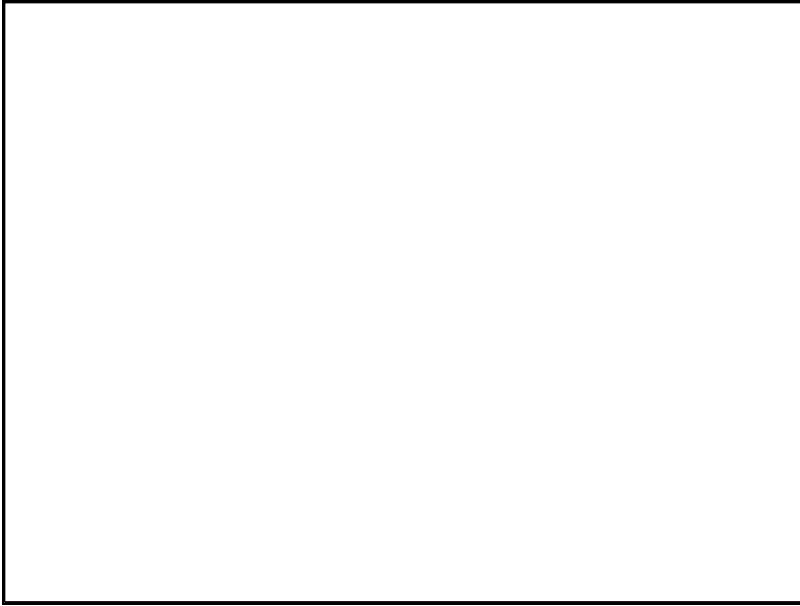


Fig.15 View from the entrance gate along the T185 road.

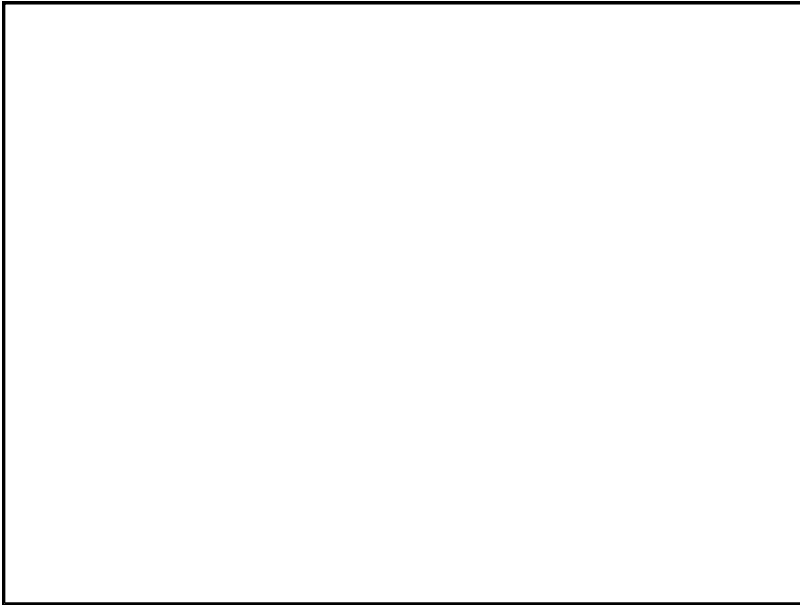


Fig.16 View from the gate along the T185 road.