

SOUTH AFRICAN RESEARCH AGENCY
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APPENDIX 6

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The owners of the Meerust Estate have embarked on a programme to redevelop the 152ha property into a prestige conference facility with ancillary facilities such as a restaurant, guest accommodation and reception areas. At the same time, they are introducing new agricultural enterprises with herb production and exotic fruit to supplement existing vineyards and orchards. Facilities for processing agricultural produce on the farm are required.

Jan Hanekom Partnership, town and regional planners, has been appointed to make the necessary land-use applications in terms of the Land Use Planning Ordinance (No 15 of 1985) and Doug Jeffery and Associates has been appointed to ensure that provisions of the Environmental Conservation Act (Act No 73 of 1989) have been met. Architects Munnik Visser have been involved in architectural work related to the project for some years and are an integral part of the planning team. Ian Ford - Deon Bronkhorst: landscape architects are providing landscape design for the project team and Sogor Fineart Design are directing interior design decision-making.

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.1 Legal Framework

The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) has been involved with planning and development of Meerust for the past two years and has recommended that, in order to facilitate the rezoning as contemplated, a Heritage Impact Assessment should form part of the application process. Section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999) (NHRA) requires that a specialist report must include:

- The identification and mapping of all heritage resources in the area affected
- An assessment of the significance of such resources
- An assessment of the impact of the development on such heritage resources
- An evaluation of the impact of the development on heritage resources relative to the sustainable social and economic benefits to be derived from the development
- The results of consultation with communities affected by the proposed development and other interested parties regarding the impact of the development on heritage resources
- If heritage resources will be adversely affected by the proposed development, the consideration of alternatives; and
- Plans for mitigation of any adverse effects during and after the completion of the proposed development.

The report must be considered timeously by the responsible heritage resources authority which must, after consultation with the person proposing the development, decide:

- Whether or not the development may proceed
- Any limitations or conditions to be applied to the development
- What general protections in terms of the NHRA apply, and what formal protections may be applied, to such heritage resources

- Whether compensatory action is required in respect of any heritage resources damaged or destroyed as a result of the development; and
- Whether the appointment of specialists is required as a condition of approval of the proposal.

2. HIA PROCESS AND SCOPE OF STUDY

The HIA process and scope of study has been informed by discussions with SAHRA officials and follows guidelines for HIA's recommended by SAHRA.

2.1 Phase One: Preparation

The following preparatory work has been undertaken:

- Site inspections to familiarise the team with the site and its contents
- Discussions with the client and members of the project team of planners and designers
- Discussions with the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) regarding requirements in terms of the NHRA. Note: while SAHRA has been involved in issuing permits for alterations and additions to the administration building and the new gatehouse, this agency's role will be filled by the newly formed Provincial Heritage Authority: Heritage Western Cape
- Gathering of relevant background information on the site and proposals.

2.2 Phase Two: Scoping

The main objective of the second phase is to determine the heritage significance of the estate and provide design constraints for the team. The work consists of the following:

- **Statutory and Policy Framework: Critical Review:**
All relevant municipal and planning frameworks and policy related to the estate have been reviewed in terms of their relevance to the estate's heritage resource protection.
- **Contextual and Site Analysis:**
This has involved the analysis of title deeds, historical maps and other archival material undertaken by Dr Malan (See Annexure 1).
A building-by building survey has been carried out and detailed comment provided by Hennie Vos: architectural archaeologist

An analysis of the landscape and its precincts has been carried out through site surveys and from aerial photographs

A Stage One archaeological (pre-colonial) survey was carried out by Jonathan Kaplan: professional archaeologist

- **Statement of Significance:**

The outcome of the analytical work takes the form of a preliminary "Statement of Heritage Significance" and a constraints and opportunities plan to guide the project team.

The Statement and plan together with this plan has been presented to the relevant Interested and Affected Parties (I & AP's) for comment. The minutes of the site inspection and meeting are attached as Annexure B.

2.3 Phase Three: Impact and Mitigation

Aikman Associates will comment on the design response from the project team.

These comments will form part of the rezoning assessment.

3. HIA CONSULTING TEAM

An interdisciplinary team was set up to handle this complex programme:

- Aikman Associates: Heritage Management
Henry Aikman, architect, and Andrew Berman, architect and urban designer are co-ordinating the work programme
- Dr Antonia Malan: University of Cape Town: Historical Archaeology Research Group
Dr Malan has undertaken archival research
- Hennie Vos: architectural archaeologist
He has provided detailed comment in the building-by-building survey undertaken
- Jonathan Kaplan: professional archaeologist
A Phase One (pre-colonial) survey has been undertaken.

4. PURPOSE OF THE DRAFT REPORT

This DRAFT report provides a preliminary statement of heritage significance and issues relevant to the site as well as recommendations for mitigation.. It is to be distributed to Interested Parties and the applicant for comment. . Responses from the Interested Parties will be incorporated in the final report for submission to Heritage Western Cape.

4.1 Criteria for Assessing Heritage Significance

The heritage significance of the site has been assessed on different levels, namely the overall valley landscape and at the site scale. Consideration was also given to the physical fabric of the site, its use, association and relationships. In addition, contextual, comparative and potential values were considered.

5. STATUTORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK: CRITICAL REVIEW

The property is affected/protected by the following statutory and policy provisions:

5.1 The Zoning Scheme

The property is zoned for Agricultural Purposes (Zone One). In terms of this zoning only primary agricultural activity can take place. Consent for the operation of a commercial nursery was provided many years ago.

From a heritage perspective, this protects the landscape character of the property from agri-business physical intrusions.

5.2 The Integrated Spatial Development Framework (ISDF)

The ISDF for Groot Drakenstein-Simondium has been prepared by Taylor, van Rensburg and van der Spuy: architects and planners. In terms of this policy framework agricultural activity is promoted with ancillary tourist uses.

5.3 Heritage Conservation Study; Groot Drakenstein-Simondium Spatial Development Framework

This specialist study was commissioned by Taylor van Rensburg & van der Spuy as part of the ISDF. While this 2001 study has no formal status, its findings and recommendations are the result of an extensive public participation exercise and must be given careful consideration in relation to the HIA for Meerust.

A detailed analysis of the Groot Drakenstein-Simondium valley landscape formed the basis for determining the following:

- The Overall Perspective
- Key Landscape Elements
- Sub Areas of Character
- Sites of significance
- Vulnerability

This then led to detailed recommendations in terms of:

- Policy Controls
- Statutory Controls
- Approval Procedures

In relation to Meerust the Heritage Conservations Study had the following to say:

5.3.1 Environmental Sensitivity

The proposed redevelopment of the farm is broadly consistent with the policy framework outlined above.

The approval process being undertaken should ensure that the new interventions are sensitive to the landscape settings and the site's heritage.

5.3.2 National Heritage Site

In Section 4 of the Heritage Conservation Study Meerust was proposed as a Grade 1: National heritage Site. There were 17 other sites, 3 of which are currently Provincial Heritage Sites (formerly National Monuments).

It is believed that this recommendation is probably inconsistent with current thinking within the SAHRA where it is envisaged that there will be very few sites of National or Grade 1 significance.

This is not to say that Meerust is not of Heritage significance but in terms of protection it should have Provincial (Grade II) status and fall under the control of Heritage Western Cape.

5.3.3 Local Conservation Advisory Committee

It was recommended that an advisory committee be formed to assist the local authority with an assessment of new development proposals.

This recommendation has not been met but a public participation process forms part of this HIA.

5.3.4 Conservation Guidelines

It was recommended that comprehensive guidelines should be drawn up to inform property owners and the local authority in formulating design/intervention proposals and assessing these.

The local authority has yet to appoint consultants to prepare the guidelines.

6.4 Mid 1800's to early 1900's

The Groot Drakenstein economy suffered a number of setbacks during this period. The lifting of preferential tariffs by Britain led to a decline in wine prices, the emancipation of slaves and a series of severe droughts depressed the economy. Growth slowed down and was struck a severe blow in the 1880's when phylloxera infestation of the vineyard occurred. Dozens of farmers were bankrupted.

Harry Pickstone found this scene of dereliction and saw it as an opportunity to establish an export deciduous fruit industry. C J Rhodes, the Cape Prime Minister, was persuaded to invest in this scheme and under Pickstone's direction, bought 29 farms. These were, transformed at considerable cost and plums, peaches and apricots replaced hundreds of hectares of vineyards. By 1902 when the farms were formally consolidated as the De Beers Company, Rhodes' Fruit Farms (RFF), Groot Drakenstein had become the centre of the Cape's fruit industry. Sir Herbert Baker, Rhodes' architect and brother of Lionel Baker, Harry Pickstone's partner designed many new farm buildings, the railway station at Simondium and St Georges Church Simondium as well as altering historic homesteads like Harry Pickstone's own Lekkerwyn. In 1905 RFF diversified and introduced dairying with the Ayrshire stud as an additional enterprise. It is worth noting that at Somerset West, De Beers established their Angus stud at the same time.

6.5 1900's - Present

During this period forestry, primarily to supply wood for fruit boxes, became a major new element in the valley landscape. The large RFF canning and packing factory at the intersection of the R45 and R301 became a major landmark as did the nearby sawmills. The fruit industry began to decline from about 20 years ago which coincided with a growth in the production of quality wine and more recently, tourism. These two components of the economy together with urbanisation appear to be set to transform the Groot Drakenstein landscape.

The RFF complex of farms is being broken up and new agricultural and tourism enterprises are under way throughout the area.

Forests, particularly on the upper slopes are being replaced with vineyards and more and more urban pressure is being placed on the valley. Equestrian estates, golf estates and RDP housing projects could radically transform this quite corner of the Boland.

Local authorities need to develop mechanisms to control this growth.

7.2.3 The Mature Trees

An avenue of oaks are the remnants of an avenue that ran down the center of the werf. These trees can be seen in the Gribble photograph of the 1890's. A number of individual oaks are scattered about the werf. A giant possibly 200yrs old and in good health grows about 20m to the south west of the manor house and in front of the ruin of an earlier farm building. This tree is part of a line of oaks on the north western edge of the werf. Oaks were planted from the 17C to provide shade for farm work and buildings and to provide acorns to feed pigs. These trees are an integral element of the Meerrust werf. Some trees are in poor health and expert care is required.

Other trees of heritage significance within the werf are the grey poplars lining the irrigation furrow, the camphors in the vicinity of the manor house and the giant bamboo grove at the north-eastern end of the werf. Massive gums provide shade for the winery. These trees do not appear in the Gribble photograph so were probably planted early in the 20C. Their size could be attributed to the high water table at this end of the werf. There are 6 Washingtonia palms to the side and in front of the manor house. These were planted by Harry Pickstone to commemorate his marriage of 1907. These are also important landmarks and are characteristic of the valley (Brooks-Simons 2000). There are also Washingtonia growing at Lekkerwyn and at Delta, all owned by Pickstone. There are many wild olives in the werf particularly in the vicinity of the administration building. These trees can be assumed to predate the establishment of the first farm.

A detailed survey of the trees to establish their health and potential future growth should be undertaken to inform management plan.

Other trees of various species have been planted in an apparently random pattern in the last 20yrs. These will in time create visual confusion and removal should be considered in many cases. This should form part of the described landscape management plan.

It is recommended that all additional tree planting should make use of traditionally used patterns and choice of tree species.

7.2.4 Other Planting

Elaborate ornamental planting was not a feature of the historical werf although small garden plots were associated with homesteads and residential quarters. These plots were generally protected by low white walls or wooden fencing to keep out stock.

Ornamental planting became more prevalent from the late 19C as the farm economy changed. It is understood that the previous farm owner introduced elaborate ornamental borders and flowers all of which have been removed. These existed to at least 1985 (see Brooke-Simons). Borders of hydrangeas (popularized by C.J. Rhodes at Groot Schuur) are located in various parts of the werf as are borders of agapanthus. The use of a restrained and simple palette of plant materials is appropriate and provide an indicator for additional planting.

The historic werf was generally unpaved as it was a functional working space used by wagons and carts, livestock and people, shaded by oaks. The werf was generally kept clear and open almost as a ceremonial space. This werf has now been grassed, a late 20C

intervention which creates a park-like character. This is in sharp contrast to the dusty dry traditional werf. While not authentic it is merely a layer which could be removed. Through this grassing the existence of the original farm road has been masked. Consideration must be given to its reinstatement whether as a functioning vehicular route or as a pedestrian path.

7.2.5 Werf Walling

The buildings of the traditional Cape werf were frequently linked by low white walls to create a protected enclosure. It is doubtful that Meerrust was ever fully enclosed because of its length. Elements of werf walling exist at various points within the complex. One of these low walls has now been determined to have been part of a pre-existing farm building. New walling has been introduced to the rear and side of the manor house. The extensive introduction of new walling is problematic as it could create visual confusion and should be carefully considered.

7.3 The Buildings

A building by building survey has been carried out. On 10 February 2003 Hennie Vos (architectural archaeologist) provided the study team with comments on each building. This report consists mostly of notes taken during this survey. It would appear that most of the buildings forming the werf complex were first built in the first half of the 18C. The estate inventory of 1729 (see Annexure 1) suggests that wine was being made and brandy was being distilled on quite a large scale and cattle and sheep were being kept. (Malan 2002). The family owned 10 slaves.

The 1791 inventory of Heemraad Jacobs de Villiers suggests an extensively developed complex. Two Wine cellars, wine making and distilling equipment, a smithy, carpenter's shop, wagon house and an incomplete mill. The family owned 27 slaves.

The farm changed hands several times during the 19C until it was bought by Harry Pickstone together with the farms Delta and Lekkerwyn. All these farms had been bankrupted as a result of the phylloxera epidemic in the 1890's. Pickstone is regarded by many historians as the founder of scientific fruit farming in South Africa. He was the key figure in assembling the farms which became Rhodes Fruit Farms.

The farm then specialized in fruit tree production until the present. Although some wine grapes were also grown it is now being transformed into a herb and exotic fruit farm. The buildings and werf walling have early 18C origins (determined by wall thickness and joinery) with various alterations, additions and modifications up until today. There is evidence of fire as seen on various window frames.

The layering of different periods on all the structures should be accommodated and respected as this is a vital aspect of the essence of the architecture. It is possible to 'read' the historical development through the subtle mélange of, for example, windows of different periods possibly moved within a building or between nearby structures over time. A useful analogy to the layering of the buildings comes from painting: both palimpsest - the over painting on top of earlier work - as well as pentiment - the gradual revealment of earlier work showing through the later layers.

The following are notes on each building with a floor plan and photographs. A detailed report may be required by the responsible heritage authority. This was obviously a profitable farm with wealthy owners and the buildings demonstrate the changes over the two hundred year history.

7.3.1 Manor House

The Manor House is a U shaped homestead building which has been extensively remodeled from the eighteenth century to the late 1980's. Evidence of each era remains, in the wall thickness, joinery, flooring and ceilings. The general appearance is Georgian (1800-1840) with the impressive 8-panel front door and interesting fanlight. Four French doors with internal shutters are located on the front façade. The joinery has been stripped of paint a late 19th / early 20th century conceit. A Georgian-style entrance hall has been fashioned from the central part of the voorhuis, though the internal doors are missing.

Evidence of the original 'voorhuis' walls can be seen in the plasterwork, and ceilings. Internal doors are from an earlier period (some 18C). Generally the front of the house is more recent (the gable is dated 1849, the gable window is modern). The 1985 Brooke-Simons photograph shows a smaller window with shutters. The rear of the house has older windows and doors, probably from the 18C. Relatively low ceilings for a Cape house point towards it being an early structure. Deal floorboards (pine), ceilings and joinery are evidence of changes made during the English period.

There are early 20C interventions such as red brick fireplaces and a staircase to the bedroom and modern bathroom upstairs, as well as bracketed gutters and pergola structure on the south western side. The building is generally in a good condition except for damp on end gable wall at rear northwest gable.

A pair of massive gateposts with flanking walls are situated close to the front of the house. The alternated scroll moulding is similar to Welgelegen in Rondebosch, Rust en Vrede, Muizenberg and other suburban houses by Baker. Baker did extensive alterations to Lekkerwyn and it is possible that he was responsible for these gateposts. They were removed sometime after 1985. The newly developed herb garden / werf on the north has a plaque "AMDG in memory of Ernest Hunt Nash MB D.S of Fransch Hoek 10·10·1874 - 19·2·1912" in the pair of arts and crafts gates.

7.3.2 Old Cellar (termed 'former Gun bearers house')

This 7m wide x 34m long building defines the east side of the werf it appears in the Gribble photograph in Antonia Malans report. It is a longhouse structure accommodating a change in level and an attic space on the north eastern side. This end has a 70cm external wall and a low ceiling which could be very old (early 18C). The rest of the building is 18C and 19C, with Victorian beams and pine ceilings. The beams show evidence of fire. The plaster should be stripped to find earlier openings (for example it appears that the large carriage opening on the north end may have been blocked up in the mid 19C). The inappropriate windows and doors on the east side should be replaced. A hollow oak tree nearby may pose a danger. A trench should be dug to locate the original furrow to the rear of the cellar.

It was agreed that the serpentine 20c cobblestone lined storm-water ditch which cut through the werf should be filled in and a more natural slope reinstated.

2. LEVELS IN THE WERF

Len Raymond observed that at various points in the werf there was evidence of levels being raised and eroded possibly through drainage. The idea of a more natural slope being introduced was supported. A more detailed investigation of drainage, stormwater management and proposed new levels was needed.

3. THE GUM AVENUE

There was consensus that the flower boxes and planting on either side of the avenue was inappropriate from a heritage perspective. A simple, less fussy treatment was recommended.

It was noted that this avenue had been identified in the Henshilwood Yates and Winter heritage study for Groot Drakenstein as being of heritage significance at a valley landscape scale.

4. NEED FOR CONSERVATION POLICY & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

While it was acknowledged that the current HIA process was related to broad land-use issues (the rezoning), it was felt that a wide range of interventions would follow involving adaptation and re-use of the historic buildings and modifications to the landscape. It was felt that, in order to control an erratic and even whimsical approach, development should be controlled in terms of a "Conservation Policy" as set out in the "The Conservation Plan" by JS Kerr (2000).

It was felt that the work covered by the HIA constituted only what Kerr described as "an understanding of the place". What was required was a more detailed Conservation Policy and Strategy.

5. COMMENT ON ISSUES AT A MORE DETAILED LEVEL

Although acknowledged that detailed comment was not required at this stage in the process, it was felt that some comments should be recorded.

Each of the buildings in the complex was inspected. Len Raymond provided useful insights into various aspects of construction. Wendy Pickstone's knowledge of Meerrust was also extremely valuable. The following issues were discussed:

5.1 The manor house

5.1.1 Joinery: It was felt that the sanding away of painted surfaces both externally and internally on joinery items was inappropriate and ultimately damaging as detailed mouldings were damaged.

It was recommended that the internal screen be replaced. It was suggested that nearby Delta had many similar details to Meerrust and could be used as a reference.

5.1.2 The staircase: Wendy Pickstone maintained that the internal stair to the loft had been designed by FK Kendall in the 1930's. Kendall was Baker's partner and responsible for much of the work on the Pickstone properties. She pointed out that the stair had originally been painted. The stair was of heritage significance in its own right.

5.1.3 Edwardian fireplace: This too was a Kendall design and indicated the historical layering, adding to overall significance.

5.1.4 The roof: The roof had been raised to improve head room by a previous owner. It was agreed that particularly in relation to the central gable, this had had unfortunate aesthetic consequences. Consideration should be given to lowering it to the original level.

5.1.5 Gable window: Photographs showed that the window in the central gable was larger than the original. It was recommended that a new smaller window be installed.

5.1.6 The front stoep: The stoep showed evidence of having been widened and raised in level by as much as 100mm. It was felt that it could be removed and rebuilt at a lower level.

incorporating existing tiles. Evidence of the original stoep probably lay below the current level.

5.2 Ruin of barn west of manor house

The concept to erect a new structure on this site was supported. It was felt that as little detailed information other than the Gribble photograph existed, it would be inappropriate to attempt a "reconstruction". It was agreed that a new building similar in form to the 1890's picture could be built. Such a building should be a "background" building subsidiary in character to the manor house.

5.3 The gable building

Wendy Pickstone stated that the 1903 gable date represented a rebuild undertaken after a fire and that the building was used as stabling until the 1960's when it was converted into two flats. The arched windows and the fanlight doors were introduced with that intervention.

5.4 The mill

The concept of "restoration" was welcomed. Len Raymond felt that it was likely that an undershot mill wheel was used, fed from a mill race drawn off the historic furrow. The importance of the use of water was discussed and opportunities for interpretation.

5.5 The winery

It was felt that the level changes in the building may have been reflected in a sloping ridge line to the roof. The Gribble photograph suggested this may be true.

It was noted that soil had been eroded away at the eastern end of the building. This related to the need for a more detailed investigation.

5.6 The furrow

Wendy Pickstone stated that furrows in the district were generally lined with river stones (cobble) but that successive deepening had frequently led to this disappearing. There was an opportunity to restore the furrow.

Planting along the furrow appeared to lack any management in terms of replacement.

Various pipes appeared to drain into the furrow, e.g. at the Baker house. This needed management.

The grove of giant bamboo growing on the furrow which had been removed, should be replanted and given prominence because of its heritage significance.

5.7 The administration building

5.7.1 Scale: It was agreed that it was fortunate that the extensions did not intrude visually into the werf area, but it raised concerns regarding possible scale of proposed additional structures for guest accommodation.

5.7.2 Drainage against the walls: The practicality of this unusual design was questioned. Traditional approaches were recommended.

5.7.3 Thatch: A number of problem areas were noted and the unusually thick layer.

5.7.4 Loss of original fabric: Original doors had been removed. These were apparently of exceptional design. The concept of using them as decorative internal features was not recommended. It was felt they could be successfully re-used.

5.8 The packshed

A number of people felt that the packshed, although heavily altered, retained the character of a working farm and potentially had many years of life. While it was understood that contemporary farming practice may require purpose-made structures and new technology, it was requested that consideration be given to the re-use of the packshed.

5.9 The Baker house

The building was felt to be an intrusive element in the werf, projecting too far forward towards the manor house. This was aggravated through the low white wall.

It was agreed, however, that the structure, said to have been designed by Baker and Kendall (drawings apparently at UCT) represented the Pickstone era. It was built to house trainee farm managers.

Len Raymond pointed out that the joinery, although in an 18c style, was clearly early 20c; framing members were much too thin.

5.10 Position of new buildings

The concept of introducing new guest accommodation buildings relating to the werf, was approved in principle. The three potential sites were discussed:

- The ruin to the west of the manor house (see Section 5.2): acceptable
- To the west of the Baker house: There was unanimity that a new building in this position would be visually intrusive and encroach upon the space needed to appreciate the manor house. It would aggravate problems caused by the Baker house. The potential to view the fields of herbs beyond the furrow through the trees would be lost.
- In the horse paddock area: It was agreed that new buildings could be comfortably accommodated in the area enclosed by werf walls, known as the horse paddocks. These buildings should be aligned with the ruin to the west of the manor house.

5.11 Landscaping

There was agreement that the lawned werf was appropriate, that some specimen exotics should be removed, that, if cycads were to be moved, a permit would be required, grazing animals or flocks of geese would add character to the place.

The meeting finished at 18h00.

These minutes to be distributed to all participants.

Henry Aikman