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**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND REPORT**  
**GROOTE FONTEIN**  
**FARM NUMBER 486**  
**PORTION 41**  
**STILL BAY**

**INTRODUCTION**

Historical background information has been requested for the above named property in order to supplement information set out in the Notification of Intent to Develop to be submitted to Heritage Western Cape. Attempts have been made to establish the age of standing ruins on the farm Groote Fontein and to provide information regarding the possible occupants. A deeds search was undertaken of the early transfers of the farm and the Cape Town Archives records were consulted in order to draw conclusions.

**BACKGROUND**

Groote Fontein fell within the magisterial district of Swellendam under the field cornetcy "Onder Duiwenhoks Rivier" prior to 1858. After this date the administrative responsibilities of Stillbaai were transferred to Riversdale.<sup>1</sup> Portion 41 was re-numbered several times, starting with portion C then portion 3 and finally portion 41 which resulted from an amalgamation of a portion of portion 3 and a portion of portion 5.

The first plots comprising 'Stillbaai Village' were auctioned in 1898 on ground west of the Goukou River.

**EVIDENCE OF BUILDINGS ON GROOTEFONTEIN**

In order to establish when the farm Groote Fontein was first occupied, eighteenth century loan farm records were examined. A loan farm named Groote Fontein was allocated to Cornelius Vermaak in 1758<sup>2</sup>. The term of tenure was extended through to 1778 at which time it was held in the name of Widow Vermaak. Many farms in the Western Cape are named Groote Fontein and one has to be cautious when pinning place names. This farm is described as being situated near the Palmiet River, which on some 18<sup>th</sup> century maps was an alternative name for what was known as the Kafferkuils River (now known as the Goukou River)<sup>3</sup>. Farms names were examined around the Kleinmond/ Palmiet Rivier, and no Groote Fontein appears in that direct vicinity.

An inventory of possessions of Cornelius Vermaak was undertaken in 1778 after his death in 1777<sup>4</sup>. The inventory listed two loan farms, one Melkhoutfontyn and Groote Fontein. There is a farm on the opposite side of the Goukou river and Groote Fontein named Melkhoutfontyn, which strongly suggests that Groote Fontein could possibly be the one referred to in the 1758 record. However the inventory states that Groote Fontein was no longer used productively by the Vermaak family and was only mentioned for the record. It was therefore not necessary for officials to take an inventory of the farm. This testimony was

<sup>1</sup> Cape Town Archives : CTA Riversdale : Government Gazette 2897 dated 22 January, 1858.

<sup>2</sup> CTA : RLR 15/1 pg 227.

<sup>3</sup> Kafferkuils River : Renamed the Goukou River in 1998.

<sup>4</sup> CTA : MOOC8/17.38a



**Langebosch.**

J A Kleynhans and Ervert Philip (Johannes's son) also took ownership in equal shares, of the western neighbouring farm to Grootte Fontein named **Langebosch** on the same date, which measured 2666 morgen (2283.5 hectares)<sup>7</sup>.

**2) 1834**

**Grootte Fontein**

Grootte Fontein was transferred to Ervert Philip Kleynhans (Johannes's son).<sup>8</sup>

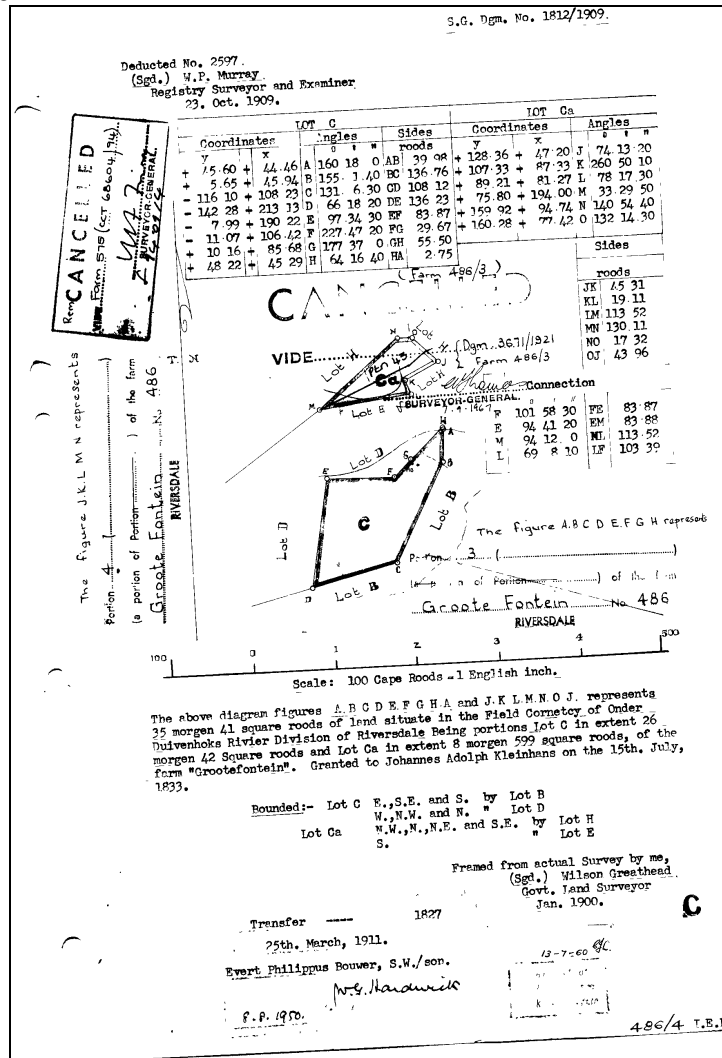
**Langebosch**

A one half share of Langebosch was transferred to Ervert Philip Kleynhans, thereby assigning him sole ownership rights to the farm. This transaction was undertaken in the same Title Deed as that of the Grootte Fontein sale.

**3) 1911 Portions Ca, C and Lot 1D (also known as Portions 3 and 5).**

**Grootte Fontein**

Portion C and Ca measuring 26 morgen 42sq roods and 8 morgen 599 sq roods respectively were re-granted to Ervert Philippus Bouwer (S W Bouwer's son) Portion D (a portion of 5) was registered on the same day in favour of Evert Phillipus Bouwer and Johannes Marthinus Bouwer. Portion D bordered North of Portion C. These two portions were transferred in sync from this time on.<sup>9</sup>



Surveyor General Diagram number 1812/1909

<sup>7</sup> CTDO : Swellendam Quitrents 12/1833

<sup>8</sup> CTDO : Title Deed 510/1834 dated 10<sup>th</sup> October.

<sup>9</sup> CTDO : Title Deed 1827/1911 dated 25<sup>th</sup> March.

Both farms Groote Fontein and Langebosch were extensively sub-divided in 1911 and re-granted to various members of the Kleynhans and Boucher families. This was done in accordance with the will of Beatrix Petronella Maria Boucher born Kleynhans<sup>10</sup>. While the farm Langebosch has nothing to do with this investigation, it is interesting to note the extent of the land holdings held by the Kleynhans/Boucher families.

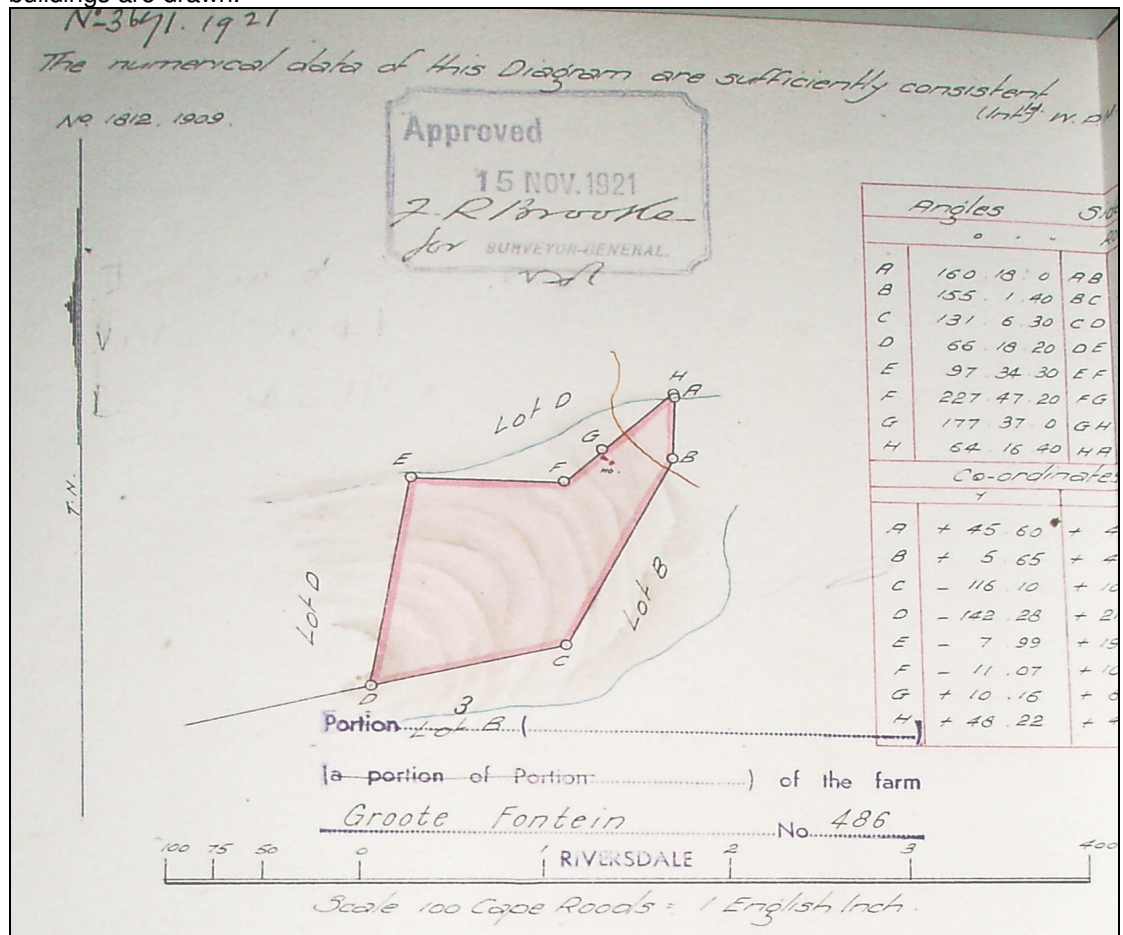
The diagram attached to this Title Deed depicts two dwellings situated on the north-western border of the property as seen above. The diagram above (bottom, page 3) was framed in 1909.

**4) 1921 Portions C, Ca and 1D Groote Fontein**

Lots C, Ca and D were transferred to Petrus Herodus Kleinhans Boucher (JM's son). A condition relating to these portions was attached to this transfer stating the following:

- The owner of these properties...
- " 1. Is entitled to water from the fountain Groote Fontein every alternate week from Friday 4.3-pm to Sunday 6 pm.
  2. No-one is allowed to obstruct water leading to the dam on Ca and C."<sup>11</sup>

Current titles were not checked to see if this Condition has been followed through. The following diagram framed in 1921 describes the position of the house, marked "HO". Two buildings are drawn.



Cropped photo of the Diagram Deed obtained from Cape Town Deeds Office for illustrative research purposes only. Not to be used for publication.

<sup>10</sup> CTA : MOOC 13/1/4143 (1921) Liquidation and Distribution Accounts.

<sup>11</sup> CTDO : Title Deed 11154/1921 dated 8<sup>th</sup> December.

## 5) 1954 Portions C, Ca and 1D Groote Fontein

Transferred to M L Cronje<sup>12</sup>

At this point the Deeds Search ended having established when buildings were first described on the diagrams.

### The Groote Fontein Pont

It was reported by the current owner of the property under review - that the Groote Fontein pont was erected on this portion of land. According to Riversdale Municipal minutes regulations for two ponts, one named Groote Fontein and one Riethuiskraal (situated further up the Goukou river) were drawn up and accepted in 1932. The sites for establishing the ponts were determined in 1931.

Building of the Groote Fontein pont commenced in 1933. Tariffs for transporting sheep and goats across the pont was set at ½ penny per head up to an amount of 200. The charge levied for over 200 sheep and goats was ¼ penny per head. What an ordeal that must have been! Footings of the pont structure may still be in place or visible. The pont fell into disuse in circa 1958 when a bridge was built connecting Stillbaai East and Stillbaai West.

### Groote Fontein: Early Families

A brief look at the families occupying Groote Fontein in the early days was undertaken.

What pricked interest was the fact that the Kleynhans family occupied the farm for over 100 years. Of particular interest was the fact that the third generation owner/chief occupier, Salomon Wilhelm Bouwer appears to have acquired his land right through the Kleynhans matriarchal line by marrying the eldest daughter of Evert Philip Kleynhans and Johanna Cornelia Margaretha Boshoff - Beatrix Petronella Maria Kleynhans. Salomon and Beatrix were married in 1829 and had eight children to whom Beatrix bequeathed portions of Groote Fontein on her death in 1894 at the age of 64 years and 8 months<sup>13</sup>. Her estate was only wound up in 1921 after subdivisions had been surveyed and transferred to inheritors.

Evert, Petronella's father was the 4<sup>th</sup> born child of Johan Adolph and Sara Grobbelaar who were the original grantees of the farm Groote Fontein.

### CONCLUSION

The ruin site should be protected from further deterioration, either by a rietdak or thatched roof structure. All invasive vegetation should be cleared from within and on the structure; that is if the owner is not prepared or cannot fully restore the building. Ruin sites have mystique value and hold the key to early construction methods. For this reason it is recommended that the ruins be preserved.

The pont site should be appropriately signed.

Kathleen Schulz  
October 2009

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<sup>12</sup> CTDO : Title Deed 292/1954

<sup>13</sup> CTA : MOOC 6/9/333