

Archaeological Assessment of Portions 7/1674 And 10/1674 Of The Boschendal Estate.

Report prepared for Sarah Winter on behalf of the proponent

Boschendal

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Summary

ACO Associates CC was appointed by Boschendal Estates, to undertake an archaeological assessment of a proposed development of the “New Village Boschendal”, on a section of the Boschendal estate.

The proposed activity has triggered section 38.8 of the National Heritage Resources Act which requires the completion of an Archaeological Impact Assessment. The proponent wishes to construct mixed density residential housing and general business buildings, including retail. Sarah Winter is undertaking the Heritage Impact Assessment of which this report is a specialist component.

The proposed development is situated on mixed land straddling Helshoogte Road (R310), and just off the R45 in Stellenbosch on portions 7/1674 and 10/1674. Currently the land contains some residential housing, orchards, unused land with uninhabited labourers cottages and a saw mill.

Findings: The site is not archaeologically sensitive as it has been heavily transformed. No clear evidence of Early or Middle Stone age archaeological material was encountered, nor are there any buildings that require grading.

Grading: Indications are that there are no finds worthy of grading in terms of HWC’s draft policy document on the grading of archaeological sites (in prep 2015). No mitigation is called for.

There are no objections to the proposed activity on archaeological grounds.

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Introduction

ACO Associates CC was contracted by Boschendal Estates (pty) Ltd to undertake an archaeological assessment of a proposed development in the Dwars River area that is part of the Boschendal estate (on, but not all of portions 7/1674 and 10/1674). The site is situated on mixed land straddling Helshoogte Road, and just off the R45. This report forms a specialist component of the Heritage Impact Assessment being compiled by Sarah Winter.

The proposed development, currently under the name “New Village Boschendal”, will include mixed density residential housing and general business buildings, including retail. Currently the development footprint is used for residential housing, orchards, unused land with uninhabited labourers cottages, a saw mill and an old unused canning factory.

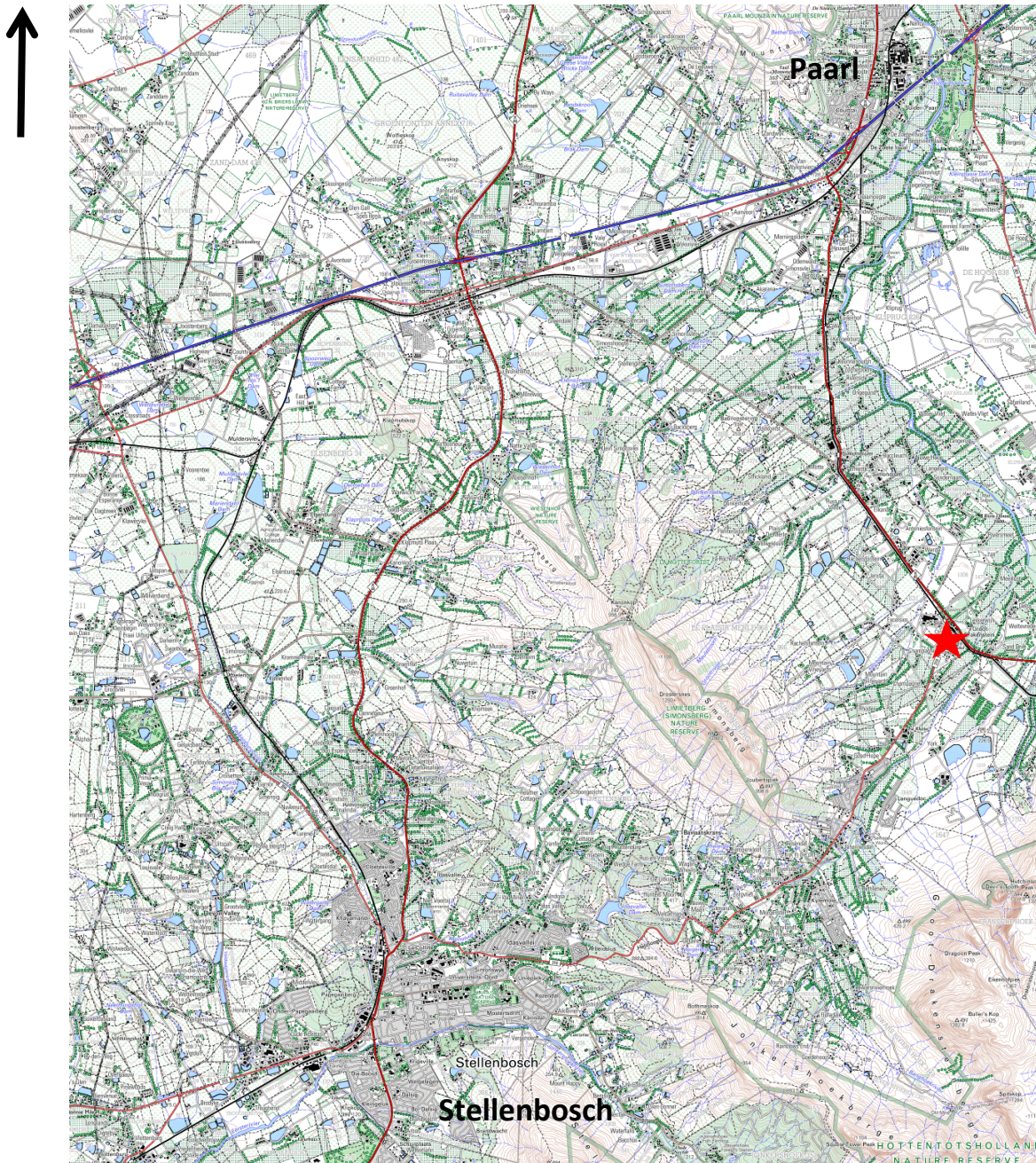


Figure 1. Location of the proposed development (red star), on Helshoogte Road.

Terms of reference

ACO associates was appointed to conduct a site inspection and report on the presence and quality of any archaeological material.

Legislation

The NHRA provides protection for the following categories of heritage resources:

- Landscapes, cultural or natural (Section 3 (3))
- Buildings or structures older than 60 years (Section 34);
- Archaeological Sites, palaeontological material and meteorites (Section 35);
- Burial grounds and graves (Section 36);
- Public monuments and memorials (Section 37);
- Living heritage (defined in the Act as including cultural tradition, oral history, performance, ritual, popular memory, skills and techniques, indigenous knowledge systems and the holistic approach to nature, society and social relationships) (Section 2 (d) (xxi)).

Methods

The proposed development footprint was surveyed by Liesbet Schietcatte and Natalie Kendrick (ACO Associates), on foot and by vehicle. The surveyed tracks were recorded on a hand held Garmin GPS device, and photos were taken.

Restrictions

Restrictions to the survey were few. (See Affected Environment below for descriptions of the sections). In Section B the fenced houses were difficult to survey. However the surface of this area was highly disturbed and transformed. In Section C and D the grass and Port Jackson trees made it difficult to see the surface, again however the surface has been greatly impacted by various activities including the digging of rubbish pits and the creation of tracks over the years.

Affected Environment



Figure 2. Proposed development (red outline) and tracks (in blue). The footprint has been divided into 5 sections (A-E) for the purpose of description, and identifying where the photos were taken.

The following describes the land in the proposed development according to arbitrarily designated sections (see Figure 2), these sections do not correspond to plans but are rather divided by the roads on the property. The development footprint is on the northern sections of portions 7/1674 and 10/1674 closest to the R45. The Le Rhone House is situated on portion 10/1674 to the south of the development (not shown on Figure 2.)

Section A contains a plum orchard (on the east side), fallow/unused land (south west) and a pine grove (north west) (See figures 2-4).

Section B is a gated community of relatively modern housing. There is some open space at the south end of the section, and running along the west hand side. This space has been transformed by old rubbish pits and old tracks, and pine trees run along the west hand side (pine needles being destructive to plant growth on the surface).

Section C is largely fallow land that has been transformed by tracks, rubbish pits, and an infestation of alien Port Jackson trees. In the south west corner there is a saw mill that is still being operated. In the north east corner there are various (used and unused) agriculture buildings and an old canning factory. There are also old uninhabited labourers houses in the north of the section. One is still occupied (see figure 6 and 7).

Section D is a largely open grassed area. There are two rows of uninhabited labourers cottages, one running roughly east-west, the other roughly north – south (see Figure 5). The ground has been

ploughed and dug. It is covered in cobbles and thick short grass. Near the centre is a large pit that may have been some kind of dam.

Section E contains fruit orchards, with two Blue Gum wind breaks.

Overall the area is highly transformed by agricultural activity, human occupation and the saw mill and old canning factory. The ground (other than the orchards), is covered in relatively dense cobbles, which occur quite deep under the surface (see Figure 3.) Non-agricultural areas (mainly B & C) are also covered in rubbish, and there are a high number of rubbish pits which have further transformed the ground surface.



Figure 3. A previously dug pit-showing the density of the cobbles that make up the surface of the area.



Figure 5. Plum orchard in Section A



Figure 4. The pine grove in Section A.



Figure 6. Open area and uninhabited cottages in Section D



Figure 7. Track and Port Jacksons in Section C



Figure 8. Uninhabited cottages (one demolished) in Section C



Figure 3. Blue gum trees in Section E.

Archaeological Background

The Dwars River Valley between Paarl and Franchhoek, has been occupied since the Early Stone Age (ESA). Artefacts have been found in the area, especially along river terraces. The first identification of ESA stone artefacts was made on along the Eerste River in Stellenbosch, and the tool types (hand axes and clevers) were denoted as the ‘Stellenbosch Culture’. Kaplan (2005) reported ESA artefacts on the Boschendal property, found amongst the vineyard rows and in the piles of rocks cleared from the vineyards. Likewise he found artefacts on other farms in the area, in similar situations. This demonstrates that highly transformed nature of the area (through agriculture), and that ESA artefacts are not known to be found *in situ*.

Evidence of Middle and Later Stone Age activity is less common, but artefacts have been found in the Paarl/Stellenbosch area (Kaplan 2005) and at Solms Delta (Hart pers com.) It is also known that Khoisan people used the area. By 2000 BP the Khoi pastoralists, the Cochoqua, kept a principal cattle kraal close to Paardeberg (Hart 2007), north of Paarl. It is not unlikely that they would have moved their cattle along the Berg River close to the study area, however no evidence is as of yet documented.

The Dwars river valley and the surrounding Paarl/Stellenbosch area is rich with colonial archaeology. ACO Associates have concluded a number of studies in the area including on the nearby Boschendal farms Bethlehem and the Founders Estate. The roots of Boschendal go back to around 1688, but the main farm Boschendal was bought by the de Villiers Family in 1715. The various farms that were later incorporated into Boschendal date back to the late 17th century. Boschendal was bought by the de Villiers family in 1715, and saw much growth under them throughout the 18th century. Later on the estate saw substantial growth under its ownership by C.J. Rhodes. It was also owned by the de Beers group in the 20th century. Boschendal contains a number of 18th century structures including farm houses and barns. The Le Rhone House, on the development portion, dates back to 1795 (Fransen 2004). The Founders Estate is also home to an old VOC silver mine dating back to c 1748 (the earliest European mine in South Africa).

Findings

The footprint of the proposed development is not archaeologically sensitive. This is due largely in part to transformation through cultivation of fruit trees in the past, habitation and infrastructure such as tracks. There was no clear evidence of Early of Middle Stone Age occupation, nor was any archaeological material encountered. There is also no historical archaeology present on these sections of the Boschendal estate.

No mitigation is required.

Conclusion

The proposed activity is considered acceptable. No mitigation action is proposed.

References

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