



## archaic consulting

architecture: research: conservation: anthropology: impacts consulting

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### Short assessment of the remains of structures on the government grounds, Ndwedwe on the site of the proposed Vehicle Testing Station for JLB Consulting, December 2016

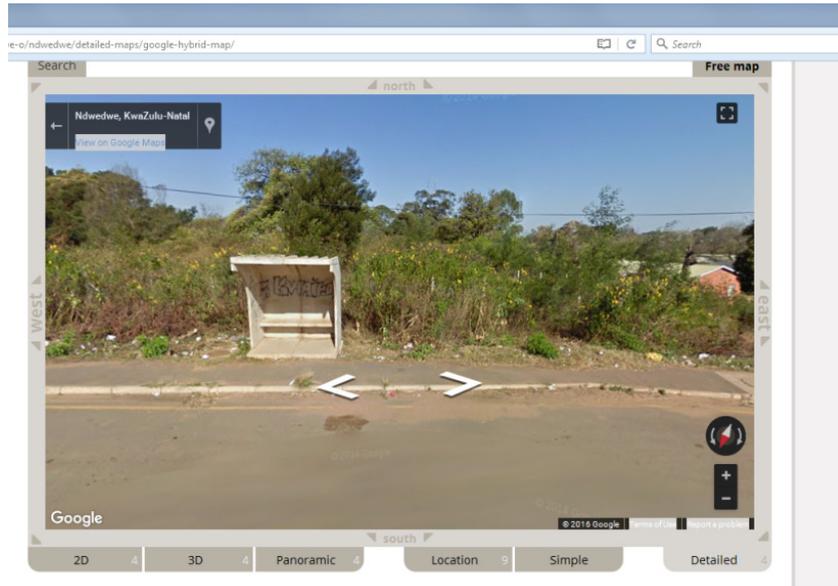
Debbie Whelan of Archaic Consulting was requested by Ms. Jean Beater of JLB Consulting to establish more history with respect to the previous buildings that existed on the site at Ndwedwe identified for the development of, *inter alia*, a Vehicle Testing Station.

Ms. Beater send a Google Earth pin of the area affected; however it appears that there may have been another structure to the north of the one identified for scrutiny.



**Fig 1: Google Earth image of cleared land showing areas for assessment**

Ms. Beater had visited the site, and found the foundations of a building that were potentially older than 60 years, which rendered the foundations subject to protection under the 60 year clause embedded in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Heritage Resources Act no 4 of 2008. The ruins consisted of a series of brick foundations which had previously carried a suspended timber floor, as well as a fireplace and chimney. The author has no knowledge as to when this building was demolished, or if it was officially sanctioned, nor when the site was cleared: Google Street View shows dense scrub on the site and still indicates 2016 as the date of origin, whilst Google Earth shows the site cleared for development.



**Fig 2: Google Street View picture of bush in which the ruins of the building are located**

Whilst there is little to merit protection of these ruins, it has been indicated that it is important to establish their provenance.

Given the state of ruination of the site, and given that there is infrequent imperative to restore or protect such ruins, the methodology consisted of a desktop study, supplemented by photographs provided by Ms. Beater. These are acknowledged accordingly.

It would appear from the ruins, that this was a simple, orthogonal domestic scale building with a central passage, a paved patio to the north which was edged by a large fig tree, the remains of which lie across it, and a plastered and painted rear *stoep* to the south. The fireplace and chimney supposes a cooking hearth, given its situation on the south and perhaps in the corner of what may have been the kitchen.



**Fig 3: Ruins showing raised and paved possible north stoep with tree stump (Beater 2016)**



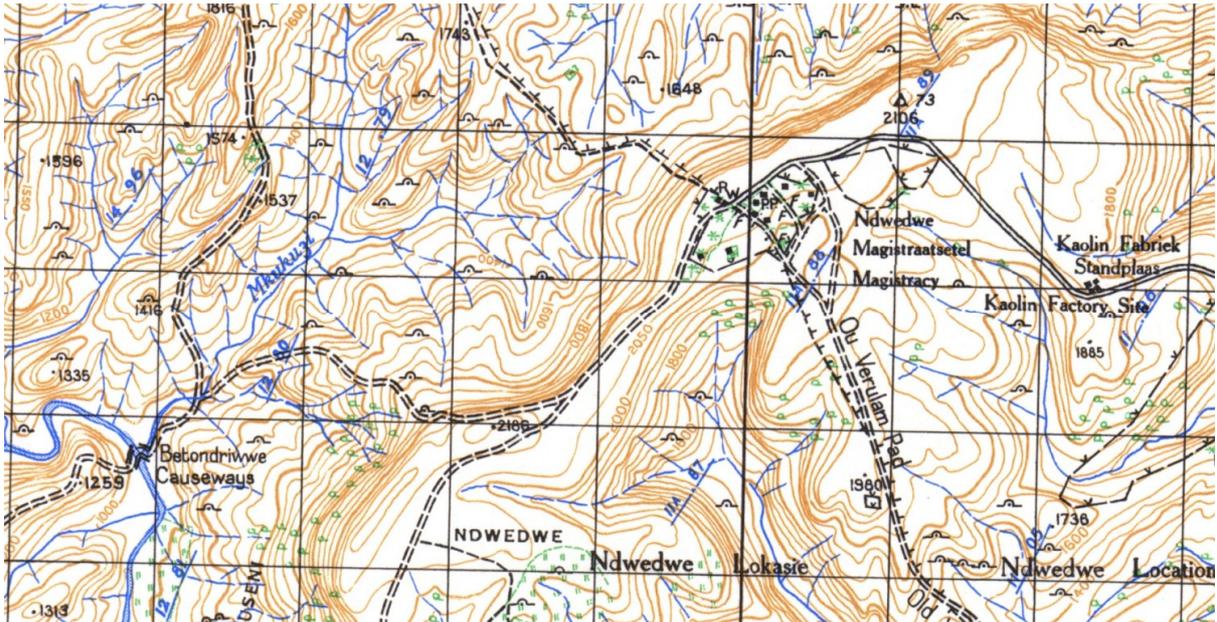
**Fig 4: Ruins looking west at hearth and chimney (Beater 2016)**



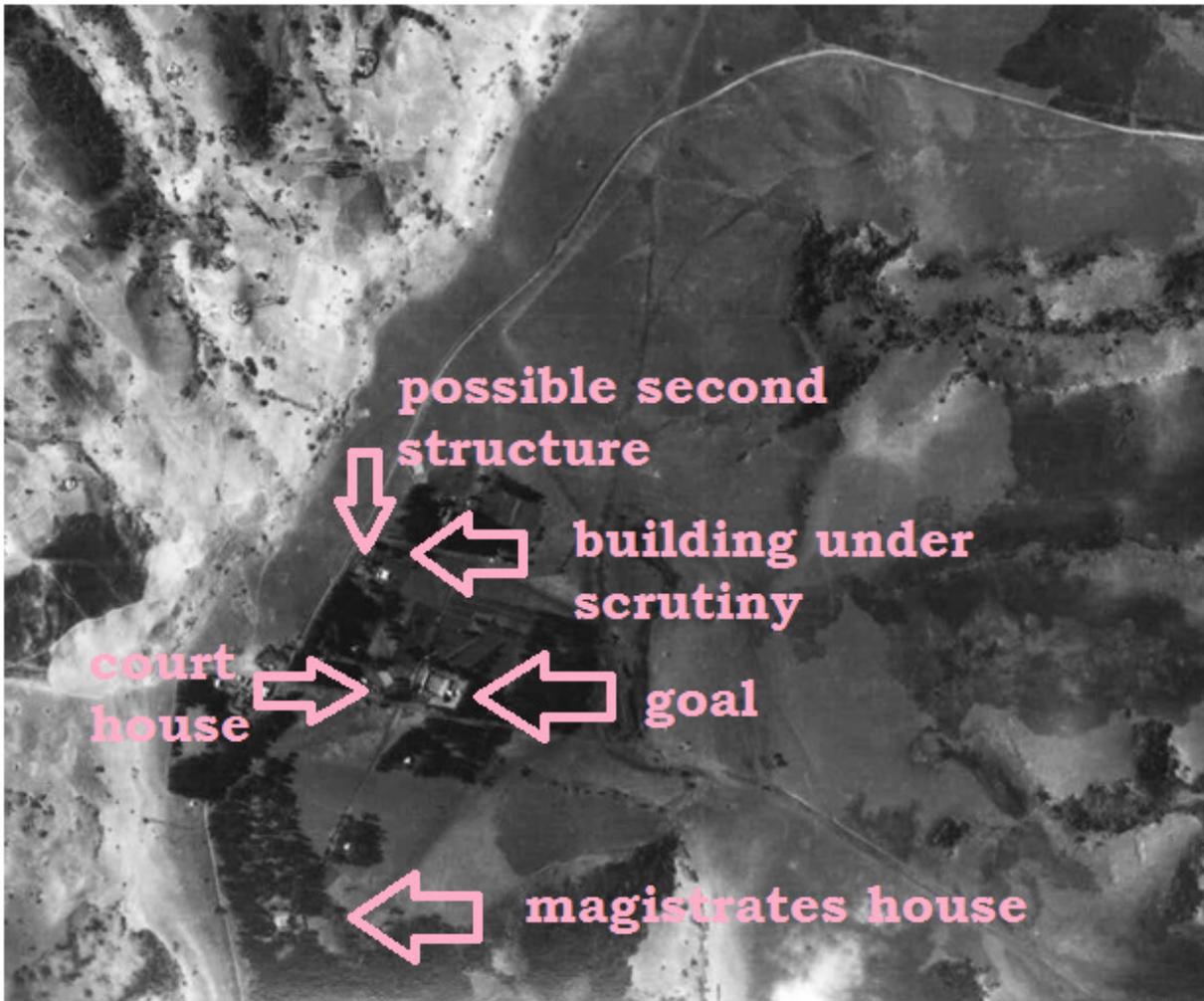
**Fig 5: Ruins showing raised stoep and fireplace (Beater 2016)**

In order to establish its possible provenance, empirical sources were consulted. The topocadastral 2930DB 1942 (Figure 6) shows a number of structures around the site, situated along what was known as the Old Verulam Road. Whilst the topocadastral is a little inscrutable suggesting that buildings on the site could have been water towers or reservoirs (F), Police Post (PP) it does not mention the old Goal which was essentially established by 1937 as this was present on the 1937 aerials. In addition, the general area, perhaps, is annotated Ndwedwe Magistracy.

The Indwedwe Magisterial District was an early establishment, and certainly present in 1898 at the time that Walter Acutt, Acting Magistrate completed his report for the Division of Indwedwe (Colony of Natal 1899: B40). Certainly, it is noted that Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson had met with a large number of African residents at the Court House on 21 November 1891. Given the association with the type of construction, and the situation within / close to the precinct which was allocated to the running of the affairs of Ndwedwe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is evident that this structure most likely dates to this period.



**Fig 6: Topocadastral Map 1942**



**Fig 7: 1937 aerial photographs showing structure on site as well as a possible structure in front of it**

The second structure appears to have been subsumed by dense planting, or else have been demolished by the time of the aerial photographic series in 1959.



**Fig 8: 1978 aerial photograph showing the building clearly on the site – there is no evidence of another structure in front of it**

By 1978, much of the dense planting on the site has been removed, and the house is again evident, without a structure to the north of it (Figure 8). This suggests that the building has been demolished, willfully or through neglect, in the period between 1978 and 2016.

***Summary: Whilst the actual function of the building is not necessarily established, it is of domestic scale and contains the type of spaces one would expect in a domestic environment. Its close association suggests that it is associated with the Police Post, or the Court House, which form part of a precinct in this area of magisterial demarcation. It is suspected, given experience with similar complexes, that the magistrates house is that located to the west, in the verdant landscape. Thus this building would have been the home of a less important official.***

***The existence of the building in the 1978 aerial photographs does not necessarily intimate use, but rather existence. Either way, the house has been demolished willfully or through neglect in the intervening years. Whilst in an ideal society charges should be brought upon the landowners for demolition of an old building without application to Amafa, this will not remedy the situation.***

***It is recommended that the ruins of this structure can be removed, given their potential hazard to people and animals, and that the Government Department responsible for maintaining and developing the property engage in a greater investigation into the official precinct that formed the Magistracy of Ndwedwe, since many of these areas have significant histories, which are completely ignored given their previous context as tribal Trust lands.***