

# HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT PARSON'S VLEI PORT ELIZABETH



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## **National Heritages Resources Act (1999)**

The National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 makes provision for a compulsory Heritage Impact Assessment when an area exceeding 5000 m<sup>2</sup> is to be developed (National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999: page 55). This is to determine whether the area contains heritage sites and to take steps that they are not damaged or destroyed during development.

Section 34 of the Act stipulates that no person may alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant provincial resources authority.

Section 38 of the Act clearly indicates that any person constructing a road or similar linear development exceeding 300m in length or developing an area exceeding 5000 m<sup>2</sup> is required to notify the responsible heritage resources authority or the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). They in turn will advise whether an impact assessment report is needed before development can take place.

## **Introduction and Terms of Reference**

Mrs Jenny Bennie was approached by Louise-Mari van Zyl of Doug Jeffrey Environmental Consultants on behalf of Midvale Properties CC and requested to undertake the historical component of the HIA assessment survey of the heritage requirements for sixty group housing units on erven 18 and 20 Parsonsvelei.

These properties are within the urban edge of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan edge and comply with the Metro's forward spatial planning for the area. Erf No. 18 Parsons Vlei is currently zoned for Industrial 2 and Transport 1 and occupies 0,8769ha. A half demolished restaurant/pub dating from about 2003 and built by the previous owner remains on the property. Erf No. 20 Parsons Vlei is listed as undetermined zoning and is currently vacant. It measures 17382ha.

Office of the Civil Commissioner,

2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1887

Dear Mr. Weyman,

I enclose herewith for your information copies of two letters in connection with the "Kuygas Flats" title deeds. The title deed left this Office on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1887 and is probably in Mr. J. J. Knight's Office.

I remain

Yours faithfully,

H. S. Gadd

A copy of a letter referring to the title deeds relating to "Cuyga's Flats" (or Kuygas Flats or Parson's Vley of Parsons Vlei)

LEASE

*The Rector & Churchwardens of St Mary's Church*  
*Port Elizabeth for themselves and their successors in office*  
 Agree to let and *John Ernest Matcham* also of Port Elizabeth  
 agrees to take the certain glebe land or property known as "Parson's Vlei"  
 situate in the district of Port Elizabeth aforesaid  
 the property of the said lessors in their aforesaid  
 capacity.

for the term of *Five* years  
 commencing from the *First day of June 1896*  
 ending on the *Thirtieth day of May 1901*  
 at the yearly Rent of *Fifty pounds (£50) sterling*  
 payable by quarterly instalments of *£12.10/-* at the offices of *Messrs*  
*Whitson, Oldham & Co. Port Elizabeth.*

shall use the said Premises without the consent of the Proprietors  
 and authorized Agent to erect all Internal Requirs and to  
 deliver up the said Premises at the expiration of this Lease in the like good order and  
 condition in which they are now in and to be occupied. *The Lessee*  
 further engaged to give *Three* months notice before the termination of this  
 Lease if *he* wishes to continue occupation of the Premises upon such terms as  
 may be agreed upon. *his successors or other shall enjoy all the*  
*rights and advantages to the lease shall pay all taxes rates levied on*  
 the said *the property during the period of lease*  
 the said *land* liable for accidental damage from fire.

Should the aforesaid Rent or any portion thereof remain unpaid for a period of  
*one* month, the said *lessors or their successors in office*  
 shall have the right to re-enter and take possession of the Premises without notice.

*John Ernest Matcham*  
*John Ernest Matcham*  
*John Ernest Matcham*

Lease for Parson's Vlei 1896

Photographs showing current state of land in question.



**View of site for development April 2008**



**Parson's Vlei site April 2008**

## **History**

### **Parson's Vley (or Vlei) Port Elizabeth**

Known originally as (C) Kuyga's Flats or Glebe Lands (ie " a portion of land going with a churchman's benefit"), this area was an extensive property encompassing both sides of the Old Cape Road from the railway line near Chelsea Station, to the escarpment above Bethelsdorp. Wetlands and a large vlei still form part of the area.

The Title Deed of Glebe was granted to the See of Cape Town on 15 November 1851 by the Cape Government to Bishop Robert Gray for St Mary's Church to lease as they wished. Fees raised from this were intended to supplement the priests' income, as salaries were very small.

In 1862 Robert Pinchin suggested re-surveying the whole grant so that the boundaries could be properly traced and beacons of stone to the height of four feet be erected to correctly demarcate the boundaries of the Glebe lands.

According to the Venerable Archdeacon Denis Hill, past Rector of St Mary's Church, the returns on the property had been granted to the churchwardens of the Anglican churches in Port Elizabeth, which at that time, were few in number. All fees collected were divided among the churches for their use, but as more churches were built with the growth of Port Elizabeth, the income had to be spread more widely and on a reduced scale. This became economically unviable and it was decided to sell the farm. However, a single vote of one church destroyed the idea of the sale and according to the constitution the status quo had to be maintained.

In 1887 a letter from J T Horne, for the Surveyor General, returned the Title Deeds for land on the Cuyga (sic) Flats to the See of Cape Town for redemption of the quitrent.

Kuyga is also spelt Kuygat Vlakte and is described as an "Extensive Plain, Grazing Ground, Periodical Pools of Water".

The name Parson's Vlei was given to the area because the farm was owned by the Anglican Church (originally the See of Cape Town then the Diocese of Grahamstown. It was later transferred to the Diocese of Port Elizabeth).

In 1946 a letter from the Diocesan Secretary stated that if Parson's Vlei or Cuyga's Flats were in the parish of St Mary's Church, St Mary's was entitled to the rents and ultimate purchase price of the ground. Interestingly it was mentioned that if a village was established at Parson's Vlei half the proceeds could be used for the erection of a church and parsonage.

In 1951 part of Parson's Vlei was expropriated for the building of the National Road to Cape Town for the sum of £89.4.0 in respect of an area of about 6.197 morgen.

Records of sales in the interim years have not been found.

Portion of the property, i.e. erven 18 and 20, is earmarked to be redeveloped into 60 housing units in 2008.

## **Survey**

Erven 18 and 20 are situated in an accessible area off the old Cape Road. Buildings in the surrounding vicinity include a Spar, workshops, a garage and miscellaneous buildings. A "vibracrete" wall runs down the length of one side and the rest appears to be open land. There is no record of the area being a site inhabited centuries ago although the vlei may have been used for watering stock. This area is the source of the Baakens River. The Glebe lands were always used for grazing of animals and although there is a record of a small wood and iron building on the property in years gone by, this no longer exists.



**Disturbed area (2008)**





**Remains of restaurant and pub (2008)**



**Vibracrete wall (2008)**

## **Recommendations and conclusion**

The half-demolished building that housed a restaurant and pub, dating from about 2003, has no historical value and there would be no merit in restoring or rebuilding it. The rest of the proposed area is unoccupied and sixty housing units should not impact on an area that was historically grazing land.

## **References:**

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**Consultations:**

Mrs Margaret Harradine  
Mr Warren Morris  
Diocese of Port Elizabeth Archives