

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF
TREVEAN, 258 WAKESLEIGH ROAD,
BELLAIR, KWAZULU- NATAL



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1. Introduction

1.

Robert J W Brusse Architect, was invited by Bryan and Ester Lee - the current owners of the property at 258 Wakesleigh Road - to carry out an Historic Impact Assessment (HIA) of the buildings and structures on the site commonly referred to as Trevean.

He chose to form an association with Debbie Whelan of Archaic Consulting, Historic Built Environment Specialists for this assessment.

The site : Erf 565 Bellair,
at 258 Wakeseigh Road,
Bellair,
eThekweni Municipality,
KwaZulu-Natal.

It is currently zoned Special residential 650 sq. M. The site consists of approximately 1,2376 ha on which are located the house - Trevean - together with a Billiard Room, sundry outbuildings, two sets of gates, terraced grounds and paved access ways.

The site is the subject of a Special Consent Application in terms of Clause 6bis of the Durban Town Planning Scheme - proposing a conversion of the existing listed buildings to offices, shop, restaurant and place of amusement, proposed new museums, work houses and residential buildings with a relaxed side space to the north boundary and a relaxed building line to Corumbene Road - being prepared by Elliott Duckworth Associates. The application has been submitted to the local authority and is currently open for public comment.

2. Methodology

The author of this report first got to know this site in the early 1970's and has visited it regularly since that date. Most recently it was inspected on 10th July 2013 specifically for the purposes of this report.

The current owners have been interviewed and their records made available for inspection and reference. Prof. B.T. Kearney's work Architecture in Natal 1824 - 1893 and other sources have been referenced.

The Deeds Office, Pietermaritzburg was visited and the traceable Deeds Register for the property, starting in 1906, was inspected. Regrettably the earlier Deeds Register could not be located.

The property and the structures there on have been described and an assessment made of the relative architectural, historical, cultural-historic, technological and scientific value of each major element has been attempted. Arising from this assessment a series of recommendations has been summarised that should be considered in the assessment of any developmental proposals to be submitted by the Bartel Arts Trust in the planning for the proposed Musart Park .

3. History of Site

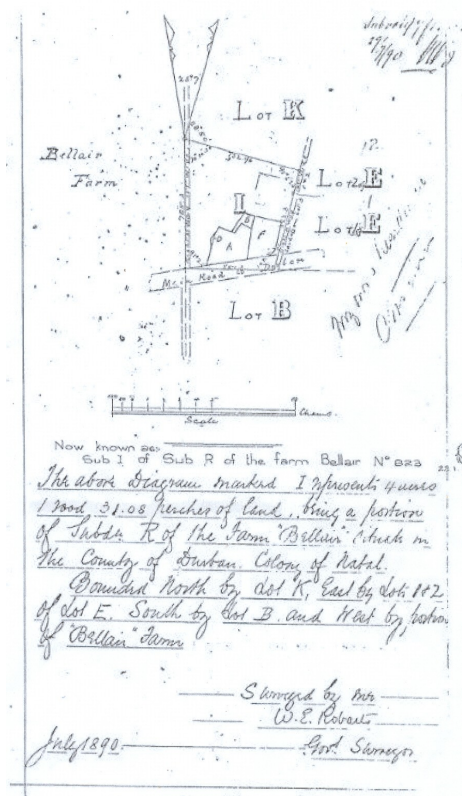
A visual inspection of the site and an enquiry of pre-settler history of the district has not led to any evidence being uncovered that there might be archaeological artefacts under ground that could cause a detailed investigation. The Owners of the property are advised of the relevant obligations in terms of current legislation, should any evidence be uncovered

during construction work.

The farm Bellair 823 would appear to have been first registered in 1839. In 1847 it was surveyed showing a number of subdivisions.

The total area of the original farm was 5 170 acrest. In July 1890 W E Robarts surveyed the sub-division I of R of the Farm Bellair 823, representing 4 acres, 1 rood 31.08 perches of land (2.063 hectares).

This diagram shows subsequent subdivisions recorded in the post 1906 Deeds Register.



| | | | | |
|----------|----------------|---------------|-------------------------|--|
| 14/02/06 | whole property | as above ? | C Hitchens | Natal Bank Ltd. |
| 22/06/15 | " | | Natal Bank Ltd. | National Bank of SA Ltd |
| 13/04/17 | " | | National Bank of SA Ltd | Hugh Cole |
| 15/03/33 | " | | High Cole | Wm P Bawden |
| 01/10/47 | Sub H | 20592 sq. ft | W P Bawden | Margaret Stapelberg |
| 28/07/58 | Rem | 3.9715 Ac. | W P Bawden | Joyce Isabel Bawden |
| 15/04/54 | Sub B | 3124 sq. ft | Joyce Isabel Bawden | Mararet A Stapelberg |
| 25/02/57 | Sub F | 17 323 sq. ft | W P Bawden | Margaret A Stapelberg |
| 25/02/57 | Sub D | 386 sq. ft | W P Bawden | Mararet A Stapelberg |
| 13/09/67 | Rem | 3.4933 Ac. | J I Bawden | 1. Ronald Bentley Lewcock 2. Bryan Howard Lee |
| 10/12/73 | 1/2 share | 2.9137 Hect. | R. B. Lewcock | Maria Ester Lee (Ferreira) |

Professor Kearney has established that the architect Robert Sellars Upton designed a house named "Trevean", for a Captain Hitchens, in Bellair, in 1882.

Capt Hitchens was a successful business man, public representative, served as Minister for Railways and Harbours, was Chairman of the Harbour Advisory Board and died while serving as a Senator in the first Union parliament. He can therefore be considered a person of some historic standing in the town, district, province and Union. While the property was bonded to a bank, Hitchens remained the owner of the property till he died in 1914.

The second owner of the property was Hugh Cole, (son of the pioneer East Griqualand trader James Cole) who owned the property between 1917 and 1933. During that time he represented his family's trading interests from an office in the house. He played an active role in the Bellair Tennis Club and was a member of the Durban County Tennis Association.

The third owner of the property was William Pascoe Bawden who, together with one of his daughters owned the property from 1933 to 1967 and carried out several major improvements. Bawden was also a successful farmer, director of companies, local, provincial and nation politician.

The building consists of a series of generously proportioned rooms across the eastern 'front' of the building, with a string of some-what smaller, utilitarian rooms along the western, 'back' of the building.

Kearney raises the issue of "*The major entrance on the east elevation conflicts with the actual entrance from the south.... This conflict may well have been resolved by the meeting of the two axis in a lantern-lit central hall, though*" which may have arisen as a result of the need to have a symmetrical principal façade facing east - and the views - whereas the actual approach was from the south. Only after Bawden constructed a new driveway, over a raised terrace to the east of the building, was the this dichotomy partly resolved.

Kearney's statement that "*Trevean*" is possibly the best domestic example of late Colonial Victorian in South Africa, and is remarkable for the simplicity of its conception and the restraint of its detail." remains an apt description of this gracious building.

There is photographic evidence that there once was a cast iron cockscomb ridge either side of the central ventilator and ending off at a decorative finial at each end of the ridge of the southern roof - that facing the approach to the house.



The whole building is surrounded by an articulated, mono-pitch verandah supported on a simple, timber, vierandeel fascia beam set on simple cast iron columns. Photographic evidence indicates that this beam was once painted in contrasting tones, which would have emphasised its linear aesthetic appeal. There are areas where the vierandeel fascia has ceased to be structurally sound and will have to be replaced. All the roofs are covered with corrugated iron sheeting, much of which was replaced in the 1960's.

The walls are constructed of burnt bricks, plastered and painted both internally and externally. There is little evidence of serious structural cracking in the main building. There may be loose internal plaster in localised areas, where regular ingress of rainwater may have damaged the existing plaster.

The floors throughout the older portion, (believed to have been incorporated into Upton's design), are all on surface beds and covered in encaustic tiles.

The balance of the building had suspended timber floors with large, profiled timber skirtings. A detailed survey of these floors needs to be undertaken to assess any damp and/or termite damage.

The verandah floors appear to be partly surface bed slabs, partly suspended slabs, all covered with encaustic tiles in a uniform pattern. There has been some severe settlement of portions of the suspended verandah slab with concomitant loss of tiles - fortunately large stocks of matching tiles were salvaged from an adjacent demolition site and are available to make good.

The building has been fitted with sliding sash windows and glazed French Doors. In general the condition of the majority of windows is satisfactory, however at least one set of sashes, complete with their frame will need to be replaced due to termite damage. Photographic evidence indicates that the building did not always have its current shutters.



Pressed metal panels have been used extensively for the ceilings to the verandahs and the principal rooms within the building. There is a very interesting variety of designs. Much of the ceiling on the verandah has been very damaged by the weather and the constant ingress of rainwater. The condition of the internal ceilings varies from very good, to seriously compromised.

The services throughout the building are relatively modern, having been replaced subsequent to the sale of the building in 1967. We are not aware of any electrical or plumbing fittings that need be considered of historic significance.

There have been several alterations and additions to the original fabric of the building that need to be individually assessed to determine their contribution to the "storey of the building" - for example the mirrored wall in the Entrance Hall, or the salvaged cast iron columns used around the former conservatory.

The outstanding features of the building that need to be retained can be summed up as follows:

- The articulated roof scape and the massing of the building, encircled by the horizontal emphasis of the light weight verandah,
- The generous proportions of the internal spaces,
- The holistic enclosure of the individual spaces by the ceiling pattern and, in several rooms, the emphasis of the floor patterns.
- The retention of the historic fabric (both seen and unseen) reflecting the design concerns and technology that forms the back-bone of this building.

OUTBUILDING

Immediately to the west of the main house there is an Outbuilding which existed in the time of Joyce Bawden's ownership (c.1958) and is most definitely more than 60 years old. There is reason to believe that this building was constructed during the ownership by William P Bawden, in the same era that the driveway retaining wall was constructed (see GARDEN WALLS AND RETAINING WALLS below). The current owner, Bryan and Ester Lee (post 1967) converted this building into a Guest Cottage and Laundry.

This building consists of a partly plastered, partly face brick structure, with some concrete block portions, under corrugated asbestos sheeting, with a mixture of original and later timber and steel windows.

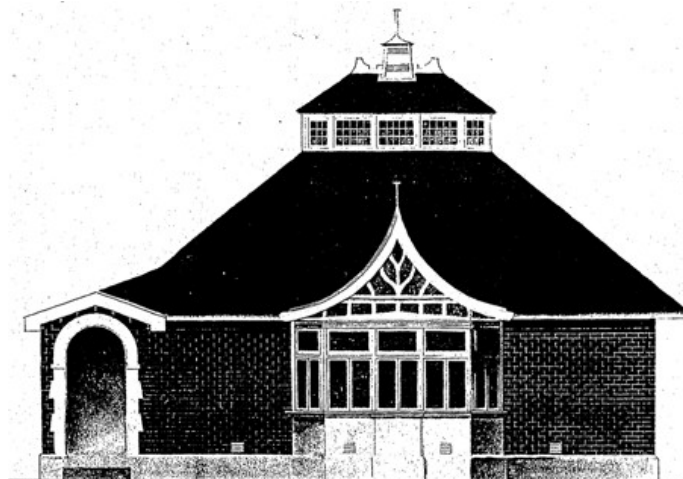
The verandah of the original building has been almost completely enclosed and incorporated into the Guest Cottage.

This building is primarily utilitarian. Architecturally it helps to enclose an implied internal courtyard, giving a strong sense of place along the western verandah of the main house. In addition, it appears to give a visual link to the Billiard Room. It does not appear to have any known historic, technological or sociological importance.

BILLIARD ROOM

This building sits to the north west of the main building. It was built several decades after the construction of the main house, to a design by another architect - thought to have been William Street-Wilson.

The building is a simple cube with articulated entrance porch and bay window. It has a pyramidal roof of cedar shingles, with a hipped lantern light set along its ridge, surmounted by a ventilator.



The whole of the original cedar shingle roof covering was replaced during the renovations of the mid 1960's.

A particular feature of the exterior of the building is the elegant curve of the roof over the bay window, given emphasis by the profiled barge boards. The roof over the porch is simpler in profile, but equally rich in its eaves details.

The walls are constructed of burnt bricks set on a plastered plinth, now greatly altered by plaster "repairs" to the deteriorating brickwork.

The floor of the entrance portico is tiled in encaustic tiles, while the interior of the building had a suspended timber floor.

The experience of walking from the lush tropical gardens, into a really small Entrance Portico, through the generously proportioned double doors, into the magnificences of the Billiard Room was, I believe, carefully contrived by the Architect to gain maximum effect.

Internally the Billiard Room consists of a single space, with a double volume over the position of the erstwhile billiard table. The structural demands of the roof construction have been transformed into a series of elegant arched beams crossing this upper volume, allowing natural light to penetrate down from the lantern-light. Situated in the centre of the lantern-light ceiling is a ventilator in the form of a spider's web!

The whole ceiling was richly embellished with plaster mouldings. There is a period fireplace in a small alcove on the western wall, opposite the bay window. There are a number of period light fittings including a magnificent, copper centre fitting, as well as period switches.

The bay windows are, I believe original; the windows on the north wall are said to be a latter introduction and this needs to be tested. The other windows appear to be original, otherwise sensitive replacements that fit the existing brick reveals.

To the south of the main volume there are the double-doors from the Entrance Portico, a small alcove and a second pair of matching double doors to a small room that was altered - c.1967 - into an ablution facility. Behind the Billiard Room (accessible only from the outside) there is a former ablution facility that has been used as a garden store room in recent times.

While the electrical fittings were retained, the electrical reticulation to the main spaces and ancillary rooms was replaced during the 1960's. The sanitary fittings and plumbing to the Ablutions was completely replaced at the same time.

The building has suffered greatly from neglect during the last two decades resulting in :

- the disintegration of the cedar shingle roof, probably due to insufficient oiling of the shingles,
- the currently un-assessed disintegrations of some of the structural members of the roof and the consequent collapse of at least 45 % of the decorative ceilings,
- the total failure of the timber floor,
- failure of part of the timber window frames and surrounding architraves,
- the failure of portions of the timber panelling,
- the ex-foliation of the external face brickwork, caused by rising damp and the unfortunate plastering of these areas, resulting in the damp rising ever higher.



This building once was a very rich addition to the architectural experience of Trevean and its restoration is imperative. We understand that it is the developer's intention to concentrate on this aspect of the restoration as soon as the necessary permits are received - this is commendable and must be supported.

In the assessment of any restoration proposals the following should be taken into account:

- The cleanly articulated roof scape and the massing of the building, with the clear definition of the Entrance Porch. Proposals to create an alternative entrance or exit should be very carefully considered in the light of the drama one experiences while progressing through the existing spaces.
- The generous proportions of the internal spaces and the richness of articulation,
- The richness of the applied plaster decorations to the internal surfaces, contrasting with the plainer surfaces of the walls.
- The rich collection of original fittings.

OLD STABLES & STAFF ACCOMMODATION

There are a string of early brick structures along the northern boundary of the property that are said to be the original stables and the staff quarters.

These buildings are all constructed of burnt bricks with corrugated iron rooves, timber doors and timber framed windows.

The stables building, now used as a garage, consists of a triple volume with an ancillary volume adjacent. There are no obviously historic features within the building; there are currently three "garage doors"; the building has a steep mono-pitch roof. The most interesting feature of the building is that it was built partly across the boundary of the adjacent site, necessitating a boundary adjustment that was implemented half a century after the building was completed!



The Staff Accommodation appears to have been built at much the same time as the stables. It consist of a series of small volumes, stepped down the natural slope of the site, and includes a degree of sophistication that would imply that indentured European staff may originally have been considered.