

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE CLICKS SITE: WOODSTOCK

Prepared for

Trevor Thorold Architects

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1. Introduction

The Archaeology Contracts Office of the University of Cape Town was contracted by Trevor Thorold Architects (on behalf of their client Clicks Stores) to conduct trial excavations on a piece of land bounded by Searle, Hyde and Aspeling Streets, Woodstock, Cape Town (Figure 1). Development plans for the property are currently in progress necessitating the need for a heritage impact assessment before any construction activities begin. This short report describes the results of investigations carried out on 16 August 2000.

2. The affected environment

The land is presently undeveloped and open apart from Hillside House situated on the south-eastern corner. Although this building has been badly vandalised it is considered to be conservation-worthy (Grade 1 status). Malan (2000) completed an archival assessment of the property and found that no subdivision of the land took place until after 1854. A house was built on erf 8519, Aspeling Street, circa 1861 (since demolished) and a well was shown on the boundary between erven 8519 & 8518 on Thom's Survey of the late 1890s and inside erf 8518 on a survey diagram dated 1893. Hillside House was first listed in directories of 1887. By 1910 Hillside House accommodated the Berlin Mission School and a Church was built next door. During the twentieth century the Ensign Clothing Factory occupied much of the site. This District Six Landmark was demolished in 1996.

A site inspection before trial excavations revealed that much of the site was in a highly disturbed state as land surfaces had been lowered and levelled for construction of the factory. The only intact surfaces were those in the immediate vicinity of Hillside House and an area on the western side of the site where the demolished house had been situated. Taking into consideration the amount of surface destruction that had taken place on the site, we were able to determine that there were only two areas that had potential archaeological sensitivity. These were the:

- Berlin Mission (Hillside House) precinct and well;
- Site of demolished 1861 house and well (erven 8518 & 8519 Aspeling Street).

3. Method

Since the Hillside House area was to be treated separately in the development plan, the client requested that we investigate this area at a later date. We then focused the study on the site of the 1861 house and well (Aspeling Street). This area consisted of a tarmac parking area with no surface indications of the well and demolished house. We hired a digger loader (Cat 420) and stripped off the tarmac surface and sub-base material. This revealed a dark, often ashy deposit that contained large quantities of soft English brick fragments, miscellaneous fragments of iron and steel as well as discarded fragments of bone and ceramics. No evidence of the well or any

foundations was seen. We then proceeded to excavate further removing the disturbed deposit and exposing the yellow *in situ* clay.

4. Findings

The remains of a well were found sunk into the yellow clays and the interior filled with old bricks and fragments of domestic waste. It was located on the boundary line between the erven, as indicated on Thom's Survey (Figure 1). The top courses of bricks had been removed/demolished showing that the first 1000mm below surface had been subject to vigorous disturbance that had stripped of the original topsoil and any surface features. Secondary fill had then been pushed onto the site to raise it to the existing surface level.

The well itself is 1200mm wide and lined with hard English bricks, indicating that it was built in the nineteenth century. It would have to be quite deep to reach the local water table and probably penetrates the local bedrock to tap clean water from seams in the shales. Wells of depths of 8-12m depth are not uncommon in Cape Town.

No trace was found of the second well indicated in the survey diagram on erf 8518. The only other feature that was sunk into the clays was an informal debris-filled depression.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Development site

We consider that much of the site (apart from Hillside House and the newly discovered well) is not archaeologically sensitive due to severe disturbance of the landscape. In the event of unexpected finds occurring during construction activities, an archaeologist should be contacted immediately to assess the situation and if necessary rescue any material that may be impacted.

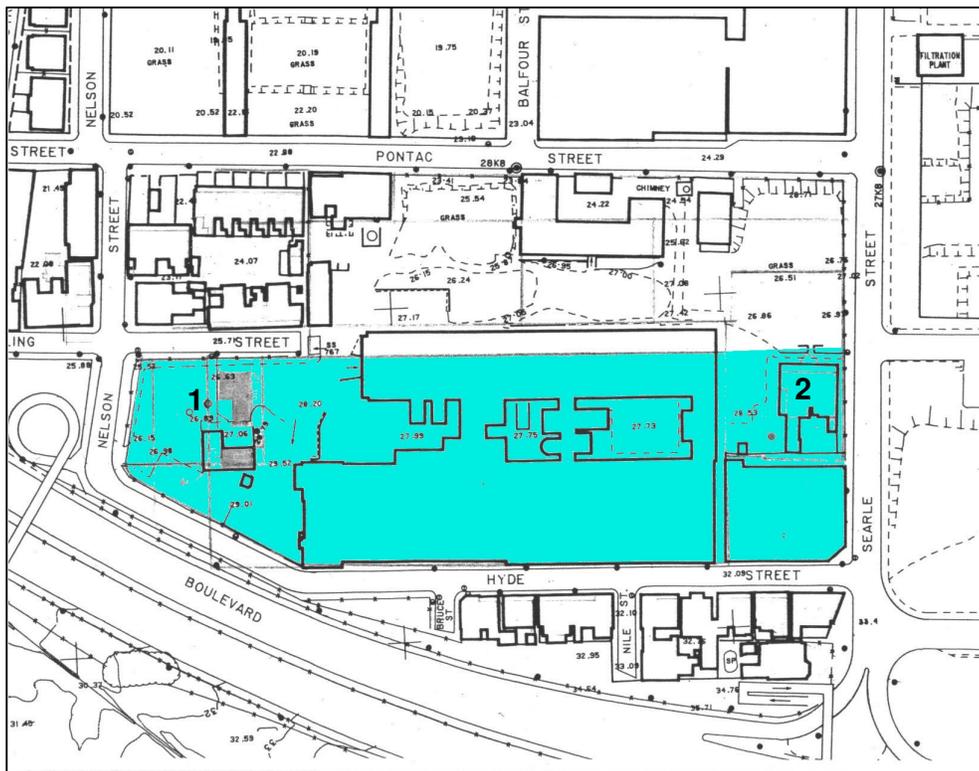
5.2 Well

The trial excavations were done to establish if any part of the development area qualified as being an archaeological site. We have established that a well exists. This is a heritage resource, which may not be disturbed or excavated without a permit issued by SAHRA (South African Heritage Resources Agency).

Wells are highly valued by archaeologists as they are often artefact rich and contain sequential information about past activities. For this reason they are considered to be highly conservation-worthy. There are three options that may be implemented with respect to the conservation of, or mitigation of impacts to the well.

- The well must be surveyed onto a modern plan of the area. If it is not to be impacted by development activities, the excavation may be filled with white builders sand and the area re-surfaced (and the well conserved within a buried context as a future archaeological resource).

- If development activities potentially impact the well (bulk earthworks, foundation trenches, landscaping), a permit from SAHRA will have to be obtained from SAHRA to demolish the well. If SAHRA does decide to issue such a permit, a minimum requirement is likely to be excavation of the well and curation of its archaeological contents at the expense of the developer.
- The developer may voluntarily hire an archaeologist to excavate the well and its contents with a view towards establishing the well as an historical focal point or feature of interest within the new development. Furthermore, a small display of artefacts, carefully interpreted and displayed could be used to illustrate the history of the area. Similar displays at Heritage Square, Cobern Street, Hohenhort Hotel and at the SAHRA offices have proved to be an asset to the owners.



- 1. Well
- 2. Hillside House

1

Outlines of previous structures and site of the well in the development area.

