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Cover illustration

Floor plan of Driefontein farmhouse, Berg River valley (drawn by H.N. Vos).

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Driefontein farmhouse, Berg River valley:  
an example of a late 18th century longhouse

Mary Patrick & Harriet Clift

Introduction

In 2003, Cape Archaeological Survey cc was appointed by the Trans Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA), the implementing agent for the Berg Water Project (BWP) on behalf of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), to compile an Archaeological Management Plan for three archaeological sites identified during the 2003 fieldwork. In addition to the Driefontein farmhouse site, there are also the two houses at Skuifraam and an early 20th century forestry village consisting of over 20 houses and associated structures.

The Driefontein Farmhouse is an example of a late 18th century farm situated in the Berg River Valley which represents a cultural landscape and lifestyle associated with stock farming (Patrick 2003). Although only the foundations of the dwelling were recovered, these remains were relatively well preserved, and are an example of a longhouse consisting of a wine cellar, dwelling, wagon house and stable. Longhouses are usually associated with an early settlement phase and have generally not been preserved as they were soon replaced by, or incorporated into the ‘letter-of-the-alphabet’ style Cape Dutch houses which have come to be associated with the Boland.

The farm Driefontein was situated to the east of the Berg River and in a valley that will be flooded once the Berg River Dam has been completed. Figure 1 shows the location of the farm (arrow points to outline) which is located at S 33° 54.423’ E 19° 03.519’.

Figure 1. 1:50 000 topographical map showing the location of Driefontein (3319CC Franschhoek).
Figure 2. Location of sites on an aerial photograph c.2000.

Figure 3. View of Skuifraam-1, looking north.
Land Ownership

The farm Driefontein consisted of three portions: a portion of freehold and two portions of quitrent land. Driefontein was situated in the district of Drakenstein in the so-called Bergriviershoek adjacent to the settlement of Franschhoek.

Figure 4. SG dgm 24/1795.

Figure 5. SG dgm B176/1811.

Figure 6. SG dgm B71/1829. (The image has been rotated so that it has a similar N/S alignment as the previous two diagrams).
In 1795 a portion of land measuring 5 morgen was granted in freehold to Jacob de Villiers Pietz (son of Piet) by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) (Figure 2). Several conditions were attached to this grant. De Villiers was to fence his property in order to avoid damage to his property by the cattle grazing in this area. The inhabitants of Franschhoek had been grazing their cattle in this area, known as the ‘Berg Riviers Hoek’ since about 1694. De Villiers was not allowed to keep more than two riding horses and a span of oxen (OSF 4.51 9/01/1795).

In 1811 an additional 26 morgen was granted in quitrent to Margaretha Roux, the widow of Jacob de Villiers. The condition attached to the grant was that the land be brought under cultivation within a period of three years. The survey diagram (Figure 3) shows the old wagon road to Cape Town as well as a portion of vineyard and a garden, presumably in which vegetables were grown. The dwelling house was situated very close to the wagon route.

In 1818, Margaretha Roux sold Driefontein to Jacob Stephanus Marais. Three years later, Marais sold the farm to Catharina Margaretha de Villiers, the widow of Andries Zeeman of the farm La Motte (Wemmershoek). In 1831 an additional 81 morgen 168 square roods of perpetual quitrent were granted to the widow of Andries Zeeman (Figure 4).

In 1848, Catharina de Villiers transferred the farm Driefontein to her youngest son, Petrus Johannes Zeeman. The farm was subsequently acquired by Hendrick Christoffel Hugo, who was declared insolvent in 1886, and who sold the farm to the South African Association.

In 1888, Driefontein was acquired by Johannes Philippus le Roux of the Paarl African Trust Company. In 1903, le Roux sold the farm to the Cape Town City Council and the land was redeveloped as a forestry reserve and known as the Franschhoek Plantation.

In 1923, the land was sold to the Government of the Union of South Africa and became part of the La Motte plantation.

**Historical land use**

Driefontein is the oldest of three farms (Skuifraam c 1811) and Bergriviershoek (c 1849) situated along this stretch of the Berg River that was historically used for stock farming. The transfer deed of Driefontein, dating to 1795, notes that the inhabitants of Franschhoek were accustomed to grazing their cattle there since the establishment of the settlement in 1694.

The farmers in the Western Cape followed the grazing patterns of the Khoekhoe, annually moving their herds to the coastal plains. The pastures in the interior are deficient in certain nutrients and the seasonal migration to the coastal plains was essential in maintaining the health of the herd. The farmers of Driefontein, Skuifraam and Bergriviershoek moved their cattle to Saldanha Bay for several months in the year.

This area along the Berg River was predominantly used for stock farming, but, as the transfer deeds show, there were close familial links between the farmers living here and those living in the traditionally viticultural Franschhoek. At the end of the 19th century the vineyards of the Drakenstein area were devastated by the outbreak of *Phylloxera* and as a result many farmers were declared insolvent. Attempts to alleviate the crisis lead to the development of the deciduous fruit industry. It has been suggested that the early forestry initiatives near Franschhoek answered the needs for packaging material for the deciduous fruit industry. In 1903 parts of Driefontein formed part of the forestry reserve known as the Franschhoek Plantation.

After the First World War, the Government of the Union of South Africa started buying up insolvent farms and redeveloping them as plantations. The industry expanded to include Robbertsvlei (1917), Wemmershoek, La Motte and Maasdorp in the 1960s. Driefontein became

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1 Vereenidge Oostindische Compagnie.
2 Margaretha Roux was the daughter of Petrus Roux, who owned the farm La Dauphine (Malherbe 2000).
3 Marais farmed on the neighbouring Robbertsvlei. He was the son-in-law of Petrus le Roux of Cabriere (Le Roux n.d.).
part of the La Motte Plantation in 1923. As the plantation expanded, additional housing was built on Driefontein (Driefontein Village).

Methodology

The survey diagrams of Driefontein, dating from 1811 and 1829, indicated the position of the dwelling or farmhouse. The house was not visible on the 1942 and 1949 aerial photographs, nor was it possible to see any remains of it on the ground owing to the dense wattle stands. It was therefore essential that the area be cleared for further investigation. Bush clearing was scheduled to take place between November 2004 and August 2005. Twenty six men from the Berg River Joint venture, as well as twelve men from a local small business involved in the Working for Water initiative, were employed.

Archaeological fieldwork started in September 2005. Three weeks were allocated for relocating and assessing the farmhouse. The location of the site was mapped using a GPS and is situated at 33° 55’ 42.72” 19° 03’ 58.92”.

Archaeological labour was provided by six local men from Paarl and Simondium. Rubble was removed using spades and picks. The standard 5x5m grid was not used as the exact position and alignment of the structure was unknown. Artefact density was also sparse and it was simpler to describe the provenance in terms of rooms, or in relation to the exterior of the structure.

For the sake of simplicity, the main access road has been taken as running in a North/South direction; Paarl is to the north, Franschhoek to the east, Dewdale to the south and the Berg River to the west.

Archaeology of the Driefontein Farmhouse

The foundations of the Driefontein Farmhouse were found alongside the present access road towards Dewdale in a stand of oak trees. The site was located by using the co-ordinates of a beacon from an adjoining property across the Berg River; provided by the Surveyor General Office in Cape, and calculating a general position for the Driefontein farmhouse based on the 1811 and 1829 and survey diagrams. The Berg Water Project surveyor who assisted in this process indicated that the farmhouse should be about 20m westward from the access road; opposite the oak trees (then, barely visible in the surrounding wattle). An area 1000m x 1000m was earmarked for bush clearing.

The area opposite the oak trees, on the western side of the main access road, was investigated on foot for evidence of a structure. A small patch of three or four river cobbles was visible. The surface plant debris and loose soil was removed from the stones using large brooms and a rake. It soon became apparent that the cobbles formed part of a 700mm wide foundation which extended southwards and northwards.

The exterior walls of the farmhouse were uncovered and traces of interior walls and several possible floor surfaces were found. The preservation of this site is surprisingly good, for the deposit covering the site (at the level of the floor surfaces) was very shallow.

The structure is an example of a longhouse, and measures just over 35m in length (Figure 5).

![Figure 7. Floor plan of the Driefontein farmhouse.](image-url)
Figure 8. Floor plan of the Driefontein farmhouse – detail.
Foundations and external walls

The foundations consist mostly of large river cobbles, but towards the northern end of the house large blocks of naturally occurring (uncut) sandstone have also been used. The foundations are between 740mm (long walls) and 900mm (end walls) thick and would have supported walls of between 550-560mm thick, which is consistent with structures built in the late 18th and early 19th century.

The western exterior wall of Rooms A-C is well preserved, but becomes more ephemeral from Rooms D-F. In Room G, the exterior walls have not been uncovered along the western edge, and are largely absent on the northern and eastern parts of this room. Only the cobbled floor indicates the possible dimensions of the room. Along the western half of Rooms E-G, the deposit has slumped away. Patches of cobbling are visible on the outside of the western exterior wall, along Room A, B and parts of C. At this stage we are not certain whether these are the foundations for support buttresses, ramps or perhaps a stoep.

The eastern exterior wall seems to have been built using smaller cobbles and has preserved less well than the western exterior wall. In Room F, this wall is completely absent, although the compacted clay/lime floor has preserved a negative imprint of the wall.

Evidence suggests that the original northern exterior wall was formed by the wall presently dividing Room F and Room G.

The southern exterior wall is present only along the western end. The metal rings of a collapsed barrel lie across part of the southern exterior wall, and it is possible that the foundation stones were intact underneath the rings.

Interior walls and floors

Room A has an irregularly cobbled floor surface, which has only preserved in patches. The interior wall separating Room A and B is 400mm wide and consists of small river cobbles.
Room B has a very hard, compact clay floor. The interior wall separating Room B and C has been partially exposed at its foundation along its western end, and there is a line of burnt line plaster on the side of Room C along the eastern end.

Room C also has a hard compact clay floor. Overlying the compact clay floor was a layer of compacted burnt wood and in places burnt thatching reed. Melted window glass and two melted wine bottles found elsewhere in the house suggest that this house was destroyed by a fire of intense heat, probably towards the end of the 19th century.

The eastern exterior wall had been lined with a single row of bricks inside Room C, and in places the plaster is intact.

Area D and Rooms E and F are less clearly defined and their function is poorly understood. Traces of a compacted clay floor are preserved in Room E. The band of packed cobbles along the eastern exterior wall of these rooms, in addition to the rut in one of the cobbles caused by wagon wheels, suggests that this area was used as a wagon shed.

A row of single bricks ‘separating’ Area D and Room E, with concentrations of brick rubble at both ends, suggests the presence of a hearth. The position of the cross wall separating Rooms E and F is not certain.

Room G has a small cobble floor constructed in such a way that a shallow furrow was created, running from east to west across the room. This type of flooring was typically used in animal stalls, as the furrow facilitates the cleaning of the stall. Room G was probably used as a stable.

Figure 10. Cobble flooring in Room G (picture taken facing west).

Features

A line of in situ soft orange bricks in Area D may have been the remains of a hearth feature. The wagon wheels rubbing on the worn foundation stones along the eastern external wall of Room E/F suggests that this space was used as a wagon shed prior to the hearth (Area D) being built. Hennie Vos (pers comm. 2005) has suggested that this area may have been reused as a smithy, as an accumulation of ash was visible in the area to the north of Area B where the deposit had subsided.

Along the southern external wall of Room A is an accumulation of concentric metal rings, which resembles a collapsed barrel, suggesting that this portion of the longhouse was used as a cellar.
Artefacts

Compared to the other sites excavated in Driefontein, the farmhouse produced many artefacts. The proximity to the village houses and a village dump has resulted in 20th century material contaminating the site.

It has not been possible to locate a sample of domestic refuse from the dwelling, but Vos (pers comm. 2005) has demonstrated that such dumps are ephemeral and difficult to find. During thirty years of experience he has yet to locate a rubbish dump associated with a rural VOC-period dwelling. He suggests that this has to do with the way rubbish was disposed of. During the early 18th century domestic rubbish in rural areas was not deposited in a pit dug into the ground, but rather scattered across the surface of the landscape. In time the rubbish became more widely dispersed from its original location (Vos pers comm 2005).

Ceramics

The ceramic assemblage of the Driefontein farmhouse is relatively small, comprising 251 sherds. The bulk of the assemblage suggests an occupation which dates from the late 19th to the early 20th century and is similar to what was found at DV1 and DB1 (Fig. 11). There are Willow pattern plates, single-colour printed plates, dishes and a serving dish, plain white Industrial ware plates with decorated edges (either moulded or banded) as well as a number of European porcelain tea cups and saucers (Fig. 12). Four sherds had the makers mark ‘Adams England’ (Fig. 13). The appellation ‘England’ only appeared after 1891.

In addition to the late 19th and early 20th century ceramics, a few sherds in the assemblage give an indication of an earlier occupation dating from the early 19th (possibly late 18th) to mid 19th century (Fig. 14). Asian/Chinese blue and white porcelain (Fig. 15) and a sherd from a red bodied coarse earthenware vessel are suggestive of the late 18th century. A few sherds of cream coloured refined earthenware and a fragment of a German brown salt-glaze stoneware jar are suggestive of the early half of the 19th century. Owing to the small size of the ceramic assemblage, caution must be exercised when using the ceramics to gauge a relative date for the farmhouse site. This assemblage is typical of an ordinary Cape farm as there are no examples of sets of dining services or fashionable wares associated with higher status (Klose 2006).

Figure 11. Ceramics found at the Driefontein sites dating to the 19th and early 20th century. They are mostly tea cups, saucers and plates (photographs Jane Klose).
Figure 12. European porcelain dating to the late 19th and early 20th century was found at all the Driefontein sites. The grouping on the left shows the range of decoration, but the enamel has worn off in some cases. Five teacups are shown in the grouping on the right.

Figure 13. Ceramics with the maker’s mark ‘Adams England’ post date 1891.

Figure 14. Ceramics found at the Driefontein farmhouse suggesting an earlier 19th century occupation, possibly even late 18th century. 
1) German salt-glaze stoneware 
2) Chinese porcelain export ware dish 
3) green shell edge cream coloured ware plate 
4) coarse earthenware vessel 
5) cream coloured refined earthenware plate.

Figure 15. Asian porcelain found at the Driefontein farmhouse.
Glass

A large range of glass was collected at this site, and included tableware (two glass bowls and the lid of a cream or butter dish), opaque white glass seals from preserve jars, window glass and bottle glass ranging from blue, aqua, olive green and brown. The proximity of the Driefontein village, as well as the rubbish dump that was dug into the north-eastern wall of the farmhouse, has resulted in a high degree of mixing of time periods. At the farmhouse, but not at the other sites, are examples of dark green bottles, hand-blown, with pontil marks and no mould seams, dating between 1830 and 1860.

Figure 16. Bottle necks and lips (left). The examples in the top row were hand blown with seams along the necks, with the exception of the neck on the far left, which has no seams. The bottom two rows are modern, manufactured in the 20th century.

Figure 17. Bottle bases (right). The bases in the top row have no mould seams and have pronounced pontil marks, suggesting that they were manufactured between 1830 and 1860. The bases in the bottom row are modern, manufactured in the 20th century.

Figure 18. Medicinal bottles (left). Figure 19. Examples of bottles that had melted as a result of a house fire (centre). Figure 20. Glass tableware (right).
Building Material

Large river cobbles and naturally occurring sandstone formed the base of the foundations. The surface was then levelled with a yellow/brown clay mortar on which the bricks would be placed to form the walls. No original *in situ* bricks were found, although some soft red clay brick fragments were found towards the northern end of the house.

Other

A partially preserved tin of dried out green paint was uncovered in the area between Room C and Room F. A doll’s foot was also found in Room F. An iron door latch was found between Rooms B and C, and two brass doorknobs were found in Room C and Room E. One small fragment of an animal’s long bone was found. One burnt whelk-like shell was found. It could have come from shell-lime burning on site, or become burnt during a fire.

Comment

The chronology of this structure is not clear, but it would seem as if it originally consisted of Rooms A, B, C and E/F: the wine cellar, two living areas and a wagon shed. At some point, Room G was added as a stable or animal stall and the wagon shed was subdivided.

The doorknobs and latch suggest that Rooms B, C and possibly E were dwelling spaces. Evidence of burnt wood and possibly thatch on the floor in Room C, as well as melted window glass and dark green glass bottles, suggests that this house was destroyed as the result of a fire. It is our impression that this house was destroyed prior to the establishment of the Driefontein village. There are no artefacts dating to the village period that have been impacted by the fire, and had the structure survived into the early 20th century would probably have been reused by the foresters, as was the case at the Skuifraam ruins.

The ceramics separate into two main periods: very scant remains suggesting an occupation during the late 18th to mid 19th century, and then the bulk of the ceramics dating to the forestry village period of the late 19th to early 20th century. The presence of a forestry village period dump dug into eastern external wall of the farmhouse suggests that the villagers used formal dumps to dispose of their garbage.

Although caution must be exercised when inferring a relative date to a site when the assemblage is so small, the ceramics and glass, together with the dimensions of the foundations (Vos pers comm. 2005) and the documentary evidence (a *woonhuis* was built before 1811), suggests that the farmhouse dates to the early 19th century (possibly the late 18th century) and may have been the original farmhouse of the farm Driefontein.

Conclusion

The current series of excavations provide a fine example, and reflection, of how land tenure grants were administered at the Cape. They show how freehold grants were consolidated by applying to the Government for quitrent land as farmers established their tenure, increased their herds and wealth, and were ultimately able to enlarge their dwellings. However, we have not been able to securely date the origins of the buildings and subsequent alterations, though there is a clear chronology of changes. Building fabric is difficult to date precisely, especially mud-clay mortar and stone, unless there are datable artefacts sealed beneath floors or in other features. Circumstantial evidence, however, points to the end of the 18th century at the earliest.

In terms of the existing valley architecture, the Driefontein Farmhouse is a more complex dwelling when compared to the Skuifraam ruins, in both the extent of residential and agricultural space and accommodation for domestic stock. In addition to the cobbled flooring of the wine cellar (at the southern end of the structure), there is also a cobbled floor which would have provided a non slip surface for domestic animals in the byre and stables (at the northern end of the structure).
We know from our background research into the history of this valley (Patrick 2003) that the owners of the VOC grant were descendants of colonists who had their primary residences and farms in the wine-producing Franschhoek. Jacob de Villiers (son of Piet who farmed at La Provence) was granted Driefontein in freehold in 1795. He married Margaretha Roux (daughter of Petrus Roux who farmed at La Dauphine) who was granted additional quitrent land in 1811, and it is on this quitrent land that we find the remains of the Driefontein Farmhouse. We also know that elsewhere people were still building longhouses into the 19th century (see Walton 1989: 43-66 and floor plans of West coast fishermen’s dwellings in Walton1995: 29-40). What is interesting is that Driefontein and Skuifraam were built in the style of a multi-purpose longhouse while members of the family living just across the valley were residing in classic Cape-style ‘T’ and ‘H-shaped’ dwellings among orderly outbuildings on a planned werf.

Perhaps the longhouse style in the valley was associated with the prevailing land-use pattern – stock farming – along that section of the Berg River. A Council of Policy enquiry in 1750 found that the carrying capacity of land in the Drakenstein was unable to sustain most of those farmers who relied on wine and wheat (Walton 1989: 8). Stock farmers tended to occupy the marginal areas. Perhaps the house was built around the core of a much older building that remained relatively unaltered, and whose occupants left no datable artefact remains.

The area has been inaccessible since at least 1903 because the State bought it as a dam site and then obscured the landscape with La Motte plantation. However, some old women who were interviewed during fieldwork recalled picnicking on the stoep of Skuifraam in the early 1900s. It may be worth asking them if they remember who lived in the valley and what all the houses looked like.

The Driefontein Farmhouse is a splendid example of a longhouse, and it is entirely worthy of preservation. It is regrettable that it will be flooded once the valley is inundated by the dam in 2007. The authors hope to return to the valley to work on Skuifraam before the dam is finished. These hidden valleys, without obvious and classic architectural gems in sight but with archaeological remains still visible, may today provide more interesting and important to explore than their over-developed neighbours.

References
Drakenstein Heemkring.

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Donkerhoek homestead: Farm 956, Stellenbosch

Emmylou Rabe

Introduction

The Donkerhoek homestead is located on the farm Donkerhoek off the Simondium road (R45) between Franschoek and Paarl in the Stellenbosch District of the Cape Winelands, Western Cape. It lies on the NE slopes of Kanonkop to the west of the Berg River, at approximately 33°50’33”S 18°56’04”E (Fig. 1, and see 3318DD Stellenbosch, Chief Directorate Surveys and Mapping, 2003). The farm and homestead is currently owned and inhabited by the Koch family to whom it has belonged, in some manner and extent, since 1896.

Figure 1. Locality of Donkerhoek (Fransen 2004: 272).

This report documents and records the homestead at Donkerhoek at RCHME Level 3 using drawings, a written report and photographs to identify and analyse the phases of construction of the building.4 Although the general phasing of the building is of interest, the specific aim was to identify the date and extent of first construction of the building and who built it. It was found, however, that the extent of research required to do that would go beyond the scope of the project, though these initial findings can form the basis for further research and have greatly aided in the analysis of the building.

4 The Royal Commission of the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) produce detailed inventories of buildings and monuments ranging from level 1, a simple visual record, to level 4 which is a fully researched and illustrated record with photographs and measured drawings. For more detailed information on the RCHME recording levels please see http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/archaeology. The original report has been revised and edited by A. van Graan and A. Malan for publication in the VASSA Journal.
Information was gathered during two site inspections and through documentary research of literary and official sources on the building, farm and the surrounding area. Fieldwork consisted of photographing, measuring and sketching the building, and was done with the help of André van Graan over two days in November 2005 and January 2006. Documentary research consisted of locating property transfer registers and title deed transfer documents from the Deeds Office in Cape Town and survey diagrams from the Surveyor-General’s Office and Deeds Office. A limited literary search on previous work done on the property was also conducted and is referenced at the end of the report. Some research was done at the Cape Town Archives, but these sources require a longer time and more experience with the language used in the old documents.

**Research aims**

The general objective was to identify and record the historical, architectural and archaeological significance of the Donkerhoek homestead as it is located in its setting, both in time and space. More specifically the aim was to identify and date the phasing of the homestead building, together with its associated outbuildings, and to see whether any part of the homestead was associated with a planned site layout.

The Cape Winelands cultural landscape is world renowned for its examples of spectacular vernacular architecture known as the Cape Dutch style and is currently provisionally protected as a National Heritage Site and is being investigated for declaration as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Much research and recording has been done on similar vernacular buildings in the area, for instance at Boschendal, Simondium and Lanzerac, Stellenbosch. Previous research on the Donkerhoek farm and homestead is relatively limited, probably because no restoration or threat of demolition has occurred there. There are some historical ownership records and architectural descriptions of the building, and speculations as to its origins and development. There is therefore no formal history or phasing of building events, and this report is the first to offer any measured drawings, sketches or plans.

As Donkerhoek has been in the Koch family since the late nineteenth century, the information gained from the owners is invaluable in that they are able to give insight into the phasing of the building for the last three generations. This memory of the construction of the building is one of the factors that make the farmstead’s history such a valuable resource for understanding vernacular Cape Dutch buildings in the Western Cape.

The style elements of the building and a suggested date of construction as indicated on the gable (1851) are also interesting factors, as they do not quite fit in with the current understanding of Cape Dutch building styles (Fig. 2). Donkerhoek has elements that should date earlier than 1851. This anomaly potentially gives insight into the influences that social and economic factors may have had on the families and building styles of the period and in that area.

*Figure 2. Centre gable of Donkerhoek homestead with date 1851.*
Methodology

Due to the relatively standard nature of the structural and architectural elements of the building as well as the common building forms and materials that were used, we can refer existing sources on types of construction and building materials for this time period in this area (for instance, Lewcock 1963). The limited resources available to inhabitants of the area, both locally and in terms of their ability to obtain resources from outside of the Cape, meant that almost all buildings from that time period in the area make use of similar construction and building materials. It is the phasing and architectural detail that makes the Donkerhoek homestead building significant and interesting.

The physical recording of the Donkerhoek homestead entailed:
1. A measured sketch floor plan of the homestead building.
2. Rough measured sketches of the front door and two back doors as well as the 24-pane sash window style. A detailed scaled drawing of the 24-pane sash window style. Measured sketches of specific architectural elements are reproduced in their rough sketch form. Further investigation into their dating and origin would require full documentary research, which fell outside the scope of this report. Most of the structural and architectural elements of the building, such as windows, wall widths, internal door openings, beams, etc. have standard proportions⁵, therefore, besides the measured window drawing, only deviations from the standard were measured up or recorded.
3. A rough sketch plan of the site, including the main homestead, and its associated outbuildings, measured crudely by pacing.
4. An elevation sketch of the front façade/ NE elevation of the building.
5. Photographing the outside and inside of the building, concentrating on specific structural and architectural elements that could aid in dating and identifying various phases of construction, as well as any other significant, interesting or anomalous elements.
6. Photographing the context of the building, including various outbuildings and older structures present on the farm, as well as views to and from the main homestead.
7. Various maps, aerial photographs and survey diagrams were obtained to assist in the investigation and interpretation of the phasing of the building as well as the evolution of the farm in general. The aerial photographs were of minimal assistance as they only exist for the twentieth century.
8. Both during and after the physical recording of the building, documentary and literary source research was also conducted. This gives insight into the physical changes and phases of construction that the building underwent as well as providing a broad overview of the social and architectural history of the area. These documents also included early photographs of the building, belonging to the Koch family.

All measuring and rough sketches were done with a standard measuring tape, a measuring rod (1m), a drawing table and the invaluable assistance of André van Graan, chairman of the Vernacular Architecture Society of South Africa. A Kodak DX759 digital camera was used in automatic function to take the photographs, flash being manually controlled as and when required. Access to the farm and homestead was not difficult but time was limited as the building is used as a residence and therefore the recording process was quite an intrusion into the Koch family’s life.

After the building was recorded, context numbers were given to various structural and architectural elements to aid in the description of the building. Each room was given a number, in a sequence that followed to some extent the phases of construction. Each window (W), door

⁵ Such as 600mm thick walls, which reduced to 450mm in Cape Town by the mid-1820s and remained the norm in the 1840s (Lewcock, 1963).
(D), internal door (ID), fireplace (F) and additional noteworthy element (E) was also given an individual sequence number. These context numbers are indicated on the building plan to assist in interpretation and description (Fig. 10). Photographs were taken of each element where appropriate.

**Description of Donkerhoek homestead**

**General**

Donkerhoek homestead is a single storey, previously U-shaped, slightly altered Cape Dutch style building. The symmetrical decoratively gabled front façade, approximately 16.5m in width, faces NE away from the mountain, towards the principal entrance road (Figs 3 and 4). This road branches off the main road connecting Franschoek and Paarl (Fig. 1). Two wings run back from the front section in parallel towards the SW. The east wing runs back a length of about 22.8m, while the west wing, to which there have been modern additions, runs back a length of 28.6m. The passage between the wings has been covered in various stages over the past so that the building is currently rectangular in shape with the modern addition to the west wing projecting out to the back for about 6 metres (Fig. 10).

*Figure 3. Donkerhoek homestead NE elevation.*

*Figure 4: Sketch drawing of Donkerhoek homestead NE elevation.*
Walls, roof and solder

Although the land slopes downwards towards the NE, the building lies on a raised level foundation, which also acts as a stoep running around the SE, NE and NW elevations of the building (Figs 3 and 10). All walls are brick with plaster, the original older walls being 500mm in width with the more recent walls, also brick and plaster, being thinner. All walls are painted. The differences in wall width make it easier to identify the original layout of the building. The building has a thatched roof, half-hipped on the SE and NW ends of the front section over rooms 1-3 and gabled at the SW ends of each of the wings. The more recently covered section between the wings is corrugated iron sheeting (Fig. 5). There is an opening into the solder (attic) at each of the five gables. These consist of a 12-pane sash window with sill above the front door in the front centre gable (Fig. 6) and a smaller 6-pane casement window in the SE end gable of the front section; horizontal timber slatted ventilation in both the NW end gable of the front section (Fig. 7) and in the back end gable of the west wing (Fig. 8), and a small wooden door located off-centre in the end gable of the east wing (Fig. 9). This off-centre positioning would be to accommodate the chimney leading up the centre of the SW wall of room 9. Crude timber steps with no balustrade run diagonally up against the outside of the SW back wall of the east wing to reach this door. The extremely poor condition of these steps made it impossible to get into the solder, therefore no detail of the solder has been included.

Figure 5. SW elevation showing corrugated iron sheeting between the back wings.

Figure 6. Window above front door. Figure 7. NW gable on NE elevation.
Figure 8. West wing end gable.  
Figure 9. East wing end gable.

Figure 10. Floorplan of Donkerhoek homestead showing context numbers for rooms, windows (W), doors (D), internal doors (ID), fireplaces (F) and other elements (E).
Interior

A high plank ceiling with exposed squared wooden roof beams runs throughout the building, except in rooms 5 and 16 which have been more recently constructed. In rooms 1 to 3 the unpainted beams run in a SW-NE direction spanning, from wall to wall, a distance of approximately 5.8m. In rooms 6 to 11 the beams run in a SE-NW direction, with the planks and beams being painted. Interestingly, the clockwise twist of the wood making up the beams is quite visible (Fig.11). The modern low ceilings in rooms 12 to 14 undoubtedly hide the rest of the timber plank and beam ceiling visible in room 11. The passageway that makes up room 5 has a modern, partially dropped, ceiling under the corrugated iron afdak roof. Reflecting the modern alterations of the ceilings, the floors in rooms 1 to 4 and 6 to 11 are all timber, and the bedrooms (rooms 1, 7, 9 and 11) are covered with carpet. The floor in the modern passageway, room 5, is concrete.

![Figure 11. Wooden ceiling beams and planks.](image1)

![Figure 12. Ceiling in room 5.](image2)

Windows

![Figure 13. 24-pane sash window (W2).](image3)

![Figure 14. 24-pane sash window. (Surveyed: January 2006, Drawn by: E. Rabe)](image4)
There are six different types of window on the ground floor, the most common being the original 24-pane sash windows (W1-10) with sills (possibly Georgian). These windows still have irregular sheet glass panes (Fig. 13). A scaled drawing of one of these windows can be seen in Fig. 14. Windows W11-12 are smaller 6-pane vertical casement windows with splayed external openings, probably also associated with early construction. W13 is a 3-pane horizontal mullioned window with a timber lintel. Windows W14 -15 are the most recent additions to the building, associated with modern (20th century) alterations and additions. W14 is a 12-pane Victorian vertical sliding sash with extended jambs on the top frame (Fig. 15). W15 is a 3-piece transom window with two side opening casements and a central glazed section.

Figure 15. 12-pane sash window (W14).

Doors

All the doors that lead from the inside out are different in style and probably age. The front door (D1, Fig. 16) is a set of double 4-panelled timber doors, with the top three panels moulded and the bottom beaded. Overhead is a timber fanlight. The front door is currently unpainted and varnished, but as can be seen in an old photograph (Fig. 17), it has been painted in the past. The double doors (D2, Fig. 18) leading out of room 10 to the SE are glass and timber panelled, the glass panes being divided by timber mullions and transoms, and the timber panels consisting of three vertical planks with mouldings. This door also has a glazed fanlight, but of much simpler design than D1, D5 or D6. It has two large glass panes divided by a timber mullion, all set under a lintel.

Six-panelled timber double doors exit the SW end of the more recently constructed middle passageway (room 5) on a NE-SW axis with the front door (D3, Fig. 19). These doors, as with the front door, have four panels each, the top three moulded and the bottom one beaded. D3 is painted, inside and out, and has no lintel.

A lintelled bo-en-ononderdeur (stable door), that has been shortened at the base, exits room 9 to the SW (D4, Fig. 20). Its two panels consist of wide timber planks with detailed moulding on the top panel and some detail on the bottom panel. D4 has heavy ironmongery detailing in the hinges and locks, visible mostly on its interior. It has two lock mechanisms on the inside, with a hole in the lower door indicating another earlier but since removed lock. The lower existing lock seems to be the door handle with which to open the door from inside and out, with the upper lock being a securing lock, much like a modern yale lock, visible only from the inside. The bo-en-ononderdeur is painted on the outside, but unpainted and varnished on the inside (Fig. 21).

Exiting room 7 to the SE is a set of narrow glazed double doors, with simple glass pane detailing similar to D2 and with beaded timber panels at the bottom of the doors. Unlike D2, however, D5 (Fig. 22) has a lead-cast bottom hung casement window above it, with detailing similar to the fanlight above the front door (D1). The glazed single door exiting room 1 to the SE is associated with a modern alteration to the building (D6, Fig.22). It has glass panes with

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6 Lewcock (1963: 85-87) refers to the sizes of English sash windows introduced to the Cape. They were higher in relation to the earlier Dutch types. In proportion they tended to start with a 1:2 minimum and were frequently 1:2.5 or 4:9, a favourite Adam proportion.

7 This can be compared to similar examples in Lewcock (1963: 44), while that on Libertas Parva in Stellenbosch is a more elaborate version. The decorative border dates it to a period not earlier than 1820. Fanlights gradually reduced in height following the English fashion for rectangular shapes based on the Roman double square.
detail similar to D2 and D5 and a beaded timber panel below. Above D6 is a fanlight which, on close inspection, can be seen to be a modern timber copy of the fanlight and window at D1 and D5. Doors D7 and D8 are both modern doors associated with recent alterations, D7 being glazed timber double doors exiting room 11 to the SW and D8 being a single 4-panelled timber door exiting room 16 to the NW.

Figure 16. Front door (D1), NE elevation.     Figure 17. Old photograph showing painted front door.

Figure 18. D2, NW elevation.   Figure 19. D3, SW elevation.

Figure 20. Bo-en-onderdeur (D4).   Figure 21. Bo-en-onderdeur interior (D4).
Internal doors

But for a few exceptions, most of the internal doors are painted 8-panelled beaded timber doors with timber architraves and matching 8-panelled timber cladding for the width of the wall openings (ID1, Fig. 24). The passageway rooms 3 and 4 are separated by a floor to ceiling timber screen with a single timber door matching the 8-panelled beaded internal doors with architraves found throughout the rest of the building (ID3, Fig. 25). Internal doors at ID5 and ID11-15 are all modern pine doors in simple timber frames associated with recent alterations during which bathrooms have been added to the building. Eight-panelled timber doors and architraves similar to those described above for other internal doors have been used for the muurkaste (wall cupboards) at E1 and E2.
Rooms 1-3, 17: Northeast facing entrance passage, bedroom and living room

D1 opens into room 3, an entrance passage with three internal doors leading out of it into rooms 1, 2 and 4. The SE facing ID1 enters into a bedroom, room 1. Room 1 has recently constructed built-in cupboards against the SE wall, between D6 and the NE wall. D6 exits room 1 to the SE (Fig. 26). There are two sash windows facing NE (W1 and W2) with panelled timber folding internal shutters. A recent addition to the room is the small bathroom, room 17, which is entered into through ID15. A Victorian sash window (W14) faces SE from room 17.

Exiting the passage, room 3, to the NW through ID2 leads into room 2, a living room that has had some alterations done to it. A modern fireplace (F1) has replaced an earlier one situated against the NW wall. It is flanked by two small casement windows, W11 and W12 (Fig. 27). Two sash windows (W3 and W4) with panelled timber folding internal shutters face NE. E3 is probably a closed up doorway leading to room 10.

![Figure 26. Room 1, D6 interior.](image1) ![Figure 27. Room 2, altered fireplace.](image2)

Rooms 4-9: central passageway and east wing

Exiting room 3 through the timber screen (ID1) in a SW direction leads to room 4, an extension of the room 3 entrance passage. A mock timber door hides a muurkas (E2) in the NW wall directly opposite ID4 in the SE wall. Through ID4 is room 6, a pantry, with another mock door and muurkas in the NE internal wall at E1. E1 is possibly a previous internal door opening which has been closed off to give room 1 more privacy. W10 faces NE out of room 6. The SW wall in room 6 has markings in the plaster that suggest that E4 may be a closed up internal doorway.

Leaving room 4 through ID5 it is evident that the wall in which ID5 is set is much thinner than other walls (at about 140mm) and is probably a modern wall. Room 5 is the covered passageway between the two older wings to the east and west (Fig.5). ID6 exits room 5 to the SE directly after coming through ID5, a mere 90mm between the NE wall of room 5 and ID6. Through ID6 is room 7, a bedroom with a set of glazed double doors exiting to the SE. Through ID8 is room 8, a modern kitchen with W9 facing SE. As with ID6, ID8 also sits uncomfortably close to the NE wall of room 8, suggesting that alterations have taken place in this area of the building. The wall between rooms 7 and 8 is thinner than the other walls, suggesting that this wall is of later construction than most of the building.

Through ID9 is room 9, currently a bedroom. Room 9 has a window (W8) facing SE and a small casement window (W13) and a door (D4) facing SW. A 6.1m long, squared yellowwood
beam (880mm x 280mm) spans the room in a SE-NW direction, 1200mm from the SW wall. It is the remains of the old large hearth located against the SW wall (Fig. 28). The chimney still exists but is no longer in use.

Figure 28. Yellowwood beam in room 9.

Rooms 10-16: west wing

ID7 exits room 5 into room 10, a large living area measuring 8.3m x 5.8m. A pair of glazed double doors with fanlight (D2), which open inwards to the NW, are flanked on either side by sash windows (W5 and W6). A modern fireplace is located in the eastern corner of the room. Through ID10 you exit room 10 into room 11, a bedroom with a single sash window (W7) facing NW and a set of modern glazed double doors (D7) facing SW. There are modern built-in cupboards against the NE wall.

Due to the construction of three new bathrooms (rooms 12-14), room 11 is narrower than any of the other rooms in either of the wings, measuring 3.4m from SE to NW wall. Room 11 has an en-suite bathroom, room 14, which also exits into the passageway, room 5. Rooms 12 and 13 are accessible from room 5 through modern doors, ID12 and ID13. The modern addition to the SW of room 11, room 16, has thinner walls and a small covered area to the NW.

NE Façade

The main façade of the Donkerhoek homestead is one of symmetry and decorative detailing, possibly late neo-classical (Fig. 3). It has a central gable with four pilasters, running from the stoep level upwards unbroken by any stringcourse on either side of the double front door and fanlight, a rounded moulding ending at the eaves line and a squared detailing continuing up to the top end of the gable. A 12-pane sash window with a sill sits between the two central pilasters above the front door. Above the window is a plaster plaque with a date, 1851. On both edges of the façade the pilasters are repeated, but at a slightly larger scale and continuing around the corner so that they are visible on both the SE and NW elevations of the building (Figs 29 and 30). Four 24-pane sash windows with sills sit symmetrically in pairs on either of the front door. The door surround, the lower parts of the pilasters, and a dado up to sill height, have all been painted dark green.

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8 The gable shows stylistic similarities to Muratie, which was owned by Johannes Andreas Beyers, the brother of Pieter Coenraad Beyers to whom the Donkerhoek gable is attributed. Interestingly, the gable at Muratie has a much earlier date (post 1811). There are also similarities to the gable of L’Ormarins, which is dated 1811 and which had an urn on the central gable capping. The Rhenish Church in Stellenbosch, dated 1840, has a similar 4-pilastered gable with a moulded capping.
Site layout

There are four outbuildings, two behind the homestead and two in front (Fig. 35). The two perpendicular flanking outbuildings consist of a wine cellar to the northwest (Fig. 31), with modern extensions to house offices and a carport, and an earlier T-shaped building with a clipped centre gable with the remains of four pilasters to the northeast (Fig. 32). This is possibly an earlier homestead (circa 1800). Interestingly, the earlier building does not have high foundations like the other buildings but is built directly onto the ground level.

Both SW ends of the flanking outbuildings are located directly in line with the NE façade of the homestead, with a distance of 32m between each of the outbuildings and the homestead. Similar broad parallel *werf* layouts are found nearby, at Rhone and Babylonstoren (Fig. 36). The outbuilding located 4m directly behind the homestead also lines up perfectly with the width of the main building (Fig. 33).

In the bushes to the north of the homestead, about 500m away, are overgrown remains of yet earlier buildings, perhaps the dwelling of the original settler. These remains consist of broken and detached portions of outer wall, with a primitive window aperture. They are surprisingly spacious for a settler’s first dwelling and include a separate building, perhaps a stable. The crude construction of the early building, with clay or earth used instead of baked brick and mortar, can be clearly seen (Fig. 34).
Figure 33. Outbuilding to SW of homestead.

Figure 34. Remains of early earthen building.

Figure 35. Donkerhoek werf layout.

Figure 36. Similar werf layouts: Rhone (left) and Babylonstoren (right) (Fransen 2004: 274,276).
Documentary research

Searches in the deeds registry, property transfers and archives help us understand the history and evolution of the farm. The dates of transfer and ownership assist in determining which owners were responsible for which phase of construction and at what time. Unfortunately the age, quality and nature of the documents makes studying them difficult and time did not allow for their detailed analysis. Investigation of probate inventories and transfer documents would help to determine what objects and structures were present during which periods of time.

The farm Donkerhoek, originally called Bergen Henegouwen, was a freehold grant to two Huguenots in partnership, Jean (Jan) Durand and Jean (Jan) Parisel, in the year 1694.9 It was 60 morgen in size (Fig. 37). In 1817, 194 morgen of land, also called Bergen Henegouwen and located in the same place was granted (in Quitrent) to Jacob de Villiers (Fig. 38). This grant, however, excluded the 60 morgen of freehold land previously granted to Parisel and Durand.

In 1888, the whole piece of land measuring 264 morgen was transferred to Pieter Coenraad Beyers (junior) after his mother died. In 1896, the 264 morgen was transferred to Robert Daniel Koch, an ancestor of the Koch family who currently own and live on the Donkerhoek farm. It seems that the farm officially changed its name to Donkerhoek in 1915 when it was

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9 Durand’s surname was elsewhere spelled Doeranghe, Durange or Doeraan.
consolidated and transferred into the ownership of the Donkerhoek Fruit Syndicate, a company owned by the Koch family (Fig. 39). The 1915 survey diagram shows the site layout including the roads, homestead and associated outbuildings, indicating that these buildings already existed in their current layout by 1915. It can also be seen that the entrance road to the homestead ran up from the NE ending in a circle in front of the NE elevation. The use of this approach can be verified by early photographs (Fig. 17) that show vehicles in front of the NE elevation. This area is now a garden.

Documentary research has previously been done on the farm Donkerhoek by de Bosdari (1971) and Fransen and Cook (1980). In *The Old Buildings of the Cape*, Fransen and Cook (1980: 219) suggest the following in relation to the original date of construction of the façade of the homestead: “If the date on the gable of the homestead, 1851, is correct (the alternative possibility is 1831), then it was built by Pieter Coenraad Beyers, who became owner in 1848. The previous owner from 1826 to 1848 was Abraham Johannes Marais, who went bankrupt— which supports his claim to be the builder. The date 1851 does seem rather late for this U-shaped homestead … but the façade woodwork looks mid-19c, and is unlikely to have replaced woodwork only 20 years older.”

**Discussion and analysis**

A more thorough and detailed documentary search, as well as some scraping or other invasive archaeological investigation, would be required to determine a more definite chronology of the site and homestead, however, the following suggestions can be made as to the phasing of the site and homestead at Donkerhoek.

The dating of the original construction of the homestead is not clear. The gable shows a date of 1851, but in light of the style of the façade this is considered to be a rather late date of construction. It is also not known for certain whether the homestead was planned as part of a larger site plan or whether it grew organically, as many such Cape Dutch homesteads did, starting as a simple three-room building and ending up as either a T-, U- or H-shaped building. It is also not known whether the homestead is located on the site of an earlier building, or whether the existing building was the first to occupy this space. The outbuildings on the farm, specifically the flanking building to the east and the older *opgekleide* (clay/mud) remains, suggest that the earlier residents of the farm lived in buildings other than the current homestead. The symmetrical and orderly site layout suggests that it was preconceived, before any building began. The question is, according to which factors were the buildings laid out in their current pattern? Were the homestead and wine cellar planned in accordance with the earlier T-shaped outbuilding as the main orientating factor? The current layout does seem to suggest such a preconceived plan, but its chronology is uncertain.

In light of the above, it would seem that the Donkerhoek homestead may have been built in its entirety (minus the obvious modern additions of rooms 12-17) as a U-shaped homestead, together, at least, with the wine cellar. The three buildings that create the rather impressive and imposing entrance to the farmstead werf most certainly abide by the well understood Cape Dutch traditional style of which there are many examples in the area. Showing off wealth to passers-by and guests through impressive architecture and farmstead approaches was the wish of most inhabitants of the area. If, as suggested by Fransen and Cook (1980), Donkerhoek had a new owner anywhere near the time of construction of the homestead, it is likely that he would try to prove his wealth in this manner. So either Donkerhoek had a new owner, or the then owner came into some money. The layout of the site and the homestead façade as it currently stands was definitely built to impress. Similar pilaster detailing on the outbuildings and the homestead façade could suggest their simultaneous construction, or that they were redecorated by an owner to seem a matching set. However, the impressive symmetrical NE façade of the homestead makes the other buildings pale in comparison. None of them are nearly as detailed or
ordered, suggesting that their function was more practical than social and that there have been many alterations to these elevations over the years.

The most obvious alteration to the homestead is the covered passageway (rooms 4 and 5) that now encloses the area between the two wings. The current layout, however, seems to have been the end result of several alterations to this space. The owner of the building and farm, Robert Koch, said that his father had done many of these, including changes in the passageway. Koch’s father moved the back doors (D3) to their current position from their previous location at point E6 in the passageway, in order to enclose the space between the wings. Koch recalled that, when he was younger, he had to run through the open space in the rain to enter room 9 through ID9. It is possible that the original position of doors entering the covered passageway between the wings could have been located at ID3, where the timber screen is now. This suggestion is based on the fact that the walls at ID3 are much thicker than is required for such a timber screen door, but are the same thickness of all the other external walls in the building. It is therefore possible that the position of the ‘back door’ to the building has been moved backwards along the passage a few times in the past to cater for the needs of the inhabitants. This implies that timber floors were placed in room 4 after the construction of the extended passage, as timber floors outside would be rather impractical!

Unlike earlier homesteads that usually had the front door enter into a full-sized reception room (voorhuis), the narrow passage entrance of the Donkerhoek homestead suggests the adoption of more private spaces and an Anglicisation of the community and its material culture. These changes took place in many older homes by the mid 19th century, such as at Valkenberg (Fransen 2004: 93).

There are places in the building where it is possible that new walls have been built and earlier ones removed. The thin walls between rooms 7 and 8 and between rooms 4 and 5 are clearly more recent alterations to the house. Besides the obvious change in wall thickness, the awkward and uncomfortable positioning of ID7 and ID8 make it even more evident. It is likely that rooms 7 and 8 were at one stage a single larger room. Looking at the beams in the ceilings also gives some indication of later alterations, as they are generally evenly spaced throughout the rooms that have had no alteration, but in rooms 7 and 8 the wall sits strangely close to one beam on the NE side of room 8. Room 10 is currently by far the largest room in the house, probably having been two rooms previously. The door and windows in room 10 are most likely more recent alterations.

With its hearth and chimney, room 9 was quite clearly a kitchen, probably the kitchen associated with the first construction of the building. It was usual for the kitchen of a Cape house to be located at the back of the building with a separate entrance for slaves and servants. The early bo-en-onderdeur (D4) fitted this function perfectly. The small horizontal casement window, W13, and the bo-en-onderdeur are positioned on either side of the chimney, leading to the conclusion that they were built at the same time as the chimney and, therefore, as part of the original construction of the house. The date of the bo-en-onderdeur is a contested one, with various experts having suggested different ages. This door is most likely of an earlier date than any other element in the building, suggesting that it was recycled for its current use. With few resources and access to new building materials it is highly unlikely that inhabitants would simply throw away a door in perfect working condition. It is clear that the door was modified to fit its current location, having been cut short at the bottom. Perhaps weathering of the door at its previous location would have lead to its modification and use as a kitchen servant’s door instead of featuring in a more prominent position in the house.

On the outside of the SW wall of room 9, the small door that enters the solder is located next to the chimney flue. The crude timber stairs leading up to the solder door could be quite old, as
more recent building and safety regulations require steps above the ground floor to have balustrading.

Leading off room 9, door ID9 opens towards the passageway rather than into the room, unlike the other ‘original’ internal doors leading off the passageway, rooms 3, 4 and 5. Modern internal doors open into the passage, whereas older doors seem to open into rooms.

The bathrooms (rooms 12-14 and 17) inside the house are obviously modern (20th century) alterations as earlier buildings would have had no piped water and used wash tubs, chamber pots or outside toilets. Rooms 12-14 have been constructed within the ‘envelope’ of room 11, using thin dividing walls and simple internal doors and frames (ID12-14). Room 17 also has thin partition walls to separate it from room 1, but the window (W14) and door (D6) indicate more architectural intention that any of the other modern alterations. W14 is a 12-paned sash window, but its extended jambs clearly indicate that it is a Victorian-period insertion.

The fanlight above D6 is a modern timber copy of the detailed fanlights above D1 and D5 and of relatively recent date. The timber fanlight above D5 is similar in material, construction and detail to the fanlight above the front door, D1. Early photographs taken of the façade of the homestead clearly show that the fanlight above D1 is part of the NE façade’s construction in contemporary style (Fig. 16). It is suggested that the fanlight above D5 originally belonged to the back door of the central passageway between the wings. It is common for Cape vernacular buildings to have such fanlights repeated along an axis in line with the front door. Although Robert Koch was around during the alterations of the back door and modern bathroom additions, he could not remember the original location of the fanlight above D5. The simple glazed doors at D2, D5 and D6 are all similar in decorative detail, which suggests they are contemporary, however closer inspection of these doors would be required to eliminate the possibility of modern copies. It is unlikely that an early homestead would have glazed doors facing to the exterior, leading to the suggestion that these doors were either constructed and added to the house more recently or that they were originally used as internal separations in the house, perhaps somewhere along the central passageway.

**Conclusion**

Using a combination of physical recording through measuring and photography and old photographs of the Donkerhoek farm and homestead, and documentary and literary research, preliminary conclusions as to the multi-phased construction of the homestead and evolution of the *werf* could be made. It is likely that the farmstead, including homestead and outbuildings, was planned and constructed according to a preconceived site plan, possibly before or around 1851. The influencing factors and chronology of such a layout could be more precisely identified with further investigation.

The history of the homestead consists of multiple phases, including the incremental covering of the passageway between the wings, enlarging and dividing of rooms and the rearrangement of doors. Modern (20th century) alterations are also evident, such as internal bathrooms and an extension to the SW end of the west wing. As with the farmstead as a whole, further investigation into family records and documentary sources such as probate inventories and transfer deeds will offer a more precise dating and chronology of the phasing of the homestead.
References & Bibliography


ASB (Archaeology of Standing Buildings), Module 3, MA in Archaeology and Heritage course material.


Figure 40. Steps leading up to front door.
Appendix: Photographs

The setting

A. NE elevation and garden.  
B. Looking NE towards approaching road.

C. Facing SW looking towards homestead.  
D. Road to earlier dwelling remains.

NW elevation

E. NE end of NW elevation.  
F. Stoep along NW elevation.
G. NW elevation from the west.

SW elevation

I. East wing end gable.

SE elevation

K. SE elevation from the east.

H. 6 pane casement window (W11/12).

J. 3 pane horizontal casement window (W13).

L. Timber casement fanlight (D5).
M. Modern fanlight copy (D6).

N. Stoep along SE elevation.

**Interior**

O. Timber fanlight close-up.

P. Interior lock on front door.

Q. Bottom interior catch on bo-en-onderdeur.

R. Top interior lock on bo-en-onderdeur.
Now and then

S. Looking south.

T. Looking south – undated painting.

U. Looking west.

V. Looking west – undated photo.

W. Looking east.

X. Looking east – undated photo.
An Investigation of a Colonial Era Farm Graveyard in the Northern Cape

Nigel Amschwand

Figure 1. View of the graveyard at Papkuilsfontein. San rock shelter at the top right.

Introduction

The Vernacular Architecture Society of South Africa (VASSA) started a project in 1999 to record some threatened farm complexes in the region. For about 100 years the area of the Onder-Bokkeveld was the northern limit of the Dutch East India Company’s colony in Southern Africa. First settled in the 1740s, further northward expansion was limited both by low annual rainfall and hostile occupation by Khoe and San tribes. Once all the available water sources and land were occupied, the farms were sub divided as the sons of the farm owners could no longer trek to new pastures. These sub divisions were later legalized in the late 1800s when formal partitioning was allowed. In many cases the water sources and dwellings remained as shared assets, becoming divided into smaller and smaller portions as the generations passed. One farm has this shared portion (called the vierkant) in fractions as small as \( \frac{1}{80} \).\(^{10}\)

Another such farm, Papkuilsfontein\(^{11}\), is now all in the hands of one family. Situated 25 km south of Nieuwoudtville, Papkuilsfontein was given out as a loan farm to Christoffel Burgert some time before 1758.\(^{12}\) Close to the Ordonnantie (the centre-point of the loan farm) lies the farm’s graveyard (Fig. 2). It is separated by a sandstone koppie from the dwellings.

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\(^{10}\) Groenrivier, the site of the town of Nieuwoudtville.

\(^{11}\) The present spelling will be used throughout but it has been spelt as Papekuilsfontein and Papenkuildfontyn.

\(^{12}\) CA: RLR 15/1 p. 273. Grazing licence given to Heemraad Pieter Loubser on 3\(^{rd}\) October 1758, vacated by Christoffel Burgert.
It was decided to survey this graveyard and try to determine its age and the identity of its occupants. In January 2005 a general survey was carried out. This was done by setting out a baseline and plotting the gravesites as horizontal coordinates along and perpendicular to this line (Fig. 5). Thirty-six identifiable graves were found, mostly consisting of an undressed vertical stone at the head and foot of a mound covered by loosely packed rocks. Seven of the graves had formal dressed headstones. Although not easily discernable from the survey diagram, when on site there appeared to be two distinct alignments for the graves. Those thought to be older and running closer to the koppie run at a slightly different angle to those known to be later, i.e. the Nels.
Much of the stone in this area is covered with lichen, including the seven formal headstones, which prevented them from being read. Application was made to the South African Heritage Resource Agency, which has jurisdiction in the Northern Cape, for permission to clean the lichen from the gravestones.

Cleaning Process

The species of the lichen was tentatively identified by Dr Tasillo Feuerer of the University of Hamburg as mostly belonging to the foliose genus *Xanthoparmelia* from the family *Parmeliaceae*, with some crustose lichen of the genus *Lecidea*. Advice on the best method to remove the lichen was provided by Royden Yates, then of Iziko Museums. Amongst the information provided was a paper concerning the removal of lichen from an engraved memorial to the American poet Walt Whitman (Wainright 1986).

Due to budgetary constraints further identification of the lichen to determine their similarity to those described in the paper was not possible. However, they were from the same genus and it was decided to use the same cleaning solutions.

Three solutions were described:

a) 5% (mass/volume) solution of sodium hypochlorite in water,

b) Denatured ethanol (ethyl alcohol),

c) 0.1% (mass/volume) solution of ortho-phenylphenol in denatured ethanol (ethyl alcohol).

Due to the similarities of solutions b) and c) it was decided to omit b).

Solution a) was easy to obtain, while the active ingredient in solution c) had to be imported from Germany. This delay gave time for solution a) to be tested. The difference between the two solutions is that a) is a weak acid and c) is a biocide. There was concern that the acid solution might damage the headstones. Six of these were made from Table Mountain Sandstone (TMS) local to the Onder Bokkeveld and the remaining one was of slate. A 12.5% concentration solution of a) was applied to a sample of TMS to test for permanent damage. None was apparent.

The site was visited on the 16th September 2005 to treat the stones. Digital photographs were taken of the seven gravestones at each stage. The gravestones were numbered 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 11 from the survey.

To test the efficacy of the solutions it was decided to treat each half of the stones with the different solutions i.e. the left-hand half with solution a) and the right-hand with c). Two applications of each solution were made, thoroughly wetting the surface. It was noted that a) made the surface instantly wet with the excess solution running down the face of the gravestone. This solution had an immediate effect on the lichen, probably due to its acidity. Solution c) seemed to be absorbed more into the surface. The coverage rates were also different. Solution a) was 0.9 m²/l (1.11l/m²) whereas solution c) was 2.3 m²/l (0.43l/m²). For interest’s sake, stone 3 was wrapped in plastic to exclude any air to see how this would affect the lichen.

One month later the site was revisited. As the owner of the farm was going to let cattle into the area to graze, the wrapping from stone 3 was removed (for some reason cattle eat plastic). No discernable difference was seen between the lichen remaining on stone 3 and the other treated stones. The left-hand face of the stones (solution a) was clean and any remaining lichen appeared to be dead. On the right-hand face (solution c) the lichen was discoloured and lighter in hue than untreated areas. However, the lichen still appeared alive so a second treatment was carried out.

At the end of November a team revisited the site to carry out the final cleaning and record the inscriptions. The lichen treated with solution c) appeared to have recovered and was indistinguishable from the untreated lichen. Initially, efforts were made to remove the remaining lichen with a nylon brush (washing up brush) but this proved ineffective. The remaining lichen on the left-hand faces was hard and the delicate use of a soft brass brush was resorted to. The lichen on the right-hand was mostly removed with a soft plastic scraper. The final hard deposits
were taken off with the brass brush. Not all lichen was cleaned off, just enough to enable the inscriptions to be read.

Figure 3. Headstone 1: before and after chemical treatment and after mechanical cleaning.

The above photographs of grave 1 (Fig. 3) show the headstone before treatment (left), after treatment (middle) and after mechanical cleaning (right). The use of solution a) was effective and made final cleaning much easier. The use of solution c) in this instance proved ineffective.

Once the headstones were cleaned various methods were used to assist in deciphering the inscriptions. Initially reflected light from a board covered with aluminium foil was tried. The resultant raking light was too powerful and much better results were obtained using white cartridge paper. As much of each inscription that could be made out, was recorded. Next, cornstarch was liberally applied with a 50 mm paintbrush to the inscriptions and the excess removed with horizontal strokes. This method proved very effective in increasing contrast. Last, when washing off the cornstarch (which flowed off easily) the water also increased the contrast allowing the remaining sections to be read. Cornstarch was used as it is biodegradable and does not leave any surface residue.

The inscriptions on headstones 1, 2, 4, 7 and 8 were almost fully recorded. If any inscriptions had ever been made on headstones 9 and 11, they are now indecipherable.

Inscriptions

Inscription - Grave No. 1

HIER
LEGT BEGRAVEN
JACOB WILLEM
STEPHANUS NEL
GEBOREN DEN 25 JANUARY
1877
OVERLEDEN 3 OCTOBER
1877
GEZ 182 VS 4

Grandson of J.W.S. Nel (grave 4), son of Jacobus Nel and Elizabeth Helena Catharina Louw (Heese & Lombard bel7c1d2e9f2g2).
**Inscription - Grave No. 2**

TER
GEDAGTENIS
VAN
JACOB WILLEM STEPHANUS
NEL
GEBOREN DEN 12 MEI 1866
OVERLEDEN DEN 29 SEPTEMBER 1871
JOHANNES 10-15 DIE IN MY GLO
ZAL LEVENAL WARE
HY OOK GESTORVEN

Perhaps the child of Jan Harmse Nel and Jannetjie Steenkamp and named after the paternal grandfather (see grave no 4) Not listed in Heese and Lombard.

**Inscription – Grave No. 4**

HIER LEGT BEGRAVEN
JACOB WILLEM STEPHANUS NEL
GEBOREN DEN 23 MAART 1808
OVERLEDEN DEN 5 JULY 1875
ZALIG ZIJN DE DOODE
DIE IN DEN HEERE
STERVEN OPENH 14
VS 13

Owner of Papkuilsfontein (Heese & Lombard b8c1d2e9).

**Inscription – Grave 7**

HIER LEGT
BEGRAVEN
{ } ONZER
KLEINE KINDER
REN MAR
LAAT DE KINDER
RENS TOT MY
KOMEN WANT
DER HERE
IS HET KONING
RYKSGODS
J E P NEL
H M NEL
7de JUNI 1907 Geb LOUW

This multiple burial could be the two children of Joachim Elias Petrus Nel and Hillethie Maria Louw listed in Heese & Lombard as dying circa 1905. They would be Johannes Wilhelm Carel Casparus Nel (born 1885) and his younger sister Rachel Catharina Nel (born 1903). There was a yellow fever epidemic in this area in the early years of the 20th century.
Inscription – Grave 8

TER
GEDAGHTENIS
VAN
HILLETJIE MARIA NEL
GEBOREN DEN 19de FEB
1889 – OVERLEDEN DEN =
25st NOVEMBER 1905
JERIMIA 15-V.9. HARE ZON
IS ONDERGEGAAN ALS HET
NOG DAG WAS
GELANG 65 V 1-5 GEWORKMTE
MOOG IN GRAF MYN LIGCHA=
AM SCHENDEN GEEN NOOD=
DAAR HY HY LEEF
MYNS TOT BEWAAKT
J E P NEL
H M NEL
GEBO LOUW

Hilletjie Maria Nel (b8c1d2e9f1g4h7) was the daughter of Joachim Elias Petrus Nel and Hilletjie Maria Louw. Another gravestone for the same person is in the floor of one of the Papkuilsfontein outbuildings, perhaps damaged, incorrect or otherwise unsuitable.

A rectangular surrounding of stones at ground level encloses the graves 6, 7 and 8. As 7 and 8 are children of Joachim Elias Petrus Nel and Hilletjie Maria Louw, one can suppose that number 6 is also. This could be Hilletjie Maria Nel who was born 19th December 1887 and died shortly afterwards.

Who was interred in this graveyard?

Working backward through time we can discount the van Wyk family, as when they purchased Papkuilsfontein they were resident on another nearby farm, Matjesfontein, and already had a family graveyard. The genealogical details are taken from Heese and Lombard unless otherwise noted.

Nel’s at Papkuilsfontein: 1838 – after 1900

Those who were, or may have been, interred are shown in italics.

*Jacob Willem Stephanus Nel (b8c1d2e9) *22-3-1808 † 5-7-1875 buried at Papkuilsfontein (grave no. 4) x 5-2-1826 Johanna Elizabeth Margaretha Steenkamp † 12-1-1827 (no death notice)

*Johannes Carel Willem Casparus *12-1-1827 † 6-10-1879 x 5-9-1846 Maria Johanna Jacoba Nel (death notice 6/9/105 #790 died 1863 at Bloemfontein in the Roggeveld on the day after giving birth to Maria Johanna Jacoba) Johannnes Carel Willem Casparus (or according to death notice of his mother named Jacob Willem Stephanus) * 4-3-1847 Hendrina Cecelia Jacoba * 7-4-1849 (perhaps she that was married to Joachim Elias Petrus Nel of Avontuur in the Roggeveld, her death notice 6/9/162 #5001 1878)

Johanna Elizabeth Margaretha *9-7-1851 x 20-9-1869 Willem Jacobus Steenkamp Joachim Elias Petrus *24-7-1854 †16-11-1918
x Hilletjie Maria Louw † 6-9-1959
   Elizabeth Cornelia † 25-5-1933
   Maria Johanna Jacoba † 7-8-1966
   Johannes Willem Carel Casparus *13-8-1885 † c 1905 (no death notice)
   Hilletjie Maria * 19-12-1887 † c 1887
   Jacobus Hendrik Louw Nel * 8-8-1888 † 11-12-1967 Sewefontein
   Anna Glaudina * 14-12-1892 † 23-4-1933
   Hilletjie Maria * 19-2-1899 † 25-11-1905 buried at Papkuilsfontein (grave number 8)
   Rachel Catharina * 23-4-1903 † c 1905 (no death notice)
   Johannes Carel Willem Casparus * 10-8-1905 † 13-11-1942
   Jacob Willem Stephanas * 16-11-1857 † circa 1864
   Jacobus Christiaan Joachim * 31-7-1860 † 8-12-1949
   Carel Gert Steenkamp Nel * 10-5-1862 † before1894 (no death notice)
   Maria Johanna Jacoba *25-11-1863 x WP Louw
   Martha Margaretha Wilhelmina Maria Steenkamp *8-8-1866 † 23-5-1951
   Jacobus * 8-10-1863 † 2-12-1885 buried at Brakerivier
   x Elizabeth Helena Catharina Louw † 2-3-1918
   Maria Magrita Clasina *4-10-1875 † 15-1-1882 buried at Brakerivier
   Jacob Willem Stephanus *25-1-1877 † 3-10-1887 buried at Papkuilsfontein
   (grave number 1)
   Nicolaas Everhardus * 1-6-1879 † 23-1-1958
   Martha Margaretha Elizabeth * 1-10-1884 x JHA Nel
   Jacobus * 28-2-1885(5) † 2-12-1885 buried at Brakerivier
   Jacobus * 15-6-1888 † 12-6-1963
   Maria Magdalena Clasina * 26-5-1890 x WJP Kotze
   Hester Elizabeth Willemina *24-6-1893 x J Louw
   Un-baptized son * 6-3-1895 † 25-3-1895
   Jan Harmse * 7-5-1847 (no death notice)
   x 17-4-1865 Jannetjie Sophia Nieuwoudt (no death notice)
   Possible son buried in grave number 2

Five definite and 13 possible.

**Ras’s at Papkuilsfontein: 1784 – 1838**

Possible interments shown in italics.

**Martinus David Ras (b2c6d1) = 1-10-1735 † between 1815 and 1818 (from Opgaafrolle) x 14-4-1771**

**Adriana Christina Hauman † before 1836 (not included in L & D Account)**

**Hendrik Christiaan =17-10-1773 † before 1836 (not included in L & D Account)**

**Susanna Elizabeth =21-1-1776 x 29-3-1792 Gerrit Michiel Visagie**

**Maria Margaretha =22-2-1778 † before 1836 (not included in L & D Account)**

**x 20-3-1796 David Frederik Spangenberg**
Other Residents

Papkuilsfontein was one of the farms that had a high proportion of bywoners (tenant farmers) in residence. Among these were the Diergaard and Esterhuizen families. They were not permanently employed by one farmer and seemed to move about from one farm to the next year by year. Although these people were Christians, they were of a poorer class and little evidence remains of their passing in the written records. However, if they died whilst residing at Papkuilsfontein they would undoubtedly have been buried there.

Conclusion

It was decided to survey a graveyard and record if possible who was interred there. Thirty-six graves were identified. By cleaning the gravestones with inscriptions five people were identified by name. Looking at the genealogy of the two families that rented the farm in the late 18th and 19th centuries, a possible further thirty-one burials could be guessed at. This number, plus the probability of bywoners having died on the farm, we believe gives an acceptable comparison between the number of graves and the number of people possibly living and dying there.
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References


Appendix

Jacob Willem Stephanus Nel (grave 4) was married three times. His first wife, Johanna Elizabeth Margaretha Steenkamp, died in childbirth in 1827 before Nel occupied Papkuilsfontein. It is assumed that his second wife, Martha Margaretha Elizabeth van Zyl who died in 1842 (without issue) is buried next to him. His last wife, Martha Margaretha Elizabeth van Taak, who died in 1884, is buried on the next farm to the south, Sewefontein (originally Quispberg). It is interesting to note that the type of stone and the style of engraving of Nel’s and van Taak’s gravestones are similar although nine years apart (Grave 4 and Fig. 4). The sourcing of grave stones in the late 19th century would be an interesting project.

Figure 4. Headstone marking Elizabeth van Taak’s grave, dated 1884.
Figure 5. Surveyed layout of the graves at Papkuilsfontein.