VASSA Journal

Number 13  June 2005

General Editor: Antonia Malan

Contents

Wine making at the Cape: the architecture of wine:  
*André van Graan*  
2

A short history of Muratie:  *Helena Scheffler*  
10

Morgenhof: from langhuis to manoir:  *Antonia Malan*  
15

*Cover illustration:*

Wine cellar, drawn by Barrie Bierman (published in 1955 in *Boukuns in Suid-Afrika*, Kaapstad: A.A. Balkema.)

©Vernacular Architecture Society of SA
Map showing farms visited during the VASSA outing in the autumn of 2005 (after Fransen 2004).
Winemaking at the Cape: the architecture of wine

André van Graan

“Today, praise be to God, wine was made for the first time from Cape grapes”

With these words, Jan van Riebeek recorded the first making of wine in South Africa in his journal on the 2nd February 1659. The wine was produced from vines that had been brought to the Cape by the yacht Leeuwin on the 22nd July 1655, in answer to the Commander’s request made a month after his arrival at the Cape.

Van Riebeek prompted the beginning of the wine industry by distributing vines to the free burghers, having successfully planted some twelve thousand on his private farm, Boscheuvel. Ross (1993:13) points out that the VOC had soon realised that it was not able to produce sufficient wine as a company for use by its shipping, nor to act as a storable anti-scrobutic. Van Riebeek complained that at first the burghers used the vines to produce shade over the fronts of their dwellings, but by 1680 viticulture had been sufficiently successfully established for Governor Simon van der Stel to restrict the development of the industry as it was having a negative impact on the production of grain. He stipulated that any burgher wishing to grow vines needed to plant six morgen of wheat for every one morgen of vines. (Walton, 1989)

By the end of the seventeenth century, the farmers had a surplus of both wine and grain. However, the market for the surplus was restricted by the monopolies established by the VOC servants, such as Willem Adriaan van der Stel.

According to Walton, most houses had wine cellars or ‘press houses’ prior to 1750. Architecturally there is little evidence of these structures. Thiel’s drawing of 1707 shows the Vergelegen wine cellar of Willem Adriaan van der Stel.

Otto Mentzel, who visited the Cape between 1733 and 1741 described ‘the pressing house, or as it is wrongly called there, the cellar, for it is merely a building on ground level, with no windows, with its entrance facing south to prevent the sun shining into it’, that he saw at Groot Constantia. This windowless cellar was probably built between 1685 and 1695. Barrie Biermann suggests that the arrival of the Huguenots at the end of the seventeenth century led to a refinement in wine production, but that they were subsumed into the local Dutch winemaking tradition, and, despite references to Chateau Constantia or Chateau Vergelegen, did not change the method of marketing wines according to the old estate names.

Pressing of grapes in the mid-eighteenth century was usually done in a pierced barrel, where the bare feet of the slaves trod the grapes, as Lady Anne Barnard noted wryly- although she was more concerned about insects and spiders! If red wine was being made, the must that was pressed out was left to ferment for about four or five days before being poured into barrels that had been infused with the fumes of burning Muscat nuts. This process was repeated until the wine appeared to have become quite clear. The barrel was then bunged and left for a few weeks before it was sold.

With the making of white wine, sulphur was used to impregnate the barrel, and during fermentation, the husks and other dregs thrown up were drained off to prevent the barrel from exploding. When the wine started fermenting, the cellars had to be left open day and night, with windows ensuring a draught to prevent suffocation by the fumes. Once fermented, the wine was cleared by the addition of isinglass.

At Groot Constantia, Hendrik Cloete built his impressive new cellar in 1790-91 to produce the highly successful Constantia wines that found favour with the European market.

The production of wine was to increase steadily between 1700 and the 1830s. This increase can be seen by an examination of the opgaafrollen for this period. However, as Ross
(1993:15) points out, there was considerable under-recording during the early VOC period. After 1744, wine production was no longer taxed and returns become more accurate. The VOC changed the system of taxation from the opgaaf to fl.4 for each barrel of wine that entered Cape Town. It was impossible to dodge this tax and removed any reason for under-reporting. Ross reports that wine production rose regularly throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1725, 1 133 leggers (about 660 000 litres) of wine were produced. By 1775, this had increased to 5528 (nearly 3 million litres). The income that the VOC made from the retail sale of wine was a principal source of revenue at the Cape. The franchise to sell wine to in Cape Town’s taverns was sold annually, but the Company did not directly control the buying and selling of wine, not even from the two Constantia estates. The officials seem to have preferred to use these wines to attract foreigners to the Cape (Ross 1993:25).

Ross points out that the influence of the Company over Cape society declined during the latter part of the eighteenth century, partly as a result of the increasing level of wealth of the wine and wheat farmers. Guelke has shown how the estates of wine farmers increased from an average of fl.9300 in 1731-1742 to fl.14030 in 1751-1762 and fl.24330 in 1771-1780. Walton considers, and Ross concurs, that most of the wine cellars still extant today were built between the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, as this was a period of prosperity that also saw farmhouses being upgraded and enlarged. During this period wine cellars were embellished with gables as decorative as those on the houses. Ross maintains that the houses and outbuildings were not designed by professional architects, whose work was confined to Cape Town, but by anonymous artisans, probably mainly by slaves, one of whom is known to have designed and built three (Ross 1994:27). Most wine cellars of this period were long rectangular thatched structures with a large door at one end and a second, possibly smaller one beneath the central dormer gable. After 1816 the simple rectangular and square window and door openings of the cellars gave way to segmental or semi-circular heads.

According to Ross, the same families seem to have remained active as wine farmers throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He cites the fact that of 53 families in which at least one member owned 10 000 or more vines in 1731 in the Stellenbosch and Drakenstein districts, 29 still did in 1752, 22 did in 1782, and as many as 19 had 20000 vines or more in 1825. Of 70 such families in 1752, 38 were still present in 1782 and around 30 in 1825; of the 83 in 1782, 55 could still be found in 1825. In that year, the 19 families who had been present in every year investigated since 1731 owned 41% of the total vines between them. These were the families Cloete, De Villiers, De Vos, Du Plessis, Du Preez, Du Toit, Joubert, Le Roux, Louw, Malan, Marais, Minnaar, Morkel, Mybergh, Retief, Roux, Theron, Van Brakel and Van de Bijl.

In 1806 9 643 leggers (over 5 million litres) of wine were produced as a result of the boom created by the temporary preference given to Cape wines on the British market that lasted until the early 1830s when there was a small decrease in production. Because of the Napoleonic war between Britain and France, there had been considerable pressure in Britain to encourage alternative wine production to reduce the demand for French wine. In 1813 preferential tariffs were introduced for ordinary Cape wine sent to Britain. The authorities encouraged the production of better quality wines after much criticism had been levelled at the local product. In 1810 16,9 million vines produced 10 400 leaguers of wine. By 1824 the number of vines had increased to 31,9 million and the quantity of wine to 16 183 leaguers. Prices also rose rapidly and the wine that had cost 60 rix-dollars at the beginning of the century had increased to between 135 and 185 rix-dollars after 1813. In 1825 the tax preference was reduced, causing a decline in income. The loss of privilege coupled with the poor quality and over-production led to an enormous surplus and a sharp drop in price. This led to numerous insolvencies. The emancipation of slaves in 1834 only made matters worse for the wine farmers.

In the 1850s there was an upturn for the wine farmers with wine merchants once more buying Cape wines after the European vineyards had been affected by an outbreak of powdery mildew. Between 1853 and 1859 there was a boom for the wine industry with prices increasing
from 67 to 82 rix-dollars a leaguer. But in November 1859 the fungus reached the Cape, destroying the crop the following year. One disaster followed the other: in 1860 the British Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, entered into a trade agreement with France. Then in 1861 the tax preference for Cape wine was dropped altogether. This led to the destruction of the wine industry, as it could not compete with French wines on quality. The discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1866 helped to improve the farmers lot a little.

In 1880 there were 60 million vines growing in the Cape, and this increased to 70 million by 1886. At this stage the claim was made that wine production at the Cape surpassed any wine-producing country in the world. Quantity had increased but quality was still lacking. Baron von Babo, a viticulture expert, reported in 1885 that with few exceptions, the wines have “a disagreeable and strong brandy taste”.

Then, in January 1886 the dreaded evidence of Phylloxera was discovered on vines in Mowbray. This swept through the Cape like wildfire continuing well into the 1890s and laid farms to waste. 22 million vines were burnt in an effort to contain the scourge and many farmers went into bankruptcy. Into this market came the ever-astute Cecil Rhodes, buying up almost the entire Drakenstein valley at bargain prices to create a vast fruit farming area.

Between 1891 and 1894 the government of the Cape Colony imported just under 700000 American phylloxera-resistant vine cuttings and these were distributed among the farmers. Within 13 years, with local propagation, over 19 million grafted vines had been planted at the Cape. But despite the improvement in the cultivation of vines, the farmers’ woes were far from over. Over-production of wine led to a commission of enquiry declaring in 1905 that the wine industry was “in an alarming state of depression” (Brooke Simons 1992:68). As a result, an act of parliament was passed in the same year that made loans available for the establishment of small co-operative wine cellars.

By 1907 the price of a leaguer of wine had dropped to half that of 1905. In 1909 a protest was held by the wine farmers, with thousands of them converging on the newly-built city hall in Cape Town, where, after an impassioned meeting, they marched to parliament to present their grievances to Prime Minister Merriman. But without the necessary funds available, he was unable to help and the wine industry continued to slide into disaster that was exacerbated by the breaking out of the First World War in 1914. One finds that in this period many Cape Town based English-speaking businessmen started buying up the wine estates and created country seats for themselves. This seemed to have, rather perversely, gone hand-in-hand with a growth in the temperance movement in the Cape. The ‘dop’ system was condemned, and fruit farming increased substantially. At Vergelegen, the Philipses were to convert the old 1815 wine cellar into a library for Sir Lionel’s collection of books.

Only after the war was the establishment of the KWV or Wine-makers Co-operative in Paarl finally able to bring some stability to the industry. But even the KWV only gained the necessary strength after the Union government passed the Wine & Spirit Act of 1924. They were then able to control not only the pricing of wine, but also to distil the surplus to produce brandy.

Many new farmers were brought into the industry as a result of this stability and Biermann drew attention to the pioneer winemakers of the twenties and thirties who set about improving their vineyards and cellars. Until then, the cellars had remained untouched since they had been erected in the nineteenth century. Now concrete fermentation tanks were built in the old structures and farmers began experimenting with new cultivars and adopting a more scientific basis for both understanding soil types and climate, and growing more suitable cultivars under the direction of experts such as Stellenbosch University’s Professor Perold.

Thus it was that when Barrie Biermann came to investigate the wine industry in the Sixties, he was heartened by the progress that had been made. Now there were signs of a major change as new mechanised means of wine production were being introduced and the scale of production increased dramatically. He was confident in his modernist manner, that the
landscape would adjust to the architecture of the Machine Age and that the stainless steel tanks and industrial structures would ultimately find their place in the agricultural landscape.

But how successful was this introduction and change to be? In some cases much has been lost, in others, the new boom in the wine industry that seems to have grown even more since democratic elections in 1994, has led to another layering on a landscape that has been continuously redefined since the arrival of the Dutch-led colonists in the seventeenth century. And so it continues, demanding a vigilance to ensure that the new recognises the past without dominating or destroying what was there. The wine industry will continue to adapt and change as it has done for over three hundred and fifty years.

In considering these changes, in March 2005 we visited a group of farms near Stellenbosch to see how they had responded to these changes. They are centred on the historical wine estates of Muratie and Uitkyk that Barrie Biermann had described in his book.

**Uitkyk**

The farm Uitkyk, was originally granted to Jan Oberholster in 1712. Martin Melck bought the farm in 1763 and transferred it to his son-in-law, Johan David Beyers, in 1776. In 1788 the homestead was built in its present double-storeyed form and the design is attributed to Louis Thibault (Fig.1). The werf lies to the rear and south side of the house, with the old wine cellar still retaining its gable, despite many changes (Fig.2). A modern wine cellar lies further down the slope to the south.

![Figure 1. Uitkyk: the unusual double-storeyed homestead built in 1788 (photo AvG 2005).](image)

Biermann recounts that the politician J.W. Sauer bought the farm Uitkyk in 1902; and that it had, before the destruction of its vines by phylloxera, been renowned for its sweet Pontac wine. Sauer planted fruit trees. His son, Paul Sauer, in association with Danie Rossouw, would later establish the estate Kanonkop on the lower portion of Uitkyk. In 1929 he sold the upper portion, including the old werf to the German, Baron von Carlowitz. Shortly afterwards, somewhat ironically, the fruit industry that had grown on the basis of the destruction of the wine
industry, collapsed. Professor Perold from Stellenbosch University advised von Carlowitz to re-establish a wine farm, and in 1930 Cabernet, Shiraz and Hermitage grape varieties were planted; followed by Port varieties in 1934. This led to a demand developing for the estate’s high quality wines, particularly among the Uitlanders in Johannesburg, and in 1949 Georg von Carlowitz marketed the red wine, Carlonet, that was to become legendary. Biermann waxes lyrically about this wine that was produced until 1963, and writing in the late 1960s, he considered it to be the best South African red wine.

The Carlowitz’s were followed by Gerry Bouwer who owned the farm for over twenty years before it was bought by Distillers Corporation in the 1990s.

![Figure 2. Uitkyk: The old wine cellar retains its gables despite many changes (above); a modern wine cellar lies further down the slope to the south (photos AvG 2005).](image)

**Muratie**

In 1925, a German artist, Georg Paul Canitz, who moved to the Cape in 1910, bought the farm, then known as Oude Muratie. Professor Perold from the university also advised him and Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir were planted. He was to establish Oude Muratie Pinot Noir as one of South Africa’s best-known red wines. In 1937, after his death, his daughter, Annemie, took over the farm.
Figure 3. The cluttered werf at Muratie is almost unchanged since Canitz’s day (photos AvG 2005).

Knorhoek

The werf of Knorhoek (originally Kleygat) follows the same pattern as the adjoining farms with the farmhouse on the western side and a rectangular layout of outbuildings forming the werf behind it (Fig. 4). Here, the layout was totally symmetrical with the wine cellar on the western side. The farmhouse has had the unusual and unique transformation of having the H-shaped building re-roofed after the enclosure of the side-courts, with a large pitched roof so that the front gable is now contained within the pediment of the roof (Fig. 5). A new wine cellar has engulfed the original cellar, dramatically increasing the scale of the building and disrupting the symmetrical disposition of the werf (Fig. 6).
Figure 4. The werf and homestead at Knorhoek. The dotted circle (left) shows where a new winery engulfs the old cellar and crosses the ringmuur boundary (after Fransen 2004). The upper buildings have been converted into guest rooms.

Figure 5. Knorhoek: the old H-shaped homestead is spanned by a huge pitched roof (photo AvG 2005).

Figure 6. A new wine cellar built around the original cellar, dramatically increasing the scale of the building and disrupting the symmetrical disposition of the werf (photos AvG 2005).
Morgenhof

Morgenhof, or Verblijf der Gelukzaligen, is a relative newcomer to the wine estates of the region, although in the layering of the estate buildings there is evidence of a 19th century cellar, typical of most farms of this region. But the modern wine making tradition at Morgenhof is represented by two 20th century layers. The first was made in the 1980s, when it was owned by Mr Grobe of Rhine Ruhr (Pty) Ltd. In the Biermann modernist manner, an industrial building was added behind the old werf. The next layer, which strongly reflects the French roots of the owner, is centered on a new underground cellar to the north of the werf. A pavilion and a tower, both somewhat Gallic in architectural character, edge a formal terasse above the maturation cellar.

References

A short history of Muratie

Helena Scheffler

This piece is based on a much more detailed history written by Dr Helena Scheffler for the Melck family. It was originally presented at a VASSA visit to Muratie in 1996, when Helena stood in front of the old opstal to address the group.

In March 2005 Muratie was chosen as a distinct contrast to neighbouring estates within the day’s excursion theme of upgrading and rebuilding in the context of new trends in the wine industry. Muratie was one of the first estates to open to the public for wine tasting and direct sales of wine, but the buildings themselves and methods of wine-making have scarcely changed for hundreds of years. Rijk Melck and his family continue to greet and serve their visitors and to retell the old stories in the midst of architectural and artefactual remnants (and ancient cobwebs) (Fig. 1). For instance, the 1930s concrete tanks in the old cellar have been minimally converted into alcoves for wine-tasting and there is a bar behind old wooden stable fittings.

The settlement at the Cape was only 47 years old when Muratie was granted to the first owner in February 1699. It was originally known as De Driesprong, which means ‘a place where three roads come together’. The first owner, Lourens Campher, was a German from Pommerania, and he was already living on the farm when it was granted to him.

Earlier, while Campher was still living in Table Valley, he befriended a young Company slave called Ansela van de Kaap. She lived in the Company slave lodge at the top of the Heerengracht. Her mother came from Guinea and her father was an unknown Company official. Ansela and Lourens had three children. They were all born in the slave lodge and baptized in the church in the Castle. Soon after the birth of their first baby, Lourens moved away to Stellenbosch and from then on he could only see his beloved whenever he visited Cape Town on business. He did not own a horse and had to travel the 50 kilometres through the deep sand of the Cape Flats by ox-wagon or on foot. This romance continued for ten years.

Ansela was fortunately freed in 1695 after she was sold to a wealthy and influential woman. Lourens probably felt wonderful when he left De Driesprong to fetch his little family from Cape Town. The journey back must have been a very happy one. Freedom beckoned and it
was probably also the slaves’s very first excursion into the interior. Cornelis was nine, Agnita five and little Jacoba three years old.

Lourens and Ansela married and worked hard to establish the farm. They were quite poor and never had servants or slaves to help them. At one stage they had 8000 vines and on average they produced about 600 litres of wine a year. After Lourens’s death in 1729, Ansela and her son Cornelis continued to farm for five years before selling De Driesprong.

The Camphers’s humble abode still exists today, behind the homestead. It is near the river on a small rise – close enough for fetching water but high enough to escape floods. The house is shown on the original title deed (Farm 47 DO OSF1.I-137, SG dgm 30/1699). On this drawing it has a pitched roof, straight end-gables, and a door in the gable wall nearest to the river. This corresponds today with the kitchen on the left. We know that these early drawings were not merely imaginative, but were of buildings that really existed at the time.

According to a tree expert, a surviving oak is about 300 years old and must therefore have been planted by the Camphers. The Camphers lived here for forty years.

After the Camphers, the farm was owned by three Germans and in 1743 the son of a French Huguenot immigrant took over. Hercules du Preez not only bought Driesprong but also the nearby farm, Het Kleigat. These two farms were sold together for many years. Du Preez sold the properties to his brother-in-law, who in his turn sold them to the famous Martin Melck in 1763.

The 40-year old Melck had just made a fortune during the Seven Years War. Apart from Driesprong and Kleigat he also bought properties in Cape Town and the farm Uitkyk. He and his wife Anna Hop lived at Elsenburg. After Melck’s death in 1781 his vast domain was divided between his children. His oldest daughter, 28-year old Anna Catharina, received De Driesprong and Kleigat. She was married to a German, Jan David Beyers, and they lived in the elegant double-storey house on the adjacent Uitkyk.

After Jan’s death Anna kept Driesprong and Kleigat for a further thirteen years before passing the farms on to her eighth child, Jan Andries Beyers. A year later her son received an adjacent piece of land of 61 morgen. It was a narrow strip that stretched in the direction of Simonsberg. Today it is part of Delheim.

In 1827 Jan Andries Beyers and his wife built themselves an H-shaped house on Kleigat and moved in. (This house was later damaged in a fire and only part of the gables and four doors survived). Jan Andries, who was a builder, also erected a house on De Driesprong. Today this is Muratie’s homestead.

Later, Jan Andries received another 600 morgen of land surrounding Driesprong and Kleigat and which bound his property together as a whole. The name of this new farm, which incorporated Driesprong and Kleigat, was Knorhoek. The name comes from *waar de leeuws knorren* – where the lions roar.

After the death of Jan Andries, his oldest son Jan Andries II inherited the huge farm. The new owner was 46 years old, a widower, and known as *Klein Koning* (Little King). A month after he received the enormous piece of land, he married Tryntje Albertyn. She was only 19 years old and from the neighbouring farm Groenhof.

After Klein Koning’s death Tryntje continued to farm but unfortunately her son was not interested and in 1897 she divided the land into two pieces and sold it to outsiders. The Melck-Beyers family had owned Driesprong for 134 years.

At that stage the land on which today’s Muratie stands was already known as *Muratie* (ruin), although officially the name was still “part of Knorhoek”. It was called Muratie because the roof of the original pioneer dwelling had burned down.
The new owner, William van der Byl, was 31 years old. When he and his wife and little toddler moved into the homestead, it was the first time in more than a century that the owner himself lived on Muratie. During Van der Byl’s ownership two pieces of land were sold off. This was in 1903. They still exist as Drie Sprong and Nieuwe Tuin. Van der Byl sold his farm to John Wright in 1907.

John Wright was married to his cousin, Louisa Cronwright. Her brother was married to the writer Olive Schreiner. The Wrights were leading citizens. Louisa’s father, brother and an uncle were all Members of Parliament. Olive’s brother, Will Schreiner, was Prime Minister of the Colony.

The Wrights lived on Muratie for only a short while before selling it in 1909 to Alice Sarah Stanford. From now on the farm was officially known as Muratie. Her husband, Walter Stanford, was a Senator. When they moved into the homestead their daughters were all still living at home. They did not attend school but were educated at home. One of the sons studied at Elsenburg. Prime Minister John X, Merriman, who lived on Schoongezicht, often called at Muratie. Walter Stanford traveled to Cape Town by train on Monday mornings and returned on Fridays. He adored farming and devoted all his spare time to it. He planted wheat and grew apples, grapes, peaches, melons and apricots.

The Stanfords’s life reminds one of the ‘landed gentry’ in England. Guests often came over from Cape Town for the day; others came for lunch or for tennis parties. Hardly a weekend went by without house guests. Stanford loved shooting parties and riding. All members of the family were excellent riders. They often went for walks, to Knorhoek or Uitkyk, and climbed Simonsberg. Once a week they went to Stellenbosch where Mrs Stanford took singing lessons at the Conservatory, and the daughters took dancing lessons. They attended dances at Government House (Tuinhuis) in Cape Town and went to Hunt Club Balls, and in turn hosted dances and fancy-dress parties at Muratie. They traveled to Elsenburg by Cape cart for the College sports days, where they also danced. According to Stanford’s diaries, the return journeys by moonlight were always very romantic.

After the oldest Stanford daughter married, with a reception at Muratie, they sold the farm because it would have been too lonely for the remaining two girls. The next owner, Philip Lotz, owned Muratie for 15 years. After him the well-known German painter, Georg Paul Canitz, took over in 1926. He knew little about wine-making but fell in love with the beautiful setting and the old oaks. His friend Professor Abraham Perold, who founded KWV, helped him and soon Canitz produced very fine wines. Until 1975 Muratie was the only South African farm which produced Pinot Noir wine.

In the morning Canitz donned his white dustcoat and painted in his studio, in the afternoons he farmed, and in the evenings he jumped into the saddle. He loved horses and was an excellent horseman. In the lounge of the homestead there is a portrait of him in riding gear, painted before he left Germany. There are also beautiful paintings of his wife Hanne and daughters Annemie and Ilse.

Canitz left Muratie every year to go on painting expeditions in the Transvaal and elsewhere. People streamed to the farm to buy his work and he could hardly supply the demand. He exhibited in London, Paris and Hamburg.

Canitz’s parties were very famous. During the weekend, guests came from Cape Town and relaxed at the pool (which he built on the Standford’s tennis court). Photographs show rather daring-looking girls with the latest bathing suits, often even smoking cigarettes. The real party place, however, was the small Kneipzimmer (pub) near the pool. The roof and walls were covered with inscriptions in German, Greek, French, English and Afrikaans. It was the scene of Bohemian gatherings where German drinking songs were often sung. Canitz referred to the room as ‘the chapel’ (Fig. 2).
Annemie Canitz helped her father in the vineyards and it was she who took over after he died in 1959. At that stage she was the only woman winemaker in the country. She also loved horses and rode until she was 80. She used to say: “I was rough, I was tough, I could ride”. Annemie kept everything the way it was during her father’s time - the cellar, the chapel and the house. It is still very much the same today.

In 1987 she sold Muratie to Ronnie and Annetjie Melck (Fig. 3). The farm thus once again became the property of the Melck family. After Ronnie died in 1995 his ashes were buried on a high part of the farm. He is the only owner whose remains rest on Muratie. Today the wine estate is managed by Ronnie and Annetjie Melck’s two sons, Rijk and Anton.

**Figure 2. A family portrait, stacks of wine bottles and a path leading through the cool shadowed werf attest to the hospitality to be expected at Muratie (photos off website).**

**Figure 3. Two generations of the Melck family (photos off website).**

**Addendum**

Hans Fransen describes the estate buildings as follows: “The present homestead is undated, but must have been built c1830 by Johan Andreas Beyers, perhaps for a manager. It is rectangular in shape, and has a kind of ‘condensed H-plan’. The front-gable, tall in proportion
because of the comparatively great depth of the house, has a pediment with a mock-chimney in its centre. The name Muratie only came into use round the turn of the century during the ownership of H. Porter; the ruins of the first homestead must still have been visible. Muratie was the home of pioneer wine make and painter Georg Canitz from 1925; an outbuilding with large arched windows must have served as his studio. The farm has a fairly complete enclosed werf behind the homestead” (Fransen 2004: 203-204).

References


www.muratie.com
Figure 1. Layering of architectural styles at Morgenhof (photos AM 2005).

Figure 2. View of Morgenhof during the rebuilding episode of 1987 (photo Martin Hall)
Morgenhof: from langhuis to manoir

Antonia Malan

An article on restoration work at Morgenhof (originally Onrust) was published in The South African Archaeological Bulletin (Hall et al. 1988). I thank my co-authors, Yvonne Brink and Martin Hall, for permission to reproduce portions of this source and for allowing me to take advantage of the fruits of their research. The Archaeology Contracts Office UCT carried out brief investigations at the homestead during renovations in 1993. I am grateful to Dave Halkett for permission to use material from his report.

Introduction

The theme of an outing with the Vernacular Architecture Society in the autumn of 2005 was to track the architectural record of developments in the red wine industry in the Stellenbosch area. The selection of wine estates included those that had hardly changed at all (Muratie), those with their past being obliterated or obscured (Knorhoek), and those with diverse architectural elements still visible and continuing to accumulate (Morgenhof, Uitkyk).

Morgenhof is especially interesting because of the clear and contrasting layering evident in the very different architectural styles of each period (Fig. 1). The earliest building dates from about 1700 (a), then came late 18th and 19th century additions in the ‘classic’ Cape style (b). Restoration of previous structures and introduction of a modern winery was carried out under German-South African ownership in the 1980s (c), and yet another cellar and French-style stone and plaster work was added in 1993 (d). Though the buildings have been extensively restored or rebuilt and the grounds landscaped, it is still possible to ‘read’ the history of the werf, and the place is an attractive and popular tourism destination, wine and food centre and wedding venue.

The owners of Onrust

Onrust was situated some 10 km north of the centre of Stellenbosch and is today incorporated in the estate known as Morgenhof (Fig 2). The documentary sources provide an outline of the ownership of the farm, commencing soon after the beginning of colonial settlement in the region late in the seventeenth century, and continuing through until the present day.

The first grant was traced to Hans Henske, dated 6 March 1692. Fifteen years later, on 25 January 1707, Hans Henske transferred ownership to David Henske, who in turn, on 11 October 1710, passed on the farm to Daniel Zayman1. But after this promising start, there is no further information for a number of years; a gap in the record which is explained by a deed dated 10 July 17812. In this grant of Onrust to Willem Esterhuisen, it is noted that the original papers had been lost. In making his case for ownership, Willem Esterhuisen claimed that he and his forefathers had cultivated Onrust for over 80 years, building structures and living on the property. Willem Esterhuisen had himself inherited Onrust from his father some twenty years earlier.

The following year, in 1782, Willem Esterhuisen sold Onrust to his brother, although in 1807 ownership was transferred to Willem’s widow, Anna Justina Voigt3. In 1812, the farm was

1 Cape Archives. Grants 1657-1735; OSF 1/25 (6.3.1692), T689 (25.1.1707), T833 (11.10.1710).
2 Deeds Office, Cape Town. OSF 3/30, 10.7.1781.
passed to Willem and Anna’s son, Hermanus Christoffel Esterhuisen; ownership that was confirmed in 1818, when it was granted in Perpetual Quitrent. The Esterhuisens were firmly established, for the neighbouring farm of Patrys Valley was the land of Willem Johannes Esterhuisen. By 1843 this, as well as the adjacent farm of Harmonie, had all become the property of Hermanus Christoffel Esterhuisen.

The quitrent grant to Hermanus Christoffel Esterhuisen in 1818 is of particular interest to us here, for it is accompanied by a diagram surveyed the previous year that shows a single building (labelled as the woonhuis) on the Onrust farm (Fig. 3 left). Hermanus Christoffel Esterhuisen was a successful wine farmer: indeed, in 1820 Onrust and Harmonie yielded 100 leaguers of wine, making their owner one of the eight most prosperous vintners in the Stellenbosch District (Smuts 1979). He farmed the now-enlarged Onrust until 1848, when he sold the holdings to Nicolaas Gabriel Vos. After this the farm (still in its consolidated form) was transferred comparatively rapidly through a sequence of owners until 1894.

Figure 3. Left: Surveyor’s diagram of 1818 shows single long building. Right: Diagram of 1905 shows four buildings. Note how the river has been redirected to the north of the werf.

Shortly after this date, the holding was again widened and the farms were reconsolidated, this time under the name Verblijf der Gelukzaligen (Home of the Blessed). In 1905 Verblijf der Gelukzaligen was surveyed and sold. The diagram accompanying the transfer documents is again revealing, for it shows a complex of four major farm buildings, one of them in the same position as the eighteenth century woonhuis (Fig. 3 right). The owner most likely to have made these extensive additions to the farm buildings was Hermanus Christoffel Esterhuisen, who held the farm the longest of any of the nineteenth century owners (from 1812 to 1848), was markedly successful and prosperous, and who lived during a period of general prosperity for the colonial farmers in the Stellenbosch area (Smuts 1979).

Many farm houses in the area lost their gables in the flood of 1822 and Esterhuisen may have felt the need to refashion his farm buildings in line with his neighbours. Though there is no record of damage to the homestead, Esterhuisen’s land was extensively damaged and a wall of his smithy collapsed.

---

5 Deeds Office, Cape Town. SQ 14/3, 1.5.1843.
6 Deeds Office, Cape Town. T1108, 4.7.1848.
8 Deeds Office, Cape Town. T1793, 3.3.1905.
9 Cape Archives, I/STB 19/126.
There are indications of a decline in the prosperity of the farm at the end of the 19th century. This would coincide with the devastation of Cape vineyards by the vine disease, Phylloxera, when many farmers became insolvent. Nicolaas Vos purchased the property for £1500 in 1848, but in 1887 August Henry Peterson paid a mere £1200 to the insolvent estate of Pieter Johannes Rossouw-Retief. By about 1890 the most valuable farmsteads in the area were Muldersvlei, Elsenburg, Klapmuts and Nooitgedacht. Harmony (no mention is made of Onrust) came somewhere in the middle of the valuation roll10 (ACO 1993).

The deeds and other transfer records thus suggest three phases in the history of Onrust: one, falling in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, when Onrust was a small farm with a single farmhouse, the second, through the rest of the nineteenth century, when Onrust was the nucleus of a larger landholding and the farm complex had been extended considerably, and the third when the farm declined in relation to its neighbours. The documents, however, provide little further detail beyond this outline, and we must turn to the archaeology of the farm.

Figure 4. Relative positions of buildings that were investigated in 1987 (numbered 1-4) (after Fransen 2004).

The eighteenth century woonhuis

The farm of Morgenhof, which incorporated the earlier Onrust, is shown in Figure 4: major buildings have been numbered for ease of reference. The first concern of the archaeologists was with Building 2 (Fig. 5), which coincided in position with the woonhuis shown on the 1818 diagram. Was this the eighteenth century Esterhuisen farmstead, in original or modified form, or was it a later building standing on the site of the since demolished woonhuis?

The technique in addressing these questions was one of structured formal analysis; simultaneously an attempt to apply the same logic to above-ground structures as is conventional in the archaeological excavation of sub-surface deposits, while also breaking away from the

---

10 Cape Archives, Valuation Rolls of dwelling houses Stellenbosch area, 1/STB 12/104.
subjective ‘reading’ of buildings which had been central in the construction of the Cape architectural tradition. Once all plaster had been removed from the building (equivalent, in a way, to removing the overburden in a sub-surface excavation) the brickwork and, where possible, the foundation platform, were carefully examined. Particular attention was paid to the consistency of coursing and of mortar, to the details of window and door margins, to the setting of lintels and sills and to tie-beams, rafters and purlins. In addition, floor surfaces inside the building, and external foundation details, were tested by means of excavation. Measured drawings and photographs served both as records and as the basis for the reconstruction of earlier building phases.

![Figure 5](image)

**Figure 5.** Building 2 during removal of 19th century alterations in 1987. The stripping of plaster allowed a full formal analysis of the structure (photo Martin Hall).

![Figure 6](image)

**Figure 6.** Reconstructed plan and elevation of Building 2 as it stood in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Extrapolated features are shown as broken lines, and the positions of excavation trenches are marked.
In the event, the formal analysis showed clearly that the 1987 Building 2 incorporated an earlier, three roomed house within its fabric, while test excavations suggested that no earlier structure survived beneath Building 2. In addition, it was clear that there was a major phase of addition and reconstruction before Building 2 assumed its 1980s form.

The brick walls of the earliest surviving building were set on a foundation platform between 600 and 700 mm wide, approximately 500 mm deep along the west and east walls but 700 mm deep at the north and south ends of Room A and at the north end of Room C. The foundation platform was itself set on the hard clay that forms the natural sub-stratum. The land surface outside the building has been to some extent re-contoured, while a test excavation in Room A suggested that this floor may have been dug out. It was therefore unclear whether the foundation platform was set on an exposed sub-stratum or whether foundation trenches were dug: there was no evidence for foundation trenches in our sample excavations. But what was clear was that there was no attempt to correct for the slope along the north/south axis of the building during construction: the foundations of the first phase of the building fell approximately 2 metres along the west elevation (Fig. 6).

The brickwork was laid on the foundation platform using a simple ‘English bond’ in which courses of headers and stretchers alternated (Fig. 7). Some correction in the north/south slope of the foundations was attempted by varying the thickness of the clay mortar and by introducing additional courses, initially with half-thickness bricks. In several places kiln-fired bricks were abandoned in favour of mud and straw, sun-baked blocks. There is no evidence to suggest that this was later repair work; indeed in one place on the east wall of Room B the bond between kiln brick and mud brick was strengthened by a wooden lath that is clearly integral to the wall fabric. The overall impression was of solid, but comparatively unskilled construction and of a shortage of high quality building materials.

Figure 7. Detail of brickwork at north end of Building 2. To the left, the later building abuts the earlier structure (photo Martin Hall).

Figure 8. Excavations in Rooms B & C of Building 2. An original wall footing, covered by clay mortar, lies immediately above the scale. Part of a plaster floor is exposed in Room B below (photo Martin Hall).
Room A, at the south end of the building, was the largest room in the original house. Interior dimensions were approximately 11 x 5 metres. A single door was set in the west wall, as were two windows. A third window was set roughly in the centre of the east wall. They could find no evidence for internal dividing walls and the position of the doors and windows militate against such features. Doors and windows had wooden lintels set into the brickwork but no other parts of original frames or fittings survive.

Room B, adjoining Room A to the north, was considerably smaller, with internal dimensions of approximately 3.5 x 5 metres. Careful examination of the brickwork along the walls showed that Room B was built at the same time as Room A, with no break in the coursing along the north/south axis and the surviving fragments of the internal wall separating Rooms A and B bonded into the west wall. The door space in the west wall of Room B was twice the width of the door space in Room A, and was made considerably higher by the use of a brick arch rather than a wooden lintel. The original window in the opposite wall had been much altered, but there was some evidence that it was also originally arched. Again, no details survived of original door or window fittings.

Room C, adjoining Room B and forming the north end of the first manifestation of Building 2, was the same size as Room B: approximately 3.5 x 5 metres. Again, the brickwork of the outside walls showed clearly that Room C was built at the same time as Rooms A and B. The internal wall separating Rooms Band C had been demolished and rebuilt several times, destroying evidence of its original junction with the west and east walls of the building. However, excavation inside Rooms B and C revealed the original brick wall footing (Fig. 8). Room C had a single-width door set into the west wall and, probably, a single window in the opposite wall. This last feature had been much modified, but a surviving slot in the original brickwork, in a position consistent with a window lintel, suggested this interpretation. There were no surviving details of original door and window fittings.

Figure 9. Original tie-beams in Room A, Building 2. The coursing of the original brickwork forming the East wall is shown, as well as the original window. Above the tie-beams is the wall extension, with ventilation slots, added in the 19th century when the woonhuis was converted into a farm building (photo Martin Hall).
The roof of the original Building 2 had been extensively modified. However, the tie-beams between the west and east walls in Rooms A and B were in their original positions (Fig. 9), and surviving details against the west wall in Room A indicated that they supported a reed ceiling. Fragments of surviving brickwork showed that the south end was definitely gabled (Fig. 10), while the heavy foundations for the internal wall separating Rooms A and B suggested that this also supported a gable, dividing the roof space into internal compartments. In contrast, the brick foundations for the wall separating Rooms B and C seemed too light to support a second internal gable, while it is a reasonable guess that the north end wall of Room C, which has a substantial foundation platform, did support a gable. The front gable which stood over the arch in Room B was a later addition: there was no evidence for an earlier front gable in this position. Access to the roof space must have been through a door in either the north or south end gables; the heavy external steps and roof door at the south end were both later additions.

It would be difficult to prove the functions of these three original rooms, particularly as test excavations showed no evidence that significant sub-surface deposits survive. However, Room A was an obvious candidate for a single-roomed living area, forming the core of the Esterhuisen woonhuis shown on the 1818 diagram. No evidence for a hearth was found, but this could easily have been set in the south end of the room (where there had been considerable later rebuilding) with an external chimney in the position now occupied by the external stairs. In contrast, the double-width, heightened doorway in Room B suggested that this was a farm-room, perhaps a wagon shed or a stable. Room C could either have been a storeroom, or an additional living area.

Figure 10. The south end of Room A Building 2 showing the brickwork of the original gable against the background of later alterations. The door was added after Building 2 had ceased to be the Onrust woonhuis (photo Martin Hall).

This is not the place for full discussion of seventeenth and eighteenth century Cape
vernacular building traditions. However, three points about the early *woonhuis* at Onrust needed to be made so that the structure could be related to this debate. Firstly, although the west elevation called to mind the form of the *langhuis*, with a core structure and successive additions, the early Onrust building did not develop in this way, for careful examination of the building fabric showed that all three rooms were built at the same time. Secondly, and rather more obviously, neither the plan nor the elevations of the eighteenth century *woonhuis* followed the classic ‘manorial’ form of careful symmetry. Thirdly, at least some (and probably all) of the farm rooms were incorporated under the same roof, rather than as separate buildings in the *werf*.

The early *woonhuis* at Onrust was therefore interpreted as an example of a transitional, and now rare, type of building - a farmhouse, in a wine growing region of the early colony, that was conceptually embedded in the broad rural vernacular of northern Europe rather than modelled on the manorial tradition of the ‘Cape-Dutch house’.

**Building an ordered world**

The documentary sources indicated that sometime between 1818 and 1905 (most likely in the tenure of Hermanus Christoffel Esterhuisen, and therefore before 1848) the farm buildings at Onrust were extensively modified (Fig. 3). Not only were the roofed farm facilities considerably extended, but the main living area was also separated from the farm functions and buildings were remodelled, designed and aligned to conform to the Cape’s now-established manorial tradition, represented today in numerous standing farms (Obholzer et al 1985).

![Figure 11. Plan and elevations of Building 2 after 19th century alterations.](image)

As the standing building, the axis of the earlier *woonhuis* determined the grid for the *werf* as a whole. In addition, the former farmhouse was converted into a symmetrical farm building forming the back of the new complex. The double, arched door which had formerly been at the north end of the building was taken as the focal point in the remodelling of the west elevation, and was given added emphasis by the addition of a small, plain front gable (Fig. 11). New rooms were added to the north of Room C to ensure that the arch and gable were central. The two west-facing windows in Room A were blocked in and the west-facing doors in both
Rooms A and C were adjusted in width and height so as to be symmetrical with the central arch (Figs 12 and 13). If there had been an external chimney at the south end of Room A, this was now demolished and replaced by the set of heavy, external stairs providing access to the roof space. Original tie beams were retained, but the walls were raised by 500 mm or more, with additional compensation for the ground slope bringing the new roof line closer to the horizontal. Ventilation slots, suggesting that the newly-modelled building was primarily for storage, were set into these wall extensions.

![Figure 12](image1.png)  ![Figure 13](image2.png)

**Figure 12.** By adding an additional course of brickwork to the door in Room A of Building 2, the doorway was narrowed, making a more symmetrical contribution to the overall façade of the remodelled structure (photo Martin Hall).

**Figure 13.** During the 19th century remodeling of Building 2 an additional lintel was added to the doorway into Room C, making the door space more symmetrical within the West façade as a whole (photo Martin Hall).

An additional building site was prepared to the northwest of Building 2 by redirecting the stream that provided the water supply to this and several other nearby farms (Fig. 3). Building 3 was placed at right-angles to Building 2 and seems from the start to have been a wine cellar with a symmetrical facade incorporating an ornate front gable, and with decorated end gables. A heavy, external set of steps leading to the roof space is on the east end of the building, in an equivalent position relative to the front facade as the steps in the modified Building 2. However, restoration of this building was completed several years before 1987, and so it was not possible to carry out detailed formal analysis.

Building 4 was laid out on the same east/west axis as Building 3 but, by 1934 when the first air photograph of Onrust was taken, had been demolished down to ground level (Fig. 14). All that survived were parts of the foundation platform, which we exposed by excavation. This confirmed that Building 4 had indeed been constructed with careful reference to the grid of the werf.

Although the foundations for the west end of the building had not survived, the ground soon began to fall away steeply, suggesting that Building 4 was between 17 and 25 metres long, and 7 metres wide. As with Building 2, the foundation platform for Building 4 was built with the slope of the ground, falling one metre over the 17 m of north wall foundations that survived.
until 1987. There is no evidence for foundations of internal walls, suggesting it was a voluminous, barn-like farm building. The internal width of the building was 5 metres; precisely the same as Building 2. Even allowing for the functional convergence that arises in available timber lengths and the need to gain an adequate roof pitch, this identity of measurement suggested that the dimensions of Building 2 were consciously employed in extending the werf. A stylistic theme taken from both Buildings 2 and 3 may have been the heavy external steps at the right-hand end of both front elevations: the single buttress foundation and brickwork surviving at the east end of Building 4 may be the remnant of a similar set of steps.

Figure 14. Detail of the 1934 aerial photograph of Onrust. Building 2 is to the right of the werf, while ground surface markings to the left of Building 3 (arrow) indicate the position of Building 4.

Building 1, which replaced Building 2 as the farmhouse, formed the front of the new werf, and was also constructed with reference to the grid of the other buildings. Building 1 seems to have been firmly in the classic Cape tradition, with an elevated stoep, a symmetrical facade and additional rooms forming a partial H-shape house plan (Fig. 15). Hans Fransen states that a “much altered homestead, an incomplete H, has been given a strange gable with heavily moulded curvilinear outlines but with fluted pilasters rising from the stoep to the bottom of the curves, and with a pointed top. The end-gables are pointed holbol, except for the half-hipped back wing” (Fransen 2004: 203).
The werf was completed with walling and gateways, and with the addition of a small fowl-house which picked up the theme of arched doorway, and arched windows in Building 3 (Walton 1985: 58). The overall result of these conceptually connected building operations was the creation of an ordered and formalized farm complex (Fig. 16), very different from the single, more functional farmhouse of the older generations of Esterhuisens, yet fully consistent with the standing of Hermanus Christoffel Esterhuisen in the local colonial community.

From Cape gentry to business investment

In common with many other wine estates in the Western Cape, Morgenhof was purchased by a successful businessman in the 1980s. Mr Grobe, of Rhine Ruhr (Pty) Ltd,
invested in a run-down farm and cluster of buildings and, as described above, spent a considerable amount of time and money restoring the standing buildings and rebuilding the old barn. Advised by the architects Wessels, Albertyn & Du Toit of Paarl, the new owner was at pains to commission architectural, historical and archaeological research so that the work was carried out according to current best practice.

The old *woonhuis* was taken back to its mid-18<sup>th</sup> century style (Fig. 17). A state-of-the-art industrial-fashion winery and wine-tasting facility was built behind the original farmyard, in modest and unobtrusive style (Figs 1 and 18). The green roofs are scarcely visible from the *werf* and yet are unmistakably modern. The *werf* was landscaped to accommodate old irrigation channels and a pond (Fig. 16), while the low-lying river bed to the north was scooped out to form a large lake-like reservoir.

![Figure 17. Left: The old langhuis restored to mid-18<sup>th</sup> century style. Right: The large south room, now called the perdestal, has been given simple casement windows and a cobbled floor (photo AM 2005).](image)

**Premiere French branding**

In 1993 Morgenhof was bought by Madame Anne Cointreau-Huchon, a descendant of
old French Cognac and liqueur-making families. In the words of the wine estate’s web page, she began “an epic journey of developing the sleepy Morgenhof farm into the international estate and brand it has become”. In fact, starting with an already modernised wine estate, she was at first concerned to make the dwelling house habitable and to screen it from the public gaze. This has resulted in the visual separation of the homestead from its associated farm buildings by plantings of trees and bushes.

The Archaeology Contracts Office at UCT was called in to look at the homestead during renovations in 1993. Their brief from the National Monuments Council was to test whether the architects’ plans for inserting new windows would be consistent with the original positions and style of openings in the front rooms of the house. The idea was to insert two windows in the front rooms to replace the later doors (Fig. 19). After stripping the plaster in a horizontal band around the rooms, the ACO was able to confirm that there was originally only one window in each room, and that the two half window openings flanking the front door were also in their original positions.

Figure 19. Façade of homestead during renovations (photo ACO 1993).

Figure 20. Floor plan of homestead in 1993 (numbers refer to photographs in ACO report 1993).
The next step for Madame Cointreau-Huchon was to create a splendid French architectural overlay, with new buildings, new winery and new landscaping alongside the old (Figs 1, 21 and 22). The architects were Michael Dall & Associates. These developments have created a formal and elegant second werk, with underground barrel maturation cellars hidden beneath a raised terrace set against majestic views of the Simonsberg.

Figure 21. Wine-bar and restaurant on left, and maturation cellars beneath the formal terrasse (photo AM 2005).

Figure 22. Enjoying ‘gastromonic delights’ in a corner of France (photo AM 2005).
References


www.morgenhof.com