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Cover illustration

Chart of Dassen Island, attributed to Caspar van Weede, c.1656 (NA: 4 VEL 190).  
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Harbours on the West Coast c. 1900 (after Van Sittert 1993: 21).
West Coast buildings: the architecture of a coastal frontier

Antonia Malan and Lita Webley

Our understanding of architectural developments in the south-western Cape was originally based on descriptions of surviving examples of often substantially altered buildings, with a bias towards the important and picturesque. The ‘Cape Dutch’ architectural form, comprising a thatched, centrally gabled, whitewashed building, was presented as ubiquitous. Architectural historians and archaeologists then demonstrated that it took almost a century of experiment and adaptation before that form, layout and style became the recognisable and later ‘classic’ Cape homestead (Brink 2001; Fransen & Cook 1980, Fransen 2004; Hall 1991, 1993; Malan 2007; Vos 1993; Walton 1989, 1995). The past 40 years has seen an enormous amount of work that supplemented and complicated this homogenised picture. Small ‘pioneer’ houses, longhouses, asymmetry, transitional forms, town houses, flat-roofed and corbelled stone structures have been added to the mixture.

In particular, from the mid-1960s ‘vernackers’ such as James Walton redefined the field of vernacular architecture in southern Africa and Walton, Hans Fransen and others, explored the distribution of a variety of such buildings in the western Cape. However, myths still cling to the architectural history of the more isolated regions of the Cape, such as the extreme West Coast. For example, it is often assumed that from time immemorial fisher-folk dwelt in two-roomed stone-walled cottages with a characteristic external hearth and drying racks for bokkoms nearby. Indeed, the fishermen of the West Coast and their dwellings have acquired a romantic tourism value on a par with ‘bushman’ – an “enduring symbol of a bygone age when people interacted directly with nature”, and “simple folk, engaged in a timeless pursuit untainted by either capitalism or the clock” (Van Sittert 1992: vii, xiv).

It appears that the iconic fishermen’s cottages, so beloved by today’s estate agents and artists (Fig.1), may not have been constructed before the mid to late 19th century. Furthermore, most of these dwellings and settlements were associated with the industrialisation of the fishing industry and coercion of wage labour. Evidence is mounting that the cottages were preceded by an earlier and general coastal building tradition based on saplings, reeds, reed mats and daubed clay, which were still being constructed and occupied until fairly recently. These materials had been used for at least the former 1000 years, and were adopted and adapted by colonial farmers, fishermen and missionaries. New building forms were developed through time. The styles included round and oval matjieshuise, and kapstylhuise and harte/hard/bieshuise in simple rectangular and more complex ‘Hopefield’ styles.

Early permanent structures along the arid West Coast were relatively isolated, and were generally related to activities carried out at VOC defensive, stock trading and fishing posts (e.g. Saldanha Bay and Groene Kloof), strategic transport nodes and river crossings (the Berg,
Verloren, Lange and Oliphants rivers), and the settlement of freehold farmers (e.g. Verlorenvlei) and trekboers (e.g. Kamiesberg). But there was not necessarily a linear progression of architectural developments, typologically or over time, or a complete abandonment of simpler or older forms of architecture. Robert Gordon’s illustration of Hermanus Engelbrecht’s homestead in the Kamiesberg in 1779 (Fig.2), shows a plastered and thatched house alongside a kapstylvuis and some matjieshuise, also present are the bell-tents and tented wagons, homes to trekboers but which also accommodated traders and travellers.

![Figure 2. Hermanus Engelbrecht’s homestead, Ellenboogfontein, Kamiesberg, by Robert Gordon (from Cullinan 1992:75, original Rijksmuseum: RM31).](image)

The history of the West Coast built environment is of significant regional importance, and has relevance for comparative purposes, both to other parts of southern Africa and to coastal regions elsewhere in the world (Malan et al. forthcoming). We require an overall and integrated study of the architecture of the West Coast, focusing on the chronological and socio-spatial contexts in which it emerged and developed. This article (first presented as a VASSA Talk in August 2010) outlines some preliminary ideas and invites debate about the historical developments of building traditions on the coastal strip between Cape Town and the mouth of the Orange River. While we build on the foundations of previous important studies, both published and unpublished, we also hope to provide a framework for further historical, architectural and archaeological research.

**Matjieshuise**

Until recently, several groups of Khoekhoe descendants followed a building tradition of matjieshuise (mat houses) and brushwood kraals, but for archaeologists traces of such impermanent structures from pre-colonial times have proven very difficult to find. Understanding how they were constructed and by whom, and the spatial organisation and layout of houses and homesteads, mostly relies on 20th century evidence from the northwest region of South Africa, where intensive ethno-archaeological studies of pastoralists in Namaqualand and the Richtersveld took place from the 1980s (Webley 1982, 2009).

The method of building a matjieshuis was to plant both ends of thin saplings in the ground in a circle, tie them together where they crossed, and clad them with reed mats (Fig.3) (Boonzaier et al 1996: 36-38). They had to be easily erected and dismantled, and light enough to carry on ox-back. Women made the mats, a skilled and time-consuming task (Walton 1995: 14-18). This meant they were very valuable objects, and lead to the tradition that women ‘owned’ the house, which was also noted by 19th century observers such as the missionary Hahn. If men made a shelter, such as when shepherding livestock, they would use bushes and branches as roofing
material. Mats were used for covering rectangular structures too (Fig. 4). More recently, when mats were unavailable or too expensive (due to limited access to reed supplies and lack of surviving skills), sacking, metal sheets and plastic were used instead.

![Figure 3. A matjieshuis is built of bent saplings clad in reed mats (Walton 1985: 13; L. Webley 1982); and an example of a matjieshouse from Nourivier, Leliefontein Reserve (L. Webley 1982).]

![Figure 4. Reed mats were also used to clad rectangular buildings (L. Webley 1983); and when mats were not available, sacking, canvas, plastic or sheets of metal could be used (R.J. Malan 2009).]

There are several travellers’ descriptions and illustrations of Khoekhoe settlements from the late 18th and early 19th century, such as Gordon and Bell. Campbell visited Pella in 1813 (“a more barren looking spot can hardly be conceived”) and found “the Namaquas live in low circular huts ... composed of branches of trees bent, and stuck into the ground at both ends, with mats made of rushes thrown over them. In the inside they dig about a foot ... into the ground, which they lie in to protect them, they say, from the wind” (Frescura 2010).

European pastoralists observed at first hand the advantages of the Khoekhoe lifestyle and adapted to it quite readily. Barrow recorded such an instance in the Kamiesberg in 1797 where his party took shelter with a family who “had no other habitation than a hut made of rush matting and fashioned in the manner of the Namaquas”. Campbell met a man called Krige who lived among the Griquas in 1820 with four or five wives and a considerable stock of cattle, and in 1839 Backhouse came across the family of an old farmer residing in mat huts at Kookfontein in Namaqualand (Frescura 1989, 2010).

Missionaries found them perfectly adequate for their immediate housing needs. Captain James Alexander’s official British expedition up the coast in 1836 noted with interest the use of matjieshuis by both missionaries and trekboers (Alexander 1838). At Silver Fountain in Namaqualand, in 1813 Campell noticed that: “all live in huts covered with mats of rushes, the same as the ordinary houses, only those belonging to Cornelius Kok and Mr Sass are much
larger, so that a person can walk about in them”. However, he also reported that it was difficult to persuade mission inhabitants to build permanent masonry structures, as they presumably saw no need for such extended hard labour (Frescura 1989). Barnabas Shaw (first LMS missionary at Leliefontein), struggled for years to persuade the Nama to build permanent houses and settle down. They needed to be mobile to be able to utilize both summer and winter grazing lands.

The prevailing migrant pastoralist economy of the western coastal region and availability of suitable building materials, sedges and reeds, resulted in an architecture that responded in every way to their lifestyle. Even if able to afford something else, farmers chose to live in matjieshui. Thompson visited the Kamiesberge in 1823 and recorded a Dutch grazier “living in a rude Namaqua hut, though apparently a person of considerable substance”: and at nearby Buffelsfontein he found the farmer, Coetzee, “also living in a Namaqua hut, without either garden or corn-field, but with extensive kraals full of sheep and cattle” (Frescura 1989).

The architectural historian Franco Frescura (1989) posed some interesting questions for us to consider. To what degree did Khoekhoe life and value systems permeate into the European farming community? Did Khoekhoe servants build and maintain such dwellings or were they purchased as part of a local barter system? Did the Europeans learn the skills necessary to build matjieshui and if so who taught them? Did the Europeans ever gain knowledge of the symbolism involved in the matting cover, and if so how was this incorporated into their own culture and value system? Were shelters laid out according to the cognitive spatial distributions of the Khoekhoe or of the Europeans?

![Figure 5](image1.png)

**Figure 5. Matjieshui: Kok’s house at Klaarwater, 1811 (Burchell 1967:506); mat house and brushwood kookskerm, c.1920 (J. Kramer Collection).**

![Figure 6](image2.png)

**Figure 6. Kookskerm (L. Webley 1982); an oval matjieshuis, 1921 (Erich Mayer in Raath 2001).**
Webley (1982, 2009) suggested that the *kookskerm*, which today forms an integral component of the settlement pattern amongst Namaqua descendants in the Kamiesberg, may have been an example of cultural borrowing from the Dutch Trekboers during the 19th century (Fig.6). Also, at least in the 20th century, it was the Nama who supplied European farmers with the reed mats. Walton (1995:19) reported that after the Europeans adopted the *matjieshuis*, they began enlarging it, and ultimately the round house of the Namaqua evolved into an oval shape, up to 6 metres long. Many early 20th century photographs show this elongated *matjieshuis*, which according to an informant questioned by Walton, started to change shape by the end of the 19th century.

**Hardbieshuiise**

James Walton (1995: 13-20) visited the Kamiesberg to see how *matjieshuiise* were built. He also travelled to more southerly West Coast settlements in the early 1960s, recording the various building forms and materials. What emerged from his study of fishermen’s cottages and mission stations on the West Coast was the widespread use of saplings and reeds (*biesies*) for building purposes, but in rectangular form with two or more rooms, rather than the circular *matjieshuis* style.

Other forms of simple sapling and reed buildings were structures commonly referred to as *hardbieshuiise* (Walton 1995: 22-26). *Biesies* is a marshland plant (sedge) of the Cape which is like a reed in appearance but quite different in anatomy as the stalks do not have segments. Poles were planted in parallel holes and each pair was bent and joined by a tie-beam and the tops were fastened cross-wise and stabilised by a ridge pole. Rafters were added and the roof was thatched.

*Kapstylhuiise* were A-framed, with paired couples (often standing on low walls to prevent decay) and thatched with reeds (Fig.7). They had rounded thatched ends, the door in one end and a window in the other, in some instances. The earliest illustration is on a chart of Dassen Island dated 1656 (see cover) (Walton 1981: 2). Replicas of these are still to be found in the southern Cape at Puntjie (Walton 1995: 60-64). Frescura (1985) regarded the *kapstylhuis* as the same basic ‘lean-to’ concept as the *matjieshuis*, with the two forms being modified by both indigenous and immigrant builders.

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*Figure 7. Kapstylhuiise: structural details (Walton 1995: 62); Puntjie, Heidelberg (Walton 1981).*
Similar structures were called *hartbeeshuise* or *hardbeeshuise* (Fig. 8). In 1848 Baines described houses built of reeds in the form of ‘roofs’ but the lower part of their sides were almost perpendicular, and sometimes plastered with mud, and the door was placed in the long side. Some writers thus make a distinction between a structure of clay walls and thatched roof, *hartbeeshuis*, and an all-roof structure, *kapstylhuis* (Raath 2001: 54-55).

In the Sandveld people also built reed dwellings which were multi-roomed rectangular, framed, buildings. The houses had a U or L shape, with additions to the front. The thatched roofs had hipped ends and the walls were made of wooden poles and horizontal lathe frames. Some were sealed with clay daubed between the saplings, others were filled with reeds. One of the largest concentrations of survivals was to be found at Oudekraal Fontein in Hopefield, until they were demolished in about 1979 (Walton 1995: 28-40). We can refer to them as reed-walled ‘Hopefield’ types.

There were other variations. Walton saw examples of a ‘post-and-pan’ construction in the little settlement of Stofbergsfontein on the western shore of Langebaan lagoon, with a thatched roof capped by a mortar ridge and triangular end gables with shallow parapets. “Some of the Stofbergsfontein cottages are at least 100 years old, for one of them is occupied by a lady who is 86 years old and was born in the house” [i.e. in about 1890] (Walton 1995: 41-2). At Leipoldtville, John Gribble recorded a three-roomed house that had a post-and-pole frame filled with mud bricks, which were then plastered and whitewashed (Gribble 1990, house VV88/25).

Semi-permanent structures of reeds and mats were built on the West Coast well into the 1930s, and in some places until today, but to our knowledge none survive on the coastal strip south of the Oliphants River, where Papendorp overlooks the estuary and salt pans (Fig 9). Walton wrote that in 1972 a “picturesque group” stood on the shore of the vlei near the crossing to Verlorenvlei (Walton 1972). He mentioned that on the west coast at the time of his survey such buildings were occupied by fishermen and farm workers. There were rectangular multi-roomed sapling-and-reed houses close to Klaarfontein on the Verloren River in the 1970s. There is a group at Heerenlogement (near Graafwater), built 40 years ago, but the owner’s eyesight is poor and he is unable to maintain them (Fig. 10) (Malan 2009). In 2000 there was an example near Clanwilliam, at the interior end of Pakhuis Pass, belonging to Miena Jantjies (Slingsby & Coombe 2001: 8). The nearest surviving examples are possibly those on the Moedverloor road, off the R364 after Pakhuis Pass, much further inland (Malan 2008).
Figure 9. Rietmuurhuis: Papendorp (A. Malan 2008); Elandsbaai and Bonteheuwel, Verlorenvlei in 1965 (Walton 1995: 28); and Langevlei (J. Gribble 1987).

Figure 10. Rietmuurhuis: Top: Moedverloor (R.J. Malan 2008); Doring River (J. Kramer 1970s). Bottom: near Heerenlogement (R.J. Malan 2009).
Definitions

There has been a lot written about the derivation and definition of *hardtieshuise*, with the most exhaustive source (as regards references, details about structure and glossary) being a cultural historical study of the *hartbees- or dakhuis* in South Africa and elsewhere by Johannes Raath (2001). According to Raath, the concept *hartbeeshuis* refers to roof dwellings, developed roof dwellings and the temporary long walled house, thus subsuming all basic reed-built structures except *matjeshuise* within the term ‘roof buildings’ (*dakhuise*). The term roof building includes those forms that are predominantly a reed or thatch roof, eg *kapstylhuis*, though some had low walls. They can look like an upturned boat or a wedge (Raath 2001: 289):

> The roof structure of the boat-shaped roof house consisted of a primary tong support. The framework of the wedge shaped roof dwelling takes one of three forms: it may consist of two forked uprights carrying a ridge tree against which the sides lean; it may consist of two pairs of sloping poles which cross at the apex to carry the ridge tree; or it may consist of a series of paired couples.

But, confusingly, Wessels (1985: 9) distinguished between *hartbees-hut* (circular-shaped and only one room) and *hartbees-huis* (rectangular and two or more rooms). In response to Wessels, and based on documented descriptions and his own observations, Walton (1987: 21-23) carefully explained and illustrated the distinctions between the three types of rectangular houses with reed walls (Fig.11). In summary:

The *kapstylhuis* had a paired couple framework which was thatched, and it was, as the name indicates, a roof-like structure such as was used on walled houses (e.g. holiday houses at Puntjie).

The *hartbeeshuis* or *hartbeeshut* was like a *bakood* in shape. It had no direct counterpart in Western Europe (e.g. it did not have a cruck framework), but was more probably a modification of the framework of the circular Khoi mat hut to a rectangular plan.

The type of dwelling with reed walls was a framed structure with post-and-pan walls largely composed of reeds (e.g. Sandveld, Hopefield, Western Cape coast and Langkloof), undoubtedly derived from framed houses introduced into the Cape by settlers. Although their walls were made of reeds similar to those of the *hartbeeshuis*, they should correctly be called *rietmuurhuis*.

As far as typological logic and consistency is concerned, it seems advisable to only use the word *hardbieshuis* as a general and literal term for any structure built using ‘hard reeds’ for walls and roof. Within that family there are several variations, including *kapstylhuis*, *dakhuise*, *hartbeeshuise*, Hopefield-styles, and so on.
Rietmuurhuis / Hopefield style: form and function

The study of the Hopefield style of architecture by C. Wessels (1985), though his interpretations are now outdated, is interesting and valuable because it was based on information from the builders and owners who constructed the houses between 1925 and 1970. He described the sequence of development and use of space. Wessels interviewed three builders, the owners of 12 of the houses, and the white farmer who provided the land for the houses. While the houses examined by Wessels were constructed in the 20th century, he was of the opinion that they were the remnant of a much older tradition. They were all demolished in about 1979 but a replica was built in Hopefield in 1985 (Fig.12).

Figure 12. Replica of Oudekraal Fontein rietmuurhuis, Hopefield (N. Schneider 2010).

Typically, the shape consisted of a number of rooms in a row, with one or two rooms added in the front, to form an L. The walls were low, 2 m high. They could be covered in clay and white washed. The windows were small, with wooden frames and wooden shutters opening inside. The average length of the house was 10.6 m and the width was 3.7 m. The average house had 3-5 rooms.

The kitchen was always at one end. Often an empty space was left in the wall of the kitchen, so that the hearth of stone or brick could be added later. The chimney had a rectangular shape and projected slightly above the thatch roof. The hole in the wall was closed with a sheet of corrugated iron. The hearth was often added later when the owners could afford it. Initially, cooking was done outside on an open fire. In some cases, the kitchen was added to the front, resulting in a U shape. Some of the owners referred to the hearth as the *kookhuis*. This is strongly reminiscent of the Namaqaland usage, where a *kookhuis* or *kookskerm* was separate from the dwelling house (Webley 2009).

The room next to the kitchen was generally the ‘voorkamer’, a combination lounge and dining room. The next room was the main bedroom, followed by the bedroom for the girls, and then for the boys. They had a separate outside entrance. When a room was added to the front, it was called a ‘swaai’ (literally, a turn). According to one informant, the room was positioned so that the “corpse cannot be seen”. This refers to the custom of letting the corpse of a deceased person lie in one of the rooms, often overnight, until the funeral. Building a room to the front (swaai) meant that the living did not look straight into the voorkamer with the dead person.

It was apparently the women who specified the layout of the house prior to construction, i.e. if it should have a ‘swaai’, and what the kitchen should look like. Women also generally kept an eye on the construction. This is interesting in view of the fact that in Nama society the women made
and owned the woven mats and therefore owned the houses constructed of mats (Webley 1982, 2009).

**Multiple roomed houses**

A distinctive architectural style developed at the mouth of the Verloren River, similar to other buildings in the area but differing from what is considered the ‘classic’ Cape farmhouse (Fig.13). The earliest permanent, plastered unfired clay brick, thatched farm buildings of the farm Verlorenvlei were probably built in the late 1770s, but by the 19th century a large hamlet had developed around them during the boom years of grain and fish production.

Detailed studies have been undertaken of several individual buildings at Verlorenvlei (e.g. Floyd 1980, Gribble 1990). They were nearly all longhouses under low thatch roofs. In 1980 Sinclair counted some 25 longhouses, and several threshing-floors, in what had become a veritable hamlet. One, a 40-metre long building (half of it comprising an outbuilding), was probably built or extended by Theunis Erasmus Smit soon after 1800. Many related families, especially the older members, settled around Oom Theunis at Verlorenvlei, and the Smits, Coetzes, Kotzes, Mosterts and others occupied the simple long houses which comprised the settlement (Sinclair 1980; Smith 1985). Few of these houses now survive.

To date, these buildings have represented the iconic vernacular architecture of the Sandveld stock and grain farmer frontiersman, and have not been considered in relation to the coastal resources around them. The extended Smit family was in fact a major alliance partner in the Piketberg farmer-fishing industry that reaped good profits from land and sea. The presence of horse mills, threshing floors and a bakery are self-evidently linked to grain processing, but were there also salt houses, shell-lime kilns and oil-rendering hearths that did not attract the attention of researchers?

If the architectural survey and analyses of spatial designs at Verlorenvlei and other Sandveld farms in the area (e.g. Gribble 1987, 1990; Sinclair 1980, 1986; Swanepoel 1996) are considered alongside the information about Oudekraal Fontein and other sapling-and-reed houses in Walton’s *Cape Cottages*, then the possibility exists that the same form was built in different materials by both owner and tenant occupants depending on the labour and resources available. One of the most interesting features of the Hopefield / Sandveld types is their superficial similarities to, and yet fundamental differences from, the classic Cape Dutch ‘letter-of-the-alphabet’ house (Fig.14). Wessels was of the opinion that the additions made at right-angles to the core form of the Hopefield-style houses was the same concept used to form letter-of-the-alphabet houses, but we cannot agree with that. The Cape Dutch form retained the symmetry of its facade and interior by adding the rooms on behind, but the Hopefield / Sandveld form added rooms to form a long row of rooms and / or on to the front or back. In our opinion, the Hopefield / Sandveld builders were constructing a vernacular form of their own, not a sort of poor man’s Cape Dutch.

However, there could also be a chronological dimension, with a tendency for farm workers to continue building versions of local farmhouse-like structures with saplings and reeds long after farmers themselves built more permanent houses. Wessels was of the opinion that the *rietmuurhuis* was a stage in the development of a more permanent structure in the Western tradition. According to his study, ‘white’ people lived in these houses earlier, but as they moved to more permanent houses, ‘coloured’ people moved into what they termed the *hartheeshuis*.

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1 The term ‘coloured’ can be regarded as offensive as it makes ‘white’ the benchmark for ‘racial’ division. Today, the label ‘coloured’ is a contentious one, but is still used for people of ‘mixed’ descent – slaves from the East, indigenous ‘Khoisan’, indigenous Africans and ‘white’ settlers (SA History Online).
Figure 13. Verlorenvlei longhouses (Walton 1989: 47; Gribble 1990).

Figure 14. Comparison between addition of rooms to ‘Sandveld’ (left) and ‘Cape Dutch’ (right) floor plans: Hoekdam, Verlorenvlei (Gribble 1990); Oudekraal Fontein (Walton 1995: 36); Groot Z[S]orgfontein and Klipriver (Fransen 1980: 381, 364).
More significantly, this building style and form was characteristic of the West Coast vernacular because of the extensive use of reeds. Some five different types of reeds were used in the construction of a typical house. Wessels (1985: 10) linked distribution of these house types to the occurrence of reeds in the vleis and marshes around Hopefield and Redelinghuys. Similar houses were found at Dassenberg, Langebaan, Churchaven and Langebaanweg. In the Clanwilliam district, light poles from wild olive trees were used to construct the frame of the house. Later the wood for the frame was replaced with blue gum, poplar or Port Jackson (i.e. alien vegetation). The poles were bound with riempies, and later fencing wire. According to Slingsby and Coombe (2001: 8), only two kinds of reed were used to cover the frame in the Clanwilliam area. Vleiriet was used for the walls as it is tall and smooth, and sonkwasriet was used for the roof as it has branching stems and these locked together, holding the roof in place.

The construction of reed-based buildings continued until 20th century because of availability and cost of raw materials. The houses were warm in winter and cool in summer. Tradition was maintained, not merely because people could afford no better but because they were supremely successful buildings. It is only when a building type becomes regarded as ‘primitive’ and ‘dirty’ that people may want bricks and concrete: first the ‘whites’ and then the ‘coloureds’ bought into this belief.

Mat, reed and wattle-and-daub buildings were built all along the coast, and were perfectly adapted to local conditions, resources and skills – typical vernacular architecture. How far back in time the rectangular forms go, and whether any predated colonial settlement, we do not know for certain. Clearly, the surviving examples were relatively recent due to the probable life-span of the fabric (those recorded by Walton were at the most 100 years old in 1960). The reeds had to be replaced every five to ten years, but plastering preserved them for longer (Slingsby & Coombe 2001: 8). Of course, they could have been rebuilt on the same site. Without systematic archival research and archaeological investigations into datable related artefacts it would be difficult to establish such a chronology. Earliest photographs would only date from about 1860.

Figure 15. Reed-walled and thatch-roofed fish houses at Paternoster, probably early 20th century (Cape Archives: AG15740).

It is interesting to note that there is evidence for the construction of matjieshuis and sapling-and-reed houses well into the 1920s, 30s and 40s, when ‘Afrikaans’ resort settlements were established on government land. Photographs of Strandfontein in the 1920s (reproduced in Ons Kontrei, 1975) show tents, matjieshuis, sapling-and-reed, and wood-and-iron buildings
huddled together and the *matjieshuis* were still there in 1941 when permanent buildings were starting to appear. A photograph of Kleinzee taken in 1927 shows a *matjieshuis* standing next to three tin huts, and a large tent in the background (Carstens 2001). Reed construction was also used for industrial purposes into the 20th century. Photographs of Paternoster show large sheds, labelled ‘fish houses’ on an early 20th century plan (Fig. 15) (Cape Archives: AG15740, E8550, E5813, E5481). Some rectangular sapling and reed structures for fishermen can still be seen on the dunes at Brandsebaai.

Walton suggested that the *hardbieshuis* seemed to combine the framework of the *matjieshuis* with the rectangular plan of white settlers’ houses, and several were still being built by coloured farm workers until the 1970s in the Sandveld and Piketberg regions (Walton 1995: 24). Frescura (1989) suggested that the *kapstylhuise* of the early 19th century, lived in by European men and their local wives, were a compromise between white expectations of dwelling form and an indigenous availability of materials. Reed-based construction was thus a vernacular building tradition that we assume to be associated with Khoekhoe descendants and isolated pastoralists, but this tradition was also still acceptable to mid-20th century farmers whose ancestors had adopted indigenous herding systems and seasonal fishing trips three hundred years before. The social context of these beach resort structures, as settlements usually occupied during the Christmas holidays or as camps during fishing and hunting expeditions, may also explain why archaeologists find isolated dumps of 19th and 20th century artefacts apparently in the middle of nowhere. The buildings are gone, but the rubbish remains.

**Fishermen’s houses**

What do we make of Walton’s observation that: “Whereas the fishermen of the west coast favoured dwellings made largely of reeds, their counterparts on the south coast, particularly along the Strandveld coast from Gansbaai to Stilbaai, built cottages of stone. This may have been due to the availability of materials but also due to the fact that the west coast fishermen were closer in contact with Namaqua influence” (Walton 1995: 48)?

The implications of a long-standing tradition of impermanent or semi-permanent architecture throws light on the absence of evidence to suggest that stone-walled fishermen’s cottages were built before the mid-19th century along the West Coast. As Fransen wryly pointed out, Soldatenpost, “an elongated row of two-room apartments (75 m long) on Steenberg’s Cove, St Helena Bay, is sometimes thought to date from the closing years of the VOC. Though the site may be redolent with history, they were more likely built as fishermen’s dwellings a century ago” (Fransen 2004: 343, 350). Fransen (2004: 340) also observed that: “One km out of the village [Yzerfontein] stands an elongated and hipped cottage, with a large chimney at the back in the middle. It is perhaps not a farmhouse but may have been one of the last remaining fishermen’s cottages, c. 1850.”

Clusters of cottages built of stone, brick and wood-and-iron occur from Cape Town to the mouth of the Oliphants River (Fig.16). They were predominantly associated with tenant fishing communities residing on farmland and linked with the industrialisation of the fishing industry in the late 19th century and into the 20th century. The type and nature of the built environment of 20th century settlements showed elements of both traditional or vernacular, and modern architecture and materials. Some worker accommodation was in the form of free-standing cottages and others were long rows of rooms or hostels.

A study of the formation of the Strand community in False Bay showed that the old Van der Stel / Mosterd Bay fishing post became the core of a successful independent settlement by Muslim fishermen from about 1822 (Rhoda 2006). However, the nature of land-ownership and access to fishing and distribution resources, and the marginal nature of the West Coast land for
intensive agricultural food production, made total independence from wage labour impossible for these communities. Though numbers of scattered squatter / subsistence communities emerged during the early 19th century (Van Sittert 1992: xxiii), more or less permanent fishing hamlets only began to emerge in the late 19th century, such as in Saldanha Bay and at the mouth of the Berg River. Other examples were Stoëbergsfontein on Langebaan lagoon and Paternoster on the Vredenburg Peninsula (Anon 1968; Kaplan 1998). Churchhaven, on Langebaan lagoon, is said to have been settled from 1863 by crew members of American ships (Fransen 2004: 341).

![Figure 16. Churchhaven (J. Kramer 1970s); Steenberg’s Cove (G. Jacobs 2007).](image)

Sandveld land owners, such as the Smits of Velddrif and Kotzes of Rietvlei, were farming on the margins of the western Cape agricultural landscape and on the edge of economic viability. Thus in order to survive, they began renting plots and homes to communities of tenant fishermen (Van Sittert 1992: 18). Large merchant fishing companies, epitomised by the Stephan Brothers on the West Coast, brought migrant (Italian) workers to the region as well as employing seasonal farm workers. They provided basic accommodation. When the crayfish factories opened, company housing was provided, of various scales and styles to match the status of the employees.

Walton (1995: 44-6) wrote that Paternoster was mainly populated by fishermen employed by the fish factory. Their homes were mostly rectangular two- or three-roomed cottages but they exhibited quite a variety of forms. Some of the oldest were flat roofed rubble-walled dwellings, with projecting komnytjies, standing on the shore of Paternosterbaai. Similar cottages were situated on the higher-lying area surrounding the little fishing harbour and there were also several interesting corrugated iron cottages, which were all painted light green and stood out prominently among the white-walled flat-roofed houses. These all had two rooms. Some had hipped corrugated iron roofs while others, which appeared to be slightly later, had triangular gabled ends. All had prominent projecting hearths. Those dwellings were almost 100 years old in 1995. In the opinion of André Pretorius: “these ‘tin cottages’ with their large projecting hearths, bo-en-onder doors and small glazed window are peculiar to this community” (Pretorius 1997: 189).

Debt–bondage and free housing was a peculiarity of the region. Characteristically, in these ‘company towns’ the fishing company provided ‘social capital’ for housing and infrastructure, kept the town unincorporated, dominated it economically and spatially, and segregated it residentially (Van Sittert 2001:194). The Smit brothers levied an annual rental for the right to erect a house on Velddrif. The settlement was unplanned and houses were built anywhere with available material (clay brick and reed thatching), in the “Sandveld vernacular style”. This was defined by Van Sittert’s source (a 1935 medical journal article) as: “the rooms are arranged in a
row, one leading into the other, comprising a ‘voorkamer’, kitchen and bedroom’. Others were described as “temporary ‘hartbeeshuise’”, presumably constructed of reeds, and emphasising their occupants’ transitory status. All the homes of ‘coloured’ tenants were deemed unfit for human habitation in 1935. Tenants had no incentive to improve their dwellings because they did not own the land, were prohibited from selling their house without the landlord’s permission and, when leaving, could either accept his valuation or remove only the roof (Van Sittert 2001: 198). A typhoid epidemic in 1937 resulted in state intervention, albeit ineffective.

At Laaiplek, the Stephan Brothers leased out premises for a police station and general dealer’s store. Wood-and-iron dwellings were sublet to fishermen and their employers. Crown land on the Tong at the mouth of the Berg River was reserved for camping and bathing, but the Department of Lands gave out annual leases to fishing sites in the reserve and, by 1939, fish houses, jetties and even dwellings for fishermen had been erected. A photograph in Die Naweek (1949) showed an orderly row of ‘coloured’ cottages built of wood-and-iron or sapling-and-reed construction, with stone-based external hearths and plastered chimneys, and corrugated iron roofs (Fig.17) (Van Sittert 2001: 198, 203).

The Second World War rehabilitated the Berg River mouth area economically, with tenants enlisting in great numbers, and inshore fishing boomed as deep-sea trawlers were requisitioned for defence and fish imports dried up. Two fish processing factories were built and then amalgamated and expanded after the war, under Marine Products. By 1944 the company had built 30 sub-economic houses at Laaiplek for ‘coloured’ tenants, subdivided the farm into 70 plots for ‘whites’, and constructed company housing for workers. Living conditions were still bad, though, and after another typhoid outbreak in 1946 the Velddrif Local Board was established to control the whole factory shoreline precinct and the remaining Crown land (Van Sittert 2001: 202-7).

Industrialisation lead to a rapid population increase and Velddrif became the boom town of the ‘Pilchard Coast’, placing enormous pressure on limited housing, land and services. Amid debilitating local political power games, lack of financial resources, and a largely disenfranchised community, modern urban infrastructure was slow to come. Though one visitor described “new, shiny American cars parked outside tiny white-washed cottages scarcely big enough to act as garages” (The Outspan, 1951), the lived reality was severe overcrowding, poor sanitation and endemic alcoholism. In an effort to sustain production and profits, in 1954 Marine Products offered 60 plots for ‘whites’ and ‘coloureds’ who could afford to buy land. White home-ownership was encouraged in the late 1950s, but with controls over design, materials and sanitation. Black workers submitted to regular inspection of their houses’ cleanliness and order (Van Sittert 2001: 210-4).
In the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, as the effects of ‘separate development’ became marked in the physical layout of settlements, special townships and hostel compounds were developed. Before Port Nolloth was formally laid out in 1957, the ‘aristocracy’ lived on the beachfront, the artisans behind, and the day labourers lived in sack-covered huts or \textit{matjieshuisie} (Van Viegna 2006: 44-5). Jowell and Forb (2004) recorded that the front row of houses in Port Nolloth were owned by the magistrate, ministers of religion, doctor, owners of hotels, and so on. Behind them, in the second row of smaller houses lived the artisans and carpenters (employees of the Cape Copper Company) while at the end of the village were the houses of the labourers. The inhabitants included the descendants of Khoekhoe, Basters, Europeans (mostly Cornishmen, Germans, Italians and Norwegians), St Helenans, South West Africans, Malawians and Transkeians.

Lance van Sittert suggested that race was a secondary consideration in the initial urbanisation of Velddrif, though after 1960 it was more systematically imposed. African migrants complicated wartime factory efforts to segregate the settlements. After 1960, when Velddrif was granted municipal status, migrant workers were housed in fenced factory hostels under strict supervision. Rigid residential segregation was imposed, with ‘buffer zones’ between white and black housing, which was screened from the main road (Van Sittert 2001: 214-215). In 1968 a planner reported that Paternoster “has been declared in terms of the Group Areas Proclamation and planning of it is being undertaken by the Department of Community Development”. At that time the settlement housed “about 900 Bantu at Bekbaai, 500 Coloureds in 60 old store houses and about 30 Whites in brick houses” (Anon 1968).

**Discussion**

It was only recently that the authors fully realised the lack of substantiated information regarding the significance of regional and/or vernacular architecture as a characteristic of a West Coast identity. In particular, we started to question the common assumption that the iconic whitewashed, thatched, ‘fisherman’s cottage’ (built of calcrete or stone) was a homogenous building style with a long history. This lead to the ‘rediscovery’ of much older occurrences and widespread distribution of various styles of impermanent structures (built of saplings, reeds and mud). They are now rarely to be found on the West Coast, but fortunately there are published and written descriptions and archival images. In general, not enough research work has been published on either the substantial or the modest stone- and clay-built architecture of the West Coast. The detailed spatial distribution and chronology of reed-walled structures, clay, sun-dried and low-fired brick and calcrete stone building materials is yet to be established. Historically whale bone (Smith & Kinahan 1984), and until recently kokerboom planks, have also been used to build homes (Fig.18).

![Unusual building materials: whale bone frame (Ugab River, Smith & Kinahan 1984: 91) and kokerboom planks (Bobbejaanhoek, Webley 1986).](image-url)
Tim Hart and Dave Halkett (1998) pointed out that “when the photographer, Arthur Elliot, visited the area at the end of the last century, vernacular cottages were commonplace. Since those times many have been demolished without any record being made of their architectural characteristics. It is therefore important that remains that still exist are conserved and/or recorded.” Much of the evidence has disappeared in the last 20 years, but fortunately James Walton (1995) identified and recorded indigenous building traditions from the Sandveld to Namaqualand, and did the same for cottages and houses in fishing communities, while ethno-archaeologists have worked on the layout and elements of herder settlements in Namaqualand.

Portable houses, such as wood-and-iron, became ubiquitous throughout South Africa from the second half of the 19th century, but only some still survive in company hamlets and on farms on the west coast. There may be unexpected discoveries of new evidence. In 1801 the Superintendent of the Kalk Bay Fisheries, an American, suggested that “cheap houses might be erected of timber, imported ready for assembly from the United States”. A single known example of such an American prefab, dated to about 1844, was erected on Nocton Farm near Uitenhage (Lewcock 1963:79). When browsing through photographs in the Cape Archives, we found an undated photograph of a shop at Little Brak River with very similar vertically timber-clad walls, but a thatched roof (AG3441/2). There was a kapstyl storehouse behind it.

By the late 20th century many buildings in hamlets and towns along the West Coast had been demolished or radically altered, and along the littoral strip especially the more isolated and lesser homesteads, cottages and related infrastructure were in ruins. Occasionally heritage and archaeological surveys mention their presence, but their heritage value was not deemed overly significant, particularly in the absence of research questions that integrated social and architectural history and historical archaeology. Only in the last few years have we taken seriously the cumulative effects of coastal resort developments along the West Coast (Fig.19). But there are difficult decisions to be made, such as the balance between development and conservation, economic investment and heritage values. Graham Jacobs (2007) summarised such a situation succinctly:

Steenberg’s Cove at St Helena Bay, once at the heart of the Stephan Brothers fishing enterprise, is of considerable local aesthetic and historical significance, containing one of the largest groups of substantially intact historical buildings on the West Coast. It is of great local and regional historical and social significance, having played a pioneering role in the development of the South African fishing industry and economic development of the West Coast. However, the settlement has for some time been in a state of semi dereliction, rendering its archaeological and other heritage resources vulnerable to uncontrolled access and lack of maintenance.

Given the cultural significance of the site, its controlled development as a waterfront facility serving the expanding residential areas along the St Helena Bay coastline is supported, in principle, provided it is in accordance with the design informants contained in this study.

Unfortunately for architectural and social historians, post-1950 examples of apartheid-era architecture have become embarrassing eyesores to local municipalities and are not protected by the National Heritage Resource Act’s ‘60-years-old clause’. The compound at Laaiiplek was still standing in 2008, but in 1995 the hostels at Sandy Point were described by a local heritage consultant as in a deplorable condition: “incompatible with the development proposals” (for a marina) and “no longer considered acceptable in SA”; “the continued existence of this compound is prejudicial to the development proposals for this part of the site” (Ellis 1995). The function and meaning of the fenced migrant labour hostel compound for the crayfish factory on
Baboon Point at Eland’s Bay, which was still operating in the mid-1970s, is now unrecognisable (Kaplan 2009: 21).

Figure 19. Left: Holiday homes creeping along the West Coast (www.capeaction.org.za); Paradise Beach, Langebaan Lagoon (www.paradeisos.co.za). Right: Paternoster housing types: stone-walled, wood-and-iron, hostel rooms and wooden prefab (www.travelblog.portfoliocollection.com; N. Schneider 2010).

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Rivers and travellers' routes on the northern West Coast of South Africa (Forbes 1965).
Die kultuur-historiese belang van die ‘Hardebieshuise’ van Hopefield

[Extracts from an article originally published in Kronos, vol.10, 1985]²

C. Wessels

**Inleiding**

Die bewARING van strukture van kultuur-historiese belang word in Suid-Afrika hoog geag.

In bogenoemde verband is die voorkoms van veertien huise van nie-kontemporêre boustyl en materiaal in die omgewing van Hopefield ondersoek. Die huise is met kamers langsmekaar of “L” of “U”-vormig, met ‘n vleuel na vore, gebou en is met wolfentrietdakke bedek. Die materiaal wat vir die mure gebruik is, is houtpale en -dwarslatte en verskillende soorte biesies. Die mure is met die paal-en-klei-tegniek gebou. Van die huise is buite met klei gepleister.

Die inwoners van die huise ... verwys na die huise as hartbeeshuise. ... Daarom is die doel van dié studie om die historiese oorsprong van die huise so na as moontlik te bepaal. Dit sal aandui of die huise enige kultuur-historiese waarde het wat die bewaring daarvan noodsaaklik maak (kyk ook Piggot 1959).

Die boukuns van die huise word in die volgende afdeling beskryf. In die daaropvolgende gedeeltes word die historiese en volkekundige betekenis van die huise ondersoek. Die studie word afgesluit met enkele gevolgtrekkinge in verband met die huise.

**Grondplanne**

Van die veertien huise wat aangetref is, kon twaalf opge meet word. Die grondplanne van die twaalf huise word in figure 1, 3, 4 aangetoon. ... Algemene variasies van dié basiese grondplan is die uitbou van een vertrek of twee vertrekke na vore om ‘n “L” of “U”-tipe grondplan te vorm (figs 3 and 4). Volgens een boer wat aat sulke huise gebou het, is daar dikwels ‘n oop ruimte in die muur van die kombuis gelaat vir die latere aanbou van ‘n vuurherd van klip of baksteen (fig. 5). Dié ruimte is tydelik met sinkplate toegemaak. Hy het self nooit vuurherde gebou nie, want hy kon nie met sodanige boumateriaal werk nie. Die vuurherd is dikwels eers heelwat later aangebou wanneer die eienaars van die huise dit kon bekostig. Intussen is buite op oop vure gekook. Van die inwoners van die huise het na die vuurherd verwys as die kookhuis. Sommige het met sink ‘n vertrek rondom die stoof gebou in stede van ‘n vuurherd (fig. 6).

Die inwoners, of eienaars van die huise, is gevra om self die vertrekke te identifiseer. Op dié wyse is vasgestel dat een vertrek aan die eentje van die huis as die kombuis geïdentifiseer word, met ‘n aangeboude vuurherd of kookhuis. Die vuurherd was gewoonlik van ru-klip of bakstene en is afgepleister.

² We are grateful to Andrew Banks and Hans Heese (current and past Editor of Kronos, respectively) for access to this material. Dots indicate where text has been cut.
Die vertrek langs die kombuis is as die voorhuis geïdentifiseer en is gewoonlik met sit en eetkamerstelle gemeubileer. Daar is allerhande versierings teen die muur, soos gesinsportrette, geraamde afdrukke van skilderye en teksverse uit die Bybel. Op tafels en sytafels is ornamente.

Op die voorhuis volg die slaapkamer. Waar meer slaapkamers gebou is, is die eerste slaapkamer die ouers se slaapkamer, gevolg deur die slaapkamer van die dogters en dan die van die seuns. Die seuns se slaapkamer het gewoonlik ‘n eie buitedeur.

Waar die derde slaapkamer na vore aangebou is, word dit ‘n “swaai” genoem. Volgens een eienaar se vrou is die swaai in die grondplan ingebou “sodat die lyk nie gesien kan word nie”. Dit was in die oue dae die gebruik om ‘n oorledene in die huis uit te lê tot die begrafnis gehou kon word (kyk ook Walton 1965). Volgens die ou dame was dit te ongemaklik om in die voorhuis te sit en die lyk in die aangrensende kamer te sien. Daarom is die swaai ingesit sodat die lyk in die buitekamer, buite sig, uitgelê kon word. Min huise het binnedeure - sommige gebruik gordyne om die deuropeninge tussen vertrekke toe te maak.

By enkele huise is die kombuis ook na vore vergroot, wat lei tot ‘n omgekeerde “U”-vormige grondplan. Dit mag wees dat die uitbouings na vore toegeskryf kan word aan die invloed van die voorouers van die huise uit die periode rondom 1900.

**Boumateriaal**

Die vernaamste materiaal wat gebruik is vir die bou van die huise, is vyf verskillende soorte biesies. Die drie bouers is gevra om die biesies te identifiseer. Vir die mure het hulle hartbeesriet (*Thamnochortus spicigerus*) of olifantsriet (*Chondropetalum tectorum*) of rooilatjies (*Berzelia abrotanoides*) gebruik. Vir die dak is gewoonlik drie soorte biesies gebruik, naamlik sandriet (*Thamnochortus erectus*) vir die spreiwerk, sonquasriet (*Wildenouwia striata*) vir die kam en steenbokriet (*Thamnochortus punctatus*) vir die vors of nok van die dak.

Die hout wat in die raamwerk van die mure en dakkappe gebruik is, is bloekom, populier of mak Port Jackson. In enkele gevalle is spaansriet vir die dwarslatte in die muur en dak gebruik en in ander gevalle is gesien dat bondsels van twee of drie hartbees- of olifantsriet as dwarslatte gebruik is.

Die mure is binne, soms buite, met goed gebreide klei uit die walle van die Soutrivier afgepleister. Die vloere is ongeveer ses tot agt sentimeter dik met klei uit die rivier gegooi. Vroeër is die vloere met beesmis gesmeer, maar vandag is die kleivloere met linoleum bedek.

Spykers, draad of masjentou is gebruik om die houtraamwerk van die huis aanmekaar te timmer. Masjentou (sisaltou) is veral gebruik om die dekriet vas te trek.

**Boutegniek**

Nadat die onderhandelings oor koste en besonderhede oor uitleg afgehandel en al die materiaal versamel is, kan die bouery begin. Die eerste stap is om die area van die grondplan gelyk te maak en dan die posisie van die voet- en stutpale en deure en vensters met penne af te steek. Nadat die gate gegrawe is, word die pale geplant (fig. 8). Die onderente van die pale word met teer behandeld om verrotting teen te werke.

‘n Voetpaal word elke vier tree en ‘n stutpaal elke twee tree ingeplant. Die voetpaal is ‘n stewige paal wat die dakkap hou. Aan die binnekant van die ingeplante pale word nou drie tot
vyf stelle dwarslatte vasgeheg. Hierna kan óf die dakkappe opgesit word, óf die mure kan eers met biesies gedek word. Die konstruksie van die dakkappe is die dubbele spar-raamwerk en houtpale is gebruik, meesal bloekom- of populier- of mak Port Jackson-pale.

Die mure word gedek deur bondels hartbees- of olifantsriet regop in ‘n voor teen die dwarslatte aan te lê. Nog ‘n bondel word dan onderstebo van die bokant van die muur teen die dwarslatte vasgeheg sodat die eindpunte van die biesies mekaar oorvleuel. Die binnemure word net tot teen die bindbalk van die dakkap gedek.

Die dak word eers met sandriet gedek, wat van binne ‘n mooi afwerking gee. Op die sandriet word sonquasriet gedek om die dak goed dig te maak. Die nok of vors van die dak word met steenbokriet, wat in polle uitgekap word, bedek. Die biesies van elke pol word in twee bene gesplits en onderstebo met die wortels na bo oor die nok gepak om die nok dig te maak. In die valleie van dakke wat na vore uitgebou is, word aan die binnekant sinkplaat gebruik om die laste dig te maak.

Nadat die mure en dak gedek is, word die vloere gegooi van klei wat goed gebrei is deur kinders wat dit trap. Hierna begin die pleisterwerk, met dieselfde goedgebreide klei, aan die mure. Die binnemuur word volledig, aan albei kante, gepleister. Die buitemure is soms glad nie, soms net voor en soms reg rondom gepleister. Eers word ‘n ruwe laag klei aangesmeer en dan word gewag tot dit goed gedroog is sodat die klei en biesies kan bind en set. Daarna word die mure met nog ‘n lagie klei netjies afgewerk. Vroeër is die mure met wit klei wat baie met water verdun is, gewit. Vandag word kalk buite en glansverf binne gebruik.

**Samevatting van algemene kenmerke van die huise**

Die grondplanne is basies ‘n ry kamers langsnaak met ‘n swaai na vore en is uitbreidings van die eerste grondplan wat ontwikkel het, naamlik drie vertrekke met ‘n slaapkamer en kombuis op die twee ente en ‘n voorhuis in die middel. Die vierde kamer wat aangebou word, word meesal ‘n buitekamer genoem.

Die buitemure is gemiddeld 1,8 m hoog. Dit is effe laag vir ‘n langerige persoon en kan ongerieflik wees. Die gemiddelde lengte van drie kamers is 10,6 m en die breedte 3,7 m. Die dak is altyd gebou op ‘n dubbele spar-raamwerk met ‘n wolfentvorm.

Die boumateriaal vir die dak en mure is houtpale en -dwarslatte wat met vyf verskillende soorte biesies gedek word. Die binnemuur is volledig met klei gepleister en geverf. Die buitemure is soms met klei gepleister. Die boumetode is die paal- (biesies) en-klei-tegniek. Die vloere is van klei, ongeveer 6 tot 8 cm dik en met veelkleurige linoleum bedek. Die vensters is klein openinge wat met houtluike toegemaak word en die buitedeur bestaan uit twee helftes, naamlik ‘n bo- en onderdeur. Min huisie het binnedeure.

Uit bostaande beskrywing is dit duidelik dat die huise met tipiese noodwoningboumateriaal gebou is ingevolge ‘n relatief eenvoudige en welbekende boumetode - die paal-en-klei-tegniek. Die materiaal is uit die omgewing afkomstig, waar dit gratis bekombaar is of teen lae pryse aangekoop is. Gevolglik kon die huise goedkoop gebou word en dus geredelik deur minder geoogde mense bekostig word.

Die grootte van die huise, naamlik drie tot vyf kamers, maak dit ‘n unieke aanwending van biesies as boumateriaal in die paal-en-klei-tegniek in Suid-Afrika.
Fig. 1. Grondplannen van "hardebieshuisjes" volgens die domine-styl aangetref in die landdros-distrik van Hopsfield.

Fig. 3. Grondplannen van omgekeerde L-vormige "hardebieshuisje" in die landdros-distrik van Hopsfield.
Fig. 4. Grondplannen van omgekeerde U-vormige "hondebissuis" in het landdrostriet van Hopetown. Volgens Fraassen en Cook was aanbouw aan die voorkant van die vroegste huis seldskaam. (Fraassen en Cook 1960; vgl. fig. 3).

Fig. 8. Die stappe in die bouproses van 'n "hondebisshuis".
Historise oorsprong

Die huise van die tydperk 1652-1750 was oor die algemeen baie eenvoudig en onpretensieus met wolfentrietdakke, houtluike as vensters en kleivloere gesmeer met beesmis. Die bekende Kaaps-Hollandse gewels en siervensters het eers hierna bygekom (Botha 1921: 12-13; De Bosdari 1953: 20-21). Van belang vir die studie is die grondplanne en boumateriaal wat gedurende die vroë tydperk aan die Kaap vir woningsbou gebruik is. Die huise van duursame materiaal, hoofsaaklik om die fort, se grondplanne was twee of drie vertrekke langsmekaar (fig. 2). Die boumateriaal vir die pionierswonings van die pionierboere was aanvanklik noodwoningboumateriaal en die grondplan was een vertrek. Na permanente vestiging is geriefliker huise bestaande uit twee of meer vertrekke gebou.

Die basiese grondplan van die Hopefield-huise toon ooreenkomst met die grondplanne van die vroegste huise aan die Kaap, veral huise wat van meer duursame materiaal gebou is en uit twee of drie kamers bestaan het (fig. 14). Waar uitbreidings van die vroegste grondplan na agter was, het die uitbreiding van die Hopefield-huise se grondplan na vore geskied en aanleiding gegee tot die “L” en omgekeerde “U”-vorm (fig. 3, 4). Volgens Fransen en Cook is uitbreiding na vore uiterst selde (Fransen & Cook 1980: 4). Die oorheersende grondplan van wonings van die eerste deel van die twintigste eeu (fig. 7) kon moontlik by dié uitsonderlike vorm ’n invloed uitgeoefen het.

Wat vorm of aansig betref, stem die Hopefield-huise ooreen met die vroeë huise aan die Kaap voor die Kaapse-Hollandse gewels aangebring is. Die Hopefield-huise is eenvoudig en onpretensieus met wolfentetakke. Die vensters is houtrameopeninge met houtluike wat meesal na binne oopmaak en die vloere is kleivloere bedek met linoleum i.p.v. beesmis. Soos vroeër was die boumateriaal wat gebruik is, houtpale en -dwarslatte en verskillende soorte biesies vir die mure en vir die dak. Die oorheersende boustof is die biesies. Dit is tipiese noodwoningboumateriaal. Die boutegniek is paal-en-kei, behalwe dat harde biesies instede van houtlote gebruik is.

In die Hopefield-huise is die invloed van die vroegste grondplanne, boustil en boutegniek, wat gedurende die eerste jare aan die Kaap gebruik is, duidelijk te bespeur. Dit dui op die oorlewing van sewentiende-eeuse woningboutradisies in die Hopefieldhuise.

Dit is dus van belang om te probeer bepaal wanneer begin is om die Hopefield-tipe huise te bou. ‘n Aanduiding hiervan kan moontlik gevind word in die oorsprong van die woorde “hartbeeshut” en “hartbeeshuis”, in die verspreiding van die Hopefield-tipe huise en in die stadia van ontwikkeling van noodwoningbou tot huise van duursame materiaal. Volgens die Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal is die voorselsel “hartbees-”, wat in verband met trekboerwonings gebruik word, ‘n samentelling van twee woorde, naamlik “harde” en “bies” (biesie) (Schoonees 1961: 106). “Hard” is moontlik afgelei van die Hottentotwoord “harub”, die matjiesgoedbiesies wat gebruik is vir die matte waarmee Hottentot-hutte bedek is. “Hardebieshut” of “hartbeeshuis” se vroeëre taalkundige vorm was dus “hardebieshut” of “hardebieshuis” en as sodanig dui dit op die oorheersende materiaal wat vir die bou van dié strukture gebruik is, naamlik biesies.

Die vroegste strukture van oorheersend harde biesies wat in die geskiedenis vermeld word, was kapstil-tipe skuilings, matjiesgoed-hutte en ‘n aangepaste kapstil-tipe huis. In die konstruksie van dié strukture is houtlatte regop ingeplant en dan bolangs na mekaar gebuig. ‘n Tipe hanebalk is soms gebruik om ‘n buig en ‘n snort kap te vorm. Die raamwerk is dan met biesies
of biesiematte, selfs velle van diere, gedek. Walton wys daarop dat die kapstylvuis se dakkonstruksiie die dubbele spar-raamwerk is (Walton 1970: 543). Dié tipe woning of skuiling is opgerig wanneer die pionierboere besluit het om tydelik op ‘n nuwe standplaas te vertoe. Na dié tipe eenvertreknoordwonings is waarskynlik deur reisigers aan die Kaap gedurende die tydperk as hutte verwys (De Wet 1981: 129). Dit bied tydelike skuiling teen die weer en wilde diere en is vinnig en gou om te bou. Dié tipe wonings verteenwoordig die eerste stadium van dié blanke se boukuns in Suid-Afrika (Trefois 1969: 34-36). Indien nie permanent vertoe word nie, word dit eenvoudig ontruim en agtergelaat. Om dié eenvertrekstrukture hartbeeshutte te noem, is waarskynlik korrek.

... Wanneer ‘n pionierboer besluit het om permanent op ‘n standplaas te bly, het die behoefte ontstaan aan wat later ‘n “muurhuis” genoem is (Van der Merwe 1938: 91, 223-224), om die eenvertrekhartbeeshut te vervang. Daar word meesal aanvaar dat dié huis se mure van duursame materiaal gebou is. Dit sou egter afhang van die finansiële vermoe van die boer om ambagsmanne te huur indien hy nie self kon bou nie, en om materiaal aan te koop en aan te karwei. Volgens Van der Walt, Wiid en Geyer was die eerste boere arm (Van der Merwe 1938: 85). Kon ‘n boer nie dié uitgawes bekostig nie was hy daarop aangewese om ‘n gerieflike huis met materiaal uit die omgewing te bou ingevolge ‘n boute gnick wat maklik uitvoerbaar is.

Kyk ‘n mens in laasgenoemde verband na die verspreiding van die Hopefield-tipe huise, dan kom dit voor in die vlei- en moerasagtige streke van die Sandveld rondom Hopefield en sover noord as Redelinghuys. Volgens segslui is die huise vroeër ook by Dassenberg, Langebaan (Churchaven) en Langebaanweg aangetref (Van der Merwe 1938: 60; Joubert 1979). Volgens mev. Elsie Esterhuysen, afgetrede lid van die Bolus-Herbarium van die Universiteit van Kaapstad en kenner op die gebied van biesies, is die biesies wat in die konstruksiie van die Hopefield-huise gebruik is, vroeër algemeen op die Kaapse Vlakte aangetref.

Na aanleiding van bogenoemde en van die bestaan van die Hopefield-huise, kan daar aanvaar word dat van die pionierboere wat teen die einde van die sewentiende eeu besluit het om permanent op die Kaapse Vlakte, die Weskus en die Sandveld te bly, ook besluit het om hul “hardebieshutte” te vervang met huise van biesie-en-klei-mure vanweë die oorvloedige voorkoms van biesies in dié streke en vanweë die gebrek aan geld om meer geskikte boumateriaal aan te koop en aan te karwei (Pearse 1956: 34, 66). Die huise se grondplante sou ooreenstem met die heersende grondplante van die tyd (fig. 2). Om van dié tipe huise as “hardebieshuis” te praat is meer sinvol en korrek en dit kon aanleiding gegee het tot die ontstaan van die woord “hartbeeshuis”. As sodanig verteenwoordig die huise ‘n oorgangstadium tussen noodwonings, die eerste stadium in woningbou en die oprigting van huise van duursame materiaal.

Word die bogenoemde aanvaar, dan is die kriteria om te onderskei tussen “hartbeeshut” en “hartbeeshuis” in die vroeëe dae aan die Kaap, die aantal vertrekke en die wyse van konstruksiie. ‘n Hartbeeshut is ‘n eenvertrekstruktuur, rond of vierkantig van houtlatte en biesies, terwyl ‘n hartbeeshuis ‘n twee- of meervertrekstruktuur is met ‘n afsonderlike dakraamwerk - die dubbele spar-raamwerk - op mure van hout en biesies.

Hieruit kan afgelei word dat die Hopefield-“hardebieshuis” waarskynlik voorbeeld is van die eerste werklike “hardebieshuis” wat gedurende die laat sewentiende eeu in Suid-Afrika opgerig is as alternatief vir huise van meer duursame materiaal. Dié huise is dus nie ‘n negentiende- of twintigste-eusee teruggryping na sewentiende-eusee boustyle en -tegnieke nie. As sodanig is die Hartbeeshuts van Puntjie en Waenhuiskrans eie aan die Suid-kusstreke is (Walton 1970: 540).
Geografiese feite dui aan dat laasgenoemde strukture later as die Hopefield-hartbeeshuise ontwikkel het, want dit lê verder weg van die Kaap.

Die omstandighede wat aanvanklik aanleiding gegee het tot die bou van die “hardebieshuise”, naamlik beskikbaarheid van biesies, vertroudheid met die paal-en-kei-techniek en gebrek aan geld, het waarskynlik vir sommige gesinne tot in die twintigste eeu voortgeduur. Dié tipe huise het dus bykans drie eeu lank in ’n behuisingsbehoeftes van ’n besondere groep mense voorsien.

...  

**Sosio-kulturele betekenis**

Volgens Rapoport is huisvorm ‘n konkrete uitdrukking van kulturele waardes. Huisvorm word nie net deur materiële faktore soos fisieke omgewing, klimaat, tegnologiese ontwikkeling, aard van materiaal en ekonomiese faktore bepaal nie, maar is die resultaat van ’n kompleks interaksie tussen al die faktore en ander kulturele faktore sons ’n groep se religieuse opvattinge, verwantskapsisteem en die waardeopvattinge wat huisvorm, ruimtebenutting en die ideale omgewing vir die huisgesin bepaal (Rapoport 1969: vi, 46-49, 61).

...  

Die pionierboere van die Kaapkolonie was arm. Hul behoefte aan huisvesting ooreenkomstig Westerse norme het die eenvertrek- en tydelike hartbeeshut onuithoubaar vir permanente bewoning gemaak. Hul ekonomiese positie en moontlike gebrek aan tegniese vaardigheid in die boukuns met duursame materiaal het dit onmoontlik gemaak om dadelik wonings van duursame materiaal te bou. Derhalwe is hulle gedwing om by die sanderige omgewing aan te pas en met materiaal uit die vlei en moerasse ’n aanvaarbare woonhuis te bou.

Dat die huise van Hopefield op ou Westerse opvattinge en gebruik in die boukuns gebaseer is, is reeds aangetoon. Dit dui op ’n vroeë aanvaarding van die Westerse woningboumodel as geldende norm vir die ideale ordening van ruimte vir die gesin. Daar moet ’n voorhuis wees waar die gesin saam kan eet, ontspan en besprekings voer. ’n Kombuis met ’n vuurherd of kookhuis onder dieselfde dak maak dit vir die huisvrou gerieflik om as deel van die gesin maaltye voor te berei. Die verdeling van slaapruimte in ’n slaapkamer vir ouers en een elk vir die twee geslagte, onderskeidelik.

Dat die seuns in ’n buitekamer gehuisves word, dui op die aanvaarding van onafhanklikheid en van manlikheid, wat aan die lig kom in sulke sake soos ’n eie afsonderlike woonruimte met ’n eie ingang, die trotsering van gevare deur in die nag die huis te verlaat en in die donker na eie kamer te stap en deur die gesin alleen daar deur te bring, in ’n mate geskei van die res van die gesin. Dit kweek ook ’n gevoel van avontuurlustigheid by die jong seuns. Dit is alles waardes en norme wat van ’n Westerse inslag getuig.

Die rede vir die vroeë aanvaarding van Westerse norme met betrekking tot woningbou kan ook toegeskryf word aan die uiteenlopende kulturele agtergronde van die slawebevolking destyds aan die Kaap. Hulle het as individue na die Kaap gekom en dadelik by Westeringe begin werk (De Wet 1981: 209, 211; Ross 1983: 16-17). Die wat vir privaathuise gewerk het, het dikwels in die huise gebly. Hulle was afgesny van hul volks- en gesinsverband wat normaalweg sanksies toepas om kulturele verliese te voorkom. Dit kan aanvaar word dat dit daartoe gelei het dat hulle en hul afstammelinge die ooreerwende kultuur van die nedersetting aanvaar het waarby hulle moes aanpas om ’n suksesvolle lewe te lei. ...
Die gevleuelde hartbeeshuise (figs 3, 4) toon ‘n unieke ontwikkeling van die basiese grondplan van huise van die Kaap. Volgens Fransen en Cook is die vleuels normaalweg altyd na agter uitgebou en is uitbreidings na voor seldsaam. Die aanbouings by die “hardebieshuise” het egter na vore geskied. Dié aanpassing dui op ‘n nie-slaafse navolging van die Westerse kulturele model en die ontwikkeling van ‘n eie eksperimentering met alternatiewe boustyle. Hierin kan die eerste tekens van die ontwikkeling van ‘n eie groepsidentiteit binne die breë Westerse beskawingsvorm bespeur word.

... Die eerste stadium in huissbou in Suid-Afrika was die oprigting van noodwonings. Hierdie wonings was eenvertrekhutte en is spoedig vervang met groter huise met twee kamers en van duursamer materiaal. Wat die blanke en bruinbevolking betref, is die hartbeeshuise ‘n oorgangstadium tussen die eenvoudige eenvertrekhuut en huise van duursame materiaal. Met behulp van die paal-en-klei-tradisie is noodwoningboumateriaal tot maksimumgrense benut om wonings daar te stel wat groter is en die blanke en bruinbeinse se idees oor die ideale omgewing vir die gesin kon bevat tot tyd en wyl huise van duursame materiaal bekostig kon word.

**Gevolgtrekkinge**

Die grondplanne, bou- en konstruksietegnieke en die gebruikmaking van ruimte binne die hartbeeshuise van Hopefield, kan terggevoer word na die vroegste tradisies wat in dié verband aan die Kaap gevolg is.

‘n Onderzoek na die ekonomiese posisie van die pionierboere aan die Kaap en na die verspreiding van die huise en die omgewings waar dit aangetref is, maak dit waarskynlik dat van die vroegste pionierboere in die Kaapse Vlakte, Weskus en Sandveldstreke en later hul bruin arbeiders, die tipe huise gebou het in stede van huise van meer duursame materiaal.

Die hartbeeshuise van Hopefield se oorsprong en ontstaan kan dus teruggevoer word na die laat sewentiende en vroeër agtiende eeu. Die huise is derhalwe die enigste voorbeeld van soort hartbeeshuise wat deur pionierboere en later hul bruin arbeiders op die Kaapse Vlakte, die Weskus en die Sandveld gebou is. Die tipe hartbeeshuis het waarskynlik bygedra tot die tradisie om pionierswonings as “hartbeeshuise”, in teenstelling met “hartbeeshutte”, te beskryf.

... Waar hartbeeshuise tradisioneel met eenvertreksture en met die paal-en-klei-tegniek vereenselwig word, is die Hopefield-hartbeeshuise verder voorbeeld van unieke gebruikmaking van noodwoningboumateriaal en die paal-en-kleitegniek om ‘n woning met verskeie kamers daar te stel. Vanweë ekonomiese faktore en moontlike tegniese faktore, kon sommige boere nie dadelik huise van duursame materiaal bou nie, met die gevolg dat die Hopefield-hartbeeshuise ook voorbeeld is van ‘n oorgangstadium in die boukuns van Suid-Afrika; ‘n stadium tussen die eenvertrekhartbeeshut en die bou van ‘n twee- of meerverrekhuis van duursame materiaal.

... Met die voorafgaande in gedagte kan laastens tot die gevolgtrekking gekom word dat die hartbeeshuise van Hopefield inderdaad unieke hartbeeshuise is en daarom behoort ‘n replika van die huise érens op ‘n geskikte terrein opgerig te word vir die bewaring van die tradisies en simboliek daarin vervat.
Bronnelys


Survey of buildings at Oudekraal Fontein, Hopefield, October 1979

Vernacular Architecture Society of South Africa

Compiled by Antonia Malan, with acknowledgements to the people of Oudekraal Fontein and the VASSA recording team

Introduction

As a result of a talk on ‘impermanent architecture’ on the West Coast, presented to VASSA members in 2010 (see this issue), Maureen Archer produced a large brown envelope labelled “Hopefield Reed Houses”. The envelope contained negatives and contact prints of black and white photographs. There were brief hand-written notes about some of the buildings (dates, dimensions, fabric) and the families living there (builder, occupants, room functions). These more or less followed a template that had been drawn up by James Walton, in his recognisable neat script. The names of members of the VASSA team of recorders and photographers are presently unconfirmed.

There were no contextual notes in the envelope, but a comprehensive ten pages of descriptions and photographs of Oudekraal Fontein were published in James Walton’s Cape Cottages (1995). The narrative suggested that the ‘vernacs’ carried out the survey in 1979 as a last-minute attempt to record the buildings before they were demolished.

I began to record the houses at Oudekraal Fontein in 1961 when I expressed the hope that some at least of those interesting examples of our vernacular architecture would be preserved. I made a further appeal for their preservation in 1979 but it became apparent that they would be demolished to make way for a playing field and the need for at least a pictorial record became evident. Most of the houses were razed to the ground but three of the most interesting survived a little longer (Walton 1995: 30).

While Walton’s published version was a valuable synthesis of information, we decided to transcribe the original notes in the envelope, to scan the negatives and to reproduce a few of the photographs to encourage further research. We have arranged to donate the material to the Walton Collection, J.S. Gericke Library, University of Stellenbosch. Readers who have not visited this wonderful resource are encouraged to do so. (Unfortunately, the notes, negatives and prints were not clearly cross-referenced so it will require some intensive detective work to identify which images refer to which buildings.)

This article should also be read alongside a publication by Commander C. Wessels in Kronos in 1985 (extracts reprinted in this issue). He illustrated floor plans of several buildings in the ‘magistrate’s district of Hopefield’, but their exact location is not given (except for those marked ‘HF’, presumably Hopefield). In response to Wessels’ article, Walton published a clarification of the typology of reed-walled structures in Tydskrif vir Volkskunde en Volkstaal (1987).

We do not know what connection the two surveys had with each other, if any, nor is it clear if the Afrikaans-speaking Wessels met or corresponded directly with the English-speaking Walton. To underline the historical importance of these buildings, Wessels referred to the VASSA survey as an ‘unpublished study’, and referred to documents held by the Simon van der Stel Foundation (RGN leer 2/K/H-F3). A replica of one of the buildings was erected in 1985 in the grounds of the municipal buildings (old library) of Hopefield, and can still be seen today. It was built under the direction of Gert Heyster (73), who learned the techniques from his father-in-law. Ironically, “blanke dorpenaars” then asked him to build beach houses for them, but he
politely refused, saying he could no longer do such work by himself. For details of the team that promoted, funded and carried out that project, see ‘Hartbeeshuis vir nageslag gebou’, Die Burger Saterdag 11 Oktober, 1986, and ‘Hartbeeshuis amptelik op Hopefield geopen’, Die Burger Ekstra, 25 November 1986.

The place and its people

Hopefield is half way between Malmesbury and Vredenburg, 115 km from Cape Town (Fig.1). Permission to establish a separate parish of the Dutch Reformed Church in the area was given in 1851, the parish to be known as Zoute Rivier. In the following year, permission was sought for the establishment of a town, which was granted in May 1853. The name Hopefield was given in honour of the incumbent Secretary of the Government (Hope) and the “collecteur der Douane” (Field). The cornerstone of the original church was laid on 8 January 1877. Even though a management committee was appointed by the inhabitants in 1903, the church council retained jurisdiction over all matters until the town became a municipality in 1914.

Before the modern West Coast road was built, the road between Cape Town and Saldanha Bay went through Hopefield. A rail link from Cape Town to Vredenburg passed through the town and the first passenger train stopped there on 28 February 1903 (the wood-and-iron station buildings, though abandoned, still survive). In 1945 a bridge was built across the Salt River and this significantly improved contact with the surrounding area, particularly during winter. In the same year the first road in the town was tarred.

Social dynamics in the area were complex, and, like most rural districts during the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a long history of interaction, collaboration, coercion and resistance. This was an arid area of marginal stock and grain farming connected with the booms and busts of the coastal fishing industry, which spawned settlements with inhabitants from all corners of the world (see Malan & Webley, this issue). For more than two centuries various excuses were found to ‘remove’ people from sustaining independent lives on developable land, either as small-holders, bywoners or fisherfolk. For instance, a permanent Resident Magistrate was stationed at Hopefield in 1896 as a result of demands for greater state protection of coastal land-owning farmers against ‘squatters’, despite the fact that many of these propertied families had benefitted from rents from fisher family tenants as well as securing a supply of cheap seasonal farm labour.

In 1979 Oudekraal Fontein, overlooking the Salt River, was home to several families who had lived for at least 60 years in the houses they had built themselves. It seems that the Klephas or Cleophas family may have been there since the late 19th century (Fourie 1951: 28). Many buildings appeared shabby by that time but the interiors were generally well furnished and maintained. The layout of the community was neighbourly yet spacious, allowing for privacy and room for keeping livestock and planting gardens. The homes and yards were nevertheless completely removed to make way for a playing field. Walton stated that reactions were mixed: most inhabitants, especially the older people, were heartbroken, but some looked forward to the expectation of modern facilities in a new housing scheme.

Figure 1. Hopefield (detail from Fransen 2004).

Notes from the survey

House no. 14

1. Built in approximately 1945.
2. Occupied by Frans Cleophas, a pensioner.
3. Owned by Peter Cleophas, to whom rent of R2.50 is paid per month.
4. House of reed exterior and of more simple construction.
5. Could not gain access as occupant sleeping.

House no. 55

1. Built by Jan Adams in 1940.
2. Owner Sanie Jacobs.
3. Occupied by two families.
4. Sannie Adams and family (6 persons) in main part of house.
5. John Papier, wife and two children occupy bedroom E.
7. Walls of gum poles and clay with riet roof.
8. Riet obtained from farm a couple of miles distant.
10. Water supply from well on spot, both for washing and drinking. Water sweet and not brak.
11. Lighting by means of paraffin lamps and candles.
12. Sanitation consists of dilapidated structure with pail, contents buried on site.
13. Rent of R3.50 per month paid to municipality with R2.00 from occupants of bedroom E.
14. Sannie Adams has been in residence for approximately 7 years and was previously an occupant in one of the scheme houses.
15. Occupiers like their dwelling as thatch makes it warm in winter and cool in summer, and would rather stay there than in a scheme house. New houses very small in comparison as rooms in reed houses are large. No bathroom in old scheme house.
16. It would appear to have started as a two-roomed dwelling and then added on, but no details available of this.
17. Cooking on wood stove with wood brought by donkey cart from district.
18. Occupants were due to move on 1 November 1979 to scheme house but did not seem definite on this.
19. An external bakoond made from a 44-gallon drum used by occupants of bedroom E for baking of bread.
20. Another structure is used to lock up wood stored for cooking.

**House no. 57**

1. Owner Mr Johannes, a brick- and plasterer.
2. Built by D. Cleophas, living in no.63, 20-30 years ago.
3. Occupied by owner, daughter, son-in-law (fisherman) and five children.
4. Daughter and husband occupy two rooms (7 and 8) in the left wing.
6. Johannes and wife and family occupy 6 rooms (1-6).
7. Men are fisherfolk for about 3 months in the year, and rest of time find odd jobs.
8. Walls: gum poles, reed, sisal string and rope for binding, wire ties with nails, clay plaster over, reed filling interior and exterior, gloss paint inside.
9. Roof: gum poles, reeds cut and tufts for ridging, sisal string ties, nails in frame, corrugated iron sheets in valleys, exposed interior and exterior.
10. Windows: mostly pine or boxwood, painted with enamel gloss paint, merely frames with simple sills and interior shutters like simple hinged doors, closed by simple wooden turn buckle; situated high under eaves to top of wall.
11. Floors: sand levelled, packed smooth with clay, covered with linoleum.
13. Thresholds as main frame members, large gum poles / logs.
15. Doorway jambs: gum logs.
17. Local materials: reeds grown locally but almost extinct in immediate vicinity, still available a distance away; clay available near river; timber for framework from gum trees grown in district; pine, boxwood and corrugated iron collected from waste material.
18. Purchased items: e.g. barrel bolts to doors; hinges to doors and window shutter, nails, sisal rope, paint, small quantities of glass, materials for stove, chimney stack, etc., bricks, cement.
19. Outbuildings: pigeon lofts, fowl run, WC, mostly constructed of waste material.
20. Water supply: well in close proximity to house, covered with sheets of metal (corrugated iron waste). Water supply good and clean (as stated by owner). Smallish tin with wire handle let down on length of rope to draw water.
22. Sanitation: Corrugated iron shack, home-made wooden seat without lid, bucket which is emptied and contents buried in vicinity by owners/occupiers.
23. Rent: R3.15 paid monthly to municipality for use of ground (?).
24. Occupiers:
   a. enjoy the freedom of living as extended families among neighbours well known to them,
   b. find low rental good,
   c. enjoy the use of large and many rooms for large families, some of whom live in city but return home at weekends / holidays,
   d. dread the removal to small scheme houses at more than R30.00 per month, with all their furniture and little space,
   e. seem to accept primitive way of life because it is cheap and ‘free’, especially the older folk,
   f. younger people may like more modern amenities but complain of the price,
   g. those in residence for only about 7 years are not as house-pride as man who built his own house (no. 63), and not as interested in maintenance and repairs.
25. It seems as if the house was designed and built ‘as is’, with large families occupying them at the time.
26. Comments by builder, Mr Cleophas of no. 63: ‘old scheme’ house residents to be moved to ‘new scheme’ houses soon, reed house people then move to ‘old scheme’ houses.
27. When leaving, the owners are expected to dismantle the house and clear the site. A strong possibility exists that demolition may be expedited by burning the structures.

House no. 61

1. Occupant: Mrs Frances Bruintjies and family.
2. Residents: Mrs Fances Bruintjies, her 82-year-old mother (diabetic and heart complaint), her niece (10 years) and nephew (5 years), children of her sister who works in Cape Town. Also the home of additional 4 sisters (including the mother of the two children) who come to stay at Christmas and for other holidays.
3. Interior consists of:
   a. kitchen – paraffin fridge, gas ring, Defy wood stove set in alcove (chimney breast),
   b. sitting room – paraffin lamps used throughout the house,
   c. bedrooms – two used regularly, other at end of house with 4 beds, guest room has a separate stable door leading to garden.
4. Details of interior:
   a. clay floors – covered with brightly coloured linoleum and rugs,
   b. walls – reeds, covered with plster (white) in lower portion,
   c. ceilings – wooden poles, beams across partition of each room, wooden poles supporting reeds; looked in perfect condition throughout house but in guest bedroom it leaked very badly and everything was covered with plastic, Mrs Bruintjies said it has ‘always’ leaked there,
   d. windows – wooden framed, with glass, painted green,
   e. doors – exterior – 3 stable doors leading into sitting room, third bedroom and out of kitchen into yard, all painted green.
5. Roof: corrugated iron valley gutters slightly visible.
6. Rent: R3.90 paid per month to the municipality.
7. Water supply: from well nearby, had to fetch buckets of water as required. Water not boiled.
8. Sanitation: bucket sanitation. Mrs Bruinjies said the municipality failed to remove.
9. Back yard structures: lavatory in corrugated iron shack, and another small corrugated iron shack for wood and other odds and ends.
10. History of house: built about 30 years ago by her father and his nephew. It was built exactly as it is today with 3 bedrooms. Roof reeds were repaired by man living next door (now dead) in 1978 (despite that it still leaks).
11. General:
   a. the house was absolutely spotless, the kitchen and all utensils immaculate. The occupier and family well dressed and living very comfortably. Bedrooms looked warm and attractive bed coverings. They said the house was warm in winter, especially with wood stove going, and cool in summer.
   b. Mrs Bruinjies and her family are very happy in the house and would not like to move, mainly because they live a very quiet peaceful life and all the people around them are of the same kind. They all belong to the ‘English’ church, which is conducted in English and Afrikaans and has its own minister.
   c. The family all originate in the nearby areas and come from Darling and Moreesburg. They have one brother working as a bus driver in Vredenburg, he drives from Hopefield each day.
12. Garden: Mrs Bruinjies has a small patch of garden of which she is very proud. She won a prize last year, awarded by the Hopefield shops, a small glass sweet stand and a tin of biscuits. We noted she grew medicinal herbs.
13. Notes on repair of reed constructed houses and comfort of living:
   a. there are only one or two of the older generation who are able to carry out thatching and the craft is not being handed down to the present generation,
   b. reeds are obtainable between 5 and 6 miles to the north of the village,
   c. the houses are cool in summer and warm in winter,
   d. the weight of the roof from wind-deposited sand is gradually destroying the older thatch.

House no. 63

1. Built by owner, Daniel Cleophas, about 20 -30 years ago.
2. Mr Cleophas built it himself according to what he had seen in other houses in existence at the time. He was untrained but did a magnificent job of building. The thatch visible in the ceiling is still original.
3. Son and daughter-in-law occupy two rooms in left wing of house. Both work in a local shop. They use gas stove for cooking (smart, large, modern stove).
4. Cleophas, a man in his 60s, very sad about leaving.
5. Unplastered external walls.
6. Do not recall seeing any glass window panes.
7. Gum log beams across bedroom and another room.
8. Recall two internal doors. One was panelled interior door and one like a gate.
9. Different floor levels with log thresholds.
10. Rent R2.00 per month.
11. Good gardens, flowers at front and vegetables at back.
13. Fowl run.
14. WC in good shape (corrugated iron).
15. Well collapsed, now use new well found amongst fruit trees to southwest of front door.
16. Most houses face east.
Ground plans (from Walton 1995)

The house plans vary considerably in detail but they fall into four main groups, which illustrate the general pattern of development:

1. An extended rectangular plan with a kitchen at one end and a living-room and one or two bedrooms in a row (Fig.21).

2. An extended rectangular plan as in 1 but with a buitkamer added to the end opposite the kitchen (Fig.27A).

3. An L-plan resulting from the addition of a buitkamer at right-angles to the end of the main block (Figs.22 and 27B).

4. A U-plan formed by adding a buitkamer (or buitkamers) at one end and extending the kitchen at the other end (Figs.23 and 27C).
The setting
Residents
Exteriors
Yards
Walls
Doors
Chimneys
Stoves & outside bakoond
Interiors