HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT: PROPOSED RE-DEVELOPMENT OF THE RATELRIVIER HOMESTEAD, FARM 300, CALEDON MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT WESTERN CAPE

(Assessment conducted under Section 38 (8) of the National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999) as part of a BAR)

Prepared for:
Mark Day

March 2014

Prepared by:
Tim Hart
Lita Webley

ACO Associates cc
8 Jacob’s Ladder
St James
7945

Phone (021) 706 4104
Fax (086) 603 7195
Email: Tim.Hart@aco-associates.com
Summary

ACO Associates cc was appointed by Enviroworks on behalf of the client, the South African National Parks Board (SAN Parks), to undertake a heritage assessment prior to the development of the Ratel Rivier farm complex within the borders of the Park. The site has already been subject to a comprehensive heritage assessment by Graham Jacobs and Melanie Atwell (Arcon 2007). Their study continues to be relevant however the significance of the structures on the farm has changed as a result of subsequent damage caused by a major fire.

It is the intention of the client (SAN Parks) to convert the main farm house, garden cottages ruins, stables ruin and outbuilding ruin into self-catering accommodation units. The stables and outbuildings were burnt during the fire of 2011. Associated with this will be the upgrade of infrastructure, i.e. water, electricity, sewerage services and internal roads. Most of the required infrastructure currently exists. Envisaged work involves bringing it into a functional state. The study area is indicated below.

Map 1 Location of the study area

All but two structures on this once spectacular property survived the fire intact. The stable building (which was a significant structure) has been destroyed and is un-restorable. It is possible to reconstruct it. The same applies to the farm outbuilding complex. Also destroyed are the garden cottages and staff houses, however the stonework of the staff houses is in better condition. The historic H-shaped main homestead survived the fire as did a single staff house. These are restorable, but are suffering from abandonment.
The property is well known for its long history and illustrious owners who across generations used similar building styles (based on south coast vernacular) until the 1990's. The result was a very scenic homogenous farm yard set with a country garden. Throughout, buildings were built from calcrete blocks and used a common theme of half-hipped thatched roofs and wolfneus gables. The scenic qualities and setting of the property would have certainly rendered this site worthy of provincial heritage status, however the severe fire and neglect means that only one staff house and the homestead are worthy of grade IIIa status.

A single area of potential archaeological significance was located. This is the garden around the “Meat House” (above) that may contain the archaeological signature of an older structure. This should be investigated if development is planned.

**Findings**

The damage to the stables and other farm buildings at Ratel Rivier goes beyond the loss of thatch and wooden joinery. The structures are made of calcrete and calcified sand blocks. Calcium carbonate is the basic ingredient of cement, so when the fabric is subject to a high temperature, it becomes porous and powdery and very prone to erosion. Over time it will harden, but the Cape winter rains will cause continued erosion and damage. Every building apart from the main house and one staff cottage will continue to crumble unless re-redevelopment takes place with minimal delay. Already too much time has elapsed between the fire of 2011 and the present day.

- One could consider the damage that has taken place to farm buildings to be a total loss, however the history of the site, its architecture, its gardens and setting make this a unique site which could argue a case for expert reconstruction. There is ample documentation to inform this process. The reconstruction will be expensive and onerous, requiring unique knowledge and skills. It will take time and will likely to be expensive. The exterior form and textures of the buildings will need to be restored and thatch roofing re-done. Furthermore, the original consistency of material across the entire *werf* will need to be achieved.
If expert reconstruction is not envisaged and budgetary issues are a constraint, it is strongly recommended that the ruin shells be stabilized and made safe, then retained as features of interest on the property. Resources for restoration should then be directed to the main house, and the farm cottages which would be a much more economical restoration opportunity.

The grounds with kraals and walls should be continued to be retained. Non-invasive exotic garden plants must not be removed as these are part of the cultural history of the site. The garden must continue to be maintained (as SAN-Parks is doing).

Any envisaged work must involve the services of a restoration architect who has knowledge of working with historical fabric, as well as a good understanding of south coast architecture.

Demolition of the two recent garden cottages can be envisaged as these are in very poor condition. Reconstruction may take place if the proponent desires.

The structure known as the “Meat House” is archaeologically sensitive and must be subject to a focused study involving trial excavations prior to development taking place.

Provided that major works is confined to the interiors of structures, and a minimum of new interventions are carried out on the property visual impacts will be negligible.

Conclusion

Provided that the measures that are implemented in this and the Arcon study of 2007, the redevelopment of Ratel Rivier will be of overall benefit in heritage terms – a distinctly positive impact. It is important that further steps to this end are followed in the short-medium term.

Following this survey and analysis, it may be concluded that the actual historic core of Ratel Rivier is quite small as the majority of fabric on the site dates to the 20th century. The exercising of “good taste” and the implementation of a consistent architecture and materiality across the werf for the duration of the 20th century resulted in the creation of a farm complex with a unique presence that fits in well with the local vernacular and the environment in which it is situated. It is however mostly all a series of good quality “fake-ups” of an architectural style derived from the relatively diminutive original homestead. It is the resulting aesthetic quality that is perhaps the site’s finest heritage quality rather than the technical details of its development. Even after the devastating fire this quality continues to prevail to some degree.

The planned reconstruction of the burned out elements at Ratel Rivier is in contrast to current heritage wisdom which does not support “faking” and values originality highly. This study has identified two alternative directions for future redevelopment of the site.

The case for reconstruction can be argued on the grounds that:

- The consistency of form and material is needed to retain the particular quality of the place, and give meaning to its history.
- The site is characterized by a history of building structures throughout the 20th century in a particular style to maintain a patina of rural charm and age – even structures of the late 20th century were “faked” to mimic the architecture of the main house and stables (the stables were an early interpretation of the vernacular).
There is good documentary evidence to inform a reconstruction process in the form of measured drawings that are of adequate quality to reconstruct exterior forms. The history of the site is well known. There are photographs available that depict the site over time.

However unless reconstruction can be done with the correct materials and skill, adequate funding and general attention to detail, the reconstruction route should not be followed and the second alternative that we have proposed in this report be considered.

**Alternative option for restoration of homesteads and refurbishment of staff cottages.**

In acknowledgment of the fact that achieving the reconstruction option will be expensive, and demanding on materials and skills, and possibly un-feasible, an alternative option will see restoration of the homestead and the staff cottages, along with stabilizing/making safe the ruins.

- The stone fabric of the staff cottages is not as severely damaged by fire therefore the degree of reconstruction needed will be less.
- An example of a staff cottage has survived.
- There is good documentation.
- Less expensive and taxing on skills and resources.

**Way forward**

- Future work must involve the compilation of a detailed redevelopment proposal by a recognized conservation architect. A landscape plan must be included in this.

- Since this report is part of an EIA process, section 38.10 applies. This report therefore recommends that HWC continued to be seen as a commenting authority and that all proposals are forwarded for the consideration of the relevant committees of that organization for comment.

- All consulting work must be carried out by recognized professionals.

- Any archaeologist who works on the site must be a registered ASAPA member accredited at PI level in historical archaeology by ASAPA.

- In the development of a detailed re-use/conservation proposal, the fundamentals of the Burra Charter should be observed.

- The restoration of the primary heritage resource – the existing homestead must take precedent over all other work.

- The structure known as the “Meat House” is archaeologically sensitive and must be subject to a focused study involving trial excavations prior to development taking place.

This study was under taken by Tim hart and Lita Webley. Previous work by Arcon (2007) De Jong (2007) and others have informed this report extensively.
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1 INTRODUCTION

ACO Associates cc was appointed by Enviroworks on behalf of the client, the South African National Parks Board (SAN Parks), to undertake a heritage assessment prior to the development of the Ratel Rivier farm complex within the borders of the Park. The site has already been subject to a comprehensive heritage assessment by Graham Jacobs and Melanie Atwell (Arcon 2007). Their study continues to apply however the significance of the structures on the farm has changed as a result of subsequent damage.

![Map of 3419 DA & DC Baardskeerdersbos showing the location of Ratelrivier](image)

2 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

It is the intention of the client (SAN Parks) to convert the main farm house, garden cottages ruins, stables ruin and outbuilding ruin into self-catering accommodation units. The stables and outbuildings were burnt during the fire of 2011. Associated with this will be the upgrade of infrastructure, i.e. water, electricity, sewerage services and internal roads. Most of the required infrastructure currently exists. Envisaged work involves bringing it into a functional state.

The proposed upgrade of services includes:

- Water pipe: gravity 2.6km x 75/9 PVC
- Sewer: Gravitational 500m in 110mm UPVC (septic tank)
- Pump: 150m in 63/6 HDPE pipe (from septic tank to soak away).
Figure 2  An aerial view of Ratelrivier. The proposal is to reconstruct buildings outlined in yellow - the Stables (centre left), the outbuildings (centre right), and the garden cottages close to the main homestead. The ruins of 3 workers buildings will not be restored.
3 LEGISLATION

The National Heritage Resources Act 1999, No 25 of 1999 (Section 38 (1)) makes provision for a compulsory notification of intent to develop when any development exceeding 5000 m² in extent, or any road or linear development exceeding 300m in length is proposed.

The NHRA provides protection for the following categories of heritage resources:

- Landscapes, cultural or natural (Section 3 (3))
- Buildings or structures older than 60 years (Section 34);
- Archaeological Sites, palaeontological material and meteorites (Section 35);
- Burial grounds and graves (Section 36);
- Public monuments and memorials (Section 37);
- Living heritage (defined in the Act as including cultural tradition, oral history, performance, ritual, popular memory, skills and techniques, indigenous knowledge systems and the holistic approach to nature, society and social relationships) (Section 2 (d) (xxi)).

With regard Section 34(1) of the NHRA states: “No person may alter or demolish any site older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant heritage authority” (in this case HWC).

4 RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

Ratel Rivier is situated inland and to the north of Quion Point, about half way between Danger Point and Cape Agulhas on the Cape south coast (Figure 1).
The farm werf is surrounded by extensive areas of indigenous wilderness and occupies low-lying, level topography with a high water table. Pans and wetlands are a characteristic of this low lying coastal plain. While much of this area was previously drained and cultivated by various owners through time, what used to vast seasonal wetlands are slowly returning as the land is reverting to becoming a natural area under SAN Parks management.

The Ratel Rivier homestead, farmyard and outbuildings is a famous landmark and well known heritage site in the region, however a severe fire which affected large tracts of the Agulhas National Park has done considerable damage to the landscape, as well as a number of historic places including Ratelrivier. The fire burned most of the outbuildings including the stables. A single staff house and the main homestead survived intact. The main house has not been used for some years now, but the garden is maintained.

4.1 Palaeontology

The Agulhas coastal plain, a remnant of an ancient wave-cut platform, is covered by calcereous sands of Tertiary Age. The shoreline of the Agulhas coast has both rocky (60 km) and sandy (45 km) beaches, followed by sand-dunes, including rare hummock-blowouts between Brandfontain and Cape Agulhas. North of these dunes is a sandy, flat coastal plain with numerous marshes, vleis and pans. The coastal mountains are Cape Fold Belt sandstone, capped in sections by limestone. Apart from Quaternary fossils in the calcrete deposits, there seems to be little likelihood of impacts on palaeontology.

4.2 Archaeology

A great deal of work has been undertaken along the coast to the west of Ratel Rivier starting with the prehistory of the southern Cape published by Professor John Goodwin in 1946. However, it was not until the 1970's that research by archaeologists of the South African Museum provided further insight into the area. Excavations by F.R. Schweitzer (1979) at Die Kelders cave near Gansbaai produced early evidence (1600 years ago) for the introduction of pottery technology and domestic stock into the Cape as well as a MSA (Middle Stone Age) occupation over 40 000 years old. Archaeologists from the South African Museum (now Iziko Museums of Cape Town) were very active in this part of the south coast during the 1970s and early 1980s.

Research in the Pearly Beach area has mainly been conducted by Graham Avery of Iziko Museums of Cape Town. Several open station shell middens in the Pearly Beach area were surveyed and excavated by him in an attempt to derive a systematic, regional understanding of the subsistence strategies of pre-colonial south coast populations (Avery, 1974). Sites were found to extend from locations just behind the beach dunes up to two kilometres inland. Sites generally cluster near the rocky stretches of the coast where shellfish are abundant, while no sites were found along the sandy beaches. In recent years similar features associated with shell middens have been identified throughout the south and west coasts.

Avery (1976) drew the conclusion that these coastal sites reveal that the ancestors of both the Khoekhoen herders and hunter-gatherer groups accumulated marine shell as part of a seasonal system that used both inland and coastal resources. Excavations of shell middens in the Pearly Beach area by Graham Avery (1974; 1976) showed that the remains of early domestic sheep were to be found in some of the coastal middens as well.

In 1984 an area just to the west of Struisbaai was the focus of a study by archaeologists from the South African Museum and the University of Cape Town (Hall 1984). They were interested in the way in which prehistoric people were using the different kinds of
environments represented in this area. An exhaustive survey of this area showed that the majority of archaeological sites were located directly on the shoreline, or on the edge of the inland dune field where large dunes overlook the coastal plain. The study showed that the dune field had been favoured for occupation over the last 4000-6000 years by both earlier hunter-gatherers and possibly pastoralists later on. Recent work by various consulting archaeologists (ACO and ACRM) resulted in more sites being recorded; however the basic settlement pattern appears to be consistent.

The historic farm werf of Ratel Rivier is located on the edge of a number of large wetlands. There is evidence that during the last few hundred years, efforts were made to drain the wetlands by a means of large drainage ditches. It is likely that the wetlands would have been attractive to prehistoric peoples. Further, the farm is only 5 km from the coast and therefore close enough for occurrence of coastal shell middens. During a survey by Webley in 2009 of the Ratel Rivier cemetery, a number of shell scatters as well as pre-colonial potsherds were recorded. The landscape has unfortunately been transformed by agricultural activities and it is unlikely that well preserved pre-colonial sites will be found around the werf.

However, the farm is likely to have high historical archaeological potential as there are indications that it may have been settled prior to 1831. The ruins of previous buildings, since demolished, as well as historical dumps are may occur. The Arcon (2007) report points to the use of ship-wreck material used in the old stable buildings on the farm.

### 4.3 History

Ratel Rivier has a colourful history spanning three centuries. It is has been comprehensively researched by a number of people, and this is summarised below.

According to De Jong (2007) report “Matthias Rostok was given permission to graze his livestock at the mouth of the Ratel Rivier in 1755” (R.L.R. 14/2. P.231; S.G. 14, p. 231 – Cape Archives). “Village Life” magazine (Oct/Nov 2004) claims that Ratel Rivier was originally known as Buffeljagsrivier aan de Ratel Rivier and was granted by the VOC to Matthys Lourens in 1745.

Matthys Lourens married Dina Maria Uys in December 1751 and they settled on Ratelrivier. According to De Jong (2007), he is frequently referred to as Matthys Rostok (the town from which his father came) to distinguish him from his father. There are numerous references in the Archives to permits issued to Lourens. For example: Gepermitteerd aan de landbouer Matthias Rostock om voor een tyd van een geheel jaar met zyn vee te mogen gaan bly en wyden aan den mond van den Ratel Rivier over die Hottentots Holland gebergte. Geteken op 13 Desember 1755 deur Goeverneur Rijk Tulbagh.

Johannes Jochemus Swart obtained grazing rights to “Buffelsjagsrivier gelegen aan de Ratelrivier” in 1795 (De Jong 2007). He was apparently already on the farm in 1822 and in 1831 the property comprising 2343 morgen (1875 ha), was sold to JJ Swart and surveyed for the first time (SG573/1831). Fransen (2004) incorrectly records the property as having been acquired by PJ Joubert. Attwell (2007) points to the Swellendam Quitrent of 16 June 1831 for Ratel Rivier, which clearly shows a t-shaped homestead and outbuilding already on the site. This is not clearly evident from the scanned survey diagram dating to 1831 (Figure 4). However, the presence of a building on the farm in 1831. suggests that the main homestead may contain an 18th century core.

Attwell (2007) points out that the house is strategically situated at the centre of the property and at the junction of the Ratel Rivier and the Cape Road, which traverses the site.
There is some conflict in the dates that historic records have provided in terms of events and ownership. In 1835 JJ Swart died, and his widow, Catharina Elizabeth (nee Moolman) continued to farm at Ratelrivier with her sons and slaves. She was very strict with her slaves and buried one in *driftsands*. It is said she only remembered about him days later when he was found with his nose protruding out of the sand. He apparently cursed the farm. It is not clear whether there is any archival support for this story or whether it is oral history.

According to Fransen (2004) the farm became the property of Dirk Gysbert van Breda in 1839 and he was responsible for building the house. However, according to De Jong (2007) the farm was bought by Dirk Gysbert Van Reenen Van Breda (the second son of Michiel Van Breda) in 1869. His last son, Dirk Gysbert Van Breda junior was born on Ratel Rivier and was appointed by his father as manager in (?)1870.

In 1870 Dirk Gysbert died and the farm was taken over by his son Dirk Gysbert junior. The following year, he shot his wife Jacoba Alida (nee Morkel) at Ratel Rivier after an altercation with her concerning undue attention she had paid to a travelling Scotsman at a dance. This was a major scandal at the time. Dirk Gysbert junior was imprisoned and after his release died elsewhere. His wife left a bloody handprint in the passage of the house. This handprint was visible for many years and could not be erased. This event has left some interesting oral history with respect to some supernatural events.

In 1898 the family sold the farm to William Fletcher, a well-known Cape Town businessman. He owned the Cape Town Department store Fletcher and Cartwright on the corner of Adderley and Darling Street. Fletcher was one of the co-founders of Rondebosh Boys’ High School in 1897. When he bought Ratel Rivier, the estate was 20 896 ha in extent and included 22 km of coastline. Fletcher was a breeder and importer of race horses and the stable block dates to around 1902/3. Ratel Rivier becomes a society retreat. There were 14 European families living on the farm including shepherds, groomsmen, gardeners, dairy workers, a nurse, a school teacher, servants, a book keeper, secretary and manager of the estate. Fletcher’s only son died in 1916 and he died 6 months later.
Figure 4 Excerpt from the Surveyor General’s plan for “Rattel Rivier 300” dating to 1831 shows a possible house on the property (SG573/1831) but does not indicate clearly its form.
Fletcher's widow (Ellen Fletcher) then invited her son's school friend Stephen Fry to take over as manager of the estate. With large death duties, he retrenched most of the white staff and sold half the farm. After Ellen's death in 1933, Stephen became the new owner. Stephen Fry died in 1939 and his widow appointed a manager until her son Fletcher was able to take over the farm in 1947. He sold the farm to Clive Corder who in turn sold it to Ratel Rivier Estates (Pty) Ltd in 1949.

The company was established by James St Vincent Broke, 5th Baron de Saumarez, who also bought the nearby Springfield farm. Both farms were developed as “bases of English culture”. De Saumarez farmed with sheep and cattle and also mined the salt pans. Lady de Saumarez established a picturesque English garden. After Lord de Saumarez’s death in 1969, his widow settled permanently at Ratel Rivier and it is around this time that the outbuildings at the big house and the swimming pool were built. Lady de Saumarez remained at Ratel Rivier until the age of 94, after which she moved to the Channel Islands where she died in 1985.

In circa 1993, the farm, now down to 2 500 ha was leased to John de Haviland (a cousin to the actresses Olivia de Havilland and Joan Fonteyn). A condition of the lease was that De Haviland restore the property. They abandoned farming practices, which were uneconomic and established a large part of the farm as a nature reserve. De Haviland gutted the post-war kitchen and bathrooms and built four new bedrooms in the style of the old house (north-west residential extension). They also built at least one of the guest cottages facing onto the “kitchen” yard on the south side.

In 2003 the executors of the De Saumarez estate sold Ratel Rivier to SAN Parks after the De Haviland lease expired.

4.4 Cultural Significance

The Arcon report identified the following aspects of Cultural Significance before the 2011 fire.

1.1.1 Aesthetic Significance
It can be considered to have high aesthetic significance. Its werf consists of an exotic landscape intended to "colonise" the wilderness by representing a small part of England (Arcon Report 2007). Lord de Saumarez made much of setting up Springfield and Ratel Rivier as a “base of English Culture” in the area.

4.4.2 Architectural Significance
The farm werf consists of a number of historical buildings of imposing thatch and cut limestone walled structures with segmented hipped gable ends. It also has high architectural significance - comprising a succession of layered additions dating to at least the early 19th century (Arcon Report 2007).

4.4.3 Historical/Social Significance
Ratel Rivier is of great importance in terms of its age and historical layering of the buildings. It also has social significance in terms of its associations with important Cape families (Van Breda and Fletcher) as well as with English aristocracy (De Saumarez). The presence of the school on the property during the 1930s may also have local historical and social importance.

4.4.4 Scientific Significance
The area around the werf is considered to have biophysical significance, being incorporated into the SAN Parks since 2003.
5 METHODOLOGY

This report draws on a number of preliminary studies commissioned by the South African National Parks. They include:

- Tshwane University of Technology. 2004/2005. Portfolio of Measured drawings undertaken for SAN Parks;
- Arcon Architects & Heritage Consultants. 2007. Ratel Rivier Farm 300 Portion 0, Bredasdorp: Preliminary Heritage Guidelines;

The Arcon report made some preliminary recommendations and conclusions with respect to:

- No-go areas for future development as well as areas that can be developed;
- Where further development could take place if the necessary mitigation measures are in place

The study area was visited by Tim Hart and Lita Webley who examined the built environment and surveyed the werf for any archaeological material or objects not previously recorded.

5.1 Restrictions

The poor condition of most of the burned structures, in particular the out-buildings and stables, rendered detailed inspection of the fabric extremely hazardous. Further detailed work would require work to render structures acceptably safe. It is not possible to undertake a detailed building analysis of these structures under these circumstances. Copies of prior reports and drawings and photographs are in the possession of SAN-Parks (Agulhas National Park). These could not be copies on sites so we photographed as many as we could. Unfortunately the quality is not ideal.

6 ASSESSMENT

6.1 Main Building

Aerial photographs taken in 1937 depict the farm in an earlier form. The main house took the form of an "H" shape – two similar structures (almost independent buildings) connected to each other with a very small passage or gang. The gap between the two structures had been roofed over to form a very long wide corridor running the length of the building. A great deal of fabric has been added on to this core structure in the 20th century. This includes the modern kitchen and pantry on the south east side as well as an extension and annex containing bathrooms and bedrooms on the northwest (Figure 5).
Figure 5 An annotated excerpt from the De Jong report depicting the 19th (or earlier) and later 20th century additions to the homestead (De Jong 2007). The blue box represents the historic core, while the yellow areas are late 20th century additions.
The Arcon (2007) report refers to an earlier possible t-shaped farm homestead and outbuilding in existence on Ratel Rivier pre-1831, however this is not immediately apparent on inspection. The historic “H” shape is clearly evident with the numerous late 20th century add-ons (Figure 5)

“The current farmhouse has a narrow H-shaped core with typical later 18th century and early 19th century period elements. The Arcon report identifies these period elements as including:

- The small-pane single sliding sash windows on the north-east (front) façade;
- Heavy (presumably yellowwood) ceiling beams in the central passage and
- Single panel door off the old kitchen.

Most of the ceiling construction in the building’s historic core is of a later, typical 19th century/early 20th century period” (Arcon 2007: 10).

“It appears that the building underwent substantial renovations, perhaps even a substantial re-build during this period. This would have coincided with the acquisition of the property by the Fletcher family” (Arcon 2007:10).

According to Fransen (2004:449) the limestone/sandstone/calcrete walls were originally plastered.

The Arcon study (2007:10) reports other significant historical features as including:

- The kitchen hearth (now enclosed with cupboard doors);
- All 4-panel (typical late 19th/early 20th C) doors;
- The north-east façade small pane single sliding sash windows with later period internal shutters. The glass panes date to at least 1871, as one has a date scratched on it and signed D Breda. These windows, according to Arcon (2007) are therefore not put in recently, as suggested by Fransen (2004:449) although they may have been installed at Ratel Rivier from elsewhere;
- The central 3-panel typical early 19th C period teak double front door;
- All ceiling beams and boards in the house (apart from those in the more recent north bedroom extension);
- All floorboards with particular reference to those in the historic core of the old living room. The Arcon (2007:10) reports suggests that the timber contains marine wormholes, suggesting that the timber is possibly recycled decking from an early shipwreck;
- Various timber built-in fittings including the fireplace surround in the main living room and a carved, though later door (possibly installed by the De Saumarez family) within the historic core.

1.1.2 Current Condition 2013

The site inspection carried out by ACO with respect to the main house concurs with the Arcon (2007) assessment of significant features, however it is apparent that deterioration and damage has taken place. In the central hallway a number of floor boards were close to collapsing while beetle attack was working its way into the flooring. The ceilings of the structure had suffered greatly in that almost all the boards had been removed from the north east side – apparently to facilitate the fitting of a roof sprinkler system. Paintwork throughout the exterior of the structure was in poor order with wooden elements becoming increasingly exposed to the weather.
San-Parks informants alerted us to the fitting of a wall cupboard closing off the passage between the two halves of the house. A door has been knocked through to create an alternative access. This apparently illogical change has been motivated by a need to block out the “un-erasable” blood stains on walls of the original passage (figure 5).

1.1.3 Recommendations for redevelopment

The original historic core of this building is relatively small compared with the overall mass of the homestead, which means that there is reasonable latitude to refurbish the recently constructed kitchen and pantry additions, as well as the additional bedrooms and bath rooms as indicated in the yellow boxes on figure 5. The historic core (figure 5, blue box) with its openings, windows and fixtures must be kept as intact as possible. The amount of deterioration that has taken place within the building means that significant repairs will be necessary, however the recommendations contained within the Arcon (2007) report should continue to apply: The building is restorable without need for extensive reconstruction work at this present time, provided that delays to implementation are avoided.

- Ratel Rivier Manor is to be retained and conserved.
- Alterations to its external envelope are to be avoided, apart from where necessary through justified and HWC approved maintenance.
- Removal and/or alterations of any of the significant elements listed above should be avoided at all costs, with the exception of approved restoration/repair work e.g. removal of the cupboard doors enclosing the old kitchen hearth.
- Alterations to the interior in order to install and/or renovate existing bathroom and the kitchen spaces are likely to be permissible, in principle.
- With the exception of the internal partition walls separating numbered bathroom/utility room spaces 4-6; 14-15; 18-20 & 24-25 (See Tswana University measured plan), removal of internal walls should be avoided at all costs, though limited new internal openings may be permitted in the manor’s internal partition walls subject to HWC endorsement.
Figure 6 The homestead from the front garden. The original house is on the left hand side, while the portion to the right is a late 20th century addition.
6.2 Garden cottages

There were three cottages in the garden, all which were destroyed by fire leaving only the calcrete and brick fabric. Two of these cottages were recent however one building (the meat house) was present in a larger form in 1937, and may be an early structure (figure 6, map 1).

Of the three garden cottages that existed prior to the 2011 fire, none survived in-tact. Two of the cottages were recent (built after 1937, and even into late 20th century) while a single cottage known as the “meat house” is earlier. There is reason to believe that this cottage may have twinned in proportion to a wing of the main house. A possible archaeological signature of the full size of the structure is likely to lie under the lawn (crop mark visible). The meat house is extensively damaged to the extent that the merit of conserving its remains is questionable.

Figure 7 The garden cottages. Top: the ruins of one of the recent cottages, bottom left: a surviving unfired mud brick interior gable hints that the “Meat House” was a larger structure. Bottom right: the surviving end gable of the “Meat House” is of fired brick – home made and of non-standard size bricks. This was an earlier building.
1.1.4 Recommendations for redevelopment

There is no compelling reason in heritage terms why the two recent garden cottages should be rebuilt – they are recent and of small heritage significance apart from contributing a recent layer to the site. They can be demolished or rebuilt should SAN-Parks wish to do so.

There is good reason to believe that the “Meat House” was an early structure that in the past was much greater in length. Redevelopment of this (if desired) must be informed by an archaeological investigation that will involve exposing earlier elements if development is planned.
Figure 8 The main buildings at Ratel Rivier from a recent aerial photograph contrasted with an image from 1937. In 1937 the farm house had retained it "H" shaped configuration. It was extensive added to in the 20th century.
6.3 Stables

The stables were described by visitors to the farm before the fire as one of the “gems” of the site (figures Built during the Fletcher era (early 20 the century) these lofty thatched buildings erected with reference to south coast vernacular architecture, contained a variety of fine wood elements in the stalls, cast iron work and also made use of shipwreck materials. The 2011 fire was particularly devastating destroyed the large expanse of thatch roof, all interior woodwork and damaging the iron work. In many areas the heat was so intense that the calcrete stone walls were metamorphosed to a soft friable texture. Today the gables still stand, but somewhat perilously. All doors, window frames have been destroyed and many relieving arches have collapsed as a result of destruction of the wooden lintels in the walls. Due to the high health and safety risk associated with the ruins, the site has been cordoned off.

Even in ruined form the stables are spectacular and still contribute to the setting and spirit of the place.

Arcon had the following to say about the significant elements of this building: The exterior of the stable was identified as being highly significant and it was recommended that this should be kept as in-tact as possible. Within the building the following elements were identified:

(i) In General: Timber joinery and construction details suggest that the stable block dates back to the farm’s acquisition by the Fletcher family approximately at the beginning of the 20th Century.

(ii) Significant elements include:

• all joinery including stall partitions, ladder and feed chute;
• central cast iron columns supporting floor centres of the attic floors (Figure 10);
• all rafters, some of which are, notably, recycled ships masts presumably recovered from the nearby beach (Figure 11);
• the rough stone floors, including floor channels (Figure 12);
• the central post supporting the southern lean-to structure (a portion of recycled ships mast); and
• All doors and windows, door ironmongery and ironwork including the weather vane on the roof ridge.

1.1.5 Recommendations for redevelopment

Unfortunately the 2011 fire destroyed almost every element identified by ARCON as being conservable, and severely damaged the building shell. Some cast iron elements have survived, and probably the stone floors (now covered in rubble). Damage to the stone work has been substantial, in particular around openings where hot gasses affected the calcrete very badly, the gables and attic windows which appear to have been subject to intense heat and are crumbling rapidly. If this structure did not exist within its present context it could be argued that demolition would be an appropriate course of action. As it is, the building is a health and safety risk.

The existence of good measured drawings and photographs as well the contribution that the structure made to setting of Ratel River argues for the reconstruction of the exterior of the stables. The interior of the structure is a “write off”. The property owner should be given a freehand to adapt the structure for accommodation within the confines of an accurately reconstructed exterior. It must be taken into consideration that a considerable amount of
fabric will have to be demolished due to heat damage and replaced with new material. It quite probable that brick faced with dressed calcrete may be required as it may not be possible to obtain good quality calcrete without having to go through the expense of obtaining a mining license to quarry more from a suitable source. Windows and joinery, overall proportions will have to be replicated and the thatch replaced.

Figure 9 The stables, possibly not long after completion (photograph courtesy SAN-Parks)
Figure 11 The stables photographed in the late 20th century before the fire (courtesy SAN-Parks).

Figure 10 The stables as photographed by ACO in 2014.
6.4 Outbuildings

Unlike the stable building the main farm buildings which took the form of a large organically evolved longhouse (workshops, barns, generator room) developed over time and was not a single construction event. Like all the other buildings on the property it is built from calcrete blocks. Like the stables it was devastated in the 2011 fire. A few recent lean-to structures against the outbuilding complex were less damaged; however these are less significant elements.

Arcon describe the structure thus:

(i) In General: Comprises a series of attached gabled structures under thatch, and similar in architectural character to the stable block. It is, therefore, possible that this structure also dates back to the time of the Fletcher family. The plan of this building suggests that it originated as a series of agricultural utility spaces incorporating a barn. The residential accommodation on the northwest end of the building appears to have been inserted later (possibly within the last few decades) judging from the thinner partition walls. Note that access could not be gained to the interior of the residential portion of this building and, therefore, these areas have not been commented on.

(ii) Significant elements:
- Relate mainly to the external envelope (stone walls, thatch roof and, an external hearth).
- The structure’s interior however incorporates some good period stone flooring and timber rafters.
- Windows and doors represent a variety of periods creating a whole that contributes strongly to the overall picturesque and strongly English character of this part of the werf.

1.1.6 Current condition

Unfortunately all joinery of any significance has been lost. The shell of the structure stands but again this is a health and safety risk as relieving arches and gables are collapsing. The stone work has degenerated due to intense heat. The generator room and Deutz generator is the only element that has survived relatively intact. ARCON placed emphasis on the significance of the exterior of this complex of structures as they formed a “set” with the stables and demonstrated style and themes of the buildings that make the Ratel Rivier farm complex so unique and distinctive.

1.1.7 Recommendations for redevelopment

Again, the massive extent of the damage would justify demolition of this complex of buildings, however the existence of good records, and the contribution of the structure to the quality of the werf argue a case for for reconstruction. The interior of the structure is very seriously damaged however some of the interior walls may be rescue-able. The form and major divisions of the building should be retained if possible. The property owner should be permitted to adapt the structure for accommodation within the confines of an accurately reconstructed exterior. It must be taken into consideration that a considerable amount of fabric will have to be demolished due to heat damage and replaced with new material. It quite probable that brick faced with dressed limestone/calcrete may be required as it may not be possible to obtain good quality calcrete without having to go through the expense of
obtaining a mining license to quarry more from a suitable source. Windows and joinery, overall proportions will have to be replicated and the thatch replaced.

6.5 Staff cottages

Only one of the four staff cottages survived the fire intact.

ARCON describe the staff cottages thus:

(i) In General: All have typical traditional long house forms. The age of these cottages cannot easily be established due to the lack of documentation on Ratel Rivier, and the similarity of their construction and materials, although the TUT measured drawings reveal that some have more substantial internal walls than others. (Judging on internal wall thicknesses, K & L may be the oldest – these are also notably the farthest from the main homestead). Interiors are simple and unadorned, showing signs of relatively recent internal renovations including some bathroom insertions.

(ii) Significant elements:
  • Relate mainly to the external envelopes of these buildings (stone walls, thatch roof with half-round gables and, in the cases of I, K & L: an external hearth each).
  • Windows and doors represent various periods from the early 20th Century create a whole that contributes strongly to the overall picturesque and strongly English character of this part of the werf.

6.6 Recommendations for redevelopment

Since these buildings were so simple the apparent relative damage inflicted by the fire seems less. The thatched roofs and rafters have been burned out, however the stone fabric appears to have survived in better condition – walls are complete and the gables continue to stand. It could be that the lesser expanses of thatch roof and woodwork on these smaller structures reduced the intensity and duration of the burning, thus preserving the walls better. While not as spectacular they represent a better and less expensive restoration opportunity than either the stables or the outbuildings. Good documentary evidence, the simplicity of the buildings as well as an intact standing example make restoration viable.

The “hunters house” survived the fire with the thatched roof intact along with joinery and fenestration. It is unfortunately in a bad state of repair – a eucalyptus tree is encroaching on the thatch, woodwork is exposed to elements. The structure is in need of simple maintenance, and responsible occupancy. This needs to be attended to quickly as damage will increase incrementally in forthcoming years.
Figure 12  A view looking towards the south east. The ruins of the outbuildings are on the left, the stables to the right.

Figure 13  The ruins of the out-buildings.
Figure 14 The Hunters cottage - the only surviving staff cottage.

Figure 15 One of the burned out staff cottages. Two others are in similar condition.
7 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of Ratel Rivier lies in its well-known history of notable families who have over generations of occupation of the site observed a consistency of materiality and building style to create a homogenous and aesthetically pleasing human made environment. This “tradition” of building has continued through from the 129th century to the start of the 20th century, and even as late as 1993.

The actual historic core structure remains in-tact and is restorable.

The farm with all its elements is set within the remote and scenic wetlands environment of the south coast – an environmentally unique area.

The wealth of existing historical information about the site enhances its overall significance.

The site enjoys significance in the regional history of the area being associated with a number of notable or famous personalities.

7.1 Grading

The severe fire has damaged the significance of the site to the extent that on an individual basis only two structures can be justifiably graded. The existing homestead and surviving in-tact staff cottage are worthy of grade IIIA status.

On account of its setting, history and aesthetic qualities the farm as a whole is worthy of grade IIIA status. This grading could reach Provincial significance if good quality re-use of the precinct is achieved.

8 ARCHAEOLOGY

Only one area of apparent archaeological sensitivity was located in the werf. Indications are that the “Meat House” was a far larger building then it is today. The original footprint may have survived under the lawn of the rear yard.

There will be other foundations of buildings that have disappeared but were not visible at the time of the survey. For these minimum intervention is suggested.

Similarly the farm cemetery should be controlled in terms of excessive vegetation growth, and a policy of minimum intervention applied.

Any unforeseen finds must be reported to the Provincial Heritage Authority and/or an archaeologist.
Table 1 (below) summarizes impacts heritage in general terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT ALTERNATIVE</th>
<th>POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT / NATURE OF IMPACT</th>
<th>ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE</th>
<th>MITIGATION</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BEFORE MITIGATION</td>
<td>AFTER MITIGATION</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>M  D  E  I  R  P  TOTAL (SP)  S  CUMULATIVE</td>
<td>M  D  E  I  R  P  TOTAL (SP)  S  CUMULATIVE</td>
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<td>8+ 5 2 2 4 5 115</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Effect on Heritage</strong></td>
<td><strong>H</strong> (+)</td>
<td><strong>H</strong> (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restoration of Ratel River Homestead, rebuilding of outbuildings and upgrade of services</td>
<td>Carried out restoration and reconstruction in the right way, continued use of the property will hopefully ensure that it will continue to be valued and conserved.</td>
<td>-  -  -  -  -  -  -</td>
<td>8+ 5 2 2 4 5 115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No-go” alternative</td>
<td>The structures will remain derelict, degradation will continue resulting in, over time, the loss of the heritage resource.</td>
<td>8- 5 2 5 4 5 120</td>
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(Note: Evaluation components: M – Magnitude; D – Duration; E – Extent; R - Reversibility; I - Irreplaceable; P – Probability; S – Significance)
1. The redevelopment of Ratel Rivier will mitigate some degree the severe damage that has taken place, however this work must be done expertly to achieve a suitable result in heritage terms.

2. Distasteful or inappropriate alterations to the exterior of buildings will have a negative impact. Well resolved designs and expert input reconstruction will have a positive impact.

3. Indications are that due to the mainly above surface nature of the proposed interventions impacts to archaeology and paleontology will of very low significance.

4. The impacts of a no-go alternative would be highly negative and result in the eventual loss of the resource.

9.1 Visual impacts

The proposed activity does not involve the construction of any new structures at this time, however visual impacts can result from construction of walls and fences, ill-conceived signage, expanses of hardtop roads and parking areas and overpowering gates to the property. To avoid this, as little new infrastructure as possible should be added to the werf. It would be important to avoid placing hard surface on roads in order to maintain the rural quality; similarly formalized paved paths should only be used where absolutely necessary. If the principal of minimum intervention is applied, there will be no negative visual impacts.

9.2 Mitigation

The damage to the stables and other farm buildings at Ratel Rivier goes beyond the loss of thatch and wooden joinery. The structures are made of calcrete and calcified sand blocks. Calcium carbonate is the basic ingredient of cement, so when the fabric is subject to a high temperature, it becomes porous and powdery and very prone to erosion. Over time it will harden, but the Cape winter rains will cause continued erosion and damage. Every building apart from the main house and one staff cottage will continue to crumble unless redevelopment takes place with minimal delay. Already too much time elapsed between the fire of 2011 and the present day.

- One could consider the damage that has taken place to farm buildings to be a total loss, however the history of the site, its architecture, its gardens and setting make this a unique site which could argue a case for expert reconstruction. There is ample documentation to inform this process. The reconstruction will be expensive and onerous, requiring unique knowledge and skills. It will take time and will likely to be expensive. The exterior form and textures of the buildings will need to be restored and thatch roofing re-done. Furthermore, the original consistency of material across the entire werf will need to be achieved.

- If expert reconstruction is not envisaged and budgetary issues are a constraint, it is strongly recommended that the ruin shells be stabilized and made safe, then retained as features of interest on the property. Resources for restoration should then be directed to the main house, and the farm cottages which would be a much more economical restoration opportunity.

- The grounds with kraals and walls should be continued to be retained. Non-invasive exotic garden plants must not be removed as these are part of the cultural history of the site. The garden must continue to be maintained (as SAN-Parks is doing).
Any envisaged work must involve the services of a restoration architect who has knowledge of working with historical fabric, as well as a good understanding of south coast architecture.

Demolition of the two recent garden cottages can be envisaged as these are in very poor condition. Reconstruction may take place if the proponent desires.

The structure known as the “Meat House” is archaeologically sensitive and must be subject to a focused study involving trial excavations prior to development taking place.

Provided that major works is confined to the interiors of structures, and a minimum of new interventions are carried out on the property visual impacts will be negligible.
10 CONCLUSION

Provided that the measures that are implemented in this and the Arcon study of 2007, the redevelopment of Ratel Rivier will be of overall benefit in heritage terms – a distinctly positive impact. It is important that further steps to this end are followed in the short-medium term.

Following this survey and analysis, it may be concluded that the actual historic core of Ratel Rivier is quite small as the majority of fabric on the site dates to the 20th century. The excursing of “good taste” and the implementation of a consistent architecture and materiality across the werf for the duration of the 20th century resulted in the creation of a farm complex with a unique presence that fits in well with the local vernacular and the environment in which it is situated. It is however mostly all a series of fake-ups of an architectural style derived from the relatively diminutive original homestead. It is the resulting aesthetic quality that is perhaps the site’s finest heritage quality rather than the technical details of its development. Even after the devastating fire this quality continues to prevail.

The planned reconstruction of the burned out elements at Ratel Rivier is in contrast to current heritage wisdom which does not support “faking” and values originality highly. This study has identified two alternative directions for future redevelopment of the site.

10.1 Option for reconstruction of stables and outbuilding, restoration of homestead.

The case for reconstruction can be argued on the grounds that:

- The consistency of form and material is needed to retain the particular quality of the place, and give meaning to its history.
- The site is characterized by a history of building structures throughout the 20th century in a particular style to maintain a patina of rural charm and age – even structures of the late 20th century were “faked” to mimic the architecture of the main house and stables (the stables were an early mimic of the vernacular).
- There is good documentary evidence to inform a reconstruction process in the form of measured drawings that are of adequate quality to reconstruct exterior forms.
- The history of the site is well known.
- There are photographs available that depict the site over time.

However unless this can be done with the correct materials and skill, adequate funding and general attention to detail, the reconstruction route should not be followed and the second alternative that we have proposed in this report be considered.

10.2 Alternative option for restoration of homesteads and refurbishment of staff cottages.

In acknowledgment of the fact that achieving the reconstruction option will be expensive, and demanding on materials and skills, and possibly un-feasible, an alternative option will see restoration of the homestead and the staff cottages, along with stabilizing/making safe the ruins.

- The stone fabric of the staff cottages is not as severely damaged by fire therefore the degree of reconstruction needed will be less.
- An example of a staff cottage has survived.
- There is good documentation.
• Less expensive and taxing on skills and resources.

10.3 Way forward

• Future work must involve the compilation of a detailed redevelopment proposal by a recognized conservation architect. A landscape plan must be included in this.

• Since this report is part of an EIA process, section 38.10 applies. This report therefore recommends that HWC continued to be seen as a commenting authority and that all proposals are forwarded for the consideration of the relevant committees of that organization for comment.

• All consulting work must be carried out by recognized professionals.

• Any archaeologist who works on the site must be a registered ASAPA member accredited at PI level in historical archaeology by ASAPA.

• In the development of a detailed re-use/conservation proposal, the fundamentals of the Burra Charter should be observed.

• The restoration of the primary heritage resource – the existing homestead must take precedence over all other work.
11 REFERENCES


Surveyor General 1831 Quitrent Survey of Ratel Rivier
APPENDIX 1: INTERIM COMMENT TO THE NID

RESPONSE TO NOTIFICATION OF INTENT TO DEVELOP

In terms of section 38(6) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) and the Western Cape Provincial Gazette 6081, Notice 298 of 2003

Attention: Mr Mark Day
Suite 336
Private Bag X15
Somerset West
7129

CASE NUMBER: 1401005TS0212
NID: RATEL RIVER HOMESTEAD DEVELOPMENT ON RATEL RIVER 200 PORTION 6, CAPE AGULHAS NATIONAL PARK

The matter above has reference.

Your NID dated 24 January 2014 was tabled and the following was discussed:

1. SANParks wishes to convert the main farm house, stables and outbuildings into self-catering accommodation units.
2. Associated with this will be the upgrade of infrastructure, i.e. water, electricity, sewerage services and internal roads.
3. Apart from Quaternary fossils in the calcrete deposits, there seems to be little likelihood of impacts on palaeontology.
4. The farm is only 5 km from the coast and therefore close enough for coastal dwellers to visit and previous studies have found a number of shell scatters and pre-colonial potsherds.
5. The farm is likely to have high historical archaeological potential dating back to the 18th century.

Decision:
1. Since there is reason to believe that heritage resources will be impacted upon, HWC requires an HIA in terms of S. 38(3) of the NHRA (Act 25 of 1999) assessing the impacts on the following heritage resources which it has identified: a Heritage Impact Assessment consisting of an Archaeological study, a Built Environment study and a Visual study.
2. An integrated set of recommendations is required.
APPENDIX 2: ORAL COMMENTS ON THE HISTORIC PROPERTY


De Jong (2007) records that there was probably a threshing floor (trapvloer) on the property prior to the Fletcher period, but Fletcher was responsible for setting up a mill driven by an old “ysterwieltrekker” (iron wheel tractor?) in a building close to the first house.

The farm also had its own school in the 1930s.

The big ditch near the house is where the horses drank water and the clothes were washed.

A farm shop at one end of the stables.

Dogs were imported to catch the jackal and lynx and they were housed in their own kennels with an adjoining room for the dog keeper. Pig sties behind the house date to the Fletcher/Fry period.

Stephen Fry initially lived in a room in the building next to the main house. This building was known as the lower stables as the work horses were kept here. The school and smithy was also in this building to the east of the house.

- Have a look at the De Jong report on the Fletcher/Fry period – there is a sketch of the old H-shaped house before the additions.

WEST

```
      Kombuis  |  2 Slaapkamers |  Hoof sitkamer
             |              |
             | Breë gang    |
          Eetkamer | Klein sitkamer | Ethel se kamer | Slaap kamer
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EAST

This is what the house looked like.

The front door opened into a small passage. Left was the dining room, with to the left of that a small room where Nellie Fletcher lived. On the inside of this room, next to the passage, was a “butler’s pantry” with a door into the passage, facing the kitchen. The Butler’s pantry had a hatch for serving food into the dining room and there was a door from the dining room into the passage. Both were later closed and changed to shelves and a cupboard. The butler’s pantry became a bathroom and toilet.

To the right of the small passage, was a small sitting room with a door to the next room, to the left of the fireplace, to the room which as occupied by Ethel. There was another door to the next bedroom. Both doors (?) were closed with shelves and a cupboard.

The passage walls were removed to create the big rooms which we have today.
Next to the kitchen was two small bedrooms, one being a children’s room. The door of the children’s room was right opposite the passage. There is a built in cupboard today.

Next to the bedrooms was the main lounge, with the low window, where the children used to climb in and out of the window. From this window, it was possible to see the red gate of the farmhouse.

The passage between the two wings of the house was always broad. The Fletcher’s added the very small bathroom at the end of the passage at one stage.

The back door, from the kitchen, faced toward the direction of the meat and milk outside room.

There was no wall around the garden. Only a short wall by the “solder” staircase. There was a curved gate, which was stored in the attic of the stables (now destroyed).