

**Short desktop assessment of the farmstead situated on  
Portion 1 of the farm Bellevue 15321, Pietermaritzburg**



*Fig: Showing site from north (Author 2010)*

Prepared for:  
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## Introduction and methodology:

Debbie Whelan of Archaic Consulting was requested by Gavin Anderson of Umlando Archaeological Tourism and Resource Management to prepare a short desktop report on the heritage value of the buildings forming the Bellevue Farmstead located at Bellevue, east of Pietermaritzburg. The intention was the completion of a first phase Architectural and historical Impact Assessment with the intention of total demolition of the structures extant on the property. Please note that there was a time and budget limitation on the production of this report.

A site inspection was carried out and the buildings assessed and photographed. The buildings directly affected by the 60 year clause in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Heritage Act No 4 of 2008 were identified as the old shale barns and associated silos, the old brick barn and the main house. Discussion of the other buildings on this site younger than 60 years of age is not covered by the scope of the brief.

## Short history of farm based on the land registers

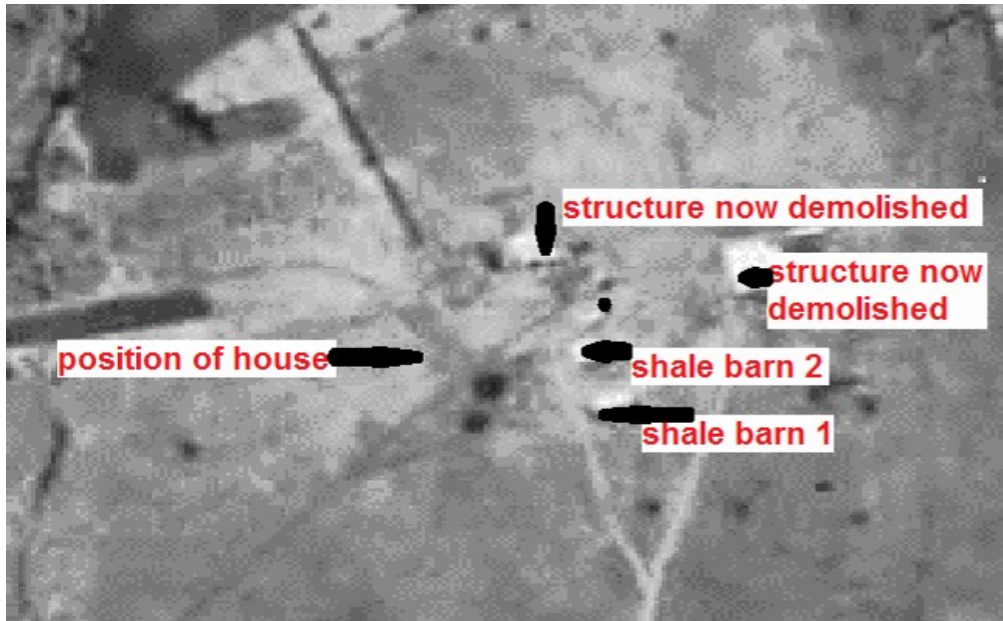
The farm was located as being situated on portion 1 of Ockerts Kraal 1336 which formed the basis for the land register investigations. The original grant was in 1853 to Gerhardus Jacobus Rudolph, who created Subdivision 1 in 1857 which was sold to Arend de Kock. This was further subdivided and in 1866 the Remainder was registered in the name of David Dale Buchanan, an advocate and the founder of the Natal Witness. He sold the Remainder to the Natal Bank in 1874. The property was then transferred to John Arnold in 1878, Percy James Peckham in 1917, Norman HD Ferguson in 1943 and then in 1965 partitioned by Norman Henry Daniel Ferguson to form a new farm known as Bellevue1321 through consolidation.

## Evaluation of structures



**Fig 1: Site layout showing buildings of concern**

Fig 1 above shows the site layout and the structures of concern. It is related to Fig 2 below, in that the latter is the aerial photograph from 1937 showing the farmstead as it stood then.



**Fig 2: 1937 aerial photograph showing the barns and two demolished structures**

### **Old shale barns 1 and 2 and the associated silos**

The 1937 aerial photos are diagnostically uncertain, but the two barns appear to be extant. There is no sign at this photographic resolution as to the presence of the silos, and it is suspected that these were constructed at a later date. The two silos are positioned between the barns.

Both of the barns are of mixed, though largely shale construction which situates them as vernacular buildings located any time between the middle years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and 1937 when they are present on the photographs. Barn no 2 has been extended more recently to the north-west. The roof sheeting is old, and there is little diagnostic marking on the underside of the sheeting. However, the space between the barns was roofed in more recent times. Apertures below wall-plate level have been filled in with brick at some time.

In addition, an important feature of the site is the two silos. They form part of the architectural massing of the barns and create a topophilia on the site. For travellers along the N3, this farmstead is characterised by the barns and the silos, and forms a landmark along the road.





***Figs 5 and 6: Showing grouping of silos, barns 1 and 2 and brick barn, and extended portion of barn no 1 with silo in foreground***



**Figs 5 and 6: The covered space between shale barns and Barn no 1 with a silo behind**

| Barns / silos | Local          | regional | national | international |
|---------------|----------------|----------|----------|---------------|
| Architectural | low            | low      | low      | low           |
| Historical    | medium         | low      | low      | low           |
| technical     | low            | low      | low      | low           |
| scientific    | low            | low      | low      | low           |
| social        | High- landmark | low      | low      | low           |

### Old brick barn

This structure is of painted brickwork in English bond under a corrugated sheeting roof. It is suspected that it dates to pre-1950. It forms part of a group together with the shale barns. It has certainly been extended to the north-west since its original construction.



**Figs 7 and 8: Showing the old brick barn: the portion towards the trees is in English bond suggesting that this portion was pre- or immediately post- World War II.**

| Brick barn    | Local           | regional | national | international |
|---------------|-----------------|----------|----------|---------------|
| Architectural | Part of a group | low      | low      | low           |
| Historical    | medium          | low      | low      | low           |
| technical     | low             | low      | low      | low           |
| scientific    | low             | low      | low      | low           |
| social        | High- landmark  | low      | low      | low           |

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** *Given the age and scale of the shale barns it is recommended that these structures, together with the silos be reused in the new development. Since the brick barn is likely of an age, and part of an architectural grouping, its contribution to the topophilia of the site indicates that it too, should be retained and reused.*

**The main house**

The house is a good example of a Natal Veranda farmstead building. It has a spectacular site looking down into the valley below and out towards Table Mountain. An important part of the site is the four large palm trees situated symmetrically on the terrace below the house.

It is of conventional construction under a low pitched corrugated sheeting roof. The windows are mainly stock steel items and there is little evidence of these being changed, suggesting that they are largely original windows. The floors are parquet, and the ceiling painted strip timber. There is an extensive veranda to the north and the west which is a state of disrepair. Simple pre-cast Tuscan columns support the veranda roof.

The house does not feature on the 1937 aerial photograph. It is suspected that it could have been constructed by the Ferguson family in either 1943 or later in 1965. It is currently unoccupied and needs much work for full rehabilitation. It is removed from the group of barns and has little relation to them.



| Main house    | Local | regional | national | international |
|---------------|-------|----------|----------|---------------|
| Architectural | low   | low      | low      | low           |
| Historical    | low   | low      | low      | low           |
| technical     | low   | low      | low      | low           |
| scientific    | low   | low      | low      | low           |
| social        | low   | low      | low      | low           |

**Figs 9 and 10:** *The main house at Bellevue from the north-east and from the north-west*

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** *Given the dislocation from the farmstead, the lack of association with buildings of landmark, and its minimal architectural, social or historical merit, it is suggested the demolition of this building could be considered an option.*



**Other notes:**

***There is a pile of substantial timber beams***

***suspected to originate from the farmstead lying next to the barns. It is recommended that these be donated to the Amafa Materials Bank for reuse in historic structures in need.***