

**Architectural Impact Assessment for the building on the
property known as Heidelberg, Lot 13 of 3 of the farm Hilton
12304**



Heidelberg House, south east view (Photo: Author November 2008)

**Prepared for: Afzelia Environmental Consultants
Lower Hilton Quarry Centre
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1. Introduction, Terms of Reference and Methodology

Debbie Whelan of Archaic Consulting was approached by Rowena Harrison of Afzelia Environmental Consultants to prepare a report with respect to the structures on the above property. From this report, Archaic Consulting was requested to make the appropriate applications to *Amafa aKwaZulu-Natali* with respect to the structures on the site.

However, according to the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act no 10 of 1997, demolition or alteration of *all* structures which are older than 60 years is subject to approval by Amafa aKwazulu-Natali, and for this reason, other structures on the site were inspected to expedite any further enquiry. A site inspection was carried out by the author on 5 November 2008.

The consultation of the 1937 Aerial photographs of the area, (photo number 117B_0) clearly shows structures on the site. This situates at least an initial structure on the site at over 70 years old, which would have made it subject to the *Amafa* application process. The aim of this report was originally thus to assess the structure, and provide recommendations for its demolition or preservation.

However, on site a different scenario presented itself. The house had been incrementally built using materials from demolitions yards and auction houses. In this respect the author contacted the erstwhile owner, and her testimony forms much of the basis of this report. Land Registers were also checked out at the Deeds Office to establish the possible point of construction of a building on the property and they correlate with the information provided by Mrs. Nancy Gardiner.

As the other buildings on the site were clearly visually datable as being of recent construction, which was corroborated by the former owner, they do not form part of this report. However, as substantial *parts* of Heidelberg are parts of long demolished structures, they constitute historic objects and can thus be protected in terms of the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act.

2. Executive Summary

Heidelberg House is an extraordinary endeavour which at face value, being constructed from 1970 onwards, has no historic merit. However, the house was built by Ian and Nancy Gardiner and their family, and with Nancy Gardiner being a long time national gardening celebrity, has social connotation. In addition, the established garden is notable and as much effort to retain this should be made.

However, many of the items that comprise Heidelberg House, some below listed from the interview with Mrs. Gardiner, have individual merit and value as historic objects. These are protected in terms of the Heritage Act Clause 21 (1) 'Heritage Object Status shall be applicable to artifacts or collections thereof which are of substantial aesthetic, historic, scientific or technological importance, or which have a significant connection to a site protected under this Act and which shall be the subject of regulations.' and (2) No Person shall destroy, damage, alter, restore or remove such an object from its place of storage except under the authority of a permit issued by Amafa aKwaZulu-Natali. The intention is, that in the event of a demolition, rather than these items be relegated to scrap-yards by the demolisher, they can be moved to the Amafa Building Materials Bank for recycling into appropriately old structures.

Although the author identified a structure on this site in 1937, there is no evidence of this today. Indeed, Mrs Gardiner asserts that the site was almost open veld when they bought the property, and that a prefabricated building was on the site. ***Thus, the building as it stands, constructed in 1970, is not subject to Amafa approval for alteration or demolition. It is some of the components of this building that have heritage value, and their retention or disposal should be negotiated with Amafa.***

3. Short history of the site

The property on which Heidelberg is situated formed part of the farm Ongegund 795. Lot A on which Heidelberg is situated was formed in 1860 and sold to James Henderson from the Grantee, Piet Grobelaar's widow. This portion consisted of 2679 acres. In 1896 this passed on to Wilfred Martin Henderson, who was responsible for the consolidation of the site into the new property Hilton 12304 in 1934. In 1970, 26ha of this was purchased in 1965 and known as Subdivision 13 of 3. Johan du Toit was the owner. This passed into the hands of R Faye, and then in 1970 was transferred into the name of Nancy Gardiner. The name Heidelberg was given to the property by the Faye's and the Gardiners decided to keep it. Heide (healthy) I for love and heim for home.

Mrs. Gardiner notes emphatically that when they arrived on the property, it was open grassland and a prefabricated house with chicken runs. What the destiny of the original structure on the site was is not known. At the time that they moved they were living at Monzali's Castle. Having purchased the property in 1970, the Gardiners set about beginning to build their home. Mrs. Gardiner says that they had no bond, and that all of the construction was done by the family, Anthony Dowdell and a couple of labourers and that the materials largely came from scouring scrap-yards and auction houses. They initially used soil cement bricks mined from the place where the sunken garden is. The kitchen was built first and then the adjoining tool-shed as the bathroom. The hexagonal double story was the idea of Peter Jones who assisted them with the design. The garden was non-existent, and she describes planting the trees and having to nurture them as they reached maturity. It took many years to complete the property before they eventually moved in. this garden also contributes in a large manner to the creation of the tophilia of this house.

What happened to the structure on the site in the 1937 aerial photograph is not evident. She says that besides the prefabricated building, there was a concrete block shed on the property in which Faye and his wife lived.

In an interview conducted with Mrs. Gardiner on 13 November 2008, she remembered the following items and where they came from:

The fireplace in the dining-room came from a demolishers yard.

The stained glass window upstairs came from the Prince of Wales Hotel in Durban

The overmantel came from Cotswold Farm, owned by the Duncan Mackenzie family.

The cast iron railings on the stairs came from an old staircase in Durban

The Brosely tiles on the kitchen roof came from an old building that was demolished 'out Edendale way' and Mrs. Gardiner thinks that they came from a Provincial Depot building.

There are 12 Burmese Teak windows.

The diningroom floors came from St Anthony's in Pietermaritzburg- they are of jarrah. The yellow wood ceiling (wide planks) came from a house in Scottsville. They have plastic and corrugated sheeting on top of them and then a slab on top. Mrs. Gardiner says that they were covered in paint and that they used a metal detector to find the nails when they were sanding with a machine.

The timber staircase inside the house came from 'Beachwalk' Arcade in Durban- it was not long enough and so bits had to be added on.

The fireplace in the lounge came from the building which was demolished to make way for the Northdale Police Station.

Ten big wooden doors came from the NBS in Timber Street.

The stained glass window in the dining-room and the spare toilet came from St Thomas's Church in Durban

4. Assessment of Structure

Heidelberg House	local	regional	national	international
Architectural significance	medium	low	low	low
Historical significance	low	low	low	low
Technological significance	low	low	low	low
Scientific significance	low	low	low	low
Social significance	medium	low	low	low

The house consists of a prominent hexagonal double storied space, containing the lounge at the bottom and a bedroom at the top of stairs leading from the entrance hall. To the south of the main hexagon is the kitchen, a single story brosely tiled wing, and to the west a dining room, ceiled in yellowwood planks above which is a terrace leading out from the bedroom upstairs. To the north of the hexagonal space is a bedroom wing and associated bathrooms, roofed with IBR. The eastern elevation of this contains the teak windows as described above. The construction is of medium architectural significance locally and medium social significance locally, given the connotations with the Gardiners. Added to this is the value of the established garden.



Fig 1: Hexagonal living area and bedroom wing



Fig 2; Bedroom wing showing teak windows



Fig 3: Lounge area and chandelier (left)

Fig 4: Lounge area with view out towards garden



Fig 5: Stained glass window in dining-room (Prince of Wales Hotel)



Fig 6: yellowwood ceiling in dining-room

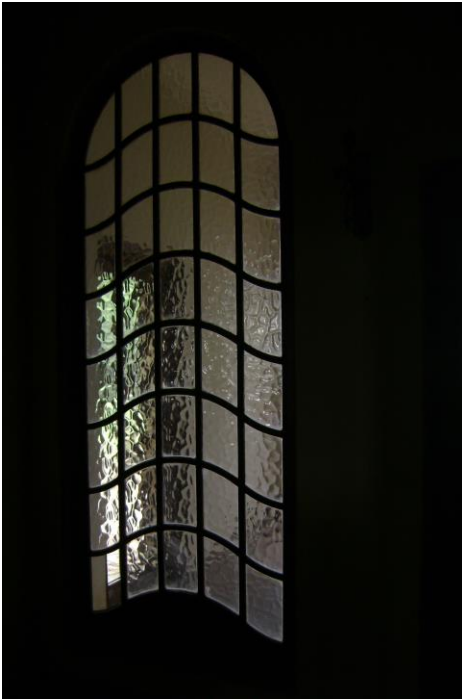


Fig 7: Window in passage looking towards lounge (no recollection as to origin)



Fig 8: Upper story terrace above diningroom, cast iron balustrade from property in Durban



Fig 9: Fireplace in main bedroom above lounge



Fig 10: showing kitchen block from dining room

Fig 11: Showing kitchen from east

4.1 Condition:

The building as it stands is in dire need of maintenance and, in many places, finishing off. Damp and overgrowth have contributed to the lack of maintenance in the last few years, and should good intention mean that the house is retained and fixed up, the position on the site, the views towards Otto's Bluff and Albert Falls, and the established garden around it would mean prime property in the Midlands.