

Onze Molen, Durbanville



Report on Restoration Work

February 2011

1 ONZE MOLEN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

According to the Government Gazette article where the mill is proclaimed as a National Monument, the mill was erected in 1840 and was recorded as the second only tower-mill in the Malmesbury district by 1850. Reports however indicate that the original freehold grant of the farm Johannesfontein was made as early as 1801, which leaves the possibility that the mill may have been built well before.

Historical research undertaken by Bronhilde Eckermans indicates that the property was granted to Johannes Jacobus Uys and the widow Roeland in 1801. They sold the property to Melt and Van der Spuy in 1837. Until this time no reference has been found regarding the Mill. The first tangible evidence of its existence is a 1942 land surveyors diagram which indicates its position. The property was sold to Jacobus Johannes Snubbe in 1843 and the Mill is referred to in the title deed of this sale. It is therefore likely that the Mill would have been built between the years 1837 and 1842.

The property was sold and resold a number of times over the years. The portion on which the Mill is situated came into the ownership of the Durbanville Council in 1958. This was resold to a company, Gell's barn in 1965 who in turn sold it to the National Building society in 1983.

According to pamphlets from the Durbanville Cultural society, the name *Onze Molen* was given to the Mill in 1963. There is however no evidence to confirm this. Apparently before this the Mill was known only as *Die Ou Meul*. The mill functioned as a windmill until early in the 20th Century and supplied the local residents with flour. At some point after this, the cap was removed and the mill reduced in height to approximately 4 meters.

According to Dr James Walton, an expert on mills, windmills that were constructed at the Cape after 1800 did not have a thatched cap which was winded by the use of a tail pole. The cap was winded either by a wheel and endless chain or by a fan-tail. Nearly all the Cape windmills built after 1800 also had galleries and sails with stocks down the middle of the sail.

1.1 Background Restoration History

The mill was restored in 1983 by Jordaan, Hartwig & Partners Architects as part of the Onze Molen residential development and was declared a national monument in the same year by the National Monuments Council. The original restoration works were executed by Daljosophat Restorations under Mr Len Raymond.

The mill was restored as part of a condition set by the City Council to allow the developers NBS Devco development rights to subdivide the property. This restoration was meant to be undertaken to the satisfaction of the National Monument's Council. Reports however indicate that the building plans for the restoration were only submitted to council a year after the work was completed. In addition, the plans specified materials which were not used, for instance, teak is specified for structural timbers but ordinary pine was used. (Agenda 14 Feb 1996: Additional Ordinary Meeting: Item 10.5 (16/4/D/3; 18/13/1)

The restoration was criticised in an article in *Die Burger* (Saturday 4 May 1996) by Dr James Walton as being historically incorrect. He stated that the mill was restored as a 'replica' of Mostert's Mill even though *Onze Molen* was built some 50 years after Mostert's Mill. Dr Walton also provided specifications as to how the Mill should be restored to resemble a 19th century windmill as it was, rather than a copy of an 18th Century Cape Dutch Mill. Dr Walton believes that the circle of holes that were exposed during the original restoration should be uncovered and a gallery erected from which shorter common sails could be reefed. That would necessitate the present thatched cap being replaced by a cap which could be winded down by a wheel and endless chain instead of the present fantail.

In 1999, residents in the Onze Molen residential development unanimously vote against the restoration of the mill as an operational mill, favouring a cosmetic restoration instead. This was despite the advice given by Joanna Marx from the Mostert Mill who felt that to convert the *Onze Molen* mill into a tourist attraction it would necessitate spending the money to make the mill functional. The residents argued that the cost of restoring the mill into an operational mill would be very high compared to a stylistic restoration.

1.2 Comments from Joanna Marx about the original restoration

According to the minutes of a meeting regarding the mill on 16 July 1999, Joanna Marx stated that if the mill was restored, it would need to resemble Dr James Walton's specifications. The following defects were also noted;

1. The millstones do not match
2. The horizontal shaft on the cross-beam is misaligned and jammed tight
3. Thatch roof has deteriorated
4. Mill is not bird proof and needs regular cleaning
5. The Vanes have been removed and are kept in storage
6. The specifications of the wood type were not adhered to

2 SNAG LIST

The following defects list was compiled at a site visit on 2 February 2011 by Sjanel Buchel. The list is for external maintenance only. The interior of the mill was not accessed at this stage and this list is not intended to restore the Mill into a working mill but is merely a cosmetic refurbishment.

2.1 Walls/ Platform and Plinth

1. Lime-washing the exterior walls



2. Repair hairline cracks which have formed in the walls and the structural cracks in the platform base and steps.





3. The platform base needs to be treated with a pesticide to remove plant growth which is compromising the structure and is probably the cause for the cracks in the base



4. Replace/ install a plaque on the plinth which has been erected in front of the mill



2.2 Support Structure

1. Structural maintenance for safety of both the exterior and interior machinery and wood work. The timber support structure for the fins needs to be repaired/ replaced and made safe.
2. Repaint external timber work



2.3 Roof

1. Check Roof structure
2. Thatch needs replacing, has been ripped out by birds/ weather
3. Check that bird proofing is all in place



2.4 Doors and Windows

1. Checking and Painting of door and windows. All glazing seems in order, however check catches and locking mechanisms
2. Brass plaque on wall has been damaged on the edges



2.5 Wind Mill Fins

1. Replace sails
2. Repair fins and replace missing timber spokes
3. Replace damaged timber and repaint all external woodwork
4. check structure for safety

