

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT TO NOTICE OF INTENT TO DEVELOP (NID) IN TERMS OF SECTION 38(8) OF THE NATIONAL HERITAGE RESOURCES ACT, 1999 (ACT 25 OF 1999)

PROPOSED SEASONAL TENTED CAMP ON A PORTION OF THE REMAINDER OF FARM DEEP WALL 218 (DIEPWALLE), KNYSNA DISTRICT AND MUNICIPALITY



ON BEHALF OF: SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCES TRADING (PTY) LTD

November 2023

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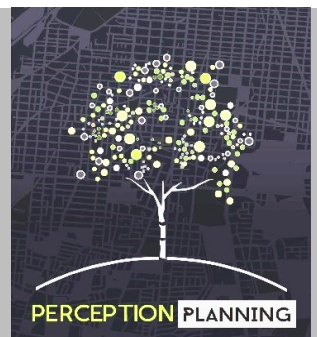
PERCEPTION Planning
7 Imelda Court, 103 Meade Street, George
PO Box 9995, George, 6530

Cell: 082 568 4719

Fax: 086 510 8357

E-mail: perceptionplanning@gmail.com

www.behance.net/perceptionplanningSA



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ABBREVIATIONS

1. DEADP –Department of Environmental Affairs & Development Planning
2. EA – Environmental Authorization
3. HIA – Heritage Impact Assessment
4. HWC – Heritage Western Cape
5. HWC – Heritage Western Cape
6. NGSI – National Geo-Spatial Information, Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, Mowbray
7. NHRA - National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act 25 of 1999)
8. PHS – Provincial Heritage Site
9. SAHRIS – South African Heritage Resources Information System

COVER: Collage of images pertinent to the site (left-to-right) – (1,2) Current context (Author). (3) Elephant cow in the forest (Reynell, 1968 after Discover Sedgefield South Africa, 2023). (4) Coffee Pot locomotive and open carriages (Knysnamuseums.co.za, 2017). (5) Shelters used during filming of "Toorbos" movie on site (Havenga, 2023). (6) Current context (Author).

1. INTRODUCTION

PERCEPTION Planning was appointed by Ms. Lysta Stander (SA ID 6003240129088), being the representative of South African Experiences Trading (Pty) Ltd, on behalf of the Republic of South Africa (the Registered Landowner), to submit to Heritage Western Cape (HWC) a Notice of Intent to Develop (NID) in terms of Section 38(8) of the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act 25 of 1999) in relation to the proposed establishment of a seasonal tented cap and associated infrastructure on a portion of the subject property. Copies of the Power of Attorney, Title Deed and SG Diagram are attached as part of **Annexure 1**.

The cadastral land unit subject to this application include the following:

- Remainder of the farm Deep Wall 218, Knysna District and Municipality, measuring 4139,3614 ha, registered to the Republic of South Africa, and held under title deed T 110/1952.

2. DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

The subject study area (± 3 ha in extent) is situated within a forested landscape ± 15 km northeast of Knysna, ± 33 km south of Uniondale, ± 16 km northwest of Wittedrift and ± 22 km northwest of Plettenberg Bay. Access to the study area from the south (Knysna) is off a narrow, forested track negotiated via the R339/ Prince Alfred Pass, from the east (Wittedrift/ Plettenberg Bay) via the R340 or from the north (Uniondale) via the Prince Alfred Pass (**Figure 1**).



Figure 1: Study area location within sub-regional context (Google Earth, 2022, as edited)

Existing rural settlements within close proximity to the study area include the hamlets of Diepwalle (also location of Diepwalle hut forming part of the Outeniqua Hiking Trail) ± 1.6 km to the northwest, Sonskyn (mainly occupied by former forestry workers) as well as the and Buffelsnek Primary School, both located ± 7 km to the north and the historic settlement of De Vlugt (once a construction camp for convicts who built the Prince Alfred Pass in 1861), located ± 16 km to the north.

During fieldwork undertaken on 14th July 2023 the site was accessed on foot via a narrow forest track $\pm 1,3$ km east of the Prince Alfred Pass/ R339. This track is not used by the public but provides access to a SANParks research site. While densely overgrown it was evident that the area (essentially a clearing in the forest) had previously been transformed through human activities in the past. According to information made available¹ these include historic use of the site as a forestry station (late 19th century), the scene of well-known film sets as well as an elephant boma.

¹ Havenga, K. 2023.

The study area is described by Brooke & Coetzee (2023) as comprising of three habitats, namely Afromontane Forest, a heavily transformed, densely vegetated clearing and man-made woody pond. The study area forms part of a very gentle, east-facing slope.

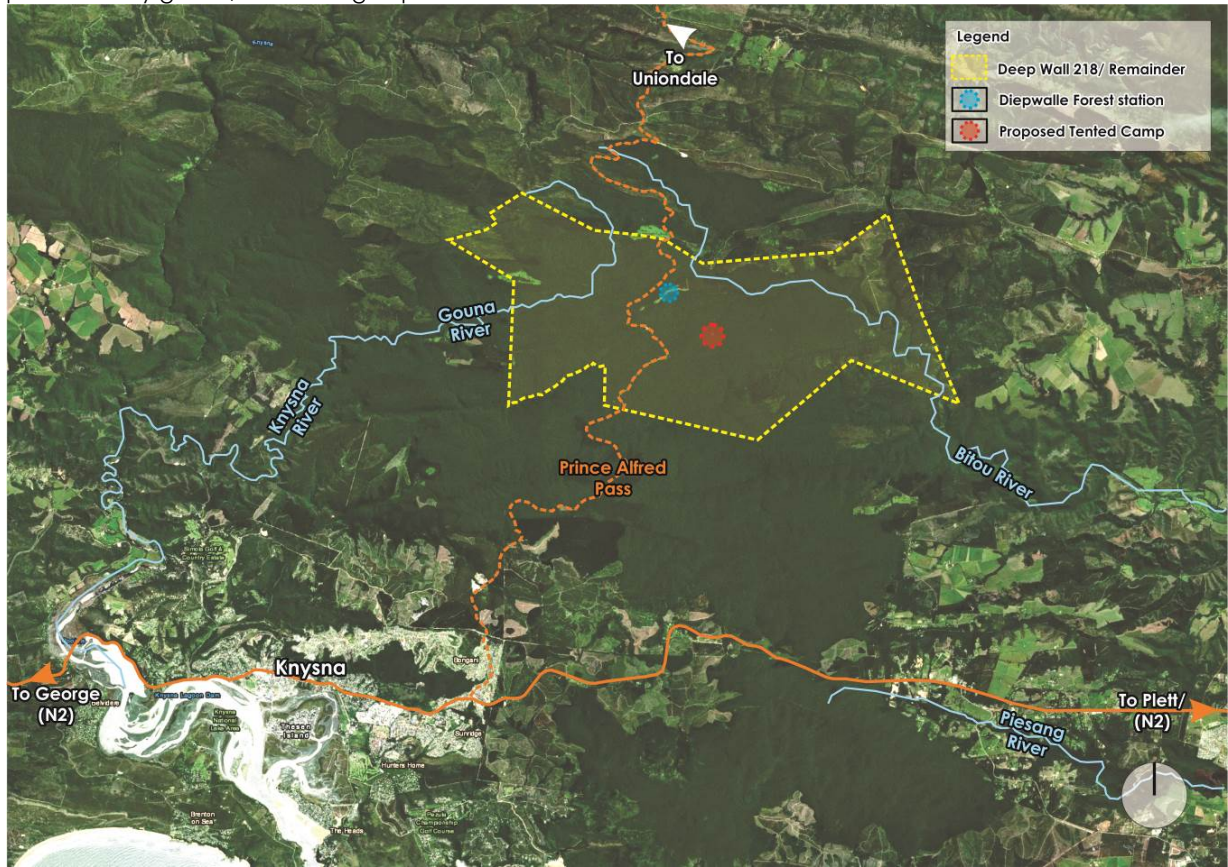


Figure 2: Study area within broader landscape context (Google Earth 2022 as edited)



Figure 3: Study area and features noted during fieldwork (Google Earth 2022 as edited)

The site forms part of the Garden Route National Park managed by SANParks. No buildings occur on or within the direct proximity of the study area. Photographs of the study area and its direct environs are attached to this report as **Annexure 2**.

3. DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

According to information made available a concession was awarded by SANParks to South African Experiences Trading (Pty) Ltd for the establishment of a seasonal tented camp with a physical development footprint of $\pm 5,700\text{m}^2$ spread out across the site (± 3 ha in extent). The proposed development will include the following components:

- 15 x guest tent units (each $\pm 50\text{m}^2$ in extent) set upon timber platforms;
- 1 x dining area;
- 1 x kitchen area;
- Staff accommodation;
- Pool area, yoga deck;
- Raised boardwalk/ pedestrian walkways;
- Forest library and "quiet zones";
- Vehicle access and turning area;
- Water storage (5,000 or 10,000 litre tanks);
- Conservancy tanks;
- Grey water disposal (showers, pool, jacuzzi and kitchen);
- Power (e.g. solar, battery backup) generation;
- Relevant ancillary services and engineering infrastructure.

All structures will be constructed on wooden platforms, be removable out of season as well and with decommissioning of the camp. The main decks, pool area and yoga deck will be joined by a raised wooden walkway and the paths leading to each tent will remain gravel forest paths. Water supply is likely to be via gravity fed pipeline from the existing Diepwalle camp, $\pm 1.6\text{km}$ to the northwest.

The conceptual layout, developed through the input of a multi-disciplinary team, is attached as **Annexure 3** to this report.

4. BROAD HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Basic historic background research focussed on primary sources obtained through the Deeds Office, Surveyor General's Office, relevant secondary sources as well as as research previously undertaken.

4.1 Knysna Timber industry

Exploitation of the forest around Knysna for timber to serve the demands of the construction industry in the newly established and developing colony at the Cape started during the 18th century. During the late 19th and 20th centuries timber merchants such as Thesen & Co. and Geo. Parkes & Sons Ltd. dominated the timber industry (and to a large degree the Knysna economy). One of the lesser know timber trading companies, Templeman Ltd. Timber and General Merchants and Furniture Manufacturers (later sold to Thesen and Co.) was established by JH Templeman around 1880 (Knysnamuseums.co.za, 2017).

Factors such as topography, dense vegetation, weather, and lack of proper roads proved to be significant challenges complicating the extraction of timber harvested in the forests. This led to developments such as the construction of the Prince Alfred Pass (1862-1865) as well as construction of a narrow-gauge railway line, (1907 - 1949) by the South Western Railway Co. Ltd connecting the Deep Wall Forest and Thesen Island (with a detour via Bracken Hill). At Deep Walls the locomotive would be turned around on a three-point switch and then return to the town via Brackenhill (Julyan, 2017).

The railway line was nicknamed as the "Coffee Pot Railway" owing to the cone-shaped chimney of the locomotives used. The railway line terminated at the Deep Wall terminal and the Templeman sawmill, set deep within the forest (Duff, 1966) (**Figure 4**). The railway line was however not very profitable and by the 1930's was replaced by early transport trucks. The company was however forced to close in 1949 – the tracks were lifted, and the locomotives and wagons sold to a sugar cane company in present day KwaZulu Natal (Knysnamuseums.co.za, 2017).

4.2 Prince Alfred Pass

As alluded to above, economic growth during the mid-19th century within Knysna town and surrounds increased the need for a more direct route across the Outeniqua mountains into the Langkloof. While routes such as the Duiwelskop Pass and Paardekop Pass provided access these roads were often poorly maintained and dangerous. First surveyed by Andrew Geddes Bain and his son Thomas Bain during 1856, construction

works commenced during 1862 with the first convict station established at Yzer Nek, though moved to De Vlucht the following year on recommendation of the then Chief Inspector M.R. Robinson. The topography and densely vegetated forest amongst the southern section of the pass reportedly complicated construction works significantly but was formally opened on 29th September 1866 and named the Prince Alfred Pass (Bell-Cross & Venter, 1991).

4.3 Woodcutters locations and Immigrant allotments

By the late 19th century several locations/ hamlets were dotted across the forests north of Knysna. These not only included woodcutters' locations but also agricultural locations/ smallholdings, many of which were granted to immigrants at the time. Some of these settlements included Yzernek, Diepwalle, Buffelsnek, Krantzbosch, Dwarsrivier and Kruis River (see Figure 4).

4.4 Farm Deep Wall 218

The property, as framed during a survey undertaken in 1952 describes it as a portion of Crown Land, measuring 5,415 morgens ($\pm 4,139.3614$ ha), having been transferred to the Government of the Union of South Africa on 5th June 1952 and held under Crown Title No. 110/1952². Early (c. 1880) SG mapping shows the property (Deep Wall Forestry Reserve) and subject study area in relation to, *inter alia*, the village of Knysna, the Coffee Pot Railway line, various woodcutter, and immigrant agricultural settlements as well as early farm boundaries. Several clearings are evident within the boundaries of the Deep Wall Forestry Reserve (one named "Petrus Brandt") where presumably harvesting of timber was underway at the time. The railway line is seen meandering through the forest and ending at Templeton's terminus just west of the study area (Figure 4).

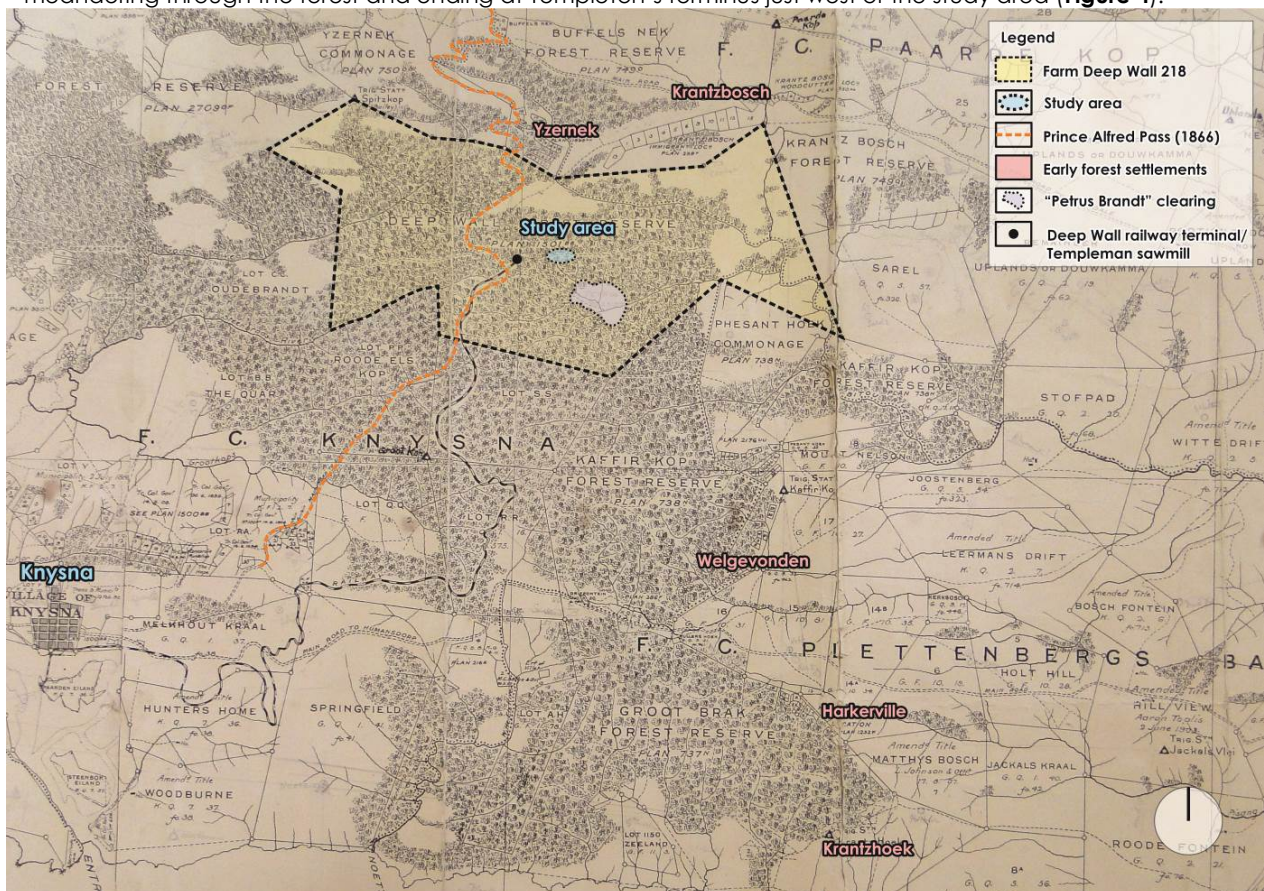


Figure 4: Study area within context of early (1880) mapping of the area showing the Deep Wall Forest Reserve (George Museum Archives as edited).

The original 1949 SG diagram denotes the location of a sawmill the position of which coincides with the subject site and refers to the narrow forest track used to access the site as the "Yzerhout Rug Road". A second "mill", also located along the same track is denoted just east of the sawmill. Apart from the sawmill and mill at least two other structures are denoted along the Yzerhout Rug Road. The locations of several structures forming part of the Deep Wall Forestry Station, just northwest of the study area are highlighted (Figure 5).

4.5 More recent history

In more recent years, the study area served as a film set for the filming of two movies based on the well-known forest novels by South African author Dalene Matthee, namely "Fiela se Kind" (1988) and "Toorbos" (1993). Photographs of temporary structures used during filming of Toorbos were made available by SANParks staff

² SG Diagram 7040/1949

- According to oral history research undertaken by Duff (1966), the railway tracks ended at Diepwalle, which was also the location of the Templeman Sawmill site – note clearing evident on imagery.
- An extensive area forming part of the Deep Wall Forest Station is noted north/ northwest of the study area.



Images 3,4: Elephant boma located on the study area in 1993 during attempts to reintroduce three young elephants to the Knysna Forest (Mackay 1996 & Joubert, 2018).

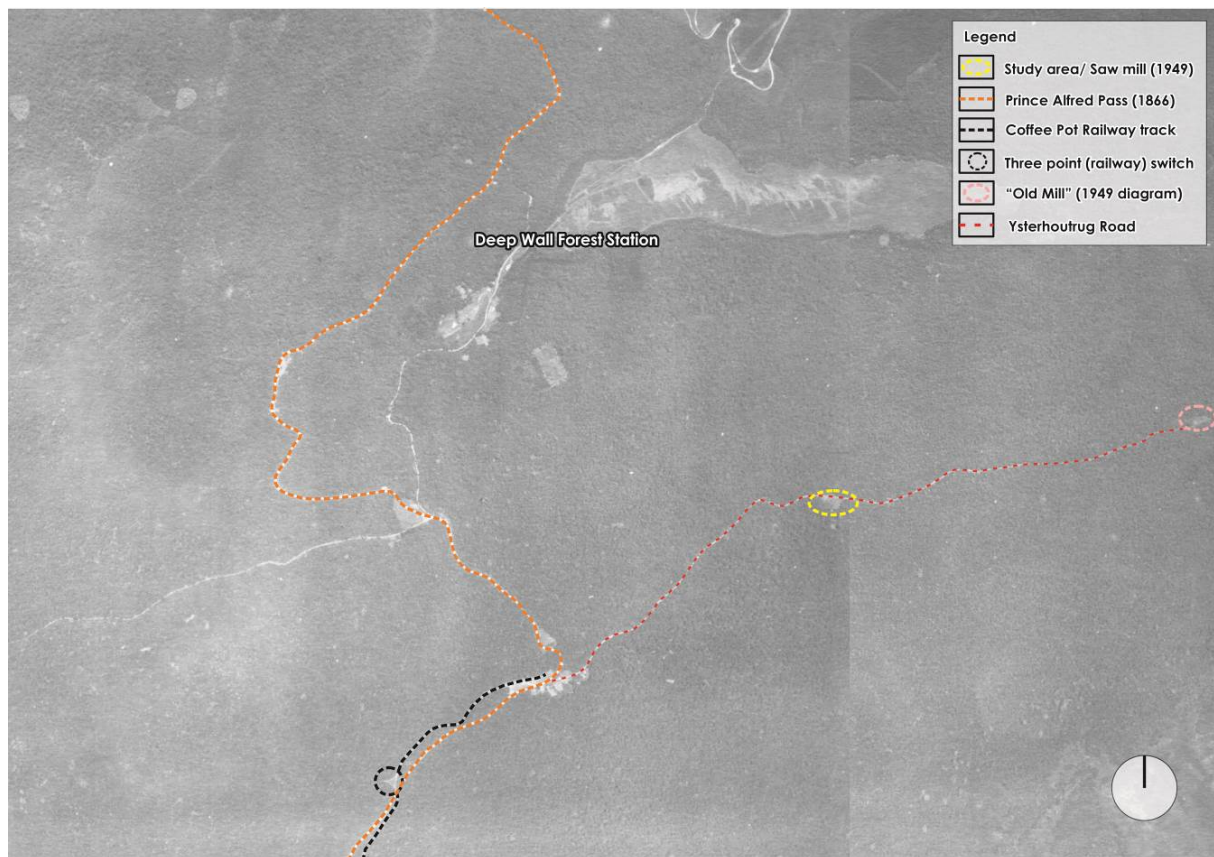


Figure 6: Study area within context of 1936 aerial imagery for the area (Flight Survey 114, Flight Strip 9, Images 19303 & 19304, NGSi as edited)

4.7 Conclusions

From basic historic background research undertaken it is therefore evident that the subject study area coincides with the location of an early sawmill (i.e. as per the 1949 SG Diagram), thus being of historic cultural significance. Subsequently the site was used during efforts to reintroduce elephants into the Knysna forests (scientific cultural significance) and served as filming sets for the production of prominent movies thus furthering cinematography and the performance arts in South Africa (social and historic cultural significance). From a broader perspective, the study area is also intrinsically linked to historic themes related to the early development of, and social history relevant to, the broader the Knysna area, which are considered of high local historic cultural significance.

5. HERITAGE RESOURCES AND ISSUES

Basic research focussing on primary archival and other secondary sources relevant to the area confirms physical transformation of the subject site through human intervention pre-dating the 1940's though evidence confirming even earlier transformation may be unearthed through further archival research. Transient but significant land uses once associated with the site include:

- Sawmill (1940's and likely earlier) – thus intrinsically linked to e.g. early development of the Knysna area, role of forestry from a broader historic context (for example the extraction of mostly indigenous timber to serve colonial expansion).
- Filming of "Fiela se Kind" (1988) and "Toorbos" (1993) by well-known author Dalene Matthee – thus significantly contributing to broaden general understanding of complex historic, social, and socio-economic themes relevant to the area as well as the furthering cinematography and the performance arts in South Africa.
- Location of an elephant boma during efforts to reintroduce elephants to the Knysna forests (1993) – thus being of high local scientific cultural significance.

No buildings and/or structures were noted on or within the direct proximity of the site during fieldwork. Although the site is densely overgrown, the nature and timeframes associated with former land use means that little if any tangible evidence of cultural significance are likely to remain. It is however possible that subsurface historic material (e.g. old rubbish dumps) may be unearthed in which case the following HWC Standard Clause will apply:

"If during ground clearance or construction, any archaeological material or human graves are uncovered, work in that area should be stopped immediately and the ECO must report this to Heritage Western Cape. The heritage resource may require inspection by the heritage authorities, and it may require further mitigation in the form of excavation and curation in an approved institution."

According to SAHRIS Palaeontological sensitivity mapping, the study area is highlighted as being of low (blue) palaeontological sensitivity. While no further palaeontological studies are recommended in areas, a protocol for potential finds is required⁴.

The proposal entails an environmentally sensitive, seasonal tented camp on a portion of the site, which by itself would not negatively impact on the intangible cultural significances associated with the site. The proposal is therefore supported.

6. RECOMMENDATION

From the above assessment it is considered that the proposal will not impact heritage resources of cultural significance and therefore, as contemplated in terms of Section 38(2) of the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act 25 of 1999), no further heritage-related studies are considered necessary in this instance.

PERCEPTION Planning

29th November 2023



STEFAN DE KOCK

Hons: TRP(SA) EIA Mgmt. (IRL) Pr Pln PHP

⁴ Sahara.org.za, accessed 22nd August 2023

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