

‘The general appearance of things is as of old’: The Colenso homestead at Bishopstowe

A significant historical site

Given the considerable significance of Bishop John William Colenso and his family in the history of Natal and Zululand, the homestead and mission which they occupied at Bishopstowe and Ekukhanyeni until 1910 is an historical site of major local and national significance. After the property at Bishopstowe passed into other hands, a surviving house and some outbuildings were used as a farmstead throughout the twentieth century. Only a small plaque on the front veranda which had been placed there by the National Monuments Council on 16 February 1949 provided any link with Bishop Colenso and his family.¹ The following is an account of the development of the homestead and the way in which the surviving structures have been rescued and partially restored.

The Restoration Committee

When the owner of the farm on which Bishopstowe stood died in the early 1990s, the new owner, who knew nothing of the history of the property, planned to demolish the surviving buildings and extend his sugar cane fields across the site. The existing structures were in a poor state and numerous inappropriate additions and alterations had been made to them over the previous eighty years. Diane Scogings, at that time working in the archives of the Diocese of Natal, was alerted to the potential demolition and brought the matter to the attention of the Diocesan Trustees. As a result they decided to enter into a one-year lease with the owner in order to undertake a feasibility study of how the property could be suitably used, rescued and restored. An exploratory committee of interested per-

sons met on 2 August 1995 under the direction of Dean John Forbes of the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity in Pietermaritzburg. There was unanimous agreement about the desirability of protecting the property as a memorial to early Natal's greatest champion of justice and peace, and a clear recognition that the 'present mood of contrition, forgiveness and reconciliation was in a large measure the consequence of the process begun by Bishop Colenso'. The meeting also recorded that 'the preservation of his home and place of work would be both a contribution to the re-education of young people of all races, and a fitting tribute to his memory'. Thus the initial idea was that the property would be ideally suited as a place 'available to the church and the wider community as a venue for day conferences, retreats, training courses and seminars'.²

At this time the focus was naturally on the Bishop himself and as he had built the first structures and lived there from 1856 until his death in 1883, the property was seen to be 'Bishop Colenso's House'. But it soon became apparent that it had as much to do with his family, especially his daughters Harriette and Agnes, who built another house after the fire of 1884 and continued to live there until their eviction in 1910. So it appeared more appropriate to describe the site as the Colenso homestead. There were also extensive discussions about the need for careful historical, architectural and archaeological surveys; a clarification of the future use of the buildings; the possible involvement of members of nearby communities in skills-training programmes and the obvious need for funds and fundraising. At this meeting John Deane was appointed as chairman of a committee which was elected to oversee the project, an onerous duty which he has continued to the present day. The author undertook to conduct an initial historical

and architectural survey and various other persons offered their assistance for a range of tasks.

One of the first actions of the Colenso Homestead Restoration Project Committee was to arrange a long lease of 49 years at a nominal rental. This included the buildings and 6 118 square metres of surrounding land. The Diocese of Natal allocated R10 000 to get the project started but it was clearly understood that this was not to be a diocesan project and that funds would have to be found elsewhere. Initially a grant of R100 000 was made by the Tourism Committee of the uMgungundlovu Regional Council; and £1 000 (about R8 000) was donated by Bishop Colenso's college, St John's Cambridge, and smaller, though generous, donations came from many individuals. A caretaker was installed and the property was 'provisionally proclaimed' in May 1996 for five years as a National Monument by the National Monuments Council.³

Four houses

Much discussion initially revolved around the status of the existing buildings on the site and their possible relationship to the houses which had been built by Bishop Colenso and his daughters. Since much of the Bishop's fine house had been destroyed by the disastrous fire of 1884 it was not at all clear as to where this had been sited and whether any portions had been re-used. A preliminary survey of September 1995 of the surviving buildings and historical evidence in the form of drawings and photographs presented a complex picture of four houses having existed on the site. A comprehensive analysis of the surviving house showed many alterations and additions but nevertheless revealed an outline of an earlier structure which in itself was complex in that it embodied different types and thicknesses of walls. [Fig. 1] At this

stage consideration was given to the way the house could be subdivided to provide suitable accommodation for a caretaker and for meetings. Attention was also given to addressing problems with the roof, the restoration of doors and windows; repairs to serious cracks; the removal of certain incompatible walls; remedial work to electrical services and drainage and the possible restoration of the garden.

Bishopstowe and Ekukhanyeni

During his first exploratory ten weeks to visit his new diocese in 1854, Colenso was granted 8 500 acres of Crown land just outside Pietermaritzburg. On this property he would develop a home for himself, his family and for the various retainers, fellow missionaries and teachers he needed to assist with the mission – Ekukhanyeni, 'the place of light' – which would be established a short distance away. It is noteworthy that he chose to build within riding distance from Pietermaritzburg indicating that right from the commencement of his office he

saw himself as being both a missionary bishop as well as serving the colonist residents of the capital of Natal, where his cathedral was located. From Bishopstowe he could both plan the missionary work and oversee the normal parochial work of the diocese. His original intention was a grand one and the mission was to have a 'native' village with a hospital, school and chapel; a hall to serve as a community centre; an orphanage and a theological college.⁴

The mission at Ekukhanyeni appears to have been a well planned and well equipped one. The Bishop imported a considerable quantity of farm and school apparatus from Britain, and acquired livestock from the local market. In 1857 he imported £147 worth of ploughs and iron, and the next year twelve more ploughs and six cotton gins. He received, in 1856, £151 worth of 'philosophical apparatus' for the institution, and at various times a corn mill, washing machine, lathe, chaffcutter, harness and, quaintly enough, an Indian rubber boat. The most costly of all the equipment was

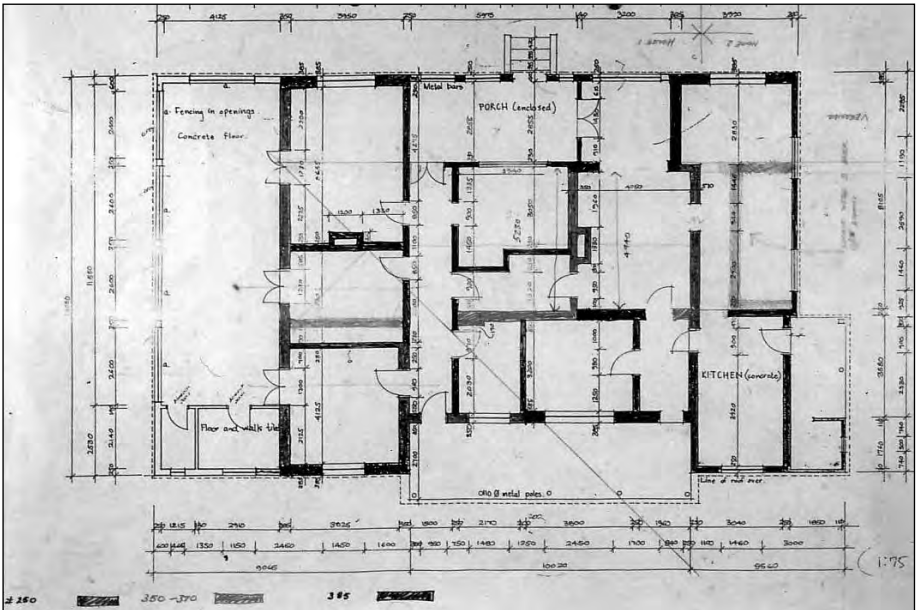


Fig 1. Plan of the surviving house in 1995, showing various wall thicknesses.

the printing press and accessories which cost him £361.⁵

Very little of this was ultimately realised.⁶ Colenso was also especially taken with the distant view of Table Mountain (Emkhambathini) which Mrs Colenso later described as 'that majestic altar, always peaceful and benignant'. The site was a magnificent one as his daughter, Frances Ellen described:

...upon a long sweep of hill, surmounted by other lower rises on each side, but over-topped to the north at right angles by a higher range into which one end of its own ascends. Upwards to the north, downwards to the east and west, swept wide the plantation of trees, grown by ourselves, those to the west bounded by a sluggish stream, white with lilies every autumn, across which a low long bridge with heavy weeping willows led to the steep and winding drive, bordered on either side by choice and foreign shrubs, which brought the traveller at length to my father's ever open doors.⁷

The first house of 1854

The author's second report to the committee of October 1895 presented a pattern drawn from both the physical reality and documentary and photographic records. The first house was commenced in 1854 and described as:

...a four-roomed house facing the Mountain, with a row of small rooms behind it, into which after about a twelve-months' stay in Pietermaritzburg, the Bishop's family (now numbering two little sons and three daughters...), with numerous members of the mission party, were at first crowded. Not half a mile down the slope to the south, another cottage gave accommodation to others of the party.⁸

The earliest descriptions included details of this first house as well as the earliest

mission structures, which included a blacksmith's forge and carpenter's shop. All the bricks for the walls were made and burnt on the site. The house was a rudimentary veranda house of the type built throughout Natal by early British colonists. [Fig. 2] This had a parasol, hipped roof of thatch which continued over a front veranda with simple pole supports. French doors led from the front rooms onto this veranda. At least two chimneys told of fireplaces in two rooms. This then was the first pragmatic statement of home. Between the arrangement of the three front rooms a hallway led to another veranda at the rear which gave access to a row of rooms which were initially used by the members of the mission party.

Both house and chapel were thatched, the long thatching grass (*tambootie*) and the finer kind (*umcele*) growing luxuriantly around, a convenience in one respect, but a source of danger in another. Alarms and accidents from grass fires were not wanting in those days. Half of the farm buildings were once burnt down. At a later terrible time, when the very climbing plants on the veranda were scorched, and the window panes hot to the touch, the Bishop came up pale and lame from a critical corner, where as he told us, he had found himself quite cut off by the fire, and suffocated by the thick smoke...⁹

Records from the mid 1850s also describe how Bishop Colenso needed 'to take off his coat and lay some courses of bricks himself, to prove by demonstration that the occupation was not degrading for a catechist'.¹⁰ The lower walls of the first two houses were built of local shale and other farm buildings of stone were also constructed at this time by James Button, his sons and a man named Moss. Young Frederick Button supervised African labourers in the stone quarry.¹¹

While Colenso was in Britain in 1855 Reverend R. Robertson and farmer Benjamin Balcomb began farming operations, stocking the farm with animals and planting fruit trees. They also began work on the foundations of the second house. By 1855 some £1 116 had been spent on the buildings.¹²

In 1855 Colenso asked the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) for £5 000 to £6 000 to be able 'to complete the design'. He also expressed the need for help and advice on the next phase of building.¹³ (Some 140 years later the SPG contributed R24 000 to the restoration project). In addition to the houses, a small octagonal 'tabernacle' was built in the form of a summer house. This was constructed of laths and plaster and lined with rough bookshelves. Colenso used this as his first study and the room was later used by Dr R.J. Mann, who had been appointed the 'Lay Head' of the mission, for his meteorological instruments. Eventually there were two such pavilions in the garden.

The second house of 1858

Despite a temporary setback when a fire destroyed half the farm buildings in 1856, work progressed on the mission station and on building the larger second house. This was very likely from the hand of an architect friend of the Colensos, perhaps even someone like William Butterfield, since the building had all the hallmarks of a refined mid-nineteenth century Gothic Revival house. The new two-storeyed building was skilfully grafted onto the 1854 one with an entrance hallway joining their respective sets of accommodation. The steeply pitched thatched roof embodied two large gables built of timber, three smaller dormer projections and two dormer windows to the upper floor. [Figs. 2–5] There were also two dormers to the courtyard side of the roof. These over-sailed the lower walls



Fig 2. View of the east front of the house of 1854 to the right and the conjoined one of 1858 on the left.

and so ingeniously provided a ground floor veranda thus continuing the original veranda of the first house fully along the front of the building. Large French windows led from the front rooms onto this veranda providing views of the landscape and Table Mountain to the east. The ornate fretwork to the verandas, dormers and the pointed arched fanlight over the front door provided the necessary Victorian Gothic character. At the south end of the new house was a brick gable with a shuttered bay window. Curiously, unlike the East front which was plastered with imitation ashlar joints, this side of the house was in face brick. [Fig. 6] Altogether this was a much more imposing house for a bishop. However we are left with something of a paradox. If Colenso's beliefs set him steadfastly against the Tractarians, who maintained that to revive old forms of worship you need to revive Gothic architecture, how did he come to take a stand against the revival of medieval liturgy and yet accept a house and chapel designed with many Gothic Revival characteristics?

Paintings and photographs inform us of other parts of the house which now took the form of a large U surrounding a court. The front of the house naturally contained the principal bedrooms, drawing room and the Bishop's study. More bedrooms for the

Colenso children were located on the first floor. On the south side there were single-storeyed bedrooms which linked the house to a large room used at various times as a school room, dining room for the mission community and then as a chapel. Other bedrooms and the printing office, some of which dated from the first house occupied the north wing while a free-standing kitchen probably stood at the centre of the court. While the evidence is scanty, it is possible that a veranda ran continuously around the inside of the U-shaped house providing covered access to all its parts. Initially the drawing room was not used by the family as it served for 'classes of men' until after Colenso returned from a visit to Britain in 1865. While the house was being built 'a section of thatched roof and gable collapsed...the weight of the thatch pulling the wall out of perpendicular...[the] roof and all upon their heads...the whole wing [is] now a ruin'.¹⁴ The accident meant that the completion of the house was delayed until 1858.¹⁵

The bishop was one of the first individuals in Natal to possess a camera and he sent 'a few photographs' of the house under construction to Allnutt of the SPG in February 1858.¹⁶ He also noted that some of the front rooms were temporarily occupied by Dr and Mrs Mann. Colenso had been determined to involve as many of the local community as possible in the buildings and

infrastructure for the farm and from 1855 a process of industrial training commenced. Reverend Walter Baugh, who supervised the industrial school, reported to Colenso in June 1858:

...A mission house was immediately commenced and all the force of the Mechanics on the ground was applied in hastening its completion...even from the laying of the first stone of the cottages, natives had been employed and instructed in quarrying and building; and as proof of their handiwork we now have a strong stone building on the mission ground which was walled entirely by natives. This building is now used as a smithy and storehouse...the force of the workmen was employed in erecting a Chapel or School Room and a Mill and Joiner's Workshop...In the autumn of 1856 a large brick shed was completed and a brick machine kept at work which produced thousands of bricks daily...the new wing to your Lordship's being completed, two rooms of the opposite



Figs 3–5. Various views of the 1854 and 1858 houses from the east.



Fig 6. A painting by Clarke of 1883 showing the south and east sides of the 1858 house.

wing were devoted to a Printing Office... Another detachment of six boys have for some time past been under regular daily instruction in Carpentry... These young carpenters have rendered considerable assistance in advancing the completion of your Lordship's residence, by preparing the boards, planks etc for the skilled workmen.¹⁷

At about the same time a chapel was also built of yellowwood to the north of the house: 'Many months were spent building the chapel... It was constructed of native yellowwood, which endures almost all weathers, the buttresses and gables being painted white...' This extraordinary structure was correctly built in the Gothic Revival style with pointed arches, buttresses, a steeply pitched roof; entrance porch on the west and an elaborate spire. It was thus a translation of a stone structure into timber. [Fig. 7] Is it possible that it was designed by the same architect who had provided Colenso with plans for the house? Unfortunately there is no surviving physical evidence of this building or of the numerous other farm structures and cottages built in the 1850s.¹⁸ A painting of the completed house by Clarke made in 1883, and which illustrates the south side, verifies that the front of the house faced the

view of Table Mountain to the east. [Fig. 8] In between his numerous travels this was where Bishop Colenso worked and lived, often in his study with its fine view of a Natal landscape:

...the Bishop loved it from first to last, not that he talked about it, – but he would not be without it. His study was without a fireplace, but he could never be persuaded to change it for an equally convenient and quieter room, because there he 'could not see the mountain': and the same reason met us when we wanted to put his writing table in what we thought a better light.¹⁹

This house was also where his wife Sarah Frances and their children resided for close on 30 years. Harriette, the eldest, was only six years old when they first arrived. We know of three events concerning the house during this period. Firstly the 'top end of the dining room', presumably the gable of what was also used as a school and chapel, was blown in during a 'tempest' on 16 October 1867, suggesting that some of the workmanship was faulty. Secondly in 1875 fairly extensive improvements and some extensions were carried out. This included re-thatching and new timber ceilings to the four bedrooms between the dining room and the drawing room and the enlargement of the dining room itself. Most of this work was done by Chinese carpenters from Mauritius.²⁰ Bishop Colenso died on 20 June 1883 and just over a year later, at about 3 pm on 3 September 1884, a disastrous fire destroyed most of the house. The cause was a veld fire which was fanned by a strong berg wind from the north west. Colenso's daughter, Frances Ellen, described the conflagration:

The buildings, composed to a great extent of wood and thatch, were tossed up in flame like a child's cardboard house, and the dense driving masses of smoke prevented any chance of saving aught



Fig 7. The yellowwood chapel from the north with the 1858 house in the background.

from destruction except the lives of the inmates and a few cherished articles snatched from the study...²¹

Further correspondence with their brother Frank, who had been in England from 1869, reveals other details about the fire and the house.²² Harriette had taken over much of the daily responsibilities for the property, and on 9 September Frances Ellen (Nelly) noted how 'destructive fires have been unusually frequent' and that Harriette had been burning fire breaks around the house for three months. On one occasion she had her 'eyelashes and front hair singed off'. When they became aware that the fire was rapidly approaching Bishopstowe, Harriette actually tried to back-burn but without any success because of the strength of the gale. With the arrival of the fire, leaping wildly across burnt veld, the horses were cut loose from the stables and taken 'beyond the old kitchen'. She described her room upstairs and having to hastily abandon all her treasured possessions, and told how during the course of escape they ran back into the house 'along the back veranda and down the long passage, looking for the others'. There had thus been two kitchens, both being detached from the main house. This also

confirms the existence of a veranda along the court side of the house, but the long passage is not easy to determine. Harriette's letter to Frank and his wife Sophie of 8 September provided vivid images of how she had rescued Bishop Colenso's most important documents and the destruction by fire of various artefacts, items of furniture in the main rooms and paintings. '...The heat was so intense that the glass, windows, bottles, inkstands, everything is run together and twisted...' [Fig.9]

After the fire the family moved to one of the early farm cottages which the daughters called 'Whitehall'. Harriette said that 'There is only a three-roomed cottage, tolerably habitable, but there are other rooms needing flooring, whitewash, glass and doors, which will do to keep some of our salvage in...' ²³ The sisters also observed how shortly after the fire the property became an object of intense public interest with 'relic hunters and sightseers', a favourite relic being 'glass from the study window'.

The third and fourth houses

At some time before 1900, Harriette and Agnes bravely built a new house at Bish-



Fig 8. A painting by Clarke of 1883 looking past the south side with Table Mountain in the distance.

opstowe. Reflecting the difficult times and their own delicate political situation, this was a much more austere house with a small front veranda flanked by two gables which would have been described in the Cape as a stoep-kamer house.²⁴ It also stood facing the same view of the garden and the distant landscape. [Fig. 10]

The old Mission House was burnt down the year after my father's death. Then we shifted into a little cottage about a quarter of a mile off. It was in a very poor state of repair then. It is now dropping to pieces, so two years ago we made up our minds to move. The Curators owed us certain monies at that time. They proposed an arrangement by which they would pay that money. We made a counter proposal to them, that if they would go shares with us in rebuilding part of Bishopstowe, we would spend a portion of the money they proposed to pay us, on that building. Getting no reply, we began to build. When half-way through, we got a notice telling us that at any future time they wished to give us notice to quit, we should have no remedy for what we had expended. We had the roof on then, and finished it, and afterwards added the schoolroom...²⁵

Harriette and Agnes continued to live there until 1910 when a cruel act of the Natal Parliament forced them off their family property.²⁶ Unfortunately there is only one early photograph of the building but interesting descriptions have survived. One was by their brother Frank who was out from Britain visiting his sisters in 1900. In a letter home to his wife on 13 April he noted some useful points:

I am astonished at what my dear sisters have done. they have expended £700 to £800, and put up on the foundations on the northern half of the ruins, a neat zinc roofed dwelling which reproduces not a few of the features of the old habitation... Seated on the front veranda...ruined

walls to my right...rebuilt portion of premises on my left...£700 to £800...put up on the foundations on the north half of the ruins ...All the rest of the rooms are left untouched except that the end of the South wing has been rebuilt. This used to be the dining room, and has been reproduced so as to form a fine large room used as a chapel and school room. From the zinc roof is collected a splendid supply of rain water in tanks. These are carefully guarded and cleaned and nothing could be more delicious than their contents...The grounds are still very much run to wilderness, but some of the most conspicuous trees are old friends and the general appearance of things is as of old...

Referring to a photograph he said: '...restored portion is on your right and extends up to and including the middle hall...rebuilt as a very charming room...French windows onto veranda...measures 18 ft by 12 ft...length of front veranda exactly fifty of my strides – 101 ft 4 in...next my room is the drawing room'. Though his description is confusing in the way he superimposed his memory of the earlier houses onto this new one, it eventually provided an important set of clues about the houses.²⁷ On 22 October 1910, just before she and Harriette moved into Pietermaritzburg, Agnes Mary wrote to a friend Bessie, saying:

It is very nice to get letters from old friends who remember Bishopstowe in its real old days when Papa was here – it is very lonely now, the trees and flowers have grown very much since then and birds – shy bush birds some – and some domestic little swallows (who will drag threads out of the coconut matting door mat on the veranda for their own mats in their nest) abound. I am writing to you in what you will remember as "the little study" opening out of Mother's bedroom (now our drawing room). Many years after the fire which burnt the whole place



Fig 9. Harriette and Agnes Colenso outside the ruined east front of the 1858 house.

down Harry and I rebuilt the old part of the house, just taking in the front steps (not the new part, i.e. study, drawing and the bed rooms in that wing) and quite separate by itself the dining room which we use as church and school. When it is too hot and the congregation is over 300 and can't get into the building we carry forms and harmonium down to the oak grove, which makes a lovely church for Xmas and Easter etc...²⁸ [Fig. 11]

During the remainder of the twentieth century this house was used by a number of owners as a farmhouse and underwent many changes, sufficient to constitute it as the fourth house. A large veranda was built on the north side and then enclosed. Several rooms were subdivided and the original timber sliding sash windows were replaced with steel casements. Many details were also altered. The original chapel-cum-school room, the lower walls of which had survived the fire, had been rebuilt by Harriette and Agnes and became a barn and a number of lean-to structures were built around it. Most of these building alterations were carried out without any regard for the character or integrity of the original late nineteenth century building, yet nevertheless represented in a crude way

a fairly typical rambling farmhouse. This was what the Restoration Committee was faced with and which became the object of an interesting 'forensic' study. [Fig. 12]

Finding the relationship between the four houses

If a photograph is converted into a line drawing by tracing an outline, it closely resembles a perspective. When an architect constructs a perspective, a plan is used as the basis, together with details of elevations and dimensions. It is therefore possible to reverse the process and work backwards from a line drawing perspective to a plan. The present author had just used the same technique in re-constructing drawings of the first aircraft to fly in Natal in 1910. That was the Voison Type III bi-plane flown by Albert Kimmerling at Jacobs between 26 April and 12 May.²⁹

Fortunately a series of photographs were taken of the Bishopstowe ruins shortly after the 1884 fire. [Figs.13–16] These provided not only a clear outline of the skeleton of the conjoined houses of 1854 and 1858, but also useful details of interiors, masonry courses, fireplaces and doors and windows. Using photographs which showed both the skeletal east and south faces and converting this into a line



Fig 10. The house built by Harriette and Agnes shortly before 1900.

drawing allowed a rudimentary plan to be developed. Further photographs from different viewpoints were also converted into line drawings and provided more information about the plan. [Figs. 17–18]

Together with the physical evidence from house number four, such as an analysis of wall thicknesses, and the descriptions of Frank and Agnes, it was then possible to superimpose the plan of house four over the perspective plan and search for possible coincidences. This showed that Harriette and Agnes had built their house over the footprint of the 1854 house and incorporated old walls which had withstood the fire as explained in Agnes' letter of 1910. [Figs. 19–20] Though their building extended slightly southwards beyond the 1854 one, the procedure provided strong evidence that old foundations and walls of the 1858 house ought therefore to be below ground level to the south of the existing building. Furthermore the position of the reconstructed chapel correlated with the plan which had emerged.

Late in 1996 Gavin Whitelaw, an archaeologist from the Natal Museum and a member of the Colenso Homestead Restoration Committee, together with assistants Treasure Shata and Israel Madishe, began the excavation of ten trenches in the area to the south of the existing house and found foundations and lower walls of the drawing room, study and adjacent bedroom wing. Gavin's report of 12 March 1997 confirmed that the developed plan of houses one and two produced by the perspective technique was 'for the most part' substantially accurate but that there were minor differences such as the position of the drawing room fireplace and the width of some bedrooms. [Fig. 21] The excavations also revealed artefacts such as broken plates and bowls from the drawing room. Unfortunately it was necessary to re-cover the exposed foundations and walls with



Fig 11. Harriette and Agnes at the west end of the reconstructed brick chapel.

earth again to prevent any further decay. The results of this analysis then revealed the plans of each of the four houses and their relationship to each other. [Figs. 22–25 on pages 24–27]

Restoration work

Much rescue work was undertaken by architect-engineer Michael Dyer between 1995 and 1997. This included major works to the roof, repairs to walls and stormwater drains. Long discussions took place at committee meetings about what should be restored and the present writer was able to persuade the members that it would not be at all practical to attempt to reconstruct the earliest houses one and two, but that the existing house should be restored back to a condition which reflected its late nineteenth century character while retaining some elements from the twentieth century. [Fig. 26]

This argument was based on the fact that this was a Colenso homestead which contained fragments from the first two houses and that in 1997 the house had been used as a farmhouse for longer than it had been in use as a Colenso family home. Thus what would be evident would be an historical process rather than something frozen in time.



Fig 12. A view of the house from the north in 1995.

In the interim, the committee, especially the chairman John Deane, had to attend to a number of regular issues. These included regular fundraising; the establishment of a Friends of Colenso group; installing suitable tenants as reliable caretakers; burning fire breaks to prevent a recurrence of history; insurances; mowing the grass; fixing fences; setting up signage; purchasing furniture; arranging for a new commemorative plaque; arranging tours of the property for overseas visitors and a myriad of other day-to-day administrative tasks.

When Michael Dyer fell ill Brian Summerton of Interplan Architects took over and began work on the restoration phase, including installing sliding sash windows, returning the front veranda to its original length, removing some internal walls, and attending to many details and services.

By this time a decision had been taken that the caretaker's accommodation was a priority though no clarity had been received from the Diocese about other future uses.

Much discussion also took place with respect to the possible way in which the old chapel could be returned to an appropriate liturgical use and after Brian Summerton's death Tony Wilson took over briefly and designed an upgraded chapel.

When he left Pietermaritzburg the Committee appointed Norton dos Santos as architect and in 2005 he prepared the first comprehensive programme for full restoration work, including entrance, parking, pathways and gardens, interpretation of the old foundations, meeting rooms and the chapel. Unfortunately through the severe limitation of funds not all of this could be



Fig 13. Photographs of the south and east end of the house joined together to show the exterior after the 1884 fire.



Fig 14–15. Two views of the drawing room after the fire.



Fig 16. A view along the east front showing the windows of the principal rooms and the front door, with pointed arch, after the fire.



Fig 18. A photograph of the north side and courtyard of the house after the fire. The building on the right, with a corrugated iron roof, was probably the second detached kitchen.

achieved, but once again important remedial work had to be undertaken to the roof, drainage and floors.³⁰

In May 2006 as a response to these difficulties an alternative strategy was pre-

sented to the committee. This involved the preservation of the chapel as a ruin, since that is what it had become. The building would be reduced down to its barest condition, the roof and floor would be removed

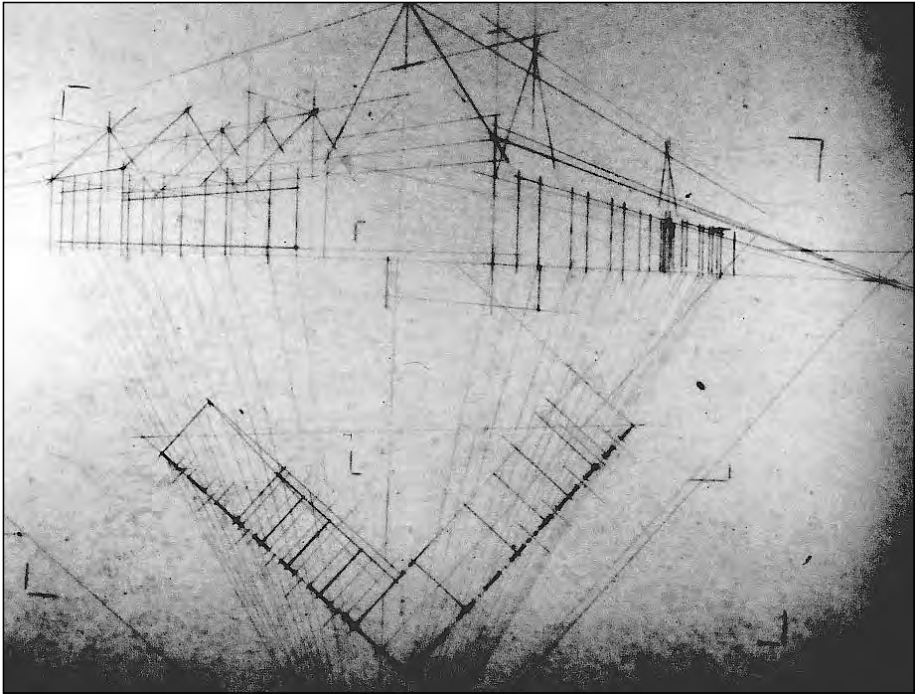


Fig 17. The reversed perspective demonstrating the development of the plan from an outline of the south-east view of the house after the fire (see Fig 13)

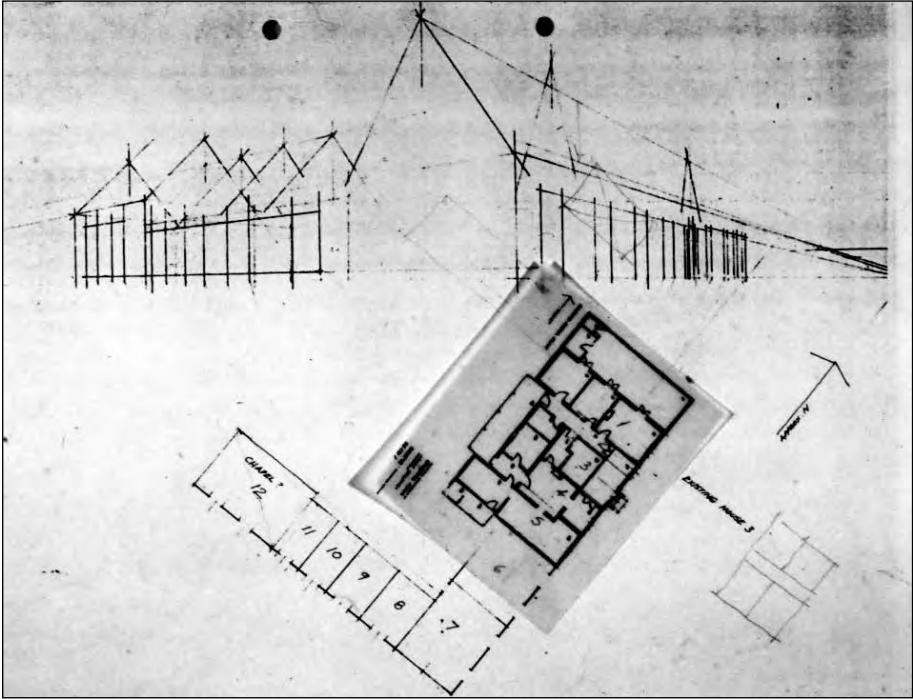


Fig 19. The plan of the existing house (four) superimposed over the plan which resulted from the reversed perspective. (see Fig 17)

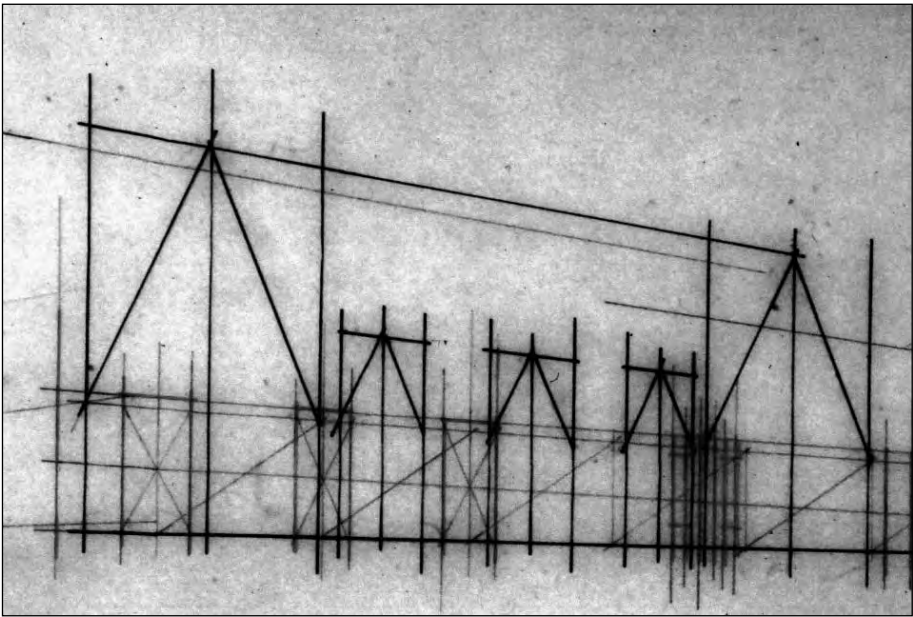


Fig 20. A line drawing of the east front of the 1858 house used to determine more detailed dimensions of the windows and dormers.

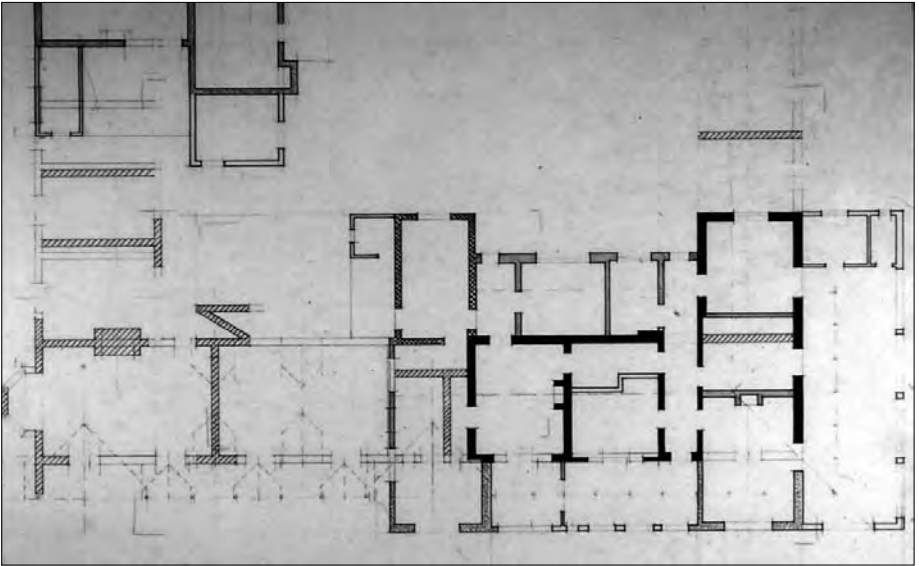


Fig 21. A plan of the foundations and walls uncovered by Gavin Whitelaw's 1996 archaeological study shown superimposed over the plans of the existing house.

and it would be treated as an outdoor gathering place or shrine in the form of a simple sunken theatre with seating surrounded by some surviving walls for weather protection. More of the old chapel has since been removed as the roof, floors and some walls had become decidedly unsafe.

However, since the committee had not received any directive from the Diocese about the future uses of the property, even this appeared to be a doubtful option and so it was decided to utilise the remaining funds on converting the other half of the house into a small flat so that some income could be provided to offset regular maintenance costs.

Conclusions

The grand vision of Bishop John Colenso, particularly his ideas for the mission station, were never fully realised for a number of reasons. In a similar manner the ideas of the Project Committee have also not been fully realised, especially the intention to utilise part of the property for some ap-

propriate community purpose; the idea of exposing and exhibiting the early foundations; creating a parking area and entrance and the restoring of the chapel and the garden. It is also unfortunate that work had to be confined to the Bishopstowe site and that no explorations could be undertaken of the Ekukhanyeni mission station. Nevertheless the modest house built by Bishop Colenso's daughters has been rescued and returned to something like its former state. The significance of this is that the building embodies fragments, such as walls and floors which date back to the earliest Bishopstowe.³¹

BRIAN KEARNEY

NOTES

1. A decision had been taken by the National Monuments Commission before World War II to mark the house in some way, but this was delayed by the war.
2. Archives of the Diocese of Natal, Minutes of exploratory meeting of persons interested in the Colenso House Project, 2 August 1995 and Chairman's Report, First annual general meeting of the Colenso Homestead Restoration Project, 23 September 1998.
3. Donations were received over eight years from the

following: **1995**, Diocese of Natal, R 10 000; **1996**, Indlovu Regional Council, R100 000; **1997**, St John's College, Cambridge, £1 000; **1999**, SPG, £2 400; Arts & Culture Trust of the President, R10 000; Dr Charles Swaisland R1 000; **2000**, Mrs R Dunne, Mr J Colenso and Mr C Martell, R3 000; Anglo American & De Beers Chairman's Fund, R50 000; **2001**, Mr Nigel Colenso £100; St Mary's DSG, Kloof, R850; Michaelhouse, Balgowan, R3 000; Mr Gwil Colenso £200; Mrs Lois Croft, R1 000; **2002**, Mr Brian Summerton, Interplan Architects, R9 690 (Fees); Mrs Roslyn Davey, R1 000; Dr Charles Swaisland, R1 555; **2003**, Dr Charles Swaisland, R1 195; Messrs Gwil & David Colenso R12 244 (in memory of their father Robert John Colenso); Dr Sylvia Vietzen & Mr John Deane, R500 (Honorarium for

talks to visitors); Natal Society Foundation Trust, R10 000; Department of Arts and Culture, R200 000; Cathedral Men's Society, R500. Total – R456 030.

4. Burnett BB, *Anglicans in Natal*, (Durban: 1955) p. 16.
5. Burnett BB, *The Missionary Work of the First Anglican Bishop of Natal, the Rt. Reverend John William Colenso between the years 1852 and 1873*, (MA [SA], 1940) p. 25.
6. The mission station was active from 1854 until 1861 when the Bishop, his family and a large number of the followers fled into Pietermaritzburg on 17 July in fear that King Cetshwayo, who was conducting hunting parties along the Tugela River, was intent on capturing Prince Mkungu, a son of Mpande's favourite wife and a pupil at

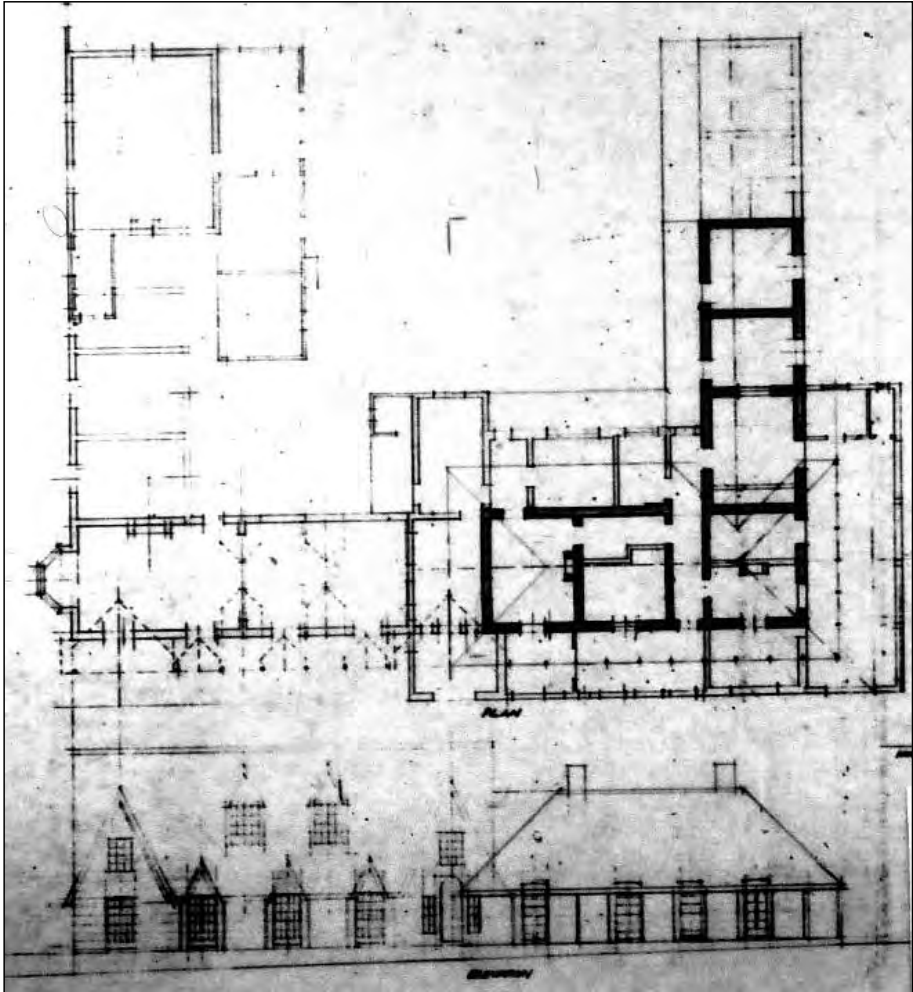


Fig 22. Plan and east elevation of the first (1854) house superimposed over a plan of the 1858 one.

the school. When Colenso returned from England in 1865, Ekukhanyeni was 'only a shadow of its former self'. His daughters then helped him to run the school and even in the last years of Colenso occupation, Harriette and Agnes continued limited missionary work and religious services. Rees W, *Colenso Letters from Natal*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1958) p. 127.

7. Colenso FE, *The Ruin of Zululand*, Vol II, (London, 1884–5) p. x.
8. Cox GW, *Life of John William Colenso*, Vol 1, (London, 1888) p. 78–79.
9. Cox GW, Vol 1, p. 79–80.
10. Cox GW, Vol 1, p. 79.
11. O'Byrne Spencer S, *British Settlers: A Biographical Register*, Vol 3, p. 108.
12. Burnett BB, *Anglicans in Natal*, p. 18.
13. University of KwaZulu-Natal, Campbell Collections, Colenso Ms, File No 6.
14. Campbell Collections, Colenso Ms, File No 6.
15. Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, Colenso Papers, A 204, Vol 3. George C. Allnutt to Colenso.
16. Campbell Collections, Colenso Ms, File No 6. Evidently the camera had been supplied by a certain Mayall, a well-known London photographer, and in a subsequent court case Robert Ryder vs the Bishop of Natal, Ryder, the foreman and 'mechanical superintendent', was accused of having stolen it.
17. Campbell Collections, Colenso Ms, File No 6, Report on Industrial Training, Walter Baugh to Bishop Colenso, 30 June 1858.
18. While this appears to have been an omission, the restoration committee was confined to working within the small area around the house which constituted the lease and thus could not embark on a wider survey.
19. Cox GW, Vol 1, p. 78.
20. Rees W, p. 321–322.
21. Colenso FE, *The Ruin of Zululand*, Vol II, p. xi.
22. Rhodes House Library, Oxford, Colenso Papers.
23. This cottage was also called *The Farm, Seven Oaks* or *Little Bishopstowe* and was destroyed by fire in 1964.
24. The 'stoep-kamer' house was a climatic response to the use of a front veranda on a house where cold winter winds required that protection was afforded to the veranda by projecting two front rooms on either side. These rooms often enjoyed direct access to the veranda. In the Cape a veranda was often termed a 'stoep' though the original meaning of the word implied an uncovered terrace.
25. PAR, Colenso Papers, A 204, Documents relating to church properties.
26. In 1910 the Natal Legislature passed an act to allow the Natal Bishop of the Church of the Province of South Africa to become the trustee of all the

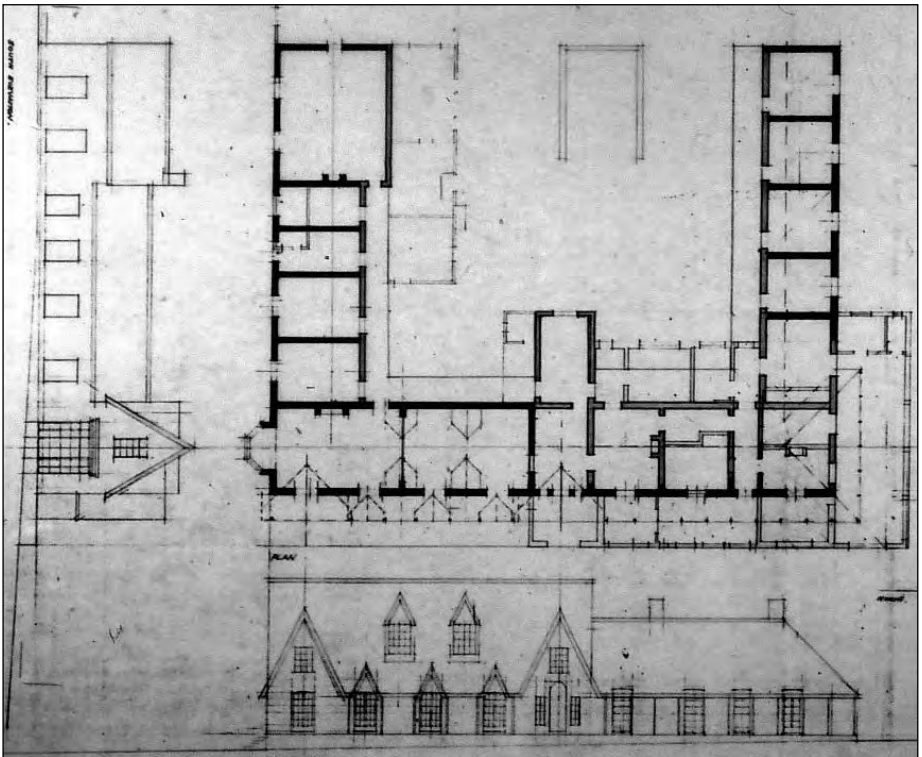


Fig 23. Plan and east elevation of the second (1858) house.

- original Colenso properties. Harriette and Agnes were provided with small pensions but were forced to leave the property. Hinchliff P, *The Anglican Church in South Africa*, p. 106.
27. Rhodes House Library, Oxford, Colenso Papers.
28. PAR, Colenso Papers, A 204, Correspondence, Agnes Colenso.
29. *Natal Mercury Pictorial*, 28 April, 5 and 19 May 1910. Reconstructed drawings were required for a model as the only available ones proved to be entirely inaccurate.
30. For example the estimated costs of work at May 2006 were R320 398 compared to the total funds available of R275 000.
31. Persons who have served on the Colenso Homestead Restoration Committee include: John Deane (Chairman), Dean John Forbes, Diane Scogings (Secretary), Margery Moberly, Jo Walker, Dr Geoffrey Soni, Dr Audrey Cahill (Secretary), Jack Frost (Treasurer), Gavin Whitelaw, Gilbert Torlage, Val Sterley, Frank and Candy Seymour, Dr Sylvia Vietzen, Bishop Michael Nuttall, Mary Gardner, Rev Fred Pitout, Alister Shaw, Malcolm Draper, Gavin Wisdom, Morag Peden, Merle Prosser and the author.

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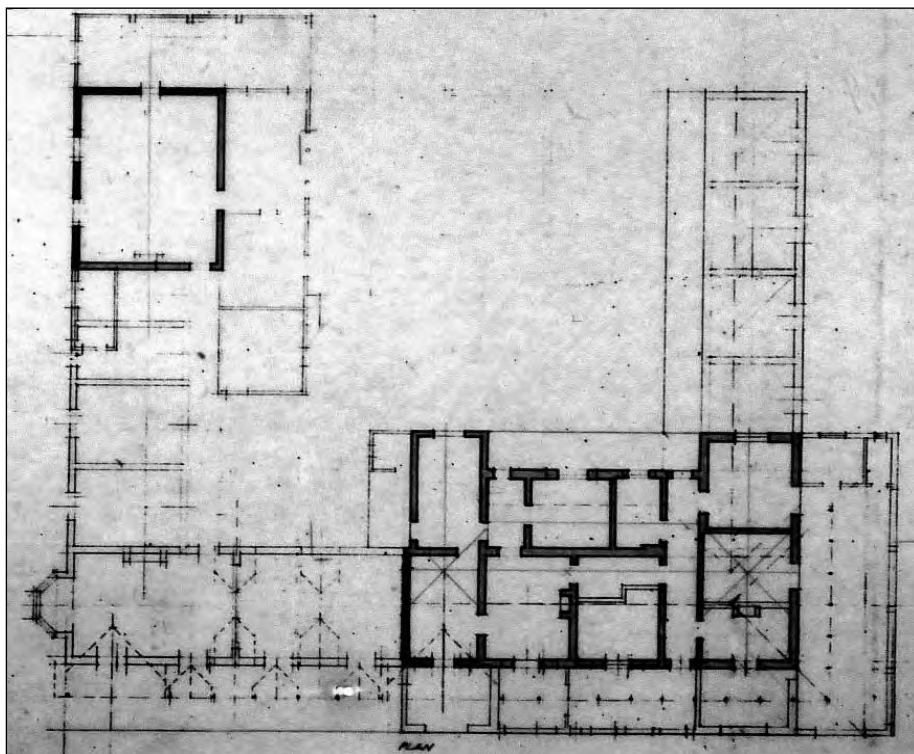


Fig 24. Plan of the third (c.1900) house superimposed over a plan of the 1858 house.

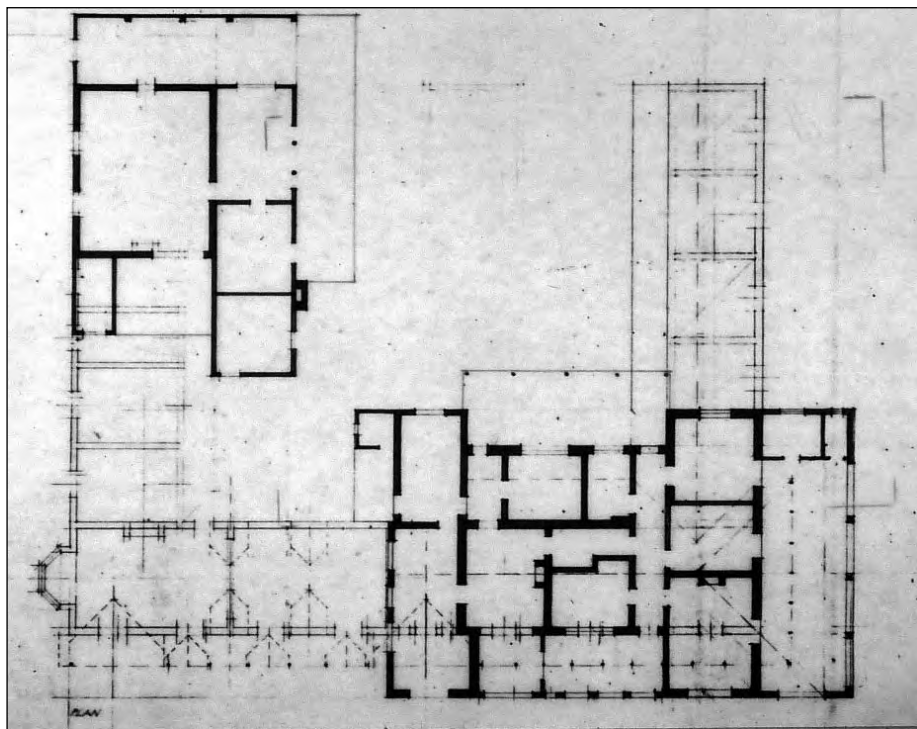


Fig 25. Plan of the fourth house as existing in 1995, superimposed over a plan of the 1858 house.

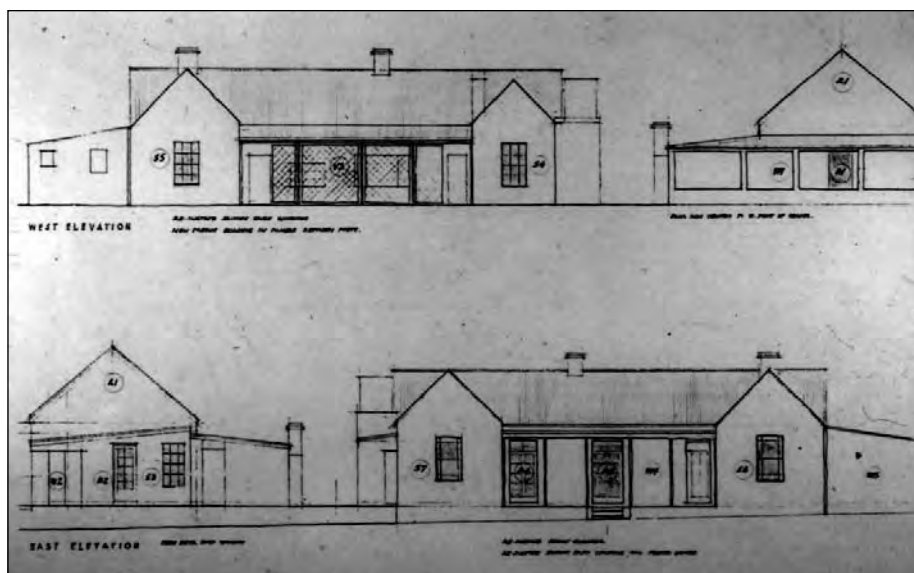


Fig 26. Elevations showing various recommendations for restoration work.