

Speculation on the existence of a watermill on Diamant

Some interesting coincidental occurrences point to the possibility of there being a water mill for wheat grinding on Diamant. In 1707, the brothers Andreas and Matthias Krugel were commissioned for construction of a new water wheel for the Drakenstein Mill in Paarl (Le Roux 1999:2). Andreas later bought Diamant in 1713.

Another Diamant owner, Johannes Lüttig, was the son of a miller. His father milled in Stellenbosch and owned the Drakenstein mill between 1750 and 1790, at the time when his son owned Diamant. (Le Roux 1999:3) Lüttig had the knowledge of milling to his advantage as well as the opportunity, since it was a family business, competition would not have been a problem. Lüttig was sexton of the Drakenstein Church in Paarl, and was responsible for the communion bread baking. A mill on his farm may have made this financially feasible and convenient. (Oberholser 1941:69)

The wheat farms of Agter-Paarl were enough of a distance from the Drakenstein mill that it would have been advantageous to have a small local mill. Small scale farmers usually milled for themselves by hand, using rotary hand querns, but sometimes one farm would have a proper mill with a water wheel to grind both for themselves and serve the neighbouring farms. (Walton 1951:38)

Although no mills have been found in Agter-Paarl, other mills must have existed in the Drakenstein area, because when the Drakenstein mill was sold in 1807, the terms of sale indicated that no other water or wind mills will be allowed in the town of Paarl. (Le Roux 1999:4)

The location of the water fountains and the direction of the streams on Diamant, as indicated on the diagrams of 1827 and 1910, indicate a water source running straight across the werf in the position of the small outbuilding (currently “The Office”)

Diamant Fick

between the second longhouse (back wing of current “Manor House) and the old barn.
(currently “The Chapel”)

Finally, if one compares the structures of the Drakenstein mill with that on Diamant, similarities can be found.

The building on Diamant is set back from the otherwise linear arrangement of the buildings on the werf, and may have been deliberately positioned so in order to create space in front of the building for wagons to turn and off-load, whilst keeping the wagon road clear.

The oak lanes both behind and in front of the linearly arranged werf buildings indicate that the old wagon route passed on both sides of the werf, joining up on either side to make a circular bypass. The reason for this seems to be to separate the visitor and passing traffic. This is fairly unusual, which leads one to believe that the werf must have received more visitors than usual. This contributes to the speculation of the existence of the mill.

The building was investigated by archaeologist, Hennie Vos, and no water wheel pin hole or water trough remains were found. But, even though no definite proof has been found to confirm the speculation, enough circumstantial evidence points to the possibility of a mill on Diamant, and particularly of this specific structure, that it is worth noting.

References:

Du Toit, Dacey, 2007: Diamant Agter Paarl Cultural Historical Report (Unpublished)

Vos, H, 2010: Diamant Farmlands No.700/1279 Agter Paarl Historical Survey and Structural and Archaeological Investigations of the Historic Buildings (Unpublished.)