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**3RD REPORT ON THE INVESTIGATION, EXHUMATION AND
RELOCATION OF A NUMBER OF KNOWN
AND UNKNOWN GRAVES IMPACTED ON BY EXPANDING OPENCAST
MINING OPERATIONS (WONDERFONTEIN COLLIERY)
WONDERFONTEIN 428JS, NEAR WONDERFONTEIN
MPUMALANGA**

For:

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REPORT: APAC014/37

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SUMMARY

Anton Pelser (of APELSER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTING cc) was appointed by Crossdale Projects & Mining Supplies (on behalf of Shanduka Coal) to undertake the archaeological investigation & exhumation of nearly 200 graves older than 60 years of age and unknown on various sites on the farm Wonderfontein 428JS. These graves will be impacted on by expanding mining operations (opencast coal) of their Wonderfontein Colliery.

After all due processes were followed (which included extensive social consultation) a permit was obtained from SAHRA to conduct the required work (Permit ID: 1101). This 3rd report discusses the second phase of work done during July 2014 on Sites X & Y. The report discusses the results and details of the graves exhumed and relocated.

The next phase of grave exhumations and relocations will commence later in August 2014, after further community consultation meetings, after which a final report will be submitted to both SAHRA, Crossdale and Shanduka.

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INTRODUCTION

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AIMS

The main aims with the investigation and exhumation of the graves (in this case) on Sites X and Y situated on a portion of the farm Wonderfontein 328JS were the following:

- (a) the detailed investigation of all possible burials located on the site,
- (b) the successful exhumation and relocation of each burial to a municipal cemetery

During the next phases of work a Final Report or Reports will be produced for all graves exhumed and relocated from the various sites on the farm to be impacted by mining operations.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Aspects concerning the conservation of cultural resources are dealt with mainly in two acts. These are the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) and the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998).

1.1 The National Heritage Resources Act

According to the above-mentioned law the following is protected as cultural heritage resources:

- a. Archaeological artifacts, structures and sites older than 100 years
- b. Ethnographic art objects (e.g. prehistoric rock art) and ethnography

- c. Objects of decorative and visual arts
- d. Military objects, structures and sites older than 75 years
- e. Historical objects, structures and sites older than 60 years
- f. Proclaimed heritage sites
- g. **Grave yards and graves older than 60 years**
- h. Meteorites and fossils
- i. Objects, structures and sites of scientific or technological value.

Archaeology, palaeontology and meteorites

Section 35(4) of this act states that no person may, without a permit issued by the responsible heritage resources authority:

- a. destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or otherwise disturb any archaeological or palaeontological site or any meteorite;
- b. destroy, damage, excavate, remove from its original position, collect or own any archaeological or palaeontological material or object or any meteorite;
- c. trade in, sell for private gain, export or attempt to export from the Republic any category of archaeological or palaeontological material or object, or any meteorite; or
- d. bring onto or use at an archaeological or palaeontological site any excavation equipment or any equipment that assists in the detection or recovery of metals or archaeological and palaeontological material or objects, or use such equipment for the recovery of meteorites.
- e. alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure which is older than 60 years as protected.

The above mentioned may only be disturbed or moved by an archaeologist, after receiving a permit from the South African Heritage Resources Agency.

Human remains

In terms of Section 36(3) of the National Heritage Resources Act, no person may, without a permit issued by the relevant heritage resources authority:

- a. destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position of otherwise disturb the grave of a victim of conflict, or any burial ground or part thereof which contains such graves;
- b. destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position or otherwise disturb any grave or burial ground older than 60 years which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority; or
- c. bring onto or use at a burial ground or grave referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) any excavation, or any equipment which assists in the detection or recovery of metals.

Human remains that are less than 60 years old are subject to provisions of the Human Tissue Act (Act 65 of 1983) and to local regulations. Exhumation of graves must conform to the standards set out in the **Ordinance on Excavations (Ordinance no. 12 of 1980)** (replacing the old Transvaal Ordinance no. 7 of 1925).

Permission must also be gained from the descendants (where known), the National Department of Health, Provincial Department of Health, Premier of the Province and local police. Furthermore, permission must also be gained from the various landowners (i.e. where the graves are located and where they are to be relocated) before exhumation can take place.

Human remains can only be handled by a registered undertaker or an institution declared under the **Human Tissues Act (Act 65 of 1983 as amended)**.

Unidentified/unknown graves are also handled as older than 60 until proven otherwise.

1.2 The National Environmental Management Act

This act states that a survey and evaluation of cultural resources must be done in areas where development projects, that will change the face of the environment, will be undertaken. The impact of the development on these resources should be determined and proposals for the mitigation must be made.

METHODOLOGY

Background information – The results of previous work carried out in the area (Heritage Impact Assessments) are normally used to provide background to the project and the graves identified and recorded in the area under discussion.

Mapping and Photographing – A Google Earth image of the area, providing a location for the areas and grave sites, was produced. Photographs of the area, as well as each individual burial, any skeletal remains and grave goods that are recovered are also taken as part of the documentation process.

Investigation and Exhumation – Normally graves are exhumed by hand using picks and shovels and where possible remains are documented photographically in position. Remains are then removed, placed in coffins, described and documented. In cases where no skeletal remains or cultural material are found in a burial a soil sample is taken for reburial as standard practice. In this case, an earthmoving machine (TLB) was used to open up the trenches up to the level of the possible burial pits.

Burial Forms – A Burial form for each individual burial is completed. Basic information on burial position, grave goods, general preservation and other general observations are included on these forms. These forms will not be reproduced in this report while the information on the burials will be summarized and interpreted at the end. The forms will

however be archived for future reference if required. Photographs of all the burials will be provided as well.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA AND SITES

The various burials to be exhumed and relocated are situated on a number of graves sites on portions of the farm Wonderfontein 428JS, near Wonderfontein in Mpumalanga. Approximately 200 graves in total are affected. The graves reported on in this document are located on Sites X & Y.

Site X contains 23 graves in total, with 22 located in a single location (informal farm worker cemetery) and another one (X23) located some distance away on its own (Breytenbach family member). A number of graves from Site X, including X23, were exhumed and relocated during a previous session.

GPS Coordinates: **S25° 51.529' E29° 52.979'**

Site Y is located close to the mining area already being developed and close to a small informal settlement that are also being relocated. Site Y contain 20 graves in total, with 1 (Y20) close to the settlement and family home, and the others located some distance away in an informal cemetery. Y20 was moved during a previous phase of work.

GPS Coordinates: **S25° 51.053' E29° 53.012'.**



Figure 1: Aerial view of site locations (Google Earth 2014).



Figure 2: Close up of Site GY08 location (Google Earth 2014).



Figure 3: Close up of Site X Locations (Google Earth 2014).



Figure 4: Close up of Site Y (Google Earth 2014).



Figure 5: View of Site X (graves 1 – 22).



Figure 6: Site Y.

INVESTIGATION AND RELOCATION OF THE BURIALS

Seventeen graves from Sites X & Y, were exhumed from 23 July 2014 to 29 July 2014, and will be relocated and reburied in two local cemeteries. Areas containing four possible graves were also tested and found not to contain any burials.

Some graves, at both sites, had been removed prior to this session, and issues within the community kept the work from being completed. Resolution of those issues resulted in the work on these two sites being completed.

SITE Y

The site is situated within the current mining area and is an overgrown island surrounded by mining activity. In order to access the remaining graves, a controlled burn was organized, thus clearly exposing the site and the graves.

It is a haphazard graveyard with graves lying on a N/S orientation, as well as an E/W orientation. There was also uncertainty as to whether some stone piles were indeed graves. These were subsequently tested (Y23, Y24, Y25) and found to not be graves.

Three graves had headstones, one elaborate recent tombstone (Y12) with what appears to be the original tombstone behind it, and two headstones made of rocks covered in cement (Y10, Y11), with inscriptions hand-carved into the cement. These inscriptions are still visible. Together with the attending family member, their identity was established. Although there is some ambiguity as to the correlation of remains, burial pit size and description by the owner/family member (Y11 family member Kleinbooi Mahlangu),

indicated that the grave belonged to his uncle who died at an old age, but upon opening, the burial pit appeared to be a child's grave.

A large, stone-packed grave (Y01) with no headstone visible was also exhumed in the presence of a family member.

Once the graves at this site were opened, they contained very little cultural material, and almost no remains. The cemetery is situated in the lower part of the wetland system, near a spruit, and the soil is acid and of a yellow clay texture. It is possible that all remains have been denuded by natural processes. Soil samples were taken from most of the graves.

The following graves were represented by family:

Grave Y01 - Grave of **Paulus Matshiga**, who was the great grandfather of family representative Johannes Motsweni. Mr Matshiga was buried in 1967 or 1968 and worked on the farm Wonderfontein, known locally as "Bortjie".

Grave Y10 - **Ndabazakhe Skhosana** was represented by her grandson, Kleinbooi Mahlangu. No birth and death dates are known other than she "died in old age."

Grave Y11 - **Mbijana Mahlangu** was represented by his nephew Kleeinbooi Mahlangu. No birth and death dates are known, only that he "died in old age."

Grave Y12 - **Mbotshua Winfol Thugwana** born 20-07-1909, died 13-11-1969. The grave was identified and claimed, but not represented by family during the exhumation and relocation process.

The remainder of the graves at this site (Y03, Y04, Y06, Y09, Y14, Y15, Y16, Y18 & Y22) contained very little, and soil samples were taken. Some cultural material was found in Y03 (a broken saucer) and in Y09 (a tied nylon ribbon), as well as fragments of coffin remains and some metal sheeting, also severely decayed.

Graves belonging to the Mahlangu family (Y10, Y11) were re-buried at Generaal's Draai, while the remaining individuals were re-buried at Belfast Municipal Cemetery.

SITE X

The site is situated on the farm Wonderfontein, which has been purchased by the mine for future development, but currently still functions as a farm. The graves are situated within a copse of bluegum trees and lie higher up in the wetland system than the graves at Site Y

Some graves have already been moved. The remaining graves are stone packed (X14) or have a packed perimeter (X15, X17, X18), and one manifests as a depression in the ground, with no stone packing (X13). As this appeared unusual within these graves, it was tested and found to contain no remains and no subterranean disturbance, and therefore deemed not to be a grave.

Opening of the graves at this site revealed that all four graves were those of infants and small children. Preservation of the remains was fair and cultural material was also relatively well preserved.

All four were buried in white wooden coffins that were still intact, but fragile. Metal coverings were placed over the coffins and were in good condition. Remains were fragile in all four burials, and two of the burials (X17, X18) contained clothing rolled up and tucked alongside the head. Blankets were still in fair condition and one infant (X18), a small baby, was also covered in a grass mat.

These burials were all lying on an E/W orientation with heads placed in the West. Reburial of these children took place in Belfast Municipal Cemetery.

There was no indication at either of the two sites, and in any of the burials, that any of these graves were historical in nature, that is, older than 60 years of age.



Figure 7: Grave Y01.



Figure 8: Remains from Grave Y01



Figure 9: Button from Grave Y01.



Figure 10: Grave Y03.



Figure 11: Porcelain found on Grave Y03.



Figure 12: Grave Y04.



Figure 13: Grave Y04 completed.



Figure 14: Grave Y06.



Figure 15: Grave Y06 completed.



Figure 16: Grave Y09.



Figure 17: Grave Y09 material.



Figure 18: Grave Y10.



Figure 19: Grave Y10 Headstone.



Figure 20: Grave Y10 done.



Figure 21: Grave Y11.



Figure 22: Grave Y11 done.



Figure 23: Grave Y12.



Figure 24: Grave Y12 old headstone.



Figure 25: Grave Y12 done.



Figure 26: Grave Y14.



Figure 27: Grave Y14 done.



Figure 28: Grave Y15.



Figure 29: Grave Y15 done.



Figure 30: Grave Y16.



Figure 31: Grave Y16 done.



Figure 32: Grave Y18.



Figure 33: Grave Y18 done.



Figure 34: Grave Y22.



Figure 35: Y23. This was not a Grave.



Figure 36: Y24 – Another No Grave.



Figure 37: Y25 – No Grave.



Figure 38: X13 – Tested but turned out to be a No Grave.



Figure 39: Grave X14.



Figure 40: Grave X14 corrugated iron sheeting covering the burial pit.



Figure 41: X14 coffin remains.



Figure 42: X14 skeletal remains.



Figure 43: Grave X15.

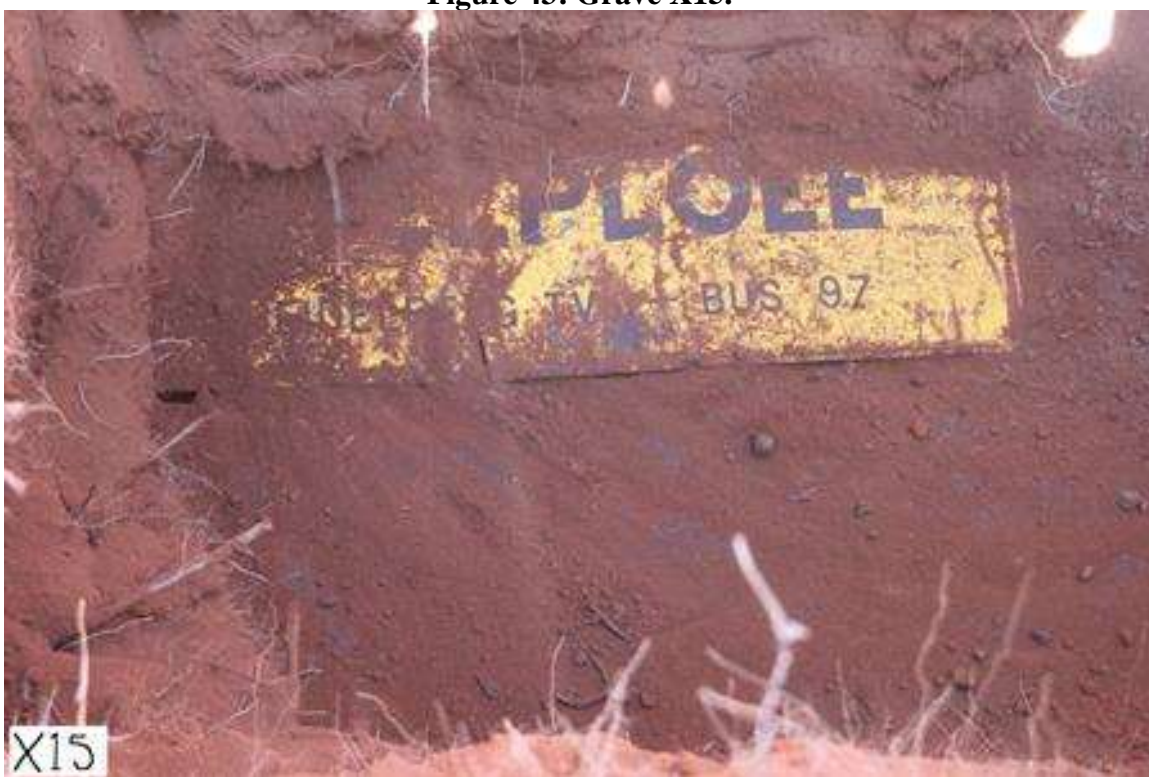


Figure 44: Grave X15. Metal sign in bottom of grave.



Figure 45: Grave X15 – Coffin.



Figure 46: Grave X15 skeletal and other remains.



Figure 47: Grave X17.



Figure 48: Grave X17 corrugated iron sheeting covering burial pit.



Figure 49: X17 blanket wrapping.



Figure 50: Grave X15 clothing.



Figure 51: X17 skeletal remains close-up.

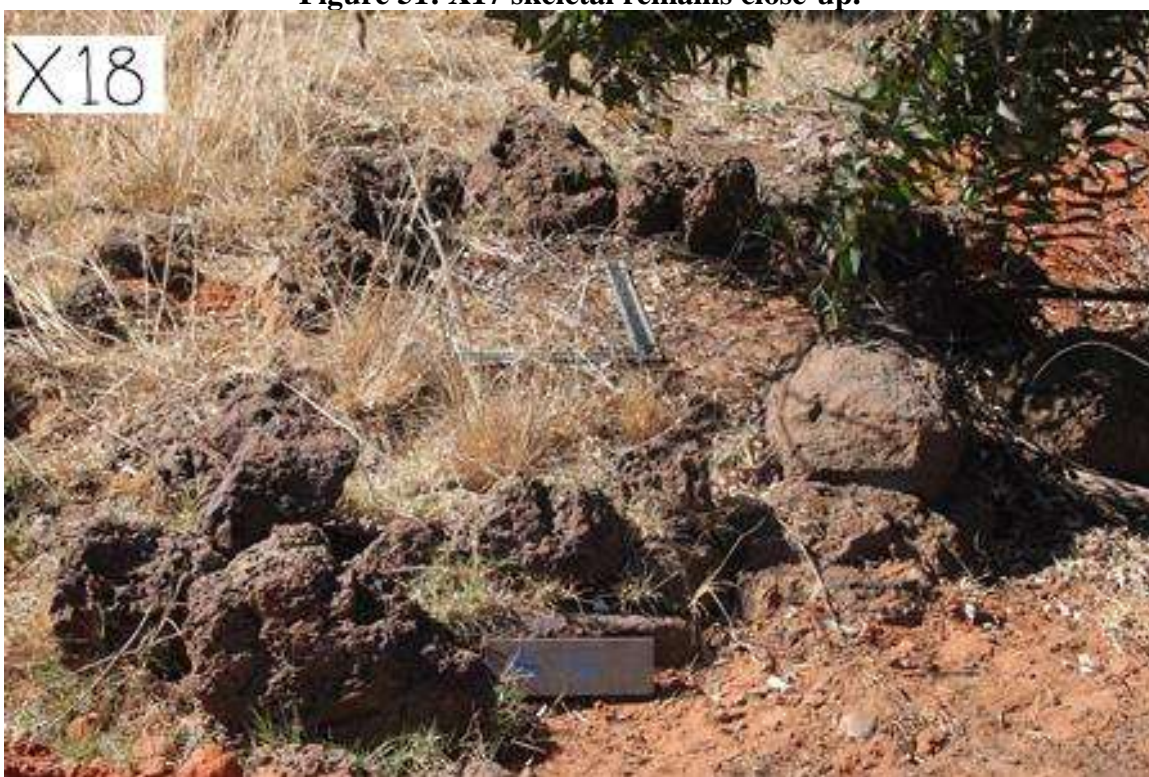


Figure 52: Grave X18.



Figure 53: Grave X18 coffin.



Figure 54: X18 skeletal remains, blanket and other material.



Figure 55: X18 clothing.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion it can be said that the investigation of the remaining burials located on Sites X and Y (on the Remaining Extent of Portion 1 of the farm Wonderfontein 428JS near Wonderfontein in Mpumalanga) was conducted successfully. A total of 17 were exhumed and relocated during July 2014.

The next phase of work will focus on the physical exhumation and reburial of the remaining graves from the other grave sites on Wonderfontein.

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