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**A REPORT ON THE EXHUMATION & RELOCATION OF TWO KNOWN  
GRAVES YOUNGER THAN 60 YEARS OF AGE  
FROM LEEUWVALLEI 297KT, BURGERSFORT EXT.47, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

For:

***All About Projects (Pty) Ltd***

P.O. Box 61642, Marshalltown, Gauteng 2107

REPORT: **APAC020/08**

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And***

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***In Conjunction with Andre van Wyk  
Roseleigh Funeral Home***

Field Work conducted: **07 February 2020** Report: **10 February 2020**

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**I HEREBY DECLARE THAT I AM AN INDEPENDENT  
SPECIALIST APPOINTED BY THE CLIENT ON A CONSULTANCY  
BASIS**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Feber". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

## SUMMARY

APelser Archaeological Consulting (APAC) and Adansonia Heritage Consultants, in conjunction with Roseleigh Funeral Home was requested and appointed by All About Projects (Pty) Ltd, to undertake the investigation, exhumation and reburial of two known graves younger than 60 years of age located on a portion of the farm Leeuwvallei 297KT, in Burgersfort, Limpopo Province. The graves are located in an informal cemetery in an area that will be impacted on by the development of a new Hospital here.

After consultation with family members of the deceased (Me. Annie & Mr. Ephraim Mkhonto who passed away in the 1970's), who provided consent for the exhumation and relocation, the work was undertaken on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2020. Permission was also obtained from the Fetakgomo Tubatse Local Municipality, while the SAP was also informed and gave permission. The family agreed to have the remains from these burials reburied at a new burial location not far from the site on Portion 8 of the farm. Mr. Buti John Mathladi, who resides on this portion and has a Family Graveyard here, gave permission for the reburial of the remains in a section at his graveyard.

It is believed that the requested work was concluded successfully and to the satisfaction of all parties. Mr. Satiene Freddy Mkhawana (the family representative who gave consent) and a representative of the Local Municipality attended the exhumation and relocation process on the day. This document represents a report on the results of the work undertaken.

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**INTRODUCTION**

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**AIMS**

The aims of the work were the following:

- (a) The successful exhumation, recovery and relocation of any possible human and cultural remains from the two Mkhonto family graves and their successful reburial at the Mathladi family graveyard on Portion 8 of Leeuwvallei 297KT in Burgersfort.

**METHODOLOGY**

The methodology comprised the following:

**Photographic** – Photographs of the site location; the excavation process; any possible material recovered and the two graves & burial pits were taken as part of the exhumation process

**Excavations**

The overburden on both graves (packed-stones and soil) was removed by an earthmoving machine up to the level of coffin and skeletal remains. Removing of the human remains and cultural material contained in the burial pits was then done by hand, while the new grave locations were dug by earthmoving machine (TLB) and the remains then placed in the graves before being covered up again.

**SHORT BACKGROUND**

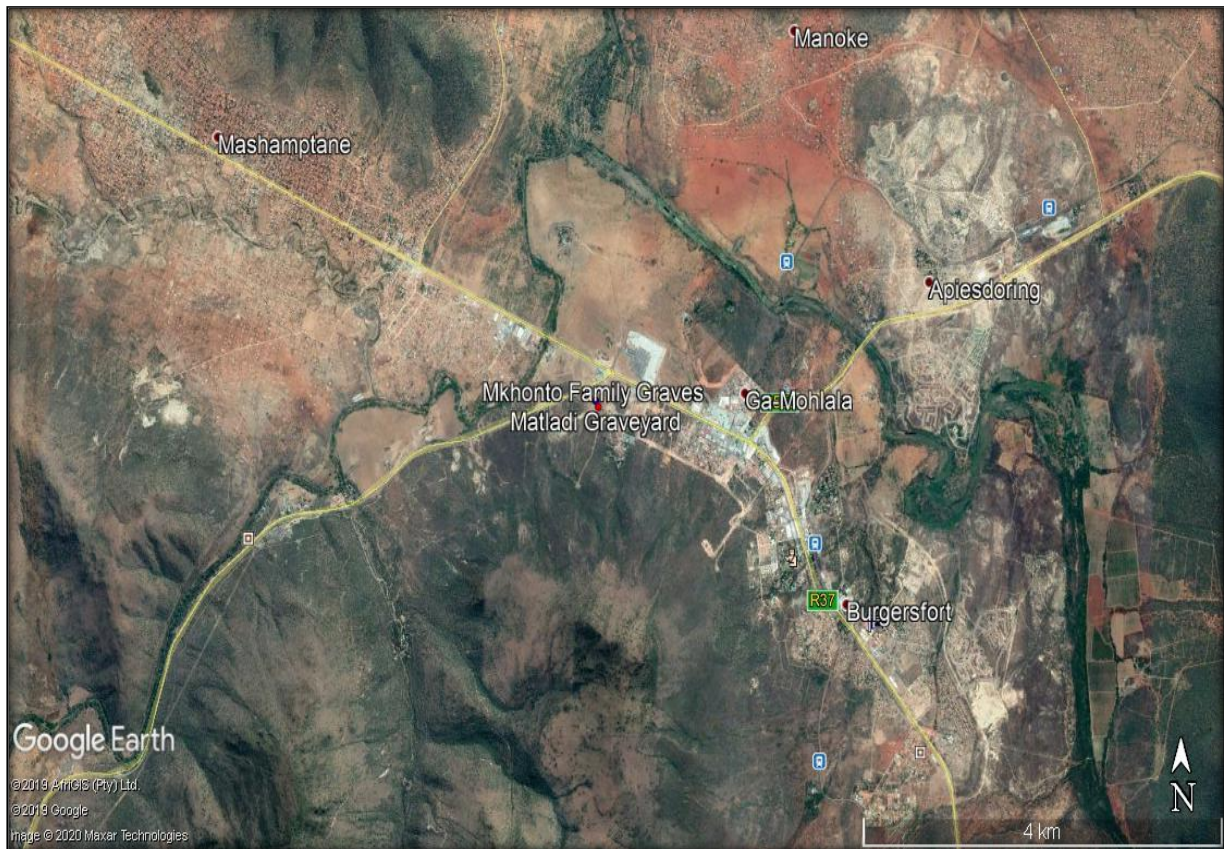
The site is located on the remainder of portion 58 of the farm Leeuwvallei 297KT. It is situated south of the R555 road from Burgersfort to Steelpoort. The Steelpoort River is situated towards the west. Extensive disturbances to the physical landscape include road

infrastructure, industrial, residential and informal settlements (recent and current) in all compass directions of the site. Sections of the property also show evidence of digging/quarrying activities. The site is vacant except for informal settlements and graves on the property, and zoned as residential 2. The study area falls within the Limpopo Province.

An industrial development is planned for this site and will include a Hospital facility. Site preparations have already started and pipeline infrastructure has been established. The site is flat and open and visibility was excellent. Various settlement layers were identified on the site. Recent homesteads and industrial areas are currently visible to the south and east. Mr. John Matladi, who resides to the south on portion 39, was interviewed on 15 September 2014. His house is near grave site LB: GY01 where several of his family members are buried.

Other recent grave sites, LB: GY02 & LB: GY03 were also identified during the two surveys, and are clearly visible on the property. These are all maintained by family members. GY02 consist of three graves and belongs to the Mkhonto/Nkambule family, who regularly visit the site. GY03) consists of approximately 18 – 20 graves. The burial site was still in use up to the 1990's, as one of the dates on a grave suggests. This burial site is associated with the Mnisi family. Site GY02 is the site that formed the focus of the February 2020 investigation, with only the Mkhonto family graves (x2) exhumed and relocated at this stage.

Mr. Satiene Freddy Mkhawana (born in 1958 although his ID Document indicates he was born in 1960) provided consent for the exhumation and reburials to be undertaken. According to his Affidavit of 8 November 2019 he is a close relation of the deceased individuals. He indicated that both Me. Annie Mkhonto and Mr. Ephraim Mkhonto passed away in the early 1970's. The graves are therefore both less than 60 years of age. According to his affidavit Annie Mkhonto was aged 47 when she passed away and Ephraim Mkhonto was aged 42 when he passed away.



**Figure 1: General location of study area & Burials (Google Earth 2020).**





**Figure 2: Closer view of the location of the 2 Mkhonto family graves as well as the New Location (Matladi Family Graveyard) where the remains were relocated to (Google Earth 2020).**



**Figure 3: The grave of Mr. Ephraim Mkhonto.**





**Figure 4: The grave of Me. Annie Mkhonto.**

## **PHYSICAL INVESTIGATIONS**

The physical investigations, exhumations and relocations were undertaken on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2020 by a team of Adansonia, APAC cc & Roseleigh Funeral Home. The team was assisted by the On-site Contractor. Mr. Satiene Freddy Mkhawana and a representative of the Local Municipality attended the exhumation and reburial process on the day as well. The aims with the physical investigations were the successful recovery of all possible remains (both human skeletal and possible cultural material from the burial pits, in order to facilitate their successful reburial in the new location.

### **Excavations**

After the rock and soil overburden on both graves were removed by a TLB, the physical excavations were conducted by hand, using picks, shovels, trowels and brushes. The graves were documented photographically prior to excavation, while the burial pit/s, the remains from it and other cultural material were also recorded. The new grave pits were dug by a TLB, with the remains (placed in new coffins) put in the new pits and covered by hand. Stones were put onto the new graves, with new name plaques also erected at both.

### **Results**

#### *Grave 1 – Mr.Ephraim Mkhonto*

According to Mr. Mkhawana, Ephraim was buried in a hand-made coffin and he was 42 years of age when he had passed away. Mr. Mkhawana was very young when the event took place and therefore some of the information provided could be slightly wrong.

However, the skeletal remains recovered from the grave do indicate the presence of an adult male individual, although the exact age cannot be determined fully. Based on characteristics of the pelvis (v-shaped sciatic notch) and robust nature of the long bones this individual was a male person. The remains were fairly fragmented and not fully-preserved. Pieces of clothing, blankets, coffin wood and metal coffin handles were also recovered. He was buried on his back with his arms next to his side.

Grave 2 – Me. Annie Mkhonto.

According to Me. Satiene Freddy Mkhawana she passed away at age 47 and was not buried in a coffin at all but only wrapped in a blanket.

The skeletal remains found was very fragmented & incomplete and although the exact age of the individual could not be determined without a doubt, it seemed that she was younger than what Freddy could remember (he was very young when she passed away). The remains seem to indicate a young adult female individual. No coffin wood (as indicated) was found, while pieces of clothing and blankets were recovered from the burial pit.

**Reburial of the remains at the New Location (Matladi Family Graveyard)**

As indicated earlier the remains from the two burials were relocated to the Matladi Family Cemetery. New coffins were used for both and the placed in new graves dug for this purpose. Each new grave was packed with stones from the area and new name plaques placed at the head as requested by Mr. Satiene Freddy Mkhawana.



**Figure 5: The burial pit of Mr. Ephraim Mkhonto.**



**Figure 6: The remains of Me. Annie Mkhonto in situ.**





**Figure 7: The remains of Mr. Ephraim Mkhonto before being placed in a new coffin.**



**Figure 8: The fragmented remains of Me. Annie Mkhonto.**



**Figure 9: The new grave of Me. Annie Mkhonto.**





**Figure 10: The new grave of Mr. Ephraim Mkhonto.**



**Figure 11: Me. Annie Mkhonto's new grave complete.**





**Figure 12: Mr. Ephraim Mkhonto's new grave complete.**

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In conclusion it is possible to say that the exhumation and relocation of the two Mkhonto family graves from Leeuwvallei 297KT in Burgersfort in the Limpopo Province were completed successfully. Mr. Satiene Freddy Mkhawana provided consent for the work to be conducted for his two close relatives Mr. Ephraim and Me. Annie Mkhonto. According to him they both had passed away in the early 1970's aged 42 and 47 respectively.

Both graves and the remains they contained were relocated to and reburied in the Matladi Family Graveyard located close to the informal cemetery where these graves were situated.

Although all efforts were made to remove all material from the graves there is always a possibility of remains (both skeletal and cultural) being missed due to a number of factors. Should any be recovered during subsequent development work a specialist should be called into investigate. Previously unmarked & unknown graves could also be present in the area and this aspect should also be kept in mind during any ongoing and future development activities.

## **REFERENCES**

General and Closer views of the location of the study area, graves and new burial location: Google Earth 2020.

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