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**FINAL REPORT ON THE INVESTIGATION, EXHUMATION AND
RELOCATION OF A NUMBER OF UNKNOWN GRAVES
FROM PORTION 6 OF THE FARM BORKUM 143LS
IMPACTED ON BY THE SENWABARWANA MALL DEVELOPMENT
IN SENWABARWANA, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

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REPORT: APAC021/13

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SUMMARY

Anton Pelsler (of APELSER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTING cc) was appointed by Molshe Business Solutions (on behalf of Rheinland Investment (Pty) Ltd) and in conjunction with Lebowa Funerals to undertake the archaeological investigation, exhumation & relocation of a number of graves located on a site located on Portion 6 of the farm Borkum 143LS, in Senwabarwana, Blouberg Municipality of the Limpopo Province. The graves are to be impacted on by the development of the new Senwabarwana Mall on the property. An approximate 15 unknown graves were identified during the Phase 1 HIA for the development (See APAC019/53). Only 11 graves were eventually found on site during the exhumation and relocation process in February 2021. Details on this will be discussed in the report.

Detailed and extensive social consultation, which included the erection of Site Notices & Newspaper Advertisements, was unable to trace any descendants or family members related to these graves. On the back of this a SAHRA permit was issued to APAC cc in December 2020. After the various required permits were obtained work was done in conjunction with Lebowa Funerals during February 2020. Representatives of Molshe Business Solutions, Rheinland Investments, the Department of Health, Local Municipality and the SAP were present during the exhumation and relocation process.

The archaeological portion of the work was carried out under SAHRA Permit No.: 3189 – Case ID No.: 14836.

This document discusses the results of the fieldwork and investigations carried out.

It is concluded that the work was done successfully and that the planned Senwabarwana Mall Development can continue, taking cognizance of the conclusions & recommendations put forward at the end of this document. The graves and the remains found were relocated to the Senwabarwana Municipal Cemetery.

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INTRODUCTION

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AIMS

The main aims with the investigation and exhumation of the graves from the Senwabarwana Mall Site situated on Portion 6 of the farm Borkum 143LS were the following:

- (a) The detailed investigation of all possible graves & burials located on the site,
- (b) The successful exhumation and relocation of all the burials and remains recovered to the Senwabarwana Municipal Cemetery.

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 – Aerial images (Google Earth) of the area, providing a location for the area and the grave site, are produced. Photographs of the area, as well as each individual grave/burial, any skeletal remains and grave goods that are recovered are also taken as part of the documentation process. A basic map for the Senwabarwana Mal grave site and the graves on it were also drawn and is included in the report.

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.

Burial Forms – A Burial form for each individual burial is normally 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.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA AND SITE

The proposed Senwabarwana Mall development is located in Senwabarwana, Limpopo Province. The site and study area is situated on Portion 6 of the original farm Borkum 143LS.

The area's topography is flat and open with no rocky outcrops and ridges. During the initial HIA there was virtually no grass or tree cover and visibility was therefore good. The development area had been completely disturbed and cleared and a large part functioned as soccer field. The area is surrounded by urban residential and business developments (housing and other) and as a result had been completely altered from its original character in recent years.

The only significant heritage site located and recorded here was the informal grave yard that contained between 10 & 15 unknown graves as initially thought.

GPS Location of Site: S23 16 56.70 E29 08 22.30.

All the graves and remains were relocated to the Senwabarwana Municipal Cemetery located at approximately:

S23 18 26.10 E29 08 34.60

During the February 2021 investigation, exhumation and relocation of the graves from the site it was found that a total of 11 graves were present on the site. Only 2 graves (No.1 & No.9) were formally demarcated with cement borders, while Grave 9 was the only one with a formal headstone. No inscription was on this headstone. All the other graves were stone-packed or had single upright stones marking their positions.



Figure 1: A view of the site during the 2019 assessment. Grave No.1 with its cement border is in the forefront.



Figure 2: Grave No.9 with its cement border & headstone.



Figure 3: General location of the Senwabarwana Mall old grave site & the Municipal Cemetery to where the graves were relocated (Google Earth 2021).



Figure 4: Closer view of the location of the grave site (Google Earth 2021).



Figure 5: Closer view of the Municipal Cemetery & the approximate location of the area where the 11 graves were reburied (Google Earth 2021).

INVESTIGATION AND RELOCATION OF THE BURIALS

As indicated earlier a total of 11 unknown graves were identified on the site. Most of these were only stone-packed or marked with a single upright stone at the head (Graves 2-8; 10 & 11), with only two formally demarcated with cement borders (Graves 1 & 9). Only Grave No.9 had a headstone, but it did not have any inscriptions on it to assist with identification.

Extensive social consultation, which included the erection of Site Notices, Newspaper advertisements and community meetings were unable to trace any possible descendants of the deceased individuals buried here and after obtaining the various permits from SAHRA, Department of Health, Blouberg Municipality and the SAP the investigation, exhumation and relocation process was undertaken and completed in February 2021. The archaeologist in conjunction with a team from the appointed undertakers (Lebowa Funerals) undertook the required work with representatives of the client, developer, Health Department, Municipality and the SAP being in attendance.

All the graves were laid out in an East-West direction, with the heads to the East. Three rows of graves were visible, with graves 1-8 in one, Graves 9 & 10 in the second and Grave 11 on its own (See Graves Map Figure 6).

After exhumation of the graves commenced, it soon became clear that most of the burial pits were waterlogged, with water seeping up from the bottom constantly. This made exhumation work difficult and also contributed to the general bad state of preservation of the skeletal material and grave goods that were recovered from some of the burials. Of the 11 graves only Graves 1, 2, 4, 6 & 11 contained any remains, with Graves 1, 2, 4, 6 and 11 also containing skeletal remains. The other 6 graves contained no remains at all and soil samples were taken for reburial purposes as is standard practice.

The sizes of the graves and burial pits indicated that most of the individuals buried here were either infants or young/juvenile individuals. This is also evident from the skeletal remains found in some of the graves. Only 1 grave (Grave 1) seems to have been that of an Adult individual (a female based on the grave goods). The human skeletal remains from the burials that did contain them were fragmented and mostly incomplete. Termite activity in one of the graves (Grave 6) also played a role in the bad state of preservation of the remains.

Senwabarwana Mall Graves

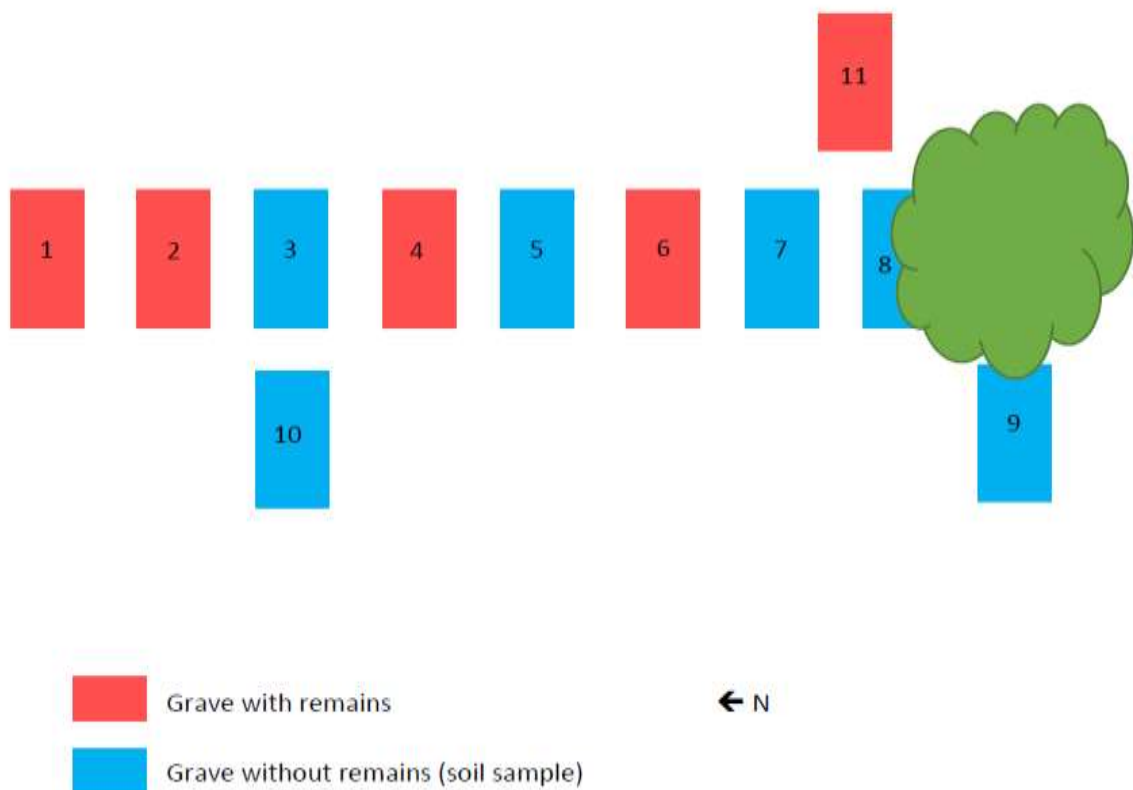


Figure 6: Basic Graves Map – Senwabarwana Mall.

Of the total of 11 confirmed graves the following regarding possible age & sex can be provided:

- (a) **Infants/Babies/Juveniles:** 10
- (b) **Adults:** 1
- (c) **Males:** 0
- (d) **Females:** 1

The graves were all dug up to the level of the original bedrock or up to the level where remains were found and the remains then excavated and removed by hand and then placed in the coffins for reburial.

Each confirmed grave/burial will be discussed briefly below:

- 01:** Cement border as demarcation. A white porcelain cup and saucer, as well the remains of woman's shoes and two silver bangles was recovered from the burial. The skeletal remains from the burial was fragmented and incomplete but indicates that this individual was a Young Adult person.
- 02:** Grave 2 was stone-packed. The size of the grave indicated that this was the burial of an infant or young child. No grave goods were found but two small arm bones (radius/ulna) were recovered from the burial pit.
- 03:** Grave 3 was again stone-packed and its size indicated the burial of an infant or small child. Nor grave goods or skeletal remains were found and a soil sample was taken for reburial purposes.
- 04:** This grave was also stone-packed. The size of the grave also pointed towards the burial of an infant or juvenile individual. One small femur was recovered from the burial pit only, indicating an infant individual. No other grave goods were found.
- 05:** Grave 5 was stone-packed. No grave goods or skeletal remains were recovered and a soil sample was taken for reburial purposes. The size of the grave and burial pit indicates that an infant was likely buried here.
- 06:** Grave 6 had a single upright stone at its head indicating its position. Besides water seeping in from the bottom of the grave when digging commences (as with most of the other graves), this grave also had evidence of termite activity. One small coffin nail and parts of the cranium of an infant was recovered from the burial.
- 07:** Grave 7 had a single upright stone at its head indicating its position. The size of the grave and burial pit indicated that an infant/young individual was buried here. No grave good or skeletal remains were recovered and a soil sample was taken for reburial purposes.
- 08:** Grave No.8 was stone-packed and was located close to a tree on the site. The stones on the graves had been disturbed as a result (by the tree roots).

Its size seemed to indicate that an adult was possibly buried here. However, no grave goods or skeletal remains were recovered and a soil sample was taken for reburial purposes.

- 09:** Grave No.9 was formally demarcated with a cement border and headstone. There was no inscription on the headstone. The size of the grave indicated that an infant or young child was likely buried here. No grave goods or skeletal remains were found and a soil sample was taken for reburial purposes. Grave No.09 was also the only grave that did not have a lot of groundwater seeping through and a hard rock bottom was present in the grave as well.
- 10:** Grave 10 was stone-packed again and its size is that of an infant or young child. Again no grave goods or remains were recovered and a soil sample was taken.
- 11:** Grave No.11 was stone-packed and its size seems to indicate that it was that of an infant or young individual. A fairly modern beer bottle (Grolsch) was found in the burial area (relatively high up and could therefore just be a later intrusion), while fragments of corrugated iron sheeting, a pottery fragment and a piece of a paper document was found in the burial pit. No skeletal remains were recovered.



Figure 7: Grave No.1.



Figure 8: Porcelain cup & saucer and shoe remains from Grave 1.



Figure 9: Silver bangles from Grave 1.



Figure 10: Skeletal remains from Grave 1.



Figure 11: Grave No.2.



Figure 12: Skeletal remains from Grave 2.



Figure 13: Grave No.3.



Figure 14: The soil sample from Grave 3.



Figure 15: Grave No.4.



Figure 16: Skeletal remains from Grave 4.



Figure 17: Grave No.5.



Figure 18: Soil sample from Grave 5.



Figure 19: Grave No.6.



Figure 20: Infant cranium fragments and coffin nail from Grave 6.



Figure 21: Grave No.7.



Figure 22: Soil sample from Grave 7.



Figure 23: Grave No.8.



Figure 24: Soil sample from Grave 8.



Figure 25: Grave No.9.



Figure 26: Soil sample from Grave 9.



Figure 27: Grave No.10.



Figure 28: Soil sample from Grave 10.



Figure 29: Grave No.11.



Figure 30: Beer bottle from the Grave 11 pit.



Figure 31: Paper, pottery and corrugated iron pieces from Grave 11.



Figure 32: Once the exhumation commenced water constantly kept seeping in from the bottom.



Figure 33: Another grave with water rising even after digging was complete.



Figure 34: Although Grave No.9 was not as water-logged as the others water can be seen rising after bedrock was reached.



Figure 36: A view of the site with the undertaker's team busy backfilling the burial pits.



Figure 37: View of the site after backfilling with the new coffins ready for transport to their new location.

The graves and the remains were relocated to and reburied in the Senwabarwana Municipal Cemetery. The Municipality dug and provided the new grave plots, with 2 rows graves provided. All the coffins were placed by hand into the new burial pits and

were then backfilled with a TLB. Once the graves had settled each grave will be marked with a plaque containing the individual grave number, date of removal and their old location.



Figure 38: A view of the new graves at the Municipal Cemetery.



Figure 39: A view of the coffins placed next to the new burial pits ready for interment.



Figure 40: A view of the new graves after being back-filled.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Anton Pelsler (of APELSER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTING cc) was appointed by Molshe Business Solutions (on behalf of Rheinland Investment (Pty) Ltd) and in conjunction with Lebowa Funerals to undertake the archaeological investigation, exhumation & relocation of a number of graves located on a site located on Portion 6 of the farm Borkum 143LS, in Senwabarwana, Blouberg Municipality of the Limpopo Province. The graves are to be impacted on by the development of the new Senwabarwana Mall on the property. An approximate 15 unknown graves were identified during the Phase 1 HIA for the development. Only 11 graves were eventually found on site during the exhumation and relocation process in February 2021.

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The graves and the remains were relocated to and reburied in the Senwabarwana Municipal Cemetery. It is concluded that the work was done successfully and that the proposed Senwabarwana Mall development in the area can continue, taking cognizance of the conclusions & recommendations put forward at the end of this document.

Finally, it needs to be stated that although extensive efforts are made to identify all possible graves in an area of impact, and to remove all possible remains from these graves, there is always a possibility that previously unknown and unmarked graves and remains could be present in the area. Should any be uncovered during the development actions, work in the area should be stopped and an expert be called in to investigate and provide recommendations on the way forward.

REFERENCES

Location of Senwabarwana Mall Grave Site and Municipal Cemetery: Google Earth 2021.

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