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MEMORANDUM

TO: Zama Ramokgadi

FROM: Jaco van der Walt - Archaeologist

DATE: 14 August 2018

SUBJECT: Memo on the site investigation of Human Remains – Lwala Mine, Burgersfort

Dear Ms Ramokgadi

1. INTRODUCTION

HCAC (Heritage Contracts and Archaeological Consulting) was contracted to assess the origins of human remains at the Lwala Samancor Mine, Burgersfort, Limpopo Province (Figure 1) unearthed by mining activities on 24 July 2018. This document constitutes feedback on the results of the site investigation as requested by SAHRA BGG.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

An AIA (Roodt 2003) was conducted for the above mention project, and submitted to SAHRA (SAHRA reference 9/2/266/0003). Mining activities commenced in 2018, and during this process, human remains were uncovered. The accidental exposure of skeletal remains was handled in the correct manner. Excavation relating to the opencast mining activities within that specific area and surroundings was halted. The Mecklenburg SAPS & Forensic Department was immediately notified (Reference: Inquiry 01/07/2018) and called to the scene. An archaeologist from HCAC was also informed and a site visit was arranged for further investigations and an incident report was compiled (Annexure A). The police together with their forensic unit visited the area and collected the human remains.

HCAC was then tasked to assess the site conditions and to liaise with the SAHRA. The BGG unit (Ms Thingahangwi Tshivhase (Case Officer at the BGG at SAHRA)) was contacted and notified of the finds via email on 31 July 2018. During the field visit (conducted on 26 July 2018) the matrix in which the remains were found was recorded. A rescue permit application was created on SAHRIS and all supporting documents uploaded to the case (Case Number 12759).

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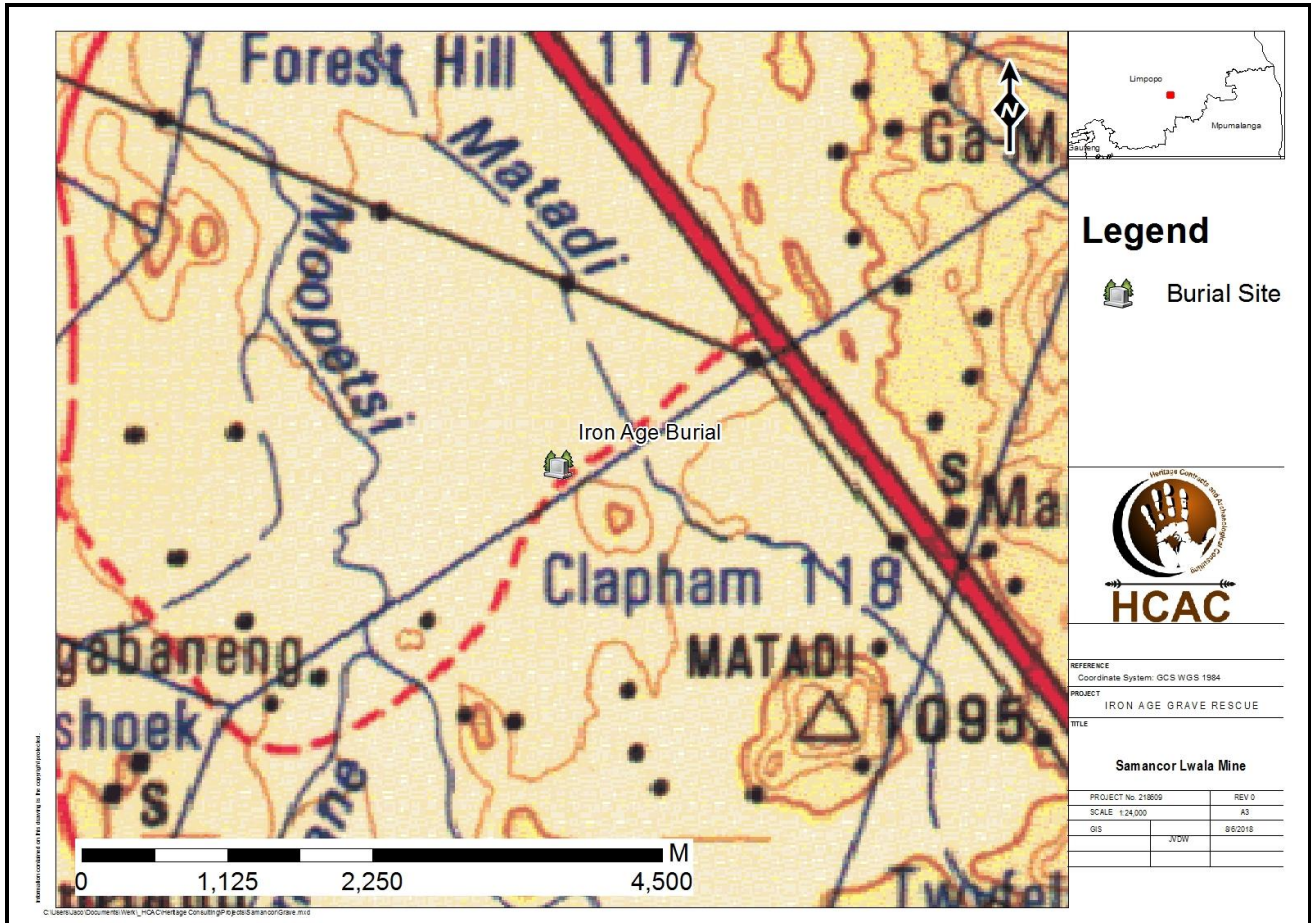


Figure 1. Provincial locality map indicating the location of the grave.

3. RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The skeletal remains were uncovered at 24°28'32.51"S and 30° 5'37.09"E in an area that used to be cultivated (Figure 2). The grave was unmarked, and no surface indications of a burial were ever noted. During opencast mining the skeletal remains were unearthed.

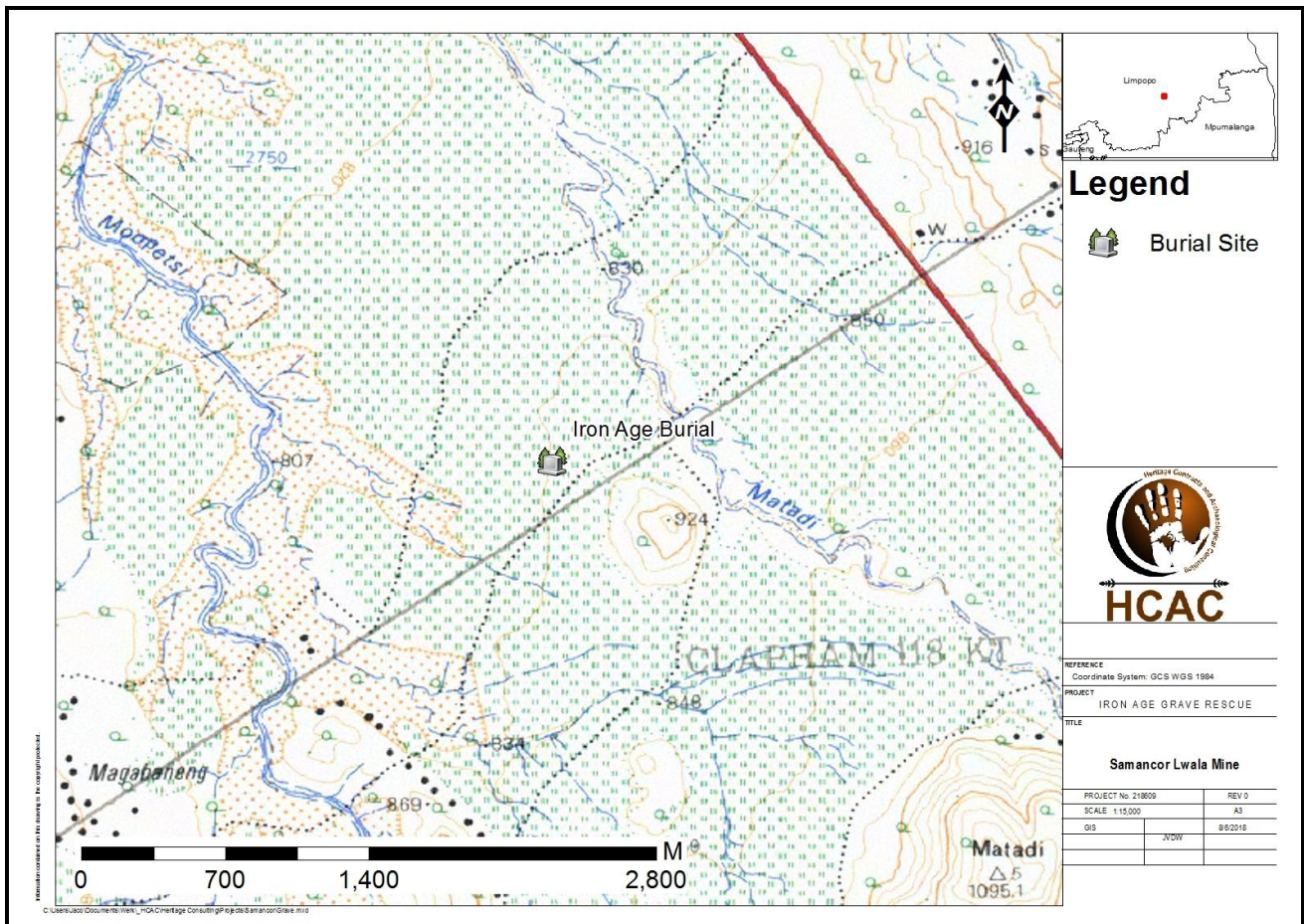


Figure 2. Locality map.

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Figure 3. Google Earth image of the area where the grave was uncovered.

The skeletal material has been removed by the police at the time of the visit, but the area where the material was exposed has been clearly marked. Although open cast mining impacted on the area there is sufficient evidence of substantial archaeological deposit in the form of ash and kraal deposits exposed in the profile of the excavated pit. From surface observation the site consists of a multi component Iron Age site. Maize lower grinders (Figure 7) are found in abundance in the area indicating an occupation level of post 1650 (Huffman 2006). Numerous stone cairns (Figure 6) were also noted that could either be the result of clearing the area for agricultural purposes or marking informal graves. Stratigraphically below this layer is the thick ash and kraal layer exposed in the profile trenches with diagnostic ceramics (Doornkop) (Figure 9) that is well dated to 600 – 900 AD (Huffman 2007). It is, however, unclear to which occupation level the skeletal remains (Figure 8) originate from.

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Figure 4. Area where the remains were uncovered



Figure 5. Danger tape marking the area where the remains were uncovered



Figure 6. Stone cairn



Figure 7. Iron Age artefacts associated with the grave

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Figure 8. Skeletal remains before they were removed from site by the police.



Figure 9. Early Iron Age ceramics.

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4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, it is possible to say that the accidental exposure of skeletal material date to the Iron Age and was handled correctly. There is sufficient deposit to warrant phase 2 rescue mitigation to mitigate the accidental destruction of the archaeological site. This excavation will also put into context the origins of the skeletal material and the archaeological skeletal material will be covered in the Section 35 rescue permit application as per a discussion with Mr Phillip Hine, acting manager of SAHRA Archaeology, Palaeontology and Meteorites Unit. It is further recommended that a chance find procedure and heritage management plan for the mine is implemented that is currently being compiled.

Any further queries can be forwarded to Jaco van der Walt on Cell: +27 82 373 8491 or to jaco.heritage@gmail.com

Sincerely

Jaco van der Walt
Archaeologist
HCAC - Heritage Contracts and Archaeological Consulting CC

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