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**REPORT ON THE EXCAVATION AND EXHUMATION OF A NUMBER OF
KNOWN & UNKNOWN GRAVES AT THE BOTHA FARM SITE
LOCATED ON THE REMAINDER OF PORTION 9
OF OLIFANTSFONTEIN 410JR, TSHWANE, GAUTENG**

For:

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REPORT: APAC022/63

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SUMMARY

Anton Pelsler (of APELSER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTING cc) was appointed by M&T Development (Pty) Ltd, in conjunction with Roseleigh Funeral Home, to assist with the investigation, exhumation & relocation of 9 known & unknown graves from the Remainder of Portion 9 of the Farm Olifantsfontein 410 JR (known as the Botha Farm Graves). These graves will be impacted on by proposed residential development.

After a Public Participation Process, which included the erection of Site Notices and Newspaper Advertisements, one descendant of some of the deceased individuals buried at the site, came forward to identify and claim the graves. He also provided information on some of the other unclaimed and unknown graves. Consent was obtained for the exhumation and relocation of these graves. No other individuals came forward to identify and claim the other graves after the stipulated time-frame of 60 days Notice Period.

After obtaining permissions from the various authorities to undertake the physical work, including SAHRA, Department of Health, COGTA, SAP and Municipal, the work was scheduled and completed during early July 2022. The descendant who provided consent for the exhumations (Mr. Louw Strydom) was in attendance during the work. As the graves (known and unknown) were all older than 60 years of age, the work was conducted under SAHRA Permit (**Case ID#18528 & Permit ID#3540**).

It can be concluded that the physical investigation, exhumation and relocation work was conducted successfully to the satisfaction of all parties involved.

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AIMS

The main aims with the excavation and exhumation of the graves/burials were the following:

- (a) The detailed investigation of all the identified and claimed graves/burials located on the site,
- (b) The successful excavation, exhumation and finally relocation, of each grave/burial & recovered remains, to the Boksburg Subregional Municipal Cemetery in Boksburg South as requested and agreed with the Strydom family representative.

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 area and grave site, is 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.

Excavation and Exhumation – Normally graves are excavated & 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 was used to remove overburden (soil, etc.) from the grave/burial locations to assist with the process.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA AND SITE

The Botha Farm Grave Site and graves were located on the Remainder of Portion 9 of the farm Olifantsfontein 410JR, near Midstream in Gauteng. A total of 9 graves were situated here, with 2 of these located in a formally demarcated lot “fenced-off” with a stone and brick boundary, with the others located outside and around this location. Four (4) of the graves had formal headstones with inscriptions, with a 5th one containing a slate headstone without inscription. The other 4 graves were stone-packed without any headstones.

The remains from all of the graves were relocated to and reburied at the Boksburg Subregional Cemetery in Boksburg South as requested and agreed with the Mr. Louw Strydom who identified some of the graves and provided consent for the exhumation and relocation work to be conducted. The headstones from the 5 graves were also relocated to and re-erected at the new location.



Figure 1: General location of the Botha Farm Graves Site (Google Earth 2022).



Figure 2: Closer view of the location of the Botha Farm Graves Site (Google Earth 2022).

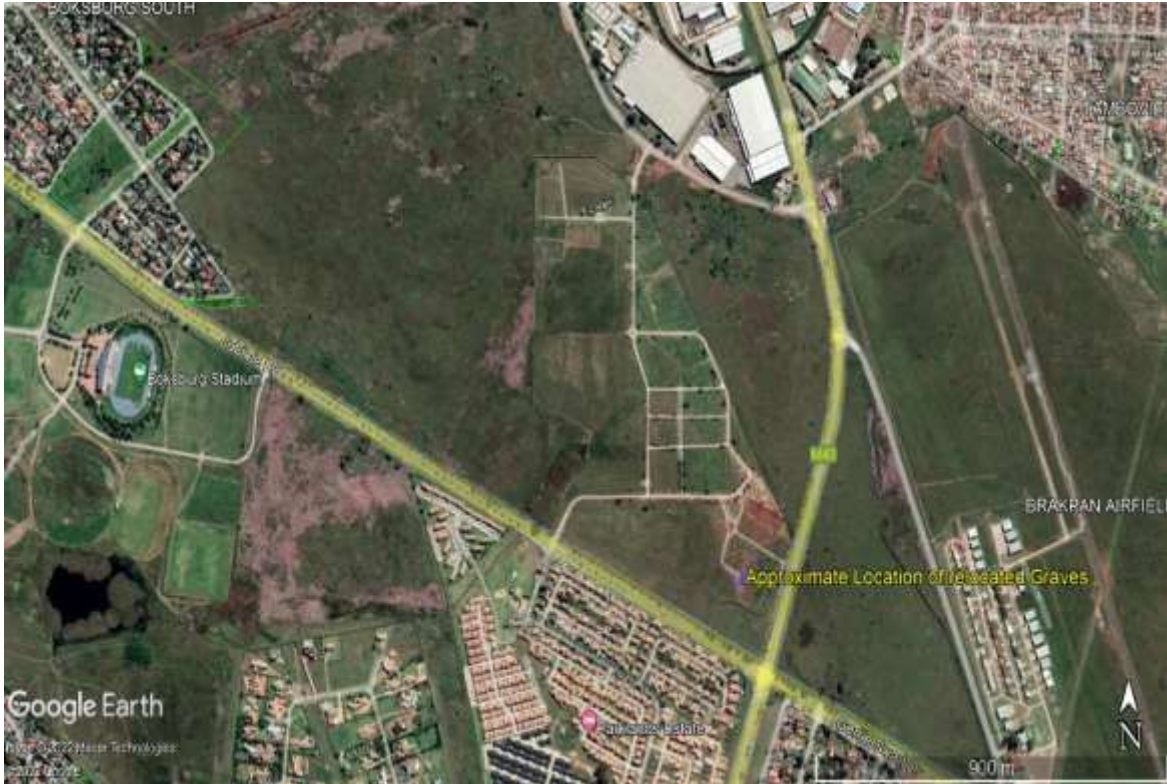


Figure 3: The approximate location of the relocated Botha Farm Graves in the Boksburg Subregional Cemetery (Google Earth 2022).

EXCAVATION AND EXHUMATION OF THE BURIALS

A total of 9 graves – some formally marked with headstones and borders and others stone-packed with no identificatory markers – were located at the site. Mr. Lourens Van Dyk Strydom – a grandchild of two of the deceased buried here – provided consent for the exhumation and relocation of these graves, while also providing information on one of the other unmarked graves located here. This grave was the resting place of one of the workers in the Strydom household. No other descendants of the rest of the deceased came forward to claim/identify any of the other graves on the site during the public participation process.

The Botha Farm Grave Site was located at S25 55 26.00 E28 13 16.00.

The physical investigation, exhumation and relocation work was conducted during the week of the 11th of July 2022. Mr. Strydom was present as requested during the process. The remains recovered from each of the graves were relocated to and reburied in the Boksburg Subregional Cemetery in Boksburg South, with the old headstones from those graves that had them also re-erected there.

The new location for the reburied graves at the Boksburg Subregional Cemetery is S26 14 24.10 E28 17 35.30.

The details for and results of the investigations/excavations & exhumations are as follows:

Grave 1 – The grave of Frikkie Strijdom. According to the headstone inscription Frikkie passed away on the 26th of December 1921. No date of birth is given. The burial pit was built out with bricks and cement, with a large slatestone “cap” covering the coffin and pit. Termite activity was visible in the burial pit, with the result that very little coffin remains were recovered. Some glass fragments of the “window” in the old coffin were recovered, but no coffin handles or nails were found. The human skeletal remains were very fragmented, with some skull pieces, longbones, pelvic fragments and phalanges (finger/toe bones) recovered. **The new grave number for Grave 1 at its new location is DC435.**



Figure 3: The grave of Frikkie Strijdom.



Figure 4: Grave 1 headstone details.



Figure 5: View of slatestone cover in Grave 1.



Figure 6: The remains found in Grave 1.



Figure 7: Grave 1 Headstone re-erected at the new location.

Grave 2 – This was the grave of Debora Jacoba Strydom (born Pretorius). According to the headstone inscription she passed away on the 19th of January 1956. No date of birth is given. Her grave was also built out with bricks and cement, with sheets of corrugated iron placed as cover on the coffin and burial pit. Although termite activity was also evident in the grave, the destruction of the coffin and other material was not as severe as in Grave 1.

Large sections of coffin wood, metal coffin handles, nails and screws were recovered from the burial. The human skeletal remains from the burial were more complete than that from Grave 1, although also fairly fragmented. It consisted of longbones, ribs, vertebrae, phalanges and skull pieces. The false teeth of Me. Strydom were also recovered from the burial. **The new grave number for Grave 2 at its new location is DC436.**



Figure 8: Grave 2 with headstone details.



Figure 9: Close-up of Grave 2 burial pit with bricks and corrugated iron cover visible.



Figure 10: Coffin wood from Grave 2.



Figure 11: One of the coffin handles from Grave 1.



Figure 12: Human skeletal remains from Grave 2.



Figure 13: Skull & false teeth from Grave 2.



Figure 14: Grave 1 headstone re-erected at its new location.

Grave 3 – This was a stone-packed grave without a headstone of an unknown individual. Some fragments of corrugated iron sheeting were found in the pit that probably covered the burial but no other grave goods such as coffin wood, nails or human remains were found. It is possible that this was the grave of an infant or small child. **The new grave number for Grave 3 at its new location is DC439.**



Figure 15: Grave 3.



Figure 16: Corrugated iron in Grave 3 pit.



Figure 17: Grave 3 reburied at its new location.

Grave 4 – This was a stone and brick-packed grave without a headstone of an unknown individual. Again some pieces of corrugated iron sheeting were found in the pit that probably covered the burial. No other grave goods such as coffin wood, nails or human remains were found. It is possible that this was the grave of an infant or small child. **The new grave number for Grave 4 at its new location is DC440.**



Figure 18: Grave 4.



Figure 19: Corrugated iron sheeting from Grave 4.



Figure 20: Grave 4 reburied at its new location.

Grave 5 – This was the grave of Schalk Engelbrecht. According to the headstone inscription he was born on the 23rd of August 1899 and passed away on the 19th of February 1900. He was therefore less than 5 months old at the time of death. It needs to be mentioned that this was during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). His cause of death is not known or stated on the headstone. Besides a small fragment of porcelain no other grave goods or skeletal remains were recovered and a soil sample was taken for reburial purposes. **Grave 5's new number in the Boksburg Subregional Cemetery is DC441.**



Figure 21: Grave 5 with headstone.



Figure 22: Grave 5 excavation completed.



Figure 23: Small piece of porcelain from Grave 5.



Figure 24: Soil sample from Grave 5.



Figure 25: Grave 5 with its headstone re-erected at the new location.

Grave 6 – This was a stone-packed grave with a single slate headstone without any visible inscription on it. The size of grave seems to indicate that of a small infant or child. No grave goods or any skeletal remains were recovered and a soil sample was taken or reburial purposes again. **Grave 6's new number in the Boksbug Subregional Cemetery is DC442.**



Figure 26: Grave 6.



Figure 275: The slate headstone from Grave 6.



Figure 28: Grave 6 excavation completed.



Figure 29: Grave 6 reburied at its new location.

Grave 7 – This was the grave of Frederich N. van As. According to the inscription on the headstone he was born on the 10th of October 1879 and passed away on the 30th of January 1925 aged nearly 46 years old. No grave goods or any human skeletal remains were recovered from underneath the packed stone cairn and headstone location that marked the position of the grave. A soil sample was also taken for reburial. **Grave 7's new number in the Boksbug Subregional Cemetery is DC443.**



Figure 30: Grave 7 headstone detail.



Figure 31: Grave 7 excavation completed.



Figure 32: Grave 7 headstone re-erected at its new location.

Grave 8 – This was a stone-packed grave without any headstone or marker. The size of the grave seems to indicate that an infant or small child might have been buried here. No grave goods or any human skeletal remains were recovered from the burial and a soil sample was taken for reburial. **Grave 8's new number in the Boksbug Subregional Cemetery is DC444.**



Figure 33: Grave 8.



Figure 34: Grave 8 excavation complete.



Figure 35: Grave 8 soil sample.



Figure 36: Grave 8 reburied at its new location.

Grave 9 – Grave 9 was a large stone-packed grave located just outside of the walled-in Strydom-family graveyard at the site. According to Mr. Louw Strydom this was the grave of one Henry/Henrie? (surname unknown) who wished to be buried close to the Strydom’s on who’s farm and in who’s house he worked as laborer. According to Mr. Strydom (based on stories he was told) Henry/Henrie was a Koranna person who looked after Boer horses during the Anglo-Boer War as well (‘n so-called “agterryer”).

No grave goods or any human skeletal remains were found in the grave and a soil sample was again taken for reburial purposes. **Grave 9’s new number in the Boksbug Subregional Cemetery is DC445.**



Figure 37: Grave 9.



Figure 38: Grave 9 excavation completed.



Figure 39: Grave 9 soil sample.



Figure 40: Grave 9 reburied at its new location.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion it can be said that the investigation, exhumation & relocation of known & unknown graves from the Remainder of Portion 9 of the Farm Olifantsfontein 410JR (known as the Botha Farm Graves) was conducted successfully. These graves will be impacted on by proposed residential development.

A total of 9 graves were situated here, with 2 of these located in a formally demarcated lot “fenced-off” with a stone and brick boundary, with the others located outside and around this location. Four (4) of the graves had formal headstones with inscriptions, with

a 5th one containing a slate headstone without inscription. The other 4 graves were stone-packed without any headstones.

The remains from all of the graves were relocated to and reburied at the Boksburg Subregional Cemetery in Boksburg South as requested and agreed with the Mr. Louw Strydom who identified some of the graves and provided consent for the exhumation and relocation work to be conducted. The formal headstones from the graves were also relocated to and re-erected at the new location.

Finally it should be stated that although all efforts are made to recover and remove all possible remains from any burials identified in the area, that there are always a possibility of something being missed. Unmarked and unknown graves/burials (not known to the families who identified and claimed the burials under discussion) could also still be located at the site. This aspect needs to be kept in mind when expanding mining operations into the area, as well as any other development activities, expose any remains or evidence. A Specialist should then be called in to investigate and provide recommendations on the way forward.

REFERENCES

General and Closer views of Botha Farm Grave Site Location: Google Earth 2022.

Location of Boksburg Subregional Municipal Cemetery: Google Earth 2022.

Marais-Botes, L. 2015. **Report on Graves on Portion 40 and the Remainder of Portion 9 of the farm Olifantsfontein 410 JR, Location and Identification.** Unpublished Report for M&T Development. July 2015.