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**REPORT ON THE TEST EXCAVATION OF POSSIBLE GRAVES
FROM PORTION 32 & 33 OF THE FARM RIETSPRUIT 152IR
TO BE IMPACTED BY TOWNSHIP DEVELOPMENT
(WATERVALSPRUIT/SKY CITY, NEAR PALM RIDGE
EKURHULENI METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY, GAUTENG**

For:

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REPORT: APAC021/28

March 2021

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Pelser', located at the bottom center of the page.

SUMMARY

Anton Pelsler (of APELSER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTING cc) was appointed by Cosmopolitan Projects Johannesburg (Pty) Ltd to undertake the test excavation of a number of possible graves located on a site on Portions 32 & 33 of the farm Riespruit 152IR, near Palm Ridge in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality of Gauteng. The possible graves will be impacted on by the ongoing Waterval Spruit/Sky City Township Development.

The possible graves were identified during site clearance work related to the development activities, and as there was uncertainty about whether or not the stone heaps represented unknown graves, work in their vicinity was halted and the site demarcated to facilitate a site assessment and recommendations on the way forward. After the site assessment it was recommended by the Heritage Specialist that a Test Excavation Permit be applied for from SAHRA's Burial Grounds & Graves Unit (the BGG).

The required permit was issued to APAC cc on the 25th of March 2021 (SAHRA Permit No.3231 and Case ID Number 16256). The Test Excavations were undertaken on the 29th of March 2021, with representatives of the client present on site. None of the stone-packed features were found to contain any evidence of graves or burial pits.

The results of the Test Excavations will be discussed in this document. It is concluded that the work on the site was conducted successfully and that the planned & ongoing development activities in this area can continue, taking cognizance of the conclusions & recommendations put forward at the end of this document.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

AIMS

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

METHODOLOGY

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA & SITES

INVESTIGATION AND RELOCATION OF BURIALS

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

REFERENCES

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INTRODUCTION

Anton Pelser (of APELSER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTING cc) was appointed by Cosmopolitan Projects Johannesburg (Pty) Ltd to undertake the test excavation of a number of possible graves located on a site on Portions 32 & 33 of the farm Rietspruit 152IR, near Palm Ridge in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality of Gauteng. The possible graves will be impacted on by the ongoing Waterval Spruit/Sky City Township Development.

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AIMS

The main aims with the test excavation of the possible graves from the site situated on Portions 32 & 33 of the farm Rietspruit 152IR were the following:

- (a) to determine whether or not any of the stone-packed features/heaps possibly represent unknown graves,
- (b) should these stone heaps represent possible graves to then provide recommendations on the way forward in terms of the Formal Exhumation & Relocation processes to be followed
- (c) to provide recommendations on the way forward should these features not represent unknown graves.

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 Act 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 paleontological site or any meteorite;
- b. destroy, damage, excavate, remove from its original position, collect or own any archaeological or paleontological 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 paleontological material or object, or any meteorite; or
- d. bring onto or use at an archaeological or paleontological site any excavation equipment or any equipment that assists in the detection or recovery of metals or archaeological and paleontological 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 possible 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 the possible grave site, are produced. Photographs of the area, as well as each individual stone-packed feature, any possible 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 the possible graves (stone-packed features/heaps) were each documented photographically prior to being opened by using an earthmoving machine (TLB). The TLB was used to first remove the stones at each location from the surface, where-after the soil overburden was carefully removed. The machine was then used to carefully remove layers of soil of around 30cm at a time to see if any disturbances (such as a burial pit) could be identified and to see if any cultural material (such as corrugated iron sheeting covering possible burial pits) and other remains were present in the trenches. Once sterile hard bedrock was reached the excavation was stopped.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA AND SITE

The site is located on Portions 32 & 33 of the farm Rietspruit 152IR, near Palm Ridge in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality of Gauteng. The possible graves are to be impacted on by the continuing development activities related to the Watervalspruit Township Development.

Initially 5 stone heaps/features were identified on the site. These were demarcated as potential graves. At closer inspection only 4 stone-packed features were identified and although the Test Excavation Permit was issued for 3 test trenches it was decided to test the 4th feature as well.

An earlier HIA for the development, undertaken in 2015 (see References) did not identify graves/grave sites or any other significant cultural heritage resources in the area, and after Environmental Authorization for the development was provided work on the township establishment commenced. It was during ground clearance work that these stone heaps were discovered located close to an old cement dam in the area.

GPS Location of site: S26 14 18.90 E28 07 41.40.

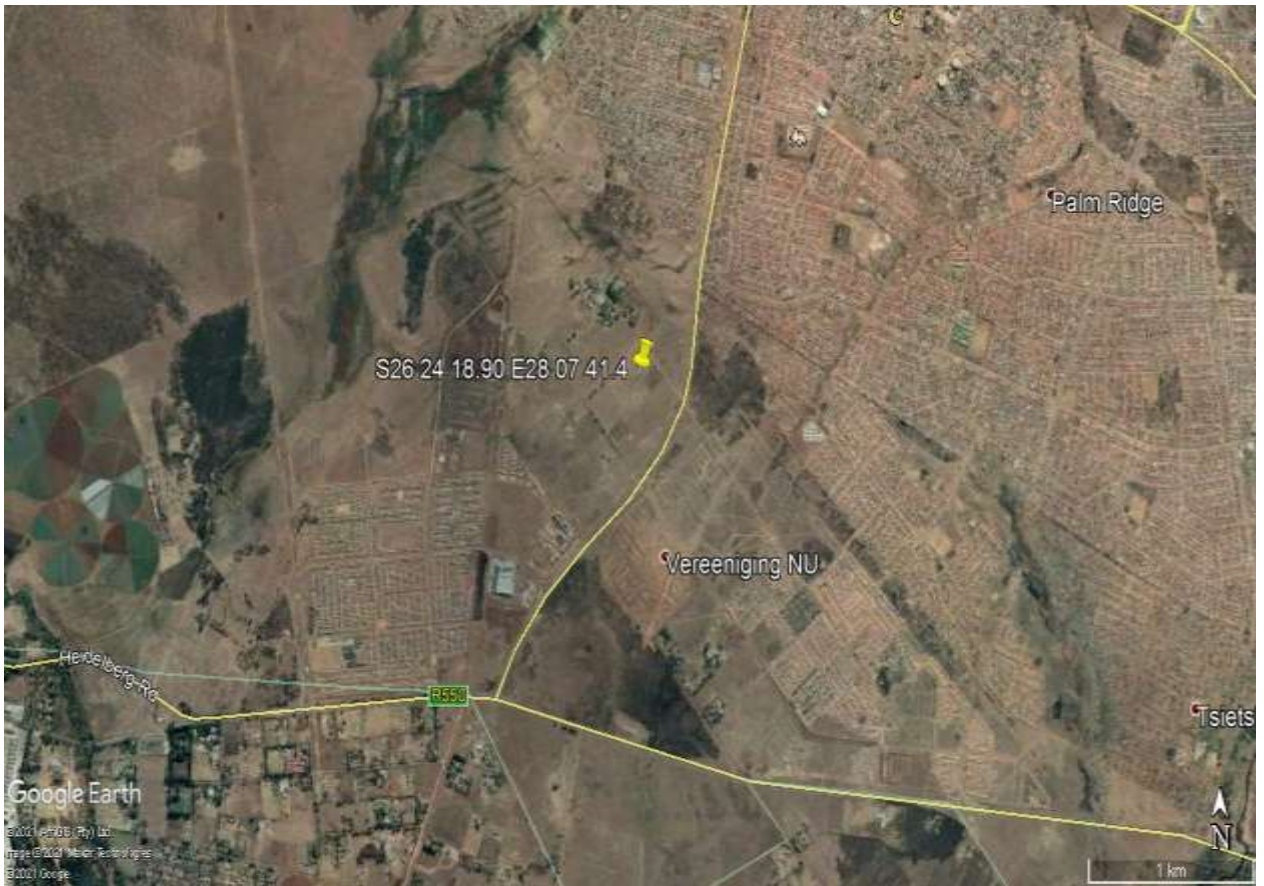


Figure 1: General location of the site (Google Earth 2021).



Figure 2: Closer view of the location of the site (Google Earth 2021).



Figure 3: A view of the demarcated site with development activities around it visible.



Figure 4: Stone feature 1 (TT = Test Trench).



Figure 5: Stone feature 2.



Figure 6: Stone feature 3.



Figure 7: Stone feature 4.

TEST EXCAVATION OF THE POSSIBLE GRAVES

All four stone-packed features (numbered TT1 to TT4) was found to contain no evidence of any unnatural disturbances (such as the digging of burial pits) and no cultural material (such as corrugated iron sheeting sometimes found in graves covering the burial pits) or any human remains were found. Once the stones covering the surface were removed the TLB was used to dig in approximately 30cm spits down towards bedrock. The natural stratigraphy consisted of around 0.20m of darkish brown loose soil, followed by a harder more gravelly reddish-brown soil of between 0.80m to 1.00m thick before sterile hard bedrock was reached. All 4 test trenches were stopped at this level of around 1.20m below the Present Surface Level (PSL).

It can therefore be concluded that these 4 stone-packed features do not represent unknown graves, but that it is more than likely the result of the clearing of fields for earlier agricultural activities that used to be practiced here or the result of actions possible related to the building of the cement dam that used to be located close by. The development activities in this area can therefore continue.



Figure 8: TT1 completed.



**Figure 9: The depth of the trench and the natural stratigraphy can be seen here.
The scale used is 1m in length.**



Figure 10: The completed TT2. The sterile hard bedrock at the bottom is visible.



Figure 11: TT3 completed.



Figure 12: The completed TT4 with sterile bedrock reached.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Anton Pelsler (of APELSER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTING cc) was appointed by Cosmopolitan Projects Johannesburg (Pty) Ltd to undertake the test excavation of a number of possible graves located on a site on Portions 32 & 33 of the farm Riespruit 152IR, near Palm Ridge in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality of Gauteng. The possible graves will be impacted on by the ongoing Waterval Spruit/Sky City Township Development.

The possible graves were identified during site clearance work related to the development activities, and as there was uncertainty about whether or not the stone heaps represented unknown graves, work in their vicinity was halted and the site demarcated to facilitate a site assessment and recommendations on the way forward. After the site assessment it was recommended by the Heritage Specialist that a Test Excavation Permit be applied for from SAHRA's Burial Grounds & Graves Unit.

The required permit was issued to APAC cc on the 25th of March 2021, with the Test Excavations undertaken on the 29th of March 2021. Representatives of the client were present on site during the process.

The four stone-packed features contained no evidence of any unnatural disturbances and no cultural material or any human remains were found. Below the stones covering the surface the natural stratigraphy in all four trenches consisted of around 0.20m of darkish brown loose soil, followed by a harder more gravelly reddish-brown soil of between

0.80m to 1.00m thick before sterile hard bedrock was reached. All 4 test trenches were stopped at this level of around 1.20m below the Present Surface Level (PSL).

It can therefore be concluded that these 4 stone-packed features do not represent unknown graves, but that it is more than likely the result of the clearing of fields for earlier agricultural activities that used to be practiced here or the result of actions possible related to the building of the cement dam that used to be located close by. The development activities in this area can therefore continue.

However, it needs to be stated that although all efforts are made to identify all possible graves in an area of impact, 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 Study Area and Site: Google Earth 2021.

Matoho, E. **PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT RELATING TO THE DEMACATION OF RIETFONTEIN-REITSPRUIT MIXED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ON FARMS RIETFONTEIN 152IR AND RIETSPRUIT 153 IR NEAR PALM RIDGE WITHIN EKURHULENI METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY, GAUTENG PROVINCE.** Unpublished Report Millennium Heritage Group (PTY) LTD. For: Naledzi Environmental Consultants. June 2015.