

Natasha Higgitt

Manager Development Application Unit
South African Heritage Resource Agency
111 Harrington Street
Cape Town
8001

RE: Transportation and temporary storage of Koffiefontein skeletal remains from the Petra Diamond mine, Koffiefontein, Free State to the School of Anatomical Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Gauteng.

Dear Ms. Higgitt,

As per our online meeting, we request permission to transport and temporarily store the human skeletal remains of the individuals recovered from the Petra Diamond mine, Koffiefontein, Free State. As per the original permits (**Permit ID 3615; Permit ID: 18581**) these individuals died during the late 1800s to early 1900s and were buried in paupers' graves on the mine premises. The aim of the Universities of the Witwatersrand and Pretoria is to assist with the ethical retrieval of these individuals' remains, using three-dimensional technology to document graves, and then to analyse these individuals' remains to determine their demographic profiles and health status. The latter is an essential step as the identity of these individuals remains unknown. South Africa's mining history, especially one that has seen a large migrant workforce, is well known, however, very little is known about these individuals' working and living conditions, despite the important role they played in contributing to the South African economy. Skeletal analyses were initially conducted on-site; however, this process is far from ideal given limited lab space and limited access to equipment. The main concern, however, is the time required to complete analyses and the knock-on effect this has on the available time to conduct systematic excavations and scientific documentation of graves and remains *in situ*. Due to budgetary constraints, the universities are not able to make frequent trips to make up for the additional time required to maintain the standards of excavation and analyses. We would like to request permission to transport, and temporarily house these remains at the University of the Witwatersrand, Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Anatomical Sciences, Johannesburg, Gauteng.

Transportation:

The remains will be transported by either a reputable courier company (e.g., DHL) and/or with the help of an accredited archaeologist (Johannes Visser) working on the project. In the case of the former, permit holders (Okuhle Sapu and/or Anja Meyer) will drive with the courier company to ensure the safe arrival of the remains at the university. The remains will be transported in enclosed vehicles and a full inventory of all elements present will be taken before and after transport.

Packaging:

The remains will be packaged on-site. Skeletal elements will be placed into brown paper bags labelled with the grave number and then placed into cardboard boxes. Fragile skeletal elements will be wrapped in bubble wrap. Each individual will be provided with their own box. Each box will be marked with the grave number for identification purposes. Boxes will be secured with clear tape to make sure that the lids are securely fastened.

Storage:

The individuals will be stored in an access-controlled room in the School of Anatomical Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand at the following address:

Second floor of the Health Sciences Building
Wits Parktown Campus
7 York Road
Parktown 2193
Johannesburg
Gauteng

The remains will be stored in their original boxes in two adjoined rooms in the School of Anatomical Sciences. These rooms are already used as the School's Bioarchaeology lab and will serve as temporary storage during the period of skeletal analysis. Analysis of remains will be done in either a section of this room or if more space is needed in the School of Anatomical Sciences' Forensic Anthropology laboratory, also situated on the same floor in an access-controlled room.

If there are any queries, please feel free to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

O. Sapo



Mr Okuhle Sapo
Principal research permit holder

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Dr Anja Meyer
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Koffiefontein project.
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