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## **A Pelser Archaeological Consulting**

Comprehensive and Professional Solutions for all Heritage Related Matters

**CK 2006/014630/23**

**VAT NO.: 4360226270**

**To: Mr. Felix Motsiri  
National Minerals Manager  
Lafarge Industries South Africa**

### **RE: SHORT REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF ACCIDENTALLY DISCOVERED HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS AND OTHER LATE IRON AGE RELATED REMAINS AT THE LAFARGE AGGREGATES QUARRY NEAR POLOKWANE, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

During August Anton Pelser was requested by Lafarge to investigate the accidental discovery of a number of human skeletons at their Lafarge Aggregates quarry near Polokwane in Limpopo. The discoveries were made during blasting operations for the expansion of the existing quarry. At least 5 fairly complete skeletons were recovered in the process and taken to the District Coroner, under supervision of the SAPS. It seems that these remains were not part of a formal, historical cemetery, and Anton Pelser was therefore called in to assess these discoveries.

During the site visit conducted during the 24<sup>th</sup> of August we were accompanied to the area by the Quarry Manager Me. Melaney Beneke, who also indicated an existing, fenced-off, cemetery to us, as well as a fenced-off stone walled Iron Age site on the property. Both these sites will possibly be negatively impacted on in the future by mining expansion and the way forward in terms of these heritage resources will also be discussed at the end of this report.

The assessment of the site where the skeletal remains were uncovered resulted in the following. Besides the approximately 5 individuals whose remains have been removed the remains of at least 5 more individuals were identified on the site. The remains are mostly scattered and not articulated, but seemingly in the locations where they were buried. Some of the remains might however be part of those already removed. Some of the individuals were situated close to large granite boulders – remnants of the original koppies that were present here in the past and have been quarried away in the recent past. A fairly large number of decorated and undecorated pottery fragments were also found in close proximity and this is evidence of earlier Late Iron Age settlements that would have been present here. The fenced-off Archaeological site on the property is further evidence of this. The individuals would have been buried in the cattle enclosures (kraals) and middens. This would have been the general practise under Bantu speaking communities at the time. The age of the finds and site is fairly difficult to determine at this stage,

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but some of the decorated pottery seem to date the site to the so-called Eiland Pottery Tradition of around 1100 AD. This will have to be confirmed however.

The area where the remains have been found has been cordoned off and no further mining activities will be undertaken here until the formal archaeological rescue investigation have been undertaken. Any further work in the area outside this will continue, but should more archaeological discoveries be made these will also be recovered and investigated.



**Figure 1: Aerial view of location of Lafarge Aggregates Quarry and distribution of sites (Google Earth 2012 – Image Date 6/17/2009).**



**Figure 2: One of the skeletons removed by the SAPS.**



**Figure 3: Skeletal remains removed by SAPS.**



**Figure 4: Location of the site in the quarry.**



**Figure 5: Another view of the site.**





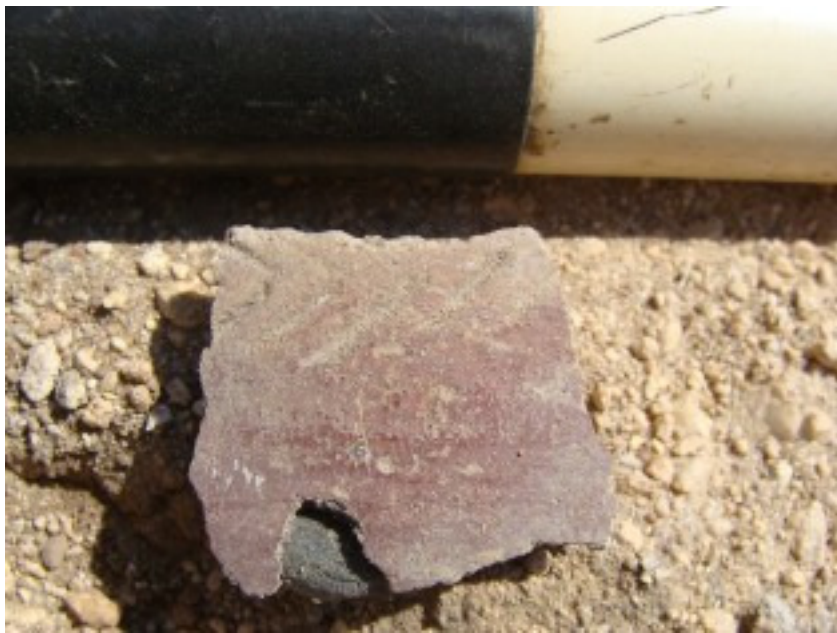
**Figure 6: More human remains on the site.**



**Figure 7: Location of the remains in Figure 6.**



**Figure 8: Archaeological deposit. Note the potsherds.**



**Figure 9: Decorated piece of pottery with herringbone incisions  
Typical of Eiland pottery.**



**Figure 10: Undecorated rim fragment of pot.**



**Figure 11: More human remains.**





**Figure 12: Formal fenced-in cemetery where community still undertake visits.**



**Figure 13: Fenced-in Archaeological Site on the property.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE WAY FORWARD**

The rescue of the exposed Iron Age skeletons at the site is of extreme importance and should be finalised as soon as possible. This would include the skeletons already removed and currently kept at the Coroner. As part of the rescue some archaeological excavations to recover as much cultural material as possible from the site should also be undertaken, while the skeletons need to be investigated by a Forensic Anthropologist in order to determine age, sex and cultural affinity.



The process involved for the above include the application for a Rescue Archaeological Permit from the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). An Archaeological/Heritage Impact Assessment (AIA/HIA) – a requirement from both DMR and SAHRA – will have to be conducted as part of the process. The AIA will cover the planned expansion of the quarry. As the Iron Age remains (including the burials) have been accidentally recovered in an area already under development this report will not cover this section and a Rescue Permit application will be dealt with separately. The AIA/HIA will deal with the Grave Site and fenced-in Archaeological Site on the property and make recommendations regarding the mitigation of negative impacts of future planned quarrying expansion activities. Should there be negative impacts then these aspects will be dealt with at a later stage.

A costing proposal will be prepared and sent for approval by Lafarge for the AIA/HIA and Rescue Archaeological Excavations. Once this have been approved the Permit Application will be done and once issued the work can be scheduled. The AIA/HIA can be conducted while the issuing of the permit is awaited.

Should there be any questions on the assessment and the way forward please contact the author as soon as possible.

Anton Pelser