

Ref: Rescue Exhumation of Archaeological Graves

11 November, 2015

To whom it may concern

RE: Exhumation of archaeological graves at the secondary water pipelines in the Seema Cluster, Ga-Mapela Village, Limpopo

Introduction

Heritage Contracts and Archaeological Consulting (**HCAC**) together with Anton Pelsers as PI was contracted to assist in the rescue excavations of archaeological burials exposed by trenching activities for the above mentioned project.

Background

An AIA (van der Walt 2015) was conducted for the project (Annexure A) and subsequently comments were received from SAHRA on the project (Annexure B). During the survey three cemeteries were recorded as well as several ephemeral stone walls. None of these features were located in the vicinity of where the skeletal material was exposed. As part of the chance finds procedure recommended for the project the accidental unearthing of skeletal remains was handled in the correct manner. All work in this area was stopped, the site barricaded and the police, resident engineer, environmental compliance officer and the archaeologist notified and incident report compiled (Annexure C). The remains were placed back in the trench, covered with plastic sheets and covered with soil from the excavation. The land owners and royal family were also notified and they gave permission for the necessary work to be carried out (Annexure D).

Site Description

The skeletal material is located at 24° 01' 51.7900" S, 28° 53' 49.8500" E in the Ga-Mapela village (Figure 1). The site is located between a dirt road and residential stands and due to the disturbed nature of the site no surface indicators of an archaeological site were visible (Figure 2).

Undecorated ceramics (Figure 3) are located approximately 50 cm from the Present Surface Level (PSL) on top of calcrete substrata. The trenching activities for the pipeline cut through a burial pit exposing a cranium and other skeletal material such as a scapula, ribs, pelvis and humerus (Figure 4) in the spoil heap and a well-defined burial pit (Figure 5) measuring 40 cm wide and 60 cm deep in the profile. Some skeletal material like phalanges from the hand etc. is still left *in situ* in the profile. The trench is left open demarcated by danger tape (Figure 6). No other archaeological deposit or features were noted in the profile of the excavated trench.

Methodology

It is recommended that the exposed skeletal material in the spoil heap is collected and that the exposed burial pits be archaeologically excavated and investigated in order for the information on the archaeological burials to be recorded and reported on in an Archaeological Burials Report. This will ensure that the information is properly disseminated and the data be collected for future studies. Once the burials (the *in situ* sections) have been studied, the exposed remains in the spoils heap will be collected as well and re-interred in the burial pit/s and left on site. The location of the burials should be marked with a permanent marker. As the open trench will be filled in again after the laying of the water pipes the burials will be protected from any further damage in future and there is therefore no need to remove the remains from site for curation in a Museum collection facility.

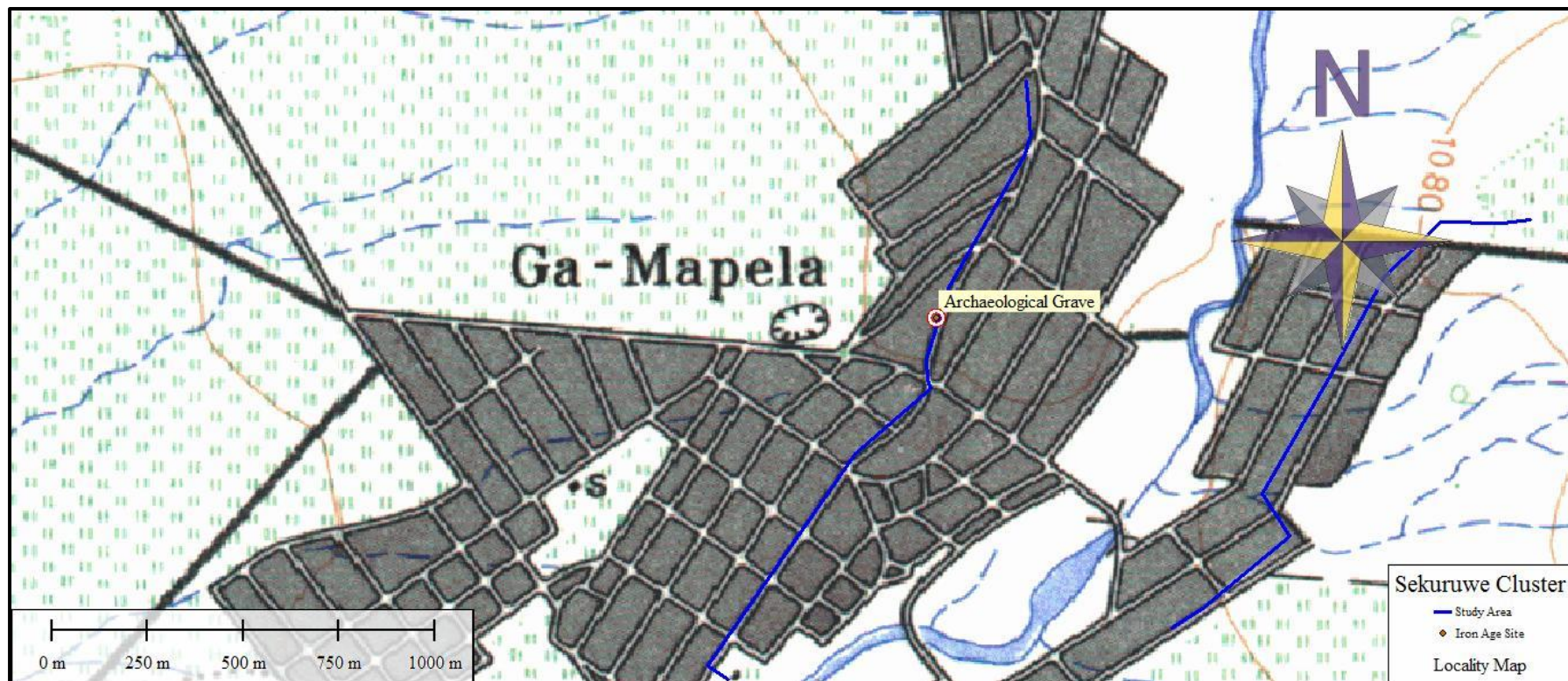


Figure 1: Locality Map indicating the archaeological site in relation to the pipeline marked in blue



Figure 2: Site prior to trenching activities marked by red arrow



Figure 3. Undecorated Ceramics



Figure 4. Skeletal material from spoil heap.



Figure 5. Burial Pit



Figure 6. Demarcated location of graves

Please find our application for a rescue permit and supporting documentation attached for your consideration.

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

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jaco van der Walt'.

Jaco van der Walt
Archaeologist

HCAC - Heritage Contracts and Archaeological Consulting CC