



Archaetnos Culture & Cultural  
Resource Consultants  
BK 98 09854/23

---

**A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF A GRAVE YARD  
AT SHANDUKA COLLIERY ON THE FARM ELANDSPRUIT 291 JS, CLOSE TO  
MIDDELBURG, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**

For:

***Shanduka Coal***

By:

***Dr. A.C. van Vollenhoven (L.AKAD. S.A.)***  
Accredited member of ASAPA  
Professional member of SASCH

**REPORT: AE01312V**

***February 2013***

P.O.Box 55  
GROENKLOOF  
0027  
Tel: **083 291 6104**  
Fax: **086 520 4173**  
Email: [antonv@archaetnos.co.za](mailto:antonv@archaetnos.co.za)

Members: AC van Vollenhoven BA, BA (Hons), DTO, NDM, MA (Archaeology) [UP], MA (Culture History) [US], DPhil (Archaeology) [UP], Man Dip [TUT], DPhil (History) [US]

## SUMMARY

During December 2010, Archaetnos cc was requested by Shanduka Collieries to investigate a number of possible grave sites identified on the mine property. Four of these sites indeed proved to be graves. One of these sites, number 4, was situated in an area where mining is planned for the near future. As a result permission was obtained from SAHRA to have the graves exhumed and reburied.

An extensive process of social consultation was done by the mine and AVBOB Middelburg, the latter who also served as undertakers for the project. The number of the permit obtained from the Burial Grounds and Graves Unit (BGG) of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) is BG/12/04/001/86.

The mining area is located on the farm Elandspruit 291 JS. This is close to the town of Middelburg in the Mpumalanga Province.

The archaeological investigations at the site commenced during February 2013. It was believed that the site contained 9 graves, which proved to be the case. No family members could be identified. None of the graves contained skeletal remains, but one did contain corrugated iron sheeting which was usually placed on top of the mortal remains. All the graves had grave dressing consisting of stones. Only three of them had headstones. For those not containing skeletal remains, other grave associations (if found) and a soil sample was taken for reburial.

It is believed that the archaeological investigation, exhumation and relocation of the graves from the site were conducted successfully. Therefore the mining activities may continue.

## **CONTENTS**

	Page no.
SUMMARY .....	2
CONTENTS.....	3
1. INTRODUCTION .....	5
2. AIMS.....	5
3. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS .....	5
4. CONDITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS .....	8
5. METHODOLOGY.....	9
6. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA.....	10
7. DISCUSSION.....	11
8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	13
9. REFERENCES .....	13
APPENDIX A BURIAL RELOCATION FORMS.....	14
APPENDIX B PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION .....	15

**©Copyright  
Archaetnos**

**The information contained in this report is the sole intellectual property of Archaetnos CC. It may only be used for the purposes it was commissioned for by the client.**

**DISCLAIMER:**

**Although all possible care is taken to identify all sites of cultural importance during the survey of study areas, the nature of archaeological and historical sites are as such that it always is possible that hidden or subterranean sites could be overlooked during the study. Archaetnos and its personnel will not be held liable for such oversights or for costs incurred as a result thereof.**

**The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) or one of its subsidiary bodies needs to comment on this report and clients are advised not to proceed with any action before receiving these. It is the responsibility of the client to submit the report to the relevant heritage authority.**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

During December 2010, Archaetnos cc was requested by Shanduka Collieries to investigate a number of possible grave sites identified on the mine property. Four of these sites indeed proved to be graves. One of these sites, number 4, was situated in an area where mining is planned for the near future. As a result permission was obtained from SAHRA to have the graves exhumed and reburied.

An extensive process of social consultation was done by the mine and AVBOB Middelburg, the latter who also served as undertakers for the project. No family members could be identified.

The mining area is located on the farm Elandspruit 291 JS. This is close to the town of Middelburg in the Mpumalanga Province.

A Heritage Impact Survey was done in the area by Dr. J van Schalkwyk. Although he did not identify any graves, he did indicate that the possibility of finding graves is a real possibility especially in areas with thick vegetation. This was followed by an assessment of the grave site by Archaetnos cc (Van Vollenhoven 2010).

The number of the permit obtained from the Burial Grounds and Graves Unit (BGG) of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) is BG/12/04/001/86. The archaeological investigations at the site commenced during February 2013. It was believed that the site contained 9 graves, which proofed to be the case.

## **2. AIMS**

The aims of the archaeological investigation and exhumation of the graves were the following:

- Exhume grave site number 4 on the farm Elandspruit 291 JS.
- Document the SAHRA and unknown graves in accordance with the stipulations of the SAHRA permit.
- To record all human skeletal and cultural remains from any possible burials that might exist on the site to facilitate their successful relocation.
- Make further recommendations if needed.

The reinternment of the human remains was to be done by AVBOB Middelburg. This was done at the nearby Mhluzi cemetery

## **3. 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).

### 3.1 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.

The national estate includes the following:

- a. Places, buildings, structures and equipment of cultural significance
- b. Places to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage
- c. Historical settlements and townscapes
- d. Landscapes and features of cultural significance
- e. Geological sites of scientific or cultural importance
- f. Archaeological and palaeontological importance
- g. Graves and burial grounds
- h. Sites of significance relating to the history of slavery
- i. Movable objects (e.g. archaeological, palaeontological, meteorites, geological specimens, military, ethnographic, books etc.)

A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is the process to be followed in order to determine whether any heritage resources are located within the area to be developed as well as the possible impact of the proposed development thereon. An Archaeological Impact Assessment only looks at archaeological resources. An HIA must be done under the following circumstances:

- a. The construction of a linear development (road, wall, power line canal etc.) exceeding 300m in length
- b. The construction of a bridge or similar structure exceeding 50m in length
- c. Any development or other activity that will change the character of a site and exceed 5 000m<sup>2</sup> or involve three or more existing erven or subdivisions thereof
- d. Re-zoning of a site exceeding 10 000 m<sup>2</sup>
- e. Any other category provided for in the regulations of SAHRA or a provincial heritage authority

## **Structures**

Section 34 (1) of the mentioned act states that no person may demolish any structure or part thereof which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant provincial heritage resources authority.

A structure means any building, works, device or other facility made by people and which is fixed to land, and includes any fixtures, fittings and equipment associated therewith.

Alter means any action affecting the structure, appearance or physical properties of a place or object, whether by way of structural or other works, by painting, plastering or the decoration or any other means.

## **Archaeology, palaeontology and meteorites**

Section 35(4) of this act deals with archaeology, palaeontology and meteorites. The act states that no person may, without a permit issued by the responsible heritage resources authority (national or provincial):

- a. destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or otherwise disturb any archaeological or palaeontological site or any meteorite;
- b. destroy, damage, excavate, remove from its original position, collect or own any archaeological or palaeontological 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 palaeontological material or object, or any meteorite; or
- d. bring onto or use at an archaeological or palaeontological site any excavation equipment or any equipment that assists in the detection or recovery of metals or archaeological and palaeontological 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 (SAHRA). In order to demolish such a site or structure, a destruction permit from SAHRA will also be needed.

## **Human remains**

Graves and burial grounds are divided into the following:

- a. ancestral graves
- b. royal graves and graves of traditional leaders
- c. graves of victims of conflict
- d. graves designated by the Minister
- e. historical graves and cemeteries

f. 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.

### **3.2 The National Environmental Management Act**

This act (Act 107 of 1998) 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 thereof are made.

Environmental management should also take the cultural and social needs of people into account. Any disturbance of landscapes and sites that constitute the nation's cultural heritage should be avoided as far as possible and where this is not possible the disturbance should be minimized and remedied.

## **4. CONDITIONS & ASSUMPTIONS**

The following conditions and assumptions have a direct bearing on the study:



1. SAHRA graves are all those with a date of death older than 60 years. Graves with an unknown date are handled as if they are SAHRA graves.
2. All recommendations are made with full cognizance of the relevant legislation.
3. Although care was taken to unearth all human remains at the site, there always is a possibility that some remains may have been missed. This is due to the fact that not all graves are always marked. Should any remains be unearthed during work on the site, an archaeologist should be called out to assess the find.
4. Not all graves exhumed include human remains as many different factors may influence the preservation of skeletal material, such as the acidity and humidity of environmental conditions and the age of the individual concerned.
5. Even though some graves do not contain human remains, grave associations such as coffin wood, coffin lining, nails and grave goods are sometimes found indicating that it indeed is a grave.
6. Frequently some of the graves are identified by families although it may not contain any human remains or other grave goods.
7. Headstones and grave dressing also indicate a grave, although no other evidence may be found.
8. The disturbance of soil is another indication that a grave indeed is one, although no other evidence may be present.

## **5. METHODOLOGY**

The graves were exhumed and documented within generally accepted guidelines of the archaeological profession. The documentation includes photography and the filling in of a burial relocation form which serves as reference to the grave as well as its new location.

The documentation comprised the following:

### ***Archaeological Investigations***

The archaeological investigations comprised of the undertakers excavating the trenches up to the level of skeletal or coffin remains, or up to the level of sterile soil. The archaeologists would then conduct further investigation to expose the possible remains and any associated material in situ.

### **Burial recording forms**

Burial recording forms were then filled in to record all details of the burials (Appendix A).

### **Photographic**

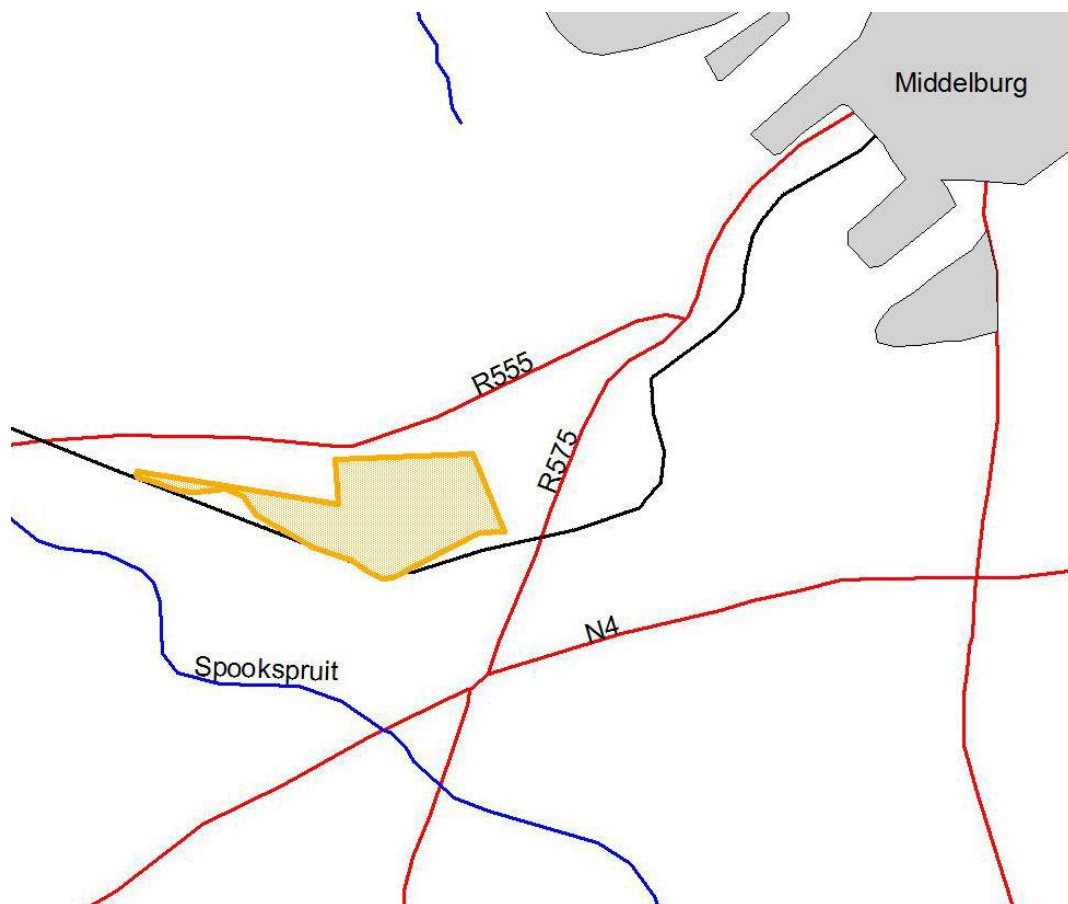
Photos of all excavations and remains were taken, while individual objects were also photographed for record purposes, if applicable (Appendix B).

### **GPS Data**

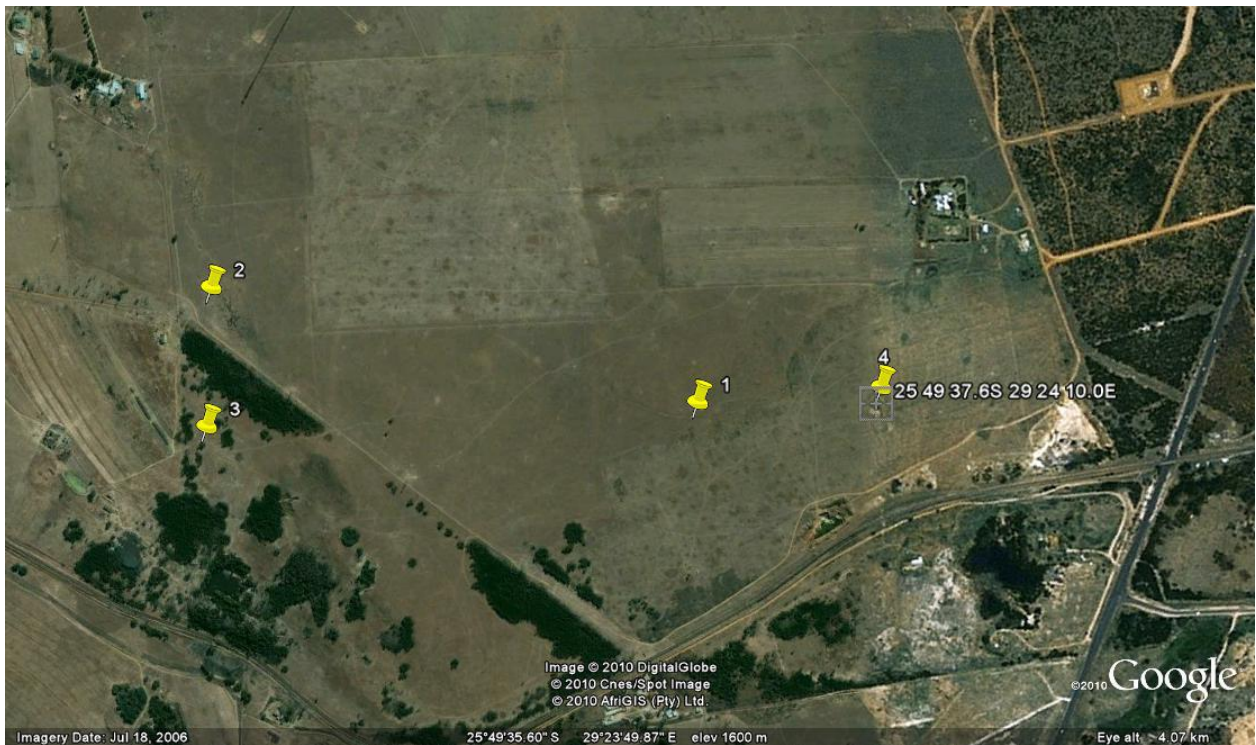
A GPS reading for the site was taken in order to locate it on a map of the area. The reading thereof is 25°49'37.6"S; 29°24'10.0"E.

## **6. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA**

The farm Elandspruit 291 JS is situated approximately 5 km to the south of Middelburg in the Mpumalanga Province (Figure 1-2). The specific area where grave site no. 4 was identified will be used for coal mining.



**Figure 1** Location of the Shanduka Colliery (in yellow) in relation to Middelburg.



**Figure 2** Location of the different graveyards at Shanduka. Number 4 is the one applicable to this study.

The topography of the area is reasonably flat running upwards in a north-western direction. The vegetation is mostly disturbed, either by former agricultural activities or the current mining operations. This includes alien species such as black wattle. The current mining activities are fairly close to the site and it is clear that it will be encroaching on it soon.

## 7. DISCUSSION

After the initial assessment it seemed as if there were approximately 10 graves. During a site visit to document the above ground remains (grave dressings, headstones etc.) it was found that there were only 9 graves present. Only one of these (number 7) was well-defined with stone dressing and a headstone. Two others (number 1 and 2) also had headstones. None of the headstones had inscriptions. However, all the others had stone grave dressing. The evidence relating to these being graves are summarized in Table 1.

None of the graves included human remains. This most likely is because the graves are believed to be those of infants. This is deduced from the relative small size of the grave dressings. The skeletal remains of infants do not last very long in the soil.

Grave goods and associated artifacts were only found in grave number 7. It consisted of corrugated iron sheeting, which sometimes is placed on top of the mortal remains.

The graves were all very shallow, less than 1,2 m deep. This is mainly due to it being infant burials and due to a slate layer making it difficult to dig any deeper.

In all cases, as no human remains were found, a soil sample was taken with the found grave goods (no. 7) for reburial. These are to be reburied at the Mhluzi cemetery, close to Middelburg. Detailed documentation is to be found in Appendix A and photographs are contained in Appendix B.

**TABLE 1: GRAVE EVIDENCE**

<b>Grave number</b>	<b>Headstone</b>	<b>Grave dressing</b>	<b>Identified by families</b>	<b>Human remains</b>	<b>Grave goods/ associated remains</b>	<b>Disturbance in soil</b>
1	X	Rectangular placed stones				X
2	X	Rectangular placed stones				X
3		Rectangular placed stones				X
4		Rectangular placed stones				X
5		Rectangular placed stones				X
6		Rectangular placed stones				X
7	X	Rectangular placed stones			X	X
8		Circular placed stones				X
9		Circular placed stones				X

## 8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is concluded that the exhumation of the graves was done successfully. All indications of graves were exhumed.

As no mortal remains were found, a soil sample as well as the grave goods for grave number 7, were taken for reburial. It should be noted that even though care was taken to exhume all mortal remains there are always a possibility that some graves may still be found during work on the site. It does sometimes happen that no proper above-ground markings are visible. Therefore, should any human remains be found, during activities on the site, an archaeologist should be contacted immediately to investigate the find and to see to it that it be exhumed and relocated in an appropriate way.

Finally it is recommended that mining operations in the area may continue.

## 9. REFERENCES

- Republic of South Africa. 1980. Ordinance on Excavations (**Ordinance no. 12 of 1980**). The Government Printer: Pretoria.
- Republic of South Africa. 1983. **Human Tissue Act** (Act 65 of 1983). The Government Printer: Pretoria.
- Republic of South Africa. 1999. **National Heritage Resources Act** (No 25 of 1999). Pretoria: the Government Printer.
- Republic of South Africa. 1998. **National Environmental Management Act** (no 107 of 1998). Pretoria: The Government Printer.
- Van Vollenhoven A.C. 2010. **A report on the assessment of possible grave sites on the farm Elandspruit 291 JS, close to Middelburg in the Mpumalanga Province**. (Unpublished report, Groenkloof, Archaetnos).

## **APPENDIX A**

### **BURIAL RELOCATION FORMS**

## **APPENDIX B**

### **PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION**