

**EXHUMATIONS FROM SIXTEEN (16) GRAVES ON THE FARM RIETFONTEIN
MULDERSDRIFT AND RELOCATION OF RETRIEVED REMAIN TO A FORMAL
CEMETERY**

**PRELIMINARY REPORT
(UPDATED)**

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Saturday, 05 December 2020



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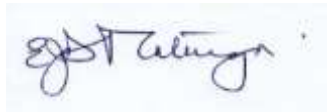
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DOCUMENTS CONTROL

APPLICANT
Wearne Aggregates (Pty) Ltd

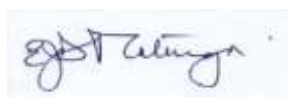
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DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

AHSA Pty Ltd is an independent consultancy: We hereby declare that we have no interest, be it business, financial, personal or other vested interest in the undertaking of the proposed activity, other than fair remuneration for work performed, in terms the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25 of 1999).

DISCLAIMER

All possible care was taken to identify and document heritage resources during the survey in accordance with best practices in archaeology and heritage management. However it is always possible that some hidden or subterranean sites are overlooked during a survey. AHSA will not be held liable for such oversights and additional costs thereof.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Wearne Aggregates (Pty) Ltd intends to carry out exhumations from sixteen (16) graves on the farm Rietfontein in Muldersdrift, Johannesburg. GPS Coordinates: 26° 3'22.44"S, 27°51'37.86" E. The human remains retrieved therefrom will be reinterred at the nearest formal cemetery. The graves are located on a pedestal of earth 11m high and 25m in diameter, which was left standing for the graves while a servitude was hardly allowed around them. This would have happened before enactment of the National Heritage Resources Act No 25/ 1999, since when a 100m buffer has been enforced around graves. Whether the sand mining was to proceed or not, keeping the burial ground under such conditions had become untenable. The earth pedestal has been wearing away due to natural and progressive processes of weathering and erosion. A couple of fault lines can be seen on the eastern and western sides which will lead eventually to collapse. Signs of undercutting weathering and visible overhang developing on the east side of the pedestal are further worrying signs of instability. In light of these factor the preservation of the graves can no longer be guaranteed.



Figure 1. Google Earth map shows an area extensively mined for sand in the midst of which is a pedestal of earth, the reason of which it was retained is the presence of 16 graves on the top.



Figure 2: Close view of the earth pedestal.



Figure 4: Another close snapshot from the east shows developing overhang and undercutting erosion. Some fault lines can be seen developing at the top the pedestal, signs of physical stress and warning of eventual failure and collapse.



Figure 5: The graves on top of the pedestal are marked by stone cairns.

2. OBJECTIVES

In view of the condition of the burial ground, and considering that Wearne Aggregates plans to continue mining operation at the site, it has become necessary to apply for a permit in terms of Section 36 of the National Heritage Resources Act to exhume the remains and reinter them at the nearest municipal cemetery.

3. PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

Legislation referenced above places an onus on the developer to identify, inform and engage with the next-of-kin of the deceased and any other interested and affected persons. The object of consultation is for the developer and the affected persons to reach consensus on the exhumations. A public notice about the planned exhumations was published in the Krugersdorp News, a weekly newspaper which circulates in the area. Representatives of five families affiliated with the graves presented themselves for discussions with Wearne Aggregates. A common understanding has been reached that it is necessary to move the graves to a safer site, i.e. a municipal cemetery as their preservation on the pedestal is not possible in the long-term. To this effect, and as required in terms of the SAHRA regulations representatives of affiliated families have prepared and signed sworn affidavits.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement is a critical process to integrate social concerns to development planning where it is likely to have direct or indirect impacts on livelihood and the social, emotional or economic welfare of communities. In accordance with minimum standards an inclusive and transparent stakeholder involvement process was undertaken to provide all key stakeholders (in particular the families affiliated with the graves) an opportunity to contribute their opinions to the exhumation process. Due to regulations gazetted to deal with the Covid-19 global pandemic it was not possible to invite family members to a meeting. One-on-one engagements and telephonic contacts were preferred instead.

4.1. Description of the consultation process

- One-on-one interviews were held with representatives of the affected families.
- Public Notices were placed at the entrance to Wearne Aggregates site offices at Riefontein Farm.
- A newspaper advert was placed in the Krugersdorp News circulating in the area during the week of 5-12 November 2020.
- Representatives of the families prepared affidavits consenting to the exhumations, which were signed under oath under oath at the Muldersdrift Police Station.

- Representatives of the families signed consent forms for the exhumations to go ahead

4.2. Results of the public participation process

The families affiliated to the graves through their representatives have granted permission to Wearne Aggregates to go ahead with the exhumations.

No objections have yet been received concerning the proposed exhumations.

In light of the of the above, an application for exhumations from the burial ground at Rietfontein Farm has been be lodged with SAHRA Burial Grounds Unit.