




**KINROSS EXT 30 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, GOVAN MBEKI
LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEST EXCAVATIONS OF SIX SITES
SUSPECTED TO BE BURIALS
&
IDENTIFICATION OF BONES**

Monday, 30 July 2018

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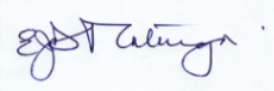
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Department of Human Settlements, Mpumalanga Provincial Government	

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

AHSA is an independent consultancy: I hereby declare that I 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 investigations in accordance with best practices in archaeology and heritage management. However it is always possible that some features or relics are overlooked during an investigation of this nature. AHSA will not be held liable for such oversights and additional costs thereof.



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DEFINITIONS

Archaeological material: remains resulting from human activities left as evidence of their presence which are older than 100 years, which are in the form of artefacts, food remains and other traces such as rock paintings or engravings, burials, fireplaces and structures.

Artefact: Any movable object that has been used, modified or manufactured by humans.

Catalogue: An inventory or register of artefacts and/or sites.

Conservation: All the processes of looking after a site/place including maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction and adaptation.

Cultural Heritage Resources: refers to physical cultural properties such as archaeological sites, palaeontological sites, historic and prehistorical places, buildings, structures and material remains, cultural sites such as places of rituals, burial sites or graves and their associated materials, geological or natural features of cultural importance or scientific significance. This include intangible resources such religion practices, ritual ceremonies, oral histories, memories indigenous knowledge.

Cultural landscape: “the combined works of nature and man” and demonstrate “the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both internal and external”.

Cultural Resources Management (CRM): the conservation of cultural heritage resources, management, and sustainable utilization and present for present and for the future generations

Cultural Significance: is the aesthetic, historical, scientific and social value for past, present and future generations.

Conservation: means all the processes of managing a place to retain its cultural significance.

Early Iron Age: Cultural period dating from the beginning of the first millennium AD associated with the introduction of metallurgy and agriculture

Early Stone Age: Predominantly the Acheulean hand axe industry complex dating to + 1Myr yrs – 250 000 yrs. before present.

Excavation: that is a method in which archaeological materials are extracted, which involves systematic recovery of archaeological remains and their context by removing soil and any other material covering them.

Grave: a place of burial which include materials such as tombstone or other marker such as cross etc.

Historic material: means remains resulting from human activities, which are younger than 100 years and no longer in used, that include artefacts, human remains and artificial features and structures.

Historical: means belonging to the past.

Intangible heritage: Something of cultural value that is not primarily expressed in a material form e.g. rituals, knowledge systems, oral traditions, transmitted between people and within communities.

Historical archaeology: the study of material remains from both the remote and recent past in relationship to documentary history and the stratigraphy of the ground in which they are found; or archaeological investigation on sites of the historic period. In South Africa it refers to the immediate pre-colonial period, contact with European colonists and the modern industrial period.

In situ material: means material culture and surrounding deposits in their original location and context, for instance archaeological remains that have not been disturbed.

Later Iron Age: The period from the beginning of the 2nd millennium AD marked by the emergence of complex state society and long-distance trade contacts.

Late Stone Age: The period from $\pm 30\ 000$ -yr. to the introduction of metals and farming technology

Middle Stone Age: Various stone-using industries dating from $\pm 250\ 000$ yr. - 30 000 yrs. before

Monuments: architectural works, buildings, sites, sculpture, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings which are outstanding from the point of view of history, art and science.

Place: means site, area, building or other work, group of buildings or other works, together with pertinent contents, surroundings and historical and archaeological deposits.

Preservation: means protecting and maintaining the fabric of a place in its existing state and retarding deterioration or change, and may include stabilization where necessary.

Shards: ceramic fragment.

Significance grading: Grading of sites or artefacts according to their historical, cultural or scientific value.

Site: a spatial cluster of artefacts, structures, organic and environmental remains, as residues of past human activity.

Site Recording Template: Site recording form.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In February 2018 bones were exposed at three sites during trenching for water and waste reticulation. This raised concern among both workers and residents that there could be a burial ground. On further examining other areas in the area of development, three piles of stones raised further concern as likely cairn burials. The SAPS Forensics Unit was called to examine the exposed material and obtained samples for laboratory analysis (Site KIN003).
2. This document is a report on the identification of bones and archaeological test excavations conducted at the six sites flagged as sensitive, named KIN001-KIN006.
3. In South Africa and worldwide there has been mounting advocacy to respect local traditions on the treatment of burial grounds and human remains interred at them.
4. SAHRA dispatched an official from its heritage protection services unit in Pretoria to make a preliminary assessment of the situation. A “cease works order” was issued to allow for specialist investigations.
5. Archaeological and Heritage Services Africa (AHSA) Pty Ltd was appointed by Abaziyo Consulting Engineers to carry out investigations.
6. The proposed development is located on the north-eastern boundary of the town of Kinross on what was the farm Zondagfontein 124 IS. The farm’s southern and south-western limits border on the town’s residential area and commercial centre respectively.

Findings of the investigations

7. It has been concluded that all the bones numbering >30 from Site 2 (KIN001) possibly come from a single human skeleton which has been positively identified from four diagnostic bones namely:

- An occipital bone
 - Upper end of a femur bone
 - Lower end of a femur bone; and
 - Lower end of a tibia bone
8. The high breakage ratio in the bone assemblage is due to the fact that the bones had been turned up by an excavator. This being a chance discovery, there are many parts of the skeleton which cannot be account for. It can be reasonably concluded that the skeleton lay below the surface (and is therefore a burial in the common sense of the word). However its exact location and provenance was lost and could not be reconstructed. The possible location, it can be generally inferred, could be anywhere along the two closest reticulation trenches that had been opened. The trenches were thoroughly examined for the possible presence of residual bone material on the walls without a positive result. It needs to be underlined, however, that once a provenance has been disturbed, reconstruction of the original scenario is very difficult, and any theory is naturally limited; there is a myriad of possible scenarios.
9. The bone fragments from Site 1 (KIN001) are undiagnostic except for a complete tooth identified to the premolar of a cow. The bone fragments from Site 3 (KIN003) are ribs, but identification to the species represented was difficult.
10. Pottery fragments found at Site KIN003 are testimony of a precolonial Later Iron Age horizon. It is tempting to speculate that the burial 120m to the south could date to the same time period before the establishment of the town.
11. The other three trenches (KIN004-6) did not yield any features or relics.

Conclusion and recommendation

12. As the finds from KIN002 have turned out to be human skeletal material, relocation to a formal cemetery is necessary. The process flow is usually as outlined in the Table below:

	ACTIVITY	ACTION
1	Lodge a report with the local SAPS Station, obtain letter or submit Affidavit	AHSA
2	Consultation/liaison with Govan Mbeki Local Municipality, obtain letter of support	Abaziyo
3	Carefully Managed Public Participation	Abaziyo / AHSA
4	Secure formal permit from SAHRA for the relocation of the remains to a formal cemetery (Permit issued to Archaeologist E Matenga in terms SAHRA procedure). They will need letter from GMLM	AHSA
5	Purchase grave in a local cemetery	Abaziyo / AHSA
6	Hire local Funeral Service	Abaziyo / AHSA
7	Reburial supervision	Abaziyo /AHSA
	MATERIALS	
	Coffin	
	Tombstone(s), cement etc/ engrave names	
	Erecting gravestone (labour) – Local Funeral Service	
	Purchase grave at cemetery	
	Refreshments for official attendants (For transparency, invite police, GMLM officials)	

1. BACKGROUND

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government Department of Human Settlements is financing a house project in Kinross to be named Kinross Ext 30 located in the small town of Kinross in the Govan Mbeki Local Municipality. In February 2018 bones were exposed at three sites during trenching for water and waste reticulation, which prompted the Consulting Engineers, Abaziyo, to suspend operations in these areas. There was concern among both workers and residents that the discoveries were human burials indicating a possible burial ground. On further examining other areas in the area of development, three piles of stones raised further concern as likely cairn burials (Figure 1). The SAPS Forensics Unit was called to examine the exposed material and obtained samples for laboratory analysis (Site KIN003). At that point the South African Heritage Resources Authority (SAHRA) was informed as required in terms of the environmental authorisation. SAHRA dispatched an official from its heritage protection services unit in Pretoria to make a preliminary assessment of the situation. A “cease works order” was issued to allow for specialist investigations.

Archaeological and Heritage Services Africa (AHSA) Pty Ltd was appointed by Abaziyo Consulting Engineers to carry out investigations. AHSA prepared a technical proposal in which identification of the exposed bones and test excavations of the suspected burial sites were recommended as part of a Phase II Heritage Impact Assessment. A Phase II HIA is a level 2 mitigation recommended if an area turns out to be more sensitive than had been thought after a Phase 1 assessment. A Phase I assessment had been conducted in 2013.¹

This document is a report on the identification of bones and archaeological test excavations conducted at the six sites flagged as sensitive, named KIN001-KIN006.

In South Africa and worldwide there has been mounting advocacy to respect local traditions on the treatment of burial grounds and human remains interred at them.

¹ Nema Consulting. 2013. Proposed Kinross Township Extension 30. Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment, pp ii and 6.

The purpose of the archaeological investigations was two-fold:

- (i) Study the exposed bones and determine the animal species representatives. The suspicion that they were human bones, made the inquiry imperative in light of the sensitivities around human remains already highlighted.
- (ii) It was necessary to clear the sites flagged as suspicious and thus to manage rumours circulating among the town's residence since this matter touched belief systems and superstition.



Figure 1: Google-Earth Map showing the six locations identified as sensitive and prompting the investigations.

1.1. Description of the area and its physical setting

The proposed development is taking place in Kinross, a small gold mining town in Mpumalanga Province with four gold mines in the region. It is one of a network of towns located on the watershed between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. These are Devon, Leandra and Evander, Secunda and Trichardt, all lying within an east-west corridor c. 40 km in extent. Kinross was declared a Village in 1915 and a town in 1965. Although this is now becoming an important coal mining hub, Kinross has been associated with gold mining.

The proposed development is located on the north-eastern side of the town on what was the farm Zondagfontein 124 IS. The farm's southern and south-western limits border on the town's residential area and commercial centre respectively. Kinross is situated on a high watershed between the Limpopo and Vaal basins to the north and south respectively. The drainage in the area of the proposed development runs northeast with a headstream of the Olifants River cutting through the area. On the west side of the town headstreams drain westwards to the Vaal. The area is open treeless veld supporting a vibrant savannah grass regime.

1.2. Public sensibilities about graves and burial grounds

As mentioned earlier this archaeological investigation was prompted by the exposure of bones suspected to be human bones and perhaps representing a burial. In South Africa and worldwide there has been mounting advocacy to respect local traditions on the treatment of human remains. Everyone deserves a decent burial and if possible to rest in the same area forever. However in South Africa and elsewhere many archaeological graves have previously been excavated solely for science and curiosity, but this practice has ceased as people have questioned it on ethical grounds. Graves are found in areas where development projects have been proposed or when such projects are already underway. Section 36 of the National Heritage Resources Act is statutory framework to mitigate such situation and to make sure that there is no conflict between the need to protect graves and the development imperative. All South African cultures in their diversity cherish the sanctity of graves and burial grounds, and the protection of human burials is upheld as a human right. Dead people are sacred. According to Shirhami Shirinda, "In the African custom, ancestors, graves and the dead are so important, even more than the living human being, as it is believed that the dead continue to take care of you, feed you, protect you, or can do anything for you as once a person is dead is closer to God". The dead live on in an ancestral realm as family guardians. Ancestors are intercessors between the living and Modimo (in Tswana / Sotho) God / Nwali (in Venda), Unkulunkulu (in Nguni languages). The connection between Modimo and ancestral graves is very strong among the Tswana as indeed is the reverence of Unkulunkulu among the Nguni communities in South Africa. The association of graves with the Modimo-ancestor complex is the premise for the ethos set in Section

36 of the National Heritage Resources Act that graves must be protected as the tangible evidence by which people connect with the land, God and the ancestors.

The purpose of the archaeological investigations was two-fold:

- (iii) Study the exposed bones and determine the animal species representatives. The suspicion that they were human bones, made the inquiry imperative in light of the sensitivities around human remains already highlighted.
- (iv) It was necessary to clear the sites flagged as suspicious and thus to manage rumours circulating among the town's residence since this matter touched belief systems and superstition.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

There were two streams of work:

- (i) Collecting the bones and other cultural material exposed during the trenching; three sites had been identified.
- (v) Conducting archaeological test excavations at six sites identified as sensitive. An archaeological test excavation is a limited examination of a site by digging with the purpose of locating deposits and developing an excavation strategy. Depending on the finds a much larger area may be opened or the scale of the dig may be maintained at all the sites targeted.

3. SITE 1

SITE NAME	KIN001	
LOCATION	Lat: 26°25'04.3"S	Long: 029°05'37.3"E

3.1. Surface finds (KIN001)



Surface finds refer to material which was retrieved from the earth excavated from the reticulation trenches and hence their provenance disturbed. Ten bones were retrieved and examined, and conclusion was they were undiagnostic (Figure 2). Undiagnostic means that they could be identified to the species of animal by just looking at their shape.



Figure 2: Undiagnostic bones retrieved at KIN001.

One tooth also came from the excavated earth identified as a premolar of a cow (Table 1).

Table 1: premolar of cow found at Site KIN001.

PHOTO DOCUMENTATION	COMPARATIVE MATERIAL
	

Near the trench to the east there were two large sandstone boulders of which one had a round 8cm in diameter hole drilled through. It appeared to have been a posthole. A timber corner post propped in concrete. Both are evidence of barbed wire fencing on the farm Zondagfontein (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Sandstone boulder with a hole drilled through in which possibly a fencing post was propped.

3.2. Test excavation at Site 1 (KIN001)

The trial trench was set against the eastern face of a reticulation trench trending NS (Figure 4-5). The dimensions of the test trench were as follows:

1.5m NS (along the reticulation trench) x 2m EW (offset from the reticulation trench).

Excavations proceeded in arbitrary spits.

0-20cm Black soil, heavy clay - a rusted bolt with threads found and a short piece of iron wire.

20-40cm – Black soil, heavy claim with increasing moisture. Appears sterile.

40-80cm – Black soil, turns brown towards the bottom, sterile (Figure 6).



Figure 4: Position of trial trench KIN001.



Figure 5: Digging – KIN001.



Figure 6: Digging down to bedrock.

4. SITE 2

SITE NAME	KIN002	
LOCATION	26°25'04.2"S	029°05'37.8"E

4.1. Surface finds (KIN002)

Surface finds refer to material which was retrieved from the earth excavated from the reticulation trenches and hence their provenance disturbed. A fairly large number of bones were retrieved from the excavated earth. Most of the bones evidently limb bones, slender but largely undiagnostic.

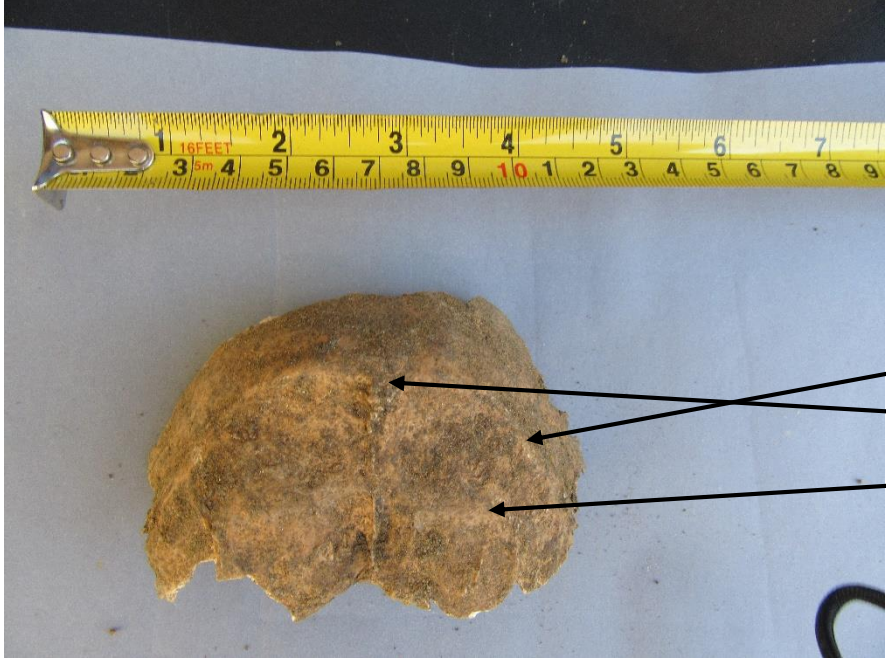
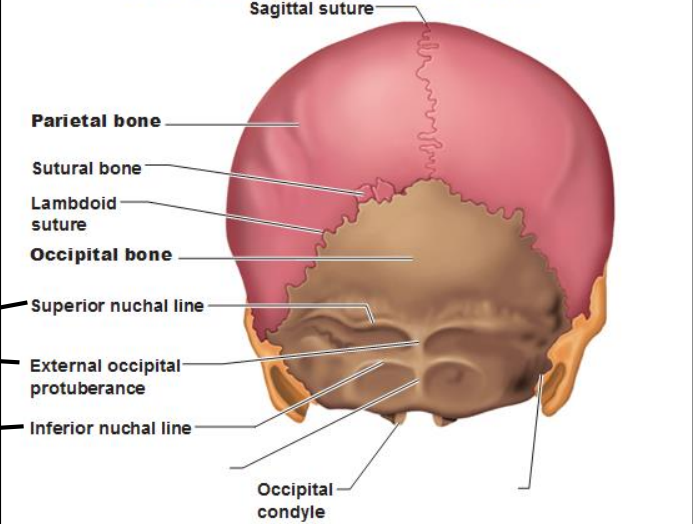
The occipital bone was immediately identified in the field as part of a human skull and provides circumstantial evidence for the conclusion that there was a human skeleton which was disturbed by the excavator (Figures 7-8)



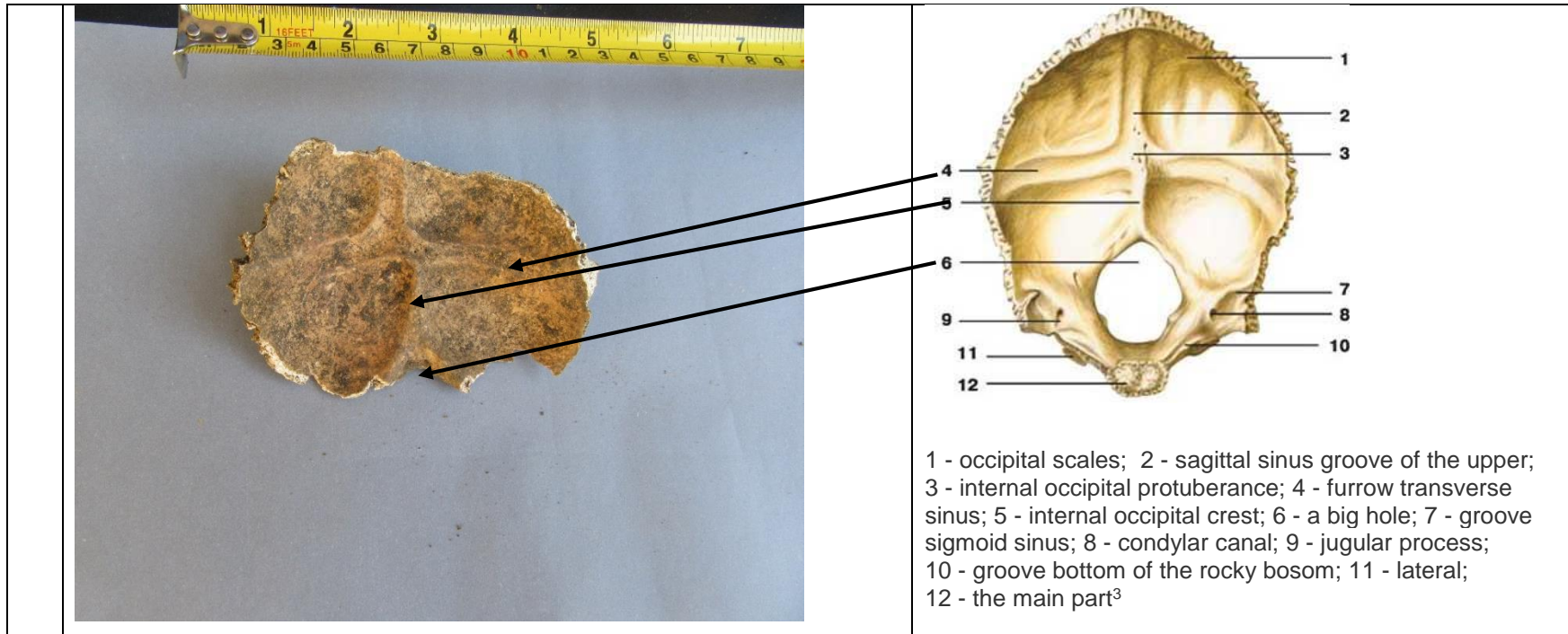
Figures 7-8: Field photos taken of an occipital bone.

A comparative analysis was subsequently conducted leading to the identification of four bones to the human skeleton as follows:

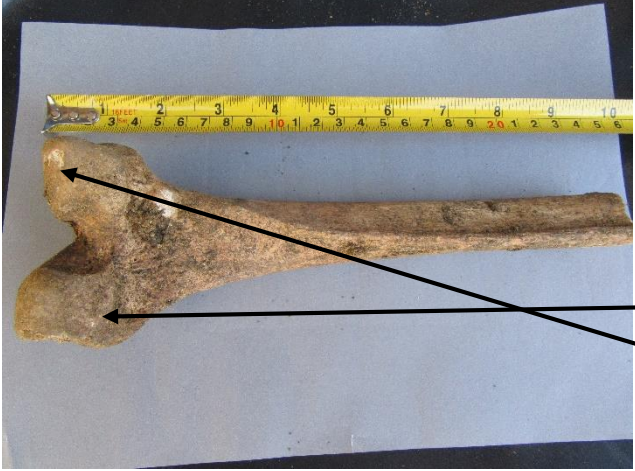

Table 2: Identification of four bones to the human skeleton.

	PHOTO DOCUMENTATION	COMPARATIVE MATERIAL
1		<p data-bbox="1326 316 1758 347">The Skull— Posterior View</p>  <p data-bbox="1205 906 1227 928">2</p>

² Found at: <https://antranik.org/geography-of-the-skull/>



³ Bone of the cranial. Found at: <http://anthropotomy.com/skeleton-and-bones-connection/the-bones-of-the-cranial>

PHOTO DOCUMENTATION	COMPARATIVE MATERIAL
<p data-bbox="248 293 331 320"><i>Femur</i></p> <p data-bbox="203 347 230 371">2</p> 	
	<p data-bbox="949 916 1182 943">1. Medial Condyle</p> <p data-bbox="949 959 1182 986">2. Lateral Condyle</p>

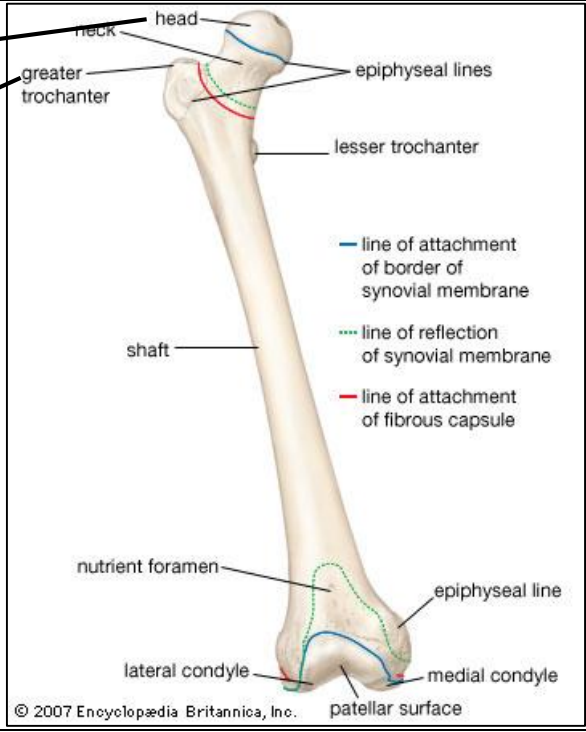
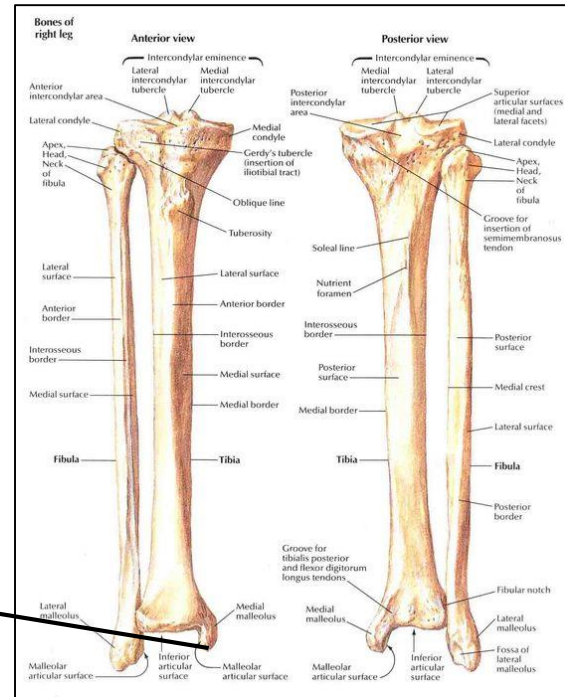


PHOTO DOCUMENTATION
Tibia



COMPARATIVE MATERIAL



Comparative material⁴

⁴ Human bones. Found at: <https://za.pinterest.com/pin/425730970996741758/?lp=true>

4.2. Test Excavations at Site No 2 (KIN002)

The trial trench was set against the northern edge of a reticulation trench trending EW. The dimensions of the test trench were as follows:

3m EW (along the reticulation trench) x 1.40m NS (offset from the reticulation trench). Excavations proceeded in arbitrary spits as follows:

0-20cm - Black soil, heavy clay. Sterile. No relics found.

20-40cm - Black soil, heavy clay. Sterile. No relics found.

20-80cm –soil, turns brown towards the bottom. A large cavity turns out to be termite hive with micro-holes (cells) brownish soil. Sterile (Figures 9-11).



Figure 9: Site KIN002 where more than 30 bones were retrieved. Four of the bones were identified to a human skeleton.



Figure 10: Trial trench at KIN002 set against the northern face of the reticulation trench.



Figure 11: Excavation down to 80cm. Sterile.

5. SITE NO 3

SITE NAME	KIN003	
LOCATION	26°25'00.3"S	029°05'38.5"E

5.1. Surface finds

Surface finds refer to material which was retrieved from the earth excavated from the reticulation trenches and hence their provenance disturbed. Bones were retrieved of which some were taken by the Police Forensics Unit for analysis. Four bones retrieved identified as rib pieces but unidentifiable to species (Figure 12).



Figure 12: Undiagnostic bones retrieved from excavated earth.

5.2. Test Excavations at Site No 3

A trial trench was set against the southern edge of a reticulation trench trending EW (Figure 13). The dimensions of the test trench were as follows:

2.50m EW (along the reticulation trench) x 1.50m NS (offset from the reticulation trench). Excavations proceeded in arbitrary spits as follows:

0-20cm - Black soil, coal waste; site appears to have been a dump or midden.

20-40cm – Black loose soil, heavy clay. A rusted iron rod with two hooks at one end which appear to be a turning mechanism (like a propeller shaft). The other end has threads. 66cm long x 4cm diameter (Figure 14). Bone cut by a machine (Figure 15).
40-80cm – Black loose soil, four potsherds, one poorly fired, the other ones red-brown. The potsherds might represent a Later Iron Age tradition in the area (Figure 16).
After 80cm, Natural later is gritty and sterile (Figure 17).



Figure 13: Location of trial trench KIN003.



Figure 14: Rusted iron rod suggesting a turning mechanism.



Figure 15: Bone cutting by a machine, suggests recent industrial age.



Figure 16. Potsherds found may date to the Later Iron Age.



Figure 17: The trench at c. 90cm sterile.

6. TEST EXCAVATIONS AT SITE 4

SITE NAME	KIN004	
LOCATION	26°24'57.2"S	029°05'37.1"E

A setting of stones had raised suspicion with the possibility of being a cairn burial. This site had not been affected by the trenching. An area 6m EW x 5m NS was delimited for clearance of grass (Figure 18). The setting of stones looked roughly oval with the longer axis aligned north-south. At the northern end there was a small dimple depression in the ground measuring 80cm in diameter. A trial trench was laid over the stones measuring 3m NS x 1.50m EW.

The upper horizon to a depth of 60cm consisted of black clay soil. The lower horizon to a depth of 100cm brown soil and stone. Sterile. The trench did not yield any features or relics.



Figure 18: Setting of stone and a small dimple depression and poor ground visibility due to grass cover.



Figure 19: Setting of stones.



Figure 20: Setting of stone and trial trench marked.



Figure 21: Excavations at 100cm depth show black clay upper horizon and brown soil in the lower horizon. Sterile.

7. TEST EXCAVATIONS AT SITES 5 & 6

Sites 5 and 6 (KIN005 and KIN006) were located in the same area 2m apart. They were oval mounds looking suspiciously like burial mounds both with the longer axes (c. 2m long) aligned north-south. The two features were situated in the planned passage of a reticulation trench so that excavations were suspended pending the investigation. An area 7.5m EW x 4.5m was marked for clearance of grass. Thereafter trial trenches 3m NS x 1.5m EW were marked over the mounds.

7.1. Excavations at Site 5 (KIN005)

SITE NAME	KIN005	
LOCATION	26°24'52.1"S	029°05'38.5"E

The upper horizon to a depth of 60cm consisted of black clay soil. The lower horizon to a depth of 100cm brown soil and stones. Sterile. The trench did not yield any features or relics.

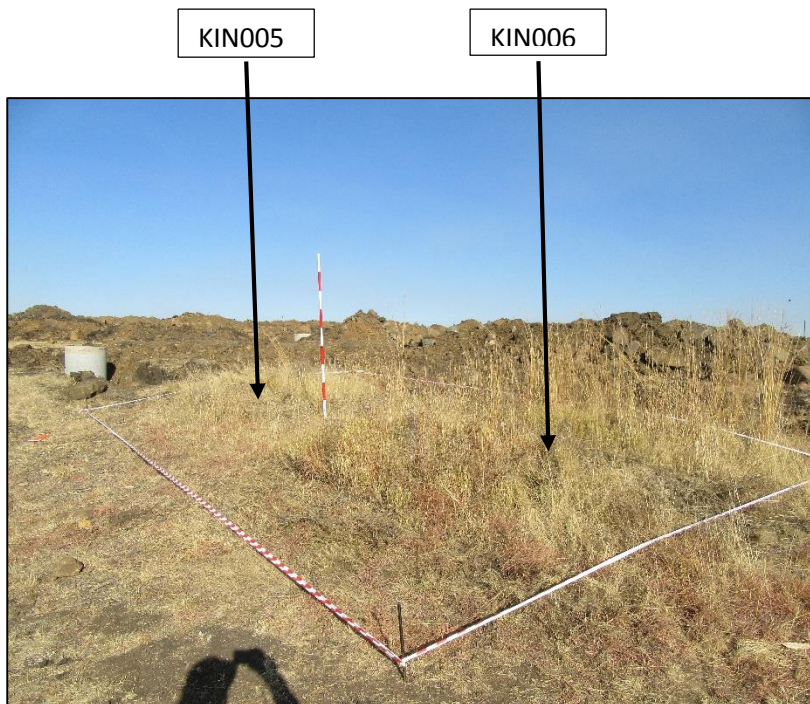


Figure 22: Location of the two mounds in the passage of the reticulation trench. The ranging rod is standing between the mounds.



Figure 23: Black clay soil in the upper horizon. Sterile.



Figure 24: Brown soil and large stones in the lower horizon. Sterile.

8. TEST EXCAVATION AT SITE 6 (KIN006)

SITE NAME	KIN006	
LOCATION	26°24'52.1"S	029°05'38.5"E

The upper horizon to a depth of 60cm consisted of black clay soil. The lower horizon to a depth of 100cm brown soil and stones. Sterile. The trench did not yield any features or relics.

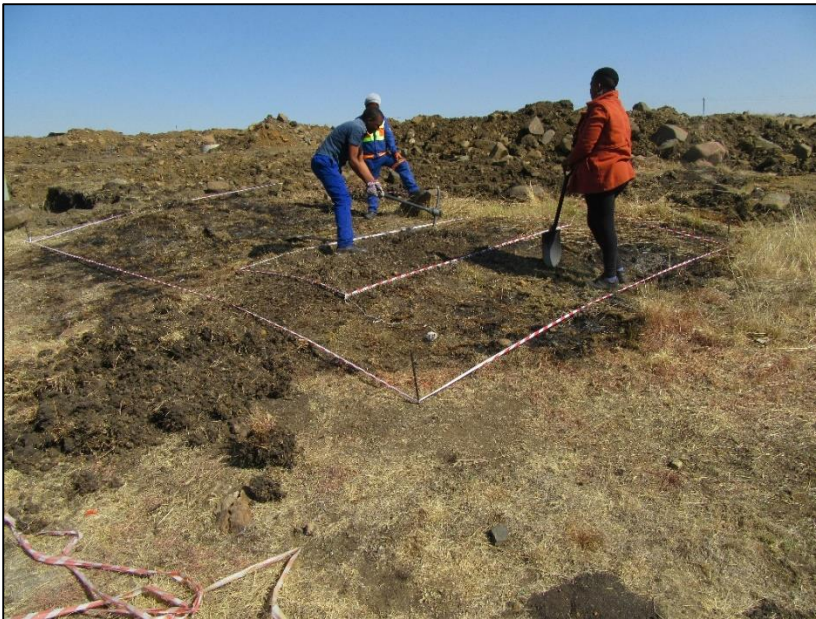


Figure 25: Digging at Site 6.



Figure 26. Upper horizon, black clay soil. Sterile.



Figure 27: Brown soil and large stones in the lower horizon. Sterile.

9. DISCUSSION

It has been concluded that all the bones numbering more than 30 from Site 2 (KIN001) possibly come from a single human skeleton which has been positively identified from four diagnostic bones namely:

- An occipital bone
- Upper end of a femur bone
- Lower end of a femur bone; and
- Lower end of a tibia bone

The high breakage ratio in the bone assemblage is due to the fact that the bones had been turned up by an excavator. This being a chance discovery, there are many parts of the skeleton which cannot be account for. It can be reasonably concluded that the skeleton lay below the surface (and is therefore a burial in the common sense of the word). However its exact location and provenance was lost and could not be reconstructed. The possible location, it can be generally inferred, could be anywhere along the two closest reticulation trenches that had been opened, perhaps not more than 20m radius from where they were deposited by the excavator. The trenches were thoroughly examined for the possible presence of residual bone material on the walls, without a positive result.

The bone fragments from Site 1 (KIN001) are undiagnostic except for a complete tooth identified to the premolar of a cow. The bone fragments from Site 3 (KIN003) represent ribs, but beyond that identification to the species represented was difficult. Pottery fragments found at the same site are testimony of a precolonial Later Iron Age horizon. It is tempting to speculate that the burial 120m to the south could date to the same time period before the establishment of the town.

The other three trenches (KIN004-6) did not yield any features or relics.

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As the material from KIN002 have turned out to be human skeletal material, relocation to a formal cemetery is necessary. The process flow is usually as outlined in the Table below:

	ACTIVITY	ACTION
1	Lodge a report with the local SAPS Station, obtain letter or submit Affidavit	AHSA
2	Consultation/liaison with Govan Mbeki Local Municipality	Abaziyo
3	Carefully Managed Public Participation	Abaziyo / AHSA
4	Secure formal permit from SAHRA for the relocation of the remains to a formal cemetery (Permit issued to Archaeologist E Matenga in terms SAHRA procedure). They will need letter from GMLM	AHSA
5	Purchase grave in a local cemetery	Abaziyo / AHSA
6	Hire local Funeral Service	Abaziyo / AHSA
7	Reburial supervision	Abaziyo /AHSA
	MATERIALS	
	Coffin	
	Tombstone(s), cement etc/ engrave names	
	Erecting gravestone (labour) – Local Funeral Service	
	Purchase grave at cemetery	
	Refreshments for official attendants (For transparency, invite police, GMLM officials)	

11. REFERENCES

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