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**RESCUE OF HUMAN REMAINS REPORTED BY THE LEROME POLICE  
DEPARTMENT, NORTH WEST PROVINCE**

For:

**THE SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE  
RESOURCES AGENCY (SAHRA),  
CAPE TOWN**

Rescue operations conducted and report prepared by the:

**NATIONAL CULTURAL HISTORY MUSEUM  
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**REPORT: 2006KH**

Date of Rescue: April 2006

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### SUMMARY

#### **Rescue of Human Remains Reported by the Lerome Police Department, North West Province**

The Museum was contacted by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) to examine a possible archaeological or historical burial that was found in the Lerome South rural settlement near to Sun City International Hotel. The South African Police Services (SAPS) in Lerome, Super-Intendant Diale contacted SAHRA on this matter.

The burial site is situated in a rural settlement, close to a corrugated house in Mr. Madumo's yard. Mr Madumo was trying to remove two large rocks that turned into large boulders. While digging around the boulders Mr Madumo noticed bone fragments and teeth that looked to be human. The SAPS was informed and after an investigation contacted SAHRA as they thought it might be a very old burial.

The investigation by the archaeologist confirmed that the bones found were that of human. The bones found were very badly damaged; only teeth and some skull bones indicated that this was a human burial. No cultural material was found. Bone could still be seen in the profile of the wall.

The archaeologists collected the loose broken bones and have taken them back to the Museum. A few months later, the human remains were excavated using archaeological techniques and brought back to the museum for further analysis. Once this is complete the human remains will be re-interred back to Lerome South.

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### **RESCUE OF HUMAN REMAINS REPORTED BY THE LEROME POLICE DEPARTMENT, NORTH WEST PROVINCE**

#### **1. AIMS OF THE RESCUE**

The National Cultural History Museum was requested by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) to conduct a rescue operation of human remains found in the Lerome South settlement by Mr. Madumo, who intern contacted the Lerome Police Department in the North West Province. The aim of the rescue operation was to locate, and identify human remains, cultural objects and structures of cultural importance found in close proximity to the burial.

#### **2. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The **Terms of Reference** for the study were to:

- 2.1 Identify the bones that were recovered as human remains.
- 2.2 Assess the burial in terms of it being of archaeological or historical nature.
- 2.3 Describe the possible impact of further development on the human remains, according to the standard set out by the SAHRA.
- 2.4 Propose suitable measures to minimize possible negative impacts on the burial and human remains.

#### **3. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS**

Aspects concerning the conservation of cultural resources are mainly dealt within two acts. These are the South African Heritage Resources

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Act (Act 25 of 1999) and the Environmental Conservation Act (Act 73 of 1989).

### 3.1 South African Heritage Resources Act

#### **Archaeology, palaeontology and meteorites**

Section 35(4) of this act states that no person may, without a permit issued by the responsible heritage resources authority:

- (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 which 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.

#### **Human remains:**

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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 or 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 is 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 (eg. 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)**.

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### 3.2 Environmental Conservation Act

This act states that a survey and an evaluation of cultural resources should be undertaken in areas where development, which will change the face of the environment, is to be made. The impact of the development on the cultural resources should also be determined and a proposal to mitigate this impact is to be formulated.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

### 1) Rescue Operation

The rescue operation was conducted according to generally accepted archaeological practices, and was aimed at locating the human remains, as well as potential sites, objects and structures.

### 2) Documentation

The human remains were documented according to the general minimum standards accepted by the archaeological profession. Coordinates the locality was determined by means of the **Global Positioning System (GPS)**. The GPS's accuracy is between 3 to 5 meters

## 5. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The surrounding area is that of a rural settlement, with corrugated dwellings and fenced off yards. The soil is of a reddish color with small shale type stones. No grass, plants or trees can be seen in the yards of the settlement. In some of the yards one finds crops growing such as maize. Otherwise the area is quite barren and very sandy. To the east of

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the settlement one finds the Pilansberg mountain range and Sun City International Hotel is approximately 15km from the rural settlement of Lerome.

### 6. **DISCUSSION**

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The burial site is situated in a rural settlement, close to a corrugated house within Mr. Madumo's yard. Mr Madumo was trying to remove two large rocks that turned into large boulders. While digging around the boulders Mr Madumo noticed bone fragments and teeth that looked to be human. The SAPS was informed and after an investigation contacted SAHRA as they thought it might be a very old burial.

The investigation by the archaeologist confirmed that the bones found were that of human. The bones found were very badly damaged; only teeth and some skull bones indicated that this was a human burial. No cultural material was found. Bone could still be seen in the profile of the wall.

The archaeologists collected the loose broken bones and have taken them back to the Museum. Once this had been done, a few months later, the existing hole was made larger to see if one could see in what position the rest of the human bones lay in situ. From this it was determined that the person was in a sitting position facing north. A drinking pot was also found while opening the grave. No other cultural

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objects were found. The soil surrounding the rest of the human bones was very damp and many damaged, so no identification of age or sex could be determined on site. Many of the bones were collected still in the damp sand and will be sieved out at the museum where one may find other information regarding the human remains.

### 7. **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The human remains were successfully exhumed and taken to the National Cultural History Museum. It would seem by the way the person was buried that it comes from the Iron Age. It is difficult to determine if it is Early or Late Iron Age. The drinking cup could possibly indicate that the person was male, but this is not a scientific fact. The person was placed in a pit facing north. More detailed studies will be looked at, at the museum to try to determine, age, sex and any other information. It might be difficult as many of the bones have been damaged by the owner digging the hole in his garden.

Once the bones have been cleaned, documented and researched it is of my opinion and the communities that the human remains are re-interred back to that area. This will be discussed with the community and the SAHRA representative of the North West.

### 8. **REFERENCES**

None were used

### 9. **PROJECT TEAM**

F. E. Teichert - Archaeologist

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Burial Form

Feature No. 1
GPS: 25 13' 23.4"S 27 14' 06.3"E
Burial No. 1
Reservoir NCHM

Site No. 1
Farm Lerome South
Province North West
Country South Africa

1. LOCATION
a. Square ~
b. Horizontal ~
c. Depth from surface 65cm
d. Depth from datum ~

2. BURIAL TYPE
a. Extended d. Reburial
b. Flexed e. Cremation
c. Semiflexed X f. Part crem.
g. Other Pit burial

3. BURIAL DIMENSIONS
a. Max. length 35cm Dir. S-N
b. Max. width 55cm Dir. E-W
c. Thickness 24cm

4. DEPOSITION
a. Position Sitting
b. Head to North

5. GRAVE TYPE
a. Surface c. Cist
b. Pit X d. Other
e. Shape Circular

8. ASSOCIATIONS
a. Features In an informal settlement on Mr. Madumo's property

b. Specimens Drinking pot and a stone tool, looks like a Middle Stone Age point.

9. PRESERVATION
a. Poor X Fair Good

10. COMPLETENESS
20-25%

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- 6. GRAVE DIMENSIONS
a. Max. length 39cm Dir. S-N
b. Max. width 58cm Dir. E-W
c. Depth 98cm
11. SEX
a. M F Indeterminate X
12. AGE
a. Infant d. Adult X
b. Child e. Mature
c. Adolescent f. Senile

- 7. STRATIFICATION
a. Inclusive c. Precedent
b. Intrusive X d. Disturbed
e.

14. REMARKS Found while digging in the garden to remove large rocks that were in the way of a structure that will be built.

15. HEAD STONE:
a. Yes: No: X

16. HEAD STONE AND GRAVE DIMENSIONS:
a. Max. length:HS G
b. Max. width:HS G
c. Thickness:HS G

17. HEAD STONE INSCRIPTION:
a.

18. HEAD STONE MATERIAL:
a.



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### 19. PHOTOGRAPH OF BURIAL

I will send the photos next week as they will make this document too large and will send them separately.

Recorded by: Frank Teichert Date: 28/04/2006

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