

30 June 2020

**Attention:** Ms. Thabiso Khumalo

MAKONE CONSULTING ENGINEERS cc

REF: PM132/Arch002

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**ASSESSMENT OF ACCIDENTALLY EXPOSED SKELETAL REMAINS**

**RE: CONTRACT No. PM 132/2018 Construction of Borehole Infrastructure & Pumping Mains for the Sterkloop and Sandriver South Wellfields. Polokwane Local Municipality.**

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The site visit was undertaken on 29 June 2020.

**A. ASSESSMENT OF THE SITE**

1. The site contains a trench which was excavated by a mechanical excavator. The trench is approximately 1.2m deep and 1.5m wide. It is located inside a paved taxi rank. Prior to the paving, the site had been filled with a topping of about 40cm of gravel material on top of the original ground surface. A clear distinction can be seen in the texture and colour of the soil (Figure 4).
2. A heritage impact assessment was conducted for the project by HCAC Heritage Consultants, titled; *Proposed Polokwane Urban Groundwater Project*, prior to the commencement of the construction of this project. This heritage assessment found no heritage remains in the area where the burials were exposed. Due to the nature of the site, i.e., paved surface, this is understandable as no heritage impact assessment would have been able to detect the heritage remains.
3. During the site visit, it was established that there were in fact **three** separate human burials that were exposed and damaged by the excavation. The burials are numbered 1 – 3 on the accompanying Google earth image. The burials are approximately 40 – 50cm below the original soil surface, which would point towards a pre-colonial or early historical period burial. This suggests the time of burial to be more than a 100 years ago.
4. Burial **1** contains the most pieces of *in situ* skeletal remains, which includes arm bones and ribs, with a loose sacrum inside the trench. Burial **2** only contains an ulna and some hand bones while burial **3** only contains skull fragments.

5. The remaining skeletal content of the disturbed burials are located in the excavated soil, which is now piled beside the trench. Here, skeletal fragments consisting of skull, ribs, arm and leg bones, vertebra and sacrum was noted.
6. The site is located in close proximity to the old Dahl Street cemetery. It is however unlikely that the burials form part of the cemetery, although the possibility must be investigated. Unfortunately, no cultural material was noted in context with the burials and during a walkabout in the cemetery, with the result that no relative date can be suggested for the burials. There may be clues to the cultural identity of the burials when the remaining skeletal material is exhumed and especially when the dumped excavated trench soil is sifted for cultural material/finds.
7. The following process is recommended:
  - 7.1 Application of a permit from SAHRA for the exhumation of the *in situ* skeletal material and the recovery of the remains inside the soil dump. This is done on-line on the SAHRIS (South African Heritage Resources Information Systems) web-page.
  - 7.2 Once a permit has been approved and issued, work should commence on recovering the skeletal remains;
    - Exhumation of the burial content that remained in situ within the trench wall (see figures 5 - 7),
    - Sift through the soil that was excavated from the trench to recover the rest of the skeletal material shown in figures 8 & 9,
    - During this process it is likely that cultural material will be recovered that would enable one to identify the cultural group and/or date the burials. If not, a C<sup>14</sup> dating can be considered.
8. The skeletal remains of the three different burials must be analysed after the recovery process. The aim will be to;
  - Undertake an analysis of the skeletal material in order to;
    - Reunited the fragments of bones to the original skeletons. This is done through bone colour, fresh breaks, body stature, etcetera.,
    - Determine the gender and age of the skeletons where possible.
9. After this process, the skeletal remains must be appropriately reinterred. It is suggested that the remains be reburied in the nearby Dahl Street cemetery or else an appropriate cemetery indicated by the Municipality.

Yours sincerely



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FRANS ROODT (BA Hons, MA Archaeology, Post Grad. Dip. Museology; UP)  
Principal Investigator



Figure 1. Location of the skeletal remains outside of the Dahl Street cemetery. The arrow points to the Dahl Street cemetery. The yellow icon is the burial site.





Figure 2. Google earth image view of the cemetery and taxi rank; the **yellow icons** indicate the positions of the burials.



Figure 3. Google earth image showing close-up view of the positions of the three burials.





Figure 4. The trench – note distinctive colour and texture difference between the upper gravel backfill (light brown) and the original surface (grey).

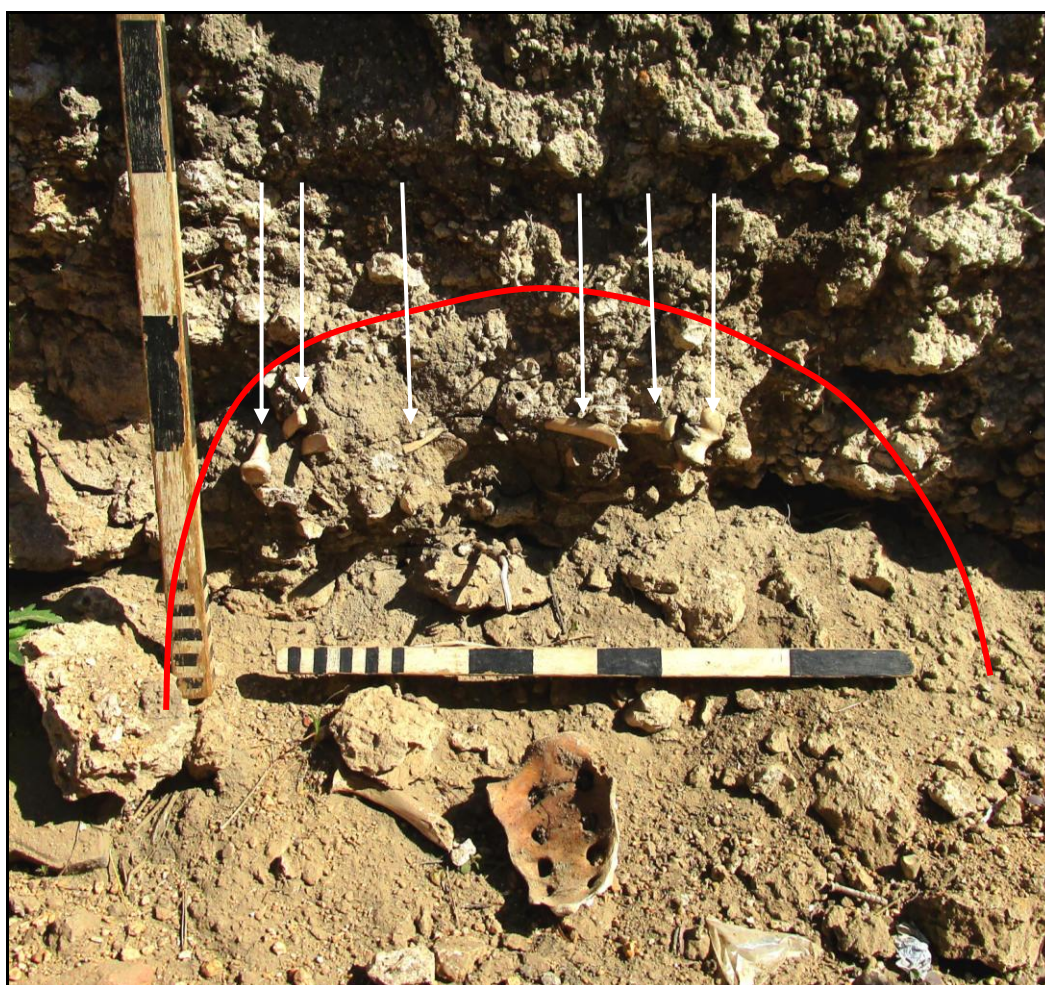


Figure 5. Burial 1 – note arm bones, ribs and sacrum (scale 50cm).





Figure 6. Burial 2 – note arm and hand bones.



Figure 7. Burial 3 – note skull fragments.  
(Scale: Figures 6 & 7. Horizontal: 50cm, Vertical: 100cm)





Figure 8. Skull fragments on the dumped soil. (Scale 50cm).

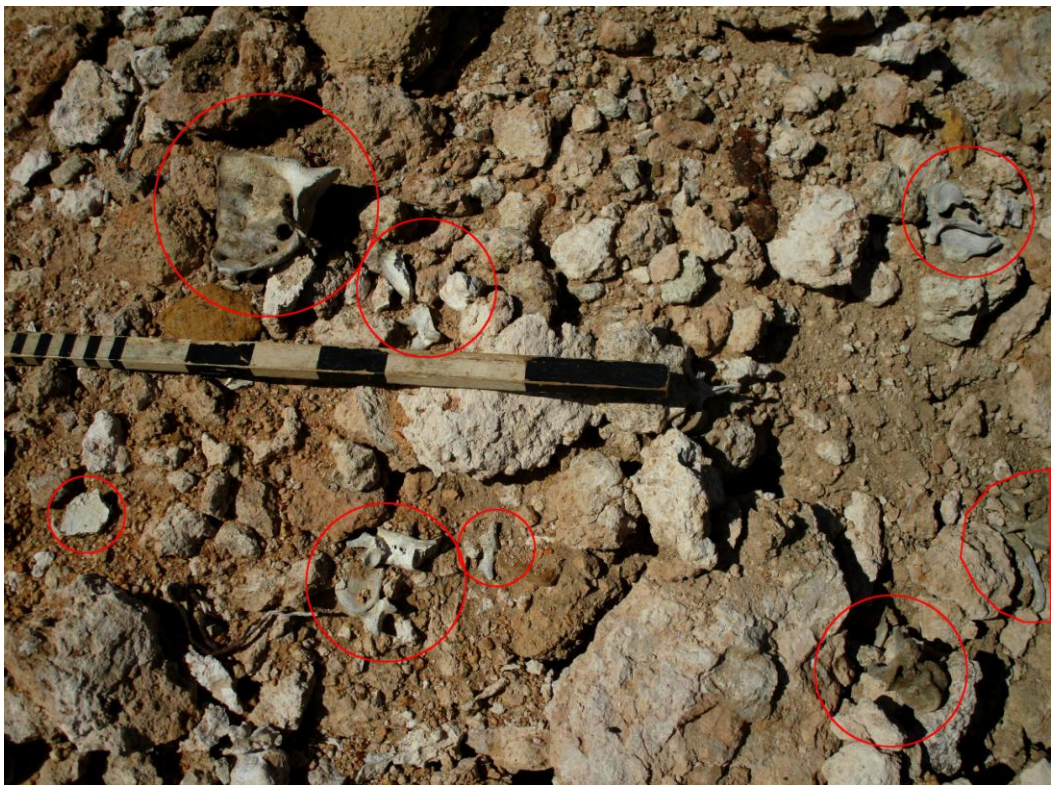


Figure 9. A sacrum and vertebra bones on the dumped soil (Scale 50cm).





Figure 10. Part of a humerus and a clavicle on the dumped soil. (Scale 50cm).

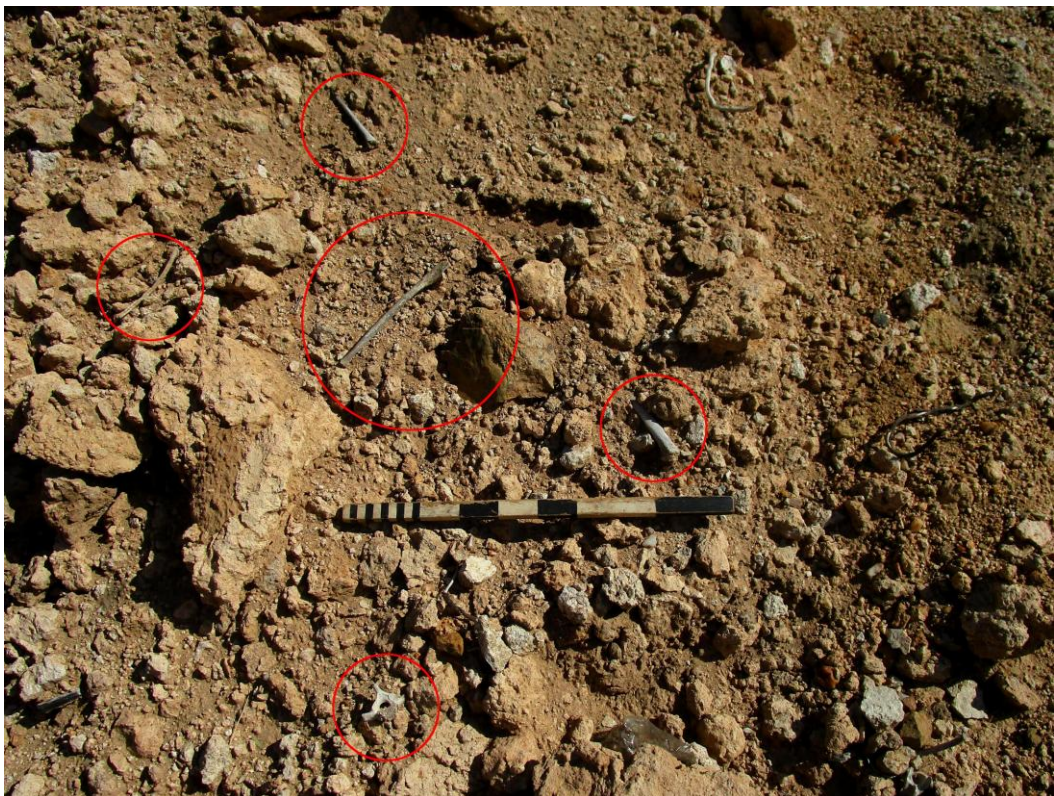


Figure 11. Various bones on the dumped soil (Scale 50cm).