

SUC

HM / CAPE WINELANDS / DRAKENSTEIN / MBEKWENI / BLINTU
STREET BURIAL



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Dr. Deirdre Abrahams
Paarl Forensic Pathology Services
53 Hospital Street
Paarl
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re: Skeletal material recovered from Mbeqweni: WC09/290/09

Dear Deirdre

We examined the remains of two individuals on the morning of the 22nd of September 2009 at the UCT Medical School. The two individuals were incomplete with only the lower limbs present. Bones present include:

- 4 tibia - 2 of which are fragmentary
- 4 fibula
- 4 tali
- 4 calcanei,
- 1 lumbar vertebra
- Pelvic fragments
- 1 right femur
- 2 distal femur condyle fragments
- Fragmentary tarsal and metatarsal bones

Age and sex: These individuals were adult females as seen from the fused epiphyses and pelvic fragments present.

Preservation and Time since Death: Information provided by you indicates that these remains were discovered by an individual digging a new, expanded garden for himself. The preservation of the specimens is not good and some of the material is fragmentary. The eroded condition of the bone suggests a rich organic soil which has produced an acid erosive environment. Artefacts found with the skeletal material indicate that these could possibly be late 19th to early 20th century burials.

Pathology and Signs of Individuality: No signs of pathology or individuality could be found on the skeletal material because of the relatively poor state of preservation except the possible size difference between the two females.

Artefacts: Three artifacts were recovered with the skeletal material.

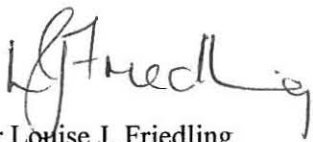
1. A small rusted metal tin with some organic material inside it
2. An empty "stoppered" bottle with "TALANA 402?" printed on the bottom
3. Two coffin handles – possibly containing chrome in its make-up

Photographs of the bottle and metal tin were submitted to Mrs. Ethleen Lastovica, a local expert on historic glass bottles. In summary, she notes that the bottle is a South African manufactured 'medicine' bottle machine produced between 1930 and 1950. Her full report is attached.

Recommendations:

- 1) These remains are of historic significance and thus not a forensic case
- 2) SAHRA should be contacted for permits to exhume / excavate the rest of the remains
- 3) More research should be done into the possibility that this could be an old or unmarked burial ground

Summary: The individuals from Mbeqweni (WC09/290/09) are those of two adult females. The preservation of the remains is poor. No signs of pathology could be found because of the poor preservation. The associated artefacts with the burial identify this individual as having been buried in the 20th century, probably between 1930 and 1950.



Dr Louise J. Friedling
University of Cape Town



Prof Alan G Morris
University of Cape Town



Fig 1: Glass bottle with R2 coin for scale



Fig 2: Metal tin with R2 coin for scale

BOTTLE

Without handling the bottle I cannot be sure of the technique used to manufacture the bottle – handmade or machine made - a feature that helps date a bottle a little more accurately.

Handmade bottles have the mould marks ending below the lip of the bottle. Machine made bottles, such as those manufactured today; have the mould (seam) marks running the full length of the bottle. In South Africa, machine made bottles began to be manufactured in quantity after 1930.

The Union Glass Ltd was formed at Talana near Dundee in Natal, now KwaZulu Natal, in 1919. At that stage they were manufacturing bottles by hand in cast-iron moulds. Initially medicine and ink bottles were produced on a "fairly considerable scale". In time, their bottle-making process became fully mechanized.

Union Glass Ltd at Talana was the only manufacturer of glass containers in South Africa until 1937. In 1954 Consolidated Glass, now Consol, acquired Union Glass.

- The photo is of a medicine bottle of the type stocked by chemists who stuck a paper label on a flat panel of the bottle to indicate its contents. Being of such a size it most probably contained something innocuous. A bottle containing poison would have been of blue, green or brown glass, often with ridges to provide a tactile means indicating that the contents were not to be taken.
- The bottle does not seem to have an applied lip, so was probably machine made.
- The bottle is of clear glass with no green tinge. Green-tinged glass was used extensively for handmade bottles until the 1920s. Clear glass is a more modern composition usually associated with the mechanization of the glass industry.
- As the bottle has TALANA on the base, it must have been made at Union Glass in Natal.
- The 402 on the base is quite likely the bottle [design] number.
- I do not know the base markings used by Union Glass. If you need to know, you should contact Consol Glass, perhaps in Bellville, or else their headquarters in Germiston. Someone on the staff might be able to help.
- The bottle cannot be dated precisely, but at a guess it was manufactured somewhere between 1930 and 1950.

TIN

I think the tin may have contained snuff or ointment.

Ethleen Lastovica

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