



## **REPORT ON THE TEST EXCAVATION OF 3 POSSIBLE GRAVES**

MSOBO COAL (SPITZKOP COLLIERY) – TEST EXCAVATION

PORTION 15 OF THE FARM WATERVAL 244 IS, NEAR BREYTEN, MPUMALANGA

TEST EXCAVATION OF THREE POSSIBLE GRAVES AFFECTED BY COAL MINING ACTIVITIES

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# Declaration of Independence

*This report was compiled for Msobo Coal by PGS Heritage (Pty) Ltd. The views stipulated in this report are purely objective and no other interests are displayed during the decision making processes discussed in this document.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TEST EXCAVATION OF THREE POSSIBLE GRAVES/FEATURES LOCATED ON PORTION 15 OF THE FARM WATERVAL 244 IS, NEAR BREYTEN, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE.

This report is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of:

- ❑ The **South African Heritage Resources Agency, Permit No. 2325 (CaseID: 9748)**, issued under Section 36(3) of the National Heritage Resources Act, Act no. 25 of 1999 to Henk Steyn.
- ❑ The agreement between *PGS Heritage (Pty) Ltd* and *Msobo Coal* for the completion of the test excavations of three possible graves.

Msobo Coal contracted PGS Heritage (Pty) Ltd to conduct test excavations of three features (MSO 1-3), all three possible graves, located on the property detailed above. The features will be affected by future coal mining activities.

This report documents the test excavation of the features (as required by SAHRA in terms of section 36 of the National Heritage Resources Act, 25 Of 1999) implemented under the SAHRA Permit, No 2325 (CaseID: 9748), issued by the SAHRA Burial Grounds and Graves Unit.

During the test excavations, it was found that the excavated features contained no human remains. Evidence gathered during the excavation however suggests that two of the features (MSO 1 & 2) were, in fact, graves that were previously relocated. Msobo Coal has no record of such relocation and it is possible that the relocation, if any, took place before they took ownership of the property.

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## 1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Msobo Coal contacted PGS Heritage to conduct a site visit in order to investigate three features (MSO 1, 2 & 3) that might be possible graves at their Spitzkop Colliery operations. The features were discovered during the stripping of topsoil in order to prepare the area for opencast mining. On inspection, it was unclear if the features were graves and it was decided to apply for a permit to conduct test excavations on the site.

## 2. LEGAL COMPLIANCE

In order to comply with the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999), that governs the exhumation of graves older than 60 years and the excavation of any archaeological site older than 100 years, an application was made to the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) for a permit to conduct test excavations on the features/possible graves. The permit (SAHRA Permit No. 2325, CaseID: 9748) was issued with the understanding that, should the features be graves, the excavation would be stopped and a formal grave relocation process be initiated. This would include obtaining the necessary permits from SAHRA, the Provincial Government and the Local Municipality (refer **Appendix B** for copies of the relevant permit):

## 3. DESCRIPTION OF EXCAVATION AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 General discussion

The possible graves/features were located on Portion 15 of the farm Waterval 244 IS, near Breyten, Mpumalanga at S26.37529° and E29.93156°.

The test excavations took place on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2016. An experienced team excavated all three features by hand (**Figure 1 and 2**). The main aim of the excavations was to ascertain whether the three features were graves. The excavations had the following measurements:

- Feature 1 (MSO 1) - 1.16m (l) x 0.80m (w) x 1.5m (d)
- Feature 2 (MSO 2). 1.45m (l) x 0.90m (w) x 1.5m (d)
- Feature 3 (MSO 3). 0.90m (l) x 0.70m (w) x 0.50m (d)

Normally, the purpose of test excavations of possible graves is to look for burial pits beneath the topsoil without causing damage to any human remains. However, since it was suspected that the features were graves that had been excavated previously, the purpose of the excavation was to:

- Determine the presence of a grave pit at each of the features;
- If a grave pit is present, determine the presence of human remains

Usually, the exact location, extent and orientation of the grave pits can be identified once the topsoil has been removed and the feature can be further assessed to be a grave or not. In this case, two of the features (MSO 1 and 2) lacked any topsoil and had been excavated in the past since both showed clear indentations where soil had been removed and/or backfilled. When these two features were excavated, it was clear that they had been backfilled with the rocks that had formed the grave dressings. Some of these rocks were found next to the features before excavation.

The grave pits in MSO 1 and 2 were quite easy to follow and both were excavated until culturally sterile soil was reached. No human or cultural remains were found in either case. MSO 3 was also excavated but did not contain a grave pit or human remains. The three excavations are detailed below, under section 3.2.



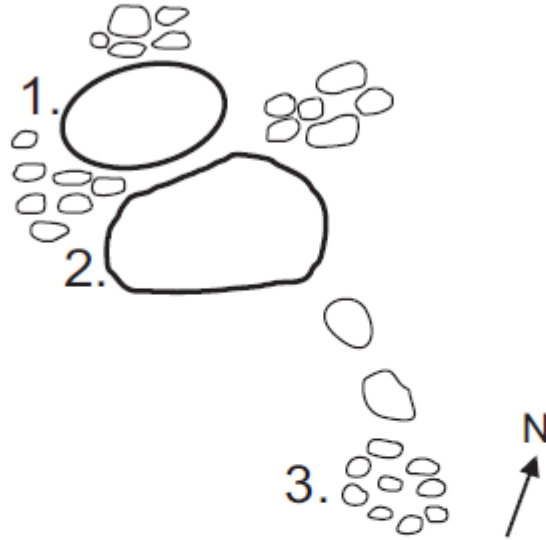
***Figure 1 & Figure 2 – The test excavations were conducted by hand.***



***Figure 3 – View of the three features before excavation. The indentation demarcating MSO 1 & 2 can clearly be seen. MSO 3 is to the right.***



# SPITZKOP COLLIERY TEST EXCAVATION



## LEGEND

Map Scale 1:10

Rocks



## Test Excavation

1. 1.6m (l) x 0.80m (w) x 1.5m (d)

2. 1.45m (l) x 0.90m (w) x 1.5m (d)

3. 0.90m (l) x 0.70m (w) x 0.50m (d)

*Figure 4 – Detailed site sketch of the test excavations.*

### 3.2 Description of individual graves

#### Feature No. MSO 16/01

Name of deceased:	Unknown.
Age at death:	Unknown.
Date of death:	Unknown.
Name of family representative:	Unclaimed.
New grave number:	N/A.
Location of grave:	Portion 15 of the farm Waterval 244 IS, near Breyten, Mpumalanga. Coordinates: S26.37529° E29.93156°.
Surface features of grave:	An elongated indentation with a few loose rocks scattered alongside. No formal headstone was present. The feature had a clear north-west/south-east orientation.
Grave goods:	None.
Measurements of grave pit/excavation:	1.6m (l) x 0.80m (w) x 1.5m (d).
Depth at which cultural remains were found:	None were found.
Depth at which human remains were found:	None were found.
Burial position:	No human remains were found.
Summary:	No human remains were found in the grave, evidence suggests that the feature have previously been excavated and the human remains it probably contained, relocated to an unknown location.



**Figure 5 – MSO 16/01, Dressing.**



**Figure 6 – MSO 16/01, Burial pit.**

**Grave No. MSO 16/02**

Name of deceased:	Unknown.
Age at death:	Unknown.
Date of death:	Unknown.
Name of family representative:	Unclaimed.
New grave number:	N/A.
Location of grave:	Portion 15 of the farm Waterval 244 IS, near Breyten, Mpumalanga. Coordinates: S26.37529° E29.93156°.
Surface features of grave:	An elongated indentation with a few loose rocks scattered alongside. No formal headstone was present. The feature had a clear north-west/south-east orientation.
Grave goods:	None.
Measurements of grave pit:	1.45m (l) x 0.90m (w) x 1.5m (d).
Depth at which cultural remains were found:	None were found.
Depth at which human remains were found:	None were found.
Burial position:	No human remains were found in the grave.
Summary:	No human remains were found in the grave, evidence suggests that the feature have previously been excavated and the human remains it probably contained, relocated to an unknown location.



**Figure 7 – MSO 16/02, Dressing.**



***Figure 8 – MSO 16/02. Rocks used to backfill the grave pit after the previous excavation. The rocks were possibly previously part of the grave dressing.***



**Figure 9 - MSO 16/02. Bottom of grave pit**



**Grave No. MSO 16/03**

Name of deceased:	Unknown.
Age at death:	Unknown.
Date of death:	Unknown.
Name of family representative:	Unclaimed.
New grave number:	N/A.
Location of grave:	Portion 15 of the farm Waterval 244 IS, near Breyten, Mpumalanga. Coordinates: S26.37529° E29.93156°.
Surface features of grave:	A small concentration of rocks.
Grave goods:	None.
Measurements of grave pit:	0.90m (l) x 0.70m (w) x 0.50m (d).
Depth at which cultural remains were found:	None were found.
Depth at which human remains were found:	None were found.
Burial position:	No human remains were found.
Summary:	No evidence could be found of either a grave pit or human remains. The purpose of the feature remains unclear.



**Figure 10 – MSO 16/03, Dressing.**

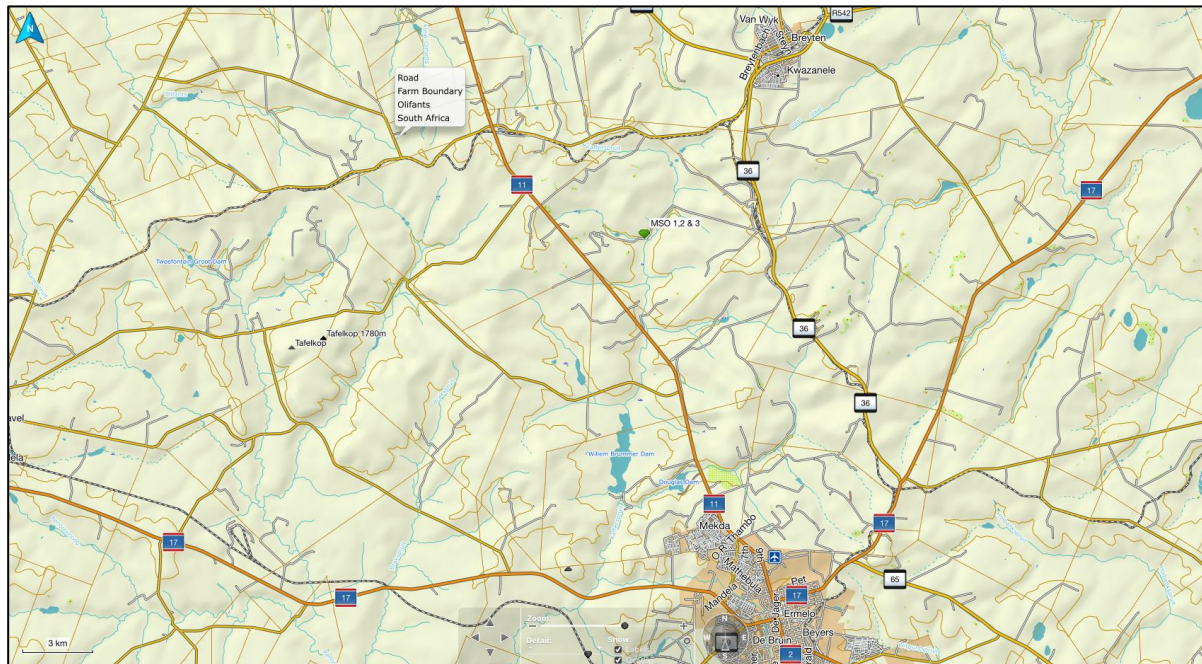


***Figure 11 – MSO 16/03, bottom of excavation.***

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

During the test excavations, the presence of grave pits were found in two of the three features (MSO 1 & 2), while the soil underneath MSO 3 were culturally sterile. Our conclusion is that MSO 1 and MSO 2 were most probably graves that were previously relocated. The purpose of MSO 3, if it had one, remains unclear.

**APPENDIX A: LOCALITY MAPS**



**Figure 12 – Regional locality map showing position of the site (MSO1, 2 & 3) on Portion 15 of the Waterval 244 IS (Garmin Basecamp image)**



**Figure 13 – Location of the site in relation to the Msobo Coal (top right). (Google Earth Image)**

## APPENDIX B: SAHRA PERMIT

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South African Heritage Resources Agency | 111 Harcourt Street | Cape Town  
P.O. Box 4637 | Cape Town | 8001  
www.sahra.org.za

Enquiries: Itumeleng Masiteng  
Tel: 012 9414967  
Email: imasiteng@sahra.org.za  
CaseID: 9748

Date: Thursday July 28, 2016  
Page No: 1

PermitID: 2325

### PERMIT: Test Excavation

In terms of Section 36(3) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)

Permit Holder: Mr Henk Steyn  
PGS Heritage and Grave Relocation Consultants  
PO Box 32542  
Totiusdal  
0134

Site: Msobo Test Trenches - Waterval 244 IS (Msobo)

The site was visited on 25 May 2016 was conducted to ascertain whether a rocky feature in a field were graves or not. Hence it was decided that test trenches should be dug across the area in order for a proper assessment to be made.

1. If the permit holder is not to be present on the site at all times then the heritage authority must be provided with the names and qualifications of the authorised representatives.
2. Adequate recording methods as specified in the Regulations and Guidelines pertaining to the National Heritage Resources Act must be employed. Note that the position of all excavations and objects collected must be marked on a plan of site.
3. A standard site record form must be lodged on SAHRIS.
4. Human remains must at all times be handled with respect and graves should not be disturbed except where unavoidable. The consultation procedures as indicated in the Regulations and the National Heritage Resources Act must be observed as appropriate if the second phase is exhumation. A Report on the Test trenches must be submitted to the heritage authority annually on or before 31 July 2017 for the duration of the permit.
5. If remains are discovered, including relics and artefacts, , must be kept with the skeletal material must remain *in situ*.
6. Reprints of all published papers or copies of theses and/or reports resulting from this work must be lodged with the relevant provincial heritage authority and SAHRA.
7. If a published report has not appeared within three years of the lapsing of this permit, the report required in terms of the permit will be made available to researchers on request.
8. It is the responsibility of the permit holder to obtain permission from the landowner for each visit, and conditions of access imposed by the landowner must be observed.
9. The heritage authority shall not be liable for any losses, damages or injuries to persons or properties as a result of any activities in connection with this permit.

Our Ref: 9748



an agency of the  
Department of Arts and Culture

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10. The heritage authority reserves the right to cancel this permit by notice to the permit holder.

This permit is valid from 28/07/2016 to 28/07/2017.

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Itumeleng Masiteng  
Heritage Officer: BBG Permitting  
South African Heritage Resources Agency

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Mimi Seetelo  
Manager: Burial Grounds & Graves Unit  
South African Heritage Resources Agency

**Additional Info:**

Please note that this permit may be suspended should an appeal against the decisions be received by SAHRA within 14 days from the date of the permit. SAHRA may not be held responsible for any costs or losses incurred in the event of the suspension or retraction of this permit.

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