

MOLETJE GRAVE RESCUE PROJECT

RESCUE EXHUMATION AND RELOCATION
OF A HUMAN SKELETON AT MOLETJE,
POLOKWANE, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

PREPARED BY:



PREPARED FOR:

POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY



CREDIT SHEET

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STEPHAN GAIGHER

SIGNED OFF BY: STEPHAN GAIGHER

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'S. Gaigher', enclosed within a red rounded rectangular border.

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Site name and location: Rescue Exhumation and Relocation of a Human Skeleton at the Village of Ramongwane, Polokwane, Limpopo Province.

Municipal Area: Polokwane Municipality.

Developer: Polokwane Municipality

Consultant: G&A Heritage, PO Box 522, Louis Trichardt, 0920, South Africa.
38A Vorster St, Louis Trichardt, 0920

Principal Investigator: Stephan Gagher

Date of Report: 20 July 2015

Report on the rescue exhumation and relocation of a human skeleton inadvertently uncovered at the village of Ramongwane, Polokwane, Limpopo Province.

Declaration of Independence

G&A Heritage has been appointed by the Polokwane Municipality through Murango Engineers as the Heritage Specialist for the relocation of one grave near the village of Ramongwane near Polokwane. The grave report will be submitted to the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). G&A Heritage does not have any vested interests in the proposed activity and will not engage in conflicting interests in undertaking such activity. G&A Heritage has provided all information at their disposal regarding the exhumation.

This report is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of:

- The South African Heritage Resources Agency Permit No. 2038, issued under Section 36(3) of the Nation Heritage Resources Act, Act no. 25 of 1999.

G&A Heritage was appointed by Proudafrique Trading 191 (Pty) Ltd to perform a rescue exhumation and relocation of a grave at the Thorny Bush Lifestyle Estate in Mokopane, Limpopo Province. The grave was accidentally exposed during construction of the Estate.

A Permit was issued by SAHRA to perform the exhumation.

- Permit ID: 2038
- Case ID: 7722

The MEC's Office of the Provincial Department of Health was notified of the intent to exhume and relocate the remains on the 19th of June 2015.

BAFA Funeral Services was appointed to handle the interment of the remains at the Ramongwane Community Cemetery in the Mogalakwena Municipality.

The exhumation was conducted on the 2nd of July 2015 with persons from the following bodies being notified and invited:

- Department of Health and Welfare
- SAPS
- G&A Heritage
- BAFA Funeral Services
- Polokwane Municipality

Bone fragments and grave goods were recovered and placed in a coffin, together with soil from the disturbed grave. Re-interment was done on the same day at the Ramongwane Community Cemetery.

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INTRODUCTION

The initial HIA for the Development was performed by Vhufa Hashu Heritage Consultant CC in 2006. The report was titled *Proposed Moletjie Regional Water Scheme Polokwane Local Municipality, Limpopo Province Cultural Heritage Scoping Report*. No sites of heritage significance were identified within the development area during the initial study. This is significant since the proposed pipeline runs directly adjacent (less than 2m) from a formal cemetery with around 50+ graves with formal granite dressings. It is not clear how the investigators managed to miss this site.

The grave in question was sub-surface, about 100cm below ground. There were no grave markers or dressings. It was inadvertently uncovered during the excavation of the pipeline trench. The first site meeting took place on 10 March 2015, when the extent of the damage was determined. The grave had been exposed and it was recommended that a rescue exhumation and relocation to the Ramongwana Cemetery be performed. Permits were issued by SAHRA and permission obtained from the Department of Health, Limpopo Province. The exhumation and re-internment was scheduled for the 2nd of July 2015.

LOCATION OF GRAVE

The grave was found at S23° 43' 31.66" E29° 22' 54.64" near the village of Ramongwana.

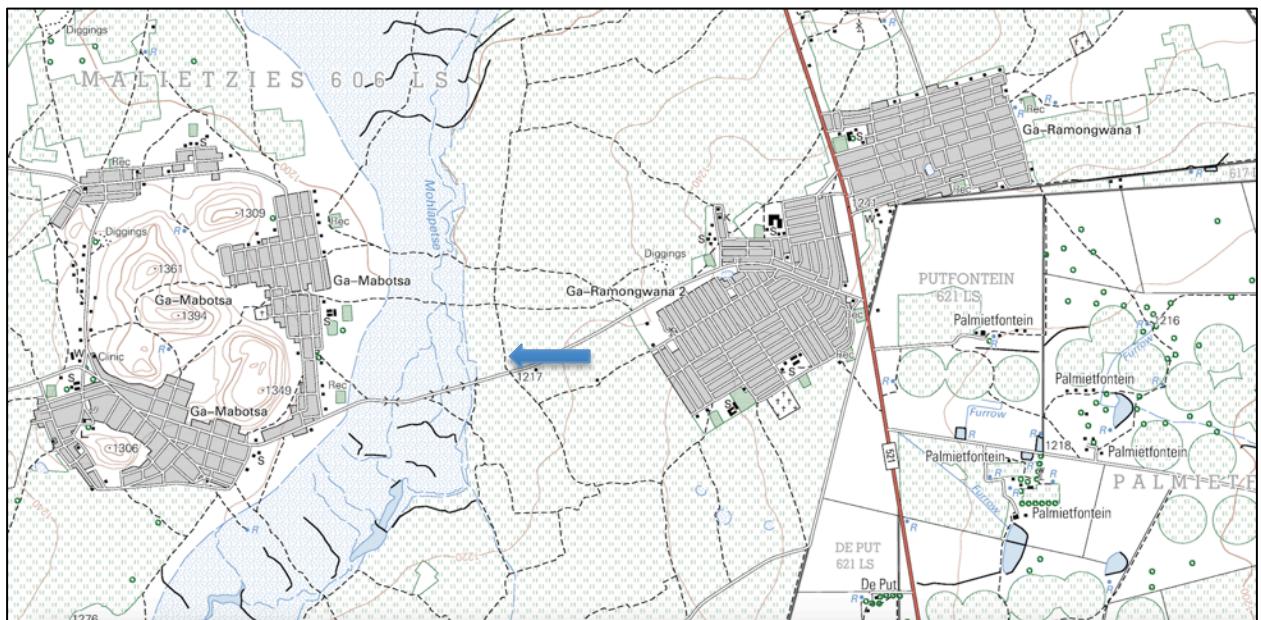


Figure 1. Location Map



Figure 2. Grave pit location

CONSULTATION WITH AFFECTED PARTIES

PUBLIC NOTICES

A public notice was placed at the site for a period of three week to enable interested and affected parties to make themselves known to the consultants.



Figure 3. Placing of signage



Figure 4. Signage on site

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

Archival research, with the aim of identifying the graves and possible next-of-kin of the deceased individual, was conducted by G&A Heritage. The area where the grave is located, as well as historical maps was included in the research.

No reference to any graves in the area was found.

LEGAL COMPLIANCE

- In terms of Section 36 of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) a rescue excavation permit was obtained: South African Heritage Resources Agency permit – ID: 1856⁵.
- To comply with the Removal of Graves and Dead Bodies Ordinance (Ord 7 of 1925), permission was obtained from the delegated Provincial MEC, which is also the authorized sphere of government identified in the Regulations Relating to the Management of Human Remains (No R363 of 22 May 2013) of the National Health Act (No 61 of 2003): Gauteng Province Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs permit of 17 July 2014⁶.
- In terms of the Regulations Relating to the Management of Human Remains (No R 363 of 22 May 2013) of the National Health Act (No 61 of 2003), the Local and District Municipality which has jurisdiction to ensure the supervision of an Environmental Health Practitioner gave permission: Gauteng Province Health, Forensic Pathology Services permit of 3 July 2014⁷.
- In terms of the Regulations Relating to the Management of Human Remains (No R 363 of 22 May 2013) of the National Health Act (No 61 of 2003), the local SAPS was notified and arrangements were made for a member of SAPS to be present during the exhumation.

IDENTIFICATION OF GRAVE AND REMAINS

The grave was exposed during construction activities for the Moletje Water Supply Scheme during the excavation of pipeline trenches. Parts of a human skull were exposed as well as the remains of long bones. Some potsherds were also encountered. After exposure of the remains the area was backfilled and demarcated with barrier tape.

METHOD OF EXHUMATION

The methods employed during the exhumation aimed to recover all the remains and grave goods, while minimising damage to the remains, to record the context and to preserve and respect the dignity of the buried individual.

The excavation methods employed resulted in the exposure of some short bones and skull pieces. While most of the skeleton is decomposed the only intact bones were disturbed from their *in situ* position by the excavation equipment employed by the construction company. The focus was on accurate and complete documentation. Various methods for the excavation of the graves have been developed by different specialists (Hester, 1975; Joukowsky, 1980; Krogman and Iscan, 1986; Morse, 1978) and all stress the need for adequate workspace around the exposed remains and a systematic approach to the removal of individual bones.

The systematic exposure of the remains was attempted. To attain this the existing trench was used as a basis and adequate workspace was created around this. No specific grave pit could be identified. Disturbed bones were recovered from this area and included some long bone pieces, skull pieces, foot bones and vertebrae (see Addendum).

The construction crew largely exposed the human remains during the mechanical excavation of the trench. A few bone fragments were left in the pit.

EXHUMATION

The exhumation was done on 2 July 2015. The location, which had been cordoned off, was clear of vegetation and debris.

Various human bones and bone fragments were recovered, as well as the remains of clay pots, all poorly preserved and damaged. The total area where the initial fragments were found was excavated and all the human bones and fragments were documented and put in an evidence bag. The potshards were also placed in evidence bags and placed with the human remains in an infant coffin.

RE-INTERMENT OF REMAINS

BAFA Funeral Services, Mokopane on the same day as the exhumation, conducted the reburial of the remains. The remains and grave goods were put in a sealed evidence bag (supplied by SAPS) and placed in an infant coffin. The coffin was reburied in the Ramongwane Local Cemetery.



Figure 6. Remains ready for reburial



Figure 7. Reburied remains

ADDENDUM A (PHOTOS)











ADDENDUM B (SAHRA PERMIT)

Moletjie Grave Site

Our Ref:

Enquiries: Itumeleng Masiteng
Tel: 012 9414967
Email: imasiteng@sahra.org.za
CaseID: 7722

Date: Thursday June 04, 2015
Page No: 1

PermitID: 2038



an agency of the
Department of Arts and Culture

PERMIT: Remove from its original position

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

Permit Holder: Mr Stephan Gaigher

G & A Heritage
G&A Heritage
PO Box 522
Louis Trichardt
0920

Site: Moletjie Grave Site near Ramongwane in Limpopo Province (Moletjie Grave Site)

Conditions: Relocation of one grave at Moletjie near the village of Ramongwane in the Limpopo Province. During the pipeline excavation activities (with and excavator) done by the Polokwane Municipality, human remains in a unmarked grave were exposed. The contractor stopped working there and the area has been barricaded. The site is located near the village of Ramongwane in the Limpopo Province. It is necessary that the grave be relocated to an official cemetery. After extensive social consultation, no next of kin could be identified, therefore the grave will be moved under a permit issued by SAHRA.

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. The recommendations for removal of graves and exhumations and for re-burial stipulated in SAHRA's Policy 'What to do when graves are uncovered', section 3, must be observed as far as possible.
5. A report on the specimens recovered and their origin must be submitted to the heritage authority annually on or before 30 June 2016 for the duration of the permit.
6. All remains recovered, including relics and artefacts must be kept with the skeletal material and be reburied at a local municipal cemetery.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. It is the responsibility of the permit holder to fill in excavations and protect sites during and after excavation to the satisfaction of the heritage authority and the landowner.



The South African Heritage Resources Agency

Street Address: 111 Harrington Street, Cape Town 8000 * Postal Address: PO Box 4537, Cape Town 8000
* Tel: +27 21 462 4502 * Fax: +27 21 462 4509 * Web: <http://www.sahra.org.za>

Moletjie Grave Site

Our Ref:

Enquiries: Itumeleng Masiteng
Tel: 012 9414967
Email: imasiteng@sahra.org.za
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Date: Thursday June 04, 2015
Page No: 2

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an agency of the
Department of Arts and Culture

11. 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.
12. The heritage authority reserves the right to cancel this permit by notice to the permit holder.

This permit is valid from 04/06/2015 to 04/06/2016.

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

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.



The South African Heritage Resources Agency

Street Address: 111 Harrington Street, Cape Town 8000 * Postal Address: PO Box 4537, Cape Town 8000
* Tel: +27 21 462 4502 * Fax: +27 21 462 4509 * Web: <http://www.sahra.org.za>

ADDENDUM C (REQUEST LETTER)

Murango Consulting Engineers cc

2004/023361/23

PO Box 893
Faunapark, 0787
Tel: 015 296 4438
Fax: 015 296 2963

for professional development

Pro Limpopo Suite #6
371 De Wet Drive,
Bendor, Polokwane, 0699



Our ref: 2010-01-Let

21 May 2015

Principal Investigator
G&A Heritage
38A Vorster Street
Louis Trichardt
0920

For Attention : Mr S Gaiger

CONTRACT NO. 192/2013
WATER PROJECT IN THE MOLETJIE EAST REGIONAL WATER SCHEME:
RELOCATION OF GRAVE

During the end of 2014 you were requested to manage the issue of the accidentally exposed informal burial site during a construction activity in the Moletjie area (approximately 23km from Polokwane on the Vivo / Mogwadi Road). We were informed by you that you have identified the site as being a human burial site of recent (within the past 60 years) provenance. The burial site has since been cordoned off as requested.

We need to finalise the project as soon as possible and the relocation is holding up the construction finalization of the water supply construction project.

We request that you apply for the necessary permissions and permits from your controlling body to relocate this burial site as a matter of urgency.

Yours faithfully,

DR Hovy (PrEng)
For Murango Consulting Engineers

Copy to:

Polokwane Municipality : Mr M Rapetsoa

REFERENCES CITED

Hester, T.R. et.al. 1975. *A Guide to Field Methods in Archaeology*. Palo Alto.

Joukowsky, M. 1980. *A Complete Manual of Field Archaeology*. Engelwood Cliffs.

Krogman, W.M. & Iscan, M.Y. 1986. *The Human Skeleton in Forensic Medicine*. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas.

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Nienaber, W.C. 1997. Exhumation and Reinterment of Burgher C.G. Naude. *South African Journal of Culture History*. 11(1):123-133.

Nienaber, W.C. and Steyn, M. 1999. Exhumation and Analysis of the Remains of a Black Native Participant in the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902), KwaZulu-Natal. *South African Journal of Culture History*. 13(2):94-110.

Steyn, M., Nienaber, W.C. and Iscan, M.Y. 2000. Excavation and Retrieval of Forensic Remains. In: Siegel, J.A., Saukko, P.J. and Knupfer, G.C. (eds.). *Encyclopaedia of Forensic Sciences*. Sidcup: Academic Press. 235-242.