

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AT ERF 97631 (41 NEWLANDS AVENUE), NEWLANDS

Required under the terms of a mitigation agreement between the property owner  
and Heritage Western Cape.

HWC Case No.: none assigned

*Report for:*

**The Panda Trust**

41 Newlands Avenue, Newlands, Cape Town

Email: [robbie@freedomproperties.co.za](mailto:robbie@freedomproperties.co.za)



**Dr Jayson Orton**

**ASHA Consulting (Pty) Ltd**

40 Brassie Street, Lakeside, 7945

Tel: (021) 788 1025 | 083 272 3225

Email: [jayson@asha-consulting.co.za](mailto:jayson@asha-consulting.co.za)

17 March 2026

## INTRODUCTION

This is a brief report describing the monitoring carried out at erf 97631 (41 Newlands Avenue), Newlands, in compliance with clause 4.2.1 of the mitigation agreement concluded between Heritage Western Cape and the owner of the property (The Panda Trust). It is essentially a captioned day-by-day photographic log of the work. Monitoring was carried out alternately by Dr Jayson Orton (23 January and 13 February 2026) and Dr Antonieta Jerardino (19 January and 3, 6, 17, 24 & 25 February 2026). Monitoring only occurred on days when new ground was being excavated. Constant communication was maintained between the archaeologists and the project manager to ensure that an archaeologist was always present during excavations as was required.

### 20 January 2026



After rescue of human remains, all further loose deposits were removed from the area and spoils were checked for bones. This is the appearance of the site at the start of monitoring of further excavations.

23 January 2026



Excavating the remaining section for underpinning of the house foundation. This was excavated down onto large river cobbles.



Working through sections of remaining fill and, at the very base, in situ sand at the south-western edge of the site to look for graves and human remains.



Working through sections of remaining fill and, at the very base, in situ sand along the south-eastern edge and in the central part of the site to look for graves and human remains.



Finds from the fill. Scale in 10 cm intervals.

6 February 2026



Excavation in the eastern corner of the property showing mostly fill but with some of the natural (and potentially sensitive) sand visible in the lower left part of the photograph.



Excavation along the south-eastern edge of the property showing mostly fill but with the natural (and potentially sensitive) sand beneath the far end of the plank.

7 February 2026



Continued excavation in the eastern corner of the property showing only fill.



Excavation along the south-western edge of the property showing mostly fill but with some natural (and potentially sensitive) sand present at the base.



Working along the south-western edge of the property excavating a trench to build a retaining wall adjacent to the existing boundary wall. The new wall is partly already built. Upon going a deeper a grave was discovered directly beneath the worker in red.



View of the section along the south-eastern boundary of the property showing existing manholes (arrowed; one has already had its upper part demolished) along a sewer line that runs parallel to the boundary wall.



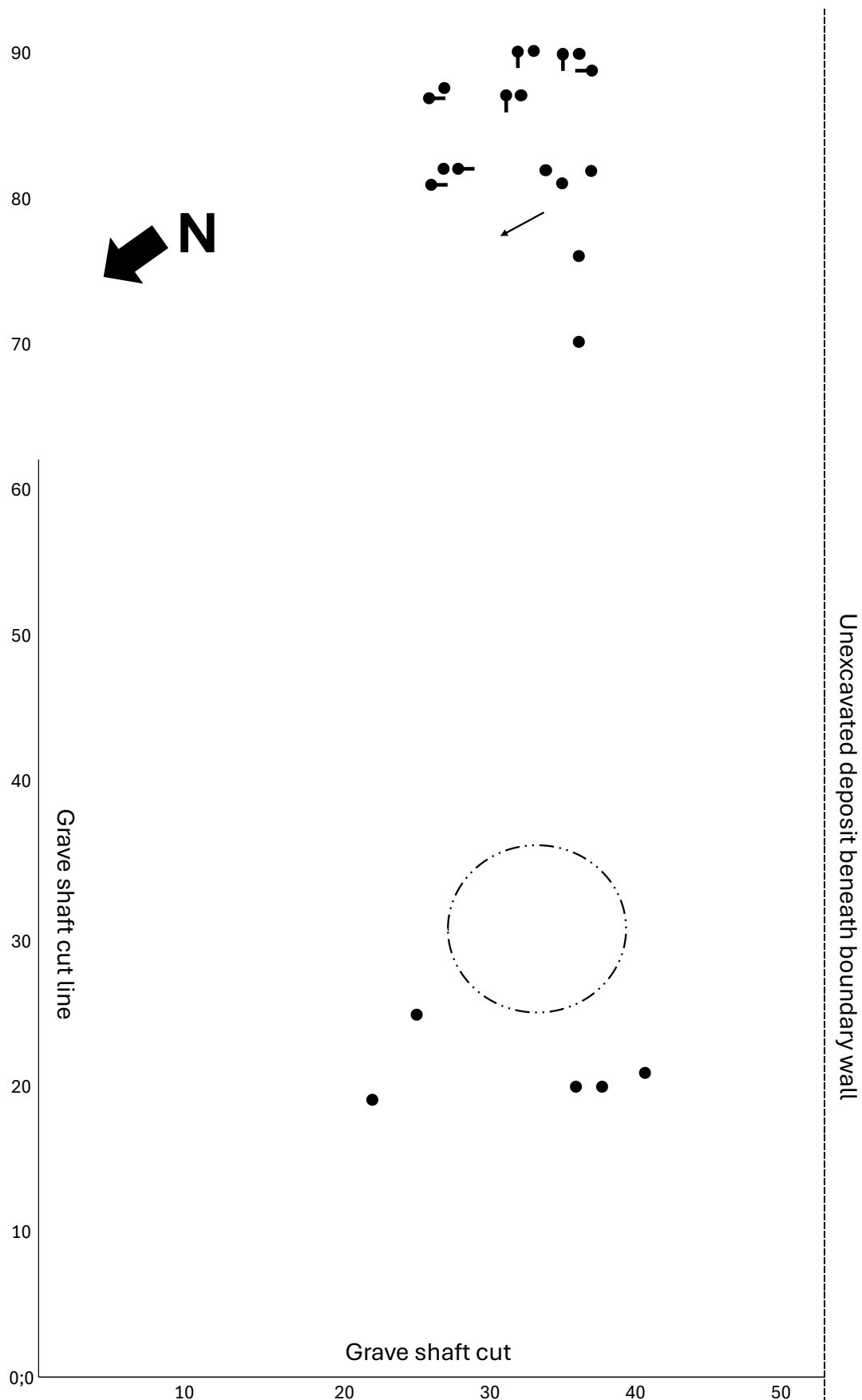
Looking northwest along the south-western boundary showing the location of the grave (immediately left of the black and white ranging rod in view) found on site on 13 February 2026. The grave is some 60 cm below the base of the foundation of the brick boundary wall and is some 9 m south-southwest of the location where the earlier human remains were discovered (out of picture towards the upper right).



View of a grave shaft just after discovery and removal of some juvenile cranial bones (location of bones circled). The remainder (at least 10 cm above the base of the grave) was excavated by the archaeologist with coffin nails and a shroud pin being the only other finds. The grave shaft was visible in the northwest (yellow arrows) and northeast (orange arrows) but towards the southeast it could not be traced. This is no doubt due to past disturbance, possibly even relating to exhumation of the grave. The south-eastern edge of the grave shaft remained under the existing wall but the entire coffin was exposed. Checking of spoils from the area revealed one further cranial bone. If this grave was not exhumed with some cranial fragments having been left behind, then it is likely that most remains have completely decayed due to the grave being waterlogged. The preserved cranial remains were probably sitting at a slightly higher elevation above the base of the grave and were thus better preserved. This is evidenced by the fact that although many iron nails were found in the grave at both ends of the coffin, further bones were absent. A silver shroud pin was also found in the grave.



View of the foot end of the grave showing four *in situ* coffin nails. Scale in 10 cm intervals.



Plan showing the locations of the coffin nails (black dots, dots with stems are in situ nails that were horizontal), shroud pin (thin arrow) and cranial bones (dashed circle). The nails indicate a coffin some 70 cm long and about 15 cm to 20 cm wide with the foot end tapered narrower. It is evident that the grave is oriented with head towards the northwest and feet towards the southeast. Axes of Cartesian plane in cm.



Some finds from the fill. They include an iron item, a copper button, a piece of coarse earthenware, a neck of a wide-mouthed bottle and a fragment of willow pattern refined-white earthenware. Scale in 10 cm intervals.



Opposite sides of a copper button with "SUSPENDER" on it. The button is 17 mm across.



Excavation along the north-eastern boundary only just intersected the natural sand at the very base with almost all deposits here being fill.

**17 February 2026**



Further work was done along the north-eastern boundary wall in preparation for building a supporting wall alongside it.



The remaining ground in the middle of the site was also excavated and added to the existing spoil heap (visible at left).

24 February 2026



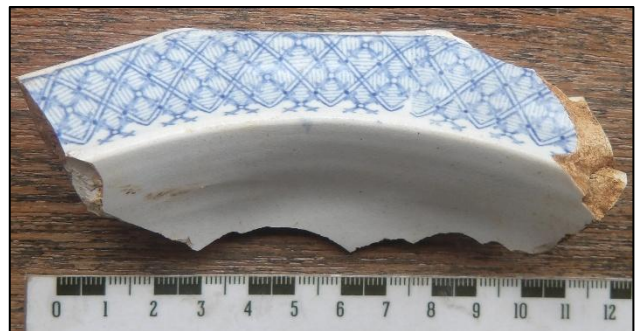
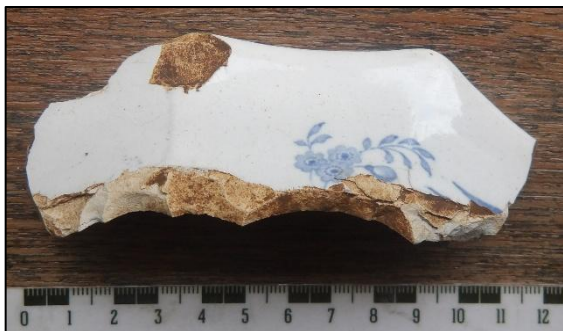
The southern corner of the area has now been completely cleared. The foundation trench for the new retaining wall is visible behind the right hand wheelbarrow (this is where the third individual was located on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2026).



Most of the ground along the south-eastern boundary wall has been removed. Its foundation is visible at the base of the wall. An existing sewer main runs along this alignment with two manholes visible (one standing tall and the other immediately behind the blue plastic bottle). This strip was heavily disturbed with the sewer main having been excavated deeper than the level at which the graves occurred.



The entire strip along the south-eastern boundary wall has now been cleared.



Underside (left) and top (right) of the edge of a large serving dish from the fill along the south-eastern edge of the property.



Olive green glass bottle neck (left) and stoneware jar (right) from the fill along the south-eastern edge of the property.



Base of a small, dark olive green bottle from the fill along the south-eastern edge of the property. The base has “v H & C” embossed on it.

## Conclusions

Monitoring resulted in the finding of one further very poorly preserved grave of a child which was successfully recorded and removed. Although the grave could be quite well recorded, only a few cranial fragments were present by way of bones. There seem to be two possible explanations for this:

- (1) The grave was exhumed in the past with only a few cranial fragments missed and left behind. This would explain (a) the partially disorganized patterning in the coffin nails, (b) the reasonable state of preservation of the recovered cranial fragments and (c) the apparently disturbed grave shaft; or
- (2) The grave was not exhumed and the bones had almost all decomposed due to high moisture levels with the preserved cranial fragments sitting at a higher elevation than where the rest of the skeleton would have been in the base of the grave.

The first explanation seems, on balance of evidence, to be the more likely one.

It also became apparent that the site had extensive earthworks in the past since, where present, the sand layer in which the graves were found was very thin and was overlain by an extensive fill that contained 19<sup>th</sup> century artefacts. Since the graveyard was used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it is evident that the earthworks were done after the cessation of burials on the site. The fill must have been introduced from elsewhere, although it is noted that a historical structure on the site (immediately northwest of the graveyard) was demolished prior to the construction of the modern houses in the area. The fill could thus have content related to this structure and simply have been moved downslope after removal of the sand in the graveyard (perhaps the clean sand was needed elsewhere).