

APPLICATION FOR PERMIT TO REMOVE CHARCOAL GRAFFITI FROM PEERS CAVE ON 16 MARCH 2013

I have been requested by Heritage Western Cape (Christina Jikelo) to assist with the MOD Centre project at Hout Bay High School by involving learners in a heritage conservation exercise that will remove charcoal graffiti from the walls of Peers Cave in Fish Hoek. I have 30 years experience in rock art conservation and graffiti removal. The graffiti have been added since I last cleaned the site in about 1999 and they detract from the heritage significance of the place.

Although it was not formally declared a national monument in the past, Peers Cave has contributed to knowledge of the Middle and Later Stone Age sequence on the Cape Peninsula since excavations were undertaken there in the 1920s and 1930s, and again in the 1960s by Barbara Anthony and in the 1990s/early 2000s by Tom Volman and others. Peers Cave is the only site on the Cape Peninsula with rock paintings, although they are barely visible today.

It is widely believed that 'graffiti attract graffiti' and that its removal contributes to a better appreciation of the heritage value of a place. It is therefore unfortunate that Peers Cave has not been supervised and protected. The object of the exercise on 16 March 2013 is to demonstrate to learners and participants in the MOD Centre programme the adverse effects of graffiti at a heritage site and to train them in the least invasive removal techniques.

After arrival at the site, the learners will be given a brief summary of the work that has been done at Peers Cave over the past century. Thereafter, they will be divided into small teams to record the graffiti on the walls of the cave. Once the names and slogans have been written down and photographed, the use of charcoal erasers and rolling poultices will be demonstrated. The learners will be supervised on how to use these methods to systematically remove the charcoal. We will try to remove commercial paint with these techniques, but it is unlikely that they will be successful.

Permission to remove the graffiti will be obtained from SANParks.

Janette Deacon
8 March 2013