



**THE MATERIAL CULTURAL ASSEMBLAGE FROM
HOFFMAN'S/ROBBERG CAVE – A COMPARISON WITH
NELSON BAY CAVE**

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Abstract

This thesis documents the curated material cultural remains from the site of Hoffman's/Robberg Cave which, although they were excavated fifty years ago, have never been catalogued or described. Second, this material is compared with that from the Post-Wilton levels of Nelson Bay Cave. This investigation augments Ludwig's (2005) comparison of Nelson Bay Cave and Matjes River Rock Shelter, in which several significant differences between the material assemblages of these sites were identified. The starting point for this research is the isotopic difference between human skeletons from the Robberg Peninsula and Plettenberg Bay region and Matjes River Rock Shelter. My analysis of the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave material is constrained by the fact that I am unsure of the extent to which the collection curated in the National Museum is truly representative of the site, given the unsystematic excavation practices employed by Hoffman and the possibility that he may have retained certain items from the site and discarded others. A possible solution to this problem would be to conduct further excavations at Hoffman's/Robberg Cave in order to obtain a more complete and representative sample.

Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to thank my advisor, Judith Sealy, for her guidance, supervision and support at all stages of this research project. Thanks must also be given to the other staff members and students in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Cape Town, who provided me with encouragement, ideas and valuable advice. Secondly, I would like to express my appreciation to the staff members of the Archaeology Department at the National Museum in Bloemfontein, especially Zoë Henderson and Gerda Coetzee, for allowing me access to the collection, providing me with a space in which to work, and for taking an interest in this project and assisting Dr Sealy and myself in many different ways.

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CHAPTER 1

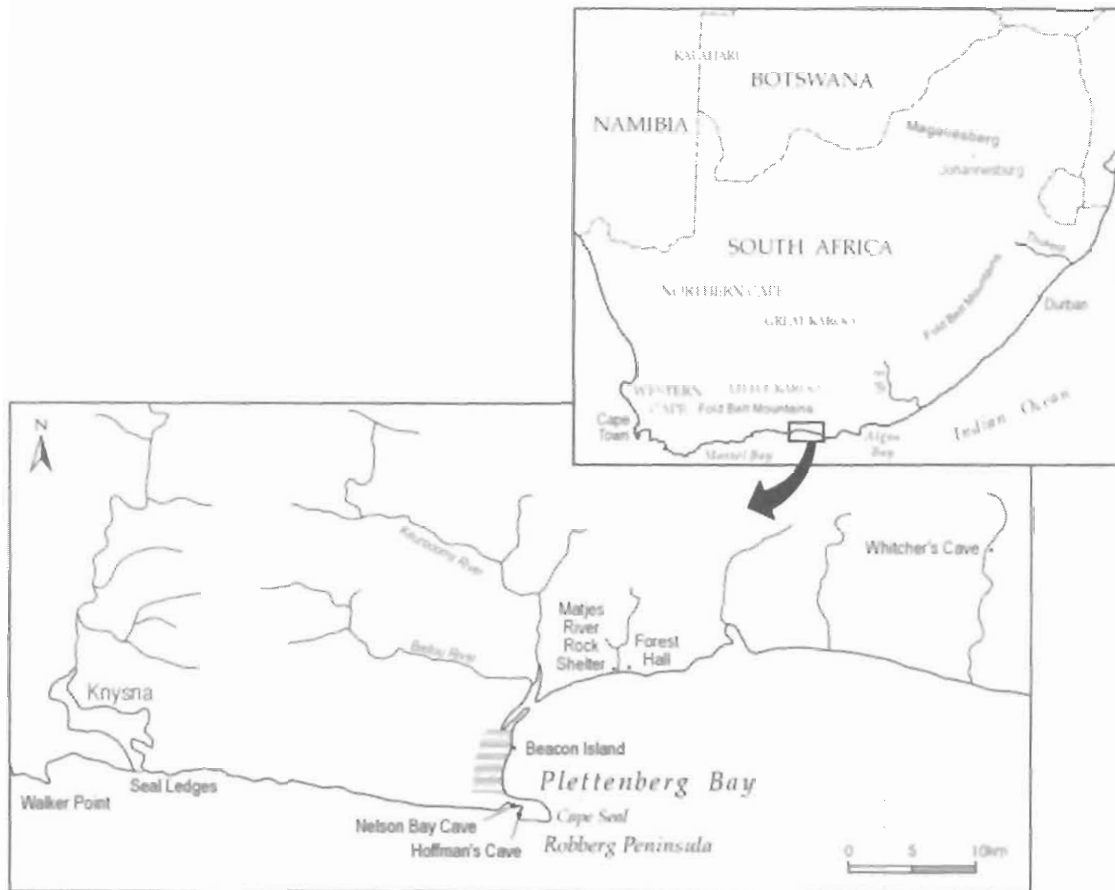
INTRODUCTION

The site of Hoffman's/Robberg Cave, also known as East Ghwanogat and Cave F, is located on the Robberg Peninsula west of Plettenberg Bay on the southeastern coast of South Africa. As part of a series of caves occurring in the vicinity, this prehistoric rock shelter was probably explored by a number of local residents, guano diggers, skeleton hunters and amateur collectors prior to the first systematic archaeological excavations. The first known investigation of the site was undertaken by the Rev W.G. Sharples and Mr. W van Rooyen who, at the request of Dr Peringuey of the South African Museum, began excavating the caves on the Robberg Peninsula in 1917. They focused on the recovery of human remains and highly decorative or elaborate items of material culture including painted stones and bone artefacts. Excavations at the site referred to as Cave F, a large cave containing stalactites along the right side of the wall, were begun in March of that year. A trench was dug near the stalactites, where the skeleton of a child was retrieved, and also a quartzite pebble decorated on one side with painted images of two black animals pursued by a human figure. The substantial shell midden deposit located beneath the stalactites yielded additional finds including a large number of bone points and some pieces of red ochre (Rudner and Rudner 1973).

The site was next excavated by Dr A.C. Hoffman during the early 1950s. A trench measuring 1.5 by 5m was apparently dug through approximately 2m of Later Stone Age shell midden deposit, and large quantities of material including human and faunal remains and a variety of artefacts were removed (Fairhall, Young and Erickson 1976). Certain components of the excavated finds were subsequently curated at the National Museum in Bloemfontein, where Hoffman held the post of director. Samples of *Patella* shell from the top and bottom levels of the midden were obtained by Hilary Deacon and Richard Klein some years later for the purpose of radiocarbon dating. Dates of 3190 ± 110 BP (UW 204) and 3770 ± 100 BP (UW 205) were obtained for the two samples respectively. Following a four hundred year adjustment for marine shell carbonate, approximate and uncalibrated dates of 3300 and 2800 BP can be inferred for the top and bottom levels of the deposit, respectively. The material cultural and other remains derived from the site thus represent a 500-year-long period of occupation by hunter-gathering people during the Late Holocene. The aforementioned radiocarbon dates appear in a list published in 1976 by Fairhall, Young and Erickson containing dates obtained for a variety of archaeological and geological sites including a number of other cave sites located in the then Cape Province of South Africa. Thereafter, nothing further appears to have been published about the material recovered from the site of Hoffman's/Robberg Cave.

Hoffman's/Robbberg Cave is situated approximately 300m to the east of another large coastal site which served as the focus of intensive archaeological excavation and inquiry during the 1960s, 70s and 80s, namely Nelson Bay Cave. The latter site was first excavated in 1964 by R.R. Inskeep, who concentrated on the youngest Stone Age deposits located in the front section of the cave and virtually blocking its entrance. He identified 148 separate stratigraphic units containing a wealth of archaeological material, the details of which are reported in his 1987 monograph on the site. These represent a period of more or less regular occupation of this cave by Later Stone Age hunter-gatherers during the second half of the Holocene. He also excavated a test trench further back into the interior of the cave, often referred to as "Inskeep's deep sounding", which exposed additional deposits dating to the earlier Holocene and the Middle Stone Age. These were further explored in several succeeding excavation seasons in the mid 1960s and 1970s. During the second of these seasons, Richard Klein was invited by Inskeep to participate in the excavations. He focused primarily on the early Holocene and Late Pleistocene deposits. As a result of the efforts of both of these researchers, the Later Stone Age sequence at Nelson Bay Cave has been extensively studied and documented, and is widely regarded as one of the most informative cave sites in the country (Deacon 1984).

Also in the vicinity of Plettenberg Bay lies another well-known southern Cape cave site, namely Matjes River Rock shelter, which is located approximately 14 km along the coast east of Nelson Bay Cave. This extensive shell midden deposit was first excavated in 1928 and 1929 by the entomologist T.F. Dreyer, who dug a large trench along the back of the cave wall and removed substantial amounts of material, including numerous human remains. Excavations at Matjes River were resumed in the early 1950s under the leadership of Hoffman and A.J.D. Meiring (Deacon 1984). The methods employed in the course of these excavations and in subsequent interpretation and documentation have since come to be regarded as "inadequate and coarse" (Ludwig 2005: 17). The monograph published a few years later by J.T. Louw was also considered to have been of a very poor standard. Further excavations carried out in 1993 by Hilary Deacon and Willemien Döckel provided additional information on the heretofore poorly resolved stratigraphy of the site. An attempt was also made to stabilize what remained of the precariously slumping archaeological deposit (Ludwig 2005).



Map showing the position of archaeological sites mentioned in the text (Sealy 2006)

In the mid-1980s, Judith Sealy embarked upon an extensive and ongoing isotopic study based on the chemical analysis of archaeological human skeletal remains to reconstruct the dietary behaviors and subsistence strategies of Later Stone Age hunter-gatherers at the Cape. Her aim has been to integrate biological and dietary information accessed through the analysis of the stable carbon and nitrogen isotopic composition of preserved human bone with more traditional lines of archaeological and ethnographic evidence to provide a clearer view of the lifeways of prehistoric people in the present-day Western Cape. Her recent work has focused upon isotopic differences observed in the skeletal remains of later Holocene hunter-gatherers from Matjes River Rock shelter and a variety of sites in the vicinity of the Robberg Peninsula and Plettenberg Bay, including Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. These differences are regarded by Sealy as indicative of broader economic and social differences among Later Stone Age hunter-gatherers living along the southern Cape coast. The results of carbon and nitrogen isotope analysis carried out on a sample of human remains dated to between 4500 – 2000 BP reveal that the inhabitants of cave and open sites located on and around the Robberg Peninsula and Plettenberg Bay ate diets rich in high-trophic level marine protein, including meat derived from large numbers of Cape fur seals inhabiting an extensive

mainland colony which would have represented a “special foraging opportunity” for hunter-gatherers living in the vicinity (Sealy 2006: 578). Their contemporaries at the nearby site of Matjes River Rock Shelter are shown to have consumed more mixed diets consisting of terrestrial resources and lower-trophic level marine foods such as shellfish. This stands as evidence for significant economic and hence social separation between these two groups of foragers during the Later Stone Age, on which basis it can be inferred that rather than forming part of wider, relatively homogenous hunter-gatherer communities, the hunter-gatherers living at the southern Cape during the Late Holocene recognized clearly demarcated geographical territories as their own and practiced their own individual lifeways. The view of later Holocene hunter-gatherer life in the southern Cape coastal region inferred from the stable carbon and nitrogen isotope data is in direct contradiction with descriptions drawn from ethnographic accounts of southern African hunter-gatherers living further inland (Sealy 2006).

In 2003 and 2004, Ben Ludwig undertook a detailed examination of the collections of archaeological material from the sites of Nelson Bay Cave and Matjes River Rock Shelter curated at the Iziko/South African Museum in Cape Town and the National Museum in Bloemfontein, respectively. He also carried out an extensive study of all of the published material available on the sites and assemblages in question. His aim was to ascertain, through a comparison of the two assemblages, whether or not the economic and social differentiation inferred for hunter-gatherers living along the Robberg Peninsula and at Matjes River Rock Shelter on the basis of Sealy’s isotopic data would be reflected in differences in material culture between the two sites (Ludwig 2005). If such a material expression of economic and social differentiation among two groups of hunter-gatherers living in closely adjacent regions at similar times could be found, it would serve to support the assertion that these groups had separate identities and pursued different variants of a coastal foraging lifeway in clearly demarcated territories. Ludwig’s approach assumes that stylistic variation in certain material cultural objects is a product of deliberate design and manipulation by prehistoric people, who would have used such artefacts as communicable expressions of their own personal or group identity. The objects most likely to have served as so-called identity markers are those which would have been used in personal adornment or decoration. Variation in some utilitarian objects such as backed scrapers are better ascribed to adherence to different tool-making traditions. In the course of his examination of the curated material from Nelson Bay Cave and Matjes River, Ludwig observed a number of potentially significant differences between the two assemblages which are reported in his 2005 thesis. He asserts that these differences, which are most apparent during the Wilton period, are unlikely to have been the result of the use of particular objects for different functions in the course of particular activities carried out at the two sites. He attributes them instead to the existence of separate technological traditions and the active negotiation and expression of particular group identities.

Differences in the material cultural remains from Nelson Bay Cave and Matjes River Rock Shelter are taken by Ludwig as attesting to territorial separation among their Later Stone Age inhabitants. The most

likely geographical boundary between these two groups of prehistoric hunter-gatherers throughout much of the Late Holocene would have been the present-day Keurbooms/Bietou estuary. The material evidence analyzed by Ludwig appears to be consistent with the findings of Sealy's isotopic study (Ludwig 2005). The argument for territorial and social separation among Later Stone Age hunter gatherers residing at the southern Cape coast would be considerably strengthened if similar and consistent patterns in material culture and technological tradition could be demonstrated in additional assemblages from both sides of the presumed geographical and cultural boundary, that is, if patterns in the artefactual remains from sites situated on either of the two sides could be shown to be consistent. Given its close proximity to Nelson Bay Cave and location on the Robberg Peninsula, it seems reasonable to expect that the hunter-gatherers living at Hoffman's/Robberg Cave from about 3300 – 2800 BP would have had lifeways and material cultural traditions very similar to those of their counterparts at Nelson Bay Cave. The investigation of possible cultural continuities, which would presumably be evident in similarities in material cultural assemblages, between the occupants of these closely situated coastal sites is the subject of this thesis. From the 13th to the 20th of July 2006, Judy Sealy and I visited the National Museum in Bloemfontein in order to examine and document the extensive collection of material recovered from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. For information on the Nelson Bay Cave assemblage, I consulted two principal references, namely Inskeep's monograph and Ludwig's later examination of the Nelson Bay Cave and Matjes River Rock Shelter material. I then compared Inskeep's and Ludwig's reports on the assemblage from Nelson Bay Cave with my own catalogue of the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection with a view to discerning possible similarities, or alternatively, disparities between the material from the two different sites. The demonstration of either similarities or differences would represent a small but significant step in broadening the scope of current reconstructions of later Holocene hunter-gatherer lifeways in the southern Cape coastal region of South Africa, particularly in so far as the recognition of separate geographical territories and cultural identities is concerned.

CHAPTER 2

DESCRIPTION OF THE LATER STONE AGE MATERIAL FROM HOFFMAN'S/ROBBERG CAVE

During our visit to the National Museum, Dr Sealy and I unpacked the various boxes and brown paper bags containing the collection of material from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave in order to assess what remains were present in the collection. We examined the entire assemblage, but our particular interest was in the items of material culture that could have been used by the inhabitants of the site as conspicuous expressions of their identity and possible cultural affinity with their counterparts at the nearby site of Nelson Bay Cave. To this end, we performed only the simplest faunal identifications, and none of the faunal or artefactual remains were examined under a microscope. The material was then packed into new bags which were labelled in exactly the same way as the original ones had been. Stone and bone artefacts and materials were separated from one another and placed into different bags while particularly delicate and fragile bone and shell artefacts were individually bagged and placed into small cardboard boxes. The reassembled material from each of the original boxes was then transferred into a new cardboard box which was labelled according to the previous system. Particularly interesting or eye-catching finds were either photographed by Dr Sealy or myself (pictures with blue backgrounds) or, in the case of very finely worked artefacts, were set aside for professional digital photography (pictures with black backgrounds). In the former, the scale used is 100 mm long, with subdivisions every 10 mm. In the latter, the scale used is 30mm long, with subdivisions every 10 and subsequently every 5 mm. In my documentation of the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection, I have followed Deacon's (1984) terminology in my description of the lithic assemblage, and Schweitzer (1979) and Inskeep's (1987) definitions for bone and shell artefacts.

Robberg Cave, Old Box 104

Bag labelled "**Robberg**", containing *Zostera* (bedding grass); bird bones, one possibly snapped perpendicular to shaft; shell including *Donax serra*, *Perna perna*, *Haliotis spadicea* and *Patella argenvillei*

Bag labelled "**Robberg, I, 0 – ½ vt**", containing one quartzite flake blade, one natural stone, rounded and split in half with a dimple on the broken side and one quartzite cobble

Bag labelled "**I – ½ vt, bloke k & z (?)**", containing one quartzite flake, one broken quartzite pebble and one quartzite slab with ochre-staining on one side

Bag labelled "**Robberg, Iste 6 dm, B.L. (boonste laag)**", containing a compacted mass of sediment and *Zostera*, with other materials such as charcoal entangled therein

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1ste 6 dm, Boonste Laag**”, containing a twisted skein of *Zostera*

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1ste 6 dm, B.L.**”, containing bone, including one large fish vertebra and two fragments of bird bone; shell, including *Haliotis spadicea*, *Patella longicosta*, *Patella barbara*, *Perna perna*, un-perforated *Donax serra*, *Patella cochlear*, *Turbo sarmaticus*, and one large *Patella tabularis*, roughly perforated at the apex

Robberg Cave, Old Box 105

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1ste 6 dm, B.L.**”, containing bone including bird and a single seal bone

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1ste 6 dm, B.L.**”, containing bone including bird, one seal bone, one small or medium bovid scapula, one large fish spine, and one possible human metatarsal

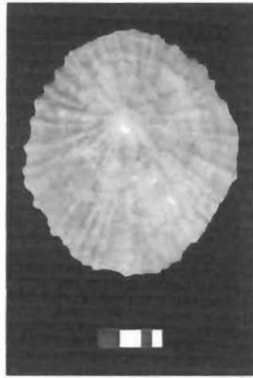
Unlabelled bag containing very finely made bone awl, with a high gloss on the tip

Bag labelled “**Robberg, Beensaag aan oppervlak gevind**”, containing a single bone fragment, flaked along one edge and with a burin-like tip (photographed)



Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1ste 6 dm, Boonste Laag**”, containing one snapped bird bone, one damaged bone awl, two bone points, pointed at both ends, one stained/coloured with ochre, and the other without ochre, measuring 125 mm in length, one damaged (probably during manufacture) hollow bone point.

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1ste 6 dm, B.L.**”, containing one quartzite pebble and a couple of other stone fragments; shell including *Patella argenveillei*, *Haliotis spadicea* and *Patella tabularis*, one specimen of which measures 125 mm in length and appears to have been used as a container for the mixing of ochre-based paint. Solid crusts of this material are still visible on the inner surface (photographed)



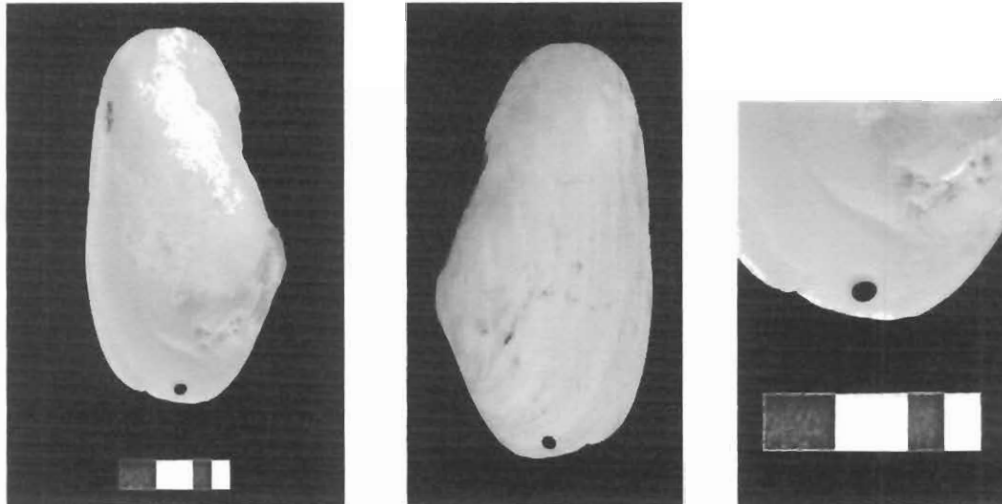
Robberg Cave, Old Box 106

Bag labelled “Robberg, 1ste 6 dm, B.L.”, containing compacted *Zostera*

Bag labelled “Robberg, Blok i, 0 – ½ ”, containing bone including bird, one large fish vertebra as well as one smaller one, one fragment of a large bovid bone, one *Pelomedusa* limb bone (photographed) and one possibly pathological seal or other bone; shell including two un-perforated *Donax* and one whelk



Bag labelled “Oppervlak, 0 – ½ , Blokke K +L”, containing one perforated bivalve shell, possibly *Lutraria lutraria*, (photographed), with very regular, smoothly drilled hole

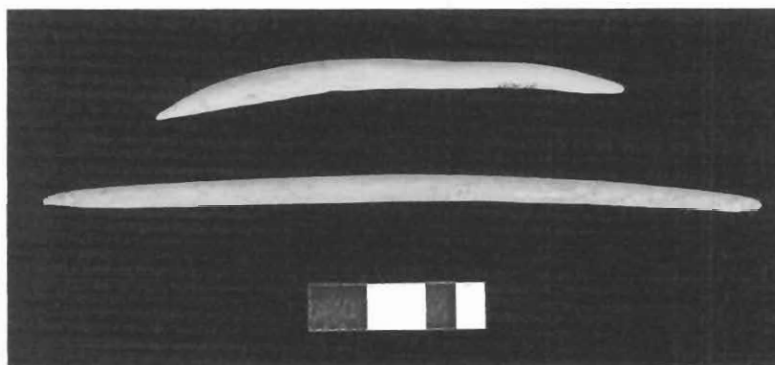


Bag labelled “0 – ½, Blok L”, containing bird bones

Robberg Cave, Old Box 107

Bag labelled “Robberg, 2de 6 dm, Blok d”, containing miscellaneous shell and bones, including a large fish vertebra

Bag labelled “2de 6 dm, Blok e”, containing bone including bird, large fish and bovid; one unusual bone point measuring 82 mm in length, double-pointed, slightly banana shaped and quite strongly asymmetrical, with remnants of cancellous bone visible on one side (photographed, upper of two points shown below); shell including one *Turbo sarmaticus* and one *Patella tabularis*



Bag labelled “Robberg, 2de 6 dm, Blok (illegible)”, containing one quartzite chunk; a broken-open oval lump of clay that appears to encase a woody substance, possibly the remains of a stick; bone including fish, bird, and a dessicated bird leg with soft tissue remaining

Bag labelled “**2de 6 dm, blok g**”, containing one quartzite, oval-shaped stone (upper grindstone) with ochred areas on two opposing sides; bone including bird and seal

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 2de 6 dm, Blok f**”, containing one long quartzite flake; one piece of ochre; bone including bird, a single fish vertebra, and a large mammal rib; two *Patella* sp.

Robberg Cave, Old Box 108

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 2de 6 dm, Sq a**”, containing a flattish fragment of lime-rich sandstone, possibly ground around one edge, perhaps part of a palette

Bag labelled “**Robberg Cave, 2de 6 dm, Blok c**”, containing two large quartzite chunks; bone including bird, fish vertebra and a large bovid astragalus; shell including *Patella*, *Haliotis spadicea* and *Turbo sarmaticus*

Bag labelled “**Sq (illegible)**”, containing compacted *Zostera*

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 2de 6 dm, Blok (illegible)**” containing compacted *Zostera* and organic material

Robberg Cave, Old Box 109

Bag labelled “**Robberg Cave, 2de 6 dm, Sq C/ Sq G (?)**”, containing one quartzite flake; bone including bird and some mammal; shell including one ochre-stained *Patella*

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 2de 6 dm, Sq a**”, containing one quartzite flake, one quartzite chunk, one small cobble and one larger cobble; bone including bird, fish vertebra, a fragment of seal bone, one hyrax mandible and one large fragment of pelvis; shell including one ochre-stained *Patella*

Robberg Cave, Old Box 110

Bag labelled “**Robberg Cave, (depth illegible), Blok g (?)**”, containing fragmentary bone including bird and fish; one worked bone “spatula” flattened to chisel-like shape at one end

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1-2 vt, Blok C**”, containing one quartzite flake; bone including bird, fish including a dentary, seal, one *Raphicerus* mandible and maxilla fragment with teeth and one other

maxillary fragment with teeth; shell including *Dinoplax gigas* plate, *Donax*, *Burnupena* and *Phalium* shell

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1 ½ vt, Blok f**”, containing one pebble with possible ochre-staining, one probable grinding stone with ochre staining and a wad of *Zostera* found lying beneath the grinding stone, also ochre stained; bone including bird and fish; one hollow – tipped bone point; one valve of a scallop shell, possibly *Pecten sulcicostatus*

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1 ½ vt, Blok f**”, containing one chunky quartzite flake with shiny residue (?), one quartzite upper grindstone, pitted on the ground surface and ochre-stained, one quartzite hammerstone, and one (probable MSA) long flake blade; one probable hollow-tipped bone point

Bag labelled “**Robberg 2de 6 dm, Blok e**”, containing two quartzite chunks and one upper grindstone; bone including bird, fish and small mammal; two fragments of shell

Robberg Cave, Old Box 111

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1 ½ vt, Blok a (?)**”, containing a wad of *Zostera*

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1 ½ vt, Blok d**”, containing one quartzite chunk and three probable upper grindstones; one elongated shale palette; bone including bird, fish, seal and bovid; shell including *Patella tabularis* and one *Perna*

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1 ½ vt, Blok a**”, containing one quartzite chunk, one upper grindstone, one ochre-stained quartzite flake; bone including fish, bird and bovid; shell including one *Perna perna*, one *Patella oculus*, one *Patella barbara* and one *Burnupena*

Robberg Cave, Old Box 112

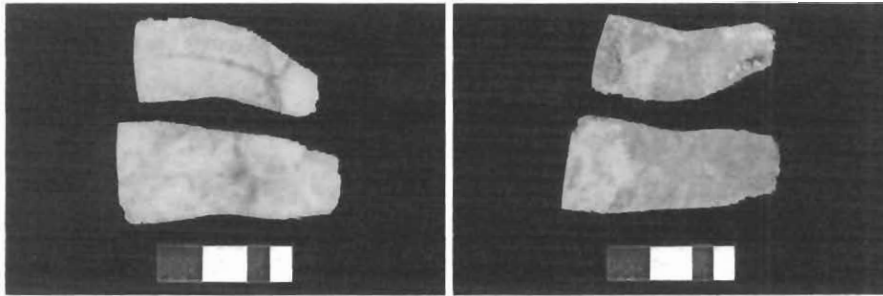
Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1 ½ vt, Blok ?**”, containing a wad of *Zostera*

Bag labelled “(illegible), **Blok b (?)**”, containing a wad of *Zostera*

Bag labelled “**Robberg, vir C 14 toets, 1 ½ voet, Blok b**”, containing dark brown, organic-rich sediment

Bag labelled “**Robberg, 1 ½ vt, Blok a**”, containing two upper grindstones and one small pebble/cobble; bone including fish and small bovid; two fragments of *Pelomedusa* shell with evidence

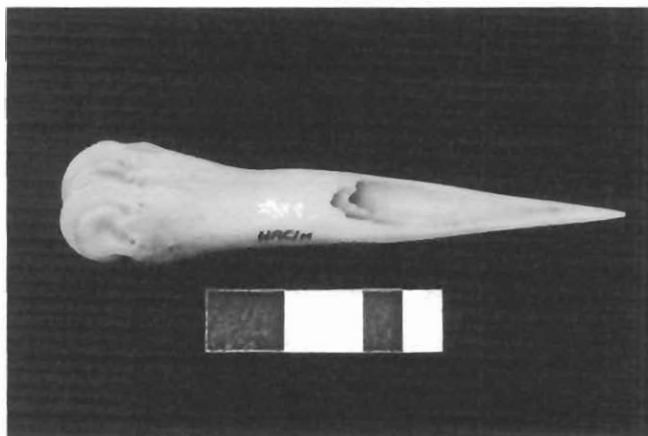
of grinding, probably part of a bowl (photographed, ground edges on left); shell including *Perna perna*, *Patella cochlear*, *Haliotis spadicea* and *Turbo sarmaticus*



Robberg Cave, Old Box 113

Bag labelled “Robberg, 1 ½ vt, Blok j”, containing fish bone and burned shell, mainly *Perna*, barnacles and *Turbo operculum*

Bag labelled “Robberg, 1 ½ vt, Blok h”, containing bone awl (photographed)



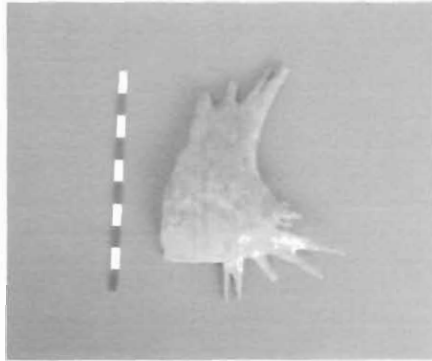
Bag labelled “Robberg, 1 ½ vt, Blok h”, containing one upper grindstone/hammerstone with possible ochre-staining; bone including bird, fish and juvenile seal

Bag labelled “Robberg, 1 ½ vt, Blok j”, containing one quartzite blade and one piece of soft, lime-rich sandstone; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Robberg Cave, Old Box 114

Bag labelled “**2 vt, Blok e, Vis skelette**”, containing one quartzite flake; little bits of *Zostera*; fragments of fish bone

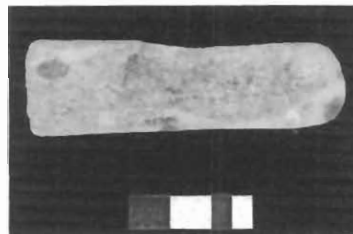
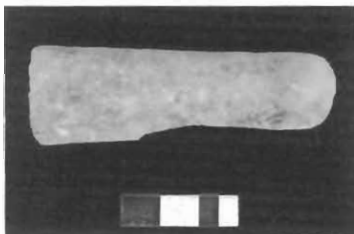
Bag labelled “ (too faded to read), **Blok C**”, containing bone including a fragment of horn core and a spiky bone fragment, possibly fish (photographed)



Bag labelled “**2 vt, Blok f**”, containing two quartzite blades, one pebble and one upper grindstone; bone including fragments of bird bone, fish, seal vertebra, other mammal

Bag labelled “ (illegible), **2 vt (?)**”, containing lumps of chalky material, probably re-precipitated calcium carbonate from shell

Bag labelled “**2 vt, Blok h, Been adze**”, containing bone artefact with rounded, smoothed, chisel-shaped tip (photographed)



Bag labelled “**2 vt, Blok h**”, containing one quartzite core; bird bone

Bag with illegible label containing one upper grindstone with ochre-stained grinding facet and one quartzite flake; bone including bird and very young seal

Bag labelled “**2 vt, Blok d**”, containing, two upper grindstones with ochre-staining, one large quartzite blade with ochre-staining on the ventral surface, four crude quartzite flakes and one fragment of a heavily patinated MSA blade with subsequent flaking through the patina

Robberg Cave, Old Box 115

Bag labelled “ 2 vt, Blok f”, containing a wad and twisted skein of *Zostera*

Bag labelled “ 2vt, Blok a”, containing bone including two fish vertebrae and a single bovid vertebra

Bag labelled “2vt, Blok c”, containing one quartzite chunk; bone including bird, fish vertebra and several large fish dentaries, seal, bovid, one dassie maxilla and two complete mandibles; shell including *Perna perna*

Bag labelled “2 vt, Blok e”, containing bone including bird, fish, seal, small mammal including a hyrax maxilla and fragments of *Pelomedusa* carapace, some ground

Bag labelled “2 vt/b”, containing two quartzite chunks; one upper grindstone with ochre-staining; bone including fish and some other small bone fragments

Robberg Cave, Old Box 116

Bag labelled “2 vt, Blok d”, containing one elongated piece of lime-rich sandstone; one wad of *Zostera*; bone including bird, fish, large seal rib and maxilla, other mammal, and one fragment of *Pelomedusa* carapace; one bone awl

Bag labelled “2vt, Blok b”, containing one quartzite flake, one pebble and three upper grindstones; bone including bird, fish, seal, other small mammal and three fragments of *Pelomedusa* carapace, not ground

Bag labelled “2 vt, Blok a”, containing two quartzite chunks, one of them ochre-stained; a fragment of a cobble with ochre-staining on both sides and two other fragments of stone; bone including bird, fish vertebrae, seal, other mammal including a hyrax mandible and *Raphicerus* mandible, and fragments of *Pelomedusa* carapace, not ground

Robberg Cave, Old Box 117

Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok b”, containing one hammerstone and some bone crushed by this hammerstone which was lying on top of it in the packet

Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok a”, containing one quartzite chunk and two quartzite spalls; bone including fish and seal

Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok b”, containing one quartzite chunk and two hammerstones; bone including bird and fish

Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok c”, containing two fragments of flattish, lime-rich sandstone; bone including bird, fish, seal, including very young seal, possibly less than nine months, bovid, including complete *Raphicerus* mandible and hyrax mandible and maxilla fragments

Robberg Cave, Old Box 118

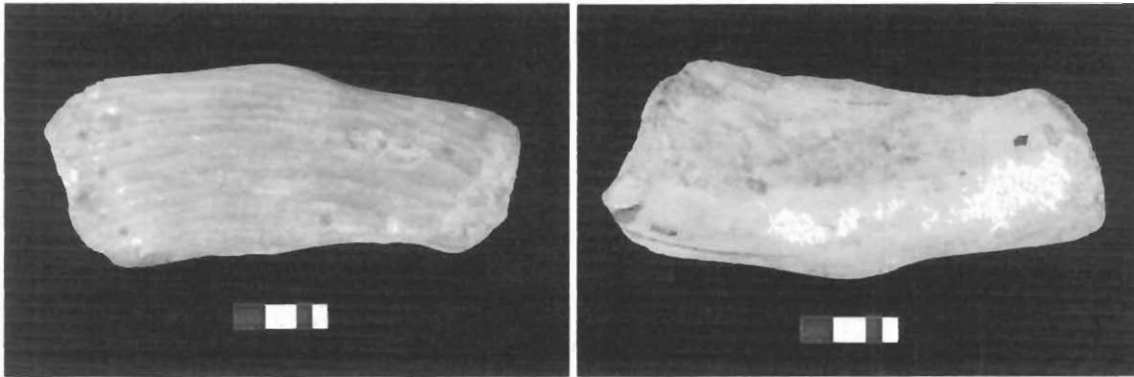
Bag labelled “(illegible)”, containing two bone fragments; shell including *Perna perna*, *Patella*, *Haliotis spadicea* and *Patella longicosta*

Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok g”, containing one upper grindstone, ochre stained, and one pebble; bone including bird and fish

Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok e”, containing one upper grindstone and broken, perforated flat stone

Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok f”, containing probable upper grindstone and reddish quartzite (?) flake; bone including bird, fish, seal and part of dune mole rat maxilla, burned on top of incisors, which are still in their sockets

Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok h”, containing large rectangular chunk of ivory, probably hippopotamus, split longitudinally through the middle of the tusk and apparently squared off at the ends (photographed); bone including bird, seal and other mammal; two *Achatina* shells



Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok j”, containing bone including bird and mammal

Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, B.L, I”, containing ashy sediment

Robberg Cave, Old Box 119

Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok e”, containing one quartzite core labelled with accession number in Indian ink (does this belong with this assemblage, given that no other artefacts are labelled?); bone including fish, bird, mammal including one fragment of bovid long-bone which has been broken longitudinally and has impact fractures, one fragment of *Raphicercus* mandible, and fragments of *Pelomedusa* carapace, not ground

Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok d”, containing one crude quartzite flake, one cobble and one large broken blade; bone including bird, fish and mammal

Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok b”, containing bone including bird, fish and seal and fragments of *Pelomedusa* carapace, not ground

Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok b”, containing burned shell, including for the most part *Perna perna*, *Patella barbara*, *Turbo sarmaticus* operculum, *Patella cochlear*, *Oxysteles*, whelk and barnacle

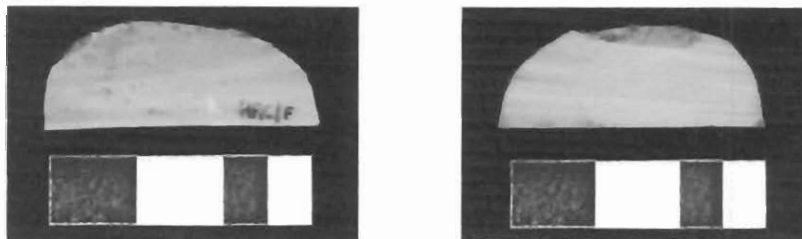
Bag labelled “2 ½ vt, Blok (illegible)”, containing ashy sediment sample

Bag containing charcoal-rich sediment from **Box 118** or **119**

Robberg Cave, Old Box 120

Bag labelled “3 vt, Blok C”, containing shell including two un-perforated *Donax serra*, one unidentified bivalve, *P longicosta*, *Achatina*, *Turbo sarmaticus*, *P barbara*, *Perna perna*, *P cochlear*, *P miniata*, *P argenvillei*, whelk, and *Haliotis spadicea*; bone including fish vertebra

Bag labelled “3 vt, Blok f”, containing upper grindstone with ochre all across grinding surface and so used as an ochre grinder, one large flat quartzite fragment with one small patch of ochre and one pebble; bone including bird, fish, seal and bovid bone showing impact fractures where the shafts were broken open and ochred on the articular surfaces; one bone awl; one shell crescent measuring 32mm in length and 11.9 mm in width, clearly worked along the convex margin (photographed)



Bag labelled “3 vt, Blok e”, containing one broken quartzite flake; bone including bird, fish, seal and *Raphicerus* mandible

Bag labelled “3 vt, Blok d”, containing three hammerstones, one a small, cylindrical, very heavily used stone with flattened, pitted facets at both ends, worn very smooth around cylindrical body and measuring 40 mm in length and 25 mm in width; one broken upper grindstone, heavily ochre-stained on broken surface, and another upper grindstone, not ochre-stained; one large quartzite chunk, ochre-stained, three quartzite flakes and a large fragment of ochre; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal; one hollow-tipped bone point; shell including *Oxysteles*

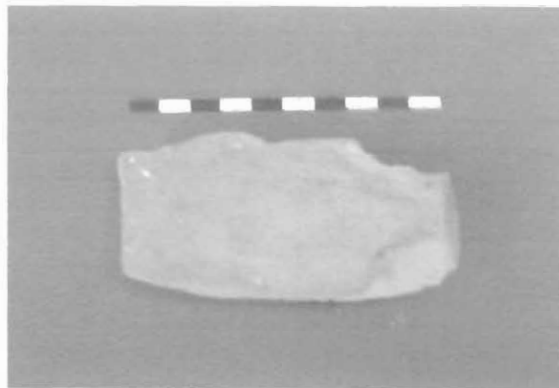
Robberg Cave, Old Box 121

Bag labelled “3 vt, Blok g”, containing two quartzite spalls, both ochre-stained on “ventral” surfaces; one skein of *Zostera*; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “3 vt, Blok b”, containing one quartzite chunk; bone including fish; burned shell including *Perna perna*, *Patella barbara*, eight un-perforated *Donax serra* (remaining five are fragmentary, so cannot tell whether or not they were perforated), *Haliotis spadicea*, *Patella cochlear*, *Oxysteles*, *Turbo sarmaticus*, whelk

Bag labelled “**3 vt, Blok b**”, containing mostly burned bone including fish, bird, seal and possibly other mammal

Bag labelled “**3 vt, Blok a**”, containing one pebble, one upper grindstone/hammerstone, one upper grindstone with several grinding facets, and one large quartzite flake, broken at the distal end and ochre-stained evenly over almost all of the ventral surface with the exception of a few small areas near the platform (photographed); another large flake in a coarser-grained raw material; one fragment of ochre; bone including bird, fish and seal; one *Perna perna*



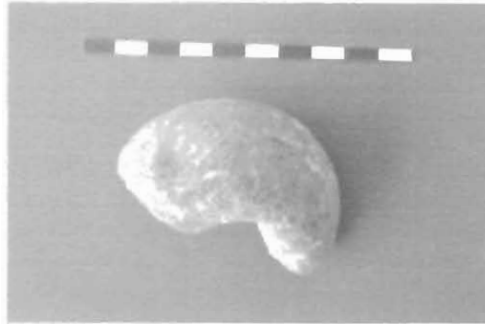
Bag labelled “**3 vt, Blok b**”, containing one quartzite pebble-type upper grindstone with oblique grinding facet at one end, one pebble, one quartzite flake with several subsequent flake removals

Bag labelled “**3 vt, Blok k**”, containing bird bone and some whitish sediment

Found lying loose in the box, one long bird bone shaft, no articular ends

Robberg Cave, Old Box 122

Bag labelled “**3 vt, Blok h**”, containing three conjoining fragments of a bored stone (photographed) and one quartzite flake; bone including bird, fish and seal



Bag labelled “**3 vt, Blok c**”, containing one large, very smooth pigeon-egg-sized pebble and a flat piece of lime-rich sandstone, possibly ground; bone including bird, fish, seal and small bovid; shell including *Oxysteles*; one stick

Bag labelled “**3 vt, Blok i**”, containing one quartzite pebble/ upper grindstone; bone including bird and mammal; one *Patella longicosta*

Bag labelled “**3 vt, Blok a**”, containing one quartzite chunk, and one quartzite upper grindstone/hammerstone, ochre-stained; burned bone including bird, fish and seal, some of which is black and some calcined

Bag labelled “**3 vt, Blok j**”, containing one quartzite chunk/core and one quartzite flake; bone including bird; one stick and another fragment of preserved woody material

Robberg Cave, Old Box 123

Bag labelled “**3 vt, Blok h**”, containing bone including bird and probable mammal

Bag labelled “**3 ½ vt, f**”, containing bone including bird, seal and other small mammal

Bag labelled “**3 ½ vt, d**”, containing four quartzite upper grindstones, all with flattened grinding facets and one of which is ochre-stained around the grinding facet; bone including fish, small mammal and probable human metatarsal

Bag labelled “**3 ½ g**”, containing one quartzite upper grindstone, one small cylindrical quartzite hammerstone with impact marks at both ends and ochre-staining in the middle, one quartzite flake, one fragment of tabular lime-rich sandstone and one smallish fragment of orange ochre with a ground edge; bone including bird, fish, seal and mammal including one hyrax mandible and one small bovid mandible

Bag labelled “3 ½ vt, e”, containing bird bone

Bag labelled “3 ½, b”, containing two almost circular, rounded stones, one a small, ochre-stained pebble and the other larger, no obvious grinding surfaces and five large quartzite flakes; bone including one fragment of bird bone, fish vertebra and seal

Bag labelled “3 ½ vt, b”, containing one quartzite cylindrical hammerstone with areas of impact at both ends, one flattish pebble with hammerstone damage at both ends and more ephemeral damage extending outwards over 2/3 of the circumference (milled-edged pebble?), one large quartzite flake ochre-stained on the dorsal and ventral surfaces, one fragment of a rectangular stone palette of unknown raw material measuring approximately 60 x 45 mm, one long edge bevelled from both surfaces, one flat surface definitely ground, the other probably not; burned bone including fish and mammal

Bag labelled “3 ½ e”, containing one fragment of lime-rich sandstone, flattish and granular, ground on one side and with the edge bevelled from one side, also some working from the other side but overall not as well finished as the fragment from **b** above; bone including bird, fish and mammal; two bone awls; one fragment of *Haliotis spadicea*

Bag labelled “3 ½ a”, containing one small cylindrical pebble with hammerstone damage at both ends as well as more ephemeral “pecking damage” distributed discontinuously around the margin of the stone (photographed) and two fragments of lime-rich sandstone, both somewhat ground on both surfaces but originating from different artefacts and also not conjoining with the piece from **e** above; bone including fish, one fragment of large bovid rib with fresh break on one end and slightly pinkish colouring (probably ochre), small mammal and microfauna

Robberg Cave, Old Box 124

Bag labelled “3 ½ vt, Blok j”, containing two quartzite pebbles with no obvious grinding surfaces, one quartzite chunk and one flake; bone including bird, one fish vertebra, larger and smaller bovid and one probable human phalange

Bag labelled “3 ½ vt, Blok i”, containing two quartzite flakes; bone including bird and mammal

Bag labelled “3 ½ vt, Blok i”, containing a wad of *Zostera* with bird and fish bone entangled in it and one mammal long-bone shaft with impact fractures

Bag labelled “3 ½ vt, Blok M”, containing one quartzite core and one quartzite chunk; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 3 ½ vt, Blok L”, containing one quartzite chunk and three bird bones

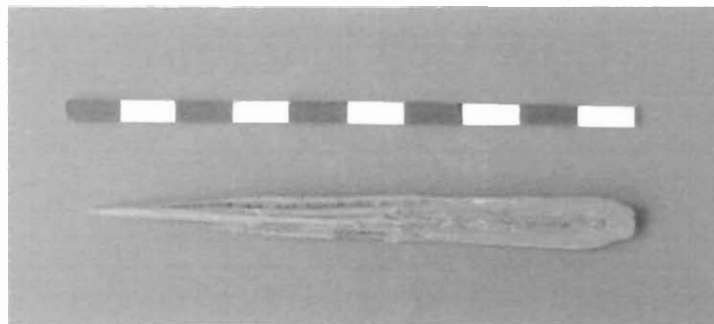
Bag labelled “ 3 ½ vt, Blok K”, containing bone including bird, fish and seal

Bag labelled “ 3 ½, h”, containing one quartzite upper grindstone, ochre-stained over most of the surface with the exception of the grinding facet, one quartzite cylindrical upper grindstone with flattened ground facets at each end and smoothed around the middle, two quartzite flakes, two quartzite blades and one quartz pebble; bone including bird, fish and small and larger mammal, probably hyrax

Robberg Cave, Old Box 125

Bag labelled “ 4 ft, Blk f”, containing one quartzite flake and one possible core; bone including bird and mammal, the latter including two fragments of long-bone shaft with impact fractures

Bag labelled “4 vt, Blok g”, containing two quartzite pebbles and one quartzite chunk; bone including fish, mammal and three fragments of *Pelomedusa* carapace; one probable fish spine with longitudinal striations and slight “teeth” along the edge (photographed)



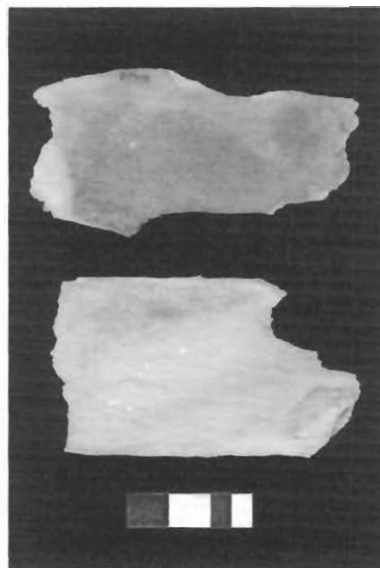
Bag labelled “ 4 vt, Blok a”, containing one quartzite upper grindstone, one quartzite pebble used as a hammerstone with extensive flaking damage on each end, one cylindrical quartzite core (originally a beach cobble or grindstone) with two platforms and very smooth and heavily worked, one CCS chunk, four quartzite cobbles and three pieces of unidentified, porous, grey, pumice-like stone, not ground; bone including bird, fish and probable seal

Bag labelled “ 4 ft, Blok d”, containing one large broken quartzite flake (distal part), ochre-stained on the ventral surface; bone including bird and probable seal; one bone awl

Bag labelled “ 4 ft, Blok c”, containing one quartzite upper grindstone with pronounced and rounded grinding facet, three fragments of lime-rich sandstone and one small, heavily flaked quartzite core;

bone including fish vertebrae, some of them calcined, and two rib fragments from a very large and a smaller mammal respectively

Bag labelled “ **4 vt, Blok a**”, containing two quartzite cobbles; bone including a few fragments of bird bone, two fish vertebrae and another large rib fragment that conjoins with that from **Blok c** (photographed)

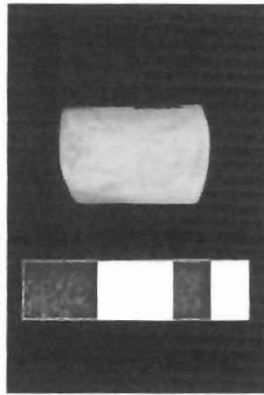


Bag labelled “ **4 vt, Blok e**”, containing fragments of bird bone

Bag labelled “ **4vt, e**”, containing one quartzite chunk, one quartzite core, one cobble with some hammering damage, one quartzite blade, one old flake with later flake removals along the two margins and one fragment of unidentified raw material; fragmentary bone including bird, fish and possibly mammal

Unlabelled bag containing one quartzite upper grindstone with hammer damage on the ends and a flattened grinding facet, ochre-stained all over body and grinding surface

Bag labelled “**4 vt, Blok C**”, containing one quartzite slab with a few flake removals around the edge and ochre-staining on one side; bone including bird, fish and mammal; one bone awl; one bone bead, oval in cross-section and measuring 18.9 mm in length and 13.3 x 9.9 mm in external diameter and manufactured from mammal bone (photographed)



Robberg Cave, Old Box 126

Bag labelled “ 4 vt, Blok M”, containing one quartzite core; bone including bird and seal; one bone awl

Bag labelled “ 4vt, Blok h”, containing one quartzite chunk and one quartzite pebble/cobble; fragmentary bone including bone and mammal; one barnacle

Found lying loose in the box: one quartzite flake, one small “Fauresmith” hand-axe, and one heavily patinated (ESA?) flake

Bag labelled “ 4 vt, Blok N”, containing one quartzite pebble, one quartzite flake and one quartzite upper grindstone, ochre-stained both on and around grinding facet; bone including bird and fish

Bag labelled “ 4 vt, Blok j”, containing one quartzite chunk; bone including bird, fish vertebra and one very large dentary, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 4 vt, Blok l”, containing one large quartzite cobble; bone including bird, seal, and one fragment large mammal rib

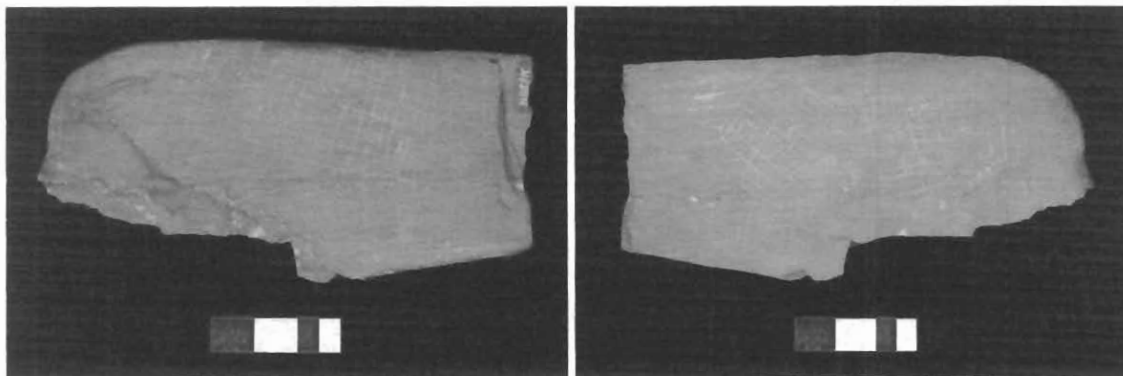
Bag labelled “ 4 vt, Blok k”, containing one quartzite upper grindstone with ochre-staining on the grinding facet as well as some smearing around it; bone including an entire bird sternum and single femur, one fish vertebra and fragment of a mammal long-bone shaft

Bag labelled “ 4 vt, Blok i”, containing one large quartzite chunk, two fragments of pebble, one flat fragment of lime-rich sandstone with a groove all the way across it, possibly a beadstone (photographed) and a piece of red ochre; bone including bird and fish

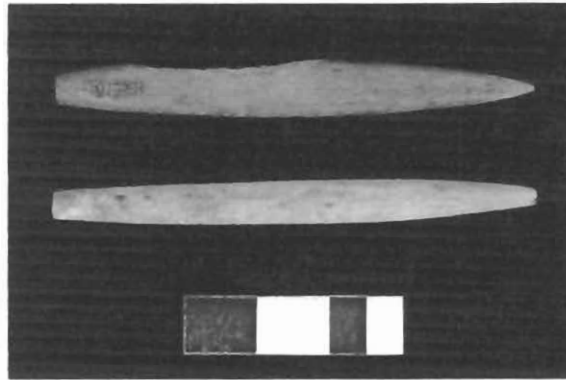


Robberg Cave, Old Box 127

Bag labelled “ 4 ½ vt, Blok k”, containing shale palette broken and snapped across, measuring 57 mm in width at widest unbroken point and 117.3mm in length, decorated with shallowly incised grid designs on both faces (photographed)



Bag labelled “ 4 ½, b”, containing one quartzite pebble, one quartzite cobble with slight ochre staining, and three quartzite pebbles with possible hammerstone damage, one somewhat ochre-stained; one fragment of wood measuring 57x45mm, thin and flat with fairly marked longitudinal striations on one side; bone, largely burned and including bird, fish, probable seal and large mammal; one bone awl and two bone points with flat butts (photographed)



Bag labelled “4 ½ vt, b”, containing two quartzite pebbles, one large quartzite blade, one quartzite flake and three fragments lime-rich sandstone, the largest of which is smoothed/ground on one surface; bone including three fish vertebrae and one seal bone

Bag labelled “4 ½, a”, containing three quartzite pebbles, two quartzite flakes, one subsequently used as a core, one probable upper grindstone with ochre staining on ventral surface, one hammerstone with damage mostly at the ends but some more ephemeral damage extending around almost the entire circumference (milled-edge pebble?), and one microlithic quartz scraper, very finely and evenly retouched; bone including bird, fish including one dentary, and mammal including one unfused bovid epiphysis; one small fragment of double-pointed fish spine, possibly worked (need microscope to be sure) and with an overall appearance similar to a fish gorge

Bag labelled “4 ½, d”, including one large quartzite flake and one broken quartzite grindstone/hammerstone; bone including bird and mammal

Bag labelled “4 ½, Blok e”, containing one quartzite chunk; one bag dark, charcoal-rich sediment; fragmentary bone, mostly bird; one bone awl

Bag labelled “4 ½ vt, f”, containing two small fragments of bone

Bag labelled “4 ½ vt, c”, containing fragmentary bone, including bird, fish and mammal

Bag labelled “4 ½ vt, h”, containing one quartzite pebble and one quartzite flake; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Robberg Cave, Old Box 128

Bag labelled “ 4 ½ vt, Blok N”, containing one quartzite pebble, two quartzite chunks, two quartzite upper grindstones, one quartzite flake and two flattish fragments of lime-rich sandstone which appear to be somewhat ground on one surface; bone including bird, fish, seal and mammal; one bone awl

Bag labelled “ 4 ½ vt, Blok M”, containing one fragment of ochre; bone including fish vertebrae and one fragment of mammal long-bone shaft as well as one rib fragment

Bag labelled “ 4 ½ vt, Blok j”, containing one quartzite flake and one quartzite hammerstone with damage extending almost around the entire circumference of the pebble; bone including bird, fish and seal

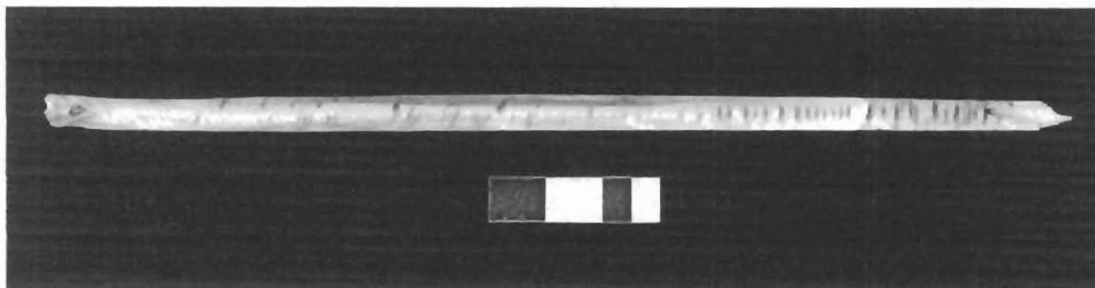
Bag labelled “ 4 ½ vt, Blok i”, containing one quartzite chunk, one large quartzite slab with one flake removed, possibly as a result of natural causes, one quartzite core which was originally part of an older flake, with ochre-staining on the ventral surface and three quartzite flakes, one of which is ochre-stained on the ventral surface; bone including bird, fish, young seal and other mammal

Found lying loose in the box, fragmentary bone including two fragments of fish bone and one fragment of mammal bone; one *Perna perna*

Bag labelled “ 4 ½ vt, Blok (illegible)”, containing one broken quartzite flake; bone including bird, fish, seal and bovid; shell including *Patella barbara*, *Patella cochlear*, *Patella longicosta*, *Perna* and one un-perforated *Donax*

Bag labelled “ 4 ½ vt, Blok l”, containing fragmentary bone, including bird and fish

Bag labelled “ 4 ½ vt, Blok g”, containing one quartzite flake, one quartzite blade and three possible upper grindstones; fragmentary bone including bird and fish; one decorated bird bone measuring 181 mm in length (photographed) ; one whole *Turbo sarmaticus*



Bag labelled “ 4 ½ vt, Blok k”, containing one piece of ochre; bone including bird, fish, one very large unfused mammal epiphysis and a large chunk of marine mammal bone

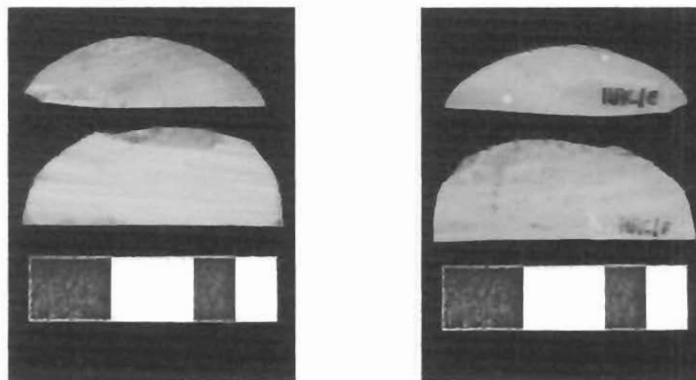
Robberg Cave, Old Box 129

Bag labelled “5 vt, k”, containing one quartzite upper grindstone/hammerstone with damage extending around most of the circumference and a patch of ochre on one side; bone including bird, fish and mammal including one *Raphicerus* mandible

Bag labelled “5 vt, d”, containing fragmentary bone including bird, a single fish spine, and mammal bone; one bone awl

Bag labelled “5 vt, l”, containing two chunks, one quartzite pebble with ochre-staining, one flake, one quartzite manuport, one quartzite cobble with a very smooth, probably natural concave area; one quartzite milled-edge pebble and three hammerstones with hammerstone damage as well as more ephemeral pecking damage extending some way around the circumference, one is ochre-stained

Bag labelled “5 vt, e”, containing bone including bird, fish, small bovid and other small mammal; one shell crescent measuring 29.6 mm in length and 8.9 mm in width (photographed, upper example in images below. Lower is crescent from Box 120, “3 vt Blok f” listed above)



Bag labelled “5 vt, a”, containing bone including fish, small bovid and other small mammal

Bag labelled “5 vt, f”, containing fragmentary fish and mammal bone

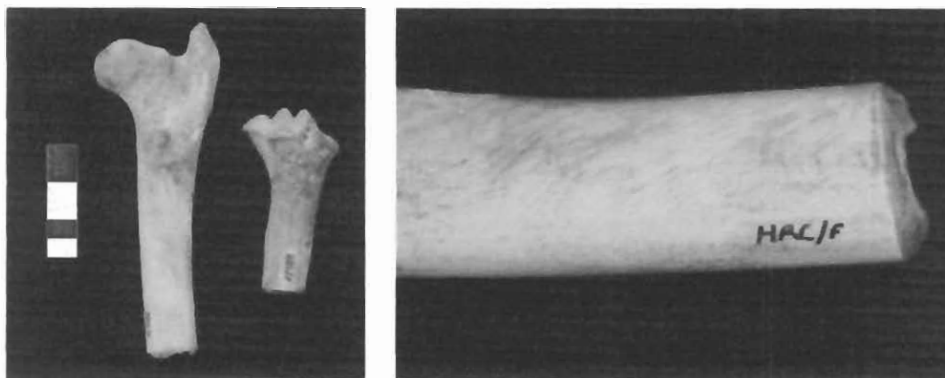
Bag labelled “5 vt, b”, containing two upper grindstones, four pebbles, one of which has some pecking on it, but too unsystematic to call it a hammerstone, and one fragment of lime-rich sandstone with a streak of ochre; bone including two fragments of burned scapula of a large mammal and one fragment of small mammal

Robberg Cave, Old Box 130

Bag labelled “ 5 vt, h”, containing one quartzite chunk, eight quartzite cobbles, two flaked quartzite cobbles, two quartzite hammerstones and one quartzite upper grindstone with ochre-staining

Bag labelled “ 5 vt, l”, containing one pebble with hammerstone damage along roughly 40% of its circumference, two quartzite pebbles and one fragment lime-rich sandstone; one large fragment of charcoal; bone including fish, small mammal, and one unfused epiphysis of a large mammal

Bag labelled “5vt, f”, containing fragmentary bone including bird, fish, seal, other mammal and a fragment of hyrax maxilla; two small bovid long-bones, with epiphyses and part of the shaft remaining and with the ends of the shafts cut and bevelled to remove sections of the diaphyses (photographed, right-hand picture below is a close-up of larger specimen) one bone point, broken at the base but no unworked part preserved, and measuring 55mm in length; one fragment of flat, thick bone, approximately rectangular in shape and measuring 70 by 20 mm, with slight, probable grooves on the exterior surface



Found lying loose in box: one bone bead of similar dimensions and workmanship to specimen in Box 1:25

Bag labelled “ 5 vt,g”, containing one quartzite pebble with some slight damage around the edge and one quartzite (?) spall; fragmentary bone including bird and mammal, and two fragments of un-worked *Pelomedusa* carapace

Bag labelled “5vt, i”, containing one quartzite hammerstone and one quartzite flake; bone including bird, fish vertebra and a dentary, mammal, and several fragments of un-worked *Pelomedusa* carapace

Bag labelled “5vt,h”, containing eight pebbles with no obvious working or damage, nine pebbles with varying degrees of hammerstone damage and/or more ephemeral pecking, two flaked pebbles/chunks, one fragment lime-rich sandstone with no obvious grinding, and one core which was originally part of a flake, with a few additional flakes struck from it and ochre-staining on the ventral surface

Robberg Cave, Old Box 131

Bag labelled “Laag P (oppervlakte), 5’ “, containing one quartzite flake and bone including bird, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ Laag O (oppervlakte), 5 vt”, containing two quartzite flakes and bone including bird

Bag labelled “5vt, M”, containing bone including bird, fish and seal; one bone awl with a broken tip

Bag labelled “ 5 vt, N”, containing one pebble; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “5 vt, j “, containing one large chunk of quartzite with a couple of large flakes removed bifacially around the margin and reminiscent of the ESA, one spall, one small, flattish pebble measuring 51.4 mm at its maximum diameter with a ground area in the middle of one side and no working/damage on the other (almost as if it was intended to be made into a bored stone?), and a fragment of lime-rich sandstone smoothed on both surfaces and ground on one edge; one fragment of probable wood measuring 75 by 45 mm; bone including bird, a fish dentary, a bovid mandible and other fragmentary mammalian remains

Robberg Cave, Old Box 132

Bag labelled “5 ½, g”, containing one chalcedony chunk; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal; two bone points with flat butts, one complete except for the very tip and the other, which is burned, having only about half its length preserved

Bag labelled “5 ½, i”, containing one quartzite hammerstone and a large quartzite flake; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 5 ½, h”, containing four quartzite pebbles with some hammerstone damage and one pebble with no signs of utilization; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 5 ½, j”, containing one quartzite core, four cobbles with hammerstone damage; one upper grindstone/hammerstone, three chunks and one fragment of lime-rich sandstone with a straight edge and a shallow step ground on to one side, as if it was used as a “grinding guide” of sorts (photographed); bone including bird and mammal



Bag labelled “5 ½, e”, containing fragmentary bone including fish and possibly other species

Bag labelled “5 ½ vt, f”, containing one pebble and one fragment of an upper grindstone; fragmentary bone including bird, fish and mammal

Bag labelled “5 ½ vt, c”, containing one milled-edge pebble; fragmentary bird, fish and mammal bone

Bag labelled “5 ½, g”, four CCS chunks, one quartzite chunk, two apparently unutilized pebbles and three pebbles with hammerstone damage, one of which also has some additional shallow, irregular pecking

Found lying loose in box: three fragments of rib from large mammal

Robberg Cave, Old Box 133

Bag labelled “Laag P, 5 ½ vt”, containing one ochre-stained pebble and four quartzite flakes, one a large, thin, MSA (?) flake with blade scars on dorsal surface; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal; one bone artefact made from a large rib (cancellous bone still visible on one surface) measuring 50 by 30 mm and 5 mm thick with flattened end ground to chisel-like shape and back end rounded rather than flattened (photographed)



Bag labelled “ 5 ½ vt, M”, containing one quartzite blade; bone including bird, fish and mammal

Bag labelled “Laag O, 5 ½ vt”, containing one large quartzite flake with ochre-staining on the dorsal surface, the proximal end of a quartzite blade (snapped) and a thin slab of lime-rich sandstone with some grinding in the centre of one face; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 5 ½, k”, containing one upper grindstone with ochre-staining around grinding facet; bone including bird, fish and mammal, one *Patella argenvillei*

Bag labelled “ 5 ½ vt, L”, containing one cobble with hammerstone damage and partially broken at opposite end; two fragments bone; one large *Patella tabularis*

Bag labelled “ 5 ½ vt, Laag P”, containing a wad of *Zostera*

Bag labelled “ 5 ½ vt, N”, containing fragmentary bone including fish and mammal

Robberg Cave, Old Box 134

Bag labelled “ 6 vt, h”, containing bone including bird, fish including a dentary and other remains, seal post-cranial fragments and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 6 ft, f”, containing bone including bird, large bovid as well as smaller bovid

Bag labelled “6ft, i”, containing one flattish pebble with hammerstone damage around approximately half of its circumference as well as some pecking marks in the middle of one face, one pebble which is burned and fractured at one end, two quartzite upper grindstones, one of which is split in half, with clear grinding facets, and one quartzite core and one chunk, both of which are ochre-stained; one large piece of charcoal and some fibrous plant material; bone including bird, fish, seal, other mammal and *Pelomedusa* carapace

Bag labelled “6 ft, j”, containing two quartzite pebbles and one core; bone including bird, fish and mammal

Bag labelled “6 vt, e”, containing bone including possible bird and mammal

Bag labelled “6 vt, d + c”, containing sediment sample

Bag labelled “6 vt, g”, containing one quartzite pebble and a large flat piece of unidentified flaky, whitish stone, probably hammered at one end; bone including bird, fish, seal, bovid and a probable human metatarsal and metacarpal

Robberg Cave, Old Box 135

Bag labelled “6 vt, R (oppervlakte)”, containing one quartzite flake; one fragment burned, un-worked ostrich eggshell; bone including bird, fish mammal and one piece ground *Pelomedusa* carapace; one bone spatula measuring 70 by 20 mm, made on a long-bone fragment, finely worked at the tip with the rest of the area largely un-worked, cancellous bone visible towards the butt end ; shell including *Patella barbara*, *Patella longicosta*, *Patella cochlear*, *Patella argenvillei*, *Perna perna*, *Patella oculus*, *Haliotis spadicea* and two un-perforated *Donax*

Bag labelled “6 vt, P”, containing one quartzite flake; a wad of *Zostera*; bone including bird, fish, probable seal and other mammal; one bone awl

Bag labelled “6 vt, O”, containing one quartzite flake; bone including bird and fish

Bag labelled “6 vt, N”, containing one quartzite hammerstone, one probable upper grindstone and one quartzite spall; two fragments of charcoal; bone including bird, fish and seal

Bag labelled “6 vt, M”, containing one quartzite blade; bone including fish and mammal

Bag labelled “6 vt, K”, containing three quartzite flakes; bone including bird, fish and seal

Bag labelled “6 vt, Q (oppervlak)”, containing two fragments of preserved plant material; bird bones; one unfinished bird-bone bead

Bag labelled “6 vt, L”, containing one quartzite chunk and one fragment tabular, lime-rich sandstone; several fragments burned wood; bone including bird, fish, seal, one rib fragment from a large bovid or other mammal

Robberg Cave, Old Box 136

Bag labelled “6 ½, S”, containing bone including bird, a single fish dentary, one hyrax mandible as well as other hyrax remains; one unfinished bird-bone bead

Bag labelled “6 ½, O”, containing one quartzite blade; bone including bird, fish, seal and young bovid

Bag labelled “6 ½, P”, containing one quartzite upper grindstone; bone including fish and seal

Bag labelled “6 ½ vt, T + S”, containing fragmentary bone including bird and bovid long-bone as well as a bovid mandible

Bag labelled “6 ½, R”, containing one pebble; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “6 ½, g”, containing one quartzite chunk and a cobble/possible upper grindstone; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “6 ½, N”, containing bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “6 ½, N”, containing one bone point with a narrowed base, creating the appearance of a tang, and a flat butt end (photographed)



Bag labelled “6 ½, M”, containing one chunk of ochre; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “6 ½, j”, containing bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal; one hollow bone point, broken at the base and one bird bone with a groove around it near the broken end, as though it was being prepared for snapping and bead-making

Bag labelled “ 6 ½, h”, containing bone including bird, a fish dentary, seal, a bovid mandible, ribs of a larger mammal and some smaller mammalian remains

Bag labelled “ 6 ½, I”, containing bone including bird, fish, seal and smaller and larger mammal

Bag labelled “ 6 ½, k”, containing bone including bird, fish and mammal

Bag labelled “ 6 ½, L”, containing one quartzite flake; bone including bird, fish and mammal

Robberg Cave, Old Box 137

Bag labelled “ 7 vt, P”, containing bone including fish and mammal; one complete bone awl measuring 92 mm in length

Bag labelled “7 vt, S”, containing fragmentary bone including bird, probable seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 7 vt, R”, containing fragmentary bone including fish and bovid

Bag labelled “7 vt, L”, containing fragmentary bone including fish and bovid

Bag labelled “ 7 vt, i”, containing bone including bird, fish, seal and bovid; one bone awl measuring 113.5 mm in length (broken in the bag but put back together), with awl tips at both ends and un-worked section in the middle

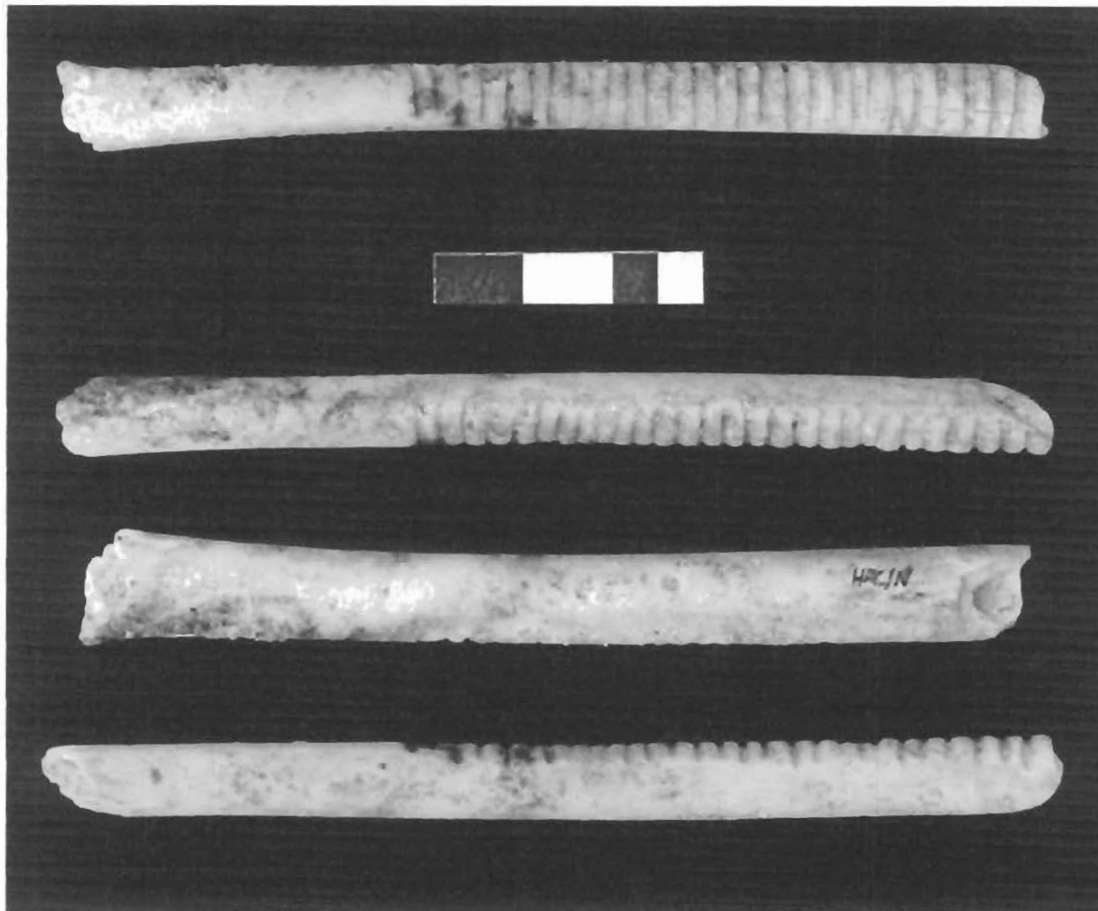
Bag labelled “ 7 vt, Q”, containing bone including bird, seal, one *Raphicerus* and one hyrax mandible

Bag labelled “ 7 vt, M”, containing one quartzite upper grindstone with a very clear grinding facet and one fragment of ochre; bone including bird, fish, seal and mammal

Bag labelled “ 7 vt, j”, containing bone including bird, fish and mammal

Bag labelled “ 7 vt, T”, containing one quartzite pebble; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal; one complete bone awl measuring 76.2 mm in length and one broken hollow bone point, remaining length 95.6 mm

Bag labelled “ 7 vt, N”, containing one quartzite pebble/probable upper grindstone and one fragment of lime-rich sandstone, the ends of which may have been formed into a rectangular shape but with no obvious working; fragmentary bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal; one bird bone broken at both ends with multiple strong, deep, very even incisions down one side, very closely and evenly spaced (photographed from all four sides)



Bag labelled “7 vt, k”, containing bone including bird, fish and mammal

Bag labelled “7 vt, O”, containing two upper grindstones with very clear grinding facets, one broken and both slightly ochre-stained and one fragment of ochre; bone including bird, fish, mammal and one *Pelomedusa* limb bone; one bird-bone bead measuring 37.4 mm in length, partly broken at one end although overall dimensions are preserved

Robberg Cave, Old Box 138

Bag labelled “7 ½, R”, containing bone including fish and mammal

Bag labelled “7 ½, Q”, containing one quartzite upper grindstone and one CCS flake; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “7 ½, P”, containing one quartzite pebble/upper grindstone; bone including bird, fish and mammal

Bag labelled “ 7 ½, Q”, containing fragmentary bone including bird and mammal

Bag labelled “ 7 ½, N”, containing one pebble with some ochre-staining and slight hammerstone damage on the two opposing ends, one ochre-stained upper grindstone with a clear grinding facet and one broken quartzite flake with ochre-staining on the ventral surface; bone including bird, fish including a dentary, and mammal

Bag labelled “ 7 ½, M”, containing one quartzite chunk; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal; one bone point measuring 63 mm in length, broken at the tip and with a flattened butt end

Bag labelled “ 7 ½, i”, containing bone including bird, fish, seal and bovid

Bag labelled “ 7 ½, j”, containing bone including bird, fish, seal and bovid

Bag labelled “ 7 ½, T”, containing bone including bird, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 7 ½, K”, containing one quartzite flake; bone including bird and mammal; one fragment of ringed and snapped bird-bone

Bag labelled “ 7 ½, L”, containing one small quartzite cobble with some hammerstone damage and another pebble with extensive hammerstone damage around most of the circumference; bone including bird, fish, and both smaller and larger other mammal

Bag labelled “ 7 ½, O”, containing one large, thin quartzite flake with ochre-staining on both surfaces and three quartzite hammerstones, one with substantial damage at both ends; bone including bird, fish and bovid, and some mandible fragments

Found lying loose in the box: one broken quartzite flake; fragmentary bone including bird and a single metacarpal

Robberg Cave, Old Box 139

Bag labelled “ 8 vt, T (oppervlak)”, containing one quartzite flake and one pebble with minimal hammerstone damage; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal; one bowl awl measuring 87 mm in length, almost complete but with some slight damage at the tip

Bag labelled “ 8 vt, K”, containing bone including bird, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 8 vt, L”, containing one hammerstone/upper grindstone with ochre-staining; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal;

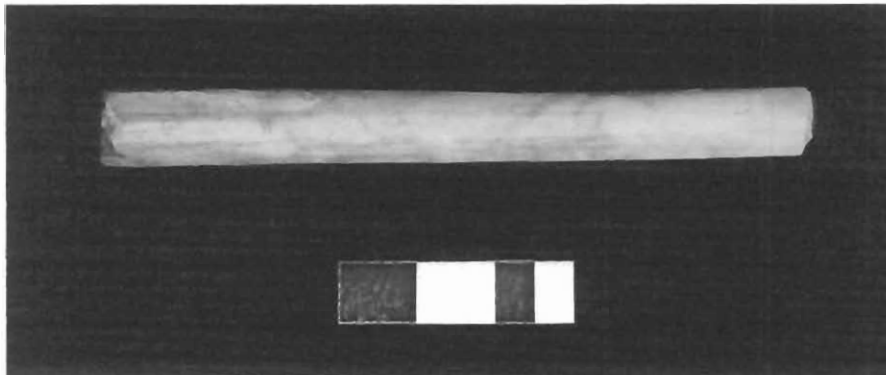
Bag labelled “ 8 vt, S”, bone including bird, fish and mammal

Bag labelled “ 8 vt, R”, containing a wad of compact probable plant material; bone including bird, fish and mammal; one complete bone awl measuring 93 mm in length; one fragment of *Perna* shell

Bag labelled “ 8 vt, M”, containing fragmentary fish and mammal bone

Bag labelled “ 8 vt, N”, containing one quartzite flake and one quartzite core which was originally part of a larger cobble (?), with ochre-staining on the remaining part of the cortex; bone including bird, fish and bovid

Bag labelled “ 8 vt, O”, containing one quartzite milled-edge pebble, milled around the entire circumference and with some pecking in the middle of both flat faces and one flake removed; bone including fish, seal and other mammal; one complete bone tube measuring 92 mm in length, ringed, snapped and smoothed at both ends and possibly shaved or scraped at the surface to remove protrusions and achieve a more symmetrical shape



Bag labelled “ 8 vt, P”, containing two quartzite pebbles; bone including fish and mammal

Bag labelled “ 8 vt, Q”, containing one cobble and one small upper grindstone; bone including bird, fish and mammal

Robberg Cave, Old Box 140

Bag labelled “ 8 ½, S”, containing fragmentary bone including bird and mammal; one small bird-bone decorated on both faces with a combination of parallel incisions and rough cross-hatching

Bag labelled “ 8 ½, L”, containing the proximal half of a broken quartzite blade; bone including bird, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 8 ½, T”, containing bone including bird, seal and other mammal and one dune mole rat mandible

Bag labelled “ 8 ½, K”, containing bone including fish, bird, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 8 ½, N”, containing bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 8 ½, M”, containing one cylinder-shaped pebble with no clear signs of working; bone including bird and mammal

Bag labelled “ 8 ½, P”, containing a small quartzite core, almost completely worked out; bone including bird, fish and mammal

Bag labelled “ 8 ½, Q”, containing fragmentary bird and fish bone

Bag labelled “ 8 ½, O”, containing one quartzite chunk; bone including fish, seal and other mammal

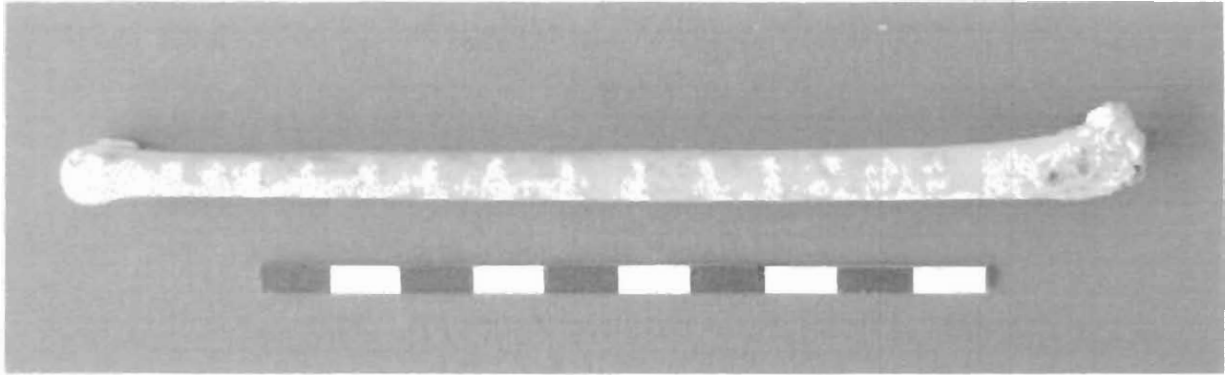
Bag labelled “ 8 ½, R”, containing bone including bird, fish and mammal

Robberg Cave, Old Box 141

Bag labelled “ 9 vt, R”, containing two quartzite hammerstones, one with damage around most of the circumference and with two flakes struck off with points of impact adjacent to one of the main areas of hammer damage; bone including bird, fish and seal

Bag labelled “ 9 vt, S”, containing one small fragment of ochre; bone including bird, fish and seal

Bag labelled “ 9 vt, T”, containing bone including bird, fish and mammal; one small fragment of bird bone shaft, ringed and snapped on one end and one complete bird bone with shallow scrape marks at regular intervals along the shaft which appear paler than the surrounding bone (photographed)



Bag labelled “ 9 vt, O”, containing fragmentary bone including bird and mammal

Bag labelled “ 9 vt, P”, containing one pebble with hammerstone damage one both ends and some more ephemeral, less regular damage around approximately 2/3 of the circumference; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 9 vt, L + K”, containing bone including bird, fish, seal and bovid

Bag labelled “ 9 vt, N”, containing bone including bird, fish and mammal

Bag labelled “ 9 vt, Q”, containing one piece of burned ostrich eggshell with incised lines on it; bone including fish and mammal

Bag labelled “ 9 vt, M”, containing one hammerstone with hammerstone damage at both ends and one probable hammerstone; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Robberg Cave, Old Box 142

Bag labelled “ 9 ½, S”, containing bone including fish and mammal; one fragment of *Pelomedusa* carapace, possibly ground in order to thin it over the inner surface

Bag labelled “ 10 vt, R”, containing bone including bird, fish and mammal

Bag labelled “ 9 ½, T”, containing one fragment of smoothed sandstone palette, thinned along one margin and ground on both faces; bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal; one fragment of bird bone, incised and probably also ringed and snapped and with two parallel notches measuring 5 mm in length just below the snapped end

Bag labelled “ 10 vt, T”, containing one pebble/possible upper grindstone; bone including bird, fish, seal, other small mammal and a blue duiker mandible

Bag labelled “ 10 ½ vt, T”, containing fragmentary bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 10 vt, S”, containing one flat quartzite pebble; fragmentary bone including bird, fish, seal and a bovid mandible

Bag labelled “ 9 ½, Q”, containing one fragment of tabular ground sandstone; bone including bird, fish, seal including a young seal mandible and other small mammal

Bag labelled “ 10 vt, Q”, containing bone including one fragment of bird bone, one fragment of mammal long-bone shaft and one fragment of rib bone, split, with the cancellous surface and one margin smoothed

Bag labelled “ 10 ½, S”, containing bone including bird, fish, seal and other mammal

Bag labelled “ 10 ½, R”, containing fragmentary bird and mammal bone

Bag labelled “ 9 1/2 , R”, containing fragments of partially carbonized plant material; bone including bird, fish and mammal; one complete bone awl measuring 88.7 mm in length, made on a fragment of mammal long bone and with a highly polished tip

Found lying loose in the box: one small fragment of bird bone and one long bone shaft measuring 240 mm in length, pale in colour and with a series of slightly abraded spots along it, which may be the result of damage incurred while in the box.

CHAPTER 3

DISCUSSION

STRATIGRAPHY

During our time at the National Museum, Dr Sealy and I attempted to locate any field notes or other documentation that Hoffman may have compiled relating to the site of Hoffman's/Robberg Cave or its excavation. With the exception of a single page written at the back of what must have been Hoffman's final notebook, in which he described the excavation of the last couple of squares, nothing of any relevance could be found. Some details concerning the stratigraphy of the site can be inferred from the labels that Hoffman and the members of his field team placed on the numerous bags of excavated materials. The brown paper bags and the written labels have for the most part remained intact throughout their long storage at the National Museum. Generally, the bags were marked with the name of the site, followed by the "blok" or square of the grid in which the artefacts or other remains were found, followed by the depth measured in feet and inches. The labels therefore serve as a partial record of the progress of the excavation. From what I am able to work out, Hoffman began by removing the top six inches of the deposit which were referred to in the labels as the "Boonste Laag". The only squares explicitly mentioned at this level are designated by the letters *k* and *z*. An additional letter, *L*, appears at a depth of between zero and half a foot. He then proceeded to uncover a further six feet of deposit, working in squares labeled *b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i* and *j*. These squares do not appear to have originated on the grid either at the same time or in this particular order, but seem to have been introduced between the depths of twelve inches and three feet, if they were not present in the topmost layer. There is also some inconsistency in terms of the labelling with regard to the use of lowercase and uppercase letters. I cannot say for certain whether this is just random or whether it was intended to be meaningful. At a depth of between three and six and a half feet, additional squares including *K* and *l*, which may or may not refer to the two squares designated by the same letters from the first few inches of the excavation, as well as new ones labeled *M, N, O, P, Q, R, S* and *T* first appear. At the same time, most of the squares from the earlier part of the excavation appear to bottom out at this level. The other squares continue to depths of between nine and a half and ten and a half feet, after which it appears that no more material was recovered. This pattern, in which there are two distinct sets or groups of squares at different depths within the deposit suggests that Hoffman may have laid out his excavation grid over a downhill slope but measured all of the depths from a single datum point. The remains of Hoffman's trench is still visible at the site today, where it cross-cuts a steeply sloping area of the deposit.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE MATERIAL CULTURAL REMAINS IN THE DEPOSIT: AN ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON WITH NELSON BAY CAVE

While it does not permit for the reconstruction of a detailed temporal framework for the site of Hoffman's/Robberg Cave, this tentative stratigraphy does provide some clues as to the distribution of different artefacts and other relevant remains throughout the different levels of the archaeological deposit. This is also rather tentative, as I do not know how representative the assemblage housed in the National Museum is of what was originally present at the site prior to its excavation. Certain archaeological materials could have been damaged or overlooked as a consequence of the rather crude field procedures which were employed, if the work here was done in the same way as at Matjes River Rock Shelter. The site was most likely excavated using shovels rather than brushes and trowels and the resulting buckets of sediment were not sieved, as is standard practice among archaeologists today. Furthermore, Hoffman may have been biased in his retention of larger and more visible or aesthetically pleasing objects, as well as those he assumed for one or another reason to have been of special significance. These factors could have resulted in the deletion of a number of items from the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave assemblage, and skewed the representation of different artefact types and categories in the collection. Nevertheless, some broad patterns can still be discerned in the distribution of the material, and in some cases these can be compared with those observed at the nearby site of Nelson Bay Cave. Given these constraints, it is somewhat difficult to compare this assemblage with that of such a stratigraphically complex and well documented site as Nelson Bay Cave. I was nevertheless able to discern certain continuities as well as a number of discontinuities in the distribution and presence or absence of certain artefact types between the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave assemblage, which has been dated to between around 3300 and 2800BP, and the chronologically comparable stratigraphic levels of Nelson Bay Cave, which include approximately units 31 – 64, with radiocarbon dates of 2950 ± 80 and 3350 ± 60 BP respectively. These trends are discussed and examined in the context of broader temporal patterns at Nelson Bay commented upon by Inskip and Ludwig.

Lithic Artefacts

Untrimmed quartzite flakes constitute the most numerous items in the lithic artefact inventory for Hoffman's/Robberg Cave, and have been found to occur throughout the assemblage. These include a couple of old, heavily patinated flakes and blades probably dating to the Middle Stone Age and distributed fairly evenly through the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave deposit. One heavily patinated Early Stone Age flake as well as a "Fauresmith" hand-axe of uncertain provenience are also included in the collection. Cores are fairly frequent, occurring at random intervals throughout the deposit, but are considerably rarer than flakes. There appears to be some slight clustering in this artefact category between the depths of three and four and a half feet, where cores seem to be somewhat more numerous

than in the upper and lower levels of the excavation. In common with the majority of Later Stone Age assemblages dating to the Post-Wilton industry, the lithic industry at Hoffman's/Robberg Cave is highly informal. In the temporally comparable post-Wilton levels of Nelson Bay Cave, formal tools are rare and secondary retouch is much less common than in older units belonging to the Wilton cultural industry (Inskeep 1987). It should be noted that formal tools characteristic of the Wilton period including backed or double scrapers and segments formed the basis of Ludwig's (2005) comparison of the lithic assemblages of Nelson Bay Cave and Matjes River Rock Shelter. The aforementioned tool types were found to be much more numerous at Matjes River than at Nelson Bay Cave during the late Holocene. Formal stone tools appear to be even more under-represented at Hoffman's/Robberg Cave, the occupation of which falls entirely within the post-Wilton industry, and are limited to a single microlithic scraper manufactured from quartz and uncovered near the middle of the excavation at a depth of four and a half feet. In common with the post-Wilton layers of Nelson Bay Cave, Matjes River Rock Shelter and other Cape coastal sites, quartzite was clearly the preferred raw material for the manufacture of lithic artefacts at Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. A single ccs flake contained within the collection was derived from the lower section of the excavation, and was found at the depth of seven and a half feet. Five ccs chunks were discovered nearby at a depth of five and a half feet. The remainder of the waste material, consisting mostly of fairly large chunks, was of quartzite and was distributed throughout the upper and middle levels of the excavation, with somewhat lower frequencies in the lower part of the deposit below the depth of six feet.

In the utilized pieces category, upper grindstones are by far the best represented items, and were found in large numbers throughout the deposit. Hammerstones are considerably less numerous, and were found scattered at rather irregular intervals in the different levels of the site. The assemblage also features several upper grindstone/hammerstones, a number of pebbles and cobbles with some hammerstone and/or more ephemeral and irregular pecking damage as well as a few "milled edged pebbles" which have been pitted or milled "through use as a hammerstone against a hard material" (Deacon 1984: 377). These utilized pieces and manuports appear to be more numerous in the middle and in some cases lower levels of the deposit. The post-Wilton assemblage at Nelson Bay Cave is similarly characterized by an abundance of grindstones and what Inskeep refers to as "rubbing stones". Rubber/hammerstones are apparently better represented in the older layers of the deposit, although "the total of grinding equipment is biased in favour of the upper group of units" (Inskeep 1987:105), that is, units 22-62, which partially correspond with the temporal framework for Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. Although he concluded that this pattern could not be definitively interpreted as a shift in emphasis on grinding activities between the two stages of occupation represented by the different groups of stratigraphic units, Inskeep did suggest that the stratigraphic grouping of the rubber/hammers in the lower group of units could be indicative of changes in the types of foods being processed.

Traces of ochre are evident on the surfaces of a relatively large number of items in the lithic assemblage from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave, including flakes, cores, chunks, and particularly upper grindstones. Out of a total of sixty securely identified upper grindstones, twenty show evidence of

often substantial ochre-staining. In seven out of the twenty cases, ochre stains occur on one or both of the grinding facets, which could indicate that these items were used for the grinding of ochre. Upper grindstones with evidence of ochre-staining derive from the upper and middle levels of the deposit, up to a depth of seven and a half feet. Ochre-stained flakes occur in the upper-middle, middle and lower-middle levels of the deposit. These are considerably smaller in number than ochre-stained upper grindstones, with only eight out of a total of seventy seven quartzite flakes bearing traces of ochre. Four of these specimens show ochre-staining on their ventral surfaces, while in two other cases this occurs on the dorsal and ventral surfaces. The occurrence of ochre-staining on these items does not necessarily imply that it was deliberately applied to them by the prehistoric inhabitants of the site. Traces of ochre could easily have been transferred from the hands of people handling this substance onto the surfaces of these items. One large *Patella tabularis* specimen derived from the first six inches of the deposit was clearly used as a vessel for mixing ochre-based paint. Visible residues of ochre were observed inside of the shell. Two additional *Patella* shells with much lighter and less thickly distributed ochre-staining were found very slightly lower in the deposit. Some incidence of ochre-staining on similar lithic artefacts and utilized pieces was recorded by Inskeep at Nelson Bay Cave, but most of these items occurred in the lower stratigraphic units which are well beyond the temporal range of the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave occupation. In units 22-62, only eight items with evidence of ochre-staining are listed, which seems to suggest that the use of ochre was considerably more prolific at Hoffman's/Robberg Cave during the Post-Wilton period than at Nelson Bay Cave. Inskeep also recovered a number of "ochre-pencils", which were more abundant in the middle levels of the deposit, from units 64 – 134, than in the upper and lower groups. Fragments of ochre were regarded as more ambiguous, as the walls of the cave were found to be naturally ochre-bearing. I do not know whether or not this is the case at Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. Nevertheless, a number of fragments and pieces of this material were found in the upper, middle and lower-middle sections of the deposit, along with the numerous ochre-stained artefacts. No ochre pencils of the kind observed by Inskeep were found, and only one fragment with an obviously ground edge is present.

Stone objects believed to have had symbolic significance and sometimes used by hunter-gatherers as "grave goods" include those referred to in the literature as palettes. These are typically flat pieces of stone, most commonly shale, which are ground at the edges to give them a roughly rounded or oval shape (Ludwig 2005: 39). Two shale palettes, one elongated, complete and undecorated, the other broken and highly decorated, are included in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection. They were found fairly far apart in the upper and upper-middle levels of the deposit. Ten specimens are listed in Inskeep's inventory for Nelson Bay Cave. Four of these are of uncertain provenience, while two derive from the lower levels of the post-Wilton deposit. In contrast to the ones found at Nelson Bay Cave as well as Matjes River Rock Shelter, neither of the palettes from the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave assemblage bear the perforations quite common in those from the other two sites. Also found in both the Nelson Bay and Hoffman's Cave assemblages were numerous thin and often irregular tabular fragments of sandstone, and in the case of the former site, quartzite (Inskeep 1987: 103). At Nelson Bay Cave, these appear to have been confined to the lower stratigraphic units predating the

Hoffman's/Robberg Cave occupation by several thousands of years. At Hoffman's/Robberg Cave, fairly substantial numbers of these were found scattered throughout the deposit. Several showed evidence of having been ground. Quartz crystals, which were found in association with Burial Five at Nelson Bay Cave and were included by Inskeep in the category of "grave goods", are not currently curated in the collection of material from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. They may have been recovered from the site and subsequently discarded by the excavators. Another lithic artefact, in this case one with a proposed utilitarian function, apparently absent from the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave assemblage but recovered in sizeable numbers from the post-Wilton levels of Nelson Bay Cave were those described by Later Stone Age researchers as sinkers. These are small, round fragments of stone bearing visible grooves around their circumferences, and believed to have been secured as weights to fishing lines. A total of one hundred and thirty eight of these specimens were reported by Inskeep from Nelson Bay Cave. Almost all of them were recovered from stratigraphic units dating to the earlier post-Wilton. In contrast, no stone sinkers, and only a single possible fish gorge (box 127) are present among the curated material from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. This is unlikely to indicate less emphasis upon fishing activities, and is almost certainly the result of rough excavation practices.

Bone Artefacts

The existence of fairly extensive and elaborate bone-working technologies has been identified as a characteristic of archaeological assemblages from Holocene coastal sites for a number of decades (Schweitzer 1976: 129). Sites that have yielded large assemblages of worked bone in many relatively formal designs include Die Kelders, Nelson Bay Cave and Matjes River Rock Shelter.

Hoffman's/Robberg Cave is no different, with a collection that features a number of bone artefacts including awls, points and other hunting paraphernalia, spatulae, beads and tubes, as well as miscellaneous engraved and decorated pieces. The Hoffman's/Robberg Cave bone artefact collection is similar in composition to the Nelson Bay Cave assemblage dating to the later Holocene, between 3300 – 2000 BP. At Hoffman's/Robberg Cave, awls are the most numerous item in the bone artefact category, and appear to be distributed fairly evenly throughout whole of the deposit. These artefacts, defined by Inskeep as roughly asymmetrical in shape and worked to point at one or both ends, are believed to have served a skin-working function and been used for the puncturing of holes into hides (Inskeep 1987; Ludwig: 2005) which were then manufactured into items including clothes and skin bags. The Hoffman's/Robberg Cave assemblage, as well as that from Nelson Bay Cave, yielded both complete as well as broken or otherwise incomplete specimens. At Nelson Bay Cave, Inskeep noted the apparent concentration of awls in the upper layers of the deposit, in stratigraphic units 22 – 62, as well as a wider range of different types of awls and the preference for more "robust cannon-bone awls" and those manufactured out of bird bones. The occurrence of a greater number of these specimens in the upper as opposed to the lower layers of the deposit at Nelson Bay Cave is interpreted by Ludwig as providing possible evidence that the majority of skin-working activities were carried out in the front section of the cave, where the deposits dating to between 5000 and 2 000 BP were removed. It is also

potentially indicative of more intensive “production and maintenance of clothing and other accessories” (Ludwig 2005: 43) during this temporal bracket.

Bone points are slender, symmetrical, generally well-finished artefacts pointed at one or both ends and identified as projectile parts on the basis of analogies with surviving ethnographic specimens from the Cape and Kalahari (Inskip 1987). These are only slightly less numerous in the Hoffman’s/Robberg Cave assemblage than are awls. A total of nineteen points were found on the surface and in the middle and lower-middle layers of deposit. They appear to cut out after a depth of seven and a half feet. Three of the points recovered from the middle and lower-middle layers of the site have flat butts. One stemmed specimen is also included in the Hoffman’s/Robberg Cave collection. Bone points were recovered in three of the four groups of stratigraphic units excavated by Inskip at Nelson Bay Cave, in significantly smaller numbers than awls. This is especially apparent in the occupation layers dating to the late Holocene. As reported by Inskip (1987), stratigraphic units 22-62 yielded a total of fifty bone awls and only eleven bone points. The Hoffmans’/Robberg Cave collection, on the other hand, includes fewer awls ($n=22$) and a greater number of points ($n=19$). Two of these are probably linkshafts, that is, the part of an arrow that linked the projectile point to the shaft. These tend to be somewhat “cigar-shaped pieces” (Schweitzer: 1979: 130), larger and thicker than projectile points and with flatter mid-sections. I have simply used the term “points” to refer to both of these archery components. Both the Hoffman’s/Robberg Cave assemblage and the comparable assemblage from Nelson Bay Cave also include so-called hollow points manufactured out of the shafts of slender, hollow bones and given their characteristic shape by being “cut or snapped and ground obliquely at the tips to create a teardrop shape in cavity at pointed end” (Ludwig 2005: 44). These were found in small numbers at both sites and in the case of Hoffman’s/Robberg Cave, seem to have been confined to the upper and lower-middle sections of the deposit. Taken together, these different archery components have been interpreted as evidence for the more or less routine use of the bow and arrow, a hunting practice that has been widely inferred for the technologically sophisticated hunter-gatherers of the Holocene.

Another type of bone artefact included in both the Nelson Bay Cave and Hoffman’s/Robberg Cave assemblages is “spatulae”. This definition is applied to elongated, flat pieces with an asymmetrical, wedge-shaped working edge, generally manufactured out of large fragments of limb bone or sections of rib. Their function remains largely speculative, although they are thought, like awls, to have been used in skin working (Inskip: 1987; Schweitzer 1979: 205). The Hoffman’s/Robberg Cave collection features only three of these artefacts, one of which was found near the surface of the excavation and two in the middle levels of the deposit. A much larger number of spatulae were recovered at Nelson Bay Cave, with twenty out of a total of twenty two specimens being derived from the later Holocene levels between units 22-62. If these items were indeed employed as skin-working tools, this could further support suppositions regarding a greater emphasis on these activities during the more recent occupation as hinted by the large number of awls. The rarity of spatulae in the Hoffman’s/Robberg Cave assemblage could easily be the result of careless excavation procedures. A single bone adze, and

an artefact designated by Hoffman as a “been saag” or bone saw, which is a fragment of bone flaked along one edge and with a burin-like tip, were also recovered from the upper level and surface layer of the deposit, respectively.

Eight bone tubes, manufactured from long bone shafts by being deliberately cut and snapped at one or both ends (Ludwig 2005), were recovered from units 22-62 at Nelson Bay Cave, within the last 3300 years. This artefact type was particularly characteristic of the later stages of occupation at this site. As with the apparent concentration of awls in the upper layers of the deposit, this could provide clues into the layout of particular activity areas by the Later Stone Age inhabitants of the site. At the nearby site of Matjes River Rock Shelter, a much larger number of bone tubes were recovered, all of them from considerably earlier in the Holocene. At Hoffman’s/Robberg Cave, which is closer to Nelson Bay Cave, a bone tube was recovered from one of the lower levels of the deposit. Five additional specimens referred to in my description of the Hoffman’s/Robberg Cave material as bone “beads” were found loosely clustered in the upper-middle, middle and lower-middle sections of the deposit. Other pieces of ringed and/or snapped bone were recovered on the surface and in the upper, middle and lower levels of the deposit. Furthermore, several pieces of decorated bone identified as having been ground, scraped, incised, or otherwise modified, were recovered from the middle and lower levels of Hoffman’s/Robberg Cave. One of these, with deeply incised lines appearing at short, regular intervals along the shaft of the bone (see photograph on pg 35), is comparable to a similarly notched specimen recovered from Bonteberg Shelter in the western Cape. Although the purpose of this artefact remains unknown, it has been proposed that it may have served as a ratchet to produce vibrations in a musical bow (Maggs and Speed 1967). The “teeth” of the notched artefact included in the Hoffman’s/Robberg Cave collection are rounded, which is consistent with its having been drawn back and forth across something. A number of decorated and incised pieces of bone were found in the Post-Wilton layers of Nelson Bay Cave. These appear to have been more variable in terms of range and design than those recovered by Hoffman. Bone rings, several examples of which were found in the stratigraphic units above 66 at Nelson Bay Cave, are completely absent from the Hoffman’s/Robberg Cave collection.

Marine and other shell artefacts

A wide variety of artefacts and decorative items manufactured from marine shell, and to a much lesser extent ostrich eggshell and turtle carapace, were recovered from the site of Nelson Bay Cave. In the marine shell category, a couple of types appear to have been of some considerable significance according to both Inskeep’s original description and analysis of the material from this site as well as Ludwig’s later re-investigation of the assemblage. These include several different kinds of pendants, which served as personal ornamentation, and artefacts referred to as shell crescents, the function of which remains unknown. A total of three hundred and sixty three shell pendants manufactured on several species of marine shell were recovered by Inskeep in the course of his excavation at Nelson Bay Cave. Included in this collection were eighty five specimens that were found to be lacking in perforations or otherwise unfinished or incomplete as well as a range of perforated and differently

shaped varieties. There were two hundred and two *Glycymeris* shell pendants, of which one hundred and seventy six were perforated. *Glycymeris* is a genus of bivalve mollusk inhabiting the sandy and gravelly shores off the southern and eastern coasts of South Africa. The empty shells, often with holes drilled into their apices by carnivorous gastropods, can quite frequently be found washed up on beaches. These would have been readily available to the inhabitants of southeastern coastal sites including Nelson Bay Cave, Matjes River Rock Shelter, as well as Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. Definite clustering of these artefacts within the younger layers of Nelson Bay Cave was commented upon by both Inskip and Ludwig, with the latter reporting that ninety nine percent of *Glycymeris* pendants were found in stratigraphic units 43, which dates from about 2970 BP, and above. Perforated *Glycymeris* pendants were present but in much smaller numbers at the site of Matjes River.

The Nelson Bay Cave assemblage also included a number of what Inskip and Ludwig refer to as "shaped shell pendants". Generally manufactured on nacreous shell fragments from *Turbo sarmaticus* and possibly *Oxysteles sinensis*, they are often found to bear two, or in some cases up to three or four perforations (Ludwig 2005). Three distinct types of shaped shell pendants were recorded by Inskip, and differ from one another in regard to their general shape and form as well as in the presence or absence or type of edge-nicking observed on the nacreous face. No examples of either perforated or un-perforated *Glycymeris* shell are to be found in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection. Two specimens of perforated marine shell of other species were recovered from the site. These include a large *Patella tabularis* roughly perforated at the apex, and another large bivalve shell, possibly *Lutraria lutraria* or otter shell, with a very smoothly drilled hole. Both were found unbroken and complete on the surface layer of the deposit. Furthermore, no shaped shell pendants are included among the material from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. The dearth of shell pendants or perforated shell in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection is quite surprising, given the great abundance and variety of these decorative objects in the assemblage from nearby Nelson Bay Cave. The presence of just two perforated shells found on or near the surface of Hoffman's excavation and the almost complete absence of shell artefacts in the material collected from the layers beneath suggests that they were most likely destroyed, or simply not recognized and therefore discarded, as a consequence of the rather rough excavation techniques employed by Hoffman and his co-workers. If this was not the case, their absence is indicative of a significant divergence between Hoffman's/Robberg Cave and Nelson Bay Cave, which requires further investigation.

In addition to the shell artefacts already described, Inskip also recovered a significant number of perforated *Donax serra* shells, into which holes of approximately 15mm in diameter were punched or drilled from the inside, near to the apex of the shell (Ludwig 2005). Ethnographic accounts suggest that these may have served as items of personal ornamentation, and were strung together into necklaces or dancing rattles. A few of the specimens from Nelson Bay Cave exhibit scraper margins as well as perforations. In conjunction with Parkington's recovery of *Donax serra* scrapers from the site of Elands Bay Cave on the west coast, this indicates that they could have served a utilitarian as well as decorative function, with the perforations serving as grip or thumb holes (Ludwig 2005). In contrast to

the *Glycymeris* and other varieties of shell pendants, perforated *Donax* tend to cluster in older layers of the Nelson Bay Cave assemblage, with a sizeable percentage recovered from units 106 – 148. They appear to have been absent between units 68 and 20, which correspond with the occupation of Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. The absence of perforated *Donax serra* shells from the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection is therefore to be expected. A number of un-perforated specimens are included among the curated material, but they are considerably less abundant than the other species represented in the shellfish assemblage.

Shell crescents, that is, segment shaped artefacts of unknown function manufactured out of *Perna perna* shells, were recovered from the mid to later Holocene levels of a number of sites along the southern Cape coast including Nelson Bay Cave, Matjes River Rock Shelter and Die Kelders. They tend to be somewhat too standardized and homogenous in both size and shape to have been the result of accidental natural breakage, and are regarded instead as the products of intentional manufacture and design by the inhabitants of these sites. There is nevertheless still no definite conclusion as to which of the edges represents the working edge of the presumed tool, while the lack of any observed mode of fixation suggests that they would have been impractical as items of personal adornment or ornamentation (Ludwig 2005). Two hundred and forty specimens were recovered from Nelson Bay Cave, although they were excluded from Inskip's report on the excavated material. Ludwig found that shell crescents are most numerous in the levels postdating 3300BP, and that the majority of these items were recovered from units 28 to 53, dating to between approximately 2560 – 3020 BP. The inverse of this pattern was observed in the Matjes River material, where the majority of shell crescents were recovered from Layer C, which predates 3300BP. Only two complete specimens and no incomplete or broken ones are present in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection. It is uncertain whether these were the only such shell crescents actually recovered by Hoffman and his team at the site, or if they are the only specimens which happen to be included in the collection.

Among the numerous pendants recovered by Inskip from Nelson Bay Cave were five which were manufactured out of ostrich eggshell. All were derived from stratigraphic units younger than 3000BP, and grouped fairly closely together. The Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection contains no ostrich eggshell pendants, but it does include two fragments of ostrich eggshell, one a burned, un-worked fragment derived from the middle section of the deposit and the other also burned, but decorated with incised lines. Since ostriches are arid environment birds which are not found in the vicinity of Plettenberg Bay today, these items were probably traded in from some distance away. At Nelson Bay Cave, there is substantial evidence of pendants and bowls made from what Inskip referred to as tortoise shell. He furthermore suggested that since terrestrial tortoises are seldom to be found in the vicinity of the site, these items were imported as finished objects from regions to the north or east of Nelson Bay. It has subsequently been pointed out by Royden Yates that the various worked and un-worked fragments are thinner and flatter than tortoise carapace, and are in fact derived from the carapace of the fresh-water turtle *Pelomedusa subrufa*. This species could have been found in either the Piesang River or the Keurbooms/Bietou estuary, where they would have been available to the

occupants of both Nelson Bay Cave and Matjes River Rock Shelter (Ludwig 2005). Inskeep's description of the material excavated from the site includes a large carapace bowl found in association with Burial Five, as well as seventy six fragments of shell, thirty four of which showed partial or complete perforations, or the presence of grinding and/or smoothing on the edges or inner surfaces (Inskeep 1987: 169). In terms of the distribution of these fragments within the deposit, it was noted that they were absent from layers below unit 58. Ludwig noted that only two fragments of perforated turtle carapace were present in the collection from Matjes River, which was significant because it contradicts the general trend of most categories of decorative artefacts from Matjes River being more variable than their counterparts from Nelson Bay Cave. He suggests that the anomalous case of turtle shell could be the result of poor excavation practices at Matjes River Rock Shelter. A similar explanation could be invoked to account for the absence of perforated *Pelomedusa* carapace in the collection of material from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. A few fragments of turtle shell were found in the upper, middle and lower levels of the deposit. Only two from the upper levels show evidence of having been worked or ground.

A number of differences and similarities between the curated material assemblages from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave and Nelson Bay Cave can tentatively be noted. The post-Wilton lithic assemblages from both sites are highly informal, consisting mainly of un-retouched flakes and utilized pieces of quartzite. Formal tools including backed scapers and segments are considerably less common in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection than in the Post-Wilton material from Nelson Bay Cave. Only a single microlithic quartz scraper and no examples of stone segments are included in the material from the former site. A similar abundance of grinding equipment and greater emphasis on ochre-staining are also evident in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave lithic assemblage. Decorative items in the form of shale palettes were present, but rare in relation to Nelson Bay Cave. With regard to bone artefacts, fewer bone awls and slightly more bone points are included among the material from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave compared to the contemporaneous levels of Nelson Bay Cave. This could be a result of excavator bias or may be indicative of differences in the relative importance of skin-working and hunting activities between the two sites. In addition to bone awls and points, relatively few bone spatulae, similar numbers of tubes/beads, and no bone rings are included in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection. In the marine shell category, no shell pendants and only two shells with deliberately made perforations are present in the collection of material from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. This is extremely surprising, given the wealth of these ornamental items recovered from Nelson Bay Cave. Also missing from the former assemblage are the large numbers of perforated *Donax serra* shells included in the Nelson Bay Cave collection. The Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection furthermore contains very little ostrich eggshell, either worked or un-worked, and only two fragments of ground *Pelomedusa* carapace. It is very difficult to tell, unfortunately, whether these differences and similarities in the material assemblages from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave and Nelson Bay Cave are in fact reflective of wider sociocultural similarities or differences among the Later Stone Age inhabitants of these sites, or whether they are merely the result of inadequacies in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection.

CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETATIONS

MATERIAL CULTURE AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN ARCHAEOLOGY: DEBATES AND APPROACHES

Ideas about the relationship between material cultural remains and ethnic or group identity has been central to the discipline of archaeology almost since its inception. The link between material culture and ethnicity is perhaps most explicit in the culture-historical approach which held sway up until the 1950s, where complete archaeological assemblages were equated with particular prehistoric groups of people. The spatial and temporal distribution of discrete archaeological cultures and “units” was taken to be a reflection of the corresponding distribution of past peoples, and as material evidence whereby the interactions among prehistoric groups and the diffusion of particular cultural traits could be reconstructed through the analysis of artefactual and other remains (Lipo *et al* 1997; Jones 1997). This approach has undergone significant revision in the light of numerous critiques and methodological and theoretical shifts that have occurred within the discipline of archaeology and broader subject of anthropology over the last several decades. Nevertheless, the relationship between material culture and ethnicity remains a topic of considerable interest and controversy among archaeologists and anthropologists, who have continued to view this relationship as having great potential in informing their reconstructions of prehistoric lifeways and understanding of the role of material things in complex forms of behaviour among human beings. Of particular importance in this regard is the “meaning” of stylistic and material cultural variation and the extent to which similarities and differences in and between archaeological assemblages can be interpreted as indications of prehistoric group relations, self-conceptualizations and interactions.

Hegmon (1992) and Jones (1997) have reviewed recent debates concerning the connection between ethnicity and material culture. These consist of four closely related components: the definition and nature of style, and where exactly in different objects of material culture style resides, as well as how style is related to ethnic and group identity and in what ways the investigation of style can be applied in archaeological studies of ethnicity and inter-group relations. The simplest and most widely accepted definition of the term “style” is that it represents a particular way of doing and manufacturing things that may be peculiar to certain groups of people in time and space (Sackett 1977; Hegmon 1992). This very general consensus among archaeologists ends here, however. There is considerable and often acrimonious disagreement over issues such as the properties and behavioural basis of style – for instance, whether style is an active or passive and more or less unconscious quality inherent in the formal or functional components of material culture – which of course has important implications for the interpretation of stylistic variation in archaeology (Hegmon 1992).

As a corrective to the earlier culture-historic approach, Binford (1965) proposed that culture is not necessarily shared; rather it is participated in, and participated in differentially, by the various

individuals and “social units” that make up cultural systems. In this context, culture is viewed as a multivariate phenomenon consisting of a number of differentially articulated and integrated components or subsystems which together constitute the “means of extra-somatic adaptation” whereby human beings function within their physical and social environments. He rejects the simplistic notion of artefacts as “equal and comparable traits” whereby the levels of social and cultural distance between different groups of prehistoric people can be assessed by means of the analysis of broad differences and similarities in their material cultural products. Binford distinguished between three different classes of material cultural remains, including “technomic”, “socio-technic” and “ideotechnic”, on the basis of the distinctive social-cultural domains in which they routinely function. He furthermore asserted that certain formal qualities which cannot be accounted for in terms of functional explanations effectively cross-cut these different functional categories. These stylistic attributes, which arise as a product of the enculturation process and may in some instances “become standardized symbols” appropriate to artefacts “used in specific social contexts” (Binford 1965: 206), nevertheless play a functional role in promoting group solidarity and providing a basis for group awareness and identity (Binford 1965; Jones 1997). Among the attributes frequently analysed in this way are the often culture-, time- and place-specific decorative motifs applied to archaeological ceramic vessels.

The views of James Sackett differ significantly from those of Binford when it comes to the interpretation of assemblage variability in archaeology. He rejects the strict dichotomy between formal, stylistic or “adjunctive” variation and functional or utilitarian variation, and regards them as essentially complementary. He coined the term *isochrestism*, derived from the Greek “equivalent in use” to describe the formal and/or functional attributes of material cultural objects that arise as a result of these objects being made and manufactured in more or less consistent and socially prescribed ways by artisans who have undergone similar enculturation processes, notwithstanding the existence of alternative, equally viable options. In this case, style becomes a passive, or rather a latent property of material culture, which, although it is often symbolically rich and ethnically-loaded, is not intended to deliberately signal group identity. In the main, material cultural objects tend to conform with and reflect standard patterns and practices of manufacture within the ethnically bounded contexts in which they are produced (Sackett 1982, 1986; Jones 1997). This is especially true of lithic artefacts, which can be grouped into distinct regional or local stone tool technologies on the basis of preferred knapping and secondary retouch techniques and raw material utilization. Sackett pointedly contrasts *isochrestic* variation with what he refers to as *iconic* or active style, which involves the self-conscious and intentional expression and signalling of ethnic identity. The latter type of style, according to Sackett, is by far the more unusual of the two, with the majority of formal and especially functional variation in material culture falling within the category of *isochrestic* variation (Sackett 1986).

The so-called “iconic approach” is evident in the work of Wiessner (1984), who, following Hodder and Wobst, perceives style as a form of assertive, nonverbal communication in terms of which important information regarding ethnic and/or personal identity is visually transmitted to members within and between social groups. In this case, style, if not in all then in a significant number of instances,

acquires an explicit behavioural dimension in the cognitive process whereby people seek to define themselves both as individuals and the members of particular social and ethnic groups by means of self-reflexive comparisons with other people and other groups. Rather than constituting a passive reflection of ethnicity or culture, so-called “emblemic” style is perceived as an active and effective tool for the articulation of personal and group identity and as a strategic resource for the negotiation and manipulation of social relationships and boundaries. Furthermore, the nature and intensity of this ethnic signalling may change with fluctuating socio-economic conditions, in terms of which social and ethnic boundaries are either maintained or re-negotiated (Wiessner 1984, 1985; Hegmon 1992; Jones 1997).

In order to demonstrate her assertions about the role of style in the negotiation and expression of identity, Wiessner investigated stylistic variation in two important components of the material cultural packages of the Kalahari San of Botswana and Namibia, namely metal-tipped arrows manufactured and used by men and decorated headbands produced and exchanged by women. The latter items in particular met with Wiessner’s proposed criteria for artefacts suitable as identity or ethnic markers: they combine a long-use life with high visibility in a number of different socio-economic activities and domains. Furthermore, a significant amount of time and effort is devoted to their manufacture, which provides artisans with abundant scope for stylistic expression. Different degrees of stylistic variation in beaded headbands were observed in and related to different contexts and spheres of social relations, including within and between bands, language families and regions (Wiessner 1984). Wiessner (1985) also identified instances, often associated with periods of ecological stress, where the purposive expression of ethnic or group identity was being deliberately held in check in order to promote solidarity and cooperation rather than individuality and differentiation. The similar use of certain cultural products by prehistoric populations as self-conscious expressions of identity is likely to have produced discontinuities in the distribution of these material cultural remains in the archaeological record. The theoretical position concerning artefacts and ethnic identity taken by Wiessner and a number of other researchers seems to encourage archaeological applications in terms of which stylistic variation in and the relative presence or absence of certain items of material culture can be investigated to gain insight into intergroup relations among past peoples. This does not imply, however, that similarities and differences in material cultural assemblages should be simplistically interpreted as indexical measures of social distance or relatedness (Wiessner 1984; Hegmon 1992; Jones 1997).

The so-called “practice theory” of ethnicity and material culture articulated by Sian Jones represents something of a compromise between the active and passive views of style expressed by Wiessner and Sackett, respectively. Jones’ ideas on human agency and ethnic consciousness are grounded in Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, which consists not of abstract or normative mental rules or structuring principles but of the “durable dispositions towards certain perceptions and practices which become part of people’s sense of self at an early age” and serve to structure their choices, actions and decisions and to shape their experiences of their particular social world (Jones 1997; Baumann 2004). In this context, material culture is seen as an “active constitutive dimension of social practice” which

simultaneously structures, and is structured by, human agency. Stylistic variation in material cultural components is therefore not merely a largely unintentional product of the enculturation process as implied in Sackett's *isochrestic* variation; neither is it always the result of deliberate ethnic signalling on the part of particular ethnic groups as proposed by Wiessner. Jones' definition of material culture as actively structured and structuring appears to lend itself once again to archaeological applications and interpretations. Nevertheless, like other researchers before her, she urges caution with regard to the identification of ethnic groups and social boundaries in the archaeological record on the basis of observed continuities or discontinuities in material cultural remains (Jones 1997).

MATERIAL CULTURE AND IDENTITY AT HOFFMAN'S/ROBBERG CAVE

In the case of Hoffman's/Robberg Cave, the existence of an economic difference between the Later Stone Age inhabitants of Nelson Bay Cave and Matjes River Rock Shelter has already been established through the results of Sealy's isotopic research. It is very likely that this translates into the existence of a social boundary between the two. Hoffman's/Robberg Cave is located only a short distance away from Nelson Bay Cave and is situated on the same side of the proposed geographical boundary of the Keurbooms/Bietou estuary. The later Holocene occupants of Hoffman's/Robberg Cave and Nelson Bay Cave were near neighbours and would have frequently encountered one another in the course of their subsistence and social activities. They may even have been the same group of people, camping at different times in different shelters on the Robberg Peninsula. That the sites of Hoffman's/Robberg Cave and Nelson Bay Cave were simultaneously occupied for at least part of the time between about 3300 and 2800 BP is suggested by the relatively dense accumulations of material cultural and other remains within this relatively short time-span at both locations. Given that the inhabitants of the sites consumed virtually the same diets, as is borne out by the results of carbon and nitrogen isotopic analysis, and practised similar subsistence strategies, it is highly likely that other aspects of their lifeways were also similar, and that they would have been conscious of a shared group identity. Judging from previous works concerning material culture and ethnicity, it follows that if this had been the case, the awareness of a common ethnic identity may have been expressed at either a conscious or unconscious level in the form of certain items which may have been preserved in the archaeological record.

There is unfortunately a limit to the interpretive statements that I can make about the material cultural similarities and/or differences between, and possibility of a shared identity among, the occupants of Hoffman's/Robberg Cave and Nelson Bay Cave, as a result of my serious doubts about the completeness of the curated assemblage from the former site. Many objects of material culture potentially indicative of similar technological traditions and common social identity, including formal lithic artefacts such as backed scrapers and segments and personal, ornamental items such as perforated and shaped shell pendants, are absent from the current collection of material from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. The presence in roughly similar or different numbers of items including grinding and skin-working equipment, respectively, could be indicative of involvement in and the ascription of varying

degrees of economic or social importance to particular activities by the inhabitants of Hoffman's/Robberg Cave and Nelson Bay Cave. The prolific occurrence of ochre-staining on 33.3 % of the upper grindstones, and to a lesser extent on other artefacts such as quartzite flakes, in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection may suggest that this substance had considerable symbolic significance for the occupants of the site in relation to their neighbours at Nelson Bay Cave, among whom the use of ochre appears to have declined during the Post-Wilton. The association between ochre-staining and symbolism and spirituality seems to be of considerable antiquity among prehistoric hunter-gatherers in the southern, southwestern and southeastern Cape, with foundations extending back into the Middle Stone Age. The occurrence of painted images on portable stones, and association of these and other items with graves, becomes considerably more numerous and marked during the Later Stone Age (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004). The relative or absolute absence of other utilitarian and ornamental objects, for example stone sinkers, marine shell and turtle carapace pendants, and bone rings from the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection could imply that the occupants of this site did not manufacture them or participate in the activities or behaviours with which they are associated. This would be rather surprising given the quantities of these items in the Post-Wilton assemblage from Nelson Bay Cave and may have significant implications for an analysis of group identity.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

My investigation of the curated material from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave was undertaken with two specific purposes in mind. The first of these was to provide a written account of the material cultural remains currently included in the collection. The second was to compare the archaeological assemblage from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave with that of the relevant Post-Wilton levels of Nelson Bay Cave. The Later Stone Age material from the latter site has already been extensively studied and documented by Inskeep, Deacon and Klein. More recently, Ludwig compared the late Holocene assemblages from Nelson Bay Cave and another extensive southern Cape coastal site, Matjes River Rock Shelter, in order to determine whether or not a material expression of the isotopic differences observed by Sealy would be evident in the assembled cultural remains from the sites. He identified a number of potentially relevant differences in the use of certain raw materials and frequencies of specific utilitarian and ornamental objects between the two sites. He interpreted the differences in more functional aspects of material culture such as stone tools as indicative of different technological traditions. Differences in what he termed highly visible decorative items were perceived as being related to the negotiation and expression of personal or group identity. My aim was to investigate whether similar patterns in the composition of the archaeological assemblages from Nelson Bay Cave and Hoffman's/Robberg Cave would be observed following the analysis of the latter material. If a significant degree of continuity in the material cultural remains from these two sites could be demonstrated, the case for territorial and socio-cultural separation among Later Stone Age hunter-gatherers living on opposite sides of the Keurbooms/Bietou estuary would be considerably strengthened.

I observed some broad similarities, as well as a number of glaring discrepancies, in the lithic, bone and shell components of the Nelson Bay Cave and Hoffman's/Robberg Cave assemblages. The lithic assemblages of the two sites are relatively similar. Both are highly informal, with an emphasis on unretouched quartzite flakes and grinding equipment. However, only a single microlithic scraper manufactured out of quartz and no stone sinkers are included in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection. These are noteworthy omissions, considering the presence of some re-touched tools and large quantities of sinkers in the curated material from Nelson Bay Cave. Ochre-staining on various stone items, particularly upper grindstones and flakes, is a recurring theme in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave material, and appears to have been more prolific at that site than at Nelson Bay Cave. With regard to lithic objects of supposed symbolic or ritual significance, two palettes, but no quartz crystals are included in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection. The bone assemblage from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave contains fewer awls, and considerably more points, than the Post-Wilton assemblage from Nelson Bay Cave, where awls were extremely numerous and points much less so. The Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection also includes bone tubes/beads as well as decorated and incised pieces in similar proportions to those recovered from Nelson Bay Cave. However, none of the bone rings found at the latter site and described by Inskeep are present among the curated material from

Hoffman's/Robberg Cave. These differences could be the result of unsystematic fieldwork practices and/or excavator bias on the part of Hoffman and his team. They could alternatively imply that specific artefacts absent from or occurring in very small numbers in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection were manufactured and used rarely, or not at all, by the occupants of the site. The marine and other shell assemblage is the cause for most of my concern regarding the completeness of the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection. Perforated pendants manufactured out of *Glycymeris* shell, perforated and shaped shell pendants, as well as perforated *Donax serra* are completely absent from the curated material from the site, although they were recovered in significant quantities from the nearby site of Nelson Bay Cave. Only two shell crescents are present in the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection, in comparison with the two hundred and forty specimens recovered from Nelson Bay Cave. It is logical to deduce that these items would have been easy to miss by a team of excavators using rather crude fieldwork techniques to excavate a shell midden deposit. Fragments of *Pelomedusa* carapace and ostrich eggshell are also absent from the Hoffman's/Robberg Cave collection.

My interpretation of the apparent similarities and differences between the archaeological assemblages from Hoffman's/Robberg Cave and Nelson Bay Cave is constrained by my doubts as to whether the curated material from the former site is at least reasonably representative of the range of cultural items manufactured by its prehistoric inhabitants. I have identified some broad similarities in the two assemblages, as well as a number of differences. These may be the result of the excavation practices employed by Hoffman and his team, or alternatively may reflect significant socio-cultural differences between the occupants of the two sites, contrary to my expectations. I think that such a conclusion would be premature, however, in the light of the probable incompleteness of the assemblage as well as the high likelihood that the late Holocene inhabitants of Hoffman's/Robberg Cave and Nelson Bay Cave had very similar lifeways and in effect formed part of the same group. A possible solution to this dilemma would be to re-excavate the site of Hoffman's/Robberg Cave in accordance with standard contemporary excavation practices. A comprehensive comparison of the material cultural remains from this site and those from Nelson Bay Cave could then be confidently undertaken. Finally, I am of the opinion that the approach whereby similarities and differences in certain aspects of material cultural assemblages are interpreted as indications of the conscious or subconscious expression of shared or different identities has considerable potential within the context of South African Later Stone Age studies. This is particularly so in the context of the southern Cape coast, characterised by rich assemblages consisting of a variety of material cultural remains which lend themselves to analyses of style.

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