Human skeletal remains from Wadi Hammeh 27 were discovered in four distinct settings. The first and most significant set of remains comprised a primary inhumation dug into basal travertine, underneath Structure 1 (Phase 4 in Plot XX F, Fig. 3.30). The second involved a partially-preserved multiple burial located underneath Structure 2 (Phase 4 in Plot XX J), found eroding from the Plateau’s western cliff-face. The third consisted of fragmentary skeletal remains, principally burnt cranial fragments, scattered throughout the Phase 1 deposits of the Main excavation area. Finally, human remains of indeterminate date, (‘Phase 0’ and possibly Natufian) were deposited in a pit that was dug into the uppermost Phase 1 deposits (Fig 15.1). Here, the skeletal morphology and pathology of the remains are described. Consideration is also given to a range of dietary and health indicators, and the cultural and mortuary contexts of the remains (Webb and Edwards 2002).

15.2 Summary of the Human Remains

15.2a Homo 1

The first burial is a single primary inhumation buried in a shallow pit (F. 8) in Phase 4 (Plot XX F Locus 5.5; Figs 15.2-4, underlimes three superimposed constructional layers (Chapter 3.13).

15.2b Homo 2-7

The second burial group comprises a secondary burial of (at least) six individuals, also buried in a shallow pit in Phase 4, which underlies the lowermost occupation phase of Structure 2 (Plot XX J; Figs 15.1, 5-6).

15.2c Various Unattributed Human Skeletal Elements

The third set of remains consists of several fragments of human bone, most of which are burnt human crania. The pieces are concentrated in the interior deposits of Structures 1 and 2 (Fig. 15.1).

15.2d Homo 8

The fourth set of remains includes teeth and bone fragments of an infant, dug into the deposits (‘Phase 0’) which over the final occupation phase of Structure 2 (Chapter 3.8; Fig. 15.1).

15.3 Context of the Primary Inhumation (Homo 1) in the Feature 8 Pit, Phase 4

The setting of the Feature 8 burial in relation to adjacent and overlying features is described in detail in Chapter 3.13. The oval burial pit (F. 8) was 1.13 metres long and 1 metre wide, cut into the basal travertine underlying Structure 2, with its major axis oriented east-west (Fig. 15.2). It was dug as two deposits; firstly Locus 5.4 and then the underlying Locus 5.5 which contained Homo 1. The individual was oriented west to east, and facing north. It was laid on its left side with its legs tightly flexed. The distal half of Homo 1 was found extending from the baulk during the excavation of the original XX F sondage during the 1988 season (Fig. 15.3), and the proximal half was excavated later in 1989, after the sondage had been extended to the south (Figs 3.26-30). The skeleton laid in the pit was badly crushed, in particular the pelvic and facial regions, and a limestone boulder had been placed directly over the thorax (Fig.15.4). Many artefacts and various raw materials were found in the pit fill. These included—in Locus 5.5—scattered charcoal, faunal remains, a small amount of yellow ochre and a single Dentalium
fragment—and in Locus 5.4 above—a basaltic quern fragment, a broken bone sickle haft (RN 120175; Chapter 12.4) and a worked piece of long bone. Apart from the large rock, it is not possible to identify these items as deliberate grave offerings, since similar frequencies of various artefacts occur throughout the occupation deposits.

15.4 Context of the Multiple Burial (Homo 2-6) under Structure 2 (Plot XX J)

During the 1984/1985 season numerous human bones were noticed eroding from the contact between the travertine bedrock and the overlying occupational deposits in the cliff section forming the western margin to Plot XX J (Fig. 15.5). Because the burial from was in imminent danger