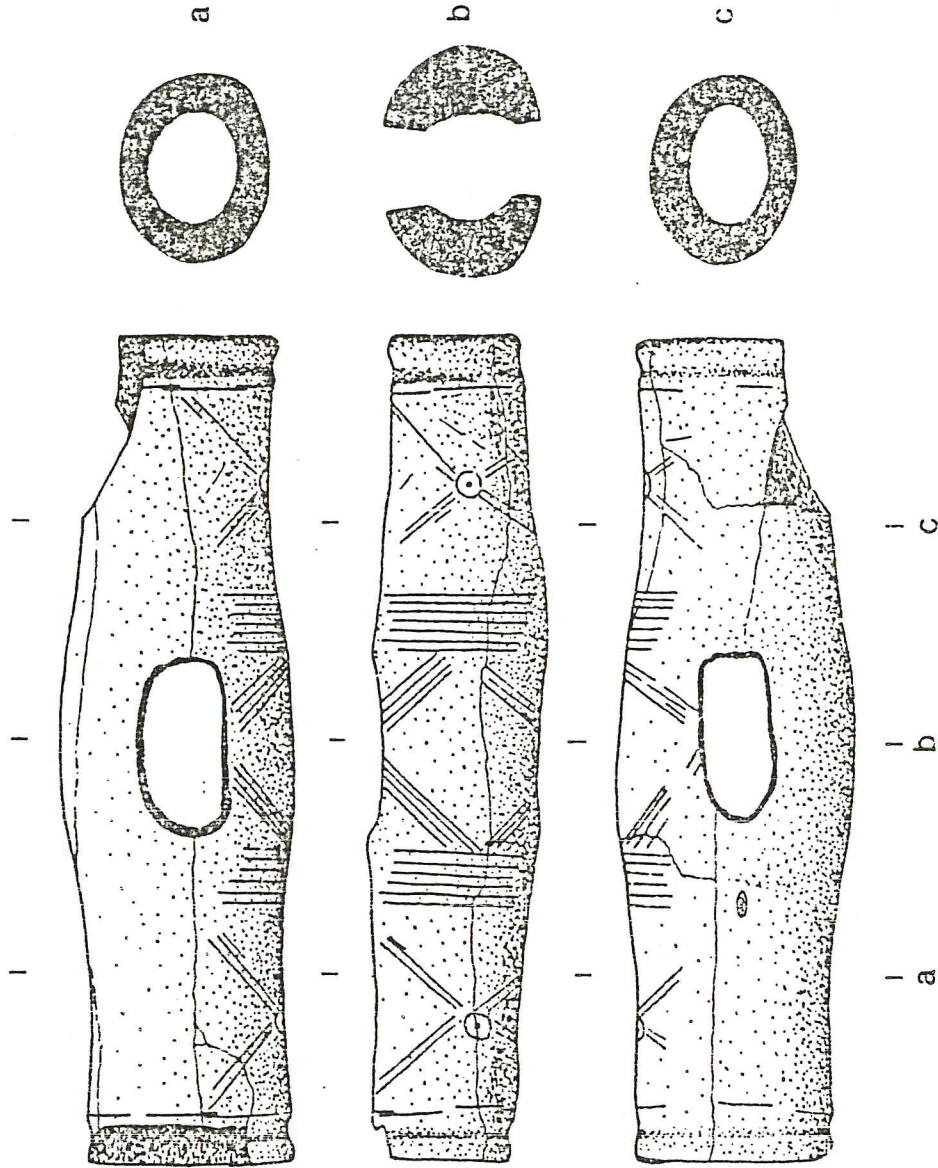
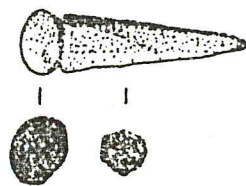


ORCHID CAVE, Llanferres  
Bone peg and toggle



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IDENTIFICATION OF BONES FROM ORCHID CAVE, MAESHAFN, CLWYD.

A preliminary examination of the bones revealed that many human bones as well as animal bones were present. All the human bones were segregated and their identifications are shown below. There has been no time for measurement or detailed examination of these bones, and the animal remains have received only a cursory examination sufficient to say that the species Ox, sheep/goat, roe deer, pig, badger, large dog/wolf and at least one rodent are present.

It became apparent that three human individuals were present and an attempt was made to assign the bones to the appropriate individual; thus three skeletons are described of which No.1 is a large male judging by pelvic remains, skeleton No.2 is a young person of undetermined sex, and Skeleton No.3 is represented only by 3 bones none of which are part of No.1 and No.2. Clearly several more human bones remain to be found and it is understood that a mound of excavated material has not yet been sieved. Also some very important artefacts have been discovered in the cave.

SKELETON NO.1

Mandible complete with 3 molars but broken in 2 places as follows:

- a) left side in front of M1;
- b) right side through the alveolus of M3. The fragments have been carefully joined together with clear Bostik and some standard measurements should be possible. The 3 teeth present are left M1, right M1 and M2. The alveoli are intact for all the teeth except that the bone is missing around the fracture at M3 right. The 3 teeth are all healthy, carry some concretion, and exhibit slight wear-flattening of the crowns.

Atlas

- 3 cervical vertebra.
- 2 thoracal vertebra
- 3 lumbar vertebra seemingly adjacent to each other.

Right clavicle.

Left and right scapula.

6 ribs and sternum fragment.

Left and right humerus.

Left and right ulna, possibly a pair but different in appearance, the left a dark colour from brown to black, and the right bone a fresh yellow colour. It is possible that the left and right arm did not reside in exactly the same matrix.

Right radius, distal end.

Right pelvis fragment, male and complete.

Right femur, damaged proximal end only.

Left tibia, both ends missing.

Metatarsus I left and II right.

Metatarsus III right.

Metacarpus I right and III right.

2 phalanges one probably fitting the Mt I above.

SKELETON NO.2

Note: some of the bones attributed to No.1 may belong to No.2.

Top rib (which could also belong to No.3).

Left clavicle and another clavicle fragment.

Left scapula.

Right humerus with proximal end missing.

Left ulna, small part of distal end missing.

Right radius, distal epiphysis missing

Left pelvis, fragment of acetabulum only.

Left femur, fragment.

Left patella.

Left tibia with proximal epiphysis missing.

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SKELETON NO.3

The following are bones which do not fit No.1 and No.2; they may come from a deeper level as they are yellowish an effect usually noted from burial in soil which later becomes covered with stalagmite. Bones actually chipped from stalagmite are also yellow in colour.

Right scapula, fragment only but not the same size as the left scapula of No.2.

Right humerus, proximal end missing and distal end damaged.

Left ulna, both ends missing and bone much gnawed by rodents. These bones provide quite definite evidence of 3 burials in the cave.

COMMENT

Gnawing by rodents is commonly found in human and animal bones buried in caves. This is a sign that the bones were first exposed to the elements before interment or that rodents were able to gain access to them after burial. The latter may be the case here as only one bone seems to be affected.

Strangely there are no upper skull fragments. Usually pieces of the cranium are found scattered with a human cave burial. The fragments may be present in the unsieved spoil heap.

The human bones do not all have the same appearance and it should not be assumed that all were buried together, a few years or a few centuries may separate them.

Taken with the unusual artefacts discovered, these remains are of considerable importance and further excavation should only be carried out in an ordered manner with full recording by drawings and photographs of all items uncovered.

Melvyn Davies

24th May 1981.

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