

Ogof Colomendy report 1976 by Mel Davies

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The report is dated December 29th 1976 (filename: Colomendy 1) and should be read in conjunction with a further report dated June 7th 1977 (filename: Colomendy 2), also available as a PDF download from the 'Caves of North Wales' website.



Ogof Colomendy in 2005

OGOF COLOMENDY -FURTHER ANIMAL REMAINS AND A THIRD HUMAN SKELETON

This report describes the bones excavated from this cave near Loggerheads, Clwyd, on 21st March 1976 by members of the North Wales Caving Club. Taken with my report dated 10 April 1976, it provides a full bone list for the cave. No dateable objects have been found, and the bones are contained in a loose, brown earth much disturbed by tree roots. A depth of 1.5m has now been reached in a narrow, steeply-descending tunnel. The entrance platform of the cave, where occupation evidence might be found, has still not been disturbed. The object of the excavation is to proceed into the

innermost recesses of the cave by removing as little as possible of the loose fill nearest to the ceiling. Since other evidence is lacking, it is considered most important in a dig of this sort that a full bone description, (with measurements where possible) be provided. A discussion follows at the end of the report. Measurements are the lengths of the fragments unless otherwise stated.

HUMAN BONES

A number of well preserved jaw fragments have been identified with the letters A, B, C, and D, and these are written on the specimens for reference:

Mandible A left side with 6 teeth intact thus, C P1 P2 M1 M2 M3; a stout-looking jaw with sockets for 3 incisors and part of a socket for a fourth. Age of the individual 18 to 30 years; it is not possible to be more precise as the M1 is worn flat, M2 has its cusps rounded, and the M3 has cusps unworn.

Measurements: CrH coronoid height, left, 62mm;

RB min.ramus breadth, left, 34mm;

ML max. proj. mandibular length, 99.5mm.

Mandible B a left-side fragment with 3 molars intact, sockets for 2 premolars and part of the socket for the canine present. Fits with fragment C of left ascending ramus (below). The bone was broken around the M3 root and it has been built up and mended with adhesive. It is a larger jaw than 'A' but insufficient bone is present for measurements to be taken. The wear on the teeth is such that M1 is worn flat, M2 cusps are well worn and M3 cusps are slightly worn.

Ascending Ramus C, left fragment, maximum length 59mm and it fits the mandible B fragment.

Maxilla D, left fragment with 6 teeth intact, thus I2 C P1 P2 M1 and M2. Part of the socket present for M3 and I1. All the teeth show considerable wear, the incisor having proceeded beyond the blunted edge stage. This fragment does not fit either mandible 'A' or 'B', and is, in the opinion of dentist Mr. Robert Shaw, significantly different from them in tooth colour. Hence 3 individuals are represented by these jaw fragments.

Mandible fragment, being the proc. articularis, right, 32mm long, a small individual.

Teeth: the following teeth, un-attached, have been identified:-

Mandible: incisor, very worn; incisor well worn and of small size not fitting mandible 'A', but could be from 'B' as colour is similar.

Canine, right, matching mandible 'A' with groove on the buccal side one third the way down the exposed enamel surface. The groove has not penet-

- rated the enamel. Similar groove in 2 teeth in mandible 'A', viz. C and P1.
 Canine, left, worn to a straight edge; not matched.
 Canine, possibly mandibular, not much worn, very symmetrical in shape, with groove as described above.
 Premolar, right, with broken root, possibly P2, not matching Mandible 'A'.
 Maxilla: canine, right, very worn.
 Premolar, left P2, worn.
 Molar, left M1, slightly larger than the similar tooth in Maxilla 'D'.
 Skull: fragments only, totalling 12 in number, size ranging from 78mm to 31mm
 Some have separated along the sutures, others show fracture. 2 of these fragments are grey in colour, one has black edging. Evidently both these pieces have been in a fire.
 Vertebra: 5 cervical;
 1 thoracic
 1 unplaced fragment.
 Ribs: 17 fragments.
 Scapula: right fragment, the articulation of prox. end only, 72mm.
 Humerus: right, complete distal end 21.2cm. Mended with adhesive.
 right, complete distal end, 15.3cm.
 small fragment of prox. end, side undetermined, 53mm
 Radius: left, prox. end fragment, 41mm., with some excavation damage;
 prox. end fragment, side undetermined, 35mm., lighter bone than the previous one.
 Ulna: left, prox. fragment, 40mm., a light bone;
 left, a damaged proximal end, 115 mm;
 right, prox. end 105 mm., partner to previous bone.
 Pelvis: fragment, 10.2cm.
 Femur: right, distal fragment, inner protuberance missing, 15cm.;
 stem fragment without articulations, side undetermined, 70mm.
 Patella: fragment, side undetermined, 37mm wide.
 Tibia: left proximal articulation, fragment only, 63mm wide;
 left distal fragment, nearly complete, 23.5cm,
 Fibula: stem fragment, side undetermined;
 left distal fragment; 42mm;
 right distal fragment, partner to previous bone, 66mm.
 Calcaneus: left, nearly complete bone, 70mm.

Metacarpal: 11 right, complete, 67mm;
 IV right, complete, 55mm;
 IV right, distal end missing, 48mm, . heavier than previous bone;
 fragment of prox. end, unplaced, 40mm;
 damaged distal fragment: could be a metatarsal fragment.

Metatarsal: I left in 2 pieces each 30mm long;
 I left, damaged at prox end, 66mm;
 III left, complete, 61mm;
 V left, prox. piece, 42mm;
 I right, 59 mm;
 III right, prox. piece, 37mm.

Phalange: 1, 42mm;
 2, 31mm;
 damaged piece, 26mm;
 nail bone, 22mm.

Unidentified human bone fragments totalling 7.

ANIMAL BONES

Five species are represented, Bos (a small variety of ox in this case), Ovis (sheep or goat), Canis (dog and fox are present), Sus (pig), and Cervus elaphus (red deer). The bones are listed by species as follows:

Ox: teeth - maxillary P1 left, freshly erupted and unworn;
 maxillary P1 right, worn flat (thus two animals are represented);
 metacarpus, right in 2 pieces totalling 11.1cm of eroded proximal end, from a small animal;
 metatarsus: possibly left, all distal articulation missing and only a small part of prox. articulation present; evidence of mid-stem gnawing;
 length 14.5cm, matches the previous Mc bone;
 nail bone, very eroded and soft.

Sheep or Goat : teeth - 3 incisors, 19 premolars and molars;
 mandible, fragment split to expose inside of alveoli, 58mm;
 mandible, left fragment with M1 intact, 90mm;
 humerus, right, with proximal end missing, 90mm;
 humerus, distal epiphysis;
 metacarpus, left, with distal epiphysis missing, 86mm;
 metacarpus, right, without articulations, 102mm (not a partner of previous bone);
 metacarpus, right, proximal piece, 53mm;
 metacarpus, right, proximal piece, 78mm, (3 animals represented here).
 metatarsus, right, fragment, gnawed prox. end, 61mm;
 metatarsus, left, 99mm;
 tibia, eroded bone, 72mm;

cuboid, right, width 22mm;

calcaneus, right, 52mm and a left 49mm, so not a partner.

Canis: teeth - maxillary incisor;
 mandibular right M1 which is considerably larger than fox, but only 3/4 size of wolf, so conclusion must be that this is a dog of fairly large size;
 mandibular right P4 which is adjacent to previous tooth, also dog;
 mandible, juvenile with I2 I3 P1 P2 P3 complete. If fox, the animal is under 4 months old; the bone is very white, 57mm;
 ulna, left fragment, 49mm;
 ulna, right fragment, 60mm;
 tibia, right, with distal end missing, 85mm;
 calcaneus, left, a yellow-coloured fragment;
 mandible fragment of fox with alveoli for 2 posterior teeth, 42mm.

Pig: Teeth only are present as follows:-
 2 incisors, 35 and 37mm;
 canine, mandibular, female, 47mm
 canine, maxillary, female, 33mm; All could be from one female animal.

Deer: Metacarpal, right, distal part, 67mm. This bone fits a proximal fragment found in the cave on Dec. 21st 1975, and described in the previous report. Together they make a complete bone of the Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*), length 27.1cm. Cracks seen in the proximal end do not extend into this new distal part, so the former was mistreated after the bone was originally broken into 2 parts.

Unplaced and species not identified, 29 vertebra fragments ranging in size from fox to ox. Completely absent from the collection are bones of fish and birds.

Bones anatomically positioned, but species not identified; 2 right scapula fragments; tibia of a juvenile large animal with proximal epiphysis missing; a pelvis fragment of about hare size; left scapula, ulna and ascending ramus of a mandible.

DISCUSSION

Since there was no change in the nature of the matrix found in the cave between the 2 excavations, and one bone found on the second occasion fitted a fragment found on the first, it is advisable to consider the complete bone list from both excavations.

It is clear that a third human adult individual is present. This had been suspected previously from tooth and femoral evidence. There are now 36 cranial fragments available plus fragments of a maxilla and mandibles, sufficient for one or more skulls to be partially assembled by a person with the necessary skill and time.

Again every one of the human long bones is fractured, something unusual in human remains from caves, and a point pursued in the first report. It was suggested that some post-mortem ritual fracturing was carried out at or near the cave before the dead were finally interred. An interesting fact emerged when the leg-bone fragments were laid side by side: there was evidence that, in the case of the tibiae at least, the point of impact producing the fracture was kept at a constant distance above the foot, as shown in the following table:

<u>Position of break in fractured human long bones</u>		
	Bone	Distance of fracture point measured upwards from the flat on the distal articular face
TIBIAE	Left No.1	11.5cm
	Left No.2	11.5cm
	Left No.3	14.0 -(this is a very slender bone)
	Right No.4	11.3cm
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	Bone	Distance of fracture measured downwards from the saddle alongside the Gt. Trochanter.
FEMORA	Right No.1	14.5cm
	Right No.2	25.5 (approx)

It is not possible to apply the theory of 'selected distance' fracture satisfactorily to the femora, as the distal parts (nearest the knee) are missing or disintegrated. Of course, further evidence is required before the theory of ritual fracture can become accepted, but that all these fractures occurred in the cave by natural means is statistically untenable.

With regard to the animal bones there is no reason to add to the 3 oxen already found in the cave; the number of sheep (or goats) must be increased from 2 to 3. The number of dogs remains at 2. There may now be a young fox in addition to the adult animal found previously. 3 pigs had been identified before and one of them, at least, was a female, so there is no need to increase that number. The Red Deer metacarpal fragment confirms the presence of this animal, but it is strange that the species should be represented by only one bone, out of the large collection of animal bones.

MEL DAVIES

29th December, 1976.