

Ogof Colomendy report 1977 by Mel Davies

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

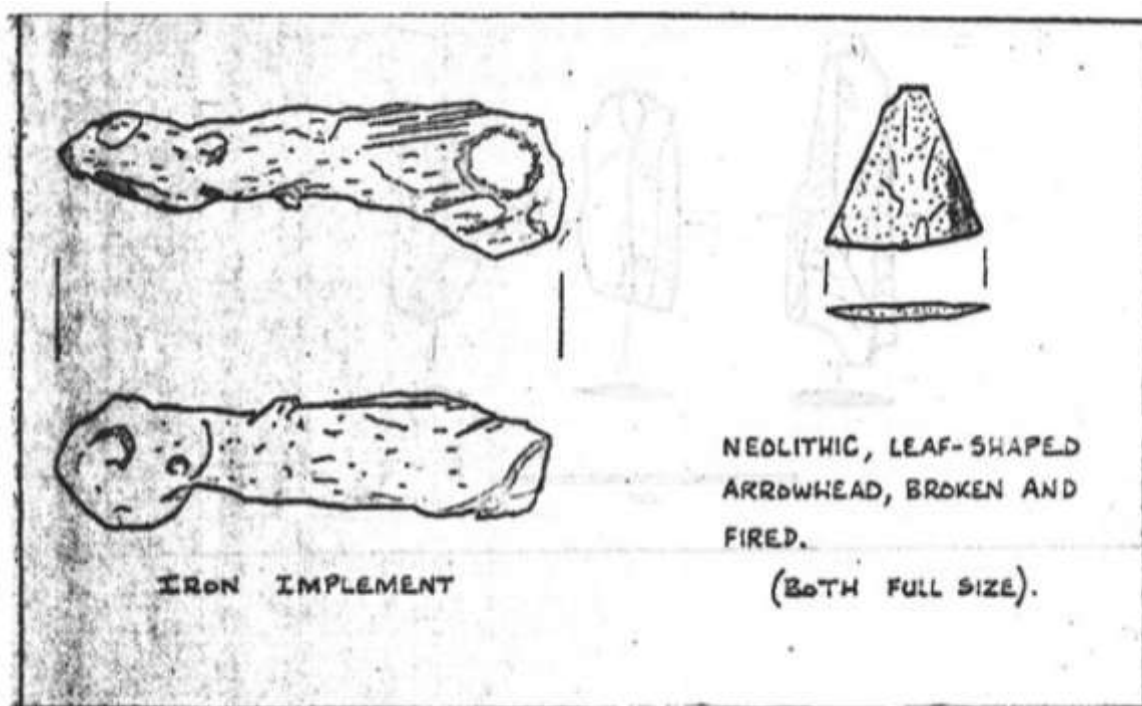
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OGOF COLOMENDY - EXCAVATION OF APRIL 1977 AND DATING EVIDENCE

(The previous article on this subject appeared in The Red Dragon, Journal No.4 Of 1977 -78 pp.18 to 23, by the same author.)

Further excavation was undertaken at the cave Ogof Colomendy, Clwyd, by eleven members of the North Wales Caving Club on 2nd April 1977. The disturbed, stony, brown cave-earth, so rich in animal and human bones (see my report dated 29th December 1976), gave way to a sterile, silty, yellow clay layer. Such a layer has also been noted, and in a similar position, in Ogof Tudno on the Great Orme near Llandudno, but it was absent in Ogof Pant-y-Wennol and Lloches-yr-Afr, two other caves near that town. It is taken to signal the end of the archeological deposits at a depth of 2m below the original surface.

As reported previously, excavation has been confined to opening a route into the inner cave, and the potentially rich entrance platform had been left undisturbed. There was evidence to suggest that the area containing the bones was separated from the outer cave by a stone wall. Indeed one large slab was found lying across the entrance in such a way that it could not have come to rest there naturally. Much of the outer cave has collapsed and it is likely Ogof Colomendy; Artefacts excavated with human and animal bones, 2nd Apl. 1977



that the habitation platform, if there is one, will be covered with the resulting loose blocks.

The bones excavated on 2nd April 1977 together with some bones found during the preliminary clearing work by club members, were identified, and a report is attached. Also found in the unstratified deposits were a flat piece of rusty iron measuring 56 x 43 x 5mm thick, and almost square in shape, some Buckley pottery, a fragment of clay pipe, unfortunately only from the stem, an iron implement shown in the figure, with a hole through it, and two pieces of flint, both patinated. One of the flints was a waste flake, but the other is a recognisable artefact, being a broken, leaf-shaped arrowhead of Neolithic provenance. The arrowhead has been examined by Miss Frances Lynch of University College of North Wales, and she confirms the dating. She has also noticed that the flint had been in a fire. It is drawn in the figure below. In view of the disturbance by roots and the lack of stratification in the cave, it is not possible to definitely ascribe a Neolithic age to the burials.

HUMAN REMAINS

Although no jaw fragments were found on this occasion, there were several loose teeth as follows:-

Incisors: 4 specimens, 3 of them with crowns worn flat. 2 of these are probably mandibular, but the third could be a maxillary lateral incisor. The 4th incisor has its crown worn very flat, which renders it unplaceable. There is also one tooth with its crown almost completely worn away and concave. It could be an incisor or a small canine.

Canines: Left mandibular canine with crown worn to a straight edge; also showing wear flattening on labial side of edge.

A damaged tooth, probably a mandibular canine originally worn down to a slightly hollowed crown, and then chipped in life. The upper edge of this fracture is smooth, and it removed the upper half of the labial side of the tooth, making precise placing difficult.

Premolars: A maxillary premolar, probably the second, as it is single-rooted, with cusps slightly worn, so it is difficult to determine which side.

A premolar, probably maxillary, but labial side chipped possibly in life. Wear has rendered occlusal surface almost flat.

Molars: Maxillary M1 right;

Mandibular M2 right, with fused root and cusps worn almost flat on the buccal side.

The human bones excavated were in very fragmentary condition as follows:

Skull bones: Left side, lower part of temporal bone and portion of mastoid pro-

cess; yellow colour, size 4mm.

Right side also lower part of temporal bone and portion of mastoid process; colour brown, length 50mm. These two bones, on the basis of size, could be from the same skull, but in appearance they are very different, one being yellow and the other brown. However this could be due to separation and different ageing conditions in the ground.

In addition there were 28 skull fragments ranging in size from 87 to 25 mm. Six of these could be joined together in pairs. Some pieces were 8mm thick. Clavicle; one bone appears to be represented, but it could be a large rib, length 57mm.

Vertebrae: Thoracic, full width 40mm, but only central part present.

Thoracic fragment 53mm. Also 2 thoracic fragments which may fit together, but both are eroded very much.

Scapula: proximal fragment of left scapula, 60mm.

Ribs: 6 fragments, 1 being a top rib fragment of 55mm; others range 69-35mm.

Ulna: right fragment without articulations, 63mm.; plus other possible ulna fragments.

Tibia: 2 right bones representing 2 individuals, but all articulations missing lengths 21 and 11mm. One bone was assembled from two fragments.

Fibula: a very flat bone was present 12.5cm long, which may be a human fibula but both ends were missing.

Metapodium: 2 very eroded bones, 30 and 32mm long which are either metacarpals or metatarsals.

Phalanges: one complete bone, 32mm long and 3 fragmentary ones.

On the basis of the tibiae, there were two individuals present. This is in accordance with the minimum of 3 individuals identified previously. In my report dated 29th December 1976, I measured and discussed 3 left and 1 right tibiae. It is possible that all 6 tibiae from the 3 individuals have now been recovered.

ANIMAL REMAINS

A total of 6 species have been identified in the collection as follows:

Ox:

Maxilla: left P1, P2, P3	right P3
5 molars	4 molars
Mandible: 3 left juvenile premolars	-
2 molars	1 molar
Plus many fragments of Ox teeth	

Skull fragment, left side, occipital region, 60mm.

Right mandibular hinge fragment, 80mm.

Left humerus, distal fragment, hacked, with traces of stalagmite.

Left ulna, ends missing, 105mm.

Left femur, hacked fragment with roots inside.

Left tibia, distal fragment with detached epiphysis now glued on; a large bone
71mm.

Right tibia, proximal end, yellow colour with small patches of stalagmite,
length 12.3cm.

Right tibia, distal end, 90mm.

Tibia, distal fragment with epiphysis missing, 77mm. probably left.

Left calcaneus, very eroded, 85mm.

Right calcaneus, eroded, head damaged, 90mm.

Left astragalus, 63mm.

Right astragalus, complete, length 57mm.

Cuboid tarsal bone, edges eroded.

Minimum number of individuals present is 2.

DEER:

Right astragalus, eroded, length 39mm.

The finding of only one deer bone confirms the scarcity of this animal in the collection, a fact commented upon in the previous report.

SHEEP?

The bones and teeth examined may be of sheep or goat.

Maxilla: 5 left molars

3 right molars

Mandible: 1 premolar

-

third molar

2nd and 3rd molars.

Unplaced incisors total 6 teeth; also unplaced, were a mandibular molar, a left and a right tooth, 4 deciduous teeth, and 2 worn incisors which may be sheep.

Right mandibular hinge fragment.

Left humerus, both articular ends damaged, 99mm

Left pelvis fragment, half of acetabulum only.

Right tibia, distal fragment, 55mm.

Astragalus bones - 3 left and 2 right.

Cuboid tarsal bone width 23mm.

Minimum number of individuals present is 3.

PIG:

Maxilla: left M1 and M2 in a fragment of jaw, and 4th premolar loose.

Mandible: M1 and M2 in a left mandible fragment with M3 not erupted, and only part of its alveolus present; age at slaughter nearly 1½ years.

Also unplaced maxillary incisor and 3 mandibular incisors. Female pig unplaced mandibular canine.

Right scapula, length 71mm, fragmentary

Minimum number of individuals is 1.

LEPUS: (Hare or rabbit):

2 right mandibular fragments with 4 & 2 teeth respectively, also an incisor each. Only bones from the rear of the animal were found in addition, Pelvis - 2 left fragments, one 52mm in size, the other complete with sacrum. 2 left femora, 82mm. 2 left tibiae. A right tibia probably partner to one of the previous bones, but proximal epiphysis missing. Right calcaneus. Minimum number of individuals is 2.

DOG:

A large number of remains of Canis species is present and on the basis of size, they are classed as dog rather than fox or wolf.

Maxilla; left canine	right canine
left 4th premolar	-
M1 large (broken)	M1 large (forming a pair)
M1 small	-

Also 3 maxillary incisors and an unplaced canine which might be mandibular.

Mandible; -	right P3
-	3 right 4th premolars
-	2 right 1st molars, one worn
left M2 in a fragment of mandible	2 right 2nd molars

Also 7 mandibular incisors and a mandibular canine, side undetermined.

On the tooth evidence of the 4th right mandibular premolars, at least 3 individuals are present.

Atlas, transverse processes missing, width only 48 mm.

Atlas, in 2 pieces and part missing.

Left scapula, fragment with articulation complete, 55mm.

Left humerus, distal fragment.

Left humerus, proximal fragment., 55mm, could fit previous bone.

Left ulna, proximal end complete, large animal, 87mm.

Right ulna, central part with articulation only, but not eroded and not a partner to the previous bone, 50mm.

Right ulna, very eroded proximal end, 77mm

Right ulna, proximal fragment, trace of stalagmite at its distal end, 56mm.

Right side of pelvis.

Right side of pelvis, acetabulum and right side of ischium complete, 66mm.

Left femur, distal fragment, 12.0cm.

Left femur, distal fragment, 54mm.

Right femur, distal fragment, 40mm.

Right femur, proximal fragment, could fit previous bone, 81mm.

Left calcaneus, complete 46cm. Also two other left calcaneus bones.

Right calcaneus, smaller than previous bone so not a partner, 40mm.

Left astragalus.

Left and right astragalus, length 32mm, a pair.

Left and right astragalus, length 31mm, a pair, smaller than previous dog.

8 metapodium bones and phalanges.

In addition to the dental evidence, bones present in triplicate are atlas (the third atlas was in the report dated April 1976), calcaneus and astragalus; thus a minimum of 3 individuals are present, the third by only a few remains.

Unidentified bones:

Skull fragment, fox/sheep size.

Skull fragment, perioticum, sheep size.

Right mandible fragment, and alveoli for 2 teeth, ox size.

Mandibular hinge fragment, ox size.

11 vertebrae fragments, 5 of them from large animals, and many rib fragments.

Humerus fragment, distal end.

Femur fragment, distal end, ox size, Right femur, proximal end, small animal, fox(?).

Tibia fragment, proximal end, sheep size.

2 pelvis fragments, ox and dog size respectively.

8 metapodium bones and phalanges, dog size, and fragment of phalange, ox size.

3 fragmentary metacarpal or metatarsal bones of small size.

Other bone fragments totalling about 430, ranging in size from 10.5cm downwards.

Melvyn Davies, Penmaenmawr.

7th June 1977.
