

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 9/86

WITCOMBE, GLOUCS. - THE HUMAN BONES

Janet D Henderson MA

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Janet D Henderson MA (Hons.) (Cantab)

Summary

Three small samples of human bone from this site were examined. Two of the samples consisted entirely of skull fragments, both most probably from adults. The third sample contained parts of the skull and lower body of an infant.

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Witcombe, Glos. - The Human Bones

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October 1986

Witcombe, Glos. - The Human Bones

Three small samples of human bone were examined in the Laboratory. Observations were made for information on sex and age and any skeletal anomalies or abnormalities. Details of the methods used and the results obtained by individual are given in the attached catalogue. Very little could be said about this material. Two of the samples consisted entirely of skull fragments, both most probably from adults (with the case of human bone sample no. 1 it was feasible that the material came from a large juvenile or sub-adult, whilst the sutural fragment provided an upper limit and thus an age bracket of 12-30 years). The third sample contained parts of the skull and lower body of an infant, who had died sometime after birth but before the age of six months. No further observations could be made on this sample.

Witcombe, Glos. - Human Bone Catalogue

HB 1, Bag 205, Ref. W 3037, AML No. 732158

An extremely small sample of human skull (this was illustrated by the fact that it weighed only 28g). The bone was fragmentary but it was possible to suggest that the pieces all came from one parietal bone.

Sex: -

Age: Probably adult although it was feasible that this came from a large juvenile or sub-adult. The appearance of the sutures confirmed that the individual was not older than a young adult.

No further observations

HB 2, Bag 789, Ref. W 4542, AML No. 8140831

5 fragments of human bone, all skull. The small size of the sample was again illustrated by its weight: 15g. 2 of the fragments could be identified as parietal, the remainder were unidentifiable.

Sex: -

Age: Adult, based on bone size and the appearance of the suture on one of the fragments.

No further observations

Burial No. 1, Bag 490, Ref. W 2651, AML No. 860274

Partial skeleton in fair condition, approximately 25% representing the skull and lower half of the body (skull fragments, R + L ilia, R ischium, R + L femora, tibiae, fibulae, fragments of tarsals and metatarsals). No attempt was made to attribute sex, owing to the inaccuracies of the methods currently available.

Age: Infant, birth - 6 months

This estimate was based on the size of the femora, tibiae and fibulae (see metrics below). The standards used were those of Ubelaker, 1978 and Stewart, 1979. On the basis of these it was suggested that death had occurred sometime after birth but within the first six months of life.

Metrics

Maximum diaphyseal length: -

	<u>Right</u>	<u>Left</u>
Femur:	79	79
Tibia:	71	72
Fibula:	68	68

No further observations

References

- Stewart T.D.: Essentials of Forensic Anthropology
Charles C. Thomas, Illinois. 1979.
- Ubelaker D.H.: Human Skeletal Remains
Aldine, Chicago. 1978.