

BONE HOLE, CHEDDAR GORGE, SOMERSET. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND PALAEOONTOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

An account is given of the various excavations of Bone Hole, Cheddar Gorge, and of the subsequent history and current whereabouts of the finds recovered from the cave. It is probable that upwards of 25 individuals (MNI 18+) were interred in the cave, reportedly including one crouched burial. The earliest dated burial comes from the Early Bronze Age and the latest from the 8th century AD.

INTRODUCTION

Bone Hole is situated at ST 4805 5472 (altitude 185 m) on the edge of the Mendip plateau and close to a small tributary valley which runs into Cheddar Gorge from the north, a short distance down-gorge from Black Rock Gate where the major tributary Velvet Bottom meets the Gorge (Figure 1). It forms a fossil part of an extensive drainage network bringing water south from Blackdown towards Cheddar Gorge and, ultimately, the Cheddar risings at the foot of the Gorge. The present entrance is a short unroofed section of north-south canyon passage. Although apparently open in antiquity, it seems to have become covered over, probably naturally, and remained so until its accident rediscovery in the early 19th century.

HISTORY OF INVESTIGATION

The earliest report of the discovery of Bone Hole, so far located, is a short note in the Taunton Courier & Western Advertiser Weds 11th April 1838 p2 col 4. This states:

The West Mendip Hounds lately ran a fox to earth in Cheddar Cliffs from whence he was dug out; and, in the process of removing the earth, two human skeletons were found. This is the more extraordinary, as it was full forty feet above the road. The skulls are in the possession of Mr. Marshall of the Bath Arms, Cheddar. Bath Journal.

Williams (2008) quoted a similar paragraph from the Somerset County Gazette, June 3rd 1837 and concluded that it was the first report of the discovery of Bone Hole. However, as we know from accounts of the August 20th 1838 British Association meeting (see, for example, the Yorkshire Gazette 25th August 1838 p3 col 2) that the finds were made in "March this year" it has to be assumed that either Williams or his source have misprinted 1837 for 1838. Although the B.A. minute book does not mention the fox being run to earth, the Yorkshire Gazette account does, thus confirming the conclusion that these sources do relate to the same

site. A copy of the Bath Journal from which the above paragraph was seemingly reproduced has not yet been located.

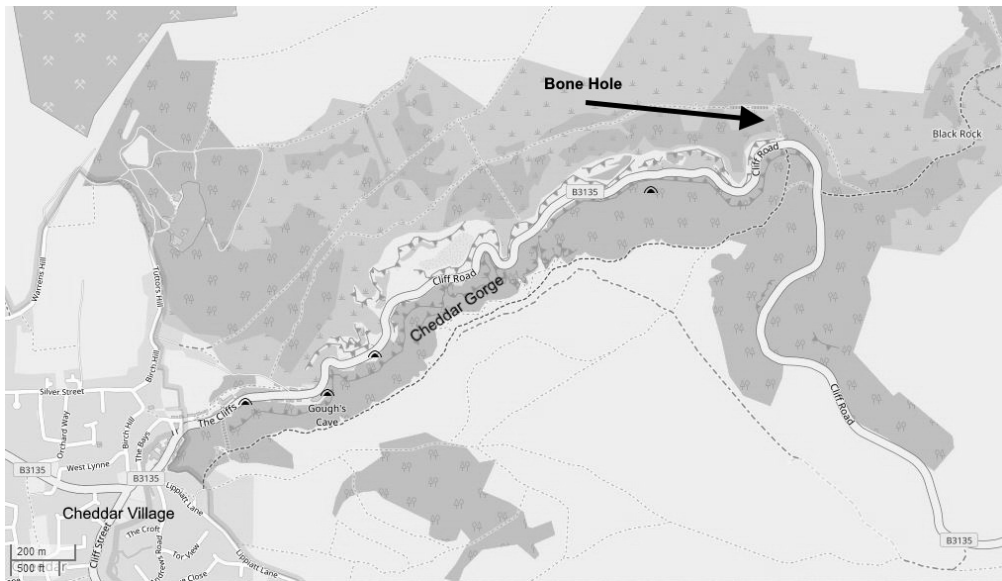


Figure 1. Location of Bone Hole, above Cheddar Gorge.
From openstreetmap.org.

The first excavation took place later in 1838 and an account was read to the British Association meeting (see above) and published by them later that year (Long, 1838). The excavator was a Mr. W. Long (see below). The account describes the location of the bones with a small amount of detail. Mr Long's paper reads as follows:

The bones were found in a detritus of soft mud or diluvium, as is the case in all the other ossiferous caves of this district, and so circumstanced as to be defended from the pressure of soil above, and excluded from the air. The human bones were found beneath the animal bones, so far as the cave has hitherto been searched ; a few remains of foxes and sheep were found at the head of the cave, but the bones to which attention was particularly drawn, were found in a mass, in a quite separate position, and easily distinguished from those of a more recent date. "In searching the cave, " says Mr. Long, "I found some bones imbedded in stalactite, as also one almost forming part (as it might be termed) of a rocky substance. It was the work of many hours to clear away the soil and rock to obtain any specimens of the bones, but I was successful in finding both human and animal bones, having been accompanied by the individual who had been most active in the former search. In the first instance there were about nine human skulls found together, with a large quantity of human bones, and with them were bones of bear, deer, ox and horse. By comparison with the bones in Mr Beard's extraordinary collection at Banwell, they are exactly similar and apparently of the same era. Some of

the bones and skulls fell to pieces and crumbled to dust on being exposed to air.

These finds and their subsequent history seems to have been largely unknown until recently. There is a comment (Balch, 1947) that at least some of the human remains found their way to Oxford and there was an un-sourced note on the entry for the site in the Mendip Cave Registry <http://www.mcra.org.uk/registry/sitedetails.php?id=727> that “Skulls found at site are in Dept. of Comparative Anatomy, Oxford University.” It is possible that this statement was based on a note published by this Society in 1924 (Buxton, 1924) which says

Secondly there is a calvaria from “Mr. Long’s Cave, Cheddar, 1838.” Little remains of this specimen, and unfortunately the anterior part of the frontal bone has been broken off, so that it is impossible even to obtain the cephalic index.

The author, L.H. Dudley Buxton was based in the Department of Human Anatomy, University Museum, Oxford.

A further account from the mid-19th century has also been found. In their book *A Monograph of British Pleistocene Mammalia Vol. 1. British Pleistocene Felidae*, Dawkins and Sandford (1866) state:

*In 1859 a small cave at the head of Cheddar Pass yielded a large quantity of bones. Prior to our examination, on its first discovery, some of the remains were deposited in the Museums of Bristol and Oxford. The list of Mammalia comprises, besides man, the wolf, fox, badger, wild boar, goat, roebuck, Bos longifrons, and horse. A human skull from the cave, preserved in the Oxford Museum, is very well developed, and may have belonged to a person of considerable capacity.**

**[footnote] We are indebted to Professor Phillips, M.A., L.L.D., F.R.S., for the following note upon this skull:*

—“The cranium is dolichol-cepahlic, elevated in the parietal region, very narrow behind, with a very distinct occipito-parietal slope, narrow and evenly convex in the front; substance thin; individual young, probably female. This cranium most nearly resembles one from Llandebie (now in the Oxford Museum), which is filled with stalagmite, and was accompanied by bones of elk, bear and Bos longifrons.

The dimensions are—

<i>Length</i>	.	<i>in inches</i>	7.22
<i>Breadth, parietal</i>	.	“	5.32
“	<i>frontal</i>	“	3.75

“The last measurement is taken along the supraciliary line, for it is hardly a crest in this individual.

“Do you ask what race of men this belonged to? I answer that I have seen plenty of men and women with such crania in the south of England and South Wales.” –Oxford, Sept. 1, 1865.

There is no known excavation in Cheddar between 1838 and 1865 which yielded such remains and the statement about remains being deposited in Bristol and Oxford matches it to Bone Hole. Further confirmation comes from a note in Dawkins’ paper on the caves of Burrington Combe (1864) which briefly describes a cave that he explored “near the top of Cheddar Pass.” This exploration took place in 1859 and Dawkins gives an accurate description of the entrance to Bone Hole. The date of 1859 therefore relates to Dawkins’ own exploration and not to Long’s, and there is no evidence that further specimens were removed at that later date. It may also be the case that the skull was damaged while in Oxford at some point between 1865 and 1924. This is hardly surprising given Long’s (1838) comment on the fragility of the specimens. The faunal list is commented on below.

The collections from the Department of Comparative Anatomy have been incorporated into the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. They do not appear in their online catalogue and enquires discovered that the calvaria from Mr Long’s Cave, along with human skulls from Aveline’s Hole and the Uphill caves, in fact all the specimens mentioned by Buxton (1924), were transferred to the Natural History Museum in London in 1946.

No further recorded excavations took place at this site during the remainder of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. The site was apparently visited in the course of a six-day excursion to the Mendip Hills by the Geologists’ Association in August 1890, during which the cave was used to illustrate a discussion on various theories of gorge formation in limestone. On this occasion, H.H. Winwood used the name “the Dawkins cavern” (Winwood and Woodward, 1890). This name has only once been found in use elsewhere, in the Mendip Caving Group’s (MCG) Logbook. Figure 2 shows the entrance of the cave as it was in 1896, not long after that visit. The cave was also visited by members of the UBSS in 1923/4 but all that they recorded was:

Bone Hole, Black Rock, has been visited. This was probably used as a Palaeolithic dwelling, but the top layers were found ransacked. (Adams, 1924)

In conversation with H.E. Balch, Victor Painter the long-time head guide at Gough’s Cave reported that around the end of the 19th century, the site was mined for stalagmite which was cut into ornamental slabs for sale to visitors. Painter stated that he remembered seeing at this time “an undisturbed human jaw, which was left where it lay.” (Balch, 1947, p56). Reeves (2013) described seeing shot holes which presumably date to this time.

Between 1967 and 1976, members of the MCG carried out excavations in Bone Hole (Cox, 1976). Their finds were not fully described at the time, for a number of reasons, and were dispersed into several places. They have, however, now been collected together in Wells and Mendip Museum and fully catalogued by Hannah Bennett (Williams, 2008). No detailed research has been undertaken subsequently, but the finding of some apparently Iron Age pottery sherds and an apparently early Bronze Age beaker gives a broad indication of the periods during which this assemblage was emplaced, though we have little indication of the processes involved. Reeves (2013) describes finding disarticulated human remains, including a juvenile skull seemingly with the complete skullcap intentionally removed, and a ‘crouch-burial’ in an alcove near the bottom of Skull Slope (Figures 4 and 7).

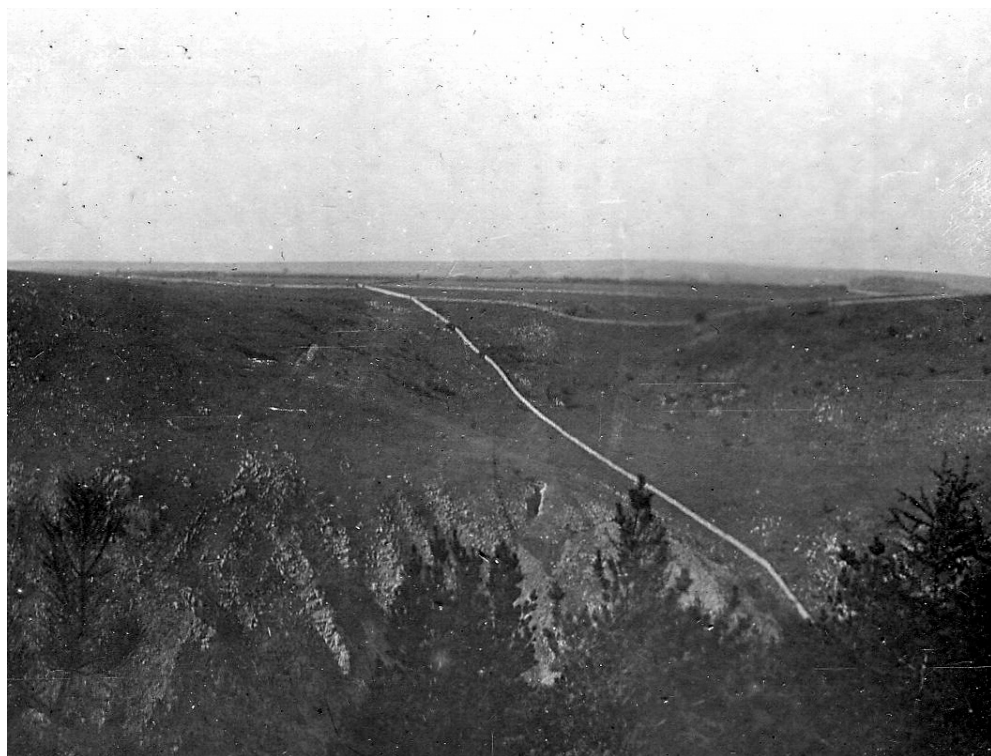


Figure 2. *The entrance to Bone Hole in 1896, seen from the far side of Cheddar Gorge.*

Photo from the Balch collection,

reproduced by kind permission of Wells and Mendip Museum.

Figures 4 and 5 are from the 1976 report and gives a broad outline of where the MCG excavated. Although the first of these indicates “William Long’s Cave” it is not now possible to be certain as to exactly where Mr Long’s finds were actually made. Cox (1976) describes the MCG diggers reopening a trench “across the cave at the location of the Flake Dig” but it cannot be certain that this was the work of Long. For the later finds, in most cases it has been possible to attribute finds to specific areas within the cave. Appendix 1 gives Bennett’s 2007 list of excavation areas, as described by Cox (1976) along with the specimen numbers attributed to them. Unfortunately, the fact that this dig was not carried out to modern archaeological standards means that no small finds or environmental information were recovered. According to the MCG’s log, the Flake Dig was backfilled by Arthur Cox and Bernard Reeves in November 1975, presumably for safety reasons..

In recent years, the cave has been further extended by digging, its current surveyed length is some 438 m, but no more archaeological collections have been made.

THE 1838 FINDS

By the time of the 1960/70s excavations, it seems that little was known of the whereabouts of the earlier finds, save the note about some human bones possibly being in Oxford,

which is now known to no longer have been the case (see above). In 2000, however, a chance find was made of some human and animal bones labelled 'Cheddar Cave' during a reorganisation of the basement archaeology store in Bristol Museum and Art Gallery. This surprising discovery was made more interesting when the bones were unpacked. An almost complete cranium had been stuffed with newspaper when packed away. When the pieces of paper were removed, they were seen to contain reports of the siege of Verdun and the battle of the Somme. It would seem that they had been packed away in 1916¹. The question then was to determine their site of origin.

The Bristol Museum called on the Natural History Museum, in London, for assistance as it was possible that these remains were from Gough's Cave, in Cheddar which were believed to have gone astray. The bones were therefore examined by the late Roger Jacobi, then working on the Natural History Museum's *Ancient Human Occupation of Britain* project. Roger considered them in conjunction with the animal remains and expressed his opinion that they were probably Neolithic in date and therefore did not come from Gough's Cave. There was only one known assemblage from Cheddar Gorge that fitted with them being of probable Neolithic date and also having been excavated before 1916 and that is Bone Hole.

Subsequent research amongst the Bristol Museum's archives has found documentary evidence that the assemblage was, indeed, from Mr Long's Bone Hole and was gifted by him to the Museum in 1840. Some of the material is recorded as having been on display in 1907, but it was all packed away in 1916, during the First World War. Ironically, this means that it survived the Second World War air raid of November 24th/25th when the building took a direct hit and most of the material on display was completely destroyed. The only post-1916 reference in their records is to the collection being divided in 1923 when the faunal material was transferred to the care of the Zoology collection.

WHO WAS Mr LONG?

Who then were the excavator and donor of these bones? Were they the same person or two different people? Later writers, such as H.E. Balch (1947), have taken it that the 1838 excavator and 1840 donor are the same person. Balch named him as William Long. The late Roger Jacobi, when examining the faunal material at the Bristol Museum, held, however, that it was 'Walter Long' (*pers. comm*). The donation, in April 1840 of some of the excavated bones, made to the forerunner of what is now the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, is clearly recorded in their surviving donors' register as 'Walter Long', although the labelling on the bones themselves only says 'Collection of Bones from Cheddar Cave'. We cannot know his reasoning but the name Walter in their contemporary donors' register would be persuasive.

The 1838 excavations of the 'Bone Hole' cave in Cheddar took place on land owned by a man named Long, part of one of the six Cheddar Manors², of which he possibly held the Lordship. Balch says the paper was read 'by William Long, who I think was the owner.' but does not give his reasons for this belief. (The paper was actually read by the meeting secretary, as Long was not present.) An alternative name for Bone Hole is 'Mr. Long's Cave' (Buxton, 1924).

¹ At this time, the Upper Museum Room (geology) was cleared to become a 'Soldiers Room' to entertain convalescents. Presumably these specimens were put into storage as part of that clearance.

² Cheddar (aka Cheddar Episcopi), Cheddar Fitzwater ; Cheddar Berkeley; Cheddar Hanham; Cheddar Vicars and Cheddar Parsonage Manors

The identity of the Walter Long, recorded as the donor, is the easier task. It is likely, in early Victorian England, that it would be the owner of the land from which the bones were recovered making the donation or else it was done with his permission. As can be shown, the owner of the cave was a Walter Long.

A paper read at the 21st annual meeting of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History (SANHS) (Serel, 1869, 32.) states:

...Cheddar Hannam was owned by the great family of Cheddar. In late years the manor, stripped of a considerable part of the lands formerly held with it, came into the possession of Mr. Walter Long, whose descendent is still the owner.

This discounts a Walter Long born in 1788, who is the father of that William Long whom we believe to be the excavator (see below), since he was still alive himself in 1869, dying only in 1871. It does fit Walter Long of Rood Ashton (1793-1867), the ‘descendent’ being his son Richard Penruddocke Long (1825-75) (Nicol, 2016).

Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre hold the family and estate papers of The Long Family of South Wraxall and Rood Ashton, Wiltshire. These papers include several estate maps of Cheddar and the Cheddar Gorge which confirm that the north edge of the Gorge, up to and including Piney Sleight, where Bone Hole is located, was owned by the Long family, including Mr Walter Long, as

part of very extensive land ownership throughout Cheddar from the eighteenth century until sale in 1876. There is a comprehensive map of the Estates of Walter Long Esq. dating from 1816 where the whole area is clearly marked as belonging to Walter Long³. Other estate maps postdating the 1839 Tithe Commutation Act map (which is almost contemporary with the



Figure 3. *Photo of Long's Cave: Looking towards the surface from what was probably the part of the cave excavated by Mr Long. The way on to "Skull Slope" is through the gate just below the figure, The Flake Dig, now backfilled, is just below where the photographer is standing*

Photo © E. Waters.

³ Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre - Cheddar Estate Papers of the Long Family of Rood Ashton, reference 515/89/2.

excavation) use the plot/holding numbers used by the Tithe commissioners. This Tithe Map and the accompanying apportionment book show that Piney Slight, the area leading from the fields above the north edge of the gorge to the gorge bottom, within which Bone Hole is located, plots numbered 1164-1169 inclusive, all show that Walter Long Esquire is the Freeholder, the land then being tenanted and occupied by James Stevens. An earlier 1786-96 rent roll for the Manor of Cheddar Hannam has a Jos. Coomer paying Manorial dues of 19s 6d annually to Mr Walter Long of South Wraxall and Whaddon (1712-1807) (also known as Walter Long of Bath, since he spent so much of his time there) as the then tenant of what is now Piney Sleight farm⁴. This earlier Walter Long is from a different line of the same Long family (Nicol, 2016, 247-54). On his death in 1807, aged 95, he was unmarried and childless. He bequeathed⁵ most of his property to the sons of his cousin, Richard Godolphin Long of Rood Ashton, Wiltshire (1771-1835) with Richard himself as one trustee. Richard's son Walter Long (1793-1867) inherited these estates, on reaching the age of 21 in October 1814, including all the manorial land in and around Cheddar. It is this Walter Long, now resident at Rood Ashton House in Wiltshire, after the death of his father in July 1835, who must have made the donations of the faunal and human bones in 1840, as owner of the land on which they were found. He had no particular antiquarian interests, being principally a career politician, sitting as Conservative MP for North Wiltshire through seven Parliaments from 1836 until 1865.

Establishing the identity of the excavator is a harder task. The report of the excavations and finds at Bone Hole was sent to the 1838 British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) annual meeting, held that year in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It was read by the meeting secretary, in the absence of the author, at the Section C – 'Geology and Geography' meeting on Monday 20 August. Clearly written at the top of the entry in the original meeting minute book (now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford⁶) is 'Mr W^m. Long'. (Figure 6) This abbreviation for William was widely used and commonly understood in the nineteenth century and before. Contemporary newspaper reports of the meeting describe the author variously as Mr. Wm. Long (Dorset County Chronicle 30 August 1838, p2 c3) William Long Esq. (an anthology publication 'The Mirror...1838), although others describe him only as 'Mr. Long' (Newcastle Courant 24 August 1838) or W. Long Esq. (Carlisle Journal 25 August 1838)⁷. The BAAS 1838 Newcastle meeting Proceedings, when published in 1840, only refer to him as 'Mr. Long' in both the index and report. We clearly have two different people here though. The circumstances of the finding of the cave given in the original paper but not reflected in the Proceedings are given in contemporary newspapers. They date the discovery to March 1838 when a fox was seen to 'descend into the cavern, through a fissure' (Newcastle Courant, Friday 24 August 1838 and see above).

In the summer of 1880 an individual called William Long wrote two letters, dated 31 May and 5 June⁸ to the antiquarian William Boyd Dawkins. These mention Dawkins' help with work by the Axbridge branch of the SANHS, discuss his own antiquarian work on 'Abury'

⁴ Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre - Cheddar Estate Papers of the Long Family of Rood Ashton reference 515/85 Agent's Notebook, including a list of rents received from tenants 1786-96 by Walter Long Esq. as Lord of the Manors of Tarnock and Cheddar Hanham. Another map of his estates 'Plan of Walter Long's property at Cheddar reference 515/88aH (undated but 'mid-19th Century') and maps prepared for the eventual sale of the Cheddar property in 1876 (reference all continued to show this land as belonging to Walter Long and his heir until this sale).

⁵ The National Archives, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills PROB 11/1456 Lushington Quire, 108-161 Will of Walter Long Esq. 1807. Accessed via Ancestry.co.uk website.

⁶ Papers of the British Association for the Advancement of Science 1831-1872 B.A.A.S.304 – Minute book for Section C (Geology) Meetings 1837 to 1854 (145 leaves).

⁷ All newspaper articles sourced from the British Newspaper Archive website.

⁸ The original correspondence is in Buxton Museum & Art Gallery.

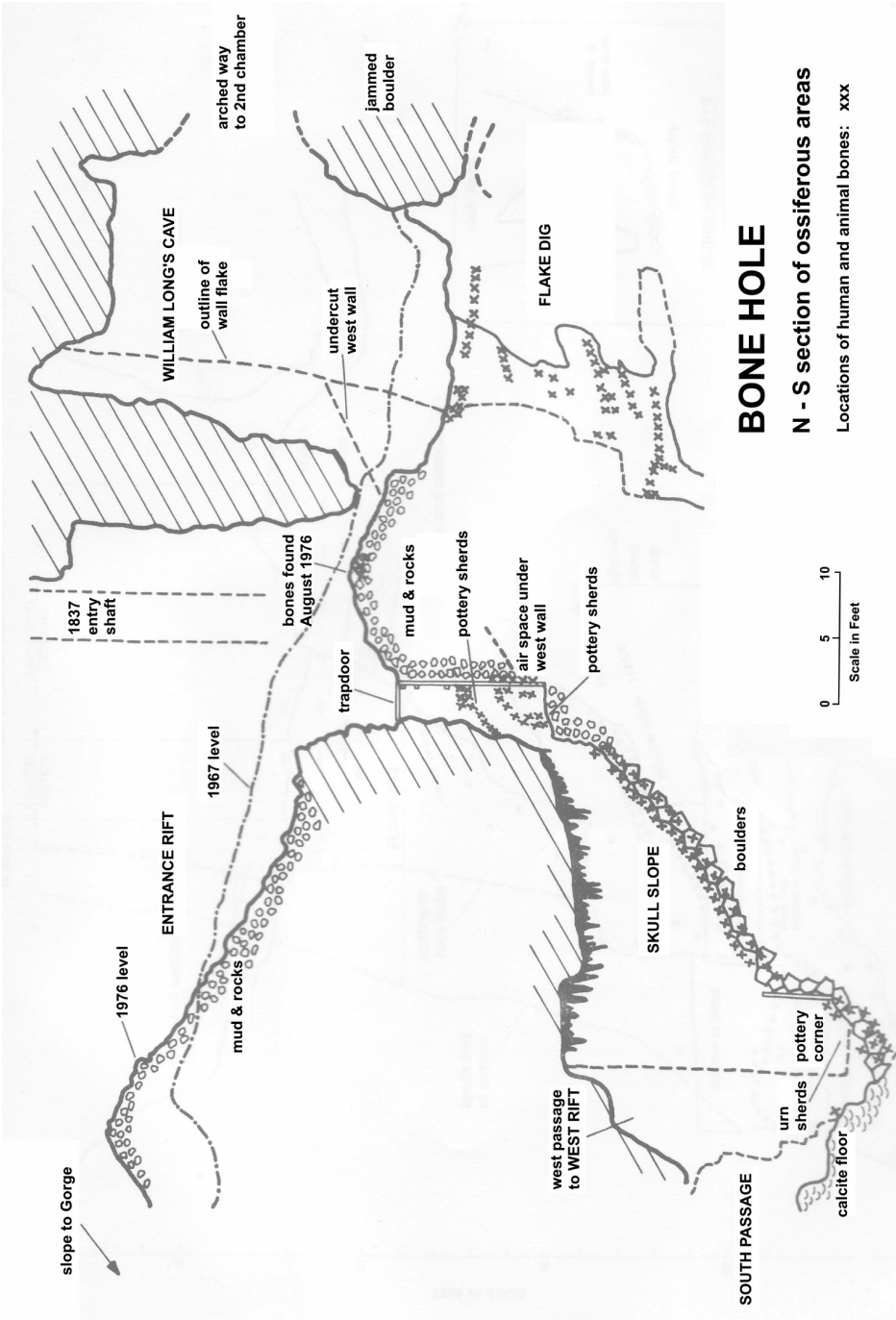


Figure 4. North-South section through the upper parts of the cave and the archaeological deposits. Re-drawn from Cox, 1976. Reproduced by kind permission of the Mendip Caving Group

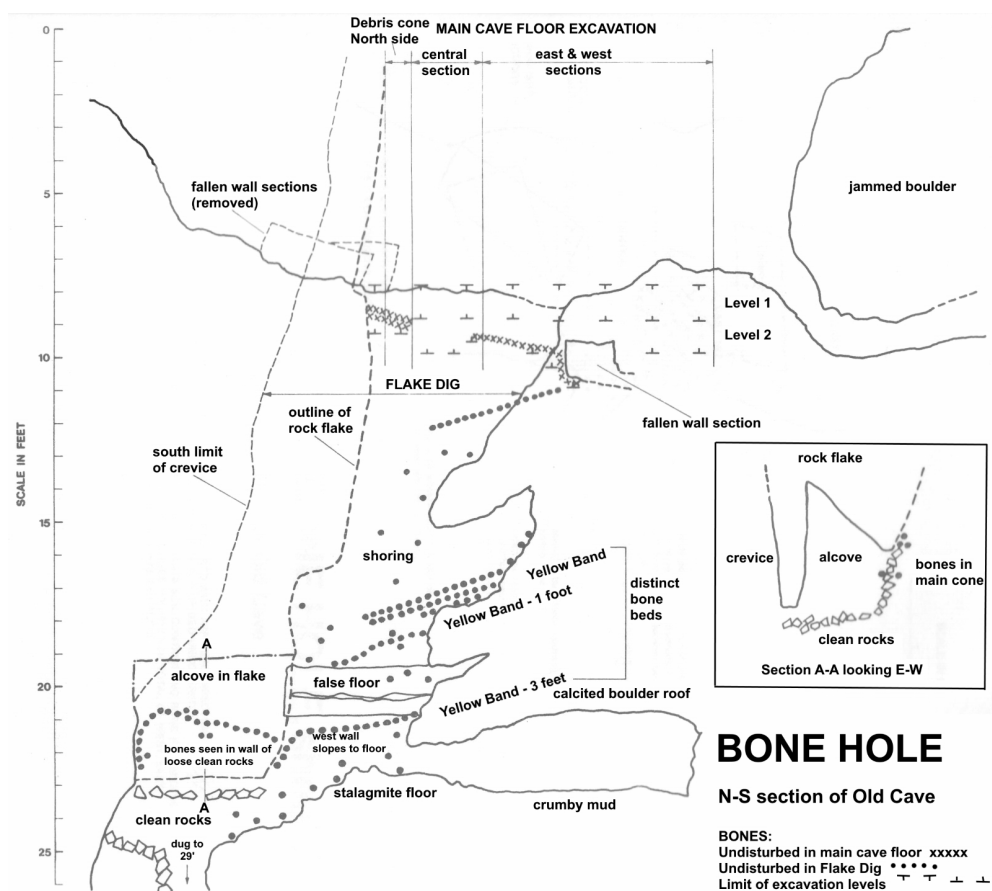


Figure 5. North-South section through the Flake Dig. Re-drawn from Cox, 1976.
Reproduced by kind permission of the Mendip Caving Group.

(Avebury, in Wiltshire), disagreeing with 'Stukely' on a theory about it and refer to another published work of his on Stonehenge. William Long's letterhead gives the address 'West Hay, Wrington, Somerset'. His identity is easily established. From the 1881 Census, we have a William Long living at West Hay House, Wrington. He is then 63 years old, a widower, described as 'J.P. Co. Somerset Banker' and born at Corhampton, Hampshire⁹. He is there with an unmarried daughter and seven servants. West Hay House still stands, about a kilometre out of Wrington village on the Congresbury Road, before reaching Udley. This William Long died on 14 April 1886 at his London home, 2 Onslow Gardens, South Kensington, London. The abstract for his will and grant of probate on 11 June 1886, to his son, another William Long, of Newton House, Clevedon, Somerset. (inherited from his father's older brother Walter Jervis Long (1816-1891) and a solicitor from Bath, describes the deceased as 'late of West Hay, Wrington, Somerset'. He left £46,482 7s 2d¹⁰.

⁹ The National Archives, 1881 Census - reference RG11/2424, folio 102 via FindMyPast website.

¹⁰ Newton House was inherited from his father's older brother Walter Jervis Long (1816-1891).

This means that William Long, of Wrington in 1880, would have been born in 1817 (Nicol, 2016, p.373-6). Burke (1836) in the entry for 'Long of Preshaw' gives his date of birth as 15 August 1817 and he was baptised on 9 September 1817 at Cheriton, Hampshire. He was the second son of a Walter Long of Preshaw House, Corhampton, Hampshire¹¹. Walter Long, unlike his second son, was never an antiquarian, an FSA nor a member of SANHS. He did, however, own some land in Somerset, although not in Cheddar.

William Long would be only 21 in 1838. He was then a student at Balliol College, Oxford, matriculating on 5 June 1835 aged 17. He received his BA only in 1839 (MA 1844). Not being 21 then, he could not himself be Lord of the Manor or own property, unless it were held in trust for him. He would also be 'up' at Oxford for a good part of his years there but would have summers to himself and is wealthy and educated enough to devote the time to this excavation and produce the BAAS paper. Accessing the cave to excavate would require a fair degree of fitness to climb in and out. He is related to the landowner, Walter Long and we know that the two branches were in friendly contact around this time (Nicol, 2016, 254-5). William is certainly interested in archaeology and related pursuits from an early age. Later in life he was acknowledged for this with his election as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London (FSA) on 12 January 1871. His obituary, published in the *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* on 22 April 1886, says that he 'graduated from Balliol College, Oxford, where he acquired a taste for the ancient classics, which he cultivated throughout his life. ...Mr Long took a keen interest in archaeological questions, and was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries'. His reputation as an Antiquary brought him an entry in the Dictionary of National Biography (Archbold, 1893). The obituary says that William moved to Bath 'shortly after his marriage' – on 13 April 1841 to Elizabeth Hare Joliffe. William lived at 16 Lansdown Place, Bath from then on, until moving to Wrington around 1867, with his children born in Bath. He was the W. Long of Lansdown Place, Bath, noted as a member of SANHS (founded 1849) in Volume 3 of their proceedings for 1852. He remained a member (his address changing to West Hay, Wrington in 1867) until near his death on 14 April 1886. He was a Vice-President of this Society by 1870, having been President in 1869. It is known that, later in life, he owned land himself in Somerset, although not in or near Cheddar. Some came down to him (the rest going to his elder brother, Walter Jervis Long (1816-91), via his father, from a childless uncle, yet another William Long FRS FSA (1747-1818)¹². He had been an eminent surgeon, in charge of St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London for 33 years until 1807. So, our William has a familiarity with and interests in and around the area of Cheddar. Did Walter ask his young cousin, with a new-found interest in antiquities, to investigate the finds on his land after they were discovered by a local Hunt in March of that year?

William Long, the excavator, in his paper, compared the bones found with the collection of Mr Beard at Banwell (some 9 km from Cheddar Gorge). 'Professor' William Beard kept a book in which he recorded visitors to the Banwell Bone Cave and the donations they made to him, from the reopening of the cave in 1824 until close to his death in 1868. This survives¹³

¹¹ The National Archives, 1851 Census at HO107/1676, folio 203, via FindMyPast website. This has William Long aged 33, married and an 'M.A. of Oxford Magistrate for the County of Somerset and Banker'. He is visiting his parents from his home in Bath. They are Walter Long, married, 62, born also in Corhampton, Hants. and 'Masters of Arts of the University of Oxford Magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant for the County of Hampshire' and Lady Mary Long, his wife, with other family members and servants. (His mother is 'Lady' as she was eldest daughter of the 7th Earl of Northesk, third in command of the British Fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805).

¹² The National Archives, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, PROB 11/604 Will Registers 1815-1818: Cresswell Quire, Numbers 209-258 (1818) Will of William Long. Accessed via Ancestry.co.uk website.

¹³ Accounts of William Beard, warden of Banwell Bone Caves 1824-65 in Banwell parish records deposit, reference D/P/ban/23/25, Somerset Heritage Centre.

with the deposit of Banwell parish records at the Somerset Heritage Centre. A researcher there examined this book for any references to visitors named Long, especially William or Walter. There is only one reference to a W. Long. It dates from 1830 - 'M^{rs} and Miss Beeston Long & M^r W Long', noting that this party gave a fee/donation of 2s 6d. Three entries down is the date Sep^r.6, indicating a summer visit. Research shows this to be the widow of Beeston Long Esq. (1757-1820, briefly Governor of the Bank of England 1806-08), born Frances Louisa Neave, who married him in 1786. She is visiting with her two surviving children, Maria (1800-1832, who married Henry Seymour Montagu later in 1830) and William Long (1802-1875). This William Long married, had 8 children and lived at the family estate, Hurts Hall in Saxmundham, Suffolk¹⁴. He had no clear antiquarian/archaeological interests, beyond this visit. It would seem that William Long who sent the paper to the BAAS 1838 meeting was not prevailed upon to pay William Beard for his visit and so to get his name in the book. He would only have been 13 at this 1830 visit date but may, of course, have visited subsequently.

Thus, we have a near certain donor in Walter Long Esq. MP of Rood Ashton, Wiltshire and a probable excavator in William Long Esq. FSA of Bath and Wrington, Somerset.

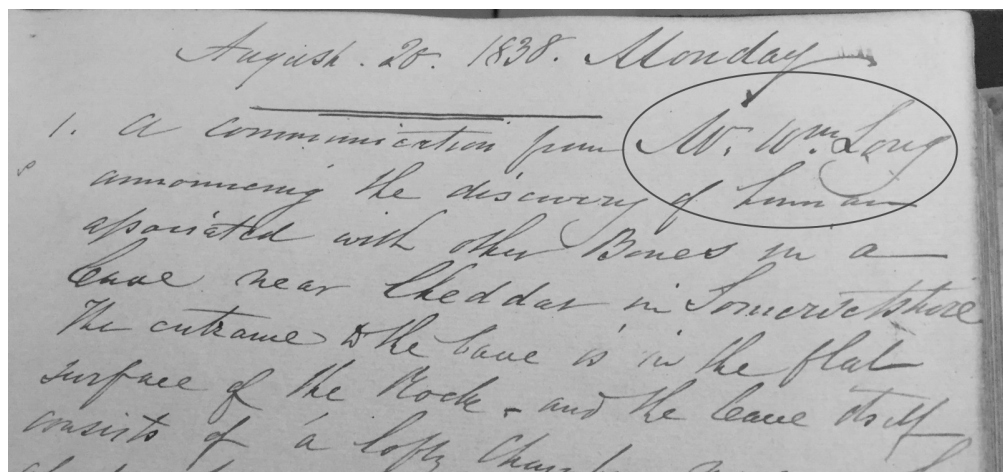


Figure 6. Extract from the original BAAS Minute book from August 20th 1838, indicating that the paper was submitted for reading by Wm. Long (circled).

Photo courtesy of Mrs. R. Owens, reproduced by kind permission of the British Science Association and the Bodleian Library.

THE HUMAN REMAINS

Human material from this cave is now known to be in three museum collections. The majority of the finds are in Wells and Mendip Museum. The discovery and extraction of these

¹⁴ The National Archives, 1841 Census at HO107/1031/17, folio 4, p.1 shows William is living with his wife and children at Hurts Hall, Saxmundham, Suffolk. The National Archives, 1851 Census at HO107/1475, folio 17, he is at Lower Brook Street, in London as a 'Landed Proprietor' with wife and family. This is another, albeit distant, branch of the same ubiquitous Long family of Wiltshire. Their ancestor, Samuel Long, was part of the Cromwellian era conquest of Jamaica in 1655. They made their fortune with a large sugar plantation and eventually moved back to England, in the early eighteenth century, purchasing their estate in Suffolk. Both via FindMyPast website.

was described by Cox (1976) and his account includes sketch sections which give a broad indication of the areas of the cave from which the material was recovered (Figures 4 and 5). This collection consists of over 400 different elements with an MNI of 13 adults and 5 juveniles. The museum's catalogue gives some indication of the specific areas of the cave in which most of it was found (see Appendix 1).

<i>Catalogue No.</i>	<i>Description</i>
Ca 6246	Cranium with paper label " <i>Man Homo sapiens, Lin – Pleistoc (Cave earth) – Cranium & upper maxilla Cheddar Cave</i> ". Also marked C.I. 7856 in a different hand
Un-numbered	Upper maxilla – probably associated with Ca 6246 above, now detached
Ca 6247	Mandible (half only) with paper label "Cheddar", ink marked with number '2'.
Un-numbered	Mandible with paper label - " <i>Man Homo sapiens, Lin – Pleisto (Cave earth) – Lower jaw Cheddar Cave</i> ". Wired together. Ink marked with number '3'.
Un-numbered	Mandible with paper label " <i>Man Homo Sapiens, Lin – Pleisto (Cave earth) – Lower jaw Cheddar Cave</i> ". 9 molars in situ – incisors and canines missing. Ink marked with number '4'.
Un-numbered	Mandible (half only) with paper label " <i>Man Homo sapiens, Lin – Pleisto (Cave earth) – Portion of lower jaw Cheddar Cave</i> ". Ink marked with number '5'.
Ca 6249	Sacrum (two adjoining pieces) almost complete. Large portion ink marked with number '6' and word 'Human', smaller portion ink marked with number '7' and word 'Human'. Paper label " <i>Man Homo sapiens, Lin – Pleisto (Cave earth) – Fragment of sacrum Cheddar Cave?</i> "
? Ca 6249	Femur (right). Degraded paper label reads ' <i>Man, Homo sapiens, Pleistoc (Cav.....), Right femur, Cheddar Cave</i> '. Ink marked 'Human'
Ca 6249	Femur (child). Ink marked with number '9' and word 'Human'. Two paper labels, one almost all gone and one reads 'Cheddar'.
Ca 6249 (on bag)	Ilium. Marked with number '11' and word 'Human'. Bag marked for 'male'.

Table 1. *The human faunal remains from Bone Hole in Bristol City Museum.*

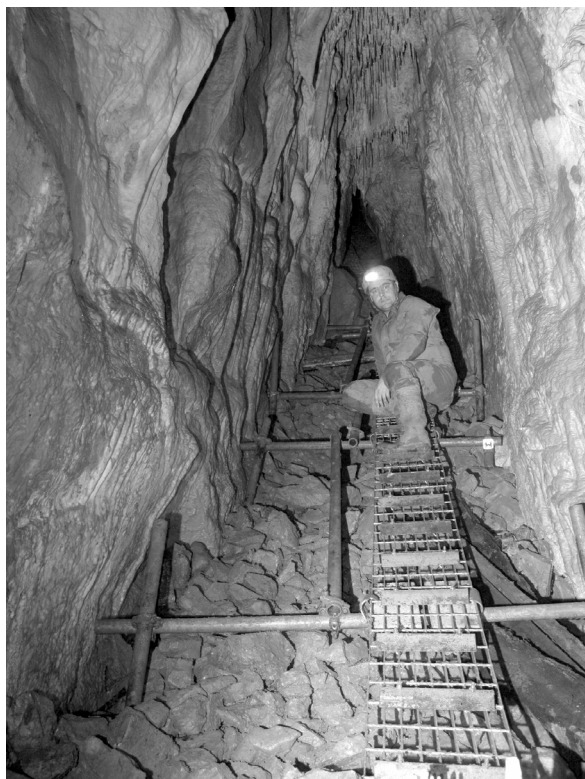


Figure 7. Looking up skull slope from Pottery Corner, as it is now.

Photo © E. Waters.

There is the single damaged calvaria in the collections of the Natural History Museum, once at Oxford and described above. This has the Oxford No. Oxf E.11.6/250 and is listed by them as “Cheddar Cliff, Either from Bone Hole or Great Oom’s Hole [sic], Somerset, England, British Isles.” It is not known whether this specimen came from Mr Long’s excavation or whether it was obtained from some other, unrecorded, 19th century work, but the balance of probability would have it as the specimen described by Phillips in 1865. It is highly unlikely that it came from Great Oone’s Hole. Its stratigraphic position is unknown. Chris Meiklejohn (*pers. comm.*) notes that the only comparable measurement given by both Buxton and by Phillips (see above) is the cranial breadth. Buxton gives 138 mm and Phillips’ measurement translates to 135.1 mm. That these do not match exactly may not matter as we do not know whether the same methodology was used both times. The specimen did not make it into the 1971 Catalogue of Fossil hominids (Oakley, *et al* 1971), nor the

earlier 1953 Catalogue des Hommes Fossile (Vallois and Movius, 1953). The UK entries in both were compiled by Oakley.

The third assemblage is that held by Bristol Museum and Art Gallery. These are catalogued above in Table 1. This is the material that was donated to the Museum by Walter Long in 1840. It is not known what proportion of the 1839 finds are now here. It would seem, from Dawkins and Sanford, that Long donated material to the Bristol and Oxford Museums, but, taken together, the two assemblages do not seem to account for all the material described in Long’s 1839 paper. There may, therefore, be more yet to be found in other museum collections.

THE FAUNAL REMAINS

Both the 1838 and 1960s excavations recovered faunal material along with human. Archaeological finds, of pot sherds, are only known from the 1960s digs.

The 1838 report by Mr Long gives the following faunal list: bear, deer, ox and horse. Cox (1976) states that “... we would agree with these, with the possible substitution of boar for bear.”

Dawkins and Sandford (1866, and see above) give wolf, fox, badger, wild boar, goat, roebuck, *Bos longifrons*, and horse. This material was, again, said to have been donated (this would have been to the Ashmolean Museum at that time) by Mr Long. The Oxford University Museum of Natural History has a drawer of 20 specimens all labelled “Cheddar, Mr Long 1838.” This collection is now catalogued under the numbers: OUMNH Q.7786 – OUMNH Q.7805 and contains the following:

- *Cervus elaphus*, left metatarsal
- *Equus*, upper molar
- *Equus*, upper molar
- *Equus*, upper molar
- *Equus*, incisor
- *Equus*, incisor
- *Equus*, right metacarpal
- *Equus*, right metatarsal
- *Equus*, metatarsal
- *Bos longifrons*, left metatarsal
- *Bos longifrons*, right metatarsal
- *Bos longifrons*, right metatarsal
- *Bos*, partial left lower jaw with 2 premolars
- *Bos*, last lower molar
- *Bos*, left radius
- *Bos*, metatarsal

The following were unidentified:

- *Bovidae*, molar
- *Bovidae*, partial jaw with 2 molars
- *Bovidae*, tooth
- ?*Bovidae*, partial lower jaw with one molar

The labels may have been handwritten by William Buckland, although this has not been confirmed.

The material now in the Zoology collection in Bristol Museum and Art Gallery contains:

Box: CHED.1

- Capra hircus*, lower right jaw
- Os innominate*, ribs (3 specimens)
- Canis lupus*, femur
- Canis lupus*, lower jaws (2 specimens)
- Canis lupus*, humerus
- Canis lupus* s, teeth (6 specimens)
- Vulpes vulgaris*, complete pelvis
- Vulpes vulgaris*, humerus

Vulpes vulgaris, femur (2 specimens)
Cervus, radius
 Assorted bone and teeth fragments
 Rodent teeth

Box: CHED.2

Equus caballus, vertebra
Equus caballus, radius
Equus caballus, metatarsal (6 specimens)
Equus caballus. Molars & incisors (20 specimens)
Equus caballus, upper and lower jaw fragments
Equus caballus, phalange
Equus caballus, metatarsal fragment
Equus caballus, incisors (3 specimens)

Box: CHED.3

Bos longifrons, right & left lower jaws
Bos longifrons, humerus (2 specimens)
Bos longifrons, metatarsals (4 specimens)
Bos longifrons, phalanges (3 specimens)
Bos longifrons, horn (2 specimens)
Bos longifrons, axis vertebra
Elephas primigenius, axis vertebra fragment

Box: CHED.4

Bos longifrons, metatarsals (3 specimens)
Bos longifrons, lower jaws (fragmented) (3 specimens)
Bos longifrons, teeth (4 specimens)
Bos longifrons, vertebrae (2 specimens)
Bos longifrons, tibia
Bos longifrons, humerus (2 specimens)
Bos longifrons, ulna
Bos longifrons, right femur
 1 specimen with no identification

As this collection is the only material in the Geology collections in the museum labelled as being from Cheddar it is assumed to be that associated with the following entry in the donation book

"Gift" "Long, W." "2/Apr/1840" "Walter Long." "Human and other bones from a cave at Cheddar. [In the Rough Book: Various Human Wolf, Boar & Deer Bones from a Cave at Cheddar] DB.1958" "DB1958"

Wells and Mendip Museum has a significant amount of faunal material, over 2,000 individual specimens in all. As with the Human material, theirs is by far the largest part of the assemblage. Much of the Wells collection is fragmentary and thus unidentifiable but the following have been identified:

Canis sp (including *Canis lupus*) Much the largest proportion¹⁵.

Ursus

Bos

Equus

Cervus

Sus

Ovis

Castor

Gallus

Lagomorpha

Unidentified bird

Unidentified rodent

When first comparing these lists, there seemed to be the possibility that in the 1838 report *bear* was misprinted for *boar* as none of the former is present in either the Oxford or Bristol collections. This was confirmed by examining the original handwritten Minute from the 1838 BAAS meeting, which clearly has ‘*boar*’. However, the later identification of three elements of *Ursus* in the Wells collection does then stand out. All three specimens came from ‘level 1’ from the east (humerus), west (phalange) and central (molar) parts of that level. It is somewhat difficult to reconstruct where these contexts were, but probably from the area of Long’s Cave above the Flake Dig.

On examining the Bristol Museum collection, the late Roger Jacobi considered it to be probably of Neolithic age. This was a reasonable conclusion and remained valid when applied to the entire assemblage from all three institutions. However, neither is the assemblage incompatible with the rather later ages revealed by the dating programme.

POTTERY

As noted above, apart from the recent debris found in the topmost parts of the deposits, a small collection of pottery sherds was collected during the MCG’s excavations. These fall into 3 categories.

Firstly, at the bottom of Skull Slope (Figure 4) dispersed in the loose boulder pile were sherds of a beaker. This was reconstructed at Wells and Mendip Museum. According to Lewis and Mullin (2012), the Beaker appears to have been deposited in a fragmentary state, has a low carination and is possibly early in the sequence. The decoration on the vessel comprises complex zones of cross-hatched triangles, incised dots, vertical lines and crosses which, although fitting within Clarke’s (1970) Southern style, is difficult to parallel.

Secondly, some decorated black ware was collected in the antechamber to Skull Slope at the very top of the mud infill (Cox, 1976). A reconstruction of this is reproduced as Figure 8. Its current whereabouts are unknown. It appears to be burnished black ware which was widely found throughout Roman Britain from the 2nd to the 4th century AD (D. Mullin, *pers. comm.*).

Finally, a single small sherd of “what appeared to be Samian Ware” was found in the same deposit as the black ware. Again, its current whereabouts are unknown. At various points in the MCG’s logbook, the finding of charcoal is mentioned, though no samples appear to have been collected. On March 29th 1975, the logbook states:

¹⁵ Identified as *C. familiaris* MNI 13 Bronze Age or later, in 1990s (Lewis, *pers. comm.*).

Dug at R.H. wall of Skull Slope. Found many human bones + well decorated pottery. Slight traces of carbon (charcoal) with apparently cooked and gnawed human bones!!

This is presumably the first discovery of sherds of the beaker. As in the above entry, charcoal is mentioned a number of times in the logbook and contemporaneous photos now in the MCG archives also show it, intermixed with clay. However, no samples were taken, the positions of any possible hearths are not shown on the extant section drawings (Figures 4 and 5) and it does not seem possible to reconstruct this stratigraphy from the photographs. There is a note which indicates that the largest charcoal deposit was from a burnt log or plank above the entry to Skull Slope, but that is all.



Figure 8. *Reconstructed burnished black ware pot from the antechamber to Skull Slope.*
Reproduced by kind permission of the Mendip Caving Group.

DATING AND DISCUSSION

The combined collections include a considerable amount of human material. Indirect indications from the fauna and the archaeology imply that they might be attributed to the Neolithic, Early Bronze Age, or as late as the Roman period. Clearly it is better to have more direct evidence. Consequently, radiocarbon dates have been obtained for four specimens. One of these is from a specimen from “Skull Slope” collected by the MCG, and having a close association with the beaker found close to the bottom of the slope. The second is from a partial human skull from as this is seemingly cut marked. The other pair are from the Bristol Museum’s collection and thus most probably from near the top of the stratigraphy. In each pair, one is a cranial specimen and the other a post-cranial specimen, to give as a broad a spread of information as possible.

<i>Element</i>	<i>Cat No.</i>	<i>Lab No.</i>	^{14}C	\pm	<i>Date range (95.4%)</i>
Mandible	Ca 6274	BRAMS-1259	1884	27	65 (95.4%) 216 cal AD
Rt. femur	?Ca 6249	BRAMS-1260	1304	26	660 (65.9%) 725 cal AD 738 (29.5%) 769 cal AD
Lumbar vertebra	BH 46	BRAMS-1261	1282	26	669 (95.4%) 770 cal AD
Mandible	BH 1920	BRAMS-1262	3489	28	1891 (93.8%) 1741 cal BC 1710 (1.6%) 1701 cal BC

Table 1. AMS and stable isotope results from Bone Hole.
Date range 95.4% probability calibrated in OxCal 4.2.4 using IntCal 13.

The oldest date, BRAMS 1262 comes from the bottom of Skull Slope, quite close to where the sherds of the beaker were found and thus, to an extent, validates that, though it is not, perhaps, as early as the beaker is thought to be. The next date, Roman, is of broadly similar age to the burnished black ware attribution for the pottery found above the top of skull slope. This specimen, though, came from towards the top of the sequence, from the material recovered in 1838. The remaining two dates, from the 7th/8th century AD, come one from the 1838 finds and one from near the Flake Dig ‘Yellow Band’ (see Figure 5). This may show that the upper parts of the sequence, at least, have been disturbed or reworked since deposition, but the relationship between the top of Flake Dig undisturbed deposits and the layer(s) excavated in 1838 is now obscure.

It seems that the cave was used over an extended period of about 2,000 years for the disposal of human remains. From the few observations that we have of the material *in situ*, it seems that the earliest usage allowed for a degree of care in the process of inhumation, especially if the report of the crouched burial is correct. It is rather more difficult to say anything about the later usage, as the remains have probably been reworked by flood events, when the clay matrix, in which most of the remains were found and which filled the hollow parts of many specimens, was deposited. The, relative, lack of clay around Skull Slope, may indicate that the route to this chamber had been sealed by the top of its talus cone before the clay was deposited and suggests that there may have been a distinct hiatus between the earlier

and the later burials. This water would probably not have come directly from the surface, there is for one thing, no clear gully leading south to the cave across the surface, as can be seen in Figure 2, but from the cave north, upstream of Long's Cave. Continued exploration of this part of the drainage network may shed some light on this prospect. The possibilities of both the sealing of Skull Slope and the reworking of the more superficial bone deposits were first postulated by Cox (1977). Further ^{14}C dates would be useful in testing this hypothesis.

If one combines the “nine skulls” of Long with the MNI of 13 adults and 5 juveniles in the Wells collection then it is possible to surmise that 25, possibly more, individuals were interred in this cave, over an extended period of time. This is a remarkable number. In South-west England, it can be compared with the MNI of 28+ for Wookey Hole (Romano-British and Iron Age) and one of 30+ for Charterhouse Warren Farm Swallet (Early Bronze Age and Iron Age). These figures are extracted from <http://caveburial.ubss.org.uk/southwest/southwest.htm> Neither of these sites has anything, however, to compare with the apparent crouched inhumation reported by Reeves (2013) at a depth of about 20 m below ground level. Nowhere in the South-west has an internment known to have been carried out so deep into a cave that was not simply an open shaft.

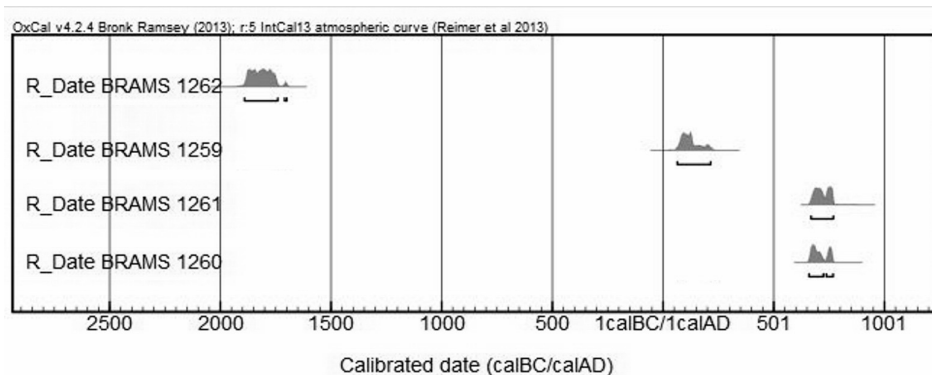


Figure 9. Plot showing calibrated AMS determinations from Bone Hole (OxCal 4.2.4).

One can further speculate that if the hypothesis about the sealing of Skull Slope is correct then the long period of use may be divided into an earlier period including the Early Bronze Age and a later period encompassing the Romano-British and Early Medieval periods rather than an extended continuous period of use. Further ^{14}C dates would be required to test this hypothesis.

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APPENDIX 1

Areas of the cave to which the 1960s/70s finds have been attributed. This table is taken from the Wells and Mendip Museum catalogue of finds compiled by Hannah Bennett.

<i>Level Name</i>	<i>Bone Numbers from Each Level</i>
East Level 1	1 – 139
Debris Cone North Side ½ Tube level	140 – 200
Central Level 1	201 – 620
West Level 1	621 – 777
East Level 2	778 – 1115
???	1116 – 1211
Shaft Level 1	1212 – 1345
???	1346 – 1400
Entry Chamber	1401 – 1850
Skull Slope Pottery Corner	1851 – 1940
???	1941 – 2160
Base Skull Slope	2161 – 2245
Central Stal Flood to One Foot North	2246 – 2326
Flake Dig Yellow Band	2327 – 2559
???	2560 – 2916
Flake Dig Yellow Band 3 Feet	2917 – 3107
Flake Dig Alcove North End	2108 – 3246
Flake Dig Alcove South End	3247 – 3346

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