

The human bone

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One fragment of human bone was recovered during the excavation (A11043; Context 5085–3; Phase (Id–)IIb–IId; Rigs V and VI). This was the lower facial region of a skull, consisting of both maxillae, left zygomatic bone and the lower parts of both palatine bones. The specimen was hard and unfriable, the surface stained a medium brown colour with darker patches and was of slightly polished appearance. In its general condition of preservation this specimen was similar to many of the animal bones which were found at the site. Most of the median wall and orbital surface of both maxillae were missing, exposing the interior of the sinus. A vestige of the premaxillary suture could be distinguished on the right side near the mid line.

The surviving parts of the maxillae contained sixteen tooth sockets. On the right side, three molars and the second premolar were present, along with the roots of the first premolar and the lateral incisor. On the left side, the first and second molars were present as well as the stumps of the two incisors and second premolar. The remaining sockets were empty. The margins of the empty sockets and those occupied by

tooth stumps were sharply defined with no evidence of bone resorption, indicating that the loss and breakage of the teeth occurred post-mortem. The teeth, although patchily stained, showed no signs of caries or dental calculus. A small amount of wear was present, maximal on the first molars where dentine was just visible in the centre of the mesio-buccal and mesio-palatal cusps. There was no evidence of mesial drift beyond a small worn facet on the anterior surface of the surviving left first molar. Transverse ridging on the enamel surface was also an indication of minimal wear.

The presence of a completely erupted third molar indicates a minimal age of 18 years at death. The slight amount of wear on the teeth, the minimal mesial drift and the vestige of unfused premaxillary suture suggest early rather than late adulthood, perhaps 20–25 years. No strong indication of the sex of the individual was present, or of any pathological conditions. The three bones, that is, the two maxillae and left zygomatic bone, were not separated from the skull by fracturing but were dislocated along the suture lines where they articulated with the missing parts of the skeleton.