EAW/P

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One skeleton from a beaker burial at Ravenstone, Bucks

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The skeleton was fairly complete but the bones were only moderately well preserved. All of them showed some erosion, especially at the articulations but also on the surface. Most of the larger bones were broken, so only a few were measurable (see table 1). The skull was warped and so could not be reconstructed or measured. Despite the incomplete preservation a number of interesting points were noted and are discussed below.

The remains were those of a female probably aged 30-40. Ageing was based on molar wear(1) which was irregular, giving rise to a non-standard pattern. All the teeth were present and most had medium calculus deposits on them. There were some slight signs of periodental disease and both lower first molars had abscesses round their roots. No caries were noted. Several teeth had part of the enamel broken away. These could be post- or ante-mortem fractures, but if they were ante-mortem they probably occurred fairly soon before death as the sharp edges showed no signs of wear. The broken teeth were all on the right side of the mouth and were the upper and lower first molars and the lower second premolar and third molar.

Non-metrical variants were noted in both the skull and post-cranial skeleton. The skull had three extra ossicles in the sutures, one at lambda and two at asterion on the right side. There was a slight mandibular torus. Both humeri had perforate coronoid fossae.

There was widespread degeneration of the joints with osteo-arthritic changes noted. These were only slight on most of the long bones but more severe changes were noted, particularly in the axial skeleton. The upper cervical, lower thoracic and lumbar vertebrae showed medium changes and the joint between the lowest lumbar vertebra and the sacrum was grossly altered and possibly partly fused.

Both femora showed an interesting extra facet joined on to but extending upwards from the posterior edge of the articular surface of the medial condyle at the distal end of the bone. This was more developed on the right femur than the left. They were possibly some type of "squatting facet" but it was not possible to be certain as the corresponding parts of both tibiae were poorly preserved.

Both fore-arms were noteworthy. The right radius had an extra articular facet on the posterior edge of the ulnar notch which was eburnated. A corresponding eburnated patch could be seen on the head of the ulna which also showed a larger degree of angulation than normal at about 5 cm from the distal end. This is indicative of some malfunction of the pronation-supernation action of the fore-arm. The left ulna had a well healed fracture about 5 cm from its distal end. It was not possible to see how much angulation there was in the fracture as the bone had been broken again post-mortem just distal to the fracture and this part is now lost. The radius, which lay alongside the ulna, appeared quite normal.

Table 1: Longbone measurements (in mm)

		Left	Right
Femur	Fe L_1	-	453
	Fe D_1	26.5	28.8
	Fe D_2	34.2	35.6
	Fe head diam	-	45.4
Tibia	Ti L_1	-	377
	Ti D_1	31.3	31.4
	Ti D_2	23.1	23.1
Humerus	Hu L_1	319	-
	Hu D_1	21.9	-
	Hu D_2	15.0	-
Radius	Ra L_1	-	245

All measurements are defined in Brothwell (1972)

Maximum stature[2] was 168 cm (5 ft 6 ins)

References

1. BROTHWELL, D.R.(1972) Digging up bones.

2. TROTTER, M. & GLESER, G.C. (1952) Estimation of stature from long-bones of American Whites and Negroes. Amer. J. phys. Anthrop. 10 463-514.