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Riddles in the Dark? The human use of caves during the 1st millennia BC and AD across the British Isles

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Region 1: Southern England		
Cave	Date	Description
Fishmongers Swallet (42)	RIA	Disarticulated remains belonging to 4 individuals were found at the base of vertical shaft. Samples taken from two individuals provided radiocarbon dates of 88 cal BC- 230 cal AD (Beta-150613) and 169 cal BC- 129 cal AD (Wk-8222). The head of a young adult female was smashed by a heavy implement, whilst a femur was also split.
Backwell Cave (53)	IA	The disarticulated remains of 18 individuals were recorded by the excavators (Tratman et al. 1938: 62) in a context 0.2m below the modern cave floor.
Read's Cavern (54)	IA	Thirteen fragments of human bone, belonging to four individuals were found in a charcoal rich layer, at the base of a collapsed swallet.
Merlin's Cave (57)	IA/RIA	A number of small bones, teeth of both adults and children were recorded within the cave (Hewer 1926: 216). In total, 5 adults and a child were recovered and were considered Iron Age or Roman in date (Philips 1935: 14). Fragments of human crania were recovered from sediment on the west wall near the entrance (Barton 1996: 269).
Guy's Rift (58)	IA	Fragments of human bone belonging to 4 adults and 3 children were found within the cave (Hewer 1927: 231). The children were aged between 4-11 years old. These were found 7.9m into the northern side of the rift at a narrowing of the cave passage (Hewer 1927: 231).
Charthouse Warren Farm Swallet (59)	RIA	An inhumation of a middle aged male was found in a side passage, 6m below the entrance. Associated with the remains were sherds of 1st century AD Samian Ware and Roman hobnails, which led the excavators to suggest that burial took place sometime during the late 1st century AD (Audsley 1988: 176).
Gough's New Cave (62)	LBA	A fragment of human bone recovered from the cave entrance was radiocarbon dated to 1210-853 cal BC (OxA-1202).
Sun Hole (63)	RIA	Possible inhumations of 2 adults and 2 children were recorded towards the eastern wall of the cave and were associated with a hearth and artefacts dating to the Roman Iron Age.
Bracelet Cave (67)	RIA (?)	The fragmentary remains of 9 individuals were found inside the rockshelter overhang and were associated with Roman Iron Age pottery dating to the 1 st or 2 nd centuries AD (Somerset 24334). Branigan et al. (1991a: 150) suggest that these are likely Bronze Age in date. Although it must be noted that confusion with Hay Wood Cave nearby, which was unrecorded by Branigan and Dearne, suggests that the burial maybe date to the Roman Iron Age.
St Cuthbert's Swallet (70)	IA	An articulated skeleton was discovered at the base of a lead working swallet, 5.18m below the surface. The inhumation was associated with four beads dating to the Late Iron Age (Balch et al. 1911: 567).
Uphill Quarry Caves (2) (73)	RIA	A human distal femur was recovered from the cave entrance and radiocarbon dated to 138-427 cal AD (OxA-4022)

Hyaena Den (74)	RIA (?)	Human remains and several hundred Roman coins were reported to have been found during the digging of a canal at the cave entrance (Campbell et al. 1971: 247).
Badger Hole (75)	EM	A fragment of human crania, radiocarbon dated to 436-601 cal AD (OxA-680) was found inside the cave.
Three Holes Cave (78)	RIA	Fragments of human remains were obtained from a layer of ash outside the cave mouth, include a fragment of mandible, which provided a radiocarbon date of 208-395 cal AD (OxA-3210).
Wookey Hole (166)	IA/RIA	Human remains belonging to at least 28 individuals were found by Balch in the Great Chamber and entrance passage. The context of many of the human bones are unknown, however an articulated skeleton was recorded in a fissure towards the western end of the cave entrance with pottery, an iron dagger and bronze pommel that were considered to date to the Iron Age (Balch 1911: 575). Two further inhumations were also found in the Great chamber that contained Iron Age and Roman Iron Age material (Balch 1911: 585).
	RIA (?)	At least 16 partial and complete human skulls were also recovered from the River Axe. Ceramics dating to the late 1 st and early 2 nd centuries AD were also found in the river.
	RIA	Excavation of the 4th chamber in Wookey Hole, which is located across the River Axe stream way, also produced the articulated remains of at least 21 individuals, many of which were juvenile, dating to the 3rd or 4th centuries AD (Hawkes et al. 1979).
Hope Wood Hole (188)	IA/RIA	Bellow the cave entrance a single crouched inhumation of an adult, which was assumed to date to the Iron Age or Roman Iron Age (Mason 1952: 186).
Tynning's Great Swallet (339)	IA	At least 10 skull fragments were found in the cave, along with a number of other human bones (Mullan et. al. 2006: 135). One of these bones, located at a depth of 30m below the entrance, was radiocarbon dated to 395-208 cal BC (Mullan et al. 2006: 49).
Region 2: Central England		
Poole's Cavern (25)	RIA (?)	The remains of 4 individuals were found buried underneath a rock overhang outside the Roman Chamber, where the majority of Roman Iron Age activity was located (Smithson et al. 1991). Therefore, the date of these remains is unclear but may well date to the Roman Iron Age, given their proximity to other evidence of cave-use.
Thirst House Cave (26)	IA/RIA	On the valley floor below the cave, excavation of a cist uncovered the remains of at least four individuals. In the centre and at a depth of 1.23m, a skeleton with its head orientated towards the east was found associated with a bronze armlet, pin and a split ring. Whilst the date of the inhumation is unclear, a cremation within a pottery vessel dating to the Roman Iron Age was also found within the enclosure (Ward 1897). A second inhumation, on the cave talus, 9m from the entrance of the cave, and 2.5m from the other cist, was also discovered alongside an iron spearhead (Salt 1897).

Carsington Pasture Cave (27)	IA	An articulated skeleton of a female was discovered on the surface of the cave's second chamber, above a deposit of human remains dating to the Neolithic and associated with 2 partial and 2 complete burials of neonates. A femur taken from the individual was radiocarbon dated to 757-405 cal BC (OxA-9806). Cut marks on both of the skeleton's femur also suggests the deliberate disarticulated of the body at the knee joints (Chamberlain 2001).
Cave Dale Cave No.2 (28)	IA (?)	Fragments of human bone and teeth were discovered in a humic layer that contained a comb comb dating to Iron Age. Without further datable evidence it is unclear whether the human bone found in the layer also date to the Iron Age or came from disturbed deposits underneath.
Robin Hood's Cave (30)	RIA	Mandible fragment, belonging to a young adult male, found at the south-western entrance, provided radiocarbon dates of 352 cal BC- 204 cal AD (OxA-736) and 126-383 cal AD (OxA-6581) suggesting the skull was deposited sometime during the 2 nd century AD.
Mother Grundy's Parlour (31)	IA	A juvenile cranium taken from the Dawkin's Collect and found in Mother Grundy's Parlour (31) was radiocarbon dated to 403-54 cal BC (OxA-1832).
Fox Hole Cave (35)	RIA	Two fragments of human jaw were found in surface deposits associated with Roman Iron Age pottery at the entrance to the cave.
Langwith Cave (38)	IA	Bones belonging to two individuals, an old aged male and child, were found inside the entrance to the inner cave chamber. A radiocarbon sample taken from the adult male's cranium suggests that these remains were deposited between 746-204 cal BC (OxA-2232).
Seven Ways Cave (46)	RIA (?)	Fragmentary remains of 4 individuals were found in contexts associated with a Guido class 9a glass bead Without firmer dating evidence however, it is unclear whether the human remains belong to the Roman Iron Age (Bramwel 1954a: 4).
Elder Bush Cave (49)	IA/ RIA	Fragmentary human bone and teeth were reported from a hearth that was associated with Iron Age and Roman Iron Age material (Challis et al. 1975: 4).
Region 3: Northern England		
Bishop Middleham (1)	LBA/IA	The remains of 11 individuals were found towards the rear of the cave below a fissure that opened to the surface. Amongst these were three crouched inhumations beneath flat stone slabs (Whimster 1981: 408).
Fairy Hole (7)	IA	A single inhumation was found inside the cave (Raistrick 19389: 128). During re-excavation of the spoil heap outside the cave in 2012 also recovered a number of human bone fragments and half an Iron Age vessel (Taylor 2013: 19).
Dowkerbottom Cave (8)	IA/RIA (?)	Human remains found in the cave's second and third chambers were considered by Raistrick to date to the Iron Age (Raistrick 1929: 128). At least, three crouched burials were recorded in layers below Roman Iron Age deposits within the caves second chamber , however these could date to the Neolithic (Branigan et al. 1991a: 86).

North End Pot (10)	IA	Small bones of a child and a skull of a young adult, radiocarbon dated to 310 -130 cal BC (HAR-8056), were found in the upper layers of the vertical entrance to the pothole (Gilks et al 1993: 57).
Jubilee Cave (11)	IA/RIA (?)	Ten individuals were recovered from inside the cave and were found disarticulated within the descending tunnel or were “tucked” under overhangs (Raistrick 1939: 128; Challis et al. 1975: 62). Raistrick considered the majority of the inhumations to date to the Iron Age (Raistrick 1939: 128) although there is no firm evidence for this.
Victoria Cave (15)	IA	A culturally-smashed human femur found outside the cave was considered to date to the Iron Age, given similar finds from Dead Man’s Cave (285) (Lord et al. 2013: 246).
Attermire Cave (16)	IA/RIA (?)	Human remains were reported from Attermire Cave, although cannot be firmly dated to a specific period.
Rawthey Cave (22)	RIA	A fragment of skull, belonging to an adult female was radiocarbon dated to 62-210 cal AD (OxA-7450)
Dog Holes Cave (87)	IA/RIA (?)	Fragmented human remains found in the shaft and north entrance passage belonged to at least 15 individuals and are of unclear date.
Raven Scar Cave (106)	IA	Culturally-smashed human bone, found at the cave entrance may date to the Iron Age (Lord et al. 2013: 246) given parallels to other remains radiocarbon date from North End Pot (10).
The Dog Hole Cave (284)	RIA	Human remains, included articulated bones, were found in the cave’s entrance and horizontal passage. In total, 23 individuals were found in the cave aged between 6 and 50 years old. Two ribs presented cut-marks from a sharp strong blade, which likely pierced the heart (Bland 1994). Radiocarbon samples from two human bones, dating to 235-381 cal AD (OxA-14173) and 240-386 cal AD (OxA-15994), suggest the mortuary use of the cave during the Roman Iron Age.
Dead Man's Cave (285)	IA	A culturally-smashed human femur dating to 511-376 cal BC was found at the entrance to the cave (Lord et al. 2013: 245).
Region 4: Southern Scotland		
Jonathan's Cave (129)	MED	Outside the cave, a human bone obtained from a burial was radiocarbon dated to 892-1220 cal AD (GU-2038).
Borness Cave (132)	RIA	Two fragments of a young child’s skull were located from a breccia layer in front of the cave. Two human bones, a child’s femur and an adult humerus were also found in layers containing Roman Iron Age artefacts (Corr et a. 1875).
St Baldred’s Cave (133)	IA (?)	Large numbers of disarticulated human remains were reported from charcoal rich layers, which also contained pottery and a bone handle (Sligo 1857: 356). It is unclear, however, whether activity in St Baldred’s Cave, dated to the Iron Age.
Region 5: Western Scotland		

MacArthur's Cave (131)	IA	The disarticulated remains of 4 adults were found towards the rear of the cave. The majority of the bones came from a layer of black earth above a midden deposit, as well as within the shell midden. Radiocarbon dating by (Saville et al. 1994) indicated a period of burial between 500-300 BC.
Uamh An Ard Achadh (154)	IA	Articulated and disarticulated human remains were found associated with the stone stairway, including the deposition of a complete skeleton of a female aged between 3—40 and a number of neonatal and perinatal remains, which sealed the cave during the Late Iron Age (Birch et al.2005: 46-48).
Uamh An Eich Bhric (155)	RIA	A fragment of human crania was recovered within the midden, which was in use between 50-210 cal AD (Wildgoose et al. 2010).
Culzean Cove Main System (252)	EM	A human cervical vertebra found on the cave floor of the second chamber of a cave provided a radiocarbon date of 777-985 cal AD (WK-14017).
Region 6: Northern Scotland		
Sculptor's Cave (134)	LBA	In total, over 1800 human bones were recovered from the cave and were part of two periods of human interment in the cave. The first group, represented by four children aged between 1-7 years were placed in the cave between 1100 900 cal BC (Armit et al. 2011). The Late Bronze Age group was made of several lower jaw fragments and frontals, one of which showed signs of being de-fleshed (Armit et al. 2011: 274).
	RIA	The Roman Iron Age assemblage comprised of five adults and two young adults (Armit et al 2011: 259), represented by vertebrae- seven of which presented cut-marks (ibid.).
Region 7: Wales		
Lesser Garth Cave (120)	EM	At least seven individuals, represent finds of articulated bone, were found in the main cave chamber (Madgwick 2007). Of these, bones of two individuals were radiocarbon dated to the 6 th or 7 th centuries AD, whilst the others were deposited during the Medieval and Post-Medieval period (ibid.).
Ogof-yr-Esgyrn (124)	RIA	The remains of forty individuals were found within the cave, consisting of neonates, 22 children and 14 adults, as well as coinage belonging to the reign of Trajan (Branigan et al. 1991a: 177).
Ogof-yr-Ychen (125)	RIA	An inhumation of a child was found in the cave's fourth chamber along with Roman Iron Age pottery (Branigan et al. 1991a: 178).
Daylight Rock (127)	RIA	A human bone found in the cave was radiocarbon dated to  333-539 cal A Sites_v2.shx Sites_v2.sbx Sites_v2.shp D (OxA-7685).
Llanymynech Cave (341)	RIA	A burial of adult was recorded in the central chamber along with Roman Iron Age artefacts.