

SETTLEMENT, FARMING AND INDUSTRY FROM PREHISTORY TO THE PRESENT IN THE THAMES ESTUARY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT DP WORLD LONDON
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SPECIALIST REPORT 13
BURNT BONE
BY MARK GIBSON

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An assemblage comprising two small, widely separated deposits of burnt bone was submitted for assessment, neither of which is certainly human. Access Road (COARD12) deposit 1003 was unurned and recovered from pit 1004 (Area A), which contained an assemblage of fired clay and Deverel-Rimbury pottery of middle Bronze Age date. The second deposit (8032) was unurned and was recovered from a shallow pit or posthole (8030) in Area H, which produced no other artefacts and is undated.

The results of the assessment are presented in Table 13.1. Deposit 8032, a fill of pit 8030, was by far the largest deposit, with 209.9g of bone. This deposit had a reasonable percentage of fragments that were over 10mm in size, but only one fragment had the potential to be human bone. The remainder lacked any diagnostic features.

Deposit 1003 had much lower bone weights. It comprised only 33.6g of bone, with only a single fragment greater than 10mm in size. Most fragments were 10-4mm in size, though the 4-2mm fragments were also numerous. No identifiable fragments were recovered from this deposit and no features which could confirm it as human were observed.

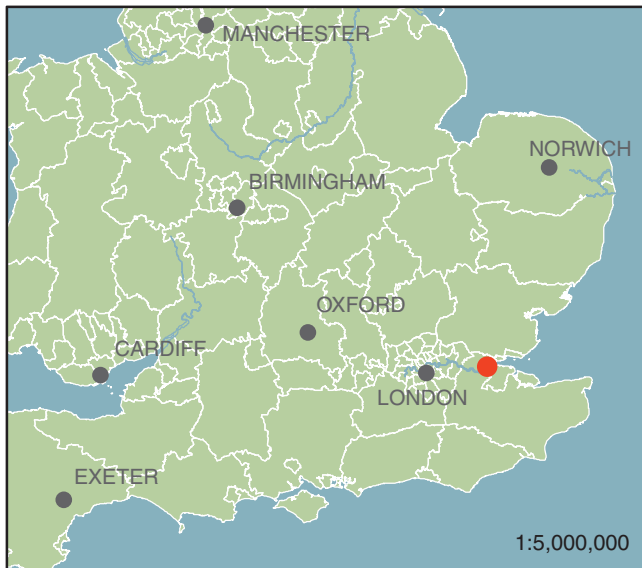
The remains from both contexts were buff-white in colour, which indicates that intense combustion of all the organic components of the bone had taken place. However, this was not uniform as the deposits also contained a very small number of black and blue-grey fragments. The colour of burnt bone can vary depending on numerous factors such as the quality of fuel, favourable weather conditions and the quality of the pyre/fire construction.

In conclusion, deposit 1003 contained no identifiable fragments, which could either be animal or human. Deposit 8032 may derive from a human cremation burial or pyre deposit, but little else can be said about it in the absence of more identifiable fragments.

Burnt Bone Table

TABLE 13.1: SUMMARY OF BURNT BONE (COARD12)

Context	Colour of bone	Total weight of bone	Degree of fragmentation	Deposit type	Comments
1003	Buff white, few light blue and black frags	33.6 g	Majority of bone is 10-4 mm, with numerous fragments 4-2mm. A single fragment was >10mm Max. frag. size 16mm	Pit fill	No landmarks identified to confirm if bone is human or animal
8032	Mostly buff white, few black frags	209.9 g	Bone mostly 10-4mm or 4-2 mm, some >10mm. Max frag size 37mm	Pit fill	Some identifiable fragments as long bone or cranial vault. Some identified as animal bone, one frag potentially human fibula. No landmarks identified to confirm if its human or animal



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