

Horses Ancient and Modern in the Caves and Shafts of Kingsdale

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A short report appeared in *Caves and Caving* No.43 by Charlotte Roberts, This described the finding of a mammal tooth in Craftsman's Hole. The tooth was found in an alcove above the first pitch by John Dale of Middlesbrough in 1986. The tooth was later identified by Andrew Currant, Curator of Quaternary Mammals at the British Museum of Natural History, as probably originating from the wild horse (*Equus ferrus*). The tooth was similar in size and morphology to equid material from Goughs Cave in Cheddar Gorge. The Goughs Cave material has been dated to circa 12,000 BP.

Two caves near Settle have produced radio carbon dated horse bones (*Equus ferrus*). Both were dated to the Lateglacial Interstadial. Victoria Cave circa 12,300 BP. Sewell's Cave circa 10,800 BP. The Craftsman's horse tooth would tie in nicely with the Settle sites, and suggests Lateglacial faunal material is present in Kingsdale.

Axe Head Rift is a small enigmatic site located approximately 350 m. S.S.W. of Craftsman's (N.G.R. SD. 70057860). During excavation circa 1985 a stone axe was found, apparently not of typical Langdale Tuff. This object has since been lost so the rock type cannot be confirmed. The author visited the site around the time of the excavation and recovered several bones and teeth, which were exposed on top of the spoil heap. These bones were later identified by Tom Lord as horse. At the time, they were assumed to be quite modern and it was only later that the discovery of the axe head came to light. The rift was narrow and had obviously taken bog drainage in the past. The excavation did not exceed 3 metres and has since completely filled up again. The interesting point is were the horse bones associated with the axe? They were at the top of the spoil, suggesting they came from the lowest level of the excavation. If so, could we then have a Neolithic horse in Kingsdale?

North End Pot is a large open shaft located on a fault at the south end of West Kingsdale. This shaft has been the site of major excavations by cavers. Numerous bones were found during the excavations and radiocarbon dates from the Iron Age and Neolithic have been obtained. Bones submitted to Tom Lord for identification included horse. The horse bones were recorded as coming from the upper fill (T. Lord pers. comm) and were excavated by cavers, probably the late

Colin Davis et al. Colin found a human skull, associated with animal bones, which was radio-carbon dated to the Iron Age. It is quite probable that the horse bones relate to this period. If so, do we have an Iron Age horse in Kingsdale?

Several other Cave-Horse associations are known in the valley, though most of these are relatively recent imports into the caves. In 2001, P. Murphy collected a scapula fragment from close to the river junction in the Kingsdale Master Cave. This was radio carbon dated to less than 200 years old.

The waters from the Kingsdale Master Cave resurge at Keld Head. A horse tooth was reputedly recovered from this site by cave divers.

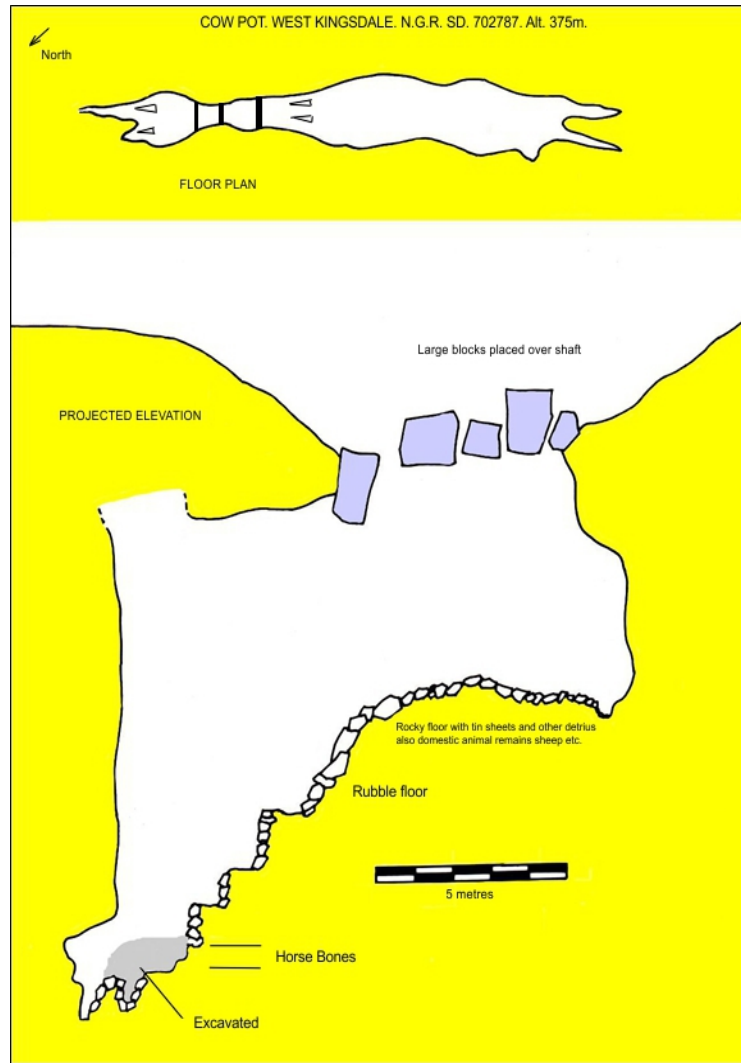
Bones recovered from Wackenburgh Pot, East Kingsdale were identified by Tom Lord as horse. Unfortunately the chronology of this shaft is complicated. A run in of possible older sediments appear to have co-mingled with recent discard and soil creep from the open shaft. Bones can be seen cemented in calcite, though these could be quite recent as the flowstone is still active.

Cow Pot a significant open rift type shaft adjacent to Bull Pot. Large blocks of limestone have at some time been placed over the shaft. At least one of these is now at the base of the shaft. The placing of the blocks was possibly to stop animals falling down, though they may have more significance. The base of the shaft has recently been excavated by cavers (2011). There are signs of an earlier phase of caver excavation though this was probably of limited extent.

During the recent excavation, bones of horse were encountered at a depth of 0.3m. The bones were found in black sediments which lay below a wet, brown, silty-clay containing many sheep bones. The black sediments rested on an almost sterile bed of brown clay. Several of the horse bones bear traces of a blue pigment, probably vivianite, a mineral that occurs naturally in peat. The age of these bones is uncertain, but they are unlikely to be very old.



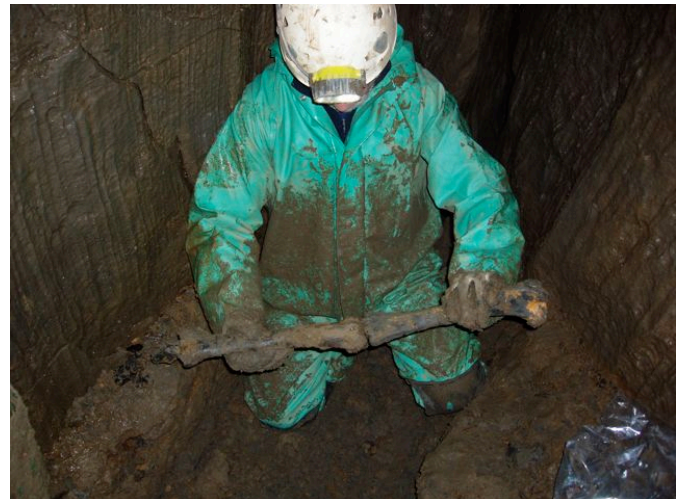
Bones on floor of Cow Pot prior to excavation. (Photo. J.Howard)



Survey of Cow Pot, Kingsdale. (J.Thorp)



Looking vertically from floor of Cow Pot showing large stones over entrance to shaft



John Thorp in Cow Pot with horse limb bones (Photos J.Howard)