

PONTNEWYDD CAVE, WALES : A NEW BRITISH MIDDLE
PLEISTOCENE HOMINID SITE

Three seasons of excavation by the National Museum of Wales have revealed that much of the cave infill is composed of a series of solifluction layers. It is because of this process of infill of the cave, with deposits derived from a former living-site at the cave-mouth, that these remains of Middle Pleistocene settlement have escaped the scouring action of subsequent glacial activity.

The cave has produced both fauna and microfauna stratified with the implements. This fauna includes pika, hare, beaver, lemming, vole, wolf, fox, bear, lion, horse, rhinoceros, red deer and bovid. The industry (or industries) is best described as of Upper Acheulian affinity with relatively strong handaxe and Levallois components. The tools are mostly made of pebbles of fine-grained volcanic rocks probably obtained locally but originating ultimately in the Welsh or Irish Sea drifts. The lowermost archaeological layer produced (in October 1980) a human maxillary molar, which may be compared with some "early Neanderthal" teeth. A series of uranium and thermoluminescent dates suggest an antiquity in the range of 225-175 thousand years for the occupation of the cave.

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