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**Report on the single human inhumation from
Norman Court, Grape Lane, York.**

by

Keith Dobney and Don Brothwell

Summary

A single human inhumation was recovered from excavations at the site of the Grape Lane methodist chapel, Norman Court, York. Preliminary analysis showed this individual to be a tall robust male of between 25-35 years of age.

On the basis of historical and archaeological evidence, this individual can be linked with a known historical figure, who was a leading member of the non-conformist Methodists in York. Full publication of all relevant data is recommended.

Keywords: NORMAN COURT; GRAPE LANE; YORK; EARLY 18TH CENTURY; METHODIST CHAPEL; HUMAN REMAINS

Authors' address:

Environmental Archaeology Unit
University of York
Heslington
York YO1 5DD

Telephone: (01904) 433843/51
Fax: (01904) 433850

Prepared for:

MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd.
39 Greengate
Malton
North Yorkshire
YO17 0EL

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Introduction

A single complete human skeleton, excavated from the site of the now destroyed Grape Lane Chapel, was submitted to the EAU for assessment of potential for further research. The chapel was built by non-conformist Methodists during the early 18th century. The individual represented by these remains was buried beneath the floor of the church, alongside the north-west wall.

Human skeleton

The unearthed skeletal remains were generally well preserved, although some chemical and physical erosion had affected some of the long bones. In particular, the cervical and thoracic section of the vertebral column were very poorly preserved and, as a result, very fragmentary in nature.

The large supra-orbital ridges and mastoid processes, along with the narrow sciatic notch, show that these bones represent a male. All major long bones, as well as being very large, showed pronounced muscle insertions indicating that this individual was not only tall, but also robust and well-built. Calculation of stature (after Trotter and Gleser 1952, 1958) showed this individual to have attained a height of almost six feet (see Tables 1 and 2).

Age at death was calculated on the basis of tooth wear and epiphyseal fusion data. Since all major long bones showed epiphyseal fusion to be complete, and the 3rd molar had erupted in the jaw, the

individual was certainly adult. Tooth wear estimations were made slightly problematic by the fact that an advanced state of dental caries was noted on the left maxillary M2 (also less severe on the M1). This has resulted in somewhat asymmetrical wear on each side of the dentition as a result of pain associated with the condition during life. However, using the criteria outlined by Brothwell (1972) an age estimate of between 25 and 35 years can be made.

Apart from the limited evidence of dental pathology already discussed, little in the way of other pathology was noted from the skeleton. Of interest, however, was the evidence of osteophyte growth on the left side of most of the lumbar vertebrae, somewhat unusual for someone not of advanced years. On closer inspection, this individual appears to have suffered from a slight congenital misalignment of the lower back, a condition which may account for the localised osteophyte growth previously noted.

Perhaps more interesting is the evidence for partial dislocation of the left leg. The left acetabulum shows a remodelled and somewhat flattened area on the rim, with some associated new bone growth directly above on the ilium (a reaction to the displacement of the femur head from the acetabulum). This would have been particularly painful and could only have occurred as a result of some serious trauma to the leg (e.g. falling from a height). It may also provide another explanation for the localised osteophyte growth on the lumbar vertebrae.

Conclusion

The post-medieval skeleton from Grape Lane, Norman Court represents a tall male, between 25-35 years of age showing limited signs of pathology. There is no evidence to suggest the cause of death.

Limited physical anthropological evidence (of age and sex) certainly link these remains to an historical figure known to have been one of two individuals buried within the chapel (the other known internment was apparently aged 65 years at death).

Recommendations

Since the identity of this individual can be almost certainly established, it would be worthwhile producing a full publication report which should include all relevant archaeological, historical and bioarchaeological information. If this were undertaken, a total of one day of EAU Research Fellow time would be needed to produce and finalise the relevant publication text.

Archive

All material is currently stored in the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York, along with paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here.

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References

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Table 1. Length measurements of major long bones.

Element	GL (Left)	GL (Right)
Femur	49.6	48.8
Tibia	41.4	41.2
Fibula	40.2	39.3

Table 2. Stature estimations (after Brothwell 1972).

Element/s	Height (cms)	Mean height = 181.03cm (5' 11")
Femur and Fibula	180.69	
Femur and Tibia	181.75	
Fibula	180.02	
Femur	180.60	
Tibia	182.12	