

"An Ebbor Stratigraphy"

The archaeological deposits that have been excavated in Ebbor tend to share the same stratigraphic sequence. The basic sequence has four layers: I, modern surface debris; II, late prehistoric material; III, a layer of tufa; and IV, thermoclastic breccia.

Layer II is by far the most interesting at Ebbor as it has yielded all the most important artefacts. In general terms, it can be divided into two sub-layers; IIa belonging to the Iron Age/Romano-British period, and IIb to the Neolithic/Bronze Age. Layer IV can also be tentatively sub-divided into layers with or without abundant animal bones. Not all layers are present at all sites. For example, Layer II seems to be absent from Gully Cave.

This sequence is a simple one and is what might be expected. It is made up of thermoclastic breccia formed under glacial conditions, followed by a layer of tufa or flowstone deposited in a warmer and more humid climate in the early Holocene. This is covered in turn by surface debris containing human bones and grave goods corresponding to burials that began in the late Neolithic.

The exception appears to be Outlook Cave, where human remains were apparently found *beneath* a floor of stalagmite. The reason is probably that this site is a cave, rather than a shelter, and the deposit formation processes may have been somewhat different from at all the other sites. But if not, those "highly mineralised" remains could be older than the Neolithic.

This sequence is based on descriptions of each layer, taken from Balch's annual reports for the MNRC and his 1947 book, and from McBurney 1959, Mason 1972, and Schreve 2007. Apart from McBurney's sections of the trench outside Bridged Pot, no excavator has ever published a stratigraphic diagram of the sites they have studied.

I	Modern material	<p><i>Bridged Pot</i>: Upper debris for two feet yielded nothing</p> <p><i>Bridged Pot 1959</i>: Level F: Modern and recent humus</p> <p><i>Beaker Shelter</i>: Surface material had accumulated only to a very small extent</p> <p><i>Savory's Hole</i>: A mass of loose stones and superficial accumulation</p> <p><i>Savory's Hole 1959</i>: A typical recent slope deposit</p> <p><i>Gully Cave</i>: An organic-rich sediment containing numerous fragments of modern wood and recent mammal bone</p>
IIa	Iron Age – Romano-British	<p><i>Bridged Pot</i>: Then we found fragmentary unwheeled pottery</p> <p><i>Bridged Pot 1959</i>: Level E: Subsoil with Early Iron Age turf line</p> <p><i>Bracelet Cave</i>: Top 3 feet of deposits contained Romano-British material, human bones were found thickly through these deposits, particularly within the top 12 inches, below 18 inches only isolated bones were found</p> <p><i>Outlook Cave</i>: Associated with the more recent skeleton were fragments of pottery of probably Roman age.</p>
IIb	Neolithic-Bronze Age	<p><i>Bridged Pot</i>: In the next foot a few fragments of decorated pottery...of Beaker.</p> <p><i>Savory's Hole</i>: We came upon an obviously very old stratum</p>

		<p>of compact cave earth, at a depth of eighteen inches we came upon human remains</p> <p><i>Beaker Shelter:</i> In the upper 18 ins of the floor debris were an unusual number of flint scrapers...At this level occurred a perfect floor of small flagstones of limestone, removing one of these it was found that it lay upon a broken human femur</p>
III	Tufa	<p><i>Bridged Pot:</i> At a depth of three feet over the whole floor within the shelter occurred a thick bed of white tufa</p> <p><i>Gully Cave:</i> A densely cemented carbonate flowstone</p> <p><i>Outlook Cave:</i> Beneath a floor of stalagmite in which were embedded bones of bear, in a highly mineralised state, occurred a human jaw, vertebrae and ribs</p>
IVa	Breccia with bones	<p><i>Bridged Pot:</i> In the next foot we began to find large red deer and reindeer</p> <p>Then in the sixth foot there was a wonderful assemblage of bones of small creatures</p> <p><i>Bridged Pot 1959:</i> Level B: Thermoclastic gravel with sharp elements only. Richly fossiliferous, the principal remains being those of rodents...reindeer and red deer...burned and blackened bone...charcoal...fragment of a struck flint blade</p> <p><i>Savory's Hole 1959:</i> a few split limb bones of large mammals occurred towards the top of the lower formation, and thus occupied a position analogous to the occupation traces of Bridged Pot.</p> <p><i>Gully Cave:</i> A red, limestone-rich breccia. Within the red breccia, bones of wild horse, arctic hare, birds and numerous rodent jaws, including the water vole and the narrow-skulled vole</p>
IVb	Breccia with scanty bones	<p><i>Bridged Pot:</i> As we dug deeper till we reached seventeen feet...all the teeth and bones were those of great bears and of their victims</p> <p><i>Savory's Hole:</i> We came upon an extensive barren stratum, at the close of our work we came upon a bed of stalagmited stones at 6 feet below the level of our original floor</p> <p><i>Beaker Shelter:</i> Bones now became very scanty and ceased to appear, in spite of following the floor debris down to over 6 feet in depth. It is another case of that inexplicable barren stratum.</p>