

Crossrail, Tottenham Court Road (XRX10)
Assessment of animal bones.
By Lena Strid

INTRODUCTION

The animal bone assemblage from Tottenham Court Road (XRX10) consists of a total of 1129 fragments, dated to the post-medieval period. A total of 55 bones (4.9%) came from sieved soil samples. Almost all of the sieved bones were small fragments unidentifiable to species.

A full record of the assemblage, documented in a *Microsoft Access* database, can be found with the site archive.

Methodology

The bones were identified at Oxford Archaeology using a comparative skeletal reference collection in addition to standard osteological identification manuals. For each context, the number of identifiable bones per species were noted, as well as the number of bones and teeth that would yield useful data for ageing, sexing and measurements. The general condition of the bones was graded as good, moderate and poor.

OVERVIEW OF THE ASSEMBLAGE

The bone condition was over all very good, suggesting that the bones were deposited rapidly, with little access for scavengers.

The assemblage is dominated by bones from sheep/goat (Table 1). Other taxa present include cattle, pig, horse, dog, cat, rabbit, domestic fowl, goose and corvid. A juvenile bone from a large bird, probably goose or turkey was also found. Judging from numbers alone, sheep/goat and cattle would have been the main meat providers. The distribution of skeletal elements from livestock indicates a mix of household and butchery waste.

The assemblage contained three articulate remains of horse and one of cat. The horse remains comprise two articulate legs (810, 5153) and one semi-articulate horse burial (5244). The cat was found in a fragmented pot in layer (710) (Small find 700). The location of the cat may have been accidental, although it bears some similarity with “witch bottles”, i.e. stoneware bellarmine jugs filled with objects and body parts/bodily fluids such hair, nail clippings, urine or blood, in order to ward off a witch’s spell (Merrifield 1987, 163-175).

Data on ageing, sexing and animal size are very limited (Table 2), but could provide useful data for a study of animal utilisation in post-medieval London, if combined with contemporary assemblages.

	Post-med
Cattle	66
Sheep/goat	132
Pig	18
Horse	74
Dog	2
Cat	66
Rabbit	7
Domestic fowl	20
Goose	3
Goose/turkey	1
Corvid	1
Indeterminate	739

Total	1129
Weight (g)	33851

Table 1. Number of identified fragments by species for the XRX10 assemblage.

Ageable mandibles	18
Ageable bones	199
Sexable bones	6
Measureable bones	78

Table 2. Number of mandibles and bones in the XRX10 assemblage providing data on ageing, sexing and animal size.

POTENTIAL AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While the assemblage is too small on its own for a valid analysis, it could be combined with contemporary assemblages from this area of London (cf Pipe 2011) to provide useful information on diet and animal utilisation. The cat remains from the pot (see above) needs to be discussed together with similar finds, in order to ascertain whether it may be a ritual or accidental deposit.

Due to the small number of published data on faunal remains from post-medieval London, a brief analysis and publication of the dataset for the assemblage in the grey literature is warranted. If the cat remains from the pot represent a deliberate deposit, a short note on them would be included in the popular publication.

Task	Time estimate (day)
Recording of assemblage	4
Library research	2
Report writing	1
Quality check (manager)	0.5
Total	7.5

Bibliography

Anthony, S, 2011 *Medieval settlement to 18th-/19th-century rookery. Excavations at Central Saint Giles, London Borough of Camden, 2006-8*. MOLA Archaeology Studies Series **23**

Merrifield, R, 1987 *The archaeology of ritual and magic*, London

Pipe, A, 2011 Animal bones, in Anthony 2011, 64-65