

Dolphin Hotel, Southampton: Animal Bone Assessment (53200).

The potential of the assemblage to provide information about husbandry patterns, population structures and consumption practices was ascertained from the number of bones that could give information on the age and sex of animals, butchery, burning and breakage patterns. The numbers of bone that could provide metrical information were also counted.

The extent of mechanical or chemical attrition to the bone surface was recorded, with 1 indicating poor condition, 2 fair and 3 good. This relates to the *majority* of the bones of each species in each context. The numbers of gnawed bone were also noted.

Conjoining fragments that were demonstrably from the same bone were counted as one bone in order to minimise distortion. No fragments were recorded as ‘medium mammal’ or ‘large mammal’; these were instead consigned to the unidentified category. No attempt was made to identify ribs or vertebrae (except the atlas and axis) to species.

Marks from chopping, sawing, knife cuts and fractures made when the bone was fresh were recorded as butchery marks.

Animal bone was located in deposits dating mainly to the Medieval period but with some Post-Medieval garden soil and dumping episodes.

Medieval

The majority of the 172 bones were in fair condition, with only 2 recorded as poor (1%) and 4 as good (2%). 6% (N=10) had been gnawed. A fairly high proportion of 58% (N=99) could be identified.

Species	NISP	% of identified fragments
<i>Aves</i> (bird)	16	16
<i>Bos</i> (cattle)	49	49
<i>Canis</i> (dog)	1	1
<i>Caprid</i> (deer)	2	2
<i>Equus</i> (horse)	3	3
<i>Felis</i> (cat)	1	1
<i>Lagomorph</i> (hare)	1	1
<i>Lagomorph</i> (rabbit)	1	1
<i>Ovicaprid</i> (sheep/goat)	21	21
<i>Sus</i> (pig)	3	3
Small Mammal	1	1
Unidentified	73	
Total	172	

Table 1: Species list and percentages (NISP): Medieval. Generic Latin name in italics, common name and/or probable species in normal font.

A fairly wide range of species could be identified, the most common of which were cattle and sheep/goat (table 2). Birds were also well represented, at least one of which

appears not to be domestic fowl. Two bird leg bones showed exostoses indicative of (healed) infection, and two had spurs indicating males were present.

Small numbers of bone from pig, dog, cat, deer, horse, hare/rabbit, and a small mammal were also found. Dog and cat are seldom found as single bones in deposits that have not been reworked, while the small mammal is likely to be intrusive. Therefore the wide range of species may be related to reworking of material from more than one location and period, rather than necessarily indicating this sort of variety in the diet (the deer, dog, cat, rabbit and hare had no visible butchery marks, although the horse bone did).

31% (N=54) of the bones could be aged, although only 5% (N=12) could be measured. None had been burnt but a fairly high proportion (19%; N=32) had been butchered in what seems to be a consistent manner, in order to divide the carcass longitudinally and extract marrow.

Recommendations

The assemblage is in fairly good condition with a wide range of species and a high proportion of bones that can provide information on age and butchery of the animals. However some of the material has been reworked which limits its potential to inform us about particular episodes of activity. Animal selection (age and species) and butchery can be further investigated for the contexts that appear to have tight ceramic date ranges, as these are often the contexts with larger numbers of animal bone. However it must be understood that these will not necessarily be complete deposits.

Identification of the birds that do not appear to be from domestic fowl is not considered crucial as they are mainly found in dump layers. However it is interesting that two showed leg pathologies which could indicate tethering in crowded conditions, or even deliberate misuse (e.g. cock fighting).

Potential: High; further investigation of selected contexts will enable reconstruction of species and age selection and food preparation / consumption patterns. The use of animals for entertainment should be further investigated with reference to other sites with similar pathologies on bird bone.

Post-Medieval

All 57 bones in this period are in fair condition, although 4 (7%) had been gnawed. A high proportion (70%) could be identified (table 2).

Species	NISP	% of identified fragments
<i>Aves</i> (bird)	6	15
<i>Bos</i> (cattle)	15	38
<i>Canis</i> (dog)	1	3
<i>Ovicaprid</i> (sheep/goat)	10	25
<i>Sus</i> (pig)	8	20
Unidentified	17	
Total	57	

Table 2: Species list and percentages (NISP): Post-Medieval. Generic Latin name in italics, common name and/or probable species in normal font.

Of the identified bone, the main domesticates, cattle, sheep/goat and pig were the most frequent, and bird bone from domestic fowl was also common. One dog bone was found in ditch 305.

Two pathological bones were found, suggesting heavy use of cattle and a possible infection of a bird leg. A high percentage (46%, N=26) of bones could be aged, and 8 (14%) could provide useful measurements. 17 (30%) had been butchered and none were burnt.

Recommendations

There are too few ageable and measureable bones to allow reconstruction of animal husbandry or selection practices. The bone appears to be mainly domestic waste with little evidence for specialisation or industry. Evidence for cooking and consumption practice is also limited although the butchery marks suggest rough chopping of bone and splitting for marrow extraction.

Potential: Low.

Redeposited Brickearth

All 17 bone fragments from the reworked brickearth into which the features were cut were in poor condition, although 10 (59%) could be identified. Seven of the bones could be aged, and the species represented were cattle, sheep/goat and deer (antler). No gnawing or butchery marks were visible and measurements could not be taken due to the very poor surface condition of the bone.

Potential: Low.