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REPORT ON 3 SMALL COLLECTIONS OF ANIMAL BONES FROM RING DITCHES AT R17, R30 and R363, M3 MOTORWAY RESCUE EXCAVNS

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Animal Bone from R17 feature 1972. Causewayed Ring Ditch

These bones came from the primary silt and fill of a causewayed ring ditch dated at approximately 2,700 - 2950 bc.

Primary Silt

In layer 1902 were two antlers from red deer, Cervus elaphus. A left antler, shed, almost whole, and from a stag with brow, bez and trez tines and two top tines (probably c. 4 years) could have been a pair with the one sent for 14 C dating from this layer, although it is more likely that they were from separate individuals as they were picked up from the ground.

Layer 1975 contained a metatarsal fragment from a lamb or kid - either newborn or a foetus and a longbone fragment from a large mammal. These were slightly eroded unlike the well-preserved antlers.

Layer 2335 (Neolithic by pottery)
This contained the following fragments none of which were measurable. All were well-preserved except for one large ungulate longbone fragment.

Red deer.	antler tine
Horse	small fragment of mandible
Pig	lower incisor tooth
Cattle	fragments of ulna, metatarsal, lower 3rd premolar
Sheep or goat	lower 1st molar, tibia
Dog	cervical vertebra and femur

Unidentifiable sheep-sized mammal 9 fragments
Unidentifiable large mammal (probably horse or cattle) 20 fragments

Apart from one small skull fragment and a piece of unfused epiphysis - both of large mammal size - all ageable material was from mature animals. The sheep/goat tibia had been gnawed - probably by a dog.

Layer 2234
This contained another antler but this time from an animal found dead or killed as part of the skull was attached. Probably it was a left antler, the lower half only was present with brow, bez and trez tines - suggesting by its appearance a stag of at least 4 years. This antler went for 14 C dating.

Secondary Fill

Layer 4357 produced a red deer antler tine with slight surface erosion.

Upper fill

Layer 1901 contained a rib fragment of cattle-sized mammal, quite badly eroded, and a longbone fragment of a sheep-sized mammal. Layer 2962 produced a slightly eroded unidentifiable fragment of a cattle-sized mammal.

N.B. We earlier looked at a worked antler of red deer from feature 5953, layer 5976, sample no. 1487.

In addition we saw some bones of cattle (a skull with small horn cores and 2 mandible fragments) and horse (mandible fragment) from the primary silt of the main ditch, F5, sample 1476 that were sent for 14 C dating.

R30 ?Middle Bronze Age Ring Ditch

The fragment from feature 2C, layer 6 was an unidentifiable piece from a large mammal and that from feature 2G, layer 25 a totally unidentifiable bone fragment - both were very badly eroded.

R363 Ring Ditch - Probably Bronze Age

All the bones from this site were badly eroded like the fragments from R30. There is little evidence from them and they are best listed:

Upper Ditch Fill;

Layer 97 Radius and tibia fragments of a large unidentifiable mammal
Layer 60 This is not a bone and may be a fossil
Layer 96 Unidentifiable fragment only

Recut in Top of Ditch
Layer 99 3 cattle upper molars from the same jaw
Fragments of a pig jaw

Both these animals were adult in that the cattle molars were all in wear and the pig all its premolars in wear but the amount of tooth wear could not be assessed. The adult bones with teeth would probably survive better than other material in such a situation where there was obviously a lot of leaching although there is some erosion of bone in site R 17 of the M3 motorway excavations and yet some immature bones survive.

Forest Ditch Fill (Probably mediaeval or post-mediaeval)

Layer 25 contained a well-preserved measurable scapula of sheep quite unlike the Bronze Age bones in its state of preservation.

The fragments from all 3 sites have been recorded as part of our computer-based data bank and full details are at the Faunal Remains Project.