

BLACKGATE 1975, NEWCASTLE

Animal remains from a seventeenth century pit at Blackgate ,
Newcastle .

The pit has been dated to the latter half of the seventeenth century . The stratification of the pit is retained in the catalogue but there was no justification for analysing the layers separately.

The conditions of the bone varied , the upper layers particularly containing poorly preserved material some with dark staining and concretions on the surface . A number of bones show substantial local erosion often on only one surface , possibly the result of biological activity or part immersion in a corrosive medium when deposited . Eight specimens had patches of green staining in consequence of contact with vivianite (hydrated iron phosphate , $\text{Fe}(\text{PO}_4) \cdot \text{Fe}_3(\text{PO}_4)_2 \cdot 8\text{H}_2\text{O}$), bones thoroughly impregnated with vivianite are termed odontolite and are fairly ~~frequent~~ common finds .

Seventy bones had been chopped , cut or scored most of which can be referred to the butchery of the specimens rather than any subsequent damage ; two bones were completely calcined as a result of fire and a third charred at one end ; and two bones showed the evidence of having been chewed (presumably by dogs). The proximal end of a right tibia of a sheep (or goat) shows a small excrescence on the medial surface . A sheep astragalus from layer 8 has an artificial groove running down its posterior surface with a dark stain or scorch mark at its bottom ; the mark is consistent with a thin cord or string having run through the groove .

Thirty-nine bones and teeth of cattle , sixty-five of sheep (or goat) and nine of pig could be aged using fusion of epiphyses and tooth eruption as criteria .

The ox bone indicated at less than nought (Table 2) is a metacarpus with the proximal epiphysis unformed , this is a prenatal condition . Less than thirty percent. of the aged bones of both sheep(or goat) and ox show juvenile characteristics and there is no pattern in the figures (Table 2) that would indicate any preferred slaughter age . The few pig bones suggest the slaughter of young animals .

Table 2

Age	Ox	Sheep/goat	Pig
Greater than $\frac{1}{4}$	31	49	7
greater than $1\frac{1}{2}$	26	24	1
greater than 3	9	14	-
greater than 7	3	-	-
Less than 5	8	20	4
less than 2	1	9	4
less than 1	1	3	1
less than 0	1	-	-

(The table has been condensed , and is compiled from Tables IX and X , Schmid , 1972)

The minimum number of cattle is five , including the unborn specimen ; that of sheep seven , based upon skull fragments ; and that of pig two . Only one bone could be definitely sexed , the mandibular canine of a male pig , but a sheep's horn core was either a male or wether . Both horned and polled shepp are present , the four horn cores found being essentially like the modern Swaledale in shape and size . None of the sheep (or goat) bones could be definitely attributed to goats , and it is considered possible that only sheep are present .

The pit appears to have contained only food debris apart from the scavengers (cat and rat) . The shaep bones are the most common , but the ox remains must have contributed substantially more in terms of meat than the rest of the species utilised for food . The upper and lower valves of an oyster and two cockle valves were recovered with the bones .

D.James Rackham 18.1.77

Schmid , E. (1972) , Atlas of animal bones , Elsevier , Amsterdam .

BLACKGATE 1975

Desturo ^{see also} 1, a pit

Date ~~1650~~ 1650 - 1700 AD

Total number of bones found — 285

Number of bones identified — 192 (+ 1 bird & 6 fish)

Number of layers containing bone — 17

Species list

Ox 65 of 2

Pig 13 of 1

Sheep/Goat 85

Sheep 11

Rabbit 2

Cat 1 of 1

Kat ,cf Black 2 of 4

Fowl 3

Goose 1

Other bones

Large ungulate 21

Small ungulate 38

Large animal 22

Medium animal 5

Bird indet. 1

Fish ^(cod family) ~~inlet.~~ 6

Fish ~~index.~~ ^(see family) 6

Bone	Ox	L.u.	L.a.	Pig	M.a.	S.u.	Sheep/Goat
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Skull (inc. maxilla)	5	4	15
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Vertebra	9	4	1	1	6	5
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Ribs	1	16	1	30
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lendible 3 2 1 7

Teeth	5	2	8
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Scamula	3	1	1	8
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Numerus	3	1	10
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3 Ring 4 13

Time	1	2
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Letter of trans.	2	1
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Reviews	4	1	1	1	1
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6 1 1 7

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1	total up	3		2
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H. Wheeler (1811-1880) *John H. Wheeler*