TUDOR STREET

The Fish Bones

A total of 236 fish bones was recovered, of these 23 were handpicked, the rest were extracted by sieving. The following species were identified: roker (<u>Raja clavata</u>), eel (<u>Anguilla anguilla</u>), herring (<u>Clupea harengus</u>), sprat (<u>Sprattus sprattus</u>), smelt (<u>Osmerus eperlanus</u>), cod (<u>Gadus morhua</u>), haddock (<u>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</u>), whiting (<u>Merlangius merlangus</u>), ling (<u>Molva molva</u>), hake (<u>Merluccius merluccius</u>), tub gurnard (<u>Trigla lucerna</u>), black sea-bream (<u>Spondyliosoma cantharus</u>), plaice (<u>Pleuronectes platessa</u>).

The deposits the fish were recovered from are listed below:

101 Late C14th to C15th dump

125 Medieval, waterlaid

128 C14th Waterlaid

130 C15th dump

812/814 Late medieval dump, overlying a waterlaid clay

D\* C13th-14th disturbed waterlaid silt

+ Unstratified

The table below shows the number of bones for each species in the different deposits:

	101	125	128	130	812/814	D <b>*</b>	+
roker	1	1		-	-	-	_
eel	-	20	5	2		-	-
herring	1	22	8	2	<b>—</b> ·	-	-
sprat		4	4				
smelt		1	1	-			
cod		1	1		1	1	
gadoid	1	2	2	-			-
haddock	-	1	1		-		-
whiting	1	4	4	****		***	
ling		1	-			-	
hake	-	1	1		-	-	
gurnard		-		1		-	-
black sea-bream	-	1					-
plaice	1	1	1				-
flatfish		6		a cost	-	-	
unidentifiable fragment	15	38	15	1		4	1
unidentifiable vertebrae		27	-			-	

There appears to be little difference between the species composition of waterlaid and dumped deposits, both contain a mixture of marine and estuarine species, and almost certainly all are food remains. The vertebral centrum of black sea-bream from deposit 125 was heavily calcined. It seems likely that some of the initially dumped material may have become detached and been incorporated into waterlaid deposits.

A variety of fishing methods are suggested by the different species, whose biology may be found in Wheeler 1978.

A deep sea fishery using lines is suggested by roker, ling, haddock and hake. Many of these fish were marketed salted or dried as transportation was too slow for them to reach the consumer while still fresh.

Whiting and herring were both products of inshore fisheries using nets. Both were often marketed salted or smoked.

All the other species could have been caught around the Thames and its estuary. Most of the information on the different fishing methods has been taken from Wheeler 1979.

Plaice, flounders etc were frequently caught in 'Kiddles' which were V-shaped traps with holding boxes erected on the tidal shore, which caught the fish returning from feeding on the shoreline at high tide.

The black sea-bream is a popular anglers fish, and today is common in the English Channel near Littlehampton where it breeds on the gravel beside hard ledges, however it is rare in the Thames Estuary.

Sprats are abundant in estuaries and inshore waters, sprat fishing was very important in the lower reaches of the Thames, usually prosecuted with stow nets. The sprat fisheries were usually near a large city so they could be sold fresh to a ready market, they were sometimes cured in the same way as herring.

Smelt were caught in the tidal and middle Thames reaches, and used to be an important fishery. Since the smelt is migratory the fishing is seasonal,

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the largest catches are made in winter and early spring when smelts enter the river mouth and move upstream to spawn.

The eel fisheries were important in the Thames, and its tributaries They were mainly caught in 'eel bucks' which were wicker baskets fixed to weirs usually in mill streams. The eels were caught in the bucks as they descended seawards.

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## References

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A Wheeler. A key to the Fishes of Northern Europe Warne 1978. A Wheeler. The Tidal Thames Routledge and Kegan Paul 1979.