

ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY

REPORT

4225

SERIES/No	CONTRACTOR
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TITLE	Castle Rising, Norfolk The fish bones

CASTLE RISING: NORFOLK

THE FISH BONES

A large number of fish bones were recovered by wet sieving medieval kitchen deposits and one garde robe pit. However only a small proportion of the bones were identifiable.

The following species were present; ray (Raja sp.), trout (Salmo trutta), smelt (Osmerus eperlanus), roach (Rutilus rutilus), eel (Anguilla anguilla), bib (Trisopterus luscus), cod (Gadus morhua), ling (Molva molva), perch (Perca fluviatilis), Black goby (Gobius niger), 3 spine stickleback (Gasterosteus aculeatus), flounder (Platichthys flesus).

The table below shows the species present in each context;

<u>Context</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Anatomy</u>
89	Ray Cyprinidae, cf roach Eel Cod?	1 dermal denticle 1 pharyngeal tooth 3 vertebral centra 1 tooth
83	Ray Smelt Eel Cod? Flounder	2 dermal denticles 2 dentaries 8 vertebral centra 3 vertebral centra 10 teeth 1 pharyngeal tooth
43	Ray Smelt	8 dermal denticles 5 vertebral centra
33	Ray Trout Eel Cod? Flounder	1 tooth 1 vertebral centrum 1 vertebral centrum 3 teeth 1 dentary 1 vertebral centrum 1 supracleithrum
103	Ray Trout Smelt Black (or Common) Goby	5 dermal denticles 1 vertebral centrum 3 dentaries 8 vertebral centra 1 dentary

<u>Context</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Anatomy</u>
38	Ray Smelt Eel Ling	1 dermal denticle 3 premaxillaries 8 vertebral centra 1 dentary 2 vertebral centra 1 tooth
84	Ray Smelt Stickleback Flounder?	2 dermal denticles 1 vertebral centrum 2 pelvic spines 1 pharyngeal tooth
34	Perch? Flatfish (cf flounder?)	1 scale 1 vertebral centrum
113	Smelt	1 dentary 1 vertebral centrum
32	Smelt Eel Perch? Stickleback	2 vertebral centra 1 vertebral centrum 1 scale 1 vertebral centrum
92	Eel Perch? Flatfish (cf flounder)	1 vertebral centrum 3 scales 1 vertebral centrum
31 garde robe pit	Trout Smelt Roach? Eel Bib Stickleback Flounder	4 vertebral centra 7 vertebral centra 1 fragment of the pharyngeal 5 vertebral centra 1 dentary 1 spine 3 vertebral centra 1 dentary

There was a high proportion of fin spines and other unidentifiable bones, compared with the vertebral centra, dentaries etc. A few of the vertebrae were calcined.

The species recovered from the garde robe pit (31) were not significantly different from those recovered from the kitchen deposits.

The fish remains represent species from three broad types of habitats, freshwater, estuarine conditions, and the sea, but several species could have originated in more than one of these habitats.

Freshwater fishes include the roach (doubtfully identified in two contexts) and perch (scales believed to be of this species identified in three contexts). Trout might also have come from a freshwater fishery. Clearly the quantity of freshwater fishes represented in these samples was small.

Sea fishes represented included cod (three tentative identifications in different contexts), ling (which occurred in one context only), and an unidentified ray which occurred in seven contexts. The remains on which these identifications were based were teeth and dermal denticles, neither of which are very suitable for positive identification nor for analysis of the size of fish represented. Therefore they can only be interpreted as evidence for some sea fish being present in the kitchen deposits, and thus in the diet. All three species could be encountered off the north Norfolk coast but the ling is rare there.

The most significant remains are those of estuarine fishes, eel, smelt, possibly trout, bib, black goby, three-spined stickleback, and flounder, which dominated the remains in all contexts. The eel, smelt, and flounder are migratory in river-mouths, travelling from the sea into freshwater and vice versa. The trout (if the remains represent a sea trout which is impossible to establish) is likewise a migratory fish. Their presence in some numbers strongly indicates that the kitchens were supplied by a

fishery in an estuary or tidal river. The bib (a small member of the cod family) is common in outer estuaries especially during the winter; it may have been caught in such a fishery. The occurrence of stickleback, black goby and the size of the flounders, which were all very small, suggests that the fishery was prosecuted using fine meshed nets, possibly a seine worked from the shore with the aid of a boat. Sticklebacks are not food fish but would have been an incidental by-catch of a fishery aimed at smelt, eels, and other edible fish. There are many areas along the edge of the Wash and close to Castle Rising where such a fishery could exist.

I would like to thank Mr A Wheeler of the Natural History Museum for all his help with the identifications and the writing of the report.

Ref; Fishes of the British Isles and NW Europe. A Wheeler. 1969. Macmillan.