

FULHAM PALACE - MEDIEVAL MOATED CORNER: EP11

THE ANIMAL BONES

by Alison Locker

A small group of mammal, bird, fish bone and shellfish, totalling 827 fragments was recovered. The following species were identified; ox (Bos domestic) 106 fragments with 135 ox-sized fragments, sheep/goat (Ovis domestic/Capra domestic) 75 fragments with 117 sheep-sized fragments, pig (Sus domestic) 51 fragments, horse (Equus domestic) 7 fragments, ?fallow deer (Dama dama) 1 fragment, dog (Canis domestic) 11 fragments, cat (Felis domestic) 1 fragment, hare (Lepus sp) 1 fragment, rabbit (Oryctolagus cuniculus) 1 fragment, domestic fowl (Gallus domestic) 15 fragments and 7 unidentifiable bird, cod (Gadus morhua) 1 fragment and oyster (Ostrea edulis) 2 valves. The remainder was unidentifiable. No goats were positively identified so the sheep/goat category are probably all sheep. All the bone was measured, details of the identifications, and measurements are available from Mr K Whitehouse.

Most of the bone (89%) came from 13th and 14th Century ditch deposits, mainly from B 19 and B 13, the remainder being post medieval, or poorly stratified.

Ox and ox-sized categories were the most numerous, both numerically and also by weight, sheep/goat and sheep sized being of secondary importance. Pig, ?fallow deer (tentatively identified from a femur shaft fragment), hare, rabbit, domestic fowl and cod all represent food remains. Oysters were a cheap and popular food in the Middle Ages, and in London at the end of the thirteenth century cost twopence a gallon (Wilson 1973, 35).

Ox are represented by most parts of the skeleton except for the horn cores which were probably taken elsewhere for the horn sheaths to be removed for horn making. Much of the bone is butchered, especially the mandibles which were chopped through the diastema and also close to the third molar, this may have been done for the extraction of marrow. Many limb bones were chopped and vertebral centra chopped axially. Knifecuts were seen on a the lateral surface of a cervical vertebra, some ox bone was burnt including a third phalanx (both from B 19). The limb extremities represent poor quality meat and alternatively were often used in glue making and bone working. Sheep bones were also butchered and showed evidence of both knifecuts and chopmarks, knifecuts were seen about the midshaft of a humerus in B 13. Both the pig bones that were burnt were from the feet (B 19), and may be from a roasting carcass that was too close to the fire. Other pig bones also showed signs of chopping and knifecuts.

Cattle were mostly mature with all permanent teeth in full wear and epiphyseal fusion complete as were sheep, both these animals would have used for milk and traction, and wool respectively before coming to the table. Conversely the pig bones were often immature since the use of this animal is as a carcass for meat and hide. Pig also have a high fecundity rate, especially in comparison to cattle and sheep, which makes early slaughter economic.

A few horse bones were recovered these, with dog and cat, are probably incidental inclusions which were not eaten. A horse

astragalus from B 22 showed exostoses and slight eburnation on the facet for articulation with the calcaneum, and may be evidence of osteoarthritis, which can result from ageing and work. A dog femur from post medieval deposits, B 12, showed slight exostoses around the distal articulation, the dog bones from B 12 may be from a single animal. Domestic fowl were kept in ^{ns} during the medieval period, both for their eggs and flesh, rabbits and hare were also commonly eaten, and although considered a poor man's game, were coursed on foot with dogs (Ibid, 83). The single cod cleithrum from B 6 b, a 13th century ditch infill, may be the remains of salted or dried fish that formed so regular and monotonous a part of the medieval diet.

REFERENCES

Wilson C Anne 1973. Food and Drink in Britain. Constable