A comparative study of the Roman animal bone assemblages from Honson Street, and from Roman and later deposits at St. Mary's Guildhall, Lincoln.

AML REPORT 4966

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Sally Scott

Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York

Introduction

The sites of St. Mary's Guildhall and Monson Street were both excavated during the 1982 season. Both sites lie to the south of the wolled Rosen city of Lindum, within the medieval suburb of Wigford. Because of the close proximity of the sates one to another, because some of the features excavated were contemporaneous, and because noither yielded particularly substantial bone assemblages, the two sites are discussed together in this report. Buch of the information about the interpretation of features has been extracted from Unpublished drafts of the excavation reports from Monson Street (Regilton, 1982) and St. Wary's Guildhall (Regilton and Stocker, 1902).

Monson Street consisted of busically Roman material from what has been described as "opulent traders dwellings", but excavations during the lust century revealed a number of early Roman cremations and inhumations (records suggest that during the early Roman period this area functioned as a conctery). There was also a number of medieval rubbish pits and other architectural fragments cut into the Roman features (Magilton, 1982). The majority of the animal bone from Roman Street was late Roman in date, but the small amounts of early Roman and Medieval bone are recorded in Tables 3 to 6. In the tables, the phases are listed as follows:

PS1 - The early Roman cenetery (1st-2nd Centuries)

FS2 - Roman (2nd-3rd Centurics)

PS3 - Medleval

St. Hary's Guildhall was a multi-phase site having been occupied from Roman through to modern times (Ragilton and Stocker, 1902). During the Roman period the site consisted of a number of artisan dwellings situated on the land between the Fosse Way and Ermine Street. After a long period of abandonment, the construction of the Guildhall, the 'Norman Nouse' and other associated buildings marked the first architectural activity in the area. The later medieval period erely represents the continued occupation and adaptation of these willdings. For the purposes of this report, and because of the upuall amounts of bones involved, the site has been divided up into three main phases:

SHC1 - 1st-3rd century (Early and Late Rosen)

SMG2 - 5th-12th century (Early Pedieval)

SRG3 - 12th-16th (Late Fedieval plus some Post-Medieval material)

In addition, there were a number of contexts which were unstratified, which are not referred to at any great length in the text, but which appear in some of the tables (SNGU/5).

From the site of Monson Street, a total of 1,420 bone fragments were retrieved of which 964 were identified to genus or species. From St. Mary's Guildhall 3,947 fragments were encavated of which 2,662 fragments were similarly identified. Preservation of the bone from both sites was reasonably good: there was a very low frequency of charred, gnamed and abraded bone and whilst much of it was fragmentary, it was fairly easy to establish the species to which most of the bones belonged

Recause all of the bone bearing contexts were small, often containing fewer than a dozen bones, the record was made on small index cards. The following information was recorded:

1.Bone type and species

2.Portion of bone identified (i.e., long bones are divided up into six sectors, the proximal and distal articulations and four equal fractions of the diaphysis)

3.Epiphyseal fusion of selected bones of the major domesticates (agter Silver, 1969)

4.The rate of dental attrition and tooth eruption in the depositicates (Grant, 1982: Payne, 1984: Rull and Payne, 1982)

5.The relative proportions of carcass components

6.Non-metrical traits, such as the presence and absence of a second premotar in the mandibles of cattle and sheep (Andrews and Moddle, 1975), and the postion of the nutrient foresen in sheep femora (Moddle, 1978).

7. The ratio of horned, to polled, to 'scurred' sheep

8_Distinctive butchery marks

9.Any signs of disease or injury.

In addition, where possible, measurements were taken on the more complete long bones, following the system first devised by von den Driesch (1976), and these are included at the end of the report and Tables (Biometry Archive).

The bones themselves are the projecty of the Trust for Lincolnshire Archaeology, and the notes and archive material for these two sites are stored within the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York.

Monson Street produced the remains of 14 different species of manmal, bird and fish (possibly 15 if the unstratified carnivore bone is for rather than dog; Table 1). The greatest diversity of species was during the Roman phase, but this is hardly surprising, as this phase produced 82.7% of all identified bone (Table 3). Dones were distributed fairly evenly throughout the contexts with no concentrations of any one species in any one phase (Table 4).

St. Mary's Guildhall produced a total of 28 different species and a further two bird, and one fish bone which it was impossible to identify to species (Table 2). The greatest diversity of species was during the Later Medieval phase, although in total this did not produce as many identifiable bones as the Farly Medieval phase (Table 3). It ought to be pointed out that many of the bones which were unstratified at the time of writing this report are probably of later medieval date. The presence of Turkey (Meleagris gallopavo) in Context 5016 implies that this context is at least 16th century in date.

A study of the dentition of the pajor describates (Tables 5 and 6) revealed no major distinctions between the two sites, or between phases. Cattle were almost exclusively adult, and in fact a fairly high proportion were at least 5-6 years of age at death. The sheep

Lincoln in that there were no very young individuals in the assemblage, and only few elderly sheep. 6% of the sheep were adult (3-4 years) and a further 27.4% were sub-adult. There were very few pig Fandibles but with the exception of one, all were juvenile and sub-adult, which would seen to suggest that pigs were being killed between the ages of 1-2 years.

A study of the epiphyseal fusion in celected long bones seems to vindicate these findings (Table 7). The majority of cattle bones were from adult individuals, whilst the distribution of sheep and pig bones represents a greater diversity in age at death with a fairly high proportion of immature individuals.

When a simple corcass components analysis was attempted (Table 0) for cattle, sheep and pig, the most striking feature was the very high proportion of skull in all phases. In the case of pig, skull accounted for between 46% and 57% of all pig bones in both assemblages. (Only very small numbers of bones were involved, however). Cattle showed a fairly random spread of carcass components throughout all phases, but with a generally high percentage of skull fragments. In the late medieval period, horn cores accounted for a third of all cattle bones but this may be emplained by the presence of a horn-workers shop somewhere in the vicinity. One feature from St. Pary's Guildhall (pit 2500) produced something in the order of 1,500 horn core fragments. They are discussed in a separate report (5cott,

It is the distribution of sheep bones which is perhaps the most interesting feature of this analysis. Throughout all phases, except CRG3, the ratio of skull to other skeletal elements is markedly high. In the later medieval phase however, there is a very high proportion of metapodial (37.2%) which is spread throughout all contexts of this phase. This phenomenon has been observed elswhere in later medieval deposits, e.g. at Aldwark, York, and can be interpreted in different ways. It could be that only selected joints of the sheep carcass were finding their way into these deposits i.e. the cheap and sinewy hock joints which may have been brought onto the site in bulk. Alternatively it could be that sheepskins were being brought onto site, the skins were then trianed and the metapodials represent the maste from this process. As there is no other evidence for skinning activity in the area, this latter alternative seens the less likely.

Table 9 shows the ratio of horned to folied to scurred sheep from post—of the recorded sites in Lincoln (studied by the author). Throughout all sites, the proportion of skulls possessing scurs was very small with no concentrations within particular phases (scurs usually, but not always represent 'ewes'). Of interest is the relatively high proportion of polied sheep in Roman levels (nost notably at Konson Street and St. Parks). It is just conceivable that this represents a single sheep population (the sites lie very close to one another geographically), but it is unusual to say the least to

find such a high concentration of polled sheep in Roman levels. They become much more common in Lincoln after the Conquest, and increased in frequency during the Medieval period (6. Connor, 1982). This observation has not been matched by Roman material from York.

The few injured and diseased bones identified consisted of a domestic fowl thiotarsus with a healed midshaft fracture, similarly a cat femur with a midshaft fracture that had healed at almost 45 degrees to the norm. There was a sheep horn core with so called 'Thumb prints', a sign of arrested growth, likely to have been chused by a short period or periods of malnutrition. The only other incidence of disease was a horse list pholony with extensive boney growth about all facets of the shaft, but with no changes apparent in the articular surfaces. This is indicative of a condition known to yets as 'ringbone'.

Faced with two saal: sites (approximately 5,000 bone fragments in total), lying within fairly close proximity to each other, 't seemed an ideal opportunity to compare and contrast the two. In terms of the assemblages themselves, it was also the rost practical solution.

Mondon Street contained basically Ropan material, whilst St. Pary's Guildhall was a multi-phase site yeilding paterial from Roman through to Late Medieval levels.

Taking the Roman assemblages from both sites, the species varied little, and represented a typical picture of the exploitation of domestic animals with wild species represented at a very low frequency (role deer, brown hare, mallard, pike). The human bone from Roman Honzon Street was probably reworked from the Farly Roman cemetery. Cattle was the most abundant species followed by sheep, with pig represented by only a very small number of bones.

By looking at the butchery marks on the cattle bones it was lossible to establish patterns in the dressing and disposal of the carcass. At Monson Street, butchery was basically concentrated on the proximal femur and humerus which is consistent with the removal of the limbs as whole units. Other butchery marks were basically random.

At St. Pary's Guildhall the only apparent Lutchery was on the utiles and exis, which suggests the removal of the head. These findings are significant in that they present a different picture to that of the Roman sites of Holres Grainwarehouse and The Park. At these sites butchery consisted of the systematic removal of the vertebral column (a process known as 'chining', and identifiable by the removal of the transverse processes on either side of the centrum). There was also the comprehensive smashing up of long bones, presumably in an attempt to extract the bone marrow. In addition, there were concentrations of cut marks along the margins of the humerus distal articulation and the glenoid cavity of the scapular.

The systematic disposal of cattle carcasses is a common feature of Roman town sites (Maltby, 1984). One possible explanation for this discrepancy in butchery techniques is that the cattle bones from the Park and West Parade (both sites close to the heart of Roman Lincoln) represent wholesale marketing and processing of cattle carcasses whereas the bones from Monson Street and St. Hary's Guildhall derived from less organised butchery and disposal. It should be stressed that these two assemblages were modest in size and thus these conclusions should be regarded as possibilities rather than probabilities.

There is too little hedieval naterial from Ponson Street with which to compare with contemporaneous naterial from St. Hary's Guildhall. At this site, during the Early Medieval phase, changes in the diet appear to have been slight with the same species represented

in similar proportions. The wild bird species represented are basically wetland species or those whose usual habitat is open agricultural land. This describes quite well the environment of Lincoln and its minterland. The fish species must have been brought onto the site from the coast. In general there seems to have been comparatively little exploitation of wild species, and this possibly indicates that they played a fairly uninjortant part in the diet at this date.

boring the Late Redieval period the picture is very such the same, but with a greater diversity of bird species (many of which must be regarded as accidentals rather than food items). It was not lossible to identify with certainty the small falcon species, but it was appreciably smaller than kestrel (Falco tinnunculus), even allowing for a large diversity in size within this species. The identification of songthrush (Turdus philoselus) attests to the fine treservation and hand collection of the bone on a site where slewing was not practised.

A single unstratified feature (5016) thought to be late Redieval in date, and described as 'the packing and filling of a chimney flue 'contained a bewildering selection of species including turkey (Releagris gallopavo), Tawny Owl (Strix aluco) and Rabbit (Oryctolagus cuniculus). The single specimen of turkey is useful in providing a terminus post quem date for this flue packing.

St. Hary's Guildhall and Monson Street provided a useful opportunity to examine two sites which lie very close to one another, perhaps highlighting any subtle differences between the two sites. This appears to have been vindicated by dicrepancies in such things as differences in butchery technique and the proportions of polled to horned sheep. The number of bones involved is too small to allow broad firm conclusions to be drawn. However the findings have extended the archaeological record and have, in particular, raised questions about rubbish disposal in the Poran period and how variation in this disposal may reflect differences between areas of the city.

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Acknowledgements

would like to thank my colleague Dr. Terry O'Connor for his id advice during this project, and Jenny Mann from the Trust for ishire Archaeology for her excellent notes and phasing for the less.

es work was funded by a post-excavation grant from the Historic es and Monuments Commission for England.

July 1986.

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Corvid species (Corvidae)
Feral pigeon (Columba livia)
Golden plever (Pluvialis apricaria)
Jordes (Corvus monedula)
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4. Unstratified Cattle (Bos sp.)

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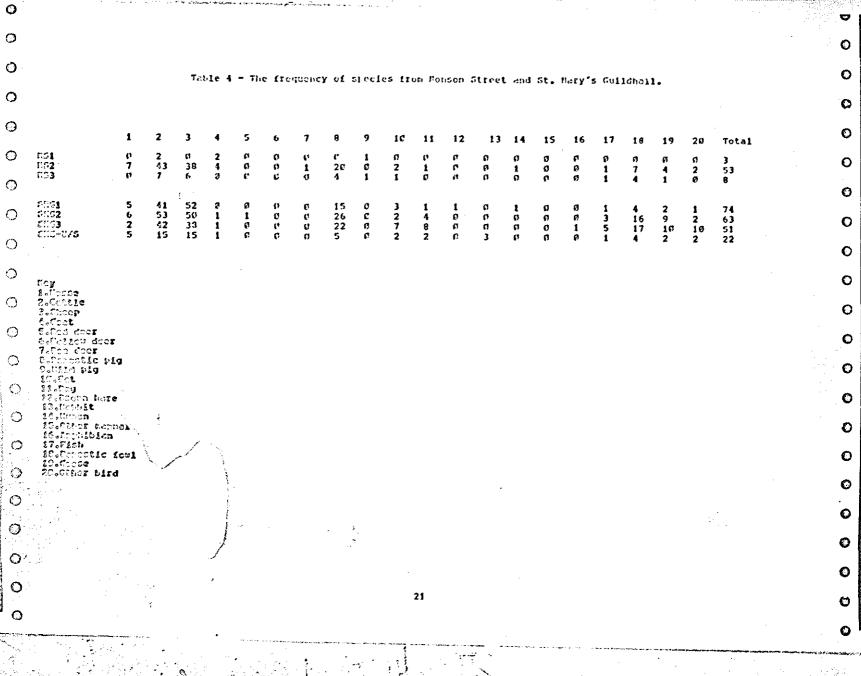


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Table 7 - Honson Street and St. Hary's Guildhall - Fpiphyseal fusion.

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Table 8 - Monson Street and St. Mary's Guildhall - Calcass components.

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Table 9 - The ratio of Polled to horned to scurred sheep from various sites in Lincoln.

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Biometry Archive (Codes for measurements follow von den Driesch, 1976).

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Site SKG	Context 5024	R/L R	G11 124.7	Glm 121.2	n. 23.9	18.1	23.9	SHG3	
Dosestic	fowl hume	FijS							
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