

X/67

Introduction

The identifiable bone material from this site weighed 21 lbs and the greater part (18 lbs) was from fifteenth century levels. The mammals present are cattle, sheep, pig and fallow deer. There are also fish and several species of bird.

Method

All measurements are given to the nearest millimetre and those of long bone extremities are of articular surfaces only. Age determinations have been based on epiphyseal fusions without, however, any attempt to express such ages in years but merely in 'age groups'.

Description of Material

The remains from thirteenth and fourteenth century levels are of cattle and pig but are too few and fragmentary to be worth special mention. The remarks that follow thus apply to the fifteenth century material.

Cattle

A minimum of four animals is represented and the majority of specimens which provide evidence of age are from fully mature animals. The total of such specimens however is too small to draw any valid conclusions as to the age structure of the bovine population and thus the nature of its possible exploitation. Measurements are given in Table I together with those of cattle from other mediaeval sites and of a modern breed which provides the closest parallel.

TABLE I  
Bone Measurements - Cattle

| Bone                       | Range       | Site/Breed        |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Humerus - Distal width     | 75-81 (3)   | Writtle           |
|                            | 58-77 (3)   | Petergate 3       |
|                            | 60-74 (2)   | Northolt 4        |
|                            | 62-83 (3)   | Gomeldon 1        |
|                            | 72          | Jersey Cow 3      |
| Radius - Proximal width    | 78 (1)      | Writtle           |
|                            | 74-82 (3)   | Northolt 4        |
| Astragalus - Total length  | 56-67 (5)   | Writtle           |
|                            | 62-67 (3)   | Northolt 4        |
|                            | 66          | Jersey Cow 3      |
| Calcaneum - Maximum length | 129-132 (4) | Writtle           |
|                            | 150 (1)     | Gomeldon 2        |
|                            | 130         | Chillingham Cow * |

\* Measured at Brit. Mus. (Nat. Hist.)

Figures in brackets indicate the number of specimens

Sheep

Sheep remains are much less numerous than those of cattle. A minimum of three animals is represented.

The fused proximal epiphyses of tibiae and humeri indicate fully mature animals. This finding is consistent with the purpose for which sheep were kept at this period, namely the maximum clip (5) so that an animal would be kept alive as long as possible.

Measurements are given in Table II from which it will be seen that the Writtle sheep had bone dimensions similar to those of the long limbed slender Soay.

TABLE II  
Long Bone Measurements - Sheep

|         | t.l.           | p.w.          | m.s.d. | d.w.          |                        |
|---------|----------------|---------------|--------|---------------|------------------------|
| Radius  | 145            | 28            | 16     | 21            | Writtle                |
|         | 145            | 28            | 17     | -             | "                      |
|         | 145            | 31            | 21     | 22            | Inst. Arch. O.361      |
| Humerus | 135(122)       | -             | 13     | 25            | Writtle                |
|         | -              | -             | -      | 28            | "                      |
|         | 142(130)       | -             | 15     | 28            | Inst. Arch. O.361      |
| Tibia   | 184            | 32            | 15     | 23            | Writtle                |
|         | <del>184</del> | <del>32</del> |        | <del>23</del> |                        |
|         | 192            | 39            | 15     | 22            | Dublin Museum 319.1904 |

0.361 Soay ram.

319.1904 Soay ewe

t.l. = total length

p.w. = proximal width

m.s.d. = midshaft diameter

d.w. = distal width

Fig

This species provided only six specimens.

Fallow Deer

Three animals are represented but as all specimens, with one exception, were waste bones removed at skinning, that is, those of the lower legs, it seems probable that the carcasses were taken away for consumption elsewhere.

Measurements are shown in Table III.

TABLE III

Long Bone Measurements - Fallow Deer

|            | t.l. | p.w. | m.s.d. | d.w. |
|------------|------|------|--------|------|
| Metacarpal | 182  | 25   | 15     | 26   |
| Metatarsal | 201  | 24   | 15     | 28   |
|            | 202  | 23   | 15     | 28   |
|            | 205  | 24   | 14     | 28   |

Comparison with reference material suggests that these may be does or young bucks.

Birds

The species form a representative selection of birds of the chase. They are heron, gull, pheasant, woodcock, plover, godwit, partridge, pigeon, goose and duck. In addition there are several small waders which it is difficult to specify accurately.

Acknowledgments

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References

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