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Summary

A small collection of poorly preserved animal bone was recovered from the 1987 excavations of the late Iron Age to Romano-British settlement at Catcote, near Hartlepool. Cattle, sheep/goat, pig and horse were identified with a single unidentified fish. The exploitation of these species cannot be assessed from this limited collection.

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The animal bones from the 1987 excavations at Catcote, Cleveland.

~~Catcote 1987. The Animal Bone.~~

By L. J. Gidney.

The excavation of part of the Romano-British settlement at Catcote near Hartlepool produced a disappointingly small collection of animal bone, the majority of which was recovered from Area F Phase 1. One context in Area F Phase 3 and one context in Area E Phase II produced a few fragments. Area E is downslope of the 1964 excavation and is thought to be the earlier occupation site, perhaps Late Bronze Age (Vyner, pers. comm.) Area F is on the ridge top adjacent to the 1964 excavation (Long, 1988) and is late Iron Age to Romano-British occupation. Most of the bone was recovered from ditches whereas the bone from the earlier excavations was largely recovered from occupation deposits.

The bones are very fragmented and in very poor condition. Some of the identifications of cattle bones are tentative. The fragment counts in Table 1 include some estimates of the original fragments present, in particular teeth which have fragmented into enamel splinters and minute fragments of bone embedded in lumps of mud which are assumed to represent single pieces of bone which have disintegrated.

Only five very small unidentifiable fragments of bone, a sheep/goat tooth, part of a cow maxillary tooth row and a single, unidentified, fish vertebra were recorded as being in reasonable condition.

Where tooth rows could be reconstructed they were catalogued as mandible or maxilla fragments though no bone has survived. Table 2 shows the high proportion of teeth amongst the identified fragments indicating the

poor level of preservation. Where a tooth row has been reconstructed this has been counted as one tooth for this table. The dentine in the majority of teeth has started to decay and the enamel is also splintering on many teeth. Since teeth are robust and the last part of the skeleton to decay this collection can in no way be considered representative of the bone assemblage originally deposited.

The domestic animals - cattle, sheep/goat, pig and horse are represented in this collection. The proportions in which these species were exploited cannot be determined from the meagre data shown in Table 1. As can be seen from Table 2 pig and horse are only represented by teeth. Context 132 in Area F produced a complete right maxillary tooth row of a horse and part of the matching left tooth row. This is probably all that remains of a complete horse skull. Besides teeth there is one fragment of astragalus and one of radius for sheep/goat. The only species with a number of fragments other than teeth still identifiable is cattle. Most of the fragments are very small but context 05 in Area E has several fragments which are probably the remnant of a complete pelvis and context 75 in Area F probably had a complete scapula originally present.

Due to the poor condition of the bone no butchery or gnawing marks were seen. Only two fragments were burnt, one being the sheep/goat astragalus.

All the identifiable fragments of bone were from adult animals - juvenile bone is unlikely to have survived the degradation this material has suffered. However, out of thirteen cattle teeth with recognisable wear patterns

only three are permanent teeth in full wear while eight are permanent teeth with slight wear and two are unerupted permanent teeth. This suggests that some cattle were killed as subadults.

Further speculation on this collection would not be fruitful. It is most unfortunate that the standard of preservation of the bone excavated in 1966 (Hodgson 1968) did not extend to this part of the site.

The animal bones and site archive are stored in the Gray Museum and Art Gallery, Hartlepool and the animal bone archive is stored in the Biological Laboratory, Department of Archaeology, University of Durham.

References

Hodgson, G. W. I. 1968. A comparative account of the animal remains from Corstopitum and the Iron Age site of Catcote near Hartlepool, County Durham. Arch. Ael. 4th Series. 46, 127-62.

Long, C. D. 1988. The Iron Age and Romano-British settlement at Catcote, Hartlepool, Cleveland. Durham Arch. Journal 4, 13-35.

Catcote
Table 1. Fragment counts for the species present.

	Area E Phase II	Area F Phase 1	Area F Phase 3	Area F U/S
Cattle	5	24	11	1
Sheep/Goat	1	11	2	
Pig		6		1
Horse		4		
Large Mammal	7	42		6
Indeterminate	25	165	2	16
Indet Fish		1		
	38	253	15	24

Catcote
Table 2. Preservation as indicated by teeth.

Area F Phase 1	Cattle	Sheep/Goat	Pig	Horse
No. of loose teeth	11	9	6	4
Loose teeth as % of id bones	45.8%	81.8%	100%	100%