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Bone from a late 16th/early 17th century rubbish deposit ; Reredorter , Durham Cathedral .

Animal bones and shells were recovered from ten layers that have been closely dated archaeologically to the late sixteenth century with some early seventeenth century material . The deposit is interpreted as a rubbish pit . The collection comprised 323 bones and shells , predominantly the remains of domestic animals and almost certainly entirely dietary in origin . The identifications of the bones and shells are given in the Table . The collection is too small for any detailed analysis consequently a general description only is given below (the data and measurements are available from the Biological Laboratory , Department of Archaeology, University of Durham) .

Sheep (and/or goat) bones are marginally more common than those of cattle , but among those bones not identified to species the reverse is the case ; large ungulate bone fragments are more frequent than those of small ungulates . The conclusion that cattle contributed the greatest proportion of the meat represented by the surviving remains is unavoidable . The remaining species being both smaller and occurring in fewer numbers must have been relatively less important .

Domestic birds include fowl and geese and three duck bones are of a size suggesting a domestic variety . A complete tibia of a small wild species of duck was found and a humerus of a Raven , a not uncommon resident scavenger of our towns in the past . Marine

REREDORTER , Durham Cathedral , 1977-78

Late sixteenth century with some early seventeenth century material.
Rubbish deposit of ten contexts .
Total number of bone fragments — 270
Percentage of bone fragments identified — 68
Total number of shellfish remains — 53

Table of species and unidentified bone fragments

Cattle	55 (3)
Pig	17 (1)
Sheep or goat	66 (5)
Sheep	11
Rabbit , Oryctolagus cuniculus	2
Fowl	16
Goose , cf domestic	10
Duck , cf domestic	3
Wild duck , unidentified	1
Raven , Corvus corax	1
Haddock , Melanogrammus aeglefinus	1
Cod , Gadus morhua	1
Large ungulate	43
Large animal	10
Small ungulate	27
Medium animal	4
Small/medium animal	1
?	2
Oyster , Ostrea edulis	36
Cockle , Cardium edule	9
Mussel , Mytilus edulis	3
Snail , Cepea nemoralis	3
Edible crab , Cancer pagurus	2
TOTAL	323

Parentheses indicate bones not definitely identified to species .

crops are represented by a clavicke of Haddock and a post-temporal bone of cod as well as a number of shellfish . Two claws of large specimens of the edible crab (Cancer pagurus) were also found .

Evidence of butchery in the form of cuts or chopsmarks were observed on sixty-two bones , but it is presumed that in this period all the larger domestic animals would be obtained from butchers already jointed much as it is today . The presence of a number of small and large ungulate vertebrae that had been chopped longitudinally down the middle or just to one or other side of the neural spine suggests that the carcasses were halved . Shellfish were no doubt readily available in the town market ; the oysters included individuals of a large size a number in excess of 100 mm , the maximum recorded length of a lower valve was 135mm.

Only eleven of forty-three sheep (and/or goat) bones assessed for age indicated juvenile animals ; in contrast seventeen of twenty-eight cattle bones assessed could be identified as juvenile , two specimens suggesting an age of less than six months (on the estimates given in Schmid , 1972) . Typically seven of ten pig bones were from juveniles and two from piglets (pigs are generally slaughtered young) .

Pathological features were observed on two bones of sheep (and/or goat) ; a tibia bearing a swelling on the posterior side of the distal shaft , and a humerus with some secondary ossification of the lateral side of the distal end .

I should like to thank Dr. D.Bramwell for his identifications of the bird bones and A.K.G.Jones fortthe identification of the two fish bones .

D.James Rackham (Preliminary report revised , Sept.79)

Reference

Schmid , E. 1972 . Atlas of Animal Bones , Amsterdam , London & New York .