

## Section 5.1.20 Trench 17 animal bone

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Except for three bones from robber pit [17001], all other bones found in this trench belong to the destruction layers associated with the abandonment of the villa and dated to Late 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

	Destruction layers					Early Medieval?
	17005	17006	17008			Robber pit [17001]
Taxon	NISP	NISP	NISP	Total	%	NISP
Cattle	1		16	17	17	
Sheep/Goat	6		52	58	57	1
Sheep	[1]		[13]	[14]		
Goat			[1]	[1]		
Pig	2		17	19	18	
Horse			8	8	8	
<b>Total identifiable</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>102</b>		<b>1</b>
<b>% identifiable</b>					<b>47</b>	
Large Mammal	4		67	71		
Medium Mammal	6	1	39	46		2
<b>Total unidentifiable</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>117</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>% unidentifiable</b>					<b>53</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>219</b>		<b>3</b>

Table 5.202 Trench 17 totals.

### Late 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD

#### *Destruction layers*

Most layers have very little bone except for layer (17008) (Table 5.202). In the discussion of these layers we will take all the layers into consideration although most of the information will come from layer (17008). Any unusual or interesting bones from other layers will be labelled with their respective layer numbers.

No bones or teeth were excellently preserved and only two Medium Mammal bones were poorly preserved. Gnawing is low at 9% and burning is reduced to only one Medium Mammal bone. Although almost a quarter (22%) are complete, or almost complete, there is still a larger amount of unidentifiable bone (53%) to identifiable ones (47%). Therefore the bones appear to have been deposited already broken up, and therefore rendering them less identifiable, as their preservation is fair to good. The usual pattern of more sheep/goat than cattle is also seen here but what is highly unusual is seeing goat. The amount of pig is unusual and also that they are slightly higher than cattle. Horse remains are also higher than normal.

### *Cattle*

Cattle remains are clustered in layer (17008) with only one bone in layer (17005) (see Table 5.202). Taking both layers together, there are at least two individuals: one calf aged 30-36 months, presented by a loose lower premolar 4 (see Table 5.203) and another adult, represented by two left ulnae, in which one could go with the 30-36 months individual and the other one must represent yet another individual. One of these individuals suffered from root pearlying as can be seen on two upper molars. This condition is associated with low grade fevers but at Alfred's Castle it is always found in very old individuals. Unusual for Alfred's Castle, the elements present concentrate on meat-bearing bones and cranial bones (Table 5. 204). There are only two butchery marks: one on an ulna to dismember it from the humerus and a distal tibia was chopped on the shaft to extract the marrow.

### *Sheep/goat*

As can be seen on Table 5.203, five loose teeth were aged, representing one individual each. The youngest one is 0-2 months, i.e. newborn, followed by two aged 2-6 months (including a kid), and one each at 2-3 years and 3-4 years. Unusual for Alfred Castle there are no foetal remains in these layers. Carnivore gnawing is very low so there must be another reason for this lack of foetal bones which are otherwise fairly common. The fact that 53% of all sheep/goat remains are loose teeth attests to the fact that these layers are not in situ and have undergone pre-depositional attrition in which the maxillary or mandibular bone has totally broken away (except for one mandible fragment). What remains are the relatively unscathed and strong teeth. Under these conditions it would be very difficult for delicate bones to survive (but see below under Pig). Three upper molars have bent roots which might be an indication of periodontal disease but unfortunately the bone surrounding the teeth has not been preserved to confirm this diagnosis. As with cattle, meat-bearing bones are also common, surpassing feet bones (Table 5.204). Only one humerus had been chopped to extract the marrow.

### *Pig*

It is very unusual for pig remains to be more common than cattle, even if by only a few bones (Table 5.202). As opposed to cattle and sheep/goat, there is one foetal cranium fragment. Only one partial mandible was available for ageing belonging to an individual aged 1-2 years (Table 5.203). The rest of the bones could go with this one individual including two proximally unfused first phalanges. A further mandible, with the lower canine present, was from a male. Cranial, mandible and loose teeth are the most common elements found to the almost exclusion of other elements (see Table 5.204). There are no butchery marks but one upper premolar 1 has a pathological problem. One of the roots has a wasted area around its middle and the other root is shortened due to extra cementum deposits which have distorted the root. All these anomalies are due to dietary deficiencies.

### *Horse*

All horse remains could belong to one individual aged 10-11 years old (Table 5.202). A left tooththrow, incisors, mandibular fragments and an upper molar could represent a cranium, or parts of one, which has disintegrated. The incisors are extremely worn and have interdental attrition. The last two bones are a lateral metapodial and first phalanx. There are no butchery marks on any of the bones.

## **Possibly Early Medieval**

### *Robber pit [17001], fill (17002)*

This robber pit only contained three bones (Table 5.202): one sheep/goat metatarsal cylinder which had been gnawed at both ends, and two Medium Mammal long bone fragments.

<b>Taxon</b>	<b>Element/Side</b>	<b>dp4</b>	<b>P4</b>	<b>M1</b>	<b>M2</b>	<b>M3</b>	<b>MWS</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Bone no.</b>	<b>Layer</b>
Sheep	Tooth/R	a		[C?]			1	0-2 mos.	AC14741	17008
Goat	Tooth/R	e		[E?]			3	2-6 mos.	AC14740	17008
Sheep	Tooth/L	g		[E?]	[V?]		5	2-6 mos.	AC14736	17008
Sheep	Tooth/R			[g?]	[d?]	c	29	2-3 yrs.	AC14746	17008
Sheep	Tooth/R			[g?]	[f?]	e	33	3-4 yrs.	AC14745	17008
Cattle	Tooth/R		b	[k?]	[j?]	[d?]	38	30-36 mos.	AC14707	17008
Pig	Mandible/L			[g?]	e	[C?]	23	1-2 yrs.	AC14765	17008

**Table 5.203** Sheep/goat, cattle and pig toothwear, after Grant (1982) and Hambleton (1999) for Trench 17 destruction layers.

	<b>Cattle</b>	<b>Sheep/ goat</b>	<b>Pig</b>	<b>Large Mammal</b>	<b>Medium Mammal</b>
<b>Element</b>	<b>NISP</b>	<b>NISP</b>	<b>NISP</b>	<b>NISP</b>	<b>NISP</b>
Horn core		2			
Cranium		1	2	1	1
Maxilla					
Loose maxillary teeth only	3	15	2		
Mandible	1	1	3		
Loose mandibular teeth only	3	17 (1G)	6		
Hyoid					
Atlas	1				
Axis		2			
Cervical					
Thoracic				4	
Lumbar				1	
Sacrum				1	
Caudal					
Vertebra Fragments					
Rib				2	10
Ossified cartilage					
Scapula	2	1		2	
Humerus		3	1		
Ulna	2		1		
Radius	1	4	1		1
Carpal					
Metacarpal	1	1			
Pelvis		3			
Femur	2	3			1
Patella					
Tibia	1	1			
Fibula					
Astragalus					
Calcaneum		1			
Tarsal					
Metatarsal			1		
Phalanx 1			2		
Phalanx 2		2			
Phalanx 3					
Metapodial		1			
Long bone				52	32
Unidentified				8	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>46</b>

**Table 5.204** Species and body part representation according to NISP for destruction layers in Trench 17.