

5.1.9 Trench 3

By Priscilla Lange

Only certain features are set out in detail for this trench: the fills of ditch [3516], irregular hollow [3521] and the disturbed layers of bank structure [3534], in this order. Several layers contained very little bone and will only be discussed briefly.

| Time period | MIA | | Late 1-2 | | Roman | | Total | |
|---------------------------|-----------|---|------------|---|------------|---|------------|-----|
| TAXON | NISP | % | NISP | % | NISP | % | NISP | % |
| Cattle | 2 | | 17 | | 27 | | 46 | 23 |
| Sheep/Goat | 2 | | 82 | | 22 | | 106 | 53 |
| Sheep | [1] | | [15] | | [3] | | [19] | |
| Pig | | | 8 | | 4 | | 12 | 6 |
| Horse | 1 | | 3 | | 18 | | 22 | 11 |
| Dog | | | | | 4 | | 4 | 2 |
| Hare | | | | | 3 | | 3 | 1.5 |
| Corvids | | | 2 | | 1 | | 3 | 1.5 |
| Bird | | | | | 1 | | 1 | <1 |
| Vole | | | | | 1 | | 1 | <1 |
| Rabbit | | | | | 1 | | 1 | <1 |
| Total identifiable | 5 | | 112 | | 82 | | 199 | |
| % identifiable | | | | | | | 51 | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Large Mammal | 1 | | 43 | | 41 | | 85 | |
| Medium Mammal | 5 | | 55 | | 43 | | 103 | |
| Total unidentifiable | 6 | | 98 | | 84 | | 188 | |
| % unidentifiable | | | | | | | 49 | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Grand Total | 11 | | 210 | | 166 | | 387 | |

Table 5.97 Species representation according to NISP and percentage for animal bones in Trench 3.

Ditch [3516]

It is immediately apparent that there are barely any animal bones in the Late first-second centuries AD and even less in the Middle Iron Age period. The majority of the bones are therefore in the fills dated only as Roman. It is also very unusual that pigs are not found in the two earliest time periods. Instead there are more cattle bones than sheep/goat and there are also more horse remains in all time periods. This goes against the normal pattern for the site. But is it known archaeologically that larger animals are general found discarded in ditches and that smaller animals are generally found closer to the habitation areas (Wilson 1996). One rabbit bone in context (3528) is cause for concern but will be discussed further below.

Middle Iron Age fill

Although there are only a few bones in this time period, they are definitely deposited through human activity. The two cattle bones have butchery marks: a scapula has cut marks for the removal of the meat and a radius was dismembered from the humerus, as attested by cut marks on the proximal edge, and was also chopped through the middle to extract the marrow. More marrow extraction can also be seen on a horse metapodial as it was chopped mid-shaft diagonally. Butchery on horse remains is rare at Alfred's Castle but it was also recorded on the Middle Iron Age Linear Ditch [1044]. The last identifiable bone is a sheep/goat radius.

| Time period | MIA | L1-2 | | Roman | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| Fills | 3532 | 3511 | 3520 | 3509 | 3519 | 3528 | | | | |
| Taxon | NISP | NISP | NISP | NISP | NISP | NISP | Total all Roman | % all Roman | Total ditch | % ditch |
| Cattle | 2 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 11 | 2 | 26 | 35 | 28 | 36 |
| Sheep/goat | 1 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 24 | 32 | 25 | 32 |
| Sheep | | [1] | | | [1] | [1] | [3] | | [3] | |
| Pig | | | | 1 | 3 | | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| Horse | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 10 | 13 | 11 | 14 |
| Dog | | | | | 3 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| Hare | | | | 1 | 2 | | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Corvid | | | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Bird | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Rabbit | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Vole | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Total identifiable | 4 | 6 | 11 | 16 | 32 | 10 | 75 | | 79 | |
| % identifiable | | | | | | | | 49 | | 49 |
| Large Mammal | | 4 | 8 | 7 | 25 | 3 | 47 | | 47 | |
| Medium Mammal | 3 | | 4 | 8 | 15 | 5 | 32 | | 35 | |
| Total unidentifiable | 3 | 4 | 12 | 15 | 40 | 8 | 79 | | 82 | |
| % unidentifiable | | | | | | | | 51 | | 51 |
| Grand total | 7 | 10 | 23 | 31 | 72 | 18 | 154 | | 161 | |

Table 5.98 Species representation according to NISP and percentage for Ditch [3516].

Late first-second centuries AD

There is nothing unusual in the animal bones from this time period except for the total lack of pig remains. Most of the animals are adult and one sheep/goat mandible was aged at 3-4 years (see Table 5.98). One sheep astragalus has skinning marks. An adult horse humerus has chop marks on the distal lateral shaft to separate it from the radius/ulna. Horse remains are rare at Alfred's Castle and butchered horse remains occur only sporadically but appear to be common in fills dating to the Middle Iron Age.

The overall impression is that this ditch was fairly empty of animal bones in this time period.

Roman

As was discussed above, ditches in general have the remains of larger animals. This ditch is no exception as the amount of sheep/goat is significantly lower than in most other contexts on this site. It is also immediately apparent that horse remains are more frequent at the expense of pig remains which are fairly low, and were not deposited at all in the other previous time periods. The relatively larger amount of dog remains is deceiving and will be discussed further below.

Although the majority of bones from this time period are not identifiable, the reason could be that they are not well preserved. A large amount (7%) is in poor condition, and for the site as whole, is an unusual large percentage. Only 3% are in excellent condition but they

are all teeth, in fact two of the dog remains and one cattle tooth. A hindrance to identification is fragmentation and only 11% are complete (all teeth). Almost a quarter, 23% have some sort of gnawing, mostly carnivore but also rodent gnawing. Burning is totally absent. These results are not entirely surprising as the bones were deposited/dumped in the ditch; they were probably not covered and were exposed to the elements. Only the strongest element in the body, the teeth, would have been able to sustain the ravages of rain, sun etc. and remain relatively unscathed.

Cattle

Cattle remains are the most commonly found in this ditch. A mandible and two loose teeth were aged, one to young adult, adult and senile (see Table 5.99). This senile mandible is one of the oldest found on site for any time period. However, there is at least one younger individual, represented by a proximally unfused humeral epiphysis and a distally unfused radius, both of which fuse at 3.5-4 years. There are no foetal or newborn bones which are fairly common on the site. One pelvis was identified as a female. All pathological problems are oral: uneven wear on an incisor, root pearl and bent roots on the senile mandible discussed above, and the lower molar 3 aged above also had the posterior pillar greatly reduced and almost missing altogether. This is a genetic trait which is more prevalent at Alfred's Castle in the Middle Iron Age but at other sites it occurs in later time periods, i.e. Late Roman to Early Medieval periods.

The majority of the elements are meat-bearing bones, i.e. scapula, humerus, pelvis, femur, radius and ulna. Only one ulna has chops to separate it from the radius but a lumbar vertebra has both transverse processes chopped to remove the tenderloin.

Sheep/goat

As opposed to cattle bones, there is at least some evidence of newborn individuals. A loose lower deciduous premolar 4 was aged at 2-6 months and a maxilla with milk teeth further attests to young individuals. A mandible aged as 4-6 years had interdental attrition between all premolars and molars due to crowding of the teeth in the mandible. The majority of the elements deposited are cranial elements with only two long bones, both radii. There are no butchery marks or pathological problems.

Pig

All pig remains are cranial although none could be aged accurately. But there is at least one immature and one adult individual due to the teeth present. There are no butchery marks and/or pathological problems. Pig remains are totally absent from the late 1st-early 2nd centuries AD and Middle Iron Age fills.

Horse

The amount of horse is quite large compared to other features and time periods on site. But as stated above, large animals are usually found more frequently in ditches. There are at least two individuals represented by two left distal radii of different ages. One is distally unfused so from an animal that died at younger than 3.5 yrs. The other one is fused so from one older than 3.5 years. An axis vertebra is also from a younger individual younger than 3-4 years as it is caudally unfused. There are no butchery marks or pathological problems.

Other animals

All four elements identified as dog probably belong to one adult cranium.

Although bird bones are rare occurrences on this site, we have two bones in this ditch. One is an almost complete humerus from a small bird from fill (3528). The other one is a distal

ulna from fill (3519) which could only be identified as a crow (*Corvus corone*) or a carrion crow (*Corvus frugilegus*) based on the measurements. As has been discussed before, corvid remains are more common in the Middle Iron Age but they are also found in some contexts dating to the 3rd century AD.

Hare and rabbit remains are found in this ditch but not in the same contexts. Although it is a bit difficult to separate them, usually hare bones are larger than rabbit ones. The three hare bones found in this ditch are a mandible, a lumbar vertebra and a scapula. The scapula is from a young individual but the other bones are from adults. None have butchery or gnaw marks. The rabbit bone on the other hand is a humerus, has a chop mark on the shaft and has been very delicately gnawed proximally, whether by humans or other small mammals is not easy to tell. Although rabbit remains have been found in securely dated Roman contexts in Britain (O'Connor and Sykes 2010) none have been radiocarbon dated and the conclusion is that in the Roman period some continental rabbits were brought over but it is not until the twelfth century when they are extensively exploited and they spread into the countryside. Unfortunately, although our rabbit remain is probably not intrusive due to the chop mark, it is not in a securely dated context other than sometime in the Roman and must remain as such for the present. A vole mandible found in fill (3528) is considered intrusive.

| Genus | Element/Side | dp4 | P4 | M1 | M2 | M3 | MWS | Age | Bone no. | Fill | Date |
|--------------|---------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Cattle | Tooth/L | | | | | g | 37 | Adult | AC13659 | 3519 | Roman |
| Cattle | Tooth/R | | e | [k?] | [g?] | [g?] | 39 | Young adult | AC13628 | 3509 | Roman |
| Cattle | Mandible/L | | | I | k | k | 46 | Senile | AC13658 | 3519 | Roman |

Table 5.99 Cattle toothwear, after Grant 1982 and Hambleton 1999, for fills in Ditch [3516].

| Genus | Element/Side | dp4 | P4 | M1 | M2 | M3 | MWS | Age | Bone no. | Fill | Date |
|--------------|---------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Sheep | Tooth/R | e | | [E?] | | | 3 | 2-6 mos. | AC13703 | 3519 | Roman |
| Sheep/goat | Mandible/R | | g | j | g | e | 36 | 3-4 years | AC13615 | 3520 | L1-2 |
| Sheep/goat | Mandible/R | | j | h | [g?] | [g?] | 37 | 4-6 years | AC13641 | 3509 | Roman |

Table 5.100 Sheep/goat toothwear, after Grant 1982 and Hambleton 1999, for fills in Ditch [3516].

Irregular Hollow [3521] dating to late first-second centuries AD

This irregular hollow hole, or tree hole, was used as a pit in the late 1st-2nd century AD. Corvid bones are rare so finding two in this hollow is unusual. The bones are well preserved and the majority, 57%, are identifiable. Burning is found in low proportions and at it stands at 9%. Gnawing is also fairly low at 14%. Only 15% are complete but since the rest are in good condition and have not suffered pre- and post-depositional attrition, they are easily identifiable.

This irregular hollow hole, or tree hole, was used as a pit in the late 1st-2nd century AD. Corvid bones are rare so finding two in this hollow is unusual. The bones are well preserved and the majority, 57%, are identifiable. Burning is found in low proportions and at it stands at 9%. Gnawing is also fairly low at 14%. Only 15% are complete but since the rest are in good condition and have not suffered pre- and post-depositional attrition, they are easily identifiable.

| | Irregular Hollow 3521 | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Fill | 3522 | |
| Taxon | NISP | % |
| Cattle | 10 | 12 |
| Sheep/goat | 63 | 77 |
| Sheep | [12] | |
| Pig | 6 | 7 |
| Horse | 1 | 1 |
| Corvid | 2 | 2 |
| Total identifiable | 82 | |
| % identifiable | | 57 |
| | | |
| Large Mammal | 18 | |
| Medium Mammal | 43 | |
| Total unidentifiable | 61 | |
| % unidentifiable | | 43 |
| | | |
| Grand total | 143 | |

Table 5.101 Species representation according to NISP and percentage.

Cattle

Unfortunately, no mandibles were available for ageing. Nevertheless, there are at least two individuals, one younger than one year, represented by two proximally unfused phalanges, and one older than 3-3.5 years, represented by fused calcaneum. Although there are bones identified as cattle with butchery marks, there are three Large Mammal ribs with filleting marks. There are no pathological problems.

Sheep/goat

Although there are only two mandibles which can be aged, several loose teeth can be added to the sample as can be seen in Table 5.101. From that table we come to an MNI of five: four aged 2-6 months and one aged 2-3 years. The fusion evidence provides two further individuals in the form of a foetal femur and proximally fused ulna from an animal older than 3-3.5 years. Thus, we actually have the remains of at least seven individuals. Cranial elements are extremely common and constitute 46% of all bones. The rest of the bones, with the exception of a thoracic vertebra, a calcaneum, a third phalanx, a metatarsal, and a patella, are all meat-bearing bones. By far the most common element was the ulna with thirteen recorded, followed by six scapulae and five radii. Two tibiae and femora and one humerus round up the rest of the meat bearing bones present. Seven of the thirteen ulnae had been chopped from the radius to dismember it from the carcass. A radius had many cuts proximally to separate it from the humerus. A scapula had cut close the articulation to the humerus to separate it from it and it also had filleting marks. Three Medium Mammal ribs had chops to separate them from the thoracic. There were no pathological problems.

Pig

Except from a cranial fragment from an immature individual, all other bones are from adults. A fragment of a lower canine is from a boar. There are no pathological problems or butchery marks.

Other animals

The other domestic animal from this hollow is an adult horse mandible fragment.

The most interesting, non-domestic remains, from this hollow are two bones, a distal humerus and a complete coracoid from a crow (*Corvus corone*) or a carrion crow (*Corvus frugilegus*), representing one individual. Bird remains, and specifically corvid remains, are rare on the site. They are nonetheless, found in Middle Iron Age and 3rd century contexts in Trench 2. This is the first instance of corvids recorded in a late 1st-2nd centuries AD context at Alfred's Castle.

| Genus | Element/Side | dp4 | P4 | M1 | M2 | M3 | MWS | Age | Bone no. |
|-------|--------------|-----|----|------|------|----|-----|----------|----------|
| Sheep | Mandible/R | e | | [E?] | | | 3 | 2-6 mos. | AC13803 |
| Sheep | Tooth/R | e | | [E?] | | | 3 | 2-6 mos. | AC13806 |
| Sheep | Tooth/L | e | | [E?] | | | 3 | 2-6 mos. | AC13807 |
| Sheep | Mandible/L | f | | U | [C?] | | 6 | 2-6 mos. | AC13804 |
| Sheep | Tooth/L | f | | [U?] | [C?] | | 6 | 2-6 mos. | AC13805 |
| Sheep | Tooth/L | | | [g?] | [f?] | d | 32 | 2-3 yrs. | AC13808 |

Table 5.102 Toothwear, after Grant 1982 and Hambleton 1999, for late first-second centuries AD fills in irregular hollow [3521].

Bank Structure [3534]

| Bank Structure [3534] | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Fills | 3502 | 3507 | 3508 | 3510 | 3512 | |
| Taxon | NISP | NISP | NISP | NISP | NISP | Total |
| Cattle | 1 | 1 | | 2 | | 4 |
| Sheep/goat | 2 | | 9 | 4 | 2 | 17 |
| Sheep | | | [2] | [1] | | [3] |
| Pig | | 2 | | | | 2 |
| Horse | | 1 | | 2 | | 3 |
| Total identifiable | 3 | 4 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 26 |
| % identifiable | | | | | | 41 |
| Large Mammal | 1 | 13 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 19 |
| Medium Mammal | 1 | 8 | | 6 | 4 | 19 |
| Total unidentifiable | 2 | 21 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 38 |
| % unidentifiable | | | | | | 59 |
| Grand total | 5 | 25 | 10 | 17 | 7 | 64 |

Table 5.103 Species representation according to NISP and percentage for Bank [3534].

Layer (3507) although not discussed in Gosden and Lock (2013) is dated to the late 1st-2nd century AD. A bone from this layer matches a bone from layer (3510) so therefore must be from this same feature. Layers (3502), (3508) and (3510) were dated to the Roman period. Layer (3512) was dated in the Roman period or later. These are all disturbed layers of bank structure [3534].

As is immediately apparent, very few bones were recorded for this bank and the majority are unidentifiable (Table 5.103). A quarter (25%) are poorly preserved which is unusual for the site as a whole. A sheep astragalus is the only burnt bone (calcined gray) and it also had

butchery marks associated with skinning. Another sheep humerus had filleting marks. None are gnawed which is very unusual for this site. With the exception of a complete sheep astragalus, all other complete elements are teeth which indicate and confirm the fact that these layers are the ploughed out layers which would have made up bank [3534]. Teeth are the strongest elements in the body and will survive pre- and post-depositional attrition better than any other elements. Unfortunately, the teeth could not be aged further than adult for horse, cattle and sheep/goat. However there were also two unshed deciduous teeth recorded for cattle and sheep/goat. Pig and horse bones are found in lesser numbers.

Layer dating to the Roman period

Layer (3002), Roman subsoil

Total 15: 4 cattle, 7 horse (3 are fragments of one adult mandible whose teeth have bent roots due to age), no sheep/goat and no pigs and the rest are unidentifiable fragments.

Miscellaneous layers dating to several time periods not discussed in Gosden and Lock (2013)

Layer (3501), Middle Iron Age

Total 4: 1 sheep lower molar ½ and the rest are unidentifiable fragments.