

Course Outline

Zooarchaeology. Analysis of animal bones from archaeological sites

Introduction

Zooarchaeology is the study of animal remains from archaeological sites. Animal remains may provide information about diet (use of domestic and wild resources), food production and distribution, animal husbandry, craft, industry and trade, as well as symbolic aspects such as status and ritual practice. Zooarchaeological remains also provide information about faunal distributions and past environments. The most commonly recovered animal remains are bones, teeth and shell, although soft tissues are occasionally preserved. During the course participants will learn about methods of identification and analysis, and interpretation of animal bones and teeth. They will have the opportunity to handle material and practice some basic zooarchaeological techniques. The main themes will include preservation and recovery; approaches to sampling; identification and quantification of taxonomic and skeletal element abundance; ageing bones and teeth; analysis of animal size and shape (biometry) and health (pathology). Course notes and a comprehensive bibliography will be provided.

Aims

The aims of the programme are to introduce participants to the methods and theory applied within zooarchaeology. It is also aimed at indicating current best practice within the discipline, from excavation to analysis. Participants should gain an understanding of the contribution of zooarchaeology to reconstructing past economies and social life, the effects of preservation and recovery bias, the importance of sampling strategies, current methods and methodological research, and how zooarchaeology can contribute to and define local, regional, national and international research agendas.

Suggested reading

Albarella, U 2002 'Size Matters': How and Why Biometry is Still Important in Zooarchaeology', in Dobney, K and O'Connor, T (eds) *Bones and the Man: Studies in Honour of Don Brothwell*. Oxford: Oxbow Books. 51-62

Barrett, J H, Locker, A M and Roberts, C M 2004 'Dark Age Economics' Revisited: The English Fish Bone Evidence AD 600-1600'. *Antiquity* **78**, 646-64

Davis, S., 1987b. *The Archaeology of Animals*. London: B.T. Batsford Ltd.

English Heritage 2002 *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation*. Portsmouth: English Heritage, Centre for Archaeology Guidelines 1.

O'Connor, T 2000 *The Archaeology of Animal Bones*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing

Woolgar, C. M., Serjeantso, D. and Waldron, T. (eds), 2006 *Food in Medieval England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.