

Recording Animal Bones



Faversham Society Archaeological Research Group

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Policy and procedures

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1. Excavation policy

Retain all animal bones (including fragments and bones of tiny animals).

2. Immediate procedures for handling

- a) Clean the bones by dry brushing.
- b) Scrutinise for human remains – if found, separate out and take appropriate action (see Human Remains policy and procedures).
- c) Bag by context numbers.
- d) Initially, store with the rest of the Test Pit or Trench assemblage.

3. Post excavation recording

For each context:

- a) Spread out all the bones from the bag, and group as follows. At this stage, you do not need to identify taxa.
 - Long bones with epiphyses
 - Long bone shafts
 - Ribs
 - Flat bones (girdles)
 - Flat bones (cranium)
 - Teeth/ tooth bearing bones
 - Vertebra
 - Phalanges
 - Metatarsals/metacarpals/ metapodials
 - Carpals and tarsals
 - Unidentifiable fragments.
- b) Take each group in turn. For each bone, or group of similar bones of the same taxa bones, record as follows on the sheet AB1:
 - Col 1: enter the taxum e.g. bos, sus OR enter as unident

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- Col.2: enter the skeletal element e.g. femur, cervical vertebra, **using the codes supplied**.
- Col 3: enter a brief description. If more than one bone, state number.
- Col 4: Enter Y (for yes) if epiphyses are fused, N (for no) if not. If not possible to tell (partial bone), put X. If not applicable e.g. with teeth or mandible, put NA.
- Col 5: Enter J if evidence for immaturity, M if fully mature, X if there is no evidence either way.
- Col 6: Enter R for right, L for left, X for can't tell, NA for not applicable (e.g. for vertebrae).
- Col 7: weight in grams for all bone in this row.
- Col 8: Enter any comments on butchery marks, pathological indicators, tooth marks from gnawing, degree of abrasion, pet burials and any other signs of human or taphonomic interventions. Continue into next row if more space required.

Reference material useful in carrying out these tasks is listed at the end of this Handbook.

- c) Rebag the bones, *with a separate bag within the main bag for bones of very small unidentified animals*. Return the bag to the TP or trench assemblage.

4. Digital entry

The data from the AB1 sheets is entered into the ACCESS database Animal *Bone* and transferred to EXCEL for statistical analysis and graphing. The main table in the database is an exact replica of the proforma AB1, so simply copy the entries on to it.

5. Summaries

- a) Test Pit (TP) summaries

These can be completed using the paper records and should be set out on sheet AB2. At this stage, coverage will be only for large mammals. The following topics should be covered for the whole TP, with reference to contrasts between contexts integrated into the comments.

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- The range of taxa – e.g. *dominated by pigs throughout the contexts.*
- The range of elements within taxa – e.g. *dominated by pigs' feet in 04.*
- Age distributions e.g. *dominated by immature animals.*
- Human and taphonomic interventions e.g. *01 and 02 are near complete, unabraded bones with clear butchery marks, 03 & 04 bones are very fragmented and worn.*
- Brief interpretative comments e.g. *the animal bone suggests that the upper 60cm of TPx is occupied by in situ kitchen waste, with the main domestic meat source being pig, whereas the deposits in the lower half of TPx are more characteristic of a midden scatter.*
If possible, these comments should be referenced e.g. O'Connor 2000:30.

A copy of this will go to the TP report writer.

b) Project summaries

The digital record will be needed for this, so that patterns over the wider area can be examined. (To be expanded later)

6. Archiving

In the medium term, animal bone will be retained and archived as a material category, sub grouped into project / TP or trench / context. It is hoped that the identification of the bones of small animals will be carried out in the future.

The paper record is to be held in a Lever Arch file, along with copies of the instructions and code lists.

7. Useful reference material

O'Connor, Terry 2000 *the Archaeology of Animal Bones* Stroud: Sutton Publishing

Hillson, Simon 2005 reprint. *Mammal Bones and Teeth: an introductory guide to methods of identification* London: Institute of Archaeology, UCL

Schmid, E 1972 *Atlas of animal bones* Amsterdam, London, New York: Elsevier

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