



making sense of heritage

Site 28  
A453 Widening Scheme  
M1 Junction 24 to A52 Nottingham  
Nottinghamshire

Animal Bone

*By L. Higbee*



## **A453 SITE 28**

### **Animal Bone**

L. Higbee

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### **Introduction**

The assemblage of animal bone recovered from Site 28 comprises 1013 fragments (or 13.369kg), however once conjoins are taken into account this falls to 870 fragments.

The assemblage includes material of Early, Middle and Late Romano-British date (Phases 1 to 3; see Table 1). The assemblage was analysed using standard methods, a detailed account of which is provided in the site archive.

### **Results**

#### *Preservation condition*

Bone preservation varies from good to fair. Differences in the preservation state of bone fragments from single contexts were noted and this is usually an indication that material has been reworked and re-deposited from earlier contexts - a common problem on multiphase sites with inter-cutting features.

#### *Phase 1 - Early Romano-British*

All of the Phase 1 animal bone is from enclosure ditches 1266, 1267 and 1392. Cattle and sheep bones are common and the range of different body parts indicates that whole carcasses are represented, which in turn suggests that animals were brought to the site on the hoof for slaughter.

Based on the limited age information available it would appear that cattle and sheep/goat were culled as young adult and adult animals, which suggests that both species were managed for a range of commodities. Evidence to support the theory that cattle were managed for secondary products includes a calf mandible from one of the ditches.

The phase 1 assemblage also includes a small number of horse and dog bones. The latter were all recovered from enclosure ditch 1267, and appear to be bones from the hindquarters of one individual.

#### *Phase 2 – Middle Romano-British*

A small number of bone fragments were recovered from ditch 1268. The identified bones include a few cattle and sheep/goat bones, and a single horse first phalanx.

### *Phase 3 – Late Romano-British*

A relatively large number of bone fragments were recovered from features assigned to Phase 3 contexts, mostly ditches but also a few gullies and pits. Approximately 25% of fragments are identifiable to species and element, and once again cattle and sheep/goat bones dominate the assemblage. The range of body parts indicates that livestock were slaughtered and butchered on site for local consumption, and the limited age information appears to suggest that the husbandry strategy was primarily geared towards secondary products and that meat production was a less important consideration. It is possible that the general expansion and intensification of arable cultivation during this period (Thomas and Stallibrass 2008, 10; Van der Veen and O'Connor 1998, 132) influenced the management strategy for cattle since large numbers of mature cattle would have been required to provide manure and traction.

Other identified species include horse, red deer and duck. The red deer remains are all fragments of antler and are from ditches 1271 and 1272. One of the antler fragments is from the lower part of the beam and includes the burr. The presence of the burr indicates that this particular piece of antler was shed naturally and then collected. Saw marks were noted on the beam, and around the base of the brow and bez tines, indicating that the antler had been reduced into smaller-sized pieces for the purpose of object manufacture (MacGregor 1985, 68-9, fig 42).

### **Conclusions**

Cattle were clearly of prime importance to the pastoral economy of the site throughout the sequence of occupation. The importance of cattle in the Romano-British economy and diet is well known (Dobney 2001; Grant 1989; King 1978, 1984 and 1999) and in general most contemporary sites in the region have high cattle bone counts. The emphasis on maintaining large numbers of adult cattle for use as traction animals in order to advance arable cultivation is another trend which has been noted elsewhere in the region (Higbee 2014).

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**Table 1.** Number of identified specimens present (or NISP) by Phase.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>	<b>Phase 3</b>	<b>Unphased</b>	<b>Total</b>
cattle	40	3	66	4	113
sheep/goat	17	2	42	1	62
pig	1	-	1	-	2
horse	2	1	13	-	16
dog	6	-	-	-	6
red deer	-	-	6	-	6
duck	-	-	1	-	1
<b>Total identified</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>Total unidentified</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>664</b>
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>870</b>



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