Fauna from Meldreth (MEL13)

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A relatively substantial assemblage of faunal remains came from a series of test pits excavated across the village. Of 879 assessable specimens, only 287 (32.6%) were identified to species or family level (Table 1). This is quite low, a reflection of poor preservation.

Ovicapra outrank cattle regardless of which quantifying method is taken into account (Table 1), although this prevalence is more evident when MNI is considered. A full range of domesticates and a relatively varied list of wild species were recorded. Smaller mammals and herpetofauna are most likely to represent chance incorporations in the archaeological record, as opposed to cultural accumulation of exploited species.

Taxon	NISP	%NISP	MNI
Cow	61	*21.4*	2
Sheep/ goat	103	*36.1*	4
Pig	70	*24.6*	2
Horse	8	*2.8*	1
Dog	4	*1.4*	1
Cat	3	*1.1*	1
Red deer	1	*0.35*	1
Rabbit	6	*2.1*	1
Fox	1	*0.35*	1
Chicken	16	*5.6*	2
Domestic goose	1	*0.35*	1
Crow	2	*0.7*	1
Wood pigeon	1	*0.35*	1
Teal	1	*0.35*	1
Wader	2	*0.7*	1
Galliformes	1	*0.35*	1
Squirrel	1	*0.35*	1
Hedgehog	1	*0.35*	1
Field or water vole	1	*0.35*	1
Frog/ toad	1	*0.35*	1
Sub-total to species or family	**285**	*100*	.
Cattle-sized	108	.	.
Sheep-sized	449	.	.
Rodent-sized	1	.	.
Mammal n.f.i.	8	.	.
Bird n.f.i.	27	.	.
Fish n.f.i.	1	.	.
Total	**879**	.	.

Table 1. Number of Identified Specimens and Minimum Number of Individuals for all species from all test pits from Meldreth; the abbreviation n.f.i. denotes that the specimen could not be further identified.

Methods:

Identification, quantification and ageing

The zooarchaeological investigation followed the system implemented by Bournemouth University with all identifiable elements recorded (NISP: Number of Identifiable Specimens) and diagnostic zoning (amended from Dobney & Reilly 1988) used to calculate MNE (Minimum Number of Elements) from which MNI (Minimum Number of Individuals) was derived. Identification of the assemblage was undertaken with the aid of Schmid (1972), and reference material from the Cambridge Archaeological Unit. Undiagnostic fragments were assigned to a size category. A small number of bones were retrieved from sieving of the environmental bulk soil samples. Small taxa were not particularly abundant, however, and the sieved bones did not provide a great deal of additional data on the main domestic species.

Preservation, fragmentation and taphonomy

Surface condition was variable, but it was mostly recorded as quite poor (Behrensmeyer 1978). Some 69 specimens were recorded with surface erosion and signs of weathering (7.8%). Burnt bone formed a small part of the assemblage with five specimens showing signs of charring and four being recorded as calcined.

Just over one percent of the bone was recorded as gnawed (N=10), with larger domesticates being equally as affected as medium-sized domesticates. This suggests that dogs had access to a proportion of bones prior to their final deposition.

Butchery

Butchery marks were recorded on 18 specimens (2%). Rough and crude chop marks and sawing were the most dominant actions performed on carcasses. Vertebra of all sizes being chopped or sawn down the sagittal plane, representing carcasses intended to be split into left and right portions, were especially common.

Pathologies

There were only two abnormal bones in the assemblage. Abnormal bone growth was noted on the proximal articulation of cow metatarsus from test pit 13. The other instance was a case of osteochondritis dissecans noted on joint surface of proximal metacarpal of cattle from test pit 7. This appears as lesions, resulting from the herniation of small portions of the joint cartilage through the articular surface of the bone, tend to be linked to the sudden physical stress or trauma to the joint.

Test pits

The majority of pits generated small quantities of faunal remains, showing an impoverished range of species. With an exception of test pits 28 and 29, as the only ones that stood out, both in terms of the quantity of recovered bone and the range of identified species (Tables 2-13), the material was dominated by the remains of livestock species and an occasional find of chicken. Test pits 28 and 29 generated a combined total of 337 specimens, or 38.3% of the assemblage. Although dominated by ovicapra, cattle and pig cohorts appeared substantial enough implying beef and pork were also commonly eaten. Poultry also played part in their diet. A sporadic crow or fox specimen came from other pits with very little other material.

	Test pit 2					Test pit 3				
Taxon	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*
Cow	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Sheep/ goat	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.
Pig	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chicken	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	.	.
Sub-total to species	**4**	**1**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**1**	**2**	**.**	**.**
Cattle-sized	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.
Sheep-sized	.	2	1	1	2	2	1	.	.	.
Mammal n.f.i.	.	.	.				.	.	.	3
Bird n.f.i.	.	.	.				.	.	1	.
Total	**4**	**3**	**1**	**1**	**3**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**3**

Table 2. Number of Identified Specimens from TP 2 and 3; the abbreviation n.f.i. denotes that the specimen could not be further identified.

	Test pit 4					Test pit 5			Test pit 6	
Taxon	*[2]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[8]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[2]*	*[3]*
Cow	1	3	1	.	2	.	.	.	.	.
Sheep/ goat	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Pig	.	.	1	1	.	.	.	1	.	.
Horse	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.
Cat	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Wood pigeon	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.
Sub-total to species	**1**	**4**	**3**	**1**	**3**	**.**	**.**	**1**	**1**	**.**
Cattle-sized	.	1	2	1	1	1	.	1	.	.
Sheep-sized	.	2	1	1	1	2	1	3	1	2
Rodent-sized	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Total	**1**	**7**	**6**	**3**	**5**	**3**	**1**	**5**	**2**	**3**

Table 3. Number of Identified Specimens from TP 4 - 6

	Test pit 7								Test pit 8				Test pit 9		
Taxon	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[7]*	*[8]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*
Cow	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.
Sheep/ goat	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Pig	1	.	1	1	1	1	1	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.
Horse	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Rabbit	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.
Chicken	.	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
?Wader	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Sub-total to species	**2**	**2**	**1**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**3**	**.**	**.**	**1**	**.**	**1**	**.**	**1**	**.**
Cattle-sized	.	4	3	.	.	2	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Sheep-sized	1	2	3	2	4	2	8	3	1	2	5	2	2	.	1
Bird n.f.i.	.	.	.	1	.	2	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Total	**3**	**8**	**7**	**6**	**6**	**7**	**14**	**3**	**1**	**3**	**5**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**2**

Table 4. Number of Identified Specimens from TP 7 -9; the abbreviation n.f.i. denotes that the specimen could not be further identified.

	Test pit 10		Test pit 11				Test pit 12					
Taxon	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[5]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[7]*
Cow	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.
Sheep/ goat	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Pig	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.
Sub-total to species	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**3**	**.**	**.**	**1**	**1**
Cattle-sized	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	2	.	.
Sheep-sized	2	1	2	2	3	4	2	.	1		.	1
Bird n.f.i.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.		.	.
Total	**2**	**1**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**2**	**3**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**2**

Table 5. Number of Identified Specimens from TP 10 - 12; the abbreviation n.f.i. denotes that the specimen could not be further identified.

	Test pit 13						Test pit 14					Test pit 15
Taxon	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[6]*	*[9]*	*[3]*
Cow	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Sheep/ goat	.	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Pig	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Horse	.	.	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Cat	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Fox	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Chicken	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Sub-total to species	**1**	**1**	**3**	**1**	**5**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**1**
Cattle-sized	.	.	4	3	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
Sheep-sized	2	4	4	2	2	3	1	3	1	3	1	.
Bird n.f.i.	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.
Total	**3**	**7**	**11**	**6**	**7**	**4**	**1**	**4**	**1**	**3**	**1**	**1**

Table 6. Number of Identified Specimens from TP 13 - 15; the abbreviation n.f.i. denotes that the specimen could not be further identified.

	Test pit 16									Test pit 17			
Taxon	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[7*	*[8]*	*[9]*	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*
Cow	.	.	1	.	.	1	.	1	2	.	.	.	.
Sheep/ goat	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Pig	1	.	.	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
Dog	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.
Cat	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.
Rabbit	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.
Crow	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Frog/ toad	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.
Sub-total to species	**3**	**.**	**1**	**1**	**.**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**3**	**1**
Cattle-sized	1	.	.	.	.	1	1	1	.	1	.	.	.
Sheep-sized	3	3	3	1	3	.	1	.	.	.	.	1	3
Bird n.f.i.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	.
Total	**7**	**3**	**4**	**2**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**5**	**4**

Table 7. Number of Identified Specimens from TP 16 - 17; the abbreviation n.f.i. denotes that the specimen could not be further identified.

	Test pit 19							Test pit 20					
Taxon	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[7]*	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*
Cow	.	3	2	2	.	.	.	.	1	1	1	.	.
Sheep/ goat	.	3	3	1	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	1	.
Pig	1	6	8	5	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Red deer	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chicken	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Wader	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Sub-total to species	**1**	**12**	**14**	**12**	**2**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**.**
Cattle-sized	.	3	3	2	1	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Sheep-sized	.	6	26	15	3	3	3	.	.	.	.	.	1
Mammal n.f.i.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	4	3	2	3	.
Bird n.f.i.	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Total	**1**	**22**	**44**	**29**	**6**	**6**	**3**	**2**	**6**	**4**	**3**	**4**	**1**

Table 8. Number of Identified Specimens from TP 19 - 20; the abbreviation n.f.i. denotes that the specimen could not be further identified.

	Test pit 21		Test pit 22			Test pit 23		Test pit 24				
Taxon	*[1]*	*[6]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[7]*
Sheep/ goat	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Sub-total to species	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**.**	**1**
Cattle-sized	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	2	1	.
Sheep-sized	2	4	.	2	.	2	.	2	1	.	1	1
Mammal n.f.i.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.
Bird n.f.i.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Total	**2**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**2**

Table 9. Number of Identified Specimens from TP 21 - 24; the abbreviation n.f.i. denotes that the specimen could not be further identified.

	Test pit 25							Test pit 26	Test pit 27						
Taxon	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[7]*	*[1]*	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[7]*
Cow	.	.	.	.	2	1	.	.	.	1	.	1	1	.	.
Sheep/ goat	1	1	4	2	2	1	.	.	.	.	1	.	2	.	.
Pig	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	3	1	2	.	1	1	.
Rabbit	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Sub-total to species	**2**	**2**	**4**	**3**	**4**	**2**	**.**	**.**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**4**	**1**	**.**
Cattle-sized	.	.	.	1	3	.	.	1	1	1	.	1	.	.	.
Sheep-sized	2	2	3	11	4	1	2	.	.	2	4	5	2	.	1
Total	**5**	**4**	**7**	**15**	**11**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**4**	**5**	**7**	**7**	**6**	**1**	**1**

Table 10. Number of Identified Specimens from TP 25 – 27

	Test pit 28													
Taxon	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[7]*	*[8]*	*[9]*	*[10]*	*[11]*	*[12]*	*[13]*	*[14]*
Cow	1	.	2	.	.	.	1	1	1	1	.	.	.	1
Sheep/ goat	.	2	3	2	.	2	.	3	3	4	5	5	4	2
Pig	.	.	1	1	.	.	1	.	1	.	1	.	3	2
Horse	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Dog	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	2
Rabbit	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.
Chicken	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	.	.	.	2
Galliformes	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Domestic goose	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Squirrel	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Hedgehog	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Vole sp.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Sub-total to species	**2**	**3**	**8**	**3**	**.**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**6**	**7**	**6**	**5**	**7**	**11**
Cattle-sized	.	.	2	.	2	.	.	1	1	2	1	1	5	8
Sheep-sized	.	10	6	6	4	11	8	7	13	12	16	8	5	7
Mammal n.f.i.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Bird n.f.i.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	1	.	.	1	.	.	.
Total	**2**	**13**	**16**	**10**	**7**	**13**	**11**	**13**	**20**	**21**	**24**	**14**	**17**	**26**

Table 11. Number of Identified Specimens from TP 28; the abbreviation n.f.i. denotes that the specimen could not be further identified.

	Test pit 29										
Taxon	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[7]*	*[8]*	*[9]*	*[10]*	*[11]*
Cow	.	.	4	5	.	1	.	.	1	.	.
Sheep/ goat	1	3	3	5	11	3	1	.	1	.	.
Pig	.	1	2	1	2	.	.	1	.	.	.
Horse	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chicken	.	.	.	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.
Teal	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Sub-total to species	**1**	**5**	**9**	**12**	**14**	**5**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**.**	**.**
Cattle-sized	.	3	.	2	.	3	2	2	.	.	.
Sheep-sized	1	6	13	4	11	2	5	7	5	4	.
Mammal n.f.i.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Bird n.f.i.	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	.	.	.	.
Fish n.f.i.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.
Total	**3**	**15**	**23**	**20**	**26**	**12**	**9**	**10**	**7**	**4**	**1**

Table 12. Number of Identified Specimens from TP 29; the abbreviation n.f.i. denotes that the specimen could not be further identified.

	Test pit 30				Test pit 31					Test pit 32		
Taxon	*[1]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[2]*	*[3]*	*[4]*	*[5]*	*[6]*	*[2]*	*[4]*	*[5]*
Cow	.	2	.	1	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
Sheep/ goat	1	1	1	.	.	.	.	1	2	.	.	1
Pig	.	2	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	1	.	.
Horse	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Rabbit	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.
Chicken	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.
?Wader	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Sub-total to species	**1**	**7**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**.**	**1**
Cattle-sized	.	2	3	.	.	.	.	.	4	.	2	.
Sheep-sized	4	13	2	1	1	2	4	2	.	.	.	3
Bird n.f.i.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Total	**5**	**22**	**7**	**2**	**2**	**3**	**5**	**4**	**7**	**1**	**2**	**4**

Table 13. Number of Identified Specimens from TP 30 - 32; the abbreviation n.f.i. denotes that the specimen could not be further identified.

Discussion

The overwhelming majority of the material is made up of remains of livestock species, especially sheep/ goat. Unfortunately, only a small part of the assemblage was identifiable to species level, mainly owing to the poor preservation, but also to the degree of processing that the material suffered. Of 879 specimens, some 437 were recorded as sheep-sized limb bone splinters, resulting from axial splitting of long bones. This is quite substantial, amounting to almost half of the assemblage, and illustrates the assemblage's domestic character. Lack of any big bone deposits or 'dumps', however, implies the area must have been the periphery of activities. Large bone sub-sets from test pits 28 and 29 were found alongside great quantities of pottery of various dates from these two pits, both indicating the area was in use over a long period of time. It was hard to record any economic patterns related to any particular period, although the heavy reliance on sheep/ goat, and livestock in general, as well as the style of butchery actions, are all characteristic of the Medieval and later periods.

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