



ANIMALS AND DEATH: AN ANALYSIS OF ANIMAL REMAINS AT THE CASTLEDYKE SOUTH CEMETERY SITE

History 495

Introduction to Historical Research



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Introduction

The Anglo-Saxons knew a great deal about animals, who they viewed as possessing various positions in their lives. This included agriculture, social status, perhaps even sex, aspects that could be found while living. But they also saw animal as having a symbolism in death with different aspects potentially being demonstrated. This association between animals and death led to the Anglo-Saxons utilizing animals in their mortuary practices, specifically as mortuary artefacts. However, the practice of grave goods only occurred for a short time in the Anglo-Saxon period of 449 to 1066 C.E., being utilized from 450 C.E. to 650 C.E.¹ While the practice was discontinued during the beginning of the Conversion period, which lasted from approximately 600 C.E. to 725~750 C.E., the conversion to Christianity did not see anything written about pre-Christian religion or on the symbolism and ideas about death. Thus, as no textual evidence exists that could aid in explaining the symbolism of animal remains in human graves, scholars have instead turned to archaeological evidence.

Archaeological work has provided an abundance of information that textual sources either do not exist for or are silent on for specific topics. This includes mortuary practices and thus one type of archaeological source that does provide information are cemetery sites. Of the approximately 1,100 cemetery sites of Early Anglo-Saxon England, the focus of this paper will be on the Castledyke South Cemetery.² The Castledyke South site consists of approximately two hundred and six burials, with an estimate of four hundred individuals being interred at the site,

¹ Christina Lee, *Feasting the Dead: Food and Drink in Anglo-Saxon Burial Rituals* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 53.

² Nicholas Higham and Martin Ryan, *The Anglo-Saxon World* (New Haven, United Kingdom: Yale University Press, 2015), 79.

which consists primarily of inhumations but also holds one cremation.³ First discovered in 1939, with subsequent field work being done in the 1980s, the site was one of over forty found within the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Lindsey region.⁴ The Anglo-Saxons utilized the site from the late 5th or early 6th up through the late 7th century, which also corresponded with the change to Christianity and cemetery location.⁵ While possessing a small number of burials (the estimate for total number of burials excavated around the United Kingdom currently sits at around twenty-five thousand), it includes a variety of grave goods, of which the focus will be on animal remains.⁶

The animal remains in the Castledyke South cemetery site pose an interesting question: for what purpose or idea did the Anglo-Saxons believe that animals should be included in their mortuary rituals as grave goods? The animal remains in the site consist of only twenty-nine graves including animals, with an additional ten also including animals but in different forms, such as a bone pin or shells.⁷ The animal remains included consist of a small number of species, such as cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs. While domestic animals are primarily what are represented, there are some instances of wild animals, such as geese and, in the case of an object, a boar tusk buckle. While there existed some reason as to why these animals would be included in human burials, that information is lost now.

Different scholars have discussed potential and different reasons for why the Anglo-Saxons included animal remains. In his article, “At the Funeral”, Howard Williams focuses on

³ Gail Drinkall, Martin Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, Sheffield Excavation Report 6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), xxi, 96.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xxi, 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, xxi.

⁶ Higham and Ryan, *The Anglo-Saxon World*, 79

⁷ Information is summarized from Drinkall and Foreman, for more info and other graves see pages 34-97.

how mortuary practices are not fully rooted in just socio-economic reasons but also in religious practices.⁸ He, however, also ties in Anglo-Saxon practices with continental and Scandinavian practices.⁹ This view is also adopted by Sam Lucy in her article, “Burial Practice in Early Medieval Eastern Britain: Constructing Local Identities, Deconstructing Ethnicity,” where she talks about the use of grave goods not symbolizing ethnic identities but instead local identities, though also stating that similarities exist with similar goods from the continent and within the different ethnic regions of Anglo-Saxon England.¹⁰ This view is also supported in her book, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, specifically when she discusses animals and the peculiarities of their burials, both as remains in human graves or as separate burials for themselves for larger animals, like horses.¹¹ With the two authors adopting a similar perspective on the inclusion of animal remains, the way that they interact complements each other as Williams focuses on the religious side of burials while Lucy focuses on the social side, both considering the ways that burials can be interpreted and how they could be understood by the Anglo-Saxons.

In a more general sense, Christina Lee’s book, *Feasting the Dead: Food and Drink in Anglo-Saxon Burial Rituals*, and Sally Crawford’s book, *Daily Life in Anglo-Saxon England*, explore different aspects that aid in explaining Anglo-Saxon life and other aspects, both discussing animals. Lee focuses primarily on archaeological evidence, discussing the possible factors, specifically social status and sex, for animal remains to be included in graves in addition

⁸ Howard Williams, “At the Funeral”, in *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*, ed. Martin Carver, Alex Sanmark, and Sarah Semple (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010), 67. See also Alexs Pluskowski, “Animal Magic,” in *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*, ed. Martin Carver, Alex Sanmark, and Sarah Semple (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010); David Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁰ Sam Lucy, “Burial Practice in Early Medieval Eastern Britain: Constructing Local Identities, Deconstructing Ethnicity,” in *Burial in Medieval England and Wales*, ed. Sam Lucy and Andrew Reynolds (London: The Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2002), 72-73.

¹¹ Sam Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death* (United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2000), 90-94.

to food and drink vessels.¹²She also utilizes the cemetery site at Castledyke South as one of her main sites of analysis. Crawford, however, takes a different approach and instead utilizes both textual and archaeological sources to examine various aspects of the Anglo-Saxons, which also creates different chronological structures in her book. While she does not dedicate a chapter to animals, she instead discusses them in her chapters on food and drink in addition to death and religion, analyzing the roles they played in their society.¹³ Both authors discuss different aspects of the inclusion of animals or their roles in society, though neither discusses the factors that could influence inclusion in detail or excludes specific factors, such as economic influence or social status influence.

While no information may exist that will allow scholars to definitively explain the Anglo-Saxons' reasons for including animal remains, the cemetery site and other sources can nevertheless help in considering which explanations are most likely. Four categories of influences focused on in this essay are: age and sex, social status, religion, and economic status. This essay will consider age and sex primarily examined through the frequency of species buried with specific age ranges and sexes, while also how it can be tied to other grave goods found. It will examine social status in regard to the species and their ties to other grave goods, keeping composition, type, and number of goods in mind. Religion, however, will see more of an examination of specific animals, with horses being a main focus, and how those animals could potentially be tied to religious reasons. Economic importance will instead concentrate on the agriculture of the region, its history, the role of specific animals, and how that could potentially

¹²Christina Lee, *Feasting the Dead: Food and Drink in Anglo-Saxon Burial Rituals* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 2.

¹³ Sally Crawford, *Daily Life in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Greenwood World Publishing, 2009), 96-105, 166-170.

lead to the symbolism seen as animals were transformed into grave goods. Overall, however, taking into account the evidence from the site, economic status and sex appear to hold the greatest influence behind the inclusion of animal remains in human graves.

Background

The Castledyke South Cemetery Site lies in the southern portion of Barton-On-Humber (historically, other names include Barrow-on-Humber, just Barrow, and Deepdale), which itself lies south of the Humber River.¹⁴ The site was first discovered in 1939, accidentally, by the Elswick Hopper Bicycle Factory, which was constructing air raid shelters and discovered five graves.¹⁵ Fieldwork, however, did not start until 1975, beginning with the excavating of four trenches and continuing in 1982 with the excavation of ten areas, lasting fifteen months.¹⁶ While records of the site were created, the graves were recorded independently of each other and while some unification of the reports occurred, they mainly remained separate. This in turn led to a gap in the data as compilation occurred in 1991, with some aspects of the records lost due to complexities.¹⁷ While a small project took place in 1986, the next excavation project began in 1989, lasting only one month. It comprised of two areas excavated, resulting in forty-nine burials discovered and more properly recorded.¹⁸ The last excavation project, directed by Martin Foreman, began in early 1990 and lasted fifteen weeks.¹⁹ This project resulted in a total of approximately 110 burials discovered.²⁰

¹⁴ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 1-2; Thomas Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons: Lincolnshire AD 400-650*, Studies in the History of Lincolnshire 3 (Lincoln: History of Lincolnshire Committee, 2012), 34.

¹⁵ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, xxii,xxi.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 6,19.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

Barton historically lay within the Kingdom of Lindsey, which was a minor kingdom after the Romans left England, while the site was used for its duration.²¹ With the departure of the Romans in 410 C.E., the Britons took control of the area and some of the provinces, and kept that control until the Anglo-Saxon invasion in the fifth century, which then passed control to them.²² This is evident in the Anglo-Saxon name of the kingdom, *Lindissi*, though only the last element comes from Old English.²³ The first element of the name is from Late British and describes the population rather than the region, with the first element fully being *Lindēs*, or , “the people of Lindon.”²⁴ With the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, the Britons were able, for a short time, to control the movement of the Anglo-Saxons and direct their settlements, which also includes Barton as one of the sites right off the Humber River, making it one mean of entering the region.²⁵ After power shifted to the Anglo-Saxons, they controlled the region and changed the name to *Lindissi* after the former kingdom’s name.²⁶ The Anglo-Saxons in the region then ruled it up until 1013, when Swein Forkbeard, a king of Denmark, ended up conquering Northumbria by the surrender of the aldorman, which also included Lindsey.²⁷

Sex and Age

Examining the evidence for the influence of sex and age, two approaches are taken. First, two tables display the species and their frequency for each sex, while discussion follows each, sex examined first then age. For sex, the discussion examines the irregularities from the table that primarily stem from the non-animal remains, such as the bone pin, as well as other animals

²¹ Ibid., 6.

²² Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons: Lincolnshire AD 400-650*, 56.

²³ Ibid., 57.

²⁴ Ibid., 58.

²⁵ Ibid., 63, 89.

²⁶ Ibid., 99.

²⁷ Higham and Ryan, *The Anglo-Saxon World*, 344, 351.

not in the table, primarily the elephant ivory rings and the beaver tooth. Age, however, only has a discussion following its table due to the evidence favoring sex over it. The last grave good examined is the boar tusk buckle. The discussion begins with the information from the cemetery then transitions into utilizing the Old English poem *Beowulf* to explain the buckle's significance.

		Species											Total
		Pig	Sheep/ Goat	Sheep	Cattle/ Horse	Cattle	Horse	Dog	Chicken	Goose	Ungulate	Fowl	
Sex	Male	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	8
	Female	2	2	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	13
	Unknown	0	1	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	2	4	13

Table 1. Frequency of the species (with some exceptions for unique specimens) and connection to sex.

Examining sex first with species frequency, from the table the strongest connections vary. For females, counting 'Sheep/Goat' and 'Sheep' together as well as the ungulates (ungulate is the term to describe hooved animals, which include horses and cattle), then sheep and ungulates have the highest frequency at four graves each out of forty-three graves containing animal remains and objects from common animals. For men, the best method would be to combine the ungulates for a total of three. The species themselves though also had stronger connections with one sex over the other, such as with pigs and birds being found more frequently with females. There, however, exists some peculiarities. Those can be seen with the sole dog (which will be explored later) and pig for men along with two additional animals, an elephant, but in the form of ivory rings, and a beaver tooth pendant.

Four of the irregular animals that appear in the grave are either tied to a single sex or are found in a specific form. The elephant ivory occurred in the form of bag rings in two graves: 40 and 112.²⁸ While 112 was confirmed to be female while 40 has the possibility of being female,

²⁸ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 48, 66-67.

other similarities appeared between the two graves. The similarities that appeared deal with their orientation, for which both of their skulls face south-west, and a flexed position and that the rings were attached to a bag.²⁹ Another unique artefact was the beaver tooth pendant found in 134, which contained the skeleton of a female aged 17-25.³⁰ What sets this grave apart is the sheer number of artefacts, totaling at fourteen different artefacts. The beaver tooth pendant is described as, “Three pieces of Beaver tooth...joined by a length of copper alloy wire.”³¹ As pointed out by one of the contributors, R. Nicholson, it likely acted as a substitute for a pendant or an amulet of different composition, though it could exist as a unique artefact as other pendants were also found.³² In addition, Kristopher Poole remarks that beaver teeth pendants became more common after the early seventh century but were typically tied to well-furnished female and children graves.³³ Poole also suggests that the use of a beaver is more symbolic as a symbol of homebuilders or as a way to symbolize chastity.³⁴ These specific animals can therefore hold symbolic connections to women but could also have feminine connotations to them, leading to their inclusion as a sex symbol.

Examining the lone pig remain for men, rather than a pig bone, it is instead a bone pin from a pig fibula that is found instead.³⁵ The bone pins, however, occur in a total of three graves: twenty-one, forty-six, and 137 (there exists a fourth bone pin in grave 181 but it lacks a species identification and moreover the skeleton has no confirmed sex; thus it will not be examined).³⁶

²⁹ Ibid., 285-286.

³⁰ Ibid., 73-74.

³¹ Ibid., 74.

³² Ibid., 239, 74.

³³ Kristopher Poole, “Ensexing Debate: Animals and Identity in Anglo-Saxon England,” *Medieval Archaeology* 57, no. 1 (2013): 69, accessed November 6, 2018, doi:10.1179/0076609713Z.00000000015.

³⁴ Ibid., 69.

³⁵ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 75.

³⁶ Ibid., 88.

The first two feature pins created out of cattle or horse bone while the latter one has the pin created out of a pig fibula³⁷. While the sex for the skeleton in grave 46 was not confirmed, it is suspected to be female, which would make this the only female to be buried with a bone pin, though in this case it is a bone pin beater.³⁸ For men, however, it demonstrates a weaker relationship between pigs as symbols and men. The same is true for men and cattle as the pin is the only connection between them. The possibility of the pins, specifically the pig fibula pin, of being a remnant of Roman settlement remains as a strong possibility to explain the form of the pins due to a large density of Roman settlement, with the pins being a leftover artefact of that.³⁹ The inclusion, however, could also have occurred as substitutes for other objects, such as brooches, though their primary function can be dependent on where they were found. For the site, each of the bone pins, including the beater, were found near the neck, supporting the idea that they were fasteners for clothing.⁴⁰ The pin beater, however, was more indicative as a weaving tool, and was one of two beaters found in the site, with the other being found with a woman as well.⁴¹ Taking this into account, weaving was seen as a female occupation and thus the beaters symbolized this relationship. The bone pins, however, likely do not have as strong of a sex connotation, though the fact that only men were buried with pins of this form suggests some form of connotation.

³⁷ Ibid., 41, 49-50, 75.

³⁸ Ibid., 49-50.

³⁹ Ibid., 270.

⁴⁰ Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, 44.

⁴¹ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 292-293.

		Species											Total
		Pig	Sheep/ Goat	Sheep	Cattle/ Horse	Cattle	Horse	Dog	Chicken	Goose	Ungulate	Fowl	
Age Range	Juvenile	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	8
	17-25	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
	Adult	0	0	1	1	3	0	1	0	0	2	1	9
	25-35	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	5
	35-45	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	6
	45+	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	5

Table 2. Frequency of species (with some exceptions) according to age range (age ranges used from Drinkall, Foreman, et. al.).

Looking at age, there are some differences between age and sex. Going by the age ranges, juveniles were most frequently buried with sheep, ungulate, and fowl remains, skeletons aged seventeen to twenty-five with sheep or goats, twenty-five to thirty-five and thirty-five to forty-five having no clear preference, forty-five and higher with horses, and adult skeletons with cattle.

⁴² With the differences of these species, it remains difficult to speak about the potential symbolism, if any, to explain these trends. The most significant, however, would likely be the horses, as the two that were confirmed came from both a male and female grave, those being graves thirty-eight and 118 respectively, and both skeletons were aged forty-five or over.⁴³ While this connection could have a meaning dealing with age, other than age, no other similarity exists between the two graves, making it difficult to suggest a connotation for horses in regard to age.

One particular grave good worth further analysis is the boar tusk buckle found in grave 91.⁴⁴ As described by Drinkall and Foreman, it has an, “Oval frame... copper alloy pin with rectangular boss at base...rectangular strip of tooth enamel beneath pin tip on frame.”⁴⁵ While the buckle is not specifically purely made from animal remains, it is still significant as it is the

⁴² With one grave, the remains were found in the fill with two skeletons buried and thus were counted twice as two skeletons were found (an adult and a juvenile). That grave is 197, which includes cattle, sheep, and ungulate remains.

⁴³ Ibid., 47, 69.

⁴⁴ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 61.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 61-62.

sole buckle of this type found in the site. Particularly of note, the skeleton does not have a sex or specific age range associated with it, mainly due to the poor preservation of the skeleton.⁴⁶ We only know that it was an adult. It is also unique as it is the only artefact found that is associated with a boar. However, utilizing the Old English poem *Beowulf* could potentially shed a new light on the buckle and its deceased possessor.



Figure 1. The boar tusk buckle. From: Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 167.

Beowulf is an Old English epic poem first written down sometime between the 7th century and the early 11th century, with a multitude of theories attempting to explain the dating, though not conclusively.⁴⁷ The poem, however, takes place in Denmark and Sweden, while England

receives no attention, during the 6th century.⁴⁸ Character wise, similarly to the setting, there are no Anglo-Saxons in the poem, only Danes, Swedes, and the Gēatas.⁴⁹ Despite the later written dating, the oral tradition elements of the poem, specifically the

different models, provides support for an earlier origin date, different from the composition date.⁵⁰ Thus, *Beowulf* provides a method of support for explaining the role of the buckle due to its early dating and elements.

The first mention of a boar (all of which refer to an image) says, “the golden figures of the boar shone over the cheek-guard, decorated and hardened by fire; it held safe conduct over

⁴⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁴⁷ R.D. Fulk, Robert Bjork, John Niles, eds., *Klaeber’s Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), clxii.

⁴⁸ Ibid., li, clxxxiii.

⁴⁹ Ibid., lii, lix.

⁵⁰ Ibid., clxxxi-clxxxii.

the fierce ones of warlike mind.”⁵¹ While a live boar does not appear anywhere in the poem there are numerous references. In *Beowulf*, the Old English words *swīn* and *eofer/eofor* are utilized for boars, though both also refer to the imagery on the helmets.⁵² The first set of lines that do refer to the boar image utilize it in a way that connects boars to warriors, in this case Beowulf and his companions. And as Allan Metcalf notes, when the boar imagery does get used it is used to describe and display the power of a warrior or warriors.⁵³

Another connection to warriors and battle lies in the names of the characters *Eofer*, *Wulf*, and *Dæghrefn*.⁵⁴ The names translate to ‘boar’, ‘wolf’, and ‘raven’ (*Dæghrefn* is a Frankish word rather than an Old English word) which, except for the boar, are a group of three animals known as the ‘beasts of battle’.⁵⁵ This connection with battle is further seen as all three are connected to the death of Beowulf’s lord, Hygelac, and the eventual battles and destruction of the Geats.⁵⁶ One other aspect that comes from the relationship between these three names lies in the idea that they are mentioned prior to Beowulf fighting the dragon and his subsequent death.⁵⁷ All three names hold a connection to battle but also to death through their usage in the poem, demonstrating a link between battle and death and the possible symbolic role of boar imagery. With the way the boar is utilized in *Beowulf*, the connections it has to death allow for the possibility of grave ninety-one holding a deceased male adult, for which the age is unquestioned.

⁵¹ Ibid., 12. Original in Old English: eoforlic scionon ofer hlēorber[g]an gehroden golde, fāh ond fȳrheard; ferhwearde hēold gūpmōd grīmmōn [303b-306a].

⁵² Ibid., 370,440.

⁵³ Allan Metcalf, “Ten Natural Animals in Beowulf,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 64, no.4 (1963): 382, accessed November 6, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43342165>.

⁵⁴ Anne Harris, “HANDS, HELMS, AND HEROES: The Role of Proper Names in ‘Beowulf,’” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 83, no. 4 (1982): 417, accessed November 6, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43343473>.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 417; R.D. Fulk, Robert Bjork, John Niles, eds., *Klaeber’s Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 248.

⁵⁶ Anne Harris, “HANDS, HELMS, AND HEROES: The Role of Proper Names in ‘Beowulf,’” 417-418.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 418.

Overall, the evidence from the site favors sex as an important reason for influencing the Anglo-Saxons' mind. The reason influences by species from the tables favor sex as explaining the placement by species rather than age. The evidence also explains the irregularities from the table, mainly the bone pins, ivory rings, and the beaver tooth, in terms of sex, rather than by age. The boar tusk buckle also best fits into the cemetery as influenced by sex rather than by age.

Religion

Religion, having a shorter section, focuses primarily on an overall discussion on religious symbolism in the site and focusing on horses as the major species for the section. First, examining the species and how they could relate to ritual feasting and how evidence from the site could support it. The remainder of the section will instead examine horses and their symbolism. The symbolism stems from both Anglo-Saxon evidence and extends to a discussion on how Continental evidence could support it.

While religion acts as one of the reasons supported less in favor of other reasons, it still has some importance as it still exists as a possible reason due to the lack of sources to confirm nor reject it.⁵⁸ And as David Wilson points out, the inclusion of animal remains is unlikely to be accidental. The remains probably were purposefully placed in the grave with regards to symbolism and the deceased.⁵⁹ Excluding the accessories, the most common animal in the site are sheep, at least when discernible from goats and excluding ungulates as it is represented in two different species, both of which are found in the site. With this in mind, and the types of bones that appeared in graves thirty-five and thirty-seven and their position, one possibility could be evidence of ritual feasting done at the grave. Another possibility is that the remains had

⁵⁸ Lee, *Feasting the Dead: Food and Drink in Anglo-Saxon Burial Rituals*, 5.

⁵⁹ David Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism* (London: Routledge, 1992), 97.

something to do with the afterlife and the Anglo-Saxons' idea of it.⁶⁰ As Christina Lee suggests, the remains of animals could have ties as grave goods to the dead but could also function in funerary rites, specifically feasting.⁶¹ One example that has the possibility of indicating this lies in the north-east corner of the site, specifically four graves: 165, 167, 180, and 195.⁶² Ignoring the social status possibilities, all four graves were buried almost adjacently to each other and all include fowl remains. And most importantly, grave 165 includes pottery shards that hold evidence of potential sooting. This could indicate the possibility of cooking, which could have led to the inclusion of the fowl remains.⁶³

One animal in particular could be one of the most important for understanding how religion could have played a role in funeral rituals: horses. The Anglo-Saxons had thought of horses as one of the most important animals in their society, starting with the names of their mythical founders, 'Hengest' and 'Horsa', which translate to 'horse and gelding'.⁶⁴ It is noteworthy that the dating of the one of the two graves to feature horse remains, grave thirty-eight, is dated earlier than the seventh century.⁶⁵ While just a single piece of a horse skeleton was buried, the symbolism of it remains the most important aspect of it. While horse inhumations had dwindled by the late sixth century, horses remained as a part of important burials.⁶⁶ This change

⁶⁰ Ibid., 98.

⁶¹ Lee, *Feasting the Dead: Food and Drink in Anglo-Saxon Burial Rituals*, 67.

⁶² Ibid., 68.

⁶³ Ibid., 68.

⁶⁴ Crawford, *Daily Life in Anglo-Saxon England*, 166.

⁶⁵ R. Nicholson, 'Animal bone from the graves,' in *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, Gail Drinkall and Martin Foreman eds., Sheffield Excavation Report 6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 237; Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 328.

⁶⁶ Chris Fern, "Horses in Mind," in *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*, ed. Martin Carver, Alex Sanmark, and Sarah Semple (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010), 134.

could possibly be suggested by the site as the two graves including horse remains were both above forty-five and without a sex preference.⁶⁷

While horses featured in both Continental and Anglo-Saxon art and lore, evidence for a greater connection can be seen through shamanism connecting to the Anglo-Saxons dating to the Migration Period.⁶⁸ Taking shamanism into account, horses and birds became idols representing the ability to travel long distances, making them ideal objects for traveling to the afterlife. This belief also can be applied to Scandinavian lore, with Odin's horse, Sleipnir, as also representing a shamanic idol.⁶⁹ Going back to the Anglo-Saxons and their lore, Hengist and Horsa represent a dual role, where they act as humans and as animals, connecting the physical world with the spiritual.⁷⁰ With these ideas and their connotations, despite the fact that only two graves in the site had horse remains, it is noteworthy that they belonged to the oldest age group, showing respect for that position but also with the remains possibly representing a way of travel in death. It is especially important to note that they refer to Odin and Sleipnir, as that aids in explaining another possible example of religion in the site, this one concentrating on the connections to literature, specifically through the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, for the year 547, the entry has one event. That event is the beginning of Ida's reign in Northumbria and says that from him the royal race of the Northumbrians began.⁷¹ It then proceeds into the genealogy of Ida, which includes a particular name along with others past it: Woden.⁷² The name 'Woden' is the Old English form of the

⁶⁷ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 47, 69.

⁶⁸ Fern, "Horses in Mind," in Carver, Sanmark, and Semple, 148.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁷¹ George Garmonsway, trans. and eds., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Everyman's Library (London: J.M. Dent, 1972), 16.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 16.

Scandinavian name ‘Oðinn’ (Odin).⁷³ Odin himself, as the chief deity in the Northern pantheon, is described as a guide of souls and has two titles dealing with death, “Lord of the Revenants” and, “God of the Hanged Men.”⁷⁴ Taking into account that the main animal associated with him is a horse and his associations to death suggests that Woden was a figure known about in Northumbria. This could suggest that the burials with the horse remains are symbolic of Woden in regard to death, position, and animal association. The interpretation of position comes primarily from the fact that the graves belong to the oldest age range and the horse remains are a testimony and sign of respect for the deceased and Woden.⁷⁵

Overall, religion has some evidence that supports it but not enough to support it being a highly influential reason. While some of the archaeological evidence can help to explain the religious symbolism in the site, it relies mainly on the vessels and some of the animal remains. The horses, however, do provide the religious symbolism to at minimum establish itself as a reason, especially if taking into the account the connections to the Continent and Germanic mythology. That connection could provide a greater establishment though it would require more research to establish the connection better.

Social Status

Social Status, however, will be examined through different perspectives to support its own influence. One perspective examines the influence through the composition of the artefacts, and another through the category. Another perspective utilizes a range of the number of grave goods, though it also relies on the other two as well. For a discussion on species, analyzing the

⁷³ Claude Lecouteux, *Encyclopedia of Norse and Germanic Folklore, Mythology, and Magic*, ed. Michael Moynihan, trans. Jon Graham, 1st U.S. ed. (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2016), 6.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 7, 214.

⁷⁵ Requires further research.

lone dog and revisiting the ivory rings provides some evidence to support the reason's influence in the site.

		Number of Artefacts
Composition	Metal	127
	Glass	15
	Amethyst	2
	Crystal	1
	Bone	7
	Amber	20
	Ivory	3
	Clay	1

Table 3. Number of artefacts from graves with animal remains in regard to composition.

		Number of Artefacts
Category	Weapon	1
	Personal Equipment/Tools	51
	Accessories	112
	Shears	1
	Containers	1
	Pottery	6

Table 4. Number of artefacts from graves with animal remains in regard to category.

		Species											Unknown	Total
		Pig	Sheep/Goat	Sheep	Cattle/Horse	Cattle	Horse	Dog	Chicken	Goose	Ungulate	Fowl		
Number of artefacts	1--5	1	2	3	2	3	1	1	0	1	4	5	5	28
	6--10	2	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	4	13
	11--15	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
	16--20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	21--25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	26+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5. Frequency of number range of artefacts found associated with each species.

From tables 3 and 4, metal constituted the greatest number of grave goods, while accessories had the highest representation. While not including species in tables 3 and 4, table 5 instead suggests that sheep/goats and chickens were included in the graves that held the highest number of grave goods, excluding peculiarities. Analyzing tables 3, the number of amber grave goods, in addition to amethyst, crystal, all appeared as beads in the graves, which also contribute to the high number of accessories. Metal, however, was the primary material for most of the personal equipment/tools (which include knives, bags, combs, amulets, and firesteel objects), as well as some of the accessories, mainly brooches and pins. While only one weapon was found in a grave containing animal remains, weapons had little overall representation in the cemetery site,

though that also allows for the possibility of any male grave containing weapons to be of a higher status.⁷⁶ Chickens, however, appeared to hold some status as the only instance of a chicken in the site coincided with one of the higher range of numbers for the domestic species. Sheep/goat, similarly, appeared to hold some status as out of the four instances, only one was found with an artefact count greater than 10.

Of note, the method used to explain the status of individuals, the *Socistat* program, ranks animals as the least influential indicator of status.⁷⁷ While this would eliminate the most common animals, there are some unique animals that could support animals having some influence on status. Those species include horses, a dog, and elephants in the form of ivory. The other animals, however, still possess some degree of importance in terms of being linked to other artefacts that do hold a high degree of influence on status, which also aids in elevating the animals' degree of influence.

As Pam Crabtree remarks, horses had the smallest representation in burials during the early Anglo-Saxon period, which led to them possessing a greater influence on social status.⁷⁸ In the Castledyke site, horses, in addition to chickens, had the least amount of representation out of the domestic animals (Tables 5). Despite this, horses appear to lack social status influence in regard to the Foreman and Drinkall, with the only two graves containing horses, 38 and 118, being regarded as low status.⁷⁹ However, in regard to grave 38, a possibility occurs of horses holding a greater status influence, which revolves around the deceased. Examining the types of

⁷⁶ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 344.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 341.

⁷⁸ Pam Crabtree, "Urban-Rural Interactions in East Anglia: The Evidence from Zooarchaeology," in *Town and Country in Medieval North Western Europe: Dynamic Interactions*, ed. Alexis Wilkin, John Naylor, Derek Keene, and Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld (Turnhout: Brepols 2015), 37.

⁷⁹ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 350.

goods found in the grave, while also knowing that the deceased was male and over 45, lends some credibility to the grave holding a higher status than believed.⁸⁰ While most of the artefacts in the grave hold relatively little social influence, the tweezers and the horse remains give the grave a higher status due to their importance, and in the horse's case, rarity. Due to these two artefacts, grave 38, despite seeming to not possess a high social status, holds evidence to support itself having a higher social status.

Another animal that appears in the cemetery is the lone dog instance in grave 36, which also acts as one of the few instances of a weapon with an animal in the site.⁸¹ From Drinkall and Foreman, the highest status artefact is the spearhead, though spearheads themselves accounted for only a small number of all the artefacts found, especially compared to other cemeteries.⁸² However, besides the spearhead, the dog remains also support the high status of the grave. The Anglo-Saxons used dogs primarily for hunting, which represented an activity for high status males.⁸³ Due to this connection between hunting and dogs, in addition to knowing that the grave contains a male, the grave itself holds a high-status influence. Including the spearhead, there is little doubt that grave 36 represents a high status grave due to the symbolism tied to the dog and the scarcity tied to the spearhead, in addition to the connections with hunting.

In two graves, 40 and 112, ivory rings consisted of one of the discovered grave goods, and both instances were determined to have come from elephants.⁸⁴ Out of the categories of artefacts considered, the rings acted as one of the four strongest influences on social status, while

⁸⁰ Ibid., 47; Poole, "Engendering Debate: Animals and Identity in Anglo-Saxon England," in *Medieval Archaeology*, 71.

⁸¹ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 47.

⁸² Ibid., 344.

⁸³ Pam Crabtree, *West Stow, Suffolk: Early Anglo-Saxon Animal Husbandry*, East Anglian Archaeology Report, 47 (Suffolk: Suffolk County Planning Dept., 1989) 62; Crawford, *Daily Life in Anglo-Saxon England*, 78.

⁸⁴ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 285.

also being linked to females.⁸⁵ In grave 40, besides the ivory rings, the other major artefact found was the copper sleeve clasps, which also acted as one of the strongest influences on social status.⁸⁶ Grave 112, however, included both the rings and, in addition to the other artefacts, a bag that contained more artefacts, including a firesteel.⁸⁷ The firesteels act as the strongest influence

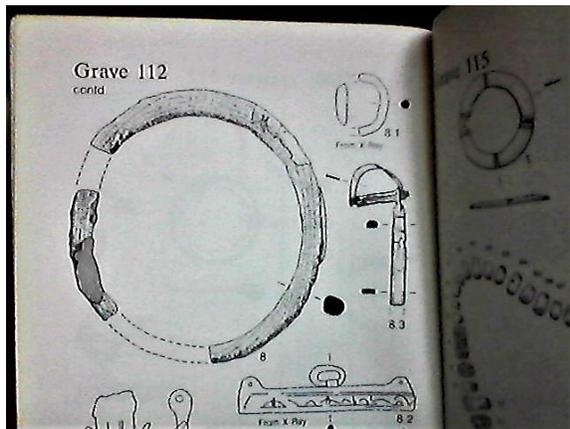


Figure 2. Grave 112 x-rays showing the ivory rings (# 8), the firesteel (lower right), iron ring fragments (upper left), and girdle hanger (middle right). From: Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 172.

on social status, while also being the rarest items in the site due to their distribution in south-east England.⁸⁸ Grave 112 is also unique as being the only grave possessing a genuine firesteel, with grave 183 potentially holding a firesteel. While the grave included other grave goods possessing

different levels of influence, the ivory rings and the firesteel hold the greatest relevance due to their rarity among the site.⁸⁹ The rarity of the rings provides the highest influence for social status, though their connections to other grave goods provide even stronger

symbolism for social status. Specifically, the firesteel along with the rings provides the greatest support for grave 112, while the sleeve clasps and rings perform similarly for grave 40, though the influence in grave 40 is lessened due to the abundance of clasps compared to the firesteels.

Overall, social status has some influence in the cemetery though it remains reliant on other reasons. Some of the compositions, primarily glass, and categories, mainly weapons and

⁸⁵ Ibid., 286, 351.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 48.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 66.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 291-292.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 48.

personal tools/equipment, support the influence of social status as a reason, though that occurs mainly without animal remains. While the animal remains have higher value in connection to other artefacts, they themselves do not have high value, except for certain animals explained in the next section.

Economic Importance

Examining the economic history of the region provides an insight into how the Anglo-Saxons used animals while living and how symbolism transferred to the mortuary setting. The species themselves held significance due to their agricultural purposes, and as a result, gave them a role in death as symbols. This symbolism can be examined through the connections the animals had in life through their utility and in death through the types of grave goods found with them, along with helping explain some of the other reasons.

Beginning with the fifth century, diet held one of the main roles of animals, though variations did exist.⁹⁰ Cattle proved to be one of the most important animals for the period due to their varied usage. That usage ranged from working animals for ploughs to a source for dairy.⁹¹ It also extended into death, primarily with their bones and horns holding value in regard to material. Because of the variety in their utility, cattle themselves had high value associated with them, while also making it more difficult to keep one due to the time and effort needed to properly utilize one.⁹² Due to these aspects of raising cattle, they had high representation in

⁹⁰ Debby Banham and Rosamond Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms and Farming* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 107.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 86

archaeological record for the early period and experienced greater usage than other animals, except for sheep.⁹³

In regard to the Castledyke site, cattle are the second most frequent animals in the site, second to sheep (Table 1). However, little archaeological evidence can support cattle representing a higher social influence, especially since in two graves of the four certain instances of cattle, no other artefacts were found.⁹⁴ Despite this, cattle constitutes a greater proportion of all animal remains in the site, which provides some support for it having a higher overall value associated with it. Grave 170 aids in providing some support as out of all the graves with cattle bones, it contained the highest number of artefacts, which also included amber beads.⁹⁵ The artefacts all fall under accessories, which elevates the value of the cattle bone, supporting the idea of cattle holding inherent value as it could act as an accessory itself, displaying it varied utility.

Sheep, however, constituted the highest number of animals in the site, though they held a similar role to cattle. Despite this, in other cemetery sites from the early period, cattle comprised the highest number of bones, outranking sheep.⁹⁶ Sheep, like cattle, held a variety of usage, from meat to dairy and wool, while also being smaller and thus easier to manage.⁹⁷ This usage gave the Anglo-Saxons an alternative to cattle but also gave the sheep less overall value compared to cattle.⁹⁸ The site, however, displays a different interpretation.

⁹³ Crabtree, *West Stow, Suffolk: Early Anglo-Saxon Animal Husbandry*, 106.

⁹⁴ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 36, 93.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

⁹⁶ Banham and Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms and Farming*, 91-92.

⁹⁷ Crabtree, *West Stow, Suffolk: Early Anglo-Saxon Animal Husbandry*, 106.

⁹⁸ Banham and Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms and Farming*, 92.

While sheep had the highest representation, they also had higher number of grave goods than cattle overall, excluding the sheep/goat number due to ambiguity (Table 5). In particular, graves 35 and 116 offer a different interpretation on the value of sheep. Grave 35 held the only instance of a container found with animals, in addition to a variety in the type of grave goods, including accessories and personal equipment/tools.⁹⁹ Taking into consideration the variety of utility sheep represented, the variety of types in the grave portrays the utility of sheep while also influencing its inherent value as a symbol. Grave 116, similarly, held a variety of the types of grave goods and a larger number, while also including an iron pin.¹⁰⁰ The pin itself possesses a higher social status influence than the other grave goods, which includes the sheep bone.¹⁰¹ Because of this influence from the pin, the value placed on the sheep bone elevates due to its association with the pin, in addition to the variety of artefacts compared with the sheep's varied utility.

Despite having little representation in the site, pigs held a high value due to the effort and cost to maintain one, in addition to the potency of their meat after slaughter.¹⁰² Pam Crabtree notes that their rapid reproduction rate made them ideal for establishing farming communities, though one important requirement remained: the landscape.¹⁰³ While pigs did have quick reproduction rates, they also required woodlands for feeding, as they could roam and eat as they needed to. Christopher Loveluck explains that in the absence of woodland areas, sheep and cattle were the preferred livestock due to maintenance.¹⁰⁴ And as Drinkall and Foreman state, "It is

⁹⁹ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 46.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 351.

¹⁰² Banham and Faith, *Anglo-Saxon Farms and Farming*, 98.

¹⁰³ Crabtree, *West Stow, Suffolk: Early Anglo-Saxon Animal Husbandry*, 106.

¹⁰⁴ Christopher Loveluck, *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages, c. AD 600-1150: A Comparative Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 93.

unlikely that much woodland survived in Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire...Domesday records a total absence of woodland.”¹⁰⁵ The shortage of woodland explains the little representation of pigs in the site, while also elevating their value due to their scarcity and maintenance with little woodland to support them.

The site portrays this elevation of value in two grave, 4 and 16. Grave 4 includes one of the few weapons found in the site, a spearhead, in addition to two buckles and knives.¹⁰⁶ As previously discussed, with the little representation of weapon in the site, any grave including weapons has a higher value associated with it.¹⁰⁷ This inherent value of weapons in turn elevates the value of the pig remains and form a connection due to the scarcity of both artefacts in the site. Grave 16, however, lacked a weapon associated with it but held different artefacts that contributed to a higher value. Specifically, the two glass beads, which were of different types but colored green.¹⁰⁸ In particular, the short cylinder bead has its origins in the Roman period as a part of a necklace, while both beads comprise only a small number of the total monochrome beads found, two out of 691.¹⁰⁹ In this case, the coloration of the beads and their type provide a higher value for the grave due to their scarcity, which also applies to the pig remains. Overall, the scarcity of pig remains in the site, while a result of the landscape not being suitable for raising them, elevates the value associated with pigs in the grave due to their own scarcity in the area.

Overall, agriculture helps to explain both the presence of certain species in the site and the influence on the Anglo-Saxons’ mindset for utilizing animals as artefacts. Utility lies as the

¹⁰⁵ Drinkall, Foreman, et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber*, 7.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 344.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 259-260.

major factor between both cattle and sheep, explaining the influence of agriculture in the symbolism of animals in the mortuary context. Pigs, however, rely on their form of care, which translates to their rarity, to explain their role in the site. The artefacts also help support the role of all three animals in the grave, particularly with the categories.

Conclusion

The use of animals in human graves in the Castledyke South cemetery has a variety of possible meanings and reasons, with various factors having support as being influential on the Anglo-Saxons. Regarding age and sex, age had the lesser support as it relied on other factors to have more influence. This can be seen with the horse remains and their connection to religion and being connected back to age. Overall though, the evidence did not lend much support of age being a primary influence. Far more evidence supports the proposition that sex acted as a stronger influence. This is more closely seen with the frequency of the species associated with a particular sex and is especially seen with the boar tusk buckle and the possible connotations it held when connected to *Beowulf*. Overall, sex appeared to hold a greater influence over the minds of the Anglo-Saxons and how they viewed animal symbolism.

The other factors had varying support. Religion, as expected, appeared to have the least amount of evidence to support its influence, though this can also depend on the species. While almost every species had, at most, potential for funerary feasting being the cause of their inclusion, horses, however, had more evidence to support their usage in a religious connotation. Taking into account the way they could be connected to the Anglo-Saxons both in folklore and mythology suggests that horses over the other species appeared to be the most influential species for religious reason, despite the fact that scant evidence appears for it. It is also worth noting that

religion would likely have the least as without any textual support, it is difficult to suggest it as a highly influential factor over other factors that also have the support of other grave goods.

The evidence suggests that social status was equally important to gender, despite representing a more puzzling factor to place in the cemetery context. While different animals held different social value to the Anglo-Saxons, tracing the connections between them and the cemetery proved simpler when also taking the other grave goods into account. However, there are a few reasons why it should not be ranked as the most influential reason in the site. One of these reasons goes back to the other grave goods and the ways they are similar to other graves, which relies on sex connotations. And the species that were available primarily existed there due to agricultural purposes, though some were more likely to have been included due to status symbolism rather than economic reasons. Therefore, suggesting that social status acts as the most influential reason cannot be entirely possible as it relied on other factors, primarily sex and economics, to hold its influence, though that is not say it held a weak influence.

Overall, the usage and symbolism of animals in the site appear to most strongly reflect the influence of sex and economics, specifically agriculture. While agriculture primarily affected what animals were available and offered some symbolism, it did not offer symbolism in the way that sex did. While there exist some exceptions to animal remains included due to economics, such as the ivory rings and the dog, it had the most influence on what animals were available to support sex and social connotations. Religion would be the factor that could be argued to be the least impacted by economics and does have some support due to the little evidence from the site, but vice-versa, it also holds the least amount of evidence to support itself. Putting the site into context, economics and sex hold the most influence due to their roles as providers and receivers of ideas and the Anglo-Saxons' roles as suppliers and beneficiaries.

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