

The Roman Pastoral Economy in East Yorkshire

A perspective from the animal bones

Dr Clare Rainsford

Roman Britain

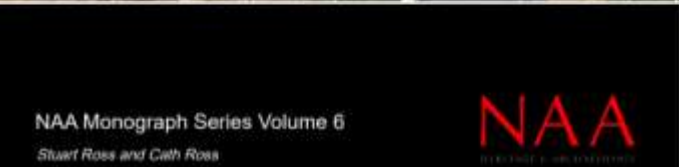
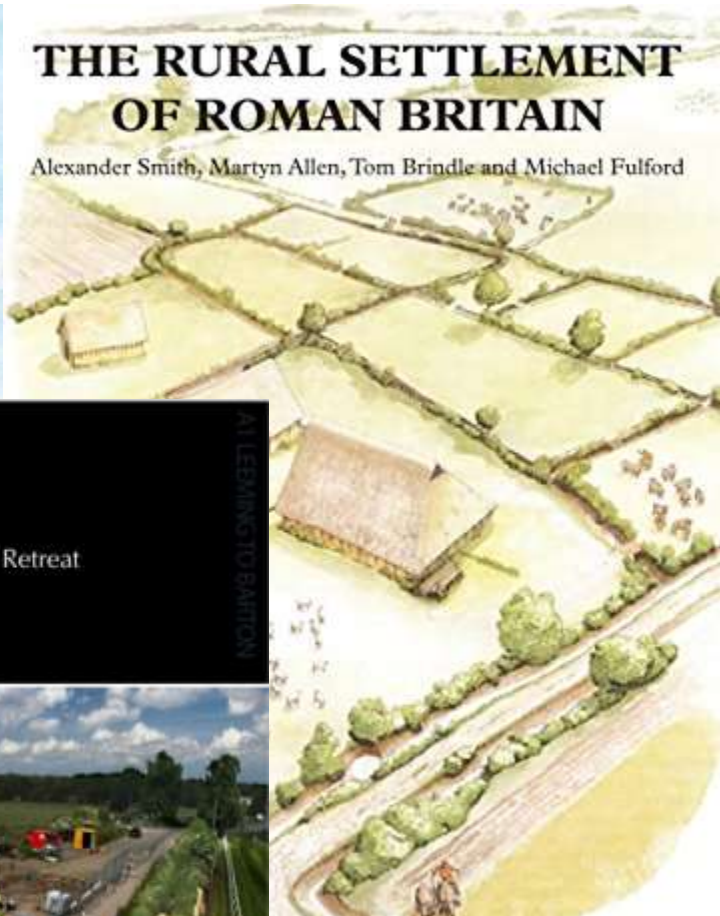
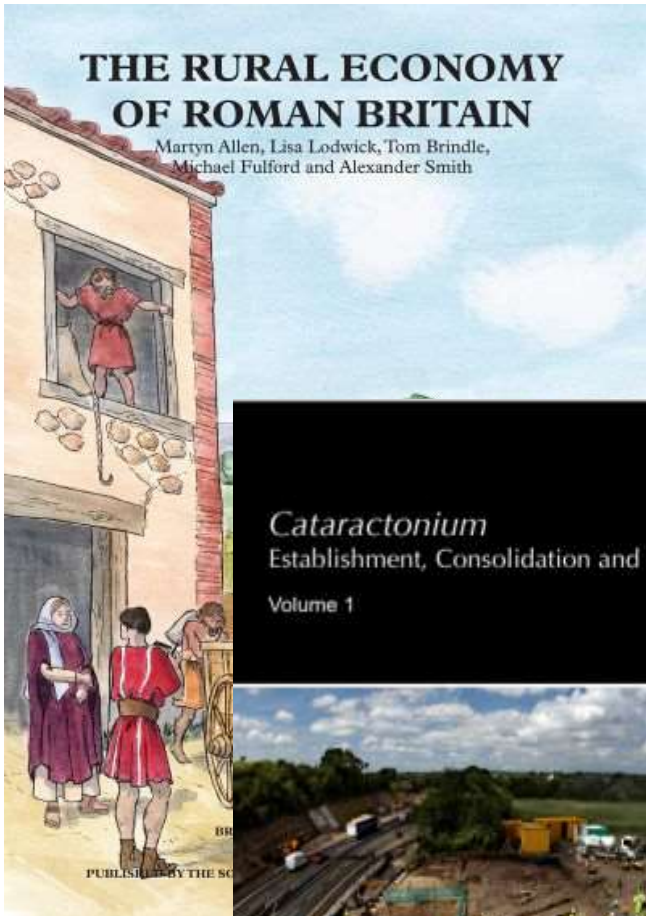
- Multicultural
- Colonial
- Varying levels of connectedness to “empire”.
- Military (which needs to be fed)
- Rural countryside: villa and non-villa



Roman Roads in Britain

Based on Reynolds' *Iter Britanniarum*, Jones & Mattingly's *Atlas of Roman Britain*, Freere's *Britannia*, and Codrington's *Roman Roads in Britain*; and other, minor sources.

0 km 100
0 mi 50



Recent Excavations:

- Malton (-2019)
- Melton
- Green Lane, Wetwang
- Cawood
- Brough Roman Fort
- Micklegate (York Archaeology)
- Heslington East

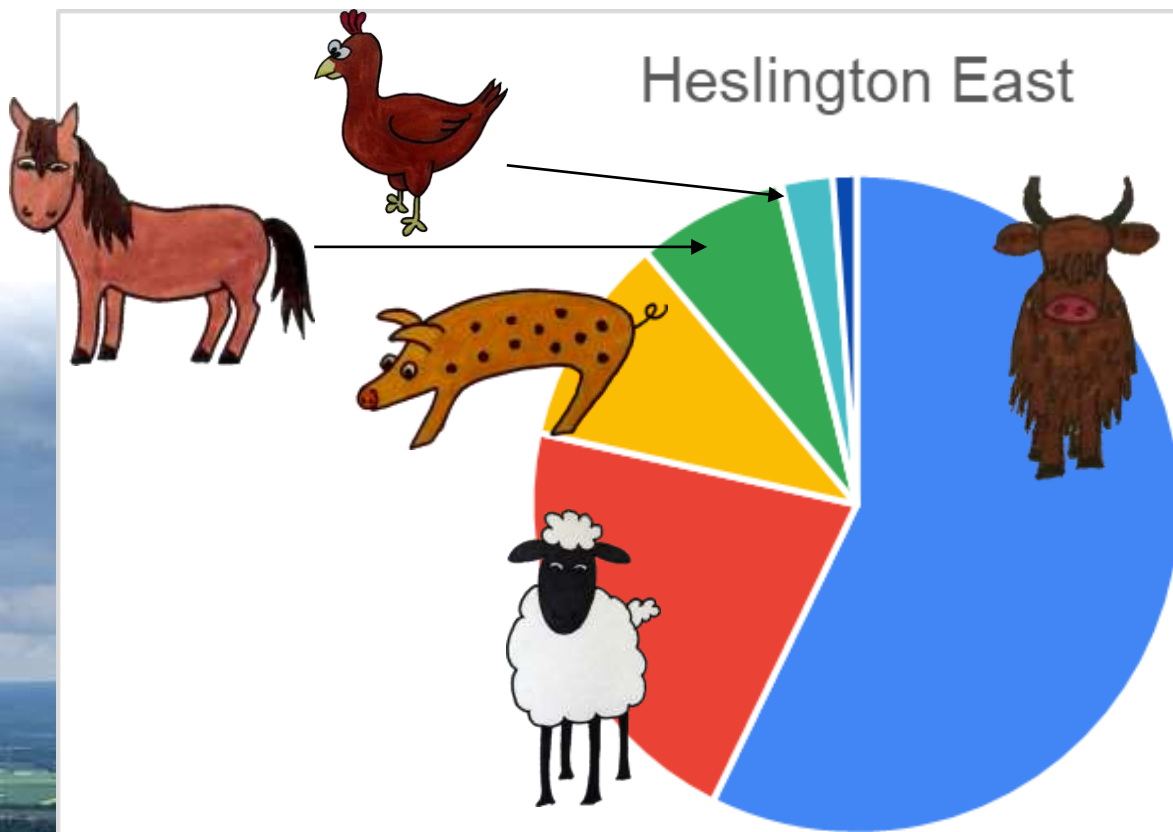
The Economy of Roman Britain

- Cattle: used for traction, dairying, beef and veal.
- Sheep: used for wool, potentially dairying, mutton and lamb.
- Pig: eaten, as young adults or as suckling pig.
- Goats: uncommon compared to sheep.
- Domestic birds: chicken and goose.
- Horses and dogs: both infrequently consumed.

Heslington East



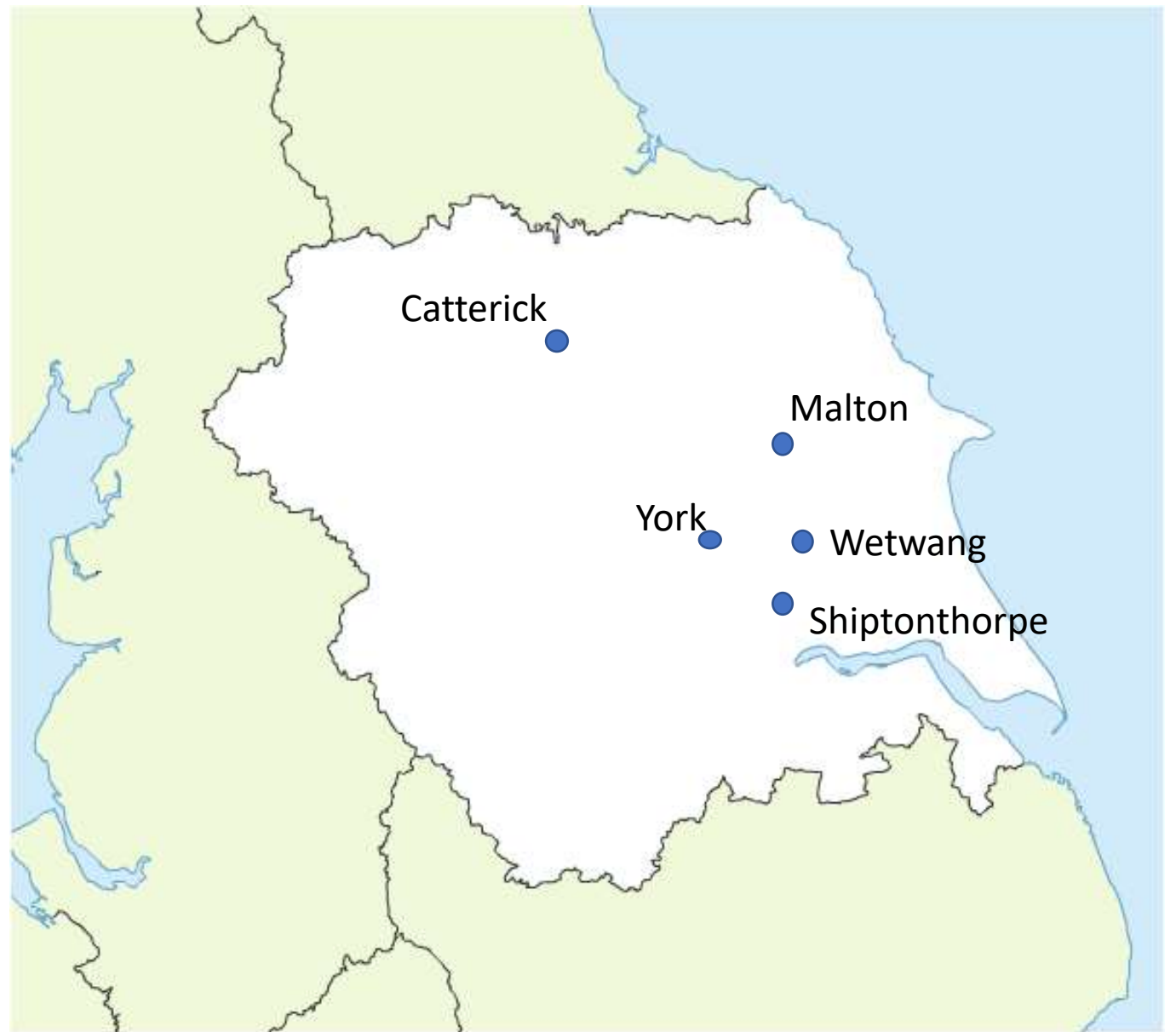
Heslington East



■ cattle ■ sheep/goat ■ pig ■ horse ■ chicken ■ dog ■ other

Roman Yorkshire

- Military
- Rural



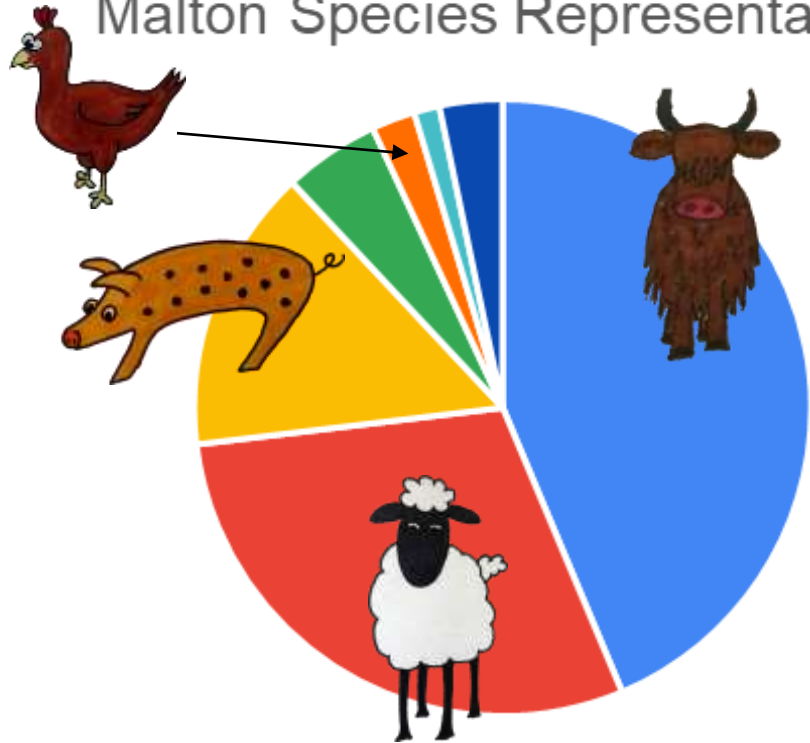
0 100 Kilometers

0 100 Miles

Roman Forts

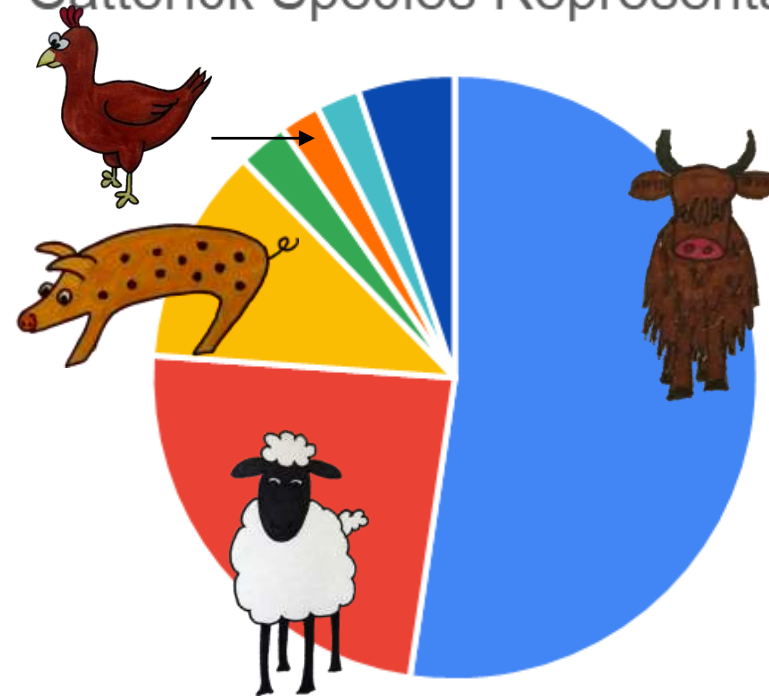


Malton Species Representation



■ cattle ■ sheep/goat ■ pig ■ horse ■ chicken ■ dog ■ other

Catterick Species Representation



■ cattle ■ sheep/goat ■ pig ■ horse ■ chicken ■ dog ■ other

York (General Accident) Species Representation



■ cattle ■ sheep/goat ■ pig ■ horse ■ chicken ■ dog ■ other

Sophisticated Roman butchery techniques



Images: Kelvin Dixon

Where are the cattle coming from?

- Stallibrass (2009) proposes droving into the northern fortresses, on the basis that element representation definitely indicates they were arriving on the hoof, and they certainly have all the necessary roads.





Madgwick et al. (2019) looked at animals from Carleon, including 23 cattle; wide range of strontium suggests some non-local animals, but also warns that strontium values are much more variable than expected within 5km of fort. However, at least 3 cattle were NOT reared in the area.

- Gan et al (2018) looked at 6 cattle mandibles from Roman Worcester, and concluded none were raised locally and all had been driven down, possibly from the north-west. (Oxygen, strontium, carbon).
- Minniti et al (2014) looked at 95 cattle teeth from Owlesbury, and showed a widening in catchment area from Middle Iron Age (primarily local) to Roman (some travelling distances of over 70km). (Strontium).



The Ubiquitous Oyster





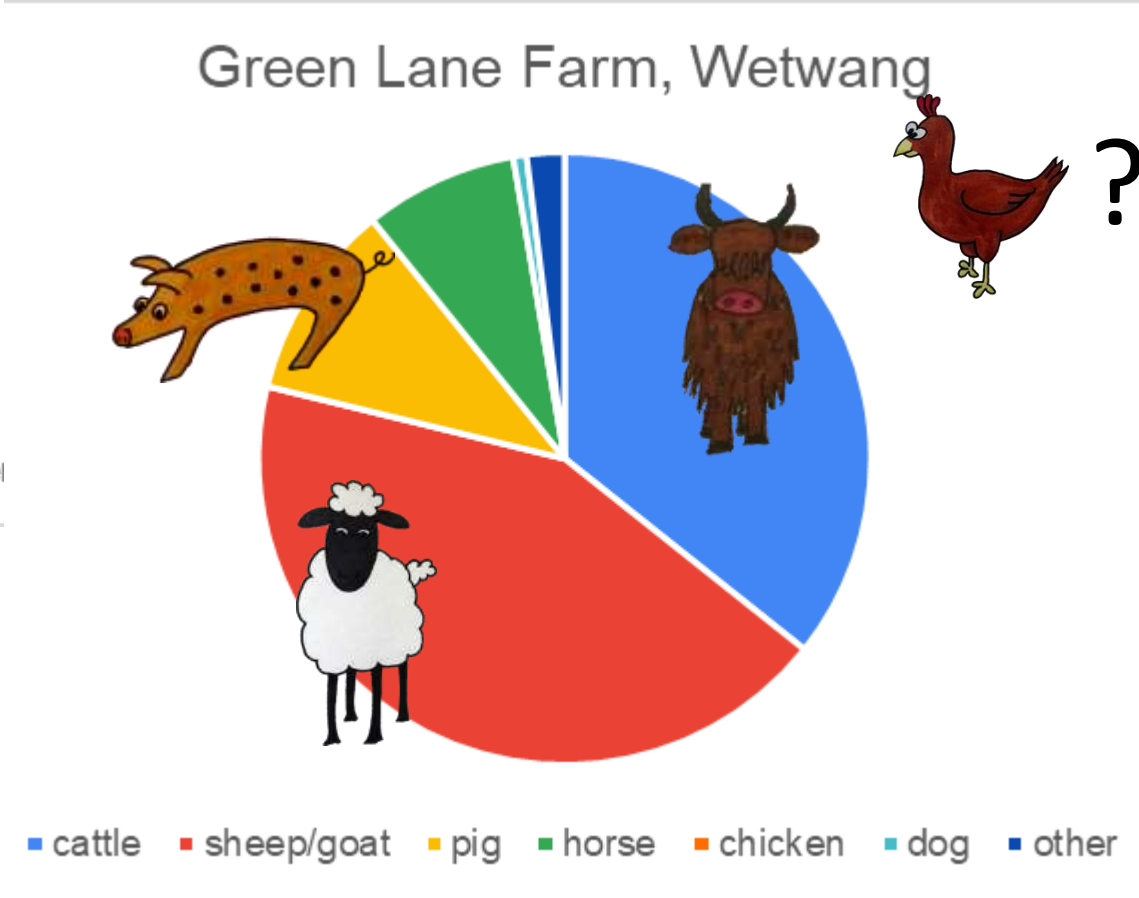
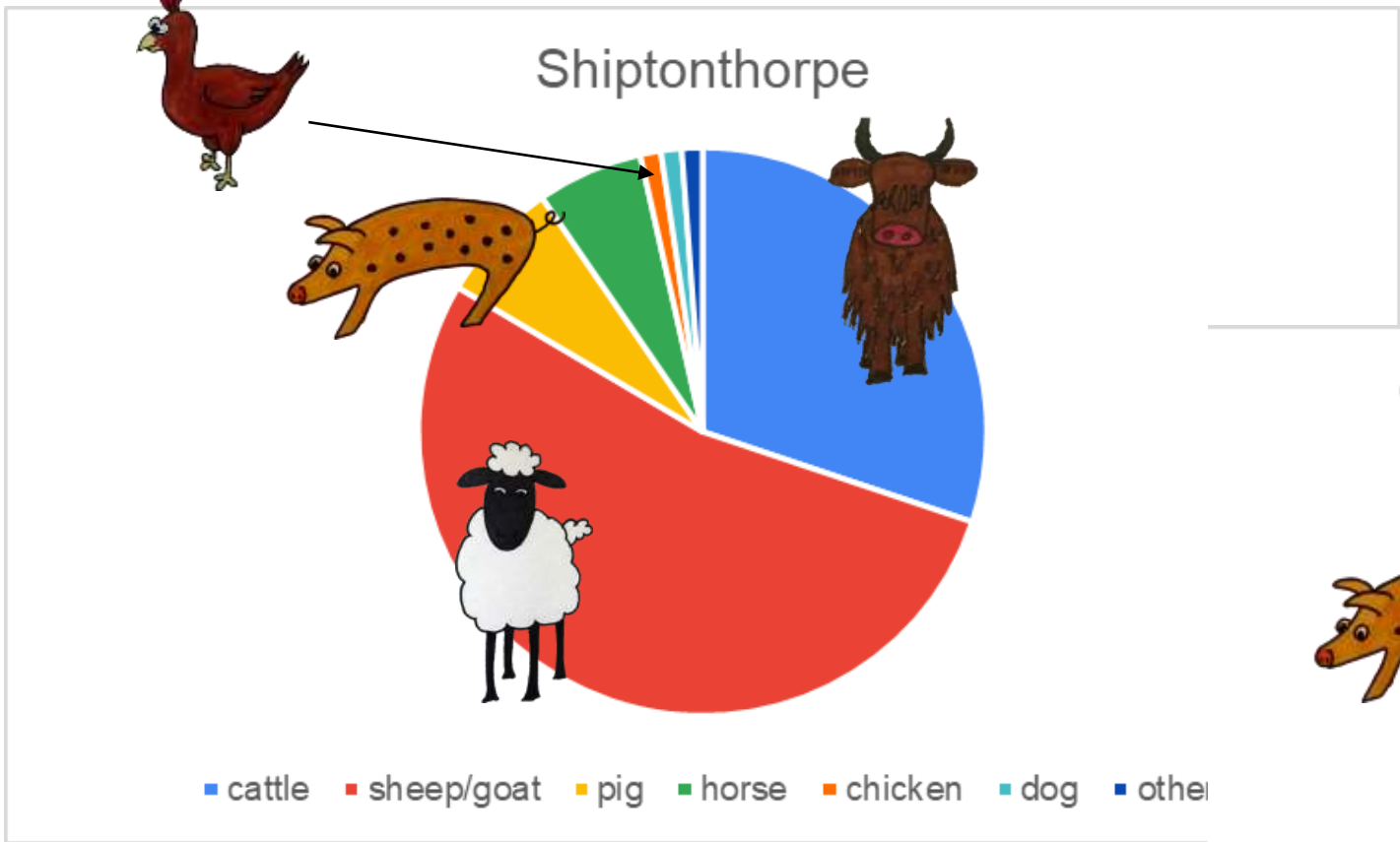
Roman Yorkshire



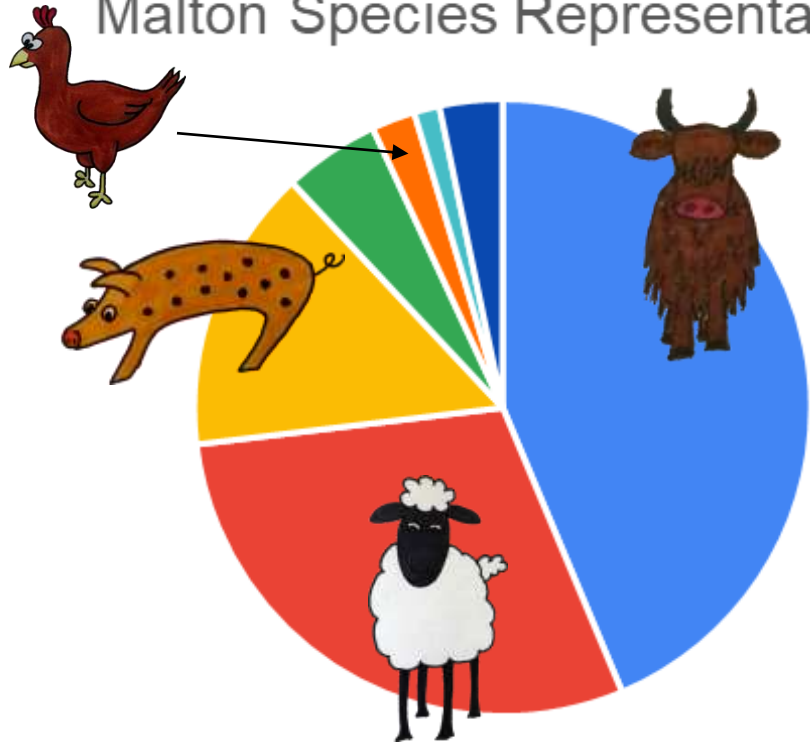
0 100
Kilometers

0 100
Miles

• Are there more sheep out on the Wolds?

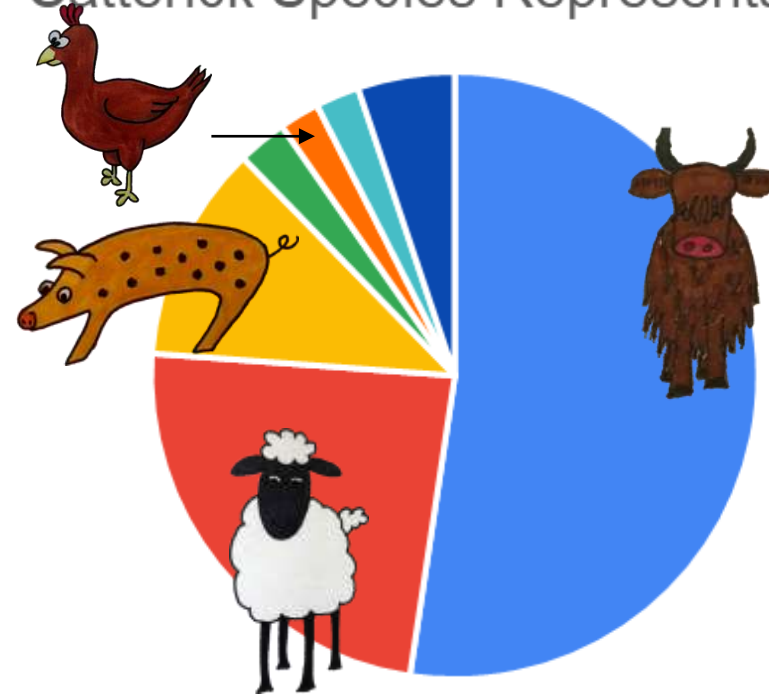


Malton Species Representation



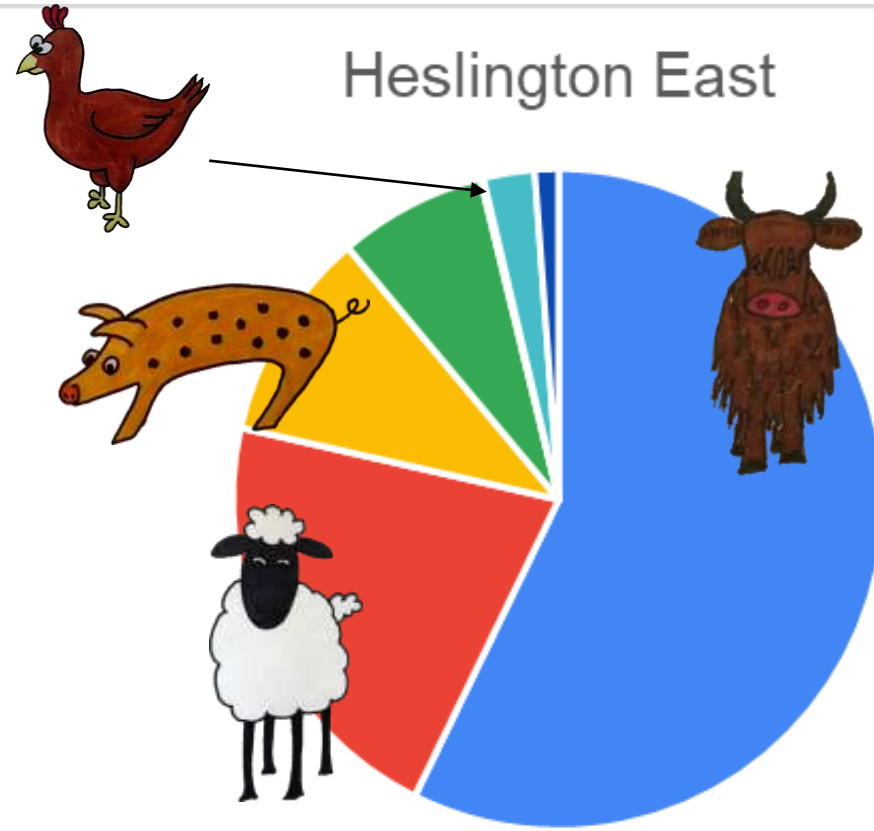
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Catterick Species Representation



■ cattle ■ sheep/goat ■ pig ■ horse ■ chicken ■ dog ■ other

Heslington East

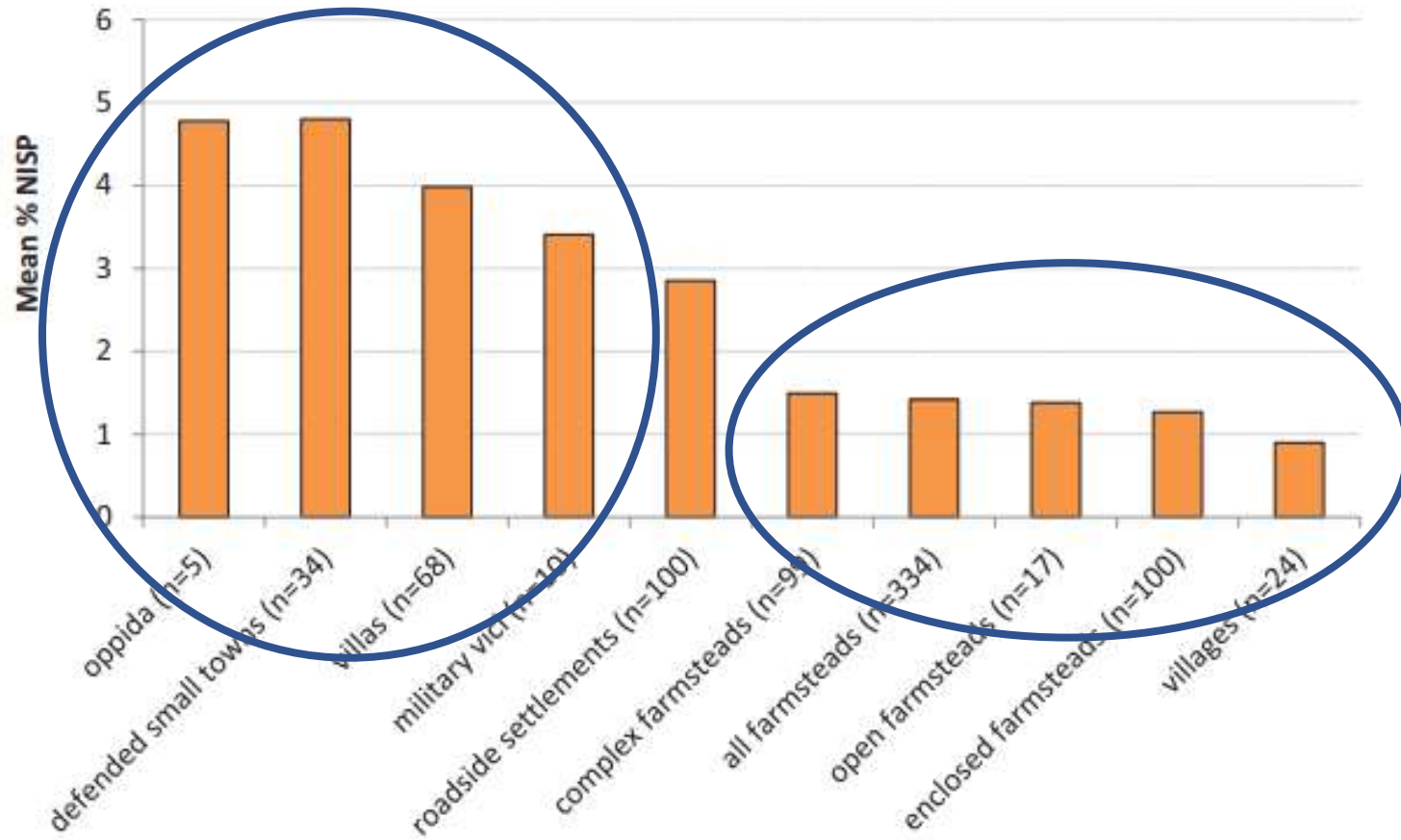


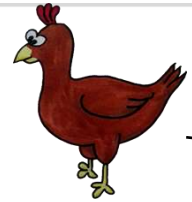
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The Chicken

- Chickens were only introduced to Britain in the Late Iron Age.







Heslington East



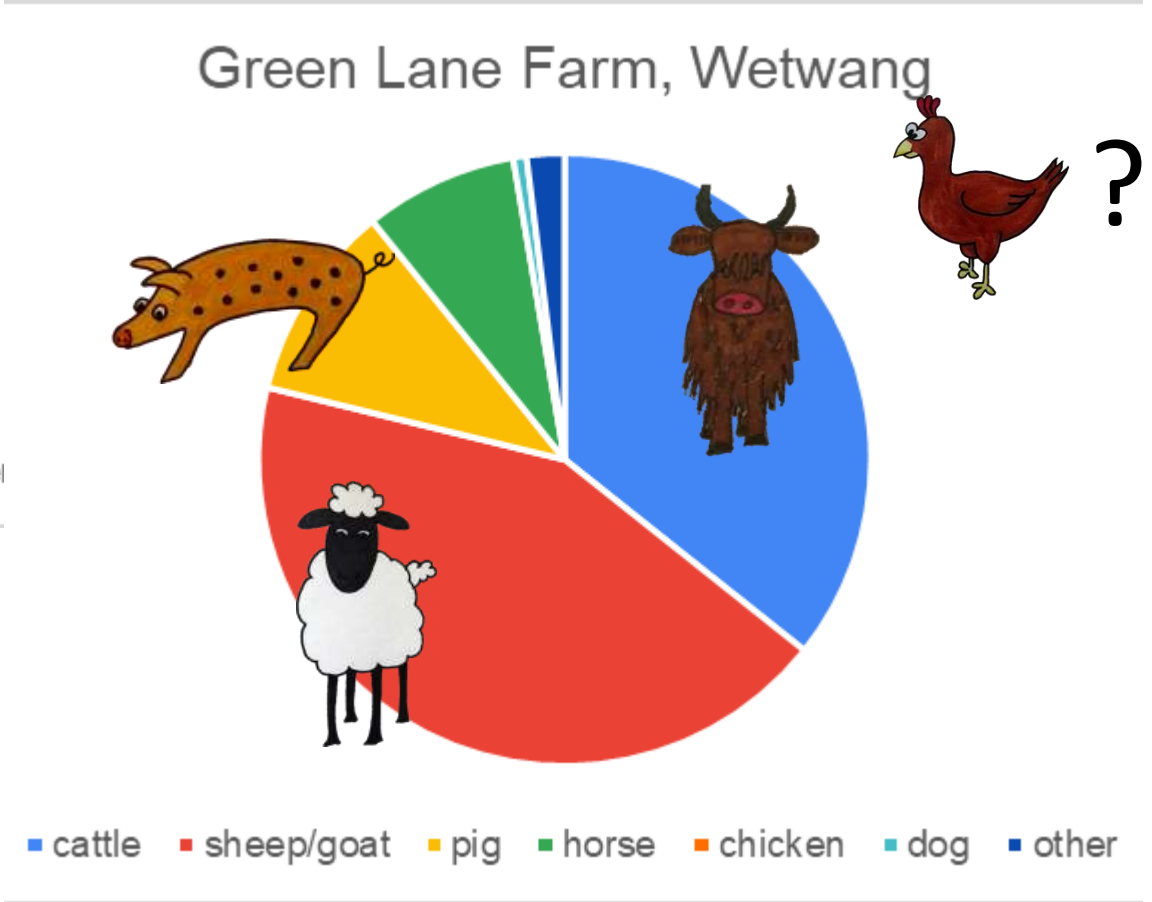
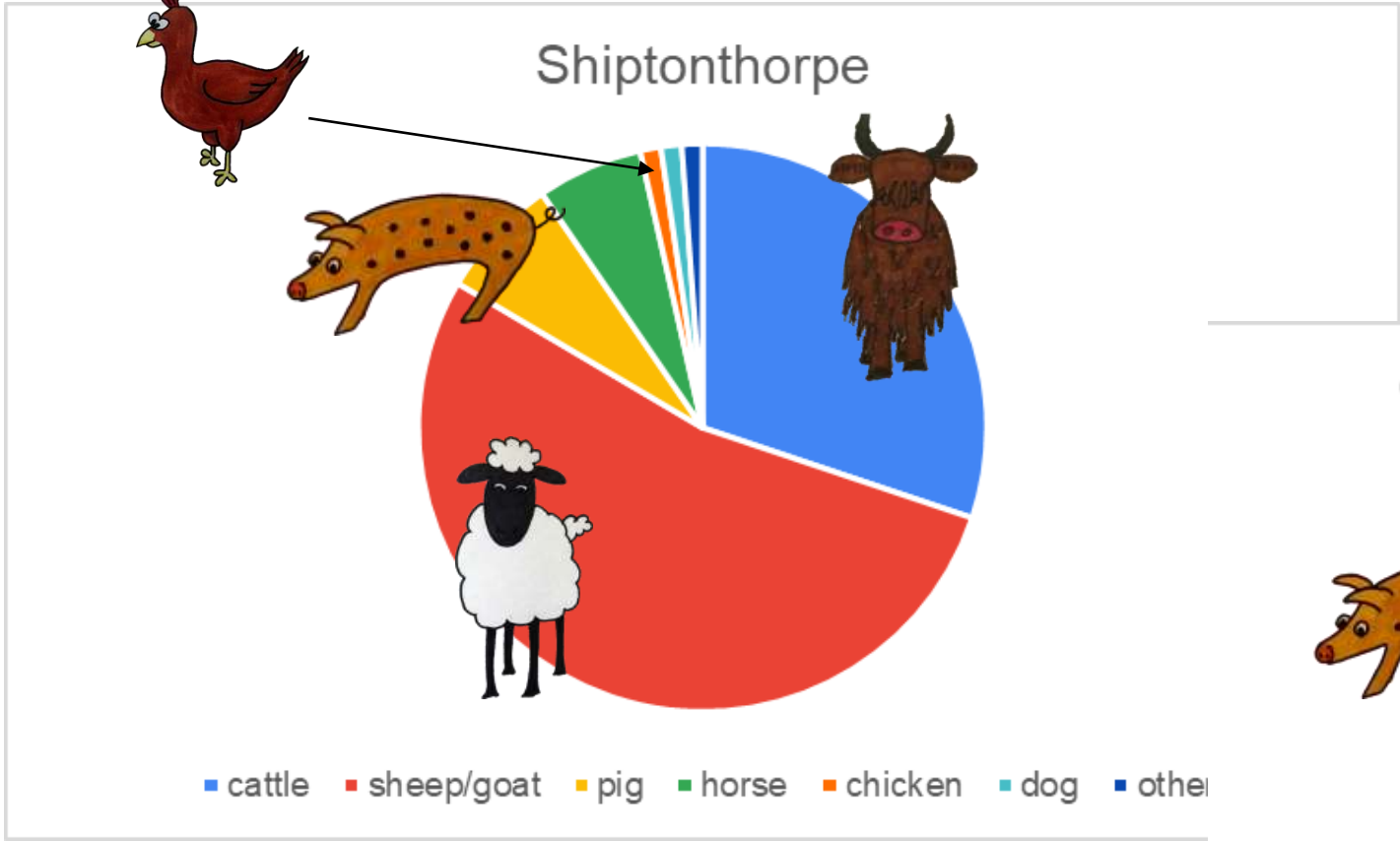
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York (General Accident) Species Representation

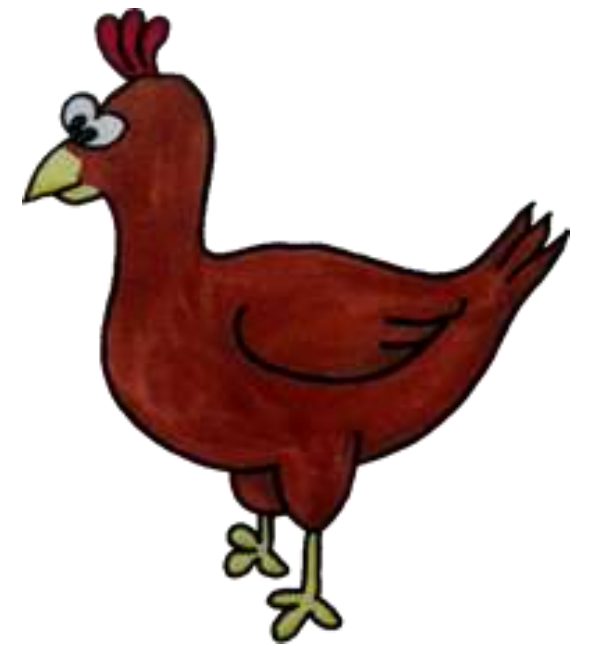


■ cattle ■ sheep/goat ■ pig ■ horse ■ chicken ■ dog ■ other



The Chicken

- Chicken remains are most commonly found on villa sites and within urban areas
- Relatively rare on rural sites
- This suggests chickens were part of a more “Romanised” or cosmopolitan diet.
- Differential access to chickens in the Late Roman countryside - the average Roman chicken probably did not venture further into the landscape than the villa barnyard.



Fish

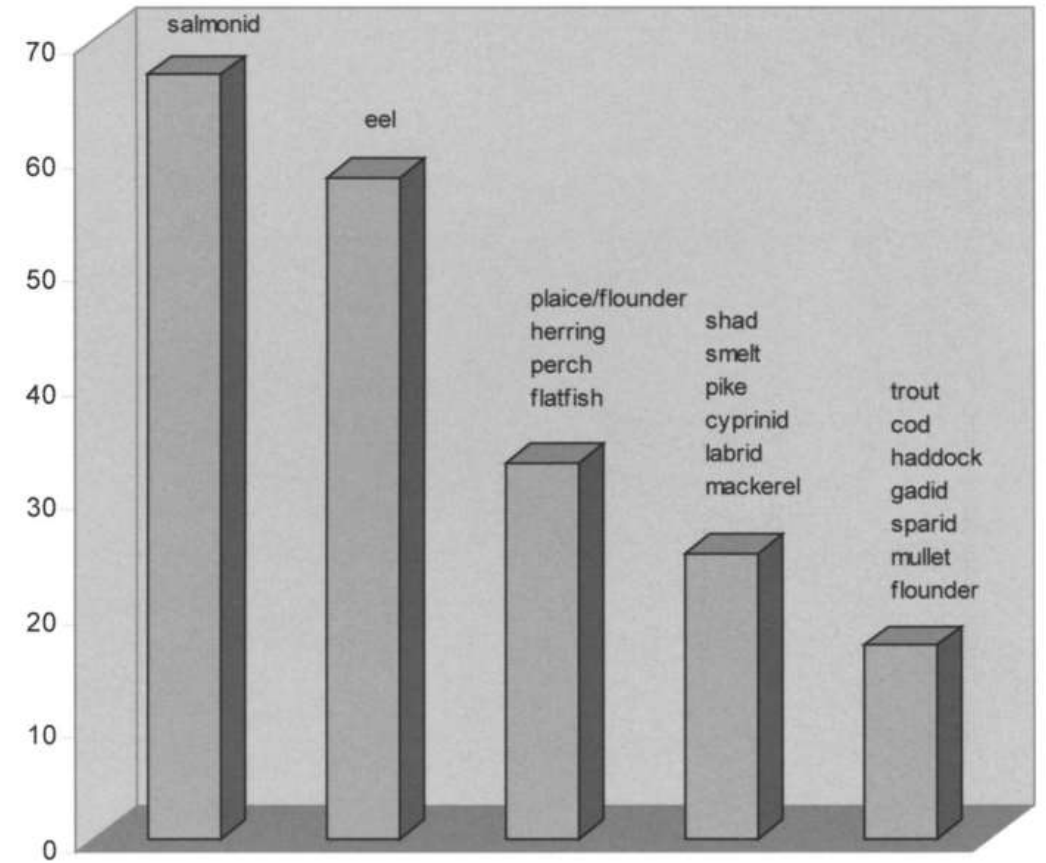
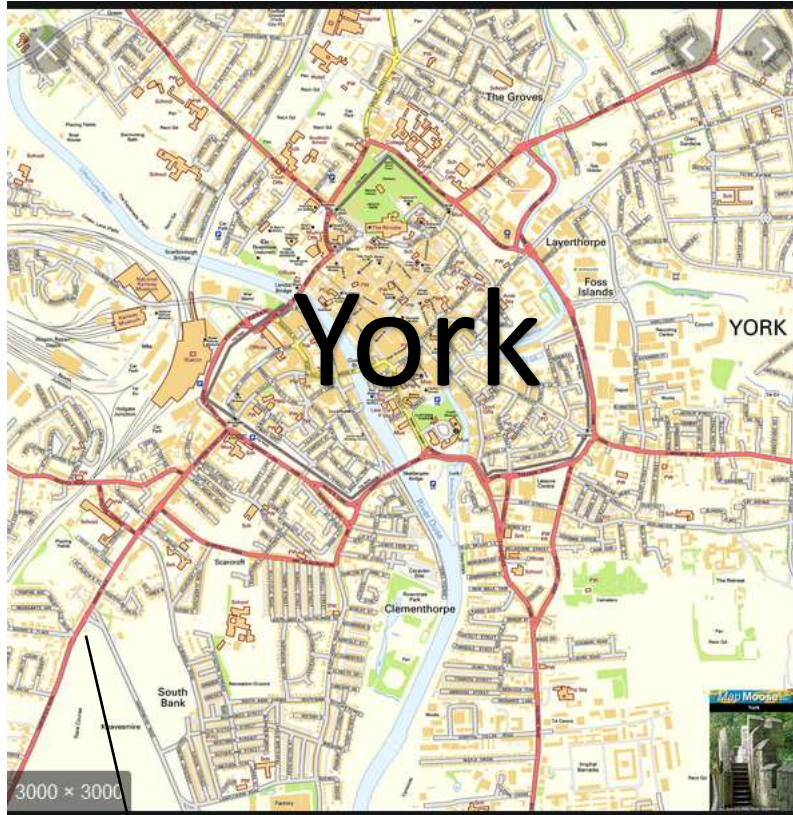


FIG. 3. Percentage of fish species from the North.

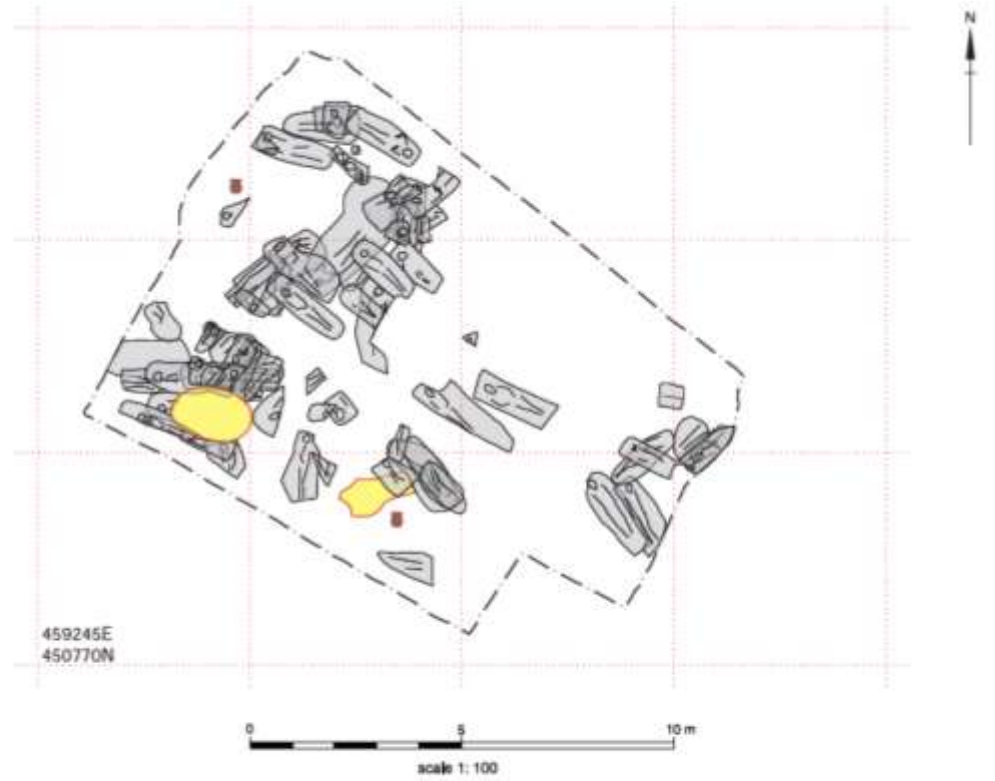
The Ritual Economy





Newington hotel

- Key**
- Grave
 - Charnel pit
 - Cremation (pottery vessel)



Newington Hotel Cemetery Site

Fig. 5 Burial locations and skeleton positions.

Burial: Newington Hotel, York

- 76 inhumations & 2 cremations
- 2nd – 4th century
- Extramural cemetery in York



- Chicken remains associated with 8 of the inhumations
- And also with both of the cremations, along with medium mammal ribs.
- Associated with both sexes, but possible that male chickens are buried with males, and female chickens with females.
- 2 were in pots.



24-36 Tanner Row: late 2nd century sheep, age at death

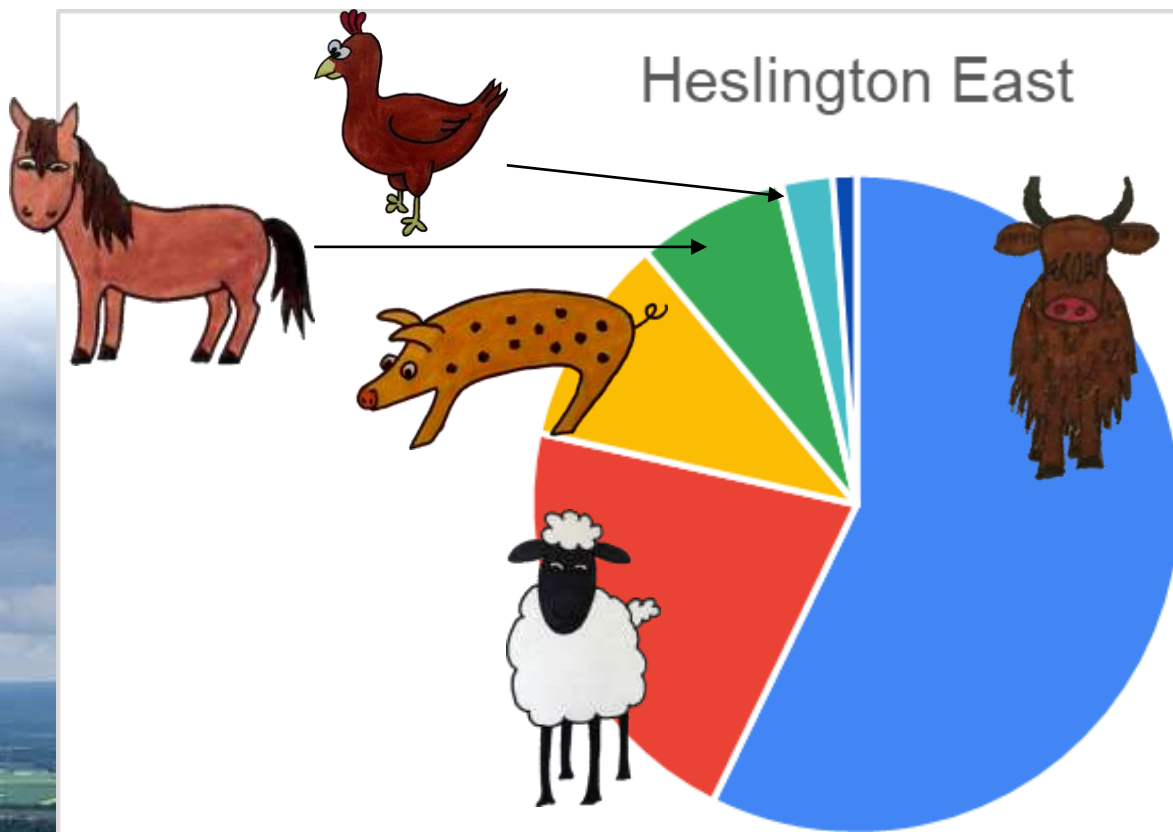
	N specimens	Approx calendar age
Neonatal	0	Birth – 1 week
Juvenile	19	2 weeks – 3 months
Immature	5	3 – 12 months
Subadult	11	12 – 24 months
Adult	24	2-5 years
Elderly	1	5 years +



In detail, mostly 2-3 months old at death. Assuming Spring lambing, these lambs died around mid-summer



Heslington East



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Pastoral Economies

- There isn't one "Roman" pastoral economy.
- Instead, what you ate, what you raised, what you had access to depends – even in East Yorkshire – on where you were living and on how extensive your connections were.
- Things changed subtly in rural areas, but mostly built on the economy that was there before.
- Forts were supplied by lots of cows... but we still don't know exactly how this worked.
- Introduced tastes, like chicken and fish, were more common in more cosmopolitan areas, and chickens were often used in ritual.