



**Bournemouth University**

# The Bones of the Matter

Inspiring Learning & Achievement in Zooarchaeology

Dr Ellen Hambleton, School of Conservation Sciences

## A Zooarchaeology Community

The subject interest and practical skills shared by students, academics and professionals in the zooarchaeology community provide a common language that allows these different groups to communicate and learn from each other.

## Creating the right atmosphere

In order to motivate and inspire students to learn it is essential to share the enthusiasm and fascination that academics, professional practitioners, and other students have for their subject area. Good communication, approachability and openness to student questions engages students and stimulates interest and motivates independent learning even when the subject matter is challenging.

## The Importance of Hands-on Learning

Providing opportunities to develop practical skills is core to the zooarchaeology learning experience at BU. Experience of working with animal bones is essential for all professional zooarchaeologists. The high proportion of practical work in our programmes stimulates learning and understanding and enhances the student experience. Hands-on activities help develop critical thinking as well as good communication and technical skills.

*'The assignments were relevant to the real world, especially animal bone reports'* Amanda Grieve, PhD researcher, Southampton University.

*'The MSc course was inspirational - leading to my PhD and subsequently to a post-doc.'* Dr Krish Seetah, Leverhulme Research Associate, Cambridge University

## Linking Teaching and Research

Integrating student learning with research and professional practice is core to zooarchaeology activities at BU. Resources, curricula, and assessment strategies reflect lecturers' own engagement with the professional and academic research field in zooarchaeology and archaeology. Students have the opportunity to become involved in staff research projects and link theses to their own dissertation research, making genuine novel contributions to knowledge. Students are also inspired to develop their own zooarchaeological research careers building on these early experiences.



## Inspiration and Aspiration

One approach to motivating and inspiring students to learn and progress is to expose them to other students and professionals who are at the next stage of their academic and/or professional careers. This is achieved during practical zooarchaeology activities in which students and tutors of all levels take part. This creates a rapport, and students feel comfortable discussing research interests and career aspirations. Students at lower levels are inspired to progress, while students at higher levels gain confidence in their abilities and clarify their own understanding through sharing their knowledge with others.

BU MSc students running a zooarchaeology activity for secondary school pupils ▶



◀ Visiting Lecturers engage in animated discussion with colleagues and students at a practical butchery workshop.

*'I really enjoyed the relaxed and friendly teaching environment which I felt facilitated learning and open discussion'* Anna Russell, PhD researcher, Leiden University.

*'The lecturers' knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject is boundless'* Dr James Morris, Osteoarchaeologist, Museum of London Archaeological Services.

*'the practical elements brought all the theory together and made it real'* Michelle Wright, Archaeologist, Suffolk County Council.



▲ BU MSc students record animal bone assemblages for an assignment modelled on real world professional activities



▲ Novgorod, Russia: a BU lecturer, graduate, & students collect data for the project and for their own PhD, MSc & BSc research. (INTAS funded zooarchaeology project led by Mark Maltby).