

Professional Zooarchaeology Group (PZG) Minutes

Inaugural Meeting, Fort Cumberland, Portsmouth, 30th July 2005

The first PZG meeting (held on the 30th July at Fort Cumberland) was a great success – there is obviously a lot of enthusiasm and willingness to collaborate, share information and provide support. This will be the main benefit of the group.

After discussing the state of British zooarchaeology, it became very clear that many of us working in the commercial world are stuck in a vicious cycle: we have a wish to produce research reports of high standard but are given no time or support to achieve this; the result being the production of basic analysis, which confirms wider opinion that zooarchaeology is of little importance – the net effect being that funding and support are withdrawn further. All of us have a role to play in breaking this cycle and ensuring that the standard and profile of zooarchaeological research is raised across the board. At the meeting we agreed that:

- 1) Freelance and unit-based specialists will try and assert their rights to site visits and research time, thus allowing their work to be placed in a regional, national and theoretical context
- 2) University-based members will provide support in terms of resources: reference collections, libraries, scientific analysis, funding applications.
- 3) English Heritage will continue to be proactive in highlighting the importance and benefits of zooarchaeological research to organisations involved in excavation and analysis – they are currently running a series of national training days for archaeological curators, project managers and consultants.

It is recognised that it will take time for some of these changes to be made. In the meantime, to make our lives easier, we will implement the following initiatives:

- a) Make our grey literature available. Dr Alan Hall who manages the Environmental Archaeology Bibliography (EAB, see ADS website) has agreed to make information about grey literature available through this database. Procedures for submission of grey literature details and reports will be provided soon.
- b) Provision of an informal peer-review service. Members, particularly those working in isolation, will have the option of sending their reports to other members of the group for informal comment.
- c) Work together to develop our reference collections.

It is hoped that the very existence of the group will, throughout the year, help the state of British Zooarchaeology. At six-monthly meetings the group will come together for one-day workshops on aspects of practical or theoretical archaeology.

The next meeting will be held at the University of Leicester on the 21st January 2006, the theme is Palaeopathology and will be organised by Jen Browning, Matty Holmes and Dr Richard Thomas. More details will be sent to members nearer the time.

Minutes contributed by Naomi Sykes

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