"Thinking through animals"

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Whether we consider deepest prehistory, or the modern world, human and animals have been intertwined both with each other, and the environments around them. This presentation takes a broad view of this enduring relationship and discusses some of the ways in which animals can inform us about ourselves, and our relationship with other humans and non-human animals. Using case studies from a range of contexts, I discuss the varying roles animals have played in our lives: as food, companions and mirrors of ourselves.

My research has used butchery analysis (with the benefit of professional and ethnographic actualistic experience) to investigate agency within the human-animal relationship. More recently, I have employed geometric morphometrics (GMM) as a mechanism for identifying and distinguishing animal populations. This has centred on the movement of Bronze Age horse populations in Eurasia, addressing how technologies, ideas and ultimately people are trans-located. A similar approach is also being applied in a wholly different setting to investigate how humans interacted with cave bears within a variety of spatio-temporal environments.

Using these methods and approaches, I also investigate issues of technology, trade and socio-economic attitudes within a number of colonial contexts in Europe. This has depended on data from faunal samples and my own experimental research. The key aim is to improve our understanding of the varying processes of colonialism and how this can be addressed through bio-archaeology and material culture. I have researched these questions within Romano-British and medieval contexts in Britain and Italy.

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Conference Room, Building 50, Room 51A

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