

THE DUTCH EXPERIENCE

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Since the fishery fleet was modernized in the fifties of the last century, the amount of fossil material collected from the bottom of the North Sea increased considerably and thousands of fossil terrestrial mammalian remains as well as hundreds of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic artefacts have been collected. The southern part of the North Sea, in particular, is rich in mammal fossils. Analyses indicated the occurrence of at least four faunal assemblages that differ in composition and age. The oldest assemblage dates from the Early Pleistocene. A second assemblage dates from the late Early Pleistocene or early Middle Pleistocene. Most numerous are the finds with a Late Pleistocene age and the most recent faunal assemblage dates from the early Holocene. Archaeological sites e.g. in England, located at the western edge of the North Sea basin indicate that the North Sea faunal associations except for the oldest one, date from a period that hominids were present in the region. However, the context of the zoological record and the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic artefacts collected by trawling and fishing, is unknown. Still these finds should be regarded as an important part of our Archaeological Heritage and we should invest in methods to increase our knowledge about the context.