

Reports from the Environmental Archaeology Unit, York 2000/43, 5 pp.

**Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at
Bishop Wilton, North Yorkshire (site code: KINCM 2000.108)**

by

Deborah Jaques, John Carrott, Allan Hall and Stephen Rowland

Summary

Seven sediment samples and a small assemblage of hand-collected bone from deposits revealed by excavations at Bishop Wilton, North Yorkshire, were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

The few recovered biological remains were of no interpretative value.

No further work is recommended on the current material.

The bone assemblage and any remaining sediment samples may be discarded.

KEYWORDS: BISHOP WILTON; NORTH YORKSHIRE; EVALUATION; ?MEDIEVAL; CHARRED PLANT REMAINS; VERTEBRATE REMAINS

Authors' address:

Palaeoecology Research Services
Environmental Archaeology Unit
Department of Biology
P. O. Box 373
University of York
York YO10 5YW

Telephone: (01904) 433846/434475/434487
Fax: (01904) 433856

Prepared for:

MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd.
39 Greengate
Malton
North Yorkshire
YO17 0EL

27 July 2000

Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at Bishop Wilton, North Yorkshire (site code: KINCM 2000.108)

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation excavation was carried out by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. at Bishop Wilton, North Yorkshire (NGR: SE 7973 5494), between 2 May 2000 and 18 May 2000.

Seven sediment samples ('GBA'/'BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) from two trenches (seven contexts) and a small assemblage of hand-collected bone, were recovered from the deposits. Two of the deposits (Contexts 1009 and 1012) were of possible medieval date, but no further dating information was available.

All of the samples were submitted to the EAU for evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

Methods

All of the sediment samples were inspected in the laboratory. Three of the samples (those from cut feature fills other than furrows) were selected for investigation; their lithologies were recorded using a standard *pro forma* prior to processing for recovery of plant and invertebrate macrofossils following the procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986).

Plant macrofossils were examined from the residues and washovers resulting from processing, and the washovers were examined for invertebrate remains. The residues were also examined for other biological and artefactual remains.

Table 1 shows a list of the submitted samples and notes on their treatment.

Results

Sediment samples

The results are presented in context number order. Archaeological information, provided by the excavator, is presented in square brackets.

Context 1009 [?Medieval pit fill]

Sample 7/T (3 kg sieved to 300 microns, with washover)

Moist, mid to dark grey-brown to light orange-brown (in places), unconsolidated and sticky (working soft), slightly sandy clay silt. Small stones (2 to 20mm, mostly chalk and flint) were present in the sample.

The moderate-sized residue of about 250 cm³ comprised chalk gravel with angular flint with some sand; the small washover contained modern roots with a trace of fine charcoal, a few charred bread/club wheat (*Triticum aestivo-compactum*) grains, one (+?) charred field bean (*Vicia faba*) seed, two charred oat (*Avena*) grains, four amphibian bones, and a few unidentified fragments of snail shell. No invertebrate remains were seen.

Context 1010 [Gully fill]

Sample 6/T (3 kg sieved to 300 microns, with washover)

Just moist, light brown to mid grey-brown, crumbly and slightly sticky (working just plastic), slightly sandy silty clay with modern rootlets and small stones (2 to 20 mm) present (again, mostly chalk and flint).

The small residue of about 100 cm³ was of angular chalk and flint with some sand; a very small flot of modern rootlets also contained traces of fine charcoal, some charred cereal grain fragments and a few small wheat grains (perhaps tail-grain, not retained during sieving of a threshed and winnowed crop). No invertebrate remains were seen.

Context 1012 [?Medieval ditch fill]

Sample 5/T (3 kg sieved to 300 microns, with washover)

Just moist, mid orange-brown to mid to dark grey-brown, stiff to crumbly (working soft and slightly

plastic), slightly sandy clay silt. Small stones (2 to 20 mm, mostly flint), modern rootlets, and charcoal were present in the sample.

There was a moderate-sized residue of about 250 cm³ of angular flint with some sand; the very small washover was of modern rootlets with a trace of charcoal. No invertebrate remains were seen.

Hand collected bone

A very small assemblage of vertebrate remains was recovered from two trenches excavated at Bishop Wilton. This amounted to a total of fifty-three fragments (including the four amphibian bones recovered from Context 1009, Sample 7), of which twenty-seven were identifiable to species (Table 2).

Bone was, on the whole, rather poorly preserved, battered in appearance, and some fragments, particularly from Context 1003, had rounded edges. Dog gnawing and fresh breakage also contributed to the fragmentary nature of the assemblage. Over half of the identified fragments were teeth; these were better preserved and much less fragile, as dental enamel survives better than other calcified tissue.

Remains of the usual domesticates (cattle and caprovids) were identified, along with a single radius shaft fragment, tentatively identified as cat. In total, two measurable fragments, and eleven teeth of use for providing age-at-death data, were noted.

Discussion and statement of potential

No further work is worthwhile on the samples examined and none is likely to be very productive if there are further excavations at the site unless deposits with rich concentrations of charred plant material are encountered.

The bone assemblage is both poorly dated and poorly preserved and shows that there is little potential for survival of bone in these deposits. Additionally, the battered and eroded condition of the recovered fragments suggests that much of the material may have been reworked.

Recommendations

No further work on the current material is recommended.

If further excavation reveals deposits rich in charred plant or other biological remains then every effort should be made to sample and investigate them.

Retention and disposal

All of the current material may be discarded.

Archive

All material is currently stored in the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York, along with paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Anne Finney and Kelly Hunter of MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. for providing the material and the archaeological information, and to English Heritage for allowing AH to contribute to this report.

References

Dobney, K., Hall, A. R., Kenward, H. K. and Milles, A. (1992). A working classification of sample types for environmental archaeology. *Circaea, the Journal of the Association for Environmental Archaeology* **9** (for 1991), 24-6.

Kenward, H. K., Hall, A. R. and Jones, A. K. G. (1980). A tested set of techniques for the extraction of plant and animal macrofossils from waterlogged archaeological deposits. *Science and Archaeology* **22**, 3-15.

Kenward, H. K., Engleman, C., Robertson, A., & Large, F. (1986). Rapid scanning of urban archaeological deposits for insect remains. *Circaea* **3**, 163–172.

Table 1. List of sediment samples from excavations at Bishop Wilton, with notes on their treatment.

Context	Sample	Notes
1003	3	Sample examined – no further action
1007	4	Sample examined – no further action
1009	7	3 kg sieved to 300 microns, with washover
1010	6	3 kg sieved to 300 microns, with washover
1012	5	3 kg sieved to 300 microns, with washover
2001	1	Sample examined – no further action
2003	2	Sample examined – no further action

Table 2. Vertebrate remains recovered from excavations at Bishop Wilton.

Species		total number	measurable	isolated teeth
Amphibian		4	-	-
cf. <i>Felis</i> f. domestic	?cat	1	-	-
Bos f. domestic	cow	7	-	4
Caprovid	sheep/goat	15	2	7
<i>Sub-total</i>		<i>27</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>11</i>
Large mammal		13	-	-
Medium mammal		11	-	-
Unidentified		2	-	-
<i>Sub-total</i>		<i>26</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>
Total		53	2	11