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**Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at Castle Street, Hull
(associated with upgrading works on the A63
site codes: 1994.481 and 1994.483)**

by

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Summary

Two samples of sediment were submitted for an evaluation of their potential for bioarchaeological analysis. Both of the samples gave small quantities of plant and invertebrate remains of limited interpretative value.

No further work on the material described here is recommended.

Keywords: Hull; Castle Street; A63; biological analyses; plant remains; invertebrate remains

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Introduction

Excavations in the Old Town area of Hull (and of part of the town defences that may be impinged upon by upgrading work on the A63) were undertaken by York Archaeological Trust in late 1994. Samples of sediment from these deposits have been examined to evaluate their bioarchaeological potential.

Methods

Two samples of sediment ('GBAs' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) were submitted. The samples were inspected in the laboratory and their lithology recorded using a standard *pro forma*. Subsamples of 1 kg were taken from each of the samples for extraction of macrofossil remains, following procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986). Plant macrofossils were examined from the washover, the 'flot' and from the residues resulting from processing. The flot and washover were examined for invertebrate remains. A 1 kg voucher of unprocessed sediment from each sample was retained and the remainder sieved to 500 :m, primarily to recover small bones and artefacts, the latter to be returned to the excavator. Neither of the samples was thought to be suitable for examination for the eggs of parasitic nematodes.

Results

The results of the investigations for each sample give context information provided by the excavator in brackets.

Site code: 1994.481 - Trench 1

Context 1002 [Earliest deposit from Trench 1.
Reason for sampling: ?in situ natural or re-deposited]
Sample 002

Moist, light pinkish brown, stiff and internally layered (working soft and sticky), very slightly sandy, slightly clay silt with orange streaks and patches of mid grey sediment. Modern rootlets and root channels (some lined with grey and some with orange sediments) were present in the sample.

The small washover was mostly plant detritus with some charcoal, undisaggregated sediment and invertebrate fragments. The latter were all outdoor forms associated with natural or semi-natural habitats. Unusually, there was no residue from sieving to 300 :m.

The tiny residue from sieving of excess material (8 grammes from 9 kg of sediment) was sand and a few plant remains of no interpretative value.

The biological remains did not give a clear answer to the question posed in the field, but the rather variable lithologies and presence of some charcoal perhaps hint at some disturbance.

Site code: 1994.483 - Trench 2

Context 2009 [Earliest deposit from Trench 2.
Reason for sampling: ?dumping or ditch fill]
Sample 001

Very jumbled, moist, light to mid grey-brown, with patches of mid grey, soft and sticky (working slightly plastic), clay silt. Very small to medium-sized stones (2 to 60 mm), flecks of ?mortar/dry clay and fragments of coal were present.

The small flot was mostly plant detritus with some sand, charcoal, coal, invertebrate remains and a few seeds. The invertebrates were mostly fragments of beetles with a few mites and fly puparia. The beetles were outdoor forms with some aquatic species, providing no evidence of dumping during occupation or of any other strong human influence.

The small residue consisted mostly of small stones (to 12 mm) with some sand, brick/tile, slag/cinder, coal, bone fragments (some burnt) and plant detritus and two very small fragments of eggshell (to 3 mm).

The small residue from sieving of excess material (from 12 kg) was sand, brick/tile, cinder,

mortar/plaster and coal with stones (to 55 mm), pottery, slag, glass, metal, plant remains, small fragments of shell and bone (including fish bone) and beetles. The latter were, again, mostly outdoor forms associated with natural habitats—including ground beetles and weevils. The plant remains comprised a few *Atriplex* sp. seeds, hazelnut (*Corylus*) fragments (one with a ?bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum* (L.)) frond embedded within it) and scraps of wood, a single burdock (*Arctium* sp.) fruit and half of a hemp (*Cannabis sativa* L.) achene.

The range of occupation debris present indicates that the fills were probably deliberately introduced. Rather than representing waste disposal, however, these may have been surface deposits used to backfill the ditch.

Discussion

Context 1002 is almost certainly an *in situ* natural deposit.

The invertebrate assemblage from Context 2009, though too small for definitive interpretation, subjectively suggests a natural outdoor community typical of that expected from a damp ditch or nearby surfaces. The material indicative of human activity was probably redeposited by backfilling of the ditch. The plant remains recovered were unfortunately insufficient to provide supporting evidence, but are not inconsistent with this hypothesis.

Statement of potential

These deposits offer only limited potential for bioarchaeological analysis.

Recommendations

No further work is recommended on the material in hand.

Retention and disposal

The samples recovered during this exercise are not thought worthy of retention.

Archive

All extracted fossils from the test subsamples, and the residues, flot and washover, are currently stored in the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York, along with paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here.

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