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**Assessment of invertebrate remains from excavations at Fisher's Road,
Port Seton, East Lothian (site code: 1134)**

by

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Summary

Six samples of sediment were submitted for an assessment of their invertebrate remains. Very few, poorly preserved remains were recovered, offering only limited potential for interpretation.

No further work on the material described here is recommended.

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Assessment of invertebrate remains from excavations at Fisher's Road, Port Seton, East Lothian (site code: 1134)

Introduction

Excavation of a prehistoric site on the raised beach platform at Fisher's Road, Port Seton was undertaken by AOC (Scotland) Ltd during early 1995. Six samples of sediment ('GBAs' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) were submitted for an assessment of their invertebrate remains.

The aims of this assessment were (a) to identify any anthropogenic and/or environmental indicators and (b) to determine rates of infilling of the wet ditches.

Methods

The samples were inspected in the laboratory and four were selected for processing. 1 kg subsamples were taken for extraction of macrofossil remains, following procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986).

Results

The results of the investigations are presented in sample number order, with context information from the excavator in square brackets. Overall, preservation was rather poor, both chemically and with regard to fragmentation. All of the flots contained many cysts of a soil-dwelling nematode, probably *Heterodera* sp.

Sample 26/T Context 1011 [inner ditch fill]

The very small flot contained a little charcoal (to 5 mm), some sand and traces of plant detritus. The only invertebrate remains were several *Daphnia* sp. ephippia (water flea resting eggs) and a dung beetle, *Aphodius* species. Nothing conclusive can be made of this except that aquatic conditions prevailed at some stage

Sample 33/T Context 1077 [clay in base of later ditch]

In addition to the *Heterodera* cysts there were only some fine charcoal (to 5 mm), a little sand and a single earthworm capsule in the very small flot.

Sample 36/T Context 1070 [ditch fill, lowest fill]

A small flot was recovered, yielding mostly plant detritus and a little sand. Fragments from only four insects were recovered including a ?weevil and a tibia of a chafer (?*Serica* sp.). A very large subsample (tens of kilos) might give an interpretatively useful group, but this is by no means certain.

Sample 70/T Context 1199 [early fill of later ditch]

The small flot consisted largely of plant detritus, with a few seeds and some sand. Several *Daphnia* sp. ephippia, two mites, a few Diptera puparia/larval skins, and a very small assemblage of beetles, were recovered. A 5 kg subsample *might* give a worthwhile group, but this could not be guaranteed.

Discussion

None of the samples yielded sufficient remains for any conclusive interpretations to be made. Water was certainly present at some stage during the formation of two of these deposits (Contexts 1011 and 1199) but unfortunately it would be impossible to determine (even tentatively) rates of infilling from the scant remains recovered. The presence of *Heterodera* sp. cysts in all of the flots suggests that these deposits were 'living' soils at times, rather than being permanently submerged.

Statement of potential

These deposits offer limited potential for bioarchaeological analysis; only sample 70 (context 1199) showed any promise of a worthwhile assemblage.

Recommendations

No further work is recommended on the material in hand, or on the samples remaining at AOC, unless (a) there are extremely pressing archaeological questions *and* (b) very large subsamples are available.

Retention and disposal

The samples recovered during this exercise are not considered worthy of retention for their content of macroinvertebrates.

Archive

All extracted fossils and flots 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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