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**Assessment of remains from bulk-sieved samples from excavations at
Kingsgate, Berkhamsted (site code: HAT183)**

by

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Summary

Nineteen 'priority' samples of sediment from deposits revealed by excavations at Kingsgate, Berkhamsted, were submitted for bulk-sieve processing and a rapid assessment of any recovered remains.

Few remains were recovered from any of the residues and in all cases preservation was very poor. None of the samples merit further investigation.

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Assessment of remains from bulk-sieved samples from excavations at Kingsgate, Berkhamsted (site code: HAT183)

Introduction

The Kingsgate site, situated directly behind the medieval High Street in Berkhamsted, is currently being excavated by Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust. Forty samples of sediment ('BS' samples *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992), all from layers rich in medieval pottery, were submitted for a rapid assessment of their content of biological and other remains. Nineteen of these samples were prioritised by Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust for processing.

The aim of this assessment was to determine the potential of the BS samples for yielding bone, carbonised plant remains, and small finds.

Methods

All of the prioritised samples were inspected in the laboratory and described using a standard *pro forma* before being processed through the automatic bulk-sieving apparatus. In order to maximise recovery of any remains, 500 :m aperture mesh was used for most of the samples. However, for the last four samples, 1 mm aperture mesh was employed as no fine remains had been recovered from any of the previous samples. The 'washover' receiving sieve was of 500 :m aperture mesh throughout.

The residues were dried and rapidly examined for their content of bone, plant remains, charcoal, and small finds.

Results

The results of the investigations are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

All of the residues contained *very* small quantities of poorly preserved remains and/or small finds; these were mostly fragments of pottery, bone and charcoal.

Discussion and statement of potential

Ancient plant remains comprised only charcoal fragments; further examination may yield a little information if there are relevant archaeological questions to be addressed.

The very few, and poorly preserved, vertebrate remains are of no interpretative value. The value of the artefacts recovered will need to be judged by comparison with the hand-collected assemblage.

Recommendations

No further work is recommended on the BS samples collected at this point in the excavation. However, if deposits with organic preservation by anoxic waterlogging, higher concentrations of charred plant material, or larger quantities of bone, are exposed by further excavation, then every effort should be made to sample and investigate them.

Retention and disposal

The residues, and unprocessed sediment from all remaining contexts, should at least be retained until the project has been completed; there are no bioarchaeological reasons for retention thereafter.

Archive

All remaining raw sediment, residues, and extracted remains 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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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.

Table 1. Sediment descriptions of BS samples from Kingsgate, Berkhamsted (in context number then sample number order).

Sample number	Sediment description
Context 100	
6	Just moist, mid grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic), moderately stony, sandy clay. Flint was common in the size range 2-6 mm and present in the size range 6-60 mm. There were orange-ish patches inside lumps of the sediment. Some charcoal and modern roots/ rootlets were also present.
16	Moist, mid to dark grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic to crumbly), moderately stony, sandy clay. Flint was common at 2-6 mm and present at 6-60 mm. Brick/tile and rootlets were also present.
18	Moist, mid to dark grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic to crumbly), moderately stony, sandy clay. Flint was common at 2-20 mm and present at 20-60 mm. Brick/tile, a mammal tooth and rootlets were also present.
58	Moist, mid grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic), moderately stony, slightly sandy clay. Flint was common in the size range 2-20 mm and present in the size range 20-60 mm. Rootlets were also present.
60	Moist, mid grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic), moderately stony, slightly sandy clay. Flint was common in the size range 2-6 mm and present in the size range 6-60 mm. Charcoal and rootlets were also present.
67	Moist, mid grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic) moderately stony, slightly sandy clay. Flint was common in the size range 2-6 mm and present in the size range 6-60 mm. Brick/tile, pottery, charcoal, mammal bone, and roots were also present.
Context 101	
2	Moist, mid grey/brown, crumbly (working slightly plastic) very stony, sandy clay. Flint was common in the size range 2-20 mm and present in the size range 20-60 mm. Charcoal and roots/rootlets were also present.
8	Moist, mid grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic) stony, slightly sandy clay. Flint was common in the size range 2-60 mm and present in the size range >60 mm. Roots were also present.
20	Moist, mid grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic) moderately stony, slightly sandy clay. Flint was common in the size range 20-60 mm and present in the size range 2-20 mm and >60 mm.

Sample number	Sediment description
29	Moist, mid grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic) moderately stony, slightly sandy clay. Flint was common in the size range 2-20 mm and present in the size range 20-60 mm. Charcoal and roots were also present.
40	Moist, mid brown/grey, crumbly and sticky (working plastic), very stony, slightly sandy, slightly silty, clay with flint present in the size range 2-20 mm and >60 mm, and common in the size range 20-60 mm. Brick/tile, charcoal, and roots/rootlets were also present.
51	Moist, mid to dark grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic), moderately stony, slightly sandy clay with flint present in the size range 6- >60 mm, and common in the size range 2-6 mm. Charcoal and ?slag were also present.
61	Moist, mid to dark grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic), moderately stony, slightly sandy clay with flint present in the size range 20-60 mm, and common in the size range 2-20 mm. Charcoal and bone were also present.
62	Moist, mid grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic), very stony, sandy clay with flint common in all size ranges. Brick/tile, charcoal, and roots were also present.
69	Just moist, mid grey/brown, crumbly, moderately stony, slightly sandy clay, with charcoal and rootlets present.
Context 128	
22	Moist, mid to dark grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic), moderately stony, slightly silty, sandy clay. Flint was present in the size range 2->60 mm. Brick/tile and rootlets were also present.
Context 130	
31	Moist, dark brown, crumbly (working crumbly, soft, and slightly sticky when wet), slightly humic, slightly clay silt with some roots/rootlets present.
Context 138	
63	Moist, mid to dark grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic), moderately stony, sandy clay with flint present in the size range 6 - >60 mm, and common in the size range 2-6 mm. Mammal bone and rootlets were also present.
Context 140	
71	Moist, mid grey/brown, crumbly (working plastic), moderately stony, slightly sandy, slightly silty clay with flint present in the size range 2-60 mm. Charcoal and rootlets were also present.

Table 2. Results of assessment of BS samples from Kingsgate, Berkhamsted (in context number then sample number order).

Sample number	Weight (kg)	Mesh size	Summary of remains/finds in residue
Context 100			
6	16	500:m	Fragments of mammal bones (sheep/goat and cow), pottery, charcoal, roots, wood, lead and glass were present. Seeds and molluscs were present in the washover.
16	12	1mm	Coal, cinder, slag, brick/tile, worked metal and roots were present, and also a few fragments of bone and pottery.
18	9	500:m	Very few fragments of bone, pottery and brick/tile.
58	12	500:m	Fragments of slag, bone, a pig tooth, pottery and charcoal.
60	13	500:m	Small amounts of pottery and charcoal, a ?faecal concretion and some brick/tile fragments. Some seeds were present in the washover.
67	12	500:m	Fragments of bone, a cow tooth, pottery, brick/tile and charcoal. A few molluscs (including fragments of marine mollusc) were present in the washover.
Context 101			
2	16	500:m	Fragments of bone (sheep incisor and molar and sheep/goat mandible), pottery and charcoal.
8	12	500:m	Fragments of bone, pottery and charcoal (to 1 cm) plus roots/rootlets.
20	14	1mm	Fragments of bone (including a sheep tooth) and pottery.
29	11.5	1mm	Very small quantity of bone and pottery. Frequent charcoal fragments (to 1 cm).

40	12	500:m	Some fragments of bone (including a piece of horn core with unusual preservation), a cow pre-molar, pottery and brick/tile.
51	11.5	500:m	Fragments of badly preserved bone and pottery, some charcoal (to 1 cm) and some slag.
61	12.5	1mm	Small amounts of bone (including a pig phalange), a cow tooth fragment, pottery and metal and some fragments of charcoal.
62	15	500:m	A few fragments of pottery and bone, a sheep tooth, some charcoal (<1 cm), roots/rootlets and a ?faecal concretion.
69	15	500:m	Mammal (sheep/goat) and fish bone, slag and small fragments of charcoal were present.
Context 128			
22	14.5	500:m	Fragments of bone, slag and brick/tile.
Context 130			
31	9.5	500:m	Fragments of bone, a small mammal bone (humerus of a juvenile carnivore) and some charcoal (to 1 cm) were present.
Context 138			
63	13	500:m	Fragments of bone (including sheep/goat astragalus and phalange) and horn core, some charcoal (to 2 cm) and a few pieces of pottery.
Context 140			
71	14.5	500:m	Some fragments of bone (sheep/goat phalange and ?goose phalange), pottery and charcoal were present.