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Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at The Former Convent School, Queen Street, Scarborough (site code: STS96)

by

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Summary

One sample of sediment from a medieval deposit revealed by excavations at The Former Convent School, Queen Street, Scarborough, was submitted for an evaluation of its bioarchaeological remains. Very little plant material, one charred cereal grain, and a single amphibian bone were recovered. Further work on this deposit is not recommended.

Keywords: FORMER CONVENT SCHOOL; QUEEN STREET; SCARBOROUGH; EVALUATION; MEDIEVAL; PLANT REMAINS; CHARRED GRAIN

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Introduction

Excavations were carried out by Scarborough Archaeological Society at The Former Convent School, Queen Street, Scarborough, during 1996. One General Biological Analysis sample ('GBA' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992), from Trench 8, was submitted for an evaluation of its biological remains. The sample was from a layer interpreted as a buried ground surface of mid 12th century date.

Methods

The sample was initially inspected in the laboratory and a 1 kg subsample was taken for extraction of macrofossil remains, following procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986). The remaining material was retained as a voucher.

The washover and residue resulting from processing were both examined for their content of plant and invertebrate macrofossils, and animal bone. Notes were made on the quantity of fossils and principal taxa. The sample was allocated a sample number by the EAU.

Results and discussion

Context 8006, Sample 800601/T

Moist, mid brown, stiff (working plastic), slightly sandy silty clay with orange patches locally, and millimetre scale particles of yellowish silt. Some mineralised patches were noted, and charcoal was present.

The very small washover was mostly fine charcoal and coal with a little, very decayed wood and herbaceous detritus, all of these less than 5 mm. The only identifiable plant remains were a very few whole or fragmentary elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* L.) seeds and one charred cereal grain which was tentatively identified as rye (*Secale cereale* L.).

The very small residue consisted of sand with a little gravel, and some concreted root moulds and casts, together with traces of coal (to 5 mm), two very eroded fragments of pottery (to 2 cm), and a single amphibian bone.

This sample did not yield sufficient biological remains for interpretation.

Recommendations

Further work on the bioarchaeological material from this particular context is not considered worthwhile and it is unlikely that very much more useful information would be obtained by processing larger subsamples. However, it should be noted that this may not necessarily be true for material (not examined here) from the other contexts revealed during these excavations.

If further excavations take place at this site then every effort should be made to investigate any revealed deposits, including an intensive regime of sampling, and commensurate funding for post-excavation analysis should be made available.

Retention and disposal

The sediment remaining from this sample need not be retained.

Archive

All extracted fossils, the washover, and residue 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

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