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**Assessment of vertebrate remains from excavations at various sites along
the Newbiggin to Aysgarth water pipeline, Upper Wensleydale, North
Yorkshire (site code: NEW96)**

by

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Summary

Two boxes of animal bone from excavations at various sites along the Newbiggin to Aysgarth water pipeline were submitted for assessment. The remains of cattle, caprovid and pig were all recovered as well as the incomplete skeleton of a dog which, judging by the different nature of preservation between its remains and all the rest, is most likely to be later and intrusive. The assemblage was too small to allow useful conclusions to be drawn. No further work on the vertebrate remains is recommended.

Keywords: NEWBIGGIN; AYSGARTH; UPPER WENSLEYDALE; NORTH YORKSHIRE; WATER PIPELINE; ASSESSMENT; VERTEBRATE REMAINS

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Assessment of vertebrate remains from excavations at various sites along the Newbiggin to Aysgarth water pipeline, Upper Wensleydale, North Yorkshire (site code: NEW96)

Introduction

Two boxes of animal bone (approximately 40 x 30 x 12 cm) from a series of sites were submitted to the EAU for assessment. The excavations were undertaken by Northern Archaeological Associates during 1996 in advance of a new water pipeline. Most of the material was recovered from Site 2, a settlement site dating mainly to the post-medieval period, although some deposits may have been medieval. An isolated pit at Site 5 produced a small number of fragments, whilst only two bones were recovered from Site 10.

Methods

All the hand-collected bone was examined; subjective records were made of preservation, angularity (i.e. the nature of the broken surfaces) and colour, whilst quantities, and identifications were noted where appropriate.

All fragments not identified to species or species group were recorded as 'unidentified'. These included skull, vertebra, rib and shaft fragments and other elements where species identification was unclear.

Results and discussion

Site 2

A small assemblage of animal bones was recovered from this site. Approximately

three-quarters were from unstratified deposits and although this material was scanned, no detailed records were made. Bones from the three recorded contexts (207, 209, 212) totalled 168 fragments, of which 124 (1161g) were identifiable.

Overall, the bone was of fair preservation, with much of the material being brown or fawn in colour. Context 209 contained part of a dog skeleton, the bones of which were noticeably better preserved. The dog bones were also ginger in colour as opposed to fawn, the colour of the rest of the assemblage. Other fragments from this skeleton were noted in the unstratified material. It seems extremely likely that the dog remains are of later date than, and therefore intrusive to, the deposit.

Few of the bones showed evidence of fresh breakage and dog gnawing, although the proportion of butchered fragments (particularly from Context 209) was quite high (20-50%).

The vertebrate remains consisted of cattle, pig and caprovid elements, with the incomplete dog skeleton forming the bulk of the assemblage (see Table 1). Most of the cattle elements present were from large individuals as would perhaps be expected from material of post-medieval date.

Site 5

Material from this area was recovered from the fill (Context 503) of a single isolated pit. A total of 102 (85g) fragments was recovered from this deposit, all identified as chicken and representing a

minimum of four individuals (see Appendix for details).

Preservation was very poor, all the bones being extremely fragile. Where the articular ends were missing, the remaining bone was paper thin and curled at the edges. The surface of the bone on some fragments had been completely destroyed. It is possible that these bones had suffered some degree of physical or chemical degradation (perhaps having been boiled) prior to being incorporated into the deposit, which accounts for the strange manner of preservation.

Site 10

Only two fragments were recovered from this site, both poorly preserved and with eroded surfaces. These were identified as fragments from animals of cow size.

Recommendations

The small size of the bone assemblages from these sites, their uncertain date, the mixed nature of the deposits from which most of the material was recovered, and the poor preservation noted on bones from certain contexts, indicate that no further work is warranted.

Retention and disposal

The bone should be retained if required for archive purposes but there are no other reasons for long term retention.

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.

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Table 1. Recorded animal bone from Site 2, Newbiggin to Aysgarth water pipeline.

Species	No. fragments	No. measurable	No. mandibles
Cattle	11	-	1
Caprovid	3	-	-
Pig	7	-	1
Dog	103*	10	-
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>2</i>
Unidentified	44	-	-
<i>Total</i>	<i>168</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>2</i>

*includes rib and vertebra fragments

Appendix

Bones from Site 2, Newbiggin to Aysgarth water pipeline

Context 207 - ploughsoil/hill wash

Preservation: fair

Cattle - 1 maxillary premolar
Caprovid - 1M3

Weight of identified fragments - 14 g

Context 209 - Demolition rubble

Preservation: fair/good
Colour: fawn/ ginger
Angularity: spiky

The dog fragments were well preserved and ginger in colour

Cattle - 1 mandible (DP2, DP3), 1 maxillary molar, 1 scapula, 1 radius, 2 ulna fragments, 1 tibia and 1 astragalus
Caprovid - 1 ulna
Dog - 103 fragments, including 2 scapulae, 2 humeri, 2 radii, 2 ulnae, 3 metacarpals, 2 pelves, 2 femora, 1 tibia, 1 calcaneum, rib and vertebra fragments.
Unidentified - 28 fragments, mainly shaft and rib fragments from large mammals (i.e. cattle or horse)

Weight of identified fragments - 996 g

Weight of unidentified fragments - 863 g

Context 212 - Primary fill of pit 213

Preservation: fair
Colour: fawn
Angularity: spiky

Cattle - 1 maxillary molar and 1 carpal
Caprovid - 1 tibia
Pig - 2 maxilla fragments, 1 canine (female) and 1 atlas
Unidentified - 16 fragments, mostly shaft and vertebra fragments from animals of cow size.

Weight of identified fragments - 90 g

Weight of unidentified fragments - 164 g

Bones from Site 5, Newbiggin to Aysgarth water pipeline

Context 503 - fill of pit 502

Preservation: very poor
Colour: fawn
Angularity: battered

Chicken - 102 fragments, including 1 skull, 6 coracoids, 6 scapulae, 6 humeri, 5 radii, 1 ulna, 7 femora, 6 tibiotarsi, 4 tarsometatarsi and pelvis, shaft, rib and vertebra frags

Weight of identified fragments - 85 g

Bones from Site 10, Newbiggin to Aysgarth water pipeline

Context 1001 - Depression in natural, cut of hollow-way

Preservation: very poor
Colour: brow
Angularity: battered

Unidentified - 2 shaft fragments from large mammals

Weight of unidentified fragments - 45 g