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**Evaluation of the biological remains from 61 Micklegate,
York (site code 1997.6)**

by

John Carrott, Allan Hall, Deborah Jaques and Cluny Johnstone

Summary

A single sediment sample and a small quantity of shell and animal bone were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

A small assemblage of animal bones, representing the Roman period, was recovered. Although, in itself, it was of little interpretative value, the good preservation and the moderate numbers of measurable bones suggest that further excavation might produce a significant Roman assemblage.

The sediment sample and hand-collected shell were considered to have little potential.

Keywords: 61 MICKLEGATE; YORK; EVALUATION; VERTEBRATE REMAINS; MOLLUSCS; SEDIMENT SAMPLE

Authors' address:

Palaeoecology Research Services
Environmental Archaeology Unit
University of York
Heslington
York YO1 5DD

Telephone: (01904) 433846/433843/434487
Fax: (01904) 433850

Prepared for:

MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd.
39 Greengate
Malton
North Yorkshire
YO17 0EL

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Introduction

A watching brief was undertaken by MAP Archaeological Consultancy at 61 Micklegate, York in January 1997. Archaeological features (mostly Roman in date) included the fill of a large rubbish pit and a series of dump deposits overlying a mortar floor. The area under investigation is believed to be situated at the heart of the known extent of the Roman *Colonia*. One General Biological Analysis sample ('GBAs' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) and a small quantity of shell and animal bone were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

Methods

The single sediment sample was inspected in the laboratory and described using a *pro forma*. No further analysis was undertaken.

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.

The hand-collected shell was examined and records made of preservation, quantities and identifications.

Results

Sediment sample

Context 1010, Sample 1 [Roman dump deposit]

Just moist, light grey, with flecks of white, black, ginger, red and yellow/orange, crumbly and brittle (working soft), silt- and sand- grade ash. Lumps within the matrix were internally somewhat layered.

This deposit appeared to be unquestionably a dump of ash. No further analysis was undertaken; the material was considered to have very little potential for bioarchaeological analysis.

Bone

Twelve contexts (of which ten were dated to the Roman period) produced a small quantity of hand-collected bone. These provided a total of 92 identifiable (4418 g) and 161 unidentifiable (3256 g) fragments. Most of the bone (170 fragments) was recovered from the fill (Context 1007) of a large rubbish pit. The range of identified species is shown in Table 1, together with total number of fragments, numbers of measurable bones and numbers of mandibles with teeth *in situ*.

Preservation of the material was fair, with the broken surfaces, for the most part, appearing 'spiky' (a few battered fragments were noted). Colour ranged from fawn to brown with some variation within contexts. Few bones showed evidence of dog gnawing or fresh breakage. Material from some deposits showed evidence for butchery, including long bones which had been split longitudinally, perhaps for marrow extraction.

The remains of cattle were most common, followed by pig, chicken, caprovid and goose. Some of the cattle elements present were from large individuals.

In addition, one human bone fragment was found, the distal humerus of a neonatal individual.

As can be seen from Table 1, there were 20 measurable fragments and seven mandibles with teeth.

Molluscs

The small hand-collected mollusc assemblage (representing remains from five contexts) consisted mostly of rotted oyster (*Ostrea edulis* L.) shell, with a single fragment of mussel (*Mytilus edulis* L.).

Statement of potential

Although small, the vertebrate assemblage is mostly well preserved and contains moderate numbers of measurable bones. Therefore, should further excavation be undertaken and a more refined dating framework be achieved, it is highly likely that a significant Roman assemblage would be recovered.

The hand-collected mollusc assemblage is of no interpretative value other than to indicate the probable importation of shellfish as a food resource.

Recommendations

Despite numerous excavations in York, only one Roman vertebrate assemblage has been published (O'Connor 1988). Consequently, in the event of further development at this site, it is essential that all well-sealed and

well-dated deposits be sampled and examined. Provision should be made for detailed post-excavation research.

Archive

The animal bone is currently stored at the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York, along with the paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here.

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References

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Table 1. Hand-collected vertebrate remains from 61, Micklegate, York. The number in parentheses represents material from the two post-medieval deposits.

Taxon		No. fragments	No. measurable	No. mandibles	Weight (g)
<i>Bos</i> f. domestic	cattle	56	8	3	3872
<i>Sus</i> f. domestic	pig	14	2	3	349
Caprovid	sheep/goat	8	1	1	167
<i>Gallus</i> f. domestic	chicken	11	8	-	25
<i>Anser</i> sp.	goose	2	1	-	4
Bird		1	-	-	1
Sub-total		92	20	7	4418
Unidentified		159 (2)	-	-	3233
Sub-total		159	-	-	3233
Total		251	20	7	7651