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**Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at
Welton Low Road, Elloughton (site code: 1997.44)**

by

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Summary

Sediment samples from Roman deposits at Welton Low Road, Elloughton were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

Small, generally poorly preserved, assemblages of terrestrial and freshwater molluscs were recovered from three of the samples. These were of no interpretative value beyond suggesting the presence or absence of standing water within the archaeological features.

No further work need be undertaken on the present material. If deposits with organic preservation by anoxic waterlogging are exposed by further excavation every effort should be made to sample and investigate them.

Keywords: WELTON LOW ROAD; ELLOUGHTON; EVALUATION; CHARCOAL; MOLLUSCS

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Introduction

Excavations were carried out by York Archaeological Trust at Welton Low Road, Elloughton in May 1997. Four General Biological Analysis samples and one bulk sample ('GBAs' and 'BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) from Trenches 1 and 3 were submitted for an evaluation of their biological potential. All of the material is thought to be Roman in date.

Methods

The samples were initially inspected in the laboratory and described using a *pro forma*. The BS sample was bulk-sieved to 500 µm and subsamples of 3 kg were taken from two of the GBA samples (1 and 3) for extraction of macrofossil remains, following procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986). The washovers and residues resulting from processing were examined for their content of plant and invertebrate macrofossils.

Results and Discussion

The results are presented by trench in context number order. Context information provided by the excavator is enclosed in brackets.

Trench 1

Context 1004

[Base of Roman ?ditch feature]
Sample 2

Just moist, light brown to mid grey brown and mid to dark grey brown, crumbly to unconsolidated, silty

sand. Modern roots and rootlets were present in the sample.

No further analysis was undertaken on this sample.

Context 1007

[Base of Roman ?ditch feature]
Sample 3

3 kg washover (primarily to recover molluscs).

As Sample 2 but with freshwater molluscs present.

The small washover was mostly planorbid snails and modern rootlets with a few freshwater bivalves (*Sphaerium/Pisidium*), a little charcoal (to 3 mm) and some land snails including *Pupilla muscorum* (L.), *Cochlicopa lubrica* (Müller), *Vallonia* sp. and *Carychium* sp. The shells were poorly to moderately well preserved.

The small residue was mostly sand and undisaggregated sediment with a few planorbids, freshwater bivalves and *Succinea* sp.

The predominance of freshwater mollusc taxa suggests that this ?ditch feature contained standing water. The terrestrial forms almost certainly originating from the land adjacent to the ?ditch.

Context 1014

[Base of Roman ?ditch feature]
Sample 1

3 kg washover (primarily to recover molluscs).

Dry, light yellowish grey with olive patches (mm-scale), brittle to crumbly (working plastic when wet), sandy silty clay. Terrestrial molluscs and modern rootlets were present in the sample.

The small washover was mostly shell fragments and modern rootlets and a small, poorly preserved, land snail assemblage. Taxa present included *Cochlicopa lubrica*, *Vallonia* sp., *Aegopinella* sp. and *Cepaea/Arianta* sp. These are forms associated with damp areas but not standing water.

The small residue was mostly sand, small lumps of undisaggregated sediment and small stones (2 to 6

mm) with many fragments of snail shell and a single *Succinea* sp.

The mollusc remains recovered from this sample suggest that this was an essentially dry feature.

Trench 3

Context 3005

[Main fill of Roman ditch feature]

Sample 4

Just moist, varicoloured (from light to dark grey with hints of brown), stiff and brittle (locally crumbly and working plastic), sandy silty clay /clay silt with mm-scale patches of ?lime/mortar. Freshwater molluscs and modern roots were present in the sample

No further analysis was undertaken on this sample.

Sample 5

28 kg bulk sieved (primarily to recover molluscs).

As Sample 4 but generally lighter in colour.

The small washover was mostly snail shell fragments, twigs and rootlets. Identifiable mollusc taxa included freshwater planorbids and bivalves and terrestrial forms including *Cochlicopa lubrica*, *Pupilla muscorum*, *Succinea* sp., *Cepaea/Arianta* sp. and ?*Trichia* sp.

The very small residue was mostly sand, undisaggregated sediment and small stones (2 to 6 mm) with many fragments of snail shell (including some individuals from the same group of taxa as were represented in the washover).

The mollusc assemblage is almost identical in character to that recovered from Sample 3 and, again, suggests that this ditch feature contained standing water.

Statement of potential and recommendations

The sediment samples have no further potential for bioarchaeological investigation. Species level identifications would be required to obtain additional information from the land snails (e.g water

quality from the planorbids) and these are, in general, not possible because of the poor preservational condition of the remains.

No further work need be undertaken on the present material. If deposits with organic preservation by anoxic waterlogging are exposed by further excavation every effort should be made to sample and investigate them.

Retention and disposal

Any remaining sediment samples may be discarded.

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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