

**Assessment of medieval plant and invertebrate remains from excavations
at West Street, Gargrave, N. Yorkshire (site code WS97)**

by

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Summary

The bioarchaeological potential of some samples of sediment from medieval deposits from excavations in West Street, Gargrave, has been assessed. Two of the samples yielded small numbers of charred cereals, but plant remains were otherwise limited to a small amount of charcoal. One sample yielded a small assemblage of molluscs of limited interpretative value. It is not recommended that any further analysis of the material is undertaken.

Keywords: WEST STREET; GARGRAVE; NORTH YORKSHIRE; MEDIEVAL; MOATED SITE; PLANT REMAINS; CHARCOAL; CHARRED CEREALS ; MOLLUSCS

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Introduction

Fifteen samples of sediment were collected during excavation of a medieval moat and associated features at a site in West Street, Gargrave, N. Yorkshire (NGR SD9454) by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. in May 1997. They were submitted to the Environmental Archaeology Unit (EAU), University of York, for assessment of their bioarchaeological potential.

Methods

All the sediment samples were inspected in the laboratory and notes made concerning their likely potential to yield useful assemblages of biological remains. On this basis, eight were selected for analysis using 'test' subsamples (Kenward *et al.* 1986) of between 1.4 and 3 kg. Washovers were taken from all the samples and these and the dried residues examined for their content of plant and animal remains.

In two cases, 'squashes' (Dainton 1992) were performed to check for the presence of microfossils of various kinds.

Results

The results of the assessment of the sediment samples are presented in Table 1.

Recommendations for further work

Given the very limited amount of preserved material and the limitations on dating of the contexts which *were* productive, the results obtained through this assessment do not, in the authors' opinion justify any further analysis of the material already examined or of any other samples from these excavations. However, the present report should be lodged with the site

archive as a record of the work on plant and invertebrate remains undertaken.

Retention and disposal

All paper and electronic archives pertaining to the work reported here, together with processed and unprocessed samples and fossils obtained from the former, are currently stored at the EAU. It is not recommended that any unprocessed material be retained on bioarchaeological grounds.

Acknowledgements

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References

- Dainton, M. (1992). A quick, semi-quantitative method for recording nematode gut parasite eggs from archaeological deposits. *Circaea, the Journal of the Association for Environmental Archaeology* **9**, 58-63.
- Kenward, H. K., Engleman, C., Robertson, A., and Large, F. (1986). Rapid scanning of urban archaeological deposits for insect remains. *Circaea* **3**, 163-72.

Table 1. Results of assessment of sediment samples from West Street, Gargrave. Samples are listed in context order. NFA—no further action recommended.

Context and archaeological information	Sample	Wt. (kg)	Nature of sediment	Evidence of plant remains	Evidence of invertebrate remains	Other material	Comments
1030 (charred fill from around kiln, Tr. 1; no dating)	3	1.4	dark greyish-brown, ?slightly humic, sandy silty clay; very small residue of sand with a little gravel (to 10 mm), traces of brick/tile (to 5 mm)	a single stinging nettle achene and traces of charcoal (< 2 mm max. dimension)	traces of land snails; many unidentified invertebrate eggs	a trace of organic detritus noted from a 'squash'	NFA
2031 (charred residues from side of pit; no dating)	17	3	angular stones (to 100 mm+) in a charcoal-rich, dark reddish-brown to black ?ash matrix; large residue of sand and gravel (to 45 mm) with some bone and mortar, and traces of brick/tile, coal and land snail shell fragments	the washover was large (about 200 cm ³) and consisted mainly of soft, somewhat 'spiky' fragments of charcoal, perhaps including some herbaceous material (e.g. from straw); some may be from coniferous wood; a few charred grains, including barley spikelets and hexaploid wheat grains(all rather blistered and poorly preserved)	a moderately large assemblage of land snails , mainly <i>Carychium</i> ? <i>bidentatum</i> and <i>Discus rotundatus</i> ; together they indicate damp, shaded conditions, perhaps under rubbish, or damp grassland with some cover (e.g. woodland), but not interpretatively very useful		the cereals could perhaps be investigated further to make a proper record; there is probably little more useful analysis to be made of the snails; but N.B. only about 0.25 kg of matrix remains and dating is currently not available
2036	10		light-mid yellowish-				not selected for

Context and archaeological information	Sample	Wt. (kg)	Nature of sediment	Evidence of plant remains	Evidence of invertebrate remains	Other material	Comments
(sand and gravel at edge of moat; dating: medieval)			grey-brown unconsolidated sand and gravel				analysis
2037 (deposit in mound passing laterally into fills of moat; dating: C13th)	4 (upper part of mound sequence)		dark grey, crumbly (working plastic and sticky when wet), moderately stony sandy silty clay				not selected for analysis
	5 (middle part of mound sequence)		dark grey, crumbly (working plastic and sticky when wet), moderately stony sandy silty clay				not selected for analysis
	7 (deposit from top of moat, perhaps old land surface)		dark grey-brown, crumbly (working plastic and sticky when wet), very stony sandy silty clay				not selected for analysis
	12 (continuation of 2037 into moat fills)	3	dark brownish-grey, crumbly to slightly plastic (sticky when wetted), very stony silty clay sand; moderately large residue of sand and gravel (including stones to 50 mm)	traces of charcoal to 2 mm and ?root bark fragments	a little invertebrate cuticle	one large mammal tooth fragment	NFA

Context and archaeological information	Sample	Wt. (kg)	Nature of sediment	Evidence of plant remains	Evidence of invertebrate remains	Other material	Comments
2038 (lower part of mound sequence; no dating)	6	3	mid-dark greyish-brown, crumbly to brittle (working plastic and slightly sticky when wet) very stony silty clay sand; small residue of sand and gravel (including stones to 70 mm); some evidence of scorching of stone fragments	traces of charcoal to 2 mm and some ?modern root/rootlet fragments	a few ?earthworm egg capsules	one large mammal tooth	NFA
2039 (rectangular organic deposit; dating: medieval)	8	2	black to yellowish-brown to grey-brown crumbly, moderately stony sandy silt, rich in charcoal and ?ash; large residue of sand and gravel (to 30 mm)	moderate amounts of charred cereal grains in the washover of about 30 cm ³ (mainly ?bread wheat, but also some oats; grains mostly rather distorted); also a little charcoal to 5 mm	traces of land snails	some organic detritus was noted from the squash, along with a few fungal hyphae, and many diatoms and phytoliths	the cereals might repay closer examination but the material lacks chaff, is not very well preserved, and is from a context for which dating is currently too broad; further examination of the diatoms might yield information on water quality at the time of deposition but this seems unlikely to be of great interpretative value

Context and archaeological information	Sample	Wt. (kg)	Nature of sediment	Evidence of plant remains	Evidence of invertebrate remains	Other material	Comments
2040 (moat fill; dating: C12-13th)	13		dark grey-brown, more or less plastic and sticky, very stony sandy silty clay				not selected for analysis
	14	3	dark brownish-grey, crumbly (working plastic and slightly sticky when wet), very stony silty clay sand; small residue of sand with a little gravel to 25 mm; some scorching evident on stones	traces of charcoal to 5 mm with one charred half-grain of a cereal and traces of elderberry (<i>Sambucus nigra</i>) seed fragments; perhaps some other (extremely poorly preserved) seeds	a few ?earthworm egg capsules	trace of burnt bone to 5 mm	NFA
	15		dark grey-brown, crumbly (working plastic and sticky when wet) sandy silty clay with traces of stones 2-6 mm				not selected for analysis
2041 (moat fill; dating: medieval)	11	3	rounded stones (cobbles, to 100 mm) in a matrix of dark grey-brown plastic sandy clay; large residue of gravel (including stones to 70 mm) and a little sand	traces of charcoal to 5 mm	traces of invertebrate cuticle		NFA

Context and archaeological information	Sample	Wt. (kg)	Nature of sediment	Evidence of plant remains	Evidence of invertebrate remains	Other material	Comments
2047 (lowest moat fill; dating: medieval)	16		mid yellowish-grey-brown, crumbly, unconsolidated, very stony slightly clay sand				not selected for analysis
2049 (deposit from within circular stone structure; dating medieval) [sample bears context 2051!]	18	3	dark grey-brown, brittle to crumbly (working plastic and sticky when wet), moderately stony silty sandy clay; small residue of sand with a little gravel (to 40 mm)	traces of charcoal to 2 mm and of elder seed fragments	traces of land snails and ?earthworm egg capsules		