Palaeoecology Research Services

Biological remains from excavations at Barnagore 3, Ballincollig, County Cork, Republic of Ireland (site code: 02E0384)

by

Allan Hall, Harry Kenward and John Carrott

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Palaeoecology Research Services
Unit 8, Dabble Duck Industrial Estate
Shildon, County Durham DL4 2RA

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Summary

Small quantities of biological remains recovered from the processing of bulk sediment samples from deposits at Barnagore 3, Ballincollig, County Cork, were submitted for analysis.

Most of the remains were of charred fragments of hazel nutshell and of no real interpretative value. The few invertebrate remains were most likely of modern origin.

KEYWORDS: BARNAGORE 3; BALLINCOLLIG; COUNTY CORK; REPUBLIC OF IRELAND; TECHNICAL REPORT; NEOLITHIC; PLANT REMAINS; CHARRED PLANT REMAINS; INVERTEBRATE REMAINS

Contact address for authors:

Palaeoecology Research Services
Unit 8
Dabble Duck Industrial Estate
Shildon
County Durham DL4 2RA
United Kingdom

Prepared for:

Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd
21 Boyne Business Park
Greenhills
Drogheda
County Louth
Republic of Ireland

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Introduction

An archaeological excavation of deposits encountered during the initial stages of the monitoring programme for the Ballincollig by-pass scheme, County Cork, Republic of Ireland, was undertaken by Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd (ACS).

The site at Barnagore 3 comprised a possible Neolithic house and associated pits.

Small quantities of biological remains recovered from the processing of bulk sediment samples were submitted to PRS for an assessment of their interpretative potential.

Methods

The soil samples were placed onto 1 mm nylon mesh in a sieving tank. The light organic fraction was washed over through a 2 mm sieve into a 500 micron sieve to collect the flots. Each of the soil samples was put through this system twice to ensure that as much material as possible was recovered from the samples.

The sediment samples were processed by ACS prior to delivery to PRS and only the small quantities of recovered plant and, in two cases (Feature F4, Sample 2; Feature F15, Sample 11) invertebrate remains were submitted for analysis. These remains were examined and identified as closely as possible.

Results

Sediment samples

The results are presented in feature number order. Archaeological information, provided by the excavator, is given in square brackets. The weight of raw sediment processed follows (in round brackets) after the sample numbers. Sediment/sample descriptions were also provided by the excavator.

Feature F4 [Part of the burnt remains of the structure sealing 3 stake holes and their fills]
Sample 2 (6 kg)

Dark brown, silty clay with inclusions of charcoal (5-10%) and occasional small stones.

The submitted remains comprised various parts of a single specimen of the dung beetle *Aphodius prodromus* (Brahm), one of the commonest dung beetles in the past and today. It is quite likely that this material is a modern contaminant unless it was excavated as disarticulated sclerites (skeleton parts).

Feature F6 [Uppermost fill of posthole F28 which was probably an internal roof support]
Sample 4 (1 kg)

A dark brown, sandy clay with moderate amounts of charcoal.

A single crushed charred hazel (*Corylus avellana* L.) nutshell was recovered from the sample.

Feature F15 [Fill of a shallow pit]
Sample 11 (3 kg)

Mid to dark brown silty clay with moderate amounts of small stones.

The remains were of one earthworm (*Oligochaeta* sp.) egg capsule (probably modern) and some fragments of herbaceous plant tissue, perhaps from roots, and also probably modern.

Feature F30 [Primary fill of post hole F28, underlying Sample 3 (F6)]
Sample 17 (1 kg)

Moderately compact light brown silty sand with frequent charcoal flecks and pebbles.

The biological remains consisted of a crushed charred hazel nutshell.

Feature F53 [Fill of an oval-shaped stake hole]
Sample 32 (1.5 kg)

Moderately compact sandy clay with charcoal and occasional pebbles.

The submitted material was the remains of a single crushed charred seed with very characteristic raised papillae on the surface reminiscent of some Polygonaceae (dock/knotweed family), but with a shape (on the basis of a fragment including what appears to be the distal apex of the propagule) more consistent with Cyperaceae (sedge family).

Feature F75 [Remains of burnt planking/stake]
Sample 42 (1 kg)

Burnt planking or stake remains.

A few fragments of crushed charred hazel nutshell were recovered.

Feature F77 [Fill of a circular posthole]
Sample 49 (2 kg)

Moderately compact dark brown-black silty clay with frequent charcoal and small stones.

As with Sample 42 (above), only a few fragments of crushed charred hazel nutshell, were recovered.

Feature F94 [Upper fill of a large pit located to the west of the structure]
Sample 54 (approximately 3 kg)

Loosely compacted dark brown-black, silty clay, with frequent inclusions of burnt stone and charcoal.

The submitted remains were of crushed charred hazel nutshell and a small (less than 5 mm) fragment of charcoal.

Discussion

The submitted remains were too few to be of any great interpretative value. No evidence of gnawing was noted on the hazel nutshell fragments perhaps indicating that they represent food waste from consumption by humans (rather than by animals). The few invertebrate remains were most likely of modern origin.

Retention and disposal

All of the material should be retained as part of the physical archive for the site.

Archive

All material is currently stored by Palaeoecology Research Services (Unit 8, Dabble Duck Industrial Estate, Shildon, County Durham), along with paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here.

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