

Palaeoecology Research Services

**Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at
site OSA02EX02, East Riding of Yorkshire
(site code: OSA02EX02)**

by

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Summary

Four sediment samples (selected from 15 collected) recovered from excavations of deposits of high medieval-?post-medieval date at a site on the Transco West Hull reinforcement pipeline (centred on NGR TA 08291 37124), in the East Riding of Yorkshire, were submitted to PRS for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

Small assemblages of charred plant remains, snails, and bone, were recovered from the samples. These were too few to be of any interpretative value beyond that discussed in the text but did demonstrate the potential for the survival of biological remains within some of the deposits at this site.

No further work is recommended on the current material and it need not be retained.

Any further excavation at this site should consider the possibility of recovering more interpretatively valuable assemblages of biological remains.

KEYWORDS: SITE OSA02EX02; EAST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE; EVALUATION; HIGH MEDIEVAL-?POST-MEDIEVAL; PLANT REMAINS; CHARRED PLANT REMAINS; CHARRED GRAIN; SNAILS; VERTEBRATE REMAINS

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Introduction

An archaeological evaluation excavation was carried out by On-Site Archaeology, at a site in the East Riding of Yorkshire (centred on NGR TA 08291 37124), between the 3rd and the 20th of May 2002, as part of a series of interventions along the route of the Transco West Hull reinforcement gas pipeline.

The site was situated to the west of the modern day village of Wawne on the eastern flood plain of the River Hull. The village of Wawne is a 'shrunken' medieval village. Archaeological and documentary evidence indicates that occupation originated during the 12th century and continues to the modern day. It is probable that occupation started earlier as the village occupies a low gravel island in what would have been an extensive wetland environment, however.

Washovers and residues from three pre-processed bulk sediment samples were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential. A 3 kg subsample from one further sample (from Context 1100 - a sediment lens containing fragments of charred grain) was processed by PRS.

All of the encountered deposits were provisionally dated as high medieval-?post-medieval.

Methods

Bulk sediment samples ('BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) were processed to 1 mm (with a 300 micron sieve for the lighter washover fraction) by the excavator.

One sample was processed by PRS following the procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980;

1986), for recovery of plant and invertebrate macrofossils.

The washovers and residues resulting from processing were examined for plant and invertebrate macrofossils. The residues were examined for larger plant macrofossils, bone, and other biological and artefactual remains.

Results

The results are presented in context number order. Archaeological information, provided by the excavator, is given in square brackets. A brief summary of the processing method and an estimate of the remaining volume of unprocessed sediment follows (in round brackets) after the sample numbers.

No remains of insects were recovered from the samples.

Context 1100 [sediment lens with charred grain fragments]

Sample 3/T (3 kg processed to 300 microns with washover; approximately 2 litres of unprocessed sediment remain)

Moist, light brown to light grey-brown (to light to mid grey in places), stiff (working more or less plastic), slightly sandy clay, with stones (2 to 20 mm), fragments of charcoal (to 15 mm) and charred grain, present.

The small washover of about 15 ml consisted mostly of charred cereal grains; many were distorted, but the majority seemed to be oats (*Avena*), with rare specimens of wheat, including bread wheat (*Triticum aestivo-compactum*) and barley (*Hordeum*). Other charred remains included small numbers of probable cornfield weeds (stinking mayweed, *Anthemis cotula* L.) and some taxa perhaps representing charred peat or cut wetland vegetation (nutlets of saw-sedge, *Cladium mariscus* (L.) Pohl, and spike-rush, *Eleocharis palustris* s.l.). The only uncharred material present comprised a few ?modern elder (*Sambucus nigra* L.) seeds.

The small residue (0.4 kg) was of sand, with some stones (to 40 mm) and a few fragments of charcoal (to 15 mm).

Context 1139 [?soil horizon or alluvium]

Sample 5/BS (25 litres processed to 1 mm with 300 micron washover; approximately 5 litres of unprocessed sediment remain)

Moist, light to mid grey-brown, stiff (working plastic), clay, with some stones (2 to 20 mm), occasional black flecks of ?rotted charcoal, modern rootlets, and some land and freshwater snails, present.

The very small washover of about 20 ml consisted mainly of snails with a few rather poorly preserved charred cereal grains, including one or a few specimens of oats, barley and wheat, and traces of coal and charcoal.

The snails present were mostly of the freshwater species *Planorbis leucostoma* Millet (white-lipped ram's-horn snail) typically found in ponds and ditches (and which resists drought in mud). There were also some land snails, including *Cochlicopa ?lubrica* (Müller) and *Vallonia ?excentrica* Sterki, and snails of waterside vegetation (Succineidae sp. indet.).

The small residue (1.1 kg) was of stones (to 30 mm) and occasional fragments of snail shell (further remains of those taxa more fully represented in the washover).

Context 1156 [fill of robber cut]

Sample 11/BS (25 litres processed to 1 mm with 300 micron washover; approximately 5 litres of unprocessed sediment remain)

Moist, mid grey-brown (with some light brown mottling in places), crumbly (working more or less plastic and slightly sticky), slightly silty clay with a little charcoal (to 8 mm).

The small washover of about 50 ml was mainly charcoal but there were also a few grains of *Triticum 'aestivo-compactum'* and at least one specimen which might have been a pea (*Pisum sativum* L.) seed. There were also a few fragments of unidentified snail shell.

The small residue (1.2 kg) was mostly of stones (to 25 mm). Larger fragments of charcoal (to 35 mm in largest dimension) from the residue were identified as of alder (*Alnus*, 2 pieces), and oak (*Quercus*, one smaller fragment).

An assemblage of well preserved bone amounting to 56 fragments was also recovered from this sample. Most fragments were less than 10 mm in any dimension and few could be identified to species. Twenty-one fragments were burnt, including a number of fish spine

and rib fragments. Identified fragments included, two herring (*Clupea harengus* L.) vertebrae, a cow carpal, a ?partridge (cf. *Perdix perdix* L.) carpometatarsus (burnt) and a Turdidae (thrush/blackbird family) humerus.

Context 1161 [possible floor deposit]

Sample 6/BS (15 litres processed to 1 mm with 300 micron washover; approximately 5 litres of unprocessed sediment remain)

Moist to wet, light grey-brown, sticky and crumbly (working soft and somewhat plastic), clay silt to silty clay, with occasional flecks of charcoal.

The very small washover (approximately 30 ml) was mostly of modern rootlets, small pieces of undisaggregated sediment, and sand. A little charcoal (to 6 mm) and a few earthworm (*Oligochaeta* sp.) egg capsules were also noted. Two other small (to 5 mm) fragments of charred plant material from the washover were of monocotyledonous rhizome, probably from a grass or sedge; though they cannot currently be identified further, the likelihood is that they originated in the burning either of turves or cut vegetation which included some pulled (subterranean) material.

The small (approximately 0.9 kg) residue was of stones (to 20 mm) and three fragments of ?pot.

Discussion and statement of potential

Charred plant remains were present in all of the examined samples. However, the small quantities recovered were too little to be of interpretative value beyond that given in the text above.

The planorbid snail remains from Context 1139 indicate the presence of at least temporary freshwater. This would favour the interpretation of this deposit as alluvial in origin rather than as a buried soil horizon.

The vertebrate remains from Context 1156 clearly show the potential for the survival of bone in some of the deposits at this site.

There does not seem to be any value either in recording the present material in more detail or in pursuing further analyses for these

deposits unless there are clear archaeological questions to address.

Recommendations

No further work is recommended on the current material.

This evaluation has shown the potential for survival of biological remains within some of the deposits at this site (i.e. charred plant remains, the snails from Context 1139, and the well preserved bone from Context 1156), however. Any further excavation should certainly consider the possibility of recovering more interpretatively useful assemblages of remains.

Retention and disposal

The current material need not be retained.

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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