

Palaeoecology Research Services

**Assessment of biological remains from excavations at
Temple Point, Colton (nr Leeds), West Yorkshire
(site code: D2001.85)**

by

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Summary

Eighteen sediment samples and a very small quantity of hand-collected bone, recovered from excavations of deposits of Bronze Age to post-Roman (pre-12th century) date at Temple Point, Colton (nr Leeds), West Yorkshire, were submitted to PRS for an assessment of their bioarchaeological potential.

Ancient biological remains recovered from the samples were, on the whole, restricted to fairly small amounts of wood charcoal and of little interpretative value. Most of the samples yielded enough material for dating of the deposits by radiocarbon assay to be attempted (at least via AMS) should this be required. The limited value of dating material which may have come from large trunks of great age must be stressed, however. No identifiable microfossils were seen in the samples examined for these remains.

A total of 22 fragments of hand-collected bone were recovered from five contexts. Most were small fragments and were burnt or poorly preserved. The assemblage as a whole was too small to be of any interpretative value.

The present samples are probably not worthy of further study (unless material is required for dating) and no further work on the vertebrate remains is warranted.

Unless they are to be processed for material other than biological remains, or for the recovery of additional charred remains for radiocarbon dating, any remaining sediment samples may be discarded. The charred plant remains recovered by this assessment should be retained for the present (primarily to provide material for radiocarbon dating of the deposits if required).

KEYWORDS: TEMPLE POINT; COLTON (NR LEEDS); WEST YORKSHIRE; ASSESSMENT; BRONZE AGE TO POST-ROMAN (PRE-12TH CENTURY); CHARRED PLANT REMAINS; VERTEBRATE REMAINS

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Assessment of biological remains from excavations at Temple Point, Colton (nr Leeds), West Yorkshire (site code: D2001.85)

Introduction

An archaeological excavation was carried out by York Archaeological Trust at Temple Point, Colton (nr Leeds), West Yorkshire (NGR SE 3770 3280), between the 8th of April and the 18th of July 2002.

Eighteen sediment samples ('GBA'/'BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) and a very small quantity of hand-collected bone were submitted to PRS for an assessment of their bioarchaeological potential.

The site covered an area of just under four hectares within a multi-period archaeological landscape. The earliest features included three Bronze Age round barrows. Iron Age activity was represented by two trackways (the smaller feeding into the larger), a roundhouse, 13 square and rectangular structures each indicated by four postholes, and two pits. The Roman/Romano-British period showed a development of the Iron Age landscape with linear land divisions running from the Iron Age trackways. The main post-Roman (certainly pre-12th century but possibly pre-9th century) feature was a rectangular enclosure which lay on a new alignment to the features of the Iron Age and Romano-British periods – the only correspondence being that the entrance to the enclosure included part of one of the earlier trackways.

Methods

The submitted sediment samples were inspected in the laboratory and their lithologies were recorded, using a standard *pro forma*, prior to processing, following the procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986), for recovery of plant and invertebrate macrofossils.

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

Subsamples from four of the samples (the two possible grave fills, Samples 25 and 26, Context 3374, and the samples from the ?stock pond, Sample 45, Context 4067 and Sample 46, Context 4068) were examined using the 'squash' technique of Dainton (1992). This technique was originally developed specifically for the rapid assessment of deposits for their content of eggs of intestinal parasitic nematodes, but has proved equally useful to provide a qualitative record of other microfossils such as pollen, diatoms, and phytoliths.

For the hand-collected bone, subjective records were made of the state of preservation, colour of the fragments, and the appearance of broken surfaces ('angularity'). Brief notes were made concerning fragment size, dog gnawing, burning, butchery and fresh breaks where applicable. Where possible, fragments were identified to species or species group using the PRS modern comparative reference collection.

Results

Archaeological information (provided by the excavator), sediment descriptions, a brief summary of the processing method, and an estimate of the remaining volume of unprocessed sediment, is given in Table 1.

The residues from processing were all of stones (to 60 mm) and a little sand, ranging from 0.2 to 4.0 kg dry weight.

Washovers from the samples from Temple Point were examined for their content of plant

and animal remains. In the event, apart from some clearly modern remains (seeds of *Fumaria*, *Veronica hederifolia* L. and some chenopods in many samples; earthworm (*Oligochaeta* sp.) egg capsules in Sample 37; and snail shells of *Cecilioides acicula* (Müller) in Sample 3), the only remains noted were wood charcoal and a very few other charred remains (Table 2). Most of the charcoal was probably oak, with small amounts of ash and sometimes also hazel being noted, though identifications were not pursued systematically at this stage. Other charred plant remains comprised a few fragments of hazel nutshell, sloe fruitstone and a single weed seed. No ancient invertebrate remains were recovered from the samples.

No identifiable microfossils were seen in any of the 'squash' subsamples.

A total of 22 fragments of hand-collected bone were recovered from five contexts (3047, 3147, 3149, 3173, and 3592). Most were small fragments and were burnt or poorly preserved. Summary information for these remains is given as Table 3.

Discussion and statement of potential

Ancient biological remains recovered from these deposits were, on the whole, restricted to fairly small amounts of wood charcoal and of little interpretative value.

Most of the samples yielded enough material for dating by radiocarbon assay, at least via AMS, though in most cases modern rootlets were present. The limited value of dating material which may have come from large trunks of great age must be stressed, however; the hazel wood is perhaps more likely to have originated in roundwood, and some ash charcoal from Sample 43 was certainly from roundwood of about 5-7 years in age.

With regard to the samples from the putative 'pond' (Samples 45 and 46) one yielded traces

of small charcoal fragments but otherwise there were no ancient biological remains with which to make an interpretation; notably, both samples yielded very small washovers containing a little coal and burnt stone or ?soil.

The hand-collected vertebrate remains were too few and too poorly preserved to be of any interpretative value.

Recommendations

Unless material is required for dating, the present samples are probably not worthy of further archaeobotanical study.

No further work on the vertebrate remains is warranted.

Retention and disposal

Unless they are to be processed for material other than biological remains, or for the recovery of additional charred remains for radiocarbon dating, any remaining sediment samples may be discarded.

The charred plant remains recovered by this assessment should be retained for the present (primarily to provide material for radiocarbon dating of the deposits if required).

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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Table 1. Temple Point, Colton: summary information for the examined samples. **Key:** CN = Context number; SN = Sample number; Rem (l) = approximate quantity of remaining sediment in litres.

CN	SN	Context type	Sediment description	Processing method	Rem (l)
1017	1	pit fill	Just moist, light to mid orange-brown, crumbly to unconsolidated (working sticky when wetted), slightly sandy clay silt, with some charcoal and stones (6 to 60 mm) present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	none
3047	3	?pit fill	Just moist, mid grey-brown, unconsolidated to crumbly (working soft), ?slightly sandy clay silt, with some stones (2 to 60 mm) present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	none
3223	11	pit fill	Just moist, light to mid yellow-brown to light to mid grey-brown, crumbly to unconsolidated (working sticky when wetted), slightly sandy clay silt, with some charcoal and modern rootlets present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	none
3292	15	fill of roundhouse gully segment	Dry, light yellow-brown to light grey-brown, crumbly to unconsolidated (working sticky when wetted), slightly sandy clay silt, with some modern rootlets present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	none
3293	16	posthole fill	Just moist, light to mid yellow-brown, unconsolidated (working slightly sticky when wetted), slightly sandy slightly clay silt. Stones (20 to 60 mm) and a trace of charcoal were present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	20
3304	17	posthole fill (at entrance to roundhouse)	Just moist, light to mid orange-brown, crumbly to unconsolidated (working sticky when wetted), slightly sandy clay silt, with some stones (6 to 20 mm) and flecks of charcoal present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	20
3305	21	posthole fill (at entrance to roundhouse)	Dry, light to mid yellow-brown, unconsolidated (working slightly sticky then soft when wetted), ?slightly sandy clay silt, with some stones (6 to 60 mm) and a trace of charcoal present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	30
3309	19	gully fill	Dry, light yellow-brown, crumbly to unconsolidated (working slightly sticky when wetted), ?slightly sandy clay silt. Some stones (6 to 60 mm) and charcoal were present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	none
3345	23	posthole fill (at entrance to roundhouse)	Just moist, light brown to light to mid brown (with a light orange cast), crumbly to unconsolidated, slightly clay silty fine sand (to fine sandy silt). Stones (6 to 60 mm) and charcoal were present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	30
3374	25	?grave fill	Dry, light yellow-brown to light grey-brown (in places), crumbly to unconsolidated (working sticky when wetted), sandy clay silt, with some stones (2 to 60 mm) present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover; microfossil squash	none
3374	26	?grave fill	Just moist, light to mid yellow-grey-brown, crumbly to unconsolidated (working sticky then soft when wetted), ?slightly sandy clay silt. Some stones (20 to 60 mm) and indurated lumps of sediment were present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover; microfossil squash	none
3421	37	posthole fill	Dry, light yellow-brown to light grey-brown, crumbly to unconsolidated (working sticky when wetted), slightly sandy clay silt, with some charcoal and modern rootlets present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	none
3461	31	pit fill	Dry, light grey-brown to mid grey-brown, unconsolidated, ?ashy, sandy silt (to silty sand). Fine charcoal was common and small stones (2 to 6 mm) were present in the sample.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	none

3462	32	pit fill	Dry, light to mid yellow-brown, indurated to crumbly, ?ashy, sandy silt, with some charcoal present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	none
3554	39	posthole fill	Dry, light to mid grey-brown to mid to dark grey-brown (with some light brown mottling on mm- and cm-scales), ?ashy, silty clay sand, with some stones (6 to 60 mm) and modern rootlets present.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	10
3602	43	cut fill	Just moist, light to mid yellow-brown to light grey-brown, crumbly to unconsolidated (working slightly sticky then soft when wetted), slightly clay silty fine sand. Stones (6 to 60 mm), modern rootlets, and charcoal (to 18 mm) were present in the sample.	sieved to 300 microns with washover	none
4067	45	?stock pond	Just moist, light grey-brown to light orange-brown (mottled on a mm-scale) with some light to mid grey patches, crumbly (working plastic), slightly silty clay.	sieved to 300 microns with washover; microfossil squash	none
4068	46	?stock pond	Just moist, very light grey-brown to light orange-brown (somewhat mottled), crumbly (working soft then more or less plastic), silty clay.	sieved to 300 microns with washover; microfossil squash	none

Table 2. Temple Point, Colton: plant remains (mainly charcoal) from washovers. Charcoal is scored on a four-point semi-quantitative scale of abundance: 1 – a few fragments, <1% of original sample volume; 2 – 1-10% of original volume; 3 – 10-50% of original volume; 4 – >50% of original volume. Key to columns under 'charcoal': q – quantification; s – size (maximum dimension in millimetres); t – taxa noted amongst fragments: Q – Quercus (oak); F – Fraxinus (ash); C – Corylus (hazel). N.B. All the coal was in fragments up to 5 mm in maximum dimension; it is likely to have been present in the local drift.

Context	Sample	Sample weight (kg)/Volume (L.)	Washover volume (cm ³)	charcoal			Other remains and notes
				q	s	t	
1017	1	17/10	900	+++	30	Q	
3047	3	17/10	40	+	10		one charred sloe (<i>Prunus spinosa</i> L.) fruitstone fragment; coal
3223	11	15/9	125	++	15	QC	hazel nutshell
3292	15	12/8	30	+	10		coal
3293	16	20/11	50	+	10	Q	
3304	17	16/9	100	++	10	Q	hazel nutshell
3305	21	18/10	120	++	10	Q	coal
3309	19	13/8	20	+	10		
3345	23	15/9	120	++	20	Q	one charred sloe fruitstone
3374	25	17/10	<5	+	5		
3374	26	13/8	<5	+	10		
3421	37	12/8	70	+	25	Q	one charred black bindweed (<i>Bilderdykia convolvulus</i> (L.) Dumort.) nutlet
3461	31	0.6/0.5	20	++	10	Q	
3462	32	0.9/0.5	40	++	10	QF	
3554	39	10/7	80	++	15	FC	coal
3602	43	11/7	60	+	15	F	ash roundwood
4067	45	16/10	<5	-			coal
4068	46	16/10	<5	+	5		coal

Table 3. Temple Point, Colton: summary information for the hand-collected bone.

Context	Notes	Weight (g)
3047	6 small fragments of burnt (white) bone, 3 of which were medium-sized mammal shaft fragments	4
3147	1 poorly preserved (very eroded and battered) caprovid distal humerus fragment. Colour was recorded as fawn and some fresh breakage was noted	12
3149	6 very small unidentifiable fragments showing heat damage and some fresh breakage	2
3173	8 very poorly preserved fragments of large mammal tooth (probably all of the same tooth)	14
3592	1 unidentified burnt bone fragment	<1