

Palaeoecology Research Services

**Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at St
George's Quarry, near Abergele, Conwy, North Wales
(site code: DA02)**

by

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Summary

Nine sediment samples recovered from excavations of deposits of unknown date at St George's Quarry, near Abergele, Conwy, North Wales, were submitted to PRS for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

Plant remains from the processed subsamples were confined to small amounts of rather small charcoal fragments, and some uncharred and presumably modern root fragments, in the washovers. No other biological remains were recovered.

Unless material is required for dating, it is probably not worthwhile pursuing further analysis of this material, or of other samples from the site. Sufficient suitable material was recovered for dating of some of the deposits by radiocarbon assay to be attempted, at least via AMS.

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.

KEYWORDS: ST GEORGE'S QUARRY; NEAR ABERGELE; CONWY; NORTH WALES; EVALUATION; CHARRED PLANT REMAINS

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Introduction

An archaeological evaluation excavation was carried out by Northern Archaeological Associates at St George's Quarry, near Abergele, Conwy, North Wales (centred on NGR SH 9695 7515), during December 2002. The works were undertaken in advance of a proposed extension to the existing quarry area.

The proposed quarry extension is located between two archaeological sites of national importance—the former site of Dinorben hill fort to the north is of prehistoric and Roman date, and the site of the early and late medieval manor of Dinorben Vaur (based at Dinorben farm) lies to the south.

A geophysical survey of the site (phase 1) had tested three areas (A, B and C) but failed to identify any significant archaeological features. The fourteen trial trenches excavated for this second phase of the evaluation were located to test the results of the geophysical survey. Seven of the trenches (d, e, j, k, l, m and n) contained no archaeological features, and none of the excavated features in the remaining trenches gave any dating evidence.

Nine sediment samples ('GBA'/'BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) were submitted to PRS for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

Methods

The sediment samples were inspected in the laboratory and four, representing the different areas and feature types of the site, were selected for investigation. The lithologies of the selected samples were recorded, using a standard *pro forma*, prior to the processing of subsamples, 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.

Results

Plant remains from these samples were confined to small amounts of rather small charcoal fragments in the washovers, as indicated in Table 1, and some uncharred and presumably modern root fragments.

The residues were of stones (to 50 mm) and a little sand, ranged from 0.2 to 1.2 kg in dry weight, and contained no biological remains.

Discussion and statement of potential

Unless material is required for dating, it is probably not worthwhile pursuing further analysis of this material, or of other samples from the site. Sufficient suitable material was recovered for dating of some of the deposits by radiocarbon assay to be attempted, at least via AMS.

Recommendations

No further work is recommended on the current material unless additional remains are required for dating.

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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References

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Table 1. Plant remains and other components of the washovers from samples from St George's Quarry. **Key:** A = Area; T = Trench; CN = Context number; S = NAA sample; PRS = PRS sample; Wt. (kg) = weight of processed subsample (kg); Rem. = approximate volume of unprocessed sediment remaining (l); for charcoal, abundance (ab) is given on a four-point semi-quantitative scale where + represents a trace (<1% of the original volume) and ++ represents 1-10%, and 'mm' is the maximum dimension of the fragments in millimetres.

A	T	CN	S	PRS	Context description	Sediment description	Wt. (kg)	Rem. (l)	Processing	Charcoal		Notes
										ab	mm	
A	C	12	AA	12/T	fill of gully 13	Just moist, light to mid grey-brown (slightly mottled – lighter and darker), crumbly to unconsolidated (working soft and sticky), stony (stones 2 to 60+ mm), slightly sandy clay silt (to silty clay), with modern rootlets and a trace of charred material present.	3	25	sieved to 300 microns with washover	+	10	charcoal of roundwood and some charred bark fragments
C	I	39	AA	39/T	fill of pit 38	Just moist, mostly charcoal and stones (2 to 60 mm), with some ash and lumps (to 20 mm) of light brown, crumbly (working soft), clay silt, and modern rootlets.	1	8	sieved to 300 microns with washover	++	15	about 120 cm ³ of charcoal, apparently all alder/hazel (<i>Alnus/Corylus</i>)
B	D	41	AA	41/T	fill of posthole 40	Just moist, mid grey-brown (mottled lighter and darker), crumbly to unconsolidated (working soft), stony (stones 2 to 60 mm), clay silt, with some modern rootlets and seedlings.	3	2	sieved to 300 microns with washover	+	5	
C	G	64	AA	64/T	secondary fill of pit 62	Just moist, mid to dark grey-brown, crumbly to unconsolidated (working more or less plastic), stony (stones 6 to 60 mm), slightly sandy silty clay, with some charcoal and modern rootlets and seedlings present.	1	2	sieved to 300 microns with washover	++	10	about 20 cm ³ of charcoal including some oak (<i>Quercus</i>)