

Palaeoecology Research Services

**Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at
East lane, Siggleshorne, East Riding of Yorkshire
(site code: BLS2002)**

by

John Carrott, Allan Hall and Deborah Jaques

PRS 2003/12

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

**Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at East Lane, Sigglesthorne,
East Riding of Yorkshire (site code: BLS2002)**

by

John Carrott, Allan Hall and Deborah Jaques

Summary

Five sediment samples and a small quantity of hand-collected bone, recovered from excavations of deposits of medieval and post-medieval date at East Lane, Sigglesthorne, East Riding of Yorkshire, were submitted to PRS for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

Ancient plant remains were lacking apart from a little charcoal and a few other charred remains including a single barley grain from the sample from Context 5005.

Only 31 fragments of bone were recovered from the two excavated trenches. The bones were of reasonable preservation but much fragmented by recent breakage. Cattle, sheep/goat and horse were all present within the assemblage, together with two fragments identified as dog.

The ancient biological remains recovered were too few to be of any interpretative value and no further work on the current material is warranted. The material in hand can be discarded if not needed for any other purpose.

Preservation of plant remains by charring can be patchy and future excavations at this site should allow for the collection and assessment of further material to check that useful macrofossils have not been missed. Furthermore, the good preservation of the bones shows that there is some potential for their survival in these deposits and this should also be borne in mind in the event of further excavation.

KEYWORDS: EAST LANE; SIGGLES THORNE; EAST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE; EVALUATION; MEDIEVAL TO POST-MEDIEVAL (13TH-16TH CENTURY); CHARRED PLANT REMAINS; VERTEBRATE REMAINS

Contact address for authors:

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

Prepared for:

Humber Field Archaeology
The Old School
Northumberland Avenue
Hull HU2 0LN

17 February 2003

Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at East Lane, Siggleshorne, East Riding of Yorkshire (site code: BLS2002)

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation excavation was carried out by Humber Field Archaeology at East Lane, Siggleshorne, East Riding of Yorkshire (NGR TA 1570 4585), during October 2002.

The site has extant earthworks, which have been surveyed, and seem to represent medieval/post-medieval house plots, enclosures and tracks. The evaluation found traces of a 13th-14th century cobbled trackway in Trench 1, possibly leading from a neighbouring village, Seaton, to Siggleshorne Church, and several 13th-14th and 14th-15th century field boundaries in Trench 2.

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

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.

Fragments of bone were identified to species or species group using the PRS modern comparative reference collection. The bones that could not be identified to species were

described as the 'unidentified' fraction. Within this fraction fragments were grouped into a number of categories: large mammal (assumed to be cattle, horse or large cervid), medium-sized mammal (assumed to be caprovid, pig or small cervid), and totally unidentifiable. Subjective records were made of the state of preservation and semi-quantitative information was recorded concerning dog gnawing, burning, butchery, and fresh breakage, where present.

Results

Sediment samples

All the samples yielded residues of sand and gravel with a little coal and (with one exception in each case) charcoal and ?iron pan. Identifiable *ancient* plant remains were lacking apart from a single barley grain from the sample from Context 5005. The results are presented in Table 1 together with archaeological information provided by the excavator (given in square brackets). No invertebrate remains were recovered from the samples.

Hand-collected vertebrate remains

Only 31 fragments of bone, of which 11 could be identified to species, were recovered from the two excavated trenches. Details of the remains by context can be found in Table 2.

The vertebrate assemblage was of reasonable preservation but much fragmented by recent breakage. Dog gnawing was common. Cattle, sheep/goat and horse were all present within the assemblage, together with two fragments identified as dog. The proximal articulation of a cattle metatarsal showed evidence of pathological change associated with an arthritic condition. The articular surface had been destroyed by extensive pitting. This could have resulted from the use of the animal for traction.

Discussion and statement of potential

The identified ancient plant remains recovered were of no interpretative value, and the prospects for assemblages of plant remains from other deposits at this site appear poor.

The very small vertebrate assemblage was of no interpretative value.

Recommendations

No further work on the current material is warranted.

Preservation of plant remains by charring can be patchy and future excavations at this site should allow for the collection and assessment of further material to check that useful macrofossils have not been missed.

The good preservation of the bones shows that there is some potential for their survival in these deposits and this should be borne in mind should additional excavation be undertaken in the area.

Retention and disposal

The material in hand can be discarded if not needed for any other purpose.

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.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to John Tibbles, Trevor Brigham and Sophie Tibbles of Humber Field Archaeology for providing the material and the archaeological information.

Allan Hall wishes to thank English Heritage for permission to undertake this evaluation.

References

- Dobney, K., Hall, A. R., Kenward, H. K. and Milles, A. (1992). A working classification of sample types for environmental archaeology. *Circaea, the Journal of the Association for Environmental Archaeology* **9** (for 1991), 24-6.
- Kenward, H. K., Hall, A. R. and Jones, A. K. G. (1980). A tested set of techniques for the extraction of plant and animal macrofossils from waterlogged archaeological deposits. *Science and Archaeology* **22**, 3-15.
- Kenward, H. K., Engleman, C., Robertson, A. and Large, F. (1986). Rapid scanning of urban archaeological deposits for insect remains. *Circaea* **3**, 163-172.

Table 1. Summary of sediment samples from excavations at East Lane, Siggleshorne. Key: C = context number; S = sample number; Rem. (l) = approximate volume of unprocessed sediment remaining.

C	S	Sediment description	Processing	Rem. (l)	Context information and notes
1010	4/T	Just moist, mid grey-brown, brittle to stiff (working more or less plastic), ?slightly sandy clay, with some stones (6 to 20 mm) and modern rootlets present.	2 kg sieved to 300 microns with washover	15	[secondary ditch fill in 1009, Iron Age to early medieval] A very small washover of a few cm ³ of modern roots, iron-concreted sediment (?iron pan) in tiny rounded clasts, and traces of coal and charcoal (to 2 mm); a small residue of about 65 cm ³ of ?iron pan, sand and a little gravel (to 5 mm).
1011	5/T	Moist, mid grey-brown (with a slight orange cast), crumbly (working more or less plastic), sandy clay, with some modern rootlets.	2 kg sieved to 300 microns with washover	20	[primary ditch fill in 1009, ?early medieval] The tiny washover contained some modern roots and one tiny (<3 mm) charred tuber (a little like lesser celandine, <i>Ranunculus ficaria</i> L.); the moderately large residue of about 180 cm ³ sand and gravel (to 5 mm) and ?iron pan.
2009	2/T	Just moist, mid grey-brown, crumbly (working more or less plastic), sandy clay, with some stones (2 to 6 mm) and modern rootlets.	2 kg sieved to 300 microns with washover	25	[ditch fill in 2010, medieval] The small washover of about 20 cm ³ was of coal and cinder with a little charcoal (to 5 mm), modern roots and fresh-looking modern stinging nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i> L.) achenes; the rather large residue of about 260 cm ³ was of sand and gravel (including flint, to 35 mm) and some ?iron pan.
2011	3/T	Just moist, mid grey-brown, crumbly (working soft), sandy silty clay (to clay silt). Modern rootlets and a pot sherd were present.	2 kg sieved to 300 microns with washover	2	[slot fill in 2021, medieval] Very small washover of a few cm ³ : coal, charcoal (to 2 mm), a few modern goosegrass (<i>Galium aparine</i> L.) fruits and modern roots; a large residue of about 250 cm ³ sand and gravel with traces of pot and ?brick/tile.
2013	1/T	Moist, mid grey-brown, brittle to crumbly (working more or less plastic), sandy clay, with some stones (2 to 20 mm), charcoal and modern rootlets.	2 kg sieved to 300 microns with washover	30	[ditch fill in 2014, medieval] A small washover of charcoal (to 10 mm), including one charred barley (<i>Hordeum</i>) grain and traces of other charred material which may include some other seeds or grain. Other components included modern roots and fragments of unidentified bone. The large residue of about 270 cm ³ consisted of sand and gravel (to 30 mm).

Table 2. Summary of hand-collected bone by context from excavations at East Lane, Sigglesthorne.
Key: C = context number.

C	Context type and date	No. of fragments	Notes
2000	Unstratified	2	Preservation: Good, some traces of dog gnawing. <i>Cow</i> : pelvis fragment – chopped and damaged by fresh breakage <i>Dog</i> : scapula – fox-sized but morphologically has greater similarities to dog
2004	Subsoil 15 th -16 th century (some 10 th /11 th century sherds)	6	Preservation: mostly good – two eroded fragments <i>Horse</i> : metacarpal (measurable) <i>Cow</i> : humerus (measurable) – dog gnawed; upper molar (brittle and broken) <i>Large mammal</i> : ulna fragment – eroded <i>Medium-sized mammal</i> : 2 shaft fragments
2009	Ditch fill 14 th -16 th century	5	Preservation: Good, some fresh breakage damage <i>Dog</i> : tibia shaft fragment <i>Large mammal</i> : scapula fragment (1); pelvis fragments from the same bone (3)
2013	Ditch fill 13 th -14 th century	18	Preservation: Fair to good, much fresh breakage damage <i>Cow</i> : metatarsal – proximal articulation destroyed by pitting – arthritic condition; metatarsal fragment (heavily dog gnawed); radius – distal epiphysis unfused <i>Sheep/goat</i> : scapula (measurable) <i>Large mammal</i> : cranium fragments (3); juvenile mandible fragment (1); rib fragments (5) <i>Medium-sized mammal</i> : shaft fragments (4)