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Notes on the biological remains from excavations at The Gardens, Sprotborough (site code: OSA01EV07)

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation excavation was carried out by On-Site Archaeology at The Gardens, Sprotborough.

A single sediment sample ('GBA'/'BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al*. 1992) and three small bags of hand-collected bone (one of which was of unstratified remains), were recovered from the deposits.

All of the material was submitted to the EAU for an evaluation of its bioarchaeological potential.

Methods

Sediment sample

The sediment sample was inspected in the laboratory and its lithology 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 washover and residue were examined for plant remains and other biological and artefactual remains.

Vertebrate remains

All of the stratified bone was recorded; subjective records were made of preservation, angularity (i.e. the nature of the broken surfaces) and colour. Where possible, fragments were identified to species or species group, using the reference collection at the EAU. Fragments not identifiable to species were grouped into a single 'unidentified' category.

Results

Sediment sample

Context 4004
Sample 100 (3 kg sieved to 300 microns with washover)

This sample yielded a moderate-sized residue of about 250 cm^3 which consisted almost entirely of sand and angular gravel (to 80 mm) with some modern woody roots and a trace of bone (to 25 mm). The very small washover of about 30 cm^3 consisted mainly of charcoal and rather puffed and eroded charred cereal grains with more modern roots and some charred (weed) and uncharred (modern) seeds. The cereal grains consisted mainly of oats (*Avena*) and bread/club wheat (*Triticum 'aestivo-compactum'*) with traces of barley (*Hordeum*). The charred weed seeds were mainly stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula* L.) with a small range of other taxa. There were also a few small (<2 mm) charred legume seeds, probably a *Vicia* species.

Vertebrate remains

A total of twenty fragments of bone were recovered from two stratified deposits (Contexts 4004 and 9000) from this site. Preservation was good, although two fragments from Context 4004 were rather battered in appearance and heavily dog gnawed. The major domesticates, cattle, caprovids and pig were all identified. No other species were present.

Context 4004 (Trench 4)

Preservation: Fair
Angularity: Variable - some battered fragments
Colour: Variable - fawn and brown

Pig: 1 maxilla with teeth *in situ*.
Unidentified: 2 large-sized mammal rib fragments, 2 large-sized mammal femur fragments (heavily dog gnawed) and 1 medium-sized mammal scapula fragment.

Weights
Identified: 27.7g
Unidentified: 113.4g

Context 9000 (Trench 9)

Preservation: Good
Angularity: Spikey
Colour: Brown

Cow: 1 maxillary molar, 1 mandibular M1 and 1 P4 (broken).
Caprovid: 1 radius (distal unfused), 1 maxillary M3.
Pig: 1 mandible (P4-M2), 2 incisors, 1 canine (male).
Unidentified: 1 medium-sized mammal shaft fragments, 1 medium-sized mammal rib fragment, 2 large-sized mammal shaft fragments (heavily dog gnawed) and 1 medium-sized mammal scapula fragment.

Weights
Identified: 118.8g
Unidentified: 32.7g

Discussion and statement of potential

The assemblage of plant remains recovered from the sample is of no particular value except inasmuch as archaeological plant remains from this area of Yorkshire are extremely sparse. Vertebrate remains were rather scarce from the deposits and the site shows little potential for the recovery of a useful assemblage.

Recommendations

No further work is required on this sample but, if the context can be dated closely and accurately, a basic record should be made as part of the archive. Other suitable contexts in the area may be worth examining for charred plant remains if they are at risk from development. Insufficient bone fragments were recovered for meaningful interpretation of the deposits and no further work is warranted on this material.

References

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.