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Notes on biological remains from excavations at land off Little Wold Lane, South Cave, Humberside (site code: KINCM 2000.223)

by

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Introduction

An archaeological evaluation excavation was carried out by York Archaeological Trust at land off Little Wold Lane, South Cave, Humberside (NGR SE 9240 3150) in July 2001.

Five sediment samples ('GBA'/'BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al*. 1992) and very small quantities of hand-collected shell and bone were recovered from the deposits. Preliminary interpretation of the evidence gave dates of Iron Age/Romano-British to late 18th century for the deposits.

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

Methods

Sediment samples and hand-collected shell

Five samples were submitted and examined in the laboratory. Visual examination suggested that the samples were unlikely to yield useful quantities of biological remains. Two samples, Sample 4 (Context 3003) and Sample 5 (Context 3008), had been reported by the excavator as containing snails, however. The lithologies of these two sediment samples were recorded, using a standard *pro forma*, prior to processing, following the procedures of Kenward *et al*. (1980), for recovery of plant and invertebrate macrofossils. The washovers and residues were examined for biological and artefactual remains. In addition, small quantities of hand-collected snail remains were recovered from Contexts 3003, 4000 (unstratified) and 4004 and these were identified as closely as possible.

Hand-collected vertebrate remains

For each context subjective records were made of the state of preservation and the appearance of broken surfaces ('angularity'). 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 categories: large mammal (assumed to be cattle, horse or large cervid) and medium-sized mammal (assumed to be caprovid, pig or small cervid).

Results

Sediment samples

The results are presented in context number order. Archaeological information, provided by the excavator, is given in square brackets.

Context 3003 [Iron Age/Romano-British ditch fill]
Sample 4/T (0.9 kg sieved to 300 microns with washover)

Just moist, light to mid slightly orangish brown, crumbly to unconsolidated, slightly sandy clay silt with fragments of chalk (2 to 30 mm) and modern rootlets present.

All of the submitted sample was processed. The residue was of sand and chalk (to 30 mm) with an occasional fragment of flint (to 15 mm). The washover was mostly fine sand and modern rootlets with a small number of land snails and snail shell fragments. All of the identified snails were *Vallonia* sp. but there was at least one other unidentified species present.

Context 3008 [Iron Age/Romano-British ditch fill]
Sample 5/T (1 kg sieved to 300 microns with washover)

Moist, light to mid orange-brown, crumbly (working soft and somewhat plastic), slightly sandy clay silt.

All of the submitted sample was processed. The residue was mostly sand with a few stones (including chalk, to 10mm) and small pieces of concreted sediment (to 8 mm). The washover was of fine sand and very small (approximately 1 mm) granules of undisaggregated sediment with a few modern rootlets and a single fragment of the burrowing land snail *Cecilioides acicula* (Müller).

Hand-collected shell

All of the very few hand-collected snails were highly fragmented but could be identified as either *Cepaea*/*Arianta* sp. or *Helix* sp.

Hand-collected vertebrate remains

A very small quantity of vertebrate material (seven fragments) was recovered from four contexts, three of which represented clearance layers or unstratified material. The fourth, a fill from a large flat bottomed ditch produced a single fragment. Preservation of the remains was quite good, although most of the bone surfaces were damaged by root etching. Further details regarding the recovered remains can be found in Table 1.

Discussion and statement of potential

The few snail remains recovered from this site were of no interpretative value.

The current vertebrate assemblage does not warrant further examination. It is unlikely, on the basis of the remains from the current excavations, that deposits in this area would produce a substantial assemblage of bone.

If the current material is representative, the potential for study of biological remains from this site is very low.

Recommendations

No further work is recommended on the current material.

Retention and disposal

The current material may be discarded.

Archive

All material is currently stored in the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York, along with paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here.

Acknowledgements

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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.

Table 1. Hand-collected vertebrate remains from land off Little Wold Lane, South Cave.

Context	No. of fragments	Notes	Weight (g)
3000	1	1 large ?goat radius - sawn across shaft. Rather battered and rounded.	37
3003	1	1 large-sized mammal shaft fragment - root etched.	16.7
6000	3	1 large-sized mammal rib fragment - sawn across either end; 1medium-sized mammal humerus shaft fragment; 1 cow metacarpal shaft fragment. Root etched and rather battered.	84
7000	2	1 medium-sized mammal shaft fragment; 1 cow maxillary molar.	47