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Evaluation of the biological remains from Barton Street, Barrow on Humber (Site code BRBD.1)

by

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Summary

Six sediment samples and a small box of animal bones, from deposits of early medieval to modern date, were presented for analysis to determine their bioarchaeological potential.

The single sample processed contained few biological remains and provided no useful information.

The vertebrate assemblage was extremely small and of variable preservation, and thus it was of no interpretative significance.

Keywords: BARTON STREET, BARROW UPON HUMBER, VERTEBRATES, SEDIMENT SAMPLE, PLANT REMAINS

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Introduction

An evaluation excavation was carried out by York Archaeological Trust at Barton Street, Barrow upon Humber, during November and December 1997. Six sediment samples and one box, containing 9 small bags, of animal bones were presented to the EAU for analysis of their bioarchaeological potential.

Methods

Sediment samples

All six samples were examined in the laboratory, and on the basis of this inspection no further action was considered appropriate for five of the samples. A description of the lithology was recorded using a standard *pro forma* for sample 4 (Context 1017). A 3 kg subsample was sieved to 300 μ m, a washover recovered and the residue dried.

Vertebrate remains

The vertebrate remains were examined and a basic archive produced (see Appendix). A record was made of preservation, quantities (numbers and weights) and identifications where appropriate.

Results

Sediment sample

Context 1017 sample 4/T

A moist, mid-dark grey-brown, sandy clay silt with a crumbly to unconsolidated texture. Stones were present at the 2-6 and 6-20mm scales, and included flint. Modern rootlets were observed.

The washover contained a few modern rootlets, charcoal fragments, a single charred cereal grain and a single elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) seed.

The residue was composed mainly of very small and small stones and sand, with slag and charcoal fragments present (<1% each). Five snail shells were recovered, two *Oxychilus* sp, two unidentified land snails and a single freshwater snail probably *Hydrobia* sp. Also present were nine animal bone fragments, including a small mammal incisor.

Vertebrate remains

Preservation overall was variable, most fragments being recorded as in either 'poor' or 'fair' condition. Colour was also recorded as variable, although most fragments were 'fawn' or 'light brown'. The angularity (appearance of the broken surfaces) was recorded as slightly 'battered'. Evidence of dog gnawing, fresh breakage and butchery was present on a few fragments (0-10%). No evidence of

burning was noted.

A total of 33 fragments (weighing 590.7 g) was recovered, of which 14 were identified to species. These included the main domesticates, i.e. cattle, caprovid, horse and pig.

Discussion and statement of potential

Sediment samples

After initial laboratory inspection, the bioarchaeological potential of five of the sediment samples was considered extremely low and, hence, no further action was taken. The one sample processed was of limited potential, yielding only a few fragments each of charcoal, seeds, molluscs and bone. The extremely small quantities present in each of these categories render this material of no interpretative value.

Vertebrate assemblage

The extremely small size of the vertebrate assemblage, combined with the variable preservation and limited dating information render this material of no interpretative value.

There is no potential for additional useful work on this material and further excavation is unlikely to recover sufficient quantity or quality of material for more than a basic archive to be produced.

Recommendations

It is recommended that if further excavation is to be carried out, sediment sampling should only be undertaken if more organic or anoxic waterlogged deposits are encountered. Provision should be made for recovery of a small quantity of bone and production of a basic archive.

Retention and Disposal

Both the sediment samples and the vertebrate remains may be disposed of as they are of extremely limited potential.

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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Appendix

Vertebrate remains from Barton Street, Barrow upon Humber

Context 1011

1 sheep/goat humerus
4 medium sized mammal unidentifiable
Weight = 44.9 g

1 pig canine
1 medium sized mammal fragment
Weight = 6.1 g

Context 1017

1 sheep horncore (chopped)
1 cattle cranium fragment
1 cattle humerus
7 large mammal unidentifiable
Weight = 198.6 g

Context 1018

1 pig radius (measurable)
1 cow M1/M2 (broken)
Weight = 27.0 g

Context 2005

1 horse lateral metapodial
2 large mammal unidentifiable
Weight = 40.4 g

Context 2007

1 cow humerus
1 cow astragalus (measurable)
2 sheep/goat tibia (both measurable)
1 large mammal unidentifiable
2 medium sized mammal unidentifiable
Weight = 266.6 g

Context 3011

1 large mammal unidentifiable
Weight = 2.6 g

Context 3013

1 horse incisor
Weight = 3.4 g

Context 3031

2 unidentifiable
Weight = 1.1 g

Context 3037