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**An evaluation of biological remains from excavations at Royal Chase,  
Tadcaster Road, Dringhouses, York (site code: 1997.186)**

by

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**Summary**

*Three samples of sediment and three small bags of hand-collected bone from deposits of post medieval and ?Romano-British date excavated at Royal Chase, Tadcaster Road, York, were submitted for an evaluation of their potential for bioarchaeological analysis.*

*The sediment samples were effectively barren of interpretable ancient plant and invertebrate remains.*

*Similarly, the tiny bone assemblage was of no interpretative value.*

**Keywords:** ROYAL CHASE; TADCASTER ROAD; YORK; EVALUATION; POST MEDIEVAL; ?ROMANO-BRITISH; PLANT REMAINS; VERTEBRATE REMAINS

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## **An evaluation of biological remains from excavations at Royal Chase, Tadcaster Road, Dringhouses, York (site code: 1997.186)**

### **Introduction**

Excavations at Royal Chase, Tadcaster Road, York, undertaken in December 1997 by York Archaeological Trust, revealed deposits of post medieval and ?Roman-British date in one trench. Three samples of sediment and three small bags of hand-collected bone from these deposits have been examined to evaluate their bioarchaeological potential.

### **Methods**

#### *Sediment samples*

Three samples of sediment ('GBAs' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) were submitted. The samples were inspected in the laboratory and a description of their lithologies recorded using a standard *pro forma*. A subsamples of 2 kg was taken from one of the samples for extraction of macrofossil remains, following procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986).

Plant macrofossils were examined from the residue and washover resulting from processing, and the washover was examined for invertebrate remains.

None of the samples were deemed suitable for examination for microfossils.

Artefacts were removed from the residues to be returned to the excavator.

#### *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**

#### *The sediment samples*

The results of the investigations are presented in context number order with information provided by the excavator in brackets.

**Context 1006** [?Romano-British fill of large cut feature]

Sample 2 (description only)

Moist, light to mid, slightly greyish brown, crumbly (working plastic in parts), very slightly silty sand (with localised patches more silty or with some clay).

No further analysis of this sample was undertaken.

**Context 1056** [post medieval ?old turfline]

Sample 1 (2 kg washover)

Moist, dark grey brown, crumbly (working slightly plastic), ?slightly humic, slightly sandy silt with some very decayed woody root and patches of white powdery mould.

The washover comprised roughly equal amounts of modern rootlets, ash, wood fragments, glassy slag and quartz sand.

The small residue was mostly quartz sand with some brick/tile fragments, modern rootlets, ash, glassy slag. Single fragments of seeds of elder (*Sambucus nigra* L.) and stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica* L.) were also noted.

The recovered remains are insufficient to allow any interpretation of this deposit.

**Context 1058** [post medieval accumulation overlying a deposit of sand washed into a quarry cut]

Sample 3 (description only)

Moist, mid to dark, greyish brown, crumbly (working slightly plastic), sandy silt/silty sand. Some of the larger lumps of sediment were darker internally. The degree of oxidisation of the deposit showed considerable local variation. Patches of white powdery mould were noted.

No further analysis of this sample was undertaken.

This appears to be a natural accumulation layer.

#### *Vertebrate remains*

Preservation overall was described as 'poor', with colour recorded as 'fawn' and angularity (appearance of the broken surfaces) as 'battered'. Evidence of dog gnawing and fresh breakage was present on a few fragments (0-10%). No evidence of burning or butchery was noted.

A total of 12 fragments (weighing 53.3 g) was recovered, of which a single fragment was identified to species (a cattle tooth fragment). Five fragments were from a possible Romano-British ditch whilst the remainder were from a medieval or post-medieval ditch. The appearance of the material is remarkably similar between periods.

### **Discussion and statement of potential**

The samples were almost devoid of ancient plant and invertebrate remains.

The extremely small size of the vertebrate assemblage, combined with the poor preservation and limited dating

information, renders the current 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 of any recovered vertebrate remains to be produced.

### **Recommendations**

Should further excavation be undertaken then provision should be made for recovery of a small quantity of bone and production of a basic archive.

### **Retention and disposal**

All remaining sediment samples may be discarded unless they are to be sieved for artefact recovery.

The bone assemblage should be retained for the present.

### **Archive**

All extracted fossils from the test subsamples, and the residues and flots are currently stored in the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York, along with paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here.

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## **Appendix**

*The vertebrate remains from Royal Chase, Tadcaster Road, Dringhouses, York (1997.186)*

### **Context 1006**

1 cattle tooth fragment  
4 large mammal fragments  
Weight = 20.6g

### **Context 1053**

3 medium sized mammal fragments  
Weight = 8.1g

### **Context 1055**

3 medium sized mammal fragments  
1 large mammal fragment  
Weight = 24.6g