

**Notes on the biological remains from Rievaulx Abbey, North Yorkshire
(Site code EH 1999.165)**

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Introduction

A small quantity of bone was recovered during a watching brief at Rievaulx Abbey, North Yorkshire. The material came from an area of dumping of probable modern origin.

Results

Overall preservation was variable with fragments described as both poor and fair within contexts. Colour was similarly variable, ranging from beige to light brown, angularity (appearance of broken surfaces) ranging from battered to rounded. Dog gnawing was noted on a few fragments and fresh breakage was evident on 20-50 % of the assemblage.

A total of 36 bone fragments (weighing 859 g) and a single oyster shell (7.8 g) were recovered from four contexts. Seventeen of the vertebrate fragments were identifiable to species and included cattle, caprovid (including fragments identified as sheep), fallow deer (*Dama dama* (L.)) and dog.

Context 3001

1 cow radius
Weight = 17.6 g

Context 6001

1 oyster shell - right hand valve
Weight = 7.8 g

Context 7001

1 cow pelvis
1 caprovid radius (measurable)
1 ?fallow deer scapula
5 large mammal ribs
1 large mammal vertebral spine
Weight = 220.2 g

Context 7002

1 caprovid radius (measurable)
1 sheep tibia (measurable)
1 cow radius (measurable)
1 cow ulna
1 cow 1st phalanx
2 cow pelvis fragments
1 medium-sized mammal shaft fragment
1 large mammal vertebra fragment
4 large mammal ribs
1 unidentified
Weight = 389.8 g

Context 7019

1 fallow deer radius
1 sheep pelvis
1 small dog femur
1 cow radius
1 cow horncore/cranium fragment
1 cow humerus (chopped)
2 large mammal shaft
1 medium sized mammal shaft
2 large mammal rib
1 bird shaft
Weight = 231.4 g

Comments

The vertebrate remains recovered from Rievaulx Abbey watching brief amounted to a very small assemblage, with few fragments of use in further analysis. As such, the material has no potential for further work, particularly in view of the uncertain dating of the deposits.

The presence of fallow deer is interesting as these animals were considered a high status foodstuff, particularly in the medieval period. The oyster shell showed damage characteristic of having been opened using a knife or similar implement, giving positive indication of human consumption.