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**Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at 22A Quay Street,
Scarborough (site code: QS96)**

by

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Summary

Two samples of sediment from medieval deposits revealed by excavations at Quay Street, Scarborough, were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential. Context 204 produced a small quantity of well-preserved fish remains, and a small assemblage of mostly synanthropic insects was recovered from Context 212. The few plant remains were of little interpretative value.

Well-preserved fish remains of Medieval date are rare from this area and it is highly likely that further excavation would recover a larger collection of useful material.

It is recommended that any deposits remaining at the site should not be destroyed without appropriate excavation and sampling.

Keywords: QUAY STREET; SCARBOROUGH; EVALUATION; MEDIEVAL; PLANT REMAINS; CHARRED PLANT REMAINS; INSECTS; VERTEBRATE REMAINS; FISH REMAINS

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Introduction

Excavations were carried out by Scarborough Archaeological Society at 22A Quay Street, Scarborough, during 1996. Two General Biological Analysis samples ('GBAs' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) were submitted for an evaluation of their biological potential; one sample came from a putative floor deposit and the other was from a layer interpreted as a domestic dump. Both deposits were of medieval date.

Methods

The material was initially inspected in the laboratory. A 3 kg subsample was taken from each of the GBAs for extraction of macrofossil remains, following procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986). The remaining material was retained as vouchers.

The washovers and residues resulting from processing were examined for their content of plant and invertebrate macrofossils, and animal bone. Notes were made on the quantity of fossils and principal taxa.

Results and discussion

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

Sample 2041/T, Context 204

[?domestic refuse]

3 kg processed

Moist, moderately heterogeneous; mid-dark slightly orange grey/brown clay sand; light-mid orange brown sandy, stony clay (?till) - mottled grey in places; a little grey clay silt. Overall texture was plastic. Charcoal was present.

The small flot consisted mostly of charcoal (to 8 mm), with a few fragments of plant debris, a mite (*Acarina* sp.), and two fragments of fish bone.

The moderate-sized residue consisted largely of quartz sand and gravel with fish bone to 50 mm, coal to 20 mm and cinder to 30 mm. There were a few stones to 50 mm and traces of crustacean (?crab) and marine mollusc (winkle, *Littorina* sp.) shell, together with a few fragments of charcoal to 10 mm.

The residue produced a small number of well preserved fish remains. These were mostly gadid fragments, including the remains of haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus* (L.)), a very large ?cod (cf. *Gadus morhua* L.) articular, and a few vertebrae from both large and small individuals. Fifty-nine fish teeth were also recovered of which one was identified as thornback ray (*Raja clavata* L.). The rest remain unidentified to species but represent other cartilaginous fish (Elasmobranchii). Additionally, two fragments of reptile bone were recorded, one possibly being a lizard (*Lacerta* spp.) mandible.

Sample 2121/T, Context 212

[?floor layers]

Moist to wet, varicoloured (light-mid grey/brown to dark grey), crumbly (working plastic), ?slightly humic, clay sand. Occasional lumps had internal lamination. Charcoal and fragments of marine mollusc were present.

The small flot, which contained mostly plant detritus and a little charcoal (to 7 mm), yielded a few seeds and a small assemblage of insects. Most of the beetle remains were of synanthropic species, such as *Tipnus unicolor* (Piller & Mitterpacher), *Oryzaephilus surinamensis* (Linnaeus), *Mycetaea hirta* (Marsham), and *Xylodromus concinnus* (Marsham). Other insect remains included an abdominal segment of a flea (Siphonaptera) and several dipterous puparia. The assemblage suggested a range of conditions, rather damp and with at least some organic detritus. There were hints of foul matter and a single newly emerged ?*Apion* sp.. If the identification of the latter is correct, it (together with other elements of the fauna) offer a very slight hint that stable manure was present, or perhaps had been trampled into the building.

The rather small residue was mostly quartz sand, gravel, coal (to 15 mm) and charcoal (also to 15 mm). There were small numbers of fish scales and bones and a few charred and uncharred plant remains, mostly weeds of disturbed places or cultivated land and of little interpretative value. A charred shoot tip and an uncharred leaf of heather or ling (*Calluna vulgaris* (L.) Hull) may point to the use of this plant as fuel, although the evidence is scant!

Fish remains from this residue were not as numerous as those for Context 204, but again included gadid fragments, together

with a single pleuronectid (flatfish) vertebra and a herring (*Clupea harengus* L.) otic bulla.

Statement of potential

The presence of well preserved fish remains, particularly from Context 204, suggests that a moderate to large assemblage would be recovered should further excavation and systematic sampling (including bulk-sieving, *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) be undertaken in this area. Few assemblages of medieval date have been recovered from this region and systematically recovered fish bone assemblages of this date are rare.

General comparisons could be made with material from sites in Hull (Scott 1993a, 1993b; Spencer 1993) and Grimsby (unpublished data), the inland sites at Lurk Lane and Eastgate, both in Beverley (Scott 1991, 1992) and sites in York such as Fishergate (O'Connor 1991).

Analysis of insect and plant remains would contribute to a reconstruction of living conditions at this site, and to a wider synthesis.

In view of the small number of excavations that have taken place in Scarborough during the past decade (Pearson 1995) all emphasis should be placed on the additional information about the waterfront of Scarborough which the present site can contribute.

Recommendations

If further excavations take place on this site then every effort should be made to investigate any revealed deposits including an intensive regime of sampling. The

deposits certainly should not be damaged by development without proper excavation and sampling, and commensurate funding for post-excavation analysis should be made available.

Retention and disposal

Any sediment remaining from these samples should be retained for future research. All washovers and residues should be retained in the longer term.

Archive

All extracted fossils 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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