

*Reports from the Environmental Archaeology Unit, York 96/50, 4pp. + 1 pp. Appendix*

**An evaluation of biological remains from excavations at Rectory Lane,  
Beeford (site code: RLB96)**

by

John Carrott, Allan Hall, Michael Issitt, Deborah Jaques and Frances Large.

**Summary**

*Sediment samples and hand-collected animal bone from excavations at Rectory Lane, Beeford, were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential. The material was associated with an Iron Age ditch and a late 18th-20th century rectory.*

*The biological remains recovered from the sediment samples were limited in quantity and of little interpretative value.*

*The interpretative value of the vertebrate assemblage is extremely limited because of its very small size.*

**Keywords:** RECTORY LANE; BEEFORD; EVALUATION; IRON AGE; SEDIMENT SAMPLES; VERTEBRATE REMAINS; MOLLUSC REMAINS; PLANT REMAINS; INVERTEBRATE REMAINS

Authors' address:

Palaeoecology Research Services  
Environmental Archaeology Unit  
University of York  
Heslington  
York YO1 5DD

Prepared for:

Humber Archaeology Partnership  
The Old School  
Northumberland Avenue  
Hull HU2 0LN

Telephone: (01904) 433846/433843/434487  
Fax: (01904) 433850

20 December 1996

## An evaluation of biological remains from excavations at Rectory Lane, Beeford (site code: RLB96)

### Introduction

During November 1996 Humber Archaeology Partnership undertook excavations at Rectory Lane, Beeford, about 10 km ESE of Great Driffield, East Yorkshire. Four trenches were excavated, two (Trenches 3 and 4) through a late Iron Age ditch. Ten of the encountered contexts were from this ditch. The remainder contained modern material and were associated with the gardens of the former rectory (constructed in the late 18th century and demolished in September 1995).

Twelve sediment samples and a small assemblage of hand-collected animal bone (amounting to 1 box 39 x 16 x 15 cm), were recovered from deposits representing two of the trenches.

This report considers the bioarchaeological potential of the material submitted to the EAU for evaluation.

### Methods

All twelve samples ('GBAs' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) were inspected in the laboratory and a description of their lithology was recorded using a standard *pro forma*. Six (from six contexts) were chosen for further investigation on the basis of information supplied by the excavator and the inspection undertaken in the laboratory. Subsamples of 3 kg were taken from two of the samples (6 and 10) for extraction of macrofossil remains, following procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986).

Six samples (from four Contexts; 5, 11, 17 and 40) were bulk-sieved to 500 µm. The residues from all processed samples were sorted for finds.

All the animal bone was examined and records made of preservation, quantities and identifications where appropriate.

None of the samples were deemed suitable for examination for the eggs of parasitic nematodes or other microfossils.

### Results

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

#### *The sediment samples*

#### Trench 3

**Context 5** [Lower part of upper fill of late Iron Age ditch]

Sample 4 (Combined with Sample 3 to give 20 kg BS)

Moist, mid to dark grey brown with dark grey and light red brown mottling, crumbly (working plastic and sticky), sandy clay—locally more sandy and more clay. Small and medium-sized stones (6 to 60 mm), ?brick/tile/ash and modern rootlets were present and root traces were abundant in the sample.

The residue was mostly stones and sand with some charcoal, modern woody roots, fragments of animal bone and pot.

**Context 14** [From full depth of lower fill of late Iron Age ditch]

Sample 6 (3 kg GBA)

Moist, mid grey brown and locally light grey to mid orange brown, stiff to crumbly (working plastic), somewhat gleyed, clay silt (locally slightly sandy). The sample was permeated by root traces/invertebrate burrows and occasional modern rootlets were present.

The small washover was mostly ?modern rootlets and a little other plant detritus including a few abraded seeds. The latter included some taxa which

were certainly or probably aquatic: duckweed (*Lemna* sp.), rush (*Juncus* sp.) and water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus* Subgenus *Batrachium*). Two fragments of beetle cuticle (*Aphodius* sp.) were also noted.

#### Trench 4

**Context 16** [Lower part of primary fill of recut of late Iron Age ditch]

Sample 10 (3 kg GBA)

Similar to Sample 6 (above) but with a slightly higher clay content. Very small stones (2 to 6 mm) and fragments of land snail were present.

The small washover was mostly modern roots with a few fragments of unidentified insect cuticle, earthworm egg capsules, *Heterodera* sp. cysts and a trace of *Lemna* sp. seeds.

**Context 17** [Upper fill of recut of late Iron Age ditch]

Sample 12 (12 kg BS)

Again, similar to Sample 6 but a clay sand rather than a clay silt.

The residue was mostly stones with some coal, woody roots and fragments of animal bone.

**Context 39** [Fill of late Iron Age ditch—layer indicating natural sitling-up of the ditch]

Sample 11 (10.5 kg BS)

Once again, similar to Sample 6 but locally more clay and more sandy with frequent modern tree roots.

The residue was mostly fragments of animal bone with some coal and woody roots fragments.

**Context 40** [Upper part of fill against northern edge of original late Iron Age ditch]

Sample 7 (Combined with Sample 8 to give 22 kg BS)

Moist, mottled light grey brown and mid orange

brown on a mm-scale, crumbly (working plastic and sticky), clay sand with very small and small stones (2 to 20 mm) and modern rootlets present and abundant root traces.

The residue was mostly stones and sand with some woody roots, fragments of animal bone, pot and a very small poorly preserved snail assemblage. The latter was dominated by freshwater species indicative of slow-flowing or standing water liable to drying out (*Lymnaea stagnalis* (L.), *L. glabra* (Müller), *Valvata cristata* (Müller)). Two land snails (*Vallonia* sp.) were also noted.

#### Vertebrate remains

A very small assemblage of hand-collected animal bones was recovered. This consisted of material from only three contexts (5, 14 and 16), together containing a total of only six identifiable and 10 unidentified fragments. Preservation of the remains was mostly fair, with the broken surfaces appearing 'spiky' and the colour being recorded as brown or fawn. A few bones showed evidence of burning and fresh breakage. Most of the identifiable fragments represented the remains of cattle and caprovid (see Appendix). A few fragments of bone were recovered from the bulk-sieved samples; notes on these can also be found in the Appendix.

#### Statement of potential

The biological remains recovered from the sediment samples are of interpretative value only in so far as is noted in the preceding text. Further work on them would be unlikely to amplify the information obtained.

The vertebrate assemblage is of little interpretative value because of its very small size.

#### Recommendations

No further work is recommended on the sediment samples. If deposits with organic preservation by anoxic waterlogging or higher concentrations of charred plant material are exposed during development, however, every effort should be made to sample and investigate them.

On the basis of such a limited vertebrate assemblage it is impossible to make further recommendations regarding the potential of the material still unexcavated.

## **Retention and disposal**

There is no justification for retaining the remaining sediment, but the bone assemblage should be kept.

## **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**

The authors are grateful to Humber Archaeology Partnership for providing this material and to English Heritage for allowing AH to contribute to this work.

## **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., Engleman, C., Robertson, A., and Large, F. (1986). Rapid scanning of urban archaeological deposits for insect remains. *Circaea* **3** (for 1985), 163-72.

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.

## Appendix

### Notes on vertebrate remains from Rectory Lane, Beeford

#### Context 5

Preservation: fair  
Colour: fawn  
Angularity: spiky

*Cattle* - 1 scapula fragment  
*Caprovid* - M1/2  
*Unidentified* - 2 fragments

Weight of identified fragments - 44g  
Weight of unidentified fragment - 4g

#### Context 14

Preservation: fair  
Colour: fawn  
Angularity: spiky

*Caprovid* - 1 humerus and 1 tibia fragment  
*Unidentified* - 7 fragments including sheep and cow-sized shaft fragments

Weight of identified fragments - 22g  
Weight of unidentified fragments - 95g

#### Context 16

Preservation: fair  
Colour: brown  
Angularity: spiky

*Cattle* - 1 humerus and 1 M1/2  
*Unidentified* - 1 fragments.

Weight of identified fragment - 130g  
Weight of unidentified fragments - 9g

#### *Bone from bulk-sieved samples*

#### Context 5 Sample 3 + 4/BS

*Unidentified* - 3 fragments, 2 burnt

#### Context 17 Sample 12/BS

*Unidentified* - 1 sheep-sized shaft fragment

#### Context 39 Sample 11/BS

*Cattle* - 1dp4  
*Small mammal* - incisor fragment  
*Unidentified* - 30 small fragments, most are unidentifiable bird shaft fragments

#### Context 40 Sample 7 + 8/BS

*Cattle* - 2 molar enamel fragments  
*Caprovid* - 1 deciduous upper premolar, 1 metatarsal shaft (juvenile)  
*Unidentified* - 9 fragments, including cow-sized rib fragments