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**Evaluation of biological remains from York Railway Station
(sitecode: YRS)**

by

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Summary

Four sediment sample from deposits revealed by excavations at York Railway Station were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

The very few recovered biological remains were of no interpretative value.

No further work is recommended on the current material.

KEYWORDS: YORK RAILWAY STATION; YORK; NORTH YORKSHIRE; EVALUATION; ROMAN TO EARLY MODERN; CHARRED PLANT REMAINS; INVERTEBRATE REMAINS; VERTEBRATE REMAINS; HUMAN BONE

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Introduction

An archaeological excavation was carried out by Field Archaeology Specialists at York Railway Station, York, in June 1999. Four sediment samples ('GBA' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) were recovered from the deposits. Most of the pottery recovered from the deposits was of Roman date with occasional fragments from later periods (to early modern) although the pottery assessment report suggests there is a likelihood that much of the Roman pottery is from post-Roman deposits. These samples were submitted to the EAU for evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

Methods

The sediment samples were inspected in the laboratory and descriptions of their lithologies were recorded using a standard *pro forma*. Two of the samples were processed, following the procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986) for recovery of plant and invertebrate macrofossils.

Plant macrofossils were examined from the residues and washovers resulting from processing, and the washovers were examined for invertebrate remains. The residues were also examined for other biological and artefactual remains.

Table 1 shows a list of the samples and notes on their treatment.

Results

The results of the evaluation are presented in context number order. Archaeological information provided by the excavator is given in square brackets—deposits containing predominantly Roman pottery but which are suspected of being of post-Roman date are given as '?Roman'.

Context 1004 [Roman layer. ?Dump/occupation debris]

Sample 100401 (10 kg bulk sieved to 300 µm and washover)

Moist, mid brown, crumbly (working soft), slightly sandy (possibly grains from rotted mortar) slightly clay silt. Medium-sized stones (20 to 60 mm), fragments of bone, and rotted mortar were present in the sample.

The tiny washover (approx. 5 ml) was mostly charcoal (to 3 mm) with some sand, a few tiny pieces of cinder, and a few scraps of plant detritus. *Heterodera* sp. egg capsules and two fragments of invertebrate (one ?modern) were also noted.

The modest residue was mostly stones (to 80 mm) and sand with some mortar and bone, and a little coal (to 65 mm), brick/tile, pot, cinder, fragments of shellfish, and a single fragment of unidentified land snail.

The bone remains totalled sixty-four fairly well-preserved (but very fragmented) small fragments (8 of which were burnt) most of which were unidentifiable (total weight 12 g). The identifiable fragments comprised one caprovid second phalanx (appeared to be acid-etched probably by passage through the gut of a dog), one ?cat (?*Felis* f. domestic) phalanx, two herring (*Clupea harengus* L.) vertebrae and a herring quadrate, and a small mammal tibia (?mouse/vole) which appeared to be a modern contaminant.

Context 1016 [?Roman]

Sample 101601 (Description only)

Just moist, mid orange brown to mid grey brown, brittle to crumbly (working soft), sandy, clay silt to silty clay with patches of light grey clay. Medium-sized stones (20 to 60 mm) and rotted mortar were present in the sample.

No further investigation of this sample was warranted.

Context 1018 [?Roman layer. Probably represents an accumulation of dumped material]

Sample 101801 (8 kg bulk sieved to 300 µm and washover)

Moist, light to mid grey brown (locally more brown and more grey), crumbly (working soft), slightly sandy (possibly from rotted mortar) slightly clay silt with clasts of light brown clay. Rotted mortar was present in the sample.

The tiny flot (approx. 5 ml) was mostly charcoal (to 12 mm) with a little sand and two charred grains.

The modest residue was mostly stones (to 40 mm) and sand with some mortar (some fragments were painted) and bone, and a little brick/tile, pot, coal, cinder, glass, and a few unidentified shellfish fragments.

The bone was quite well-preserved (though, again, highly fragmented) comprising seventy-three small fragments (6 of which were burnt) with a total weight of 26 grammes. The identifiable remains consisted of one pig (*Sus* f. domestic) tooth fragment, one cow (*Bos* f. domestic) carpal, and four small fragments of human bone (identifiable as human by its texture but not identifiable to skeletal element).

Context 1021 [?Roman]

Sample 102101 (Description only)

Just moist, light to mid brown to mid grey brown with orange patches, crumbly (working soft and slightly plastic), very slightly sandy clay silt with medium-sized stones (20 to 60 mm) present.

No further investigation of this sample was

warranted.

Discussion and statement of potential

The recovered ancient biological remains were too few to be of interpretative value.

Recommendations

No further work is recommended on the present material. The recovered bone should be integrated with the hand-collected assemblage.

Retention and disposal

Any remaining sediment samples may be discarded unless they are to be sieved to recover any remaining bone or artefacts.

Archive

All 'environmental' material is currently stored in the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York, along with paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here. Artefacts were removed from the sample residues to be returned to the excavator.

Acknowledgements

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References

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Table 1. List of the sediment samples evaluated from York Railway Station (with notes on their treatment).

Context	Sample*	Notes
1004	100401	10 kg bulk sieved to 300 µm and washover
1016	101601	Description only
1018	101801	8 kg bulk sieved to 300 µm and washover
1021	103101	Description only

* - EAU internal reference number