

Palaeoecology Research Services

**Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at
site OSA02WB23 East Riding of Yorkshire
(site code: OSA02WB23)**

by

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PRS 2002/42

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Summary

Two sediment samples (selected from four collected) recovered from excavations of deposits of late prehistoric to post-medieval date at a site on the Transco West Hull reinforcement pipeline (centred on TA 01500 34500), in the East Riding of Yorkshire, were submitted to PRS for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

The peat deposit (Context 1004), consisting of wood, bark and other debris, was clearly from an alder carr and adjacent woodland.

The material from Context 1004 would be suitable for dating by either accelerator mass spectroscopy (of contained fossils), or standard radiometric dating of a whole-sediment subsample, if this would be of interpretative value; AMS dating of contained fossils being the preferred option.

There does not seem to be any value either in recording the present material in more detail or in pursuing further analyses for these samples unless there are clear archaeological questions to address.

KEYWORDS: SITE OSA02WB23; EAST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE; EVALUATION; LATE PREHISTORIC TO POST-MEDIEVAL; PLANT REMAINS; CHARRED PLANT REMAINS; PEAT; CHARRED GRAIN; INVERTEBRATE REMAINS

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4 December 2002

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Introduction

An archaeological evaluation excavation was carried out by On-Site Archaeology, at a site in the East Riding of Yorkshire (centred on NGR SE 95076 28293), between April and July 2002, as part of a series of interventions along the route of the Transco West Hull reinforcement gas pipeline.

Two samples, from a ?fire pit (in Field 35) and a buried peat horizon (in Field 65), were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

The encountered deposits could only be dated very broadly to between the late prehistoric and post-medieval periods.

Methods

The submitted sediment samples were inspected in the laboratory and their lithologies were recorded, following a standard *pro forma*, prior to processing, employing the procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986), for recovery of plant and invertebrate macrofossils.

The flot, washover and residues resulting from processing were examined for plant and invertebrate macrofossils. The residues were examined for larger plant macrofossils, bone, and other biological and artefactual remains.

Results

The results are presented by Field and context number. Archaeological information, provided by the excavator, is given in square brackets. A brief summary of the processing method and an estimate of the remaining volume of

unprocessed sediment follows (in round brackets) after the sample numbers.

Field 35

Context 1010 [fill of ?fire pit]

Sample 1/T (1 kg sieved to 300 microns with washover; approximately 3 litres of unprocessed sediment remain)

Just moist, mottled light to mid grey-brown, crumbly to unconsolidated (working soft and somewhat plastic), silty clay to clay silt. Stones (2 to 6 mm), fine charcoal (and larger charcoal fragments to 8 mm), and traces of modern rootlets were present.

The moderately large washover of about 50 cm³ was of rather 'silted' charcoal (to 25 mm) including some which was oak (*Quercus*).

The very small residue (0.07 kg) was of small stones (1 to 8 mm).

Field 65

Context 1004 [buried peat horizon]

Sample 1/T (1 kg sieved to 300 microns with paraffin flotation; approximately 25 litres of unprocessed sediment remain)

The sediment of this sample ranged (across 3 separate tubs) from a moist to wet, fairly well-humified peat with abundant fine and coarse woody/herbaceous detritus and some large (to 30 mm across) pieces of woody ?root, to a moist, varicoloured (from light yellow-brown through shades of grey-brown and grey to mid to dark grey), sticky (working soft), clay silt with abundant organic detritus (as of the first described component).

The processed subsample was taken from the most organically rich tub.

The very small flot of fine plant detritus contained a few scraps of invertebrate material of which the only identifiable specimen was an elytron of an *Ochthebius* water beetle.

The large residue of about 300 cm³ was a mixture of woody and herbaceous detritus most of the woody part of which appeared to be of alder (and consistent with the formation of this deposit in alder carr), though there were some immature fruits of lime (*Tilia*) indicating the

presence of woodland on drier soils nearby. Other woody taxa represented were oak and hazel (bud-scales). The only herbaceous taxon identified was gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus* L.) a species likely to have grown in alder carr; the absence of other herbs perhaps indicates a dense canopy, though such woody detritus peats of this kind are notable for having low concentrations of fruits and seeds, perhaps a function of the swamping effects of a high input of woody debris.

Discussion and statement of potential

The peat deposit (Context 1004), consisting of wood, bark and other debris, was clearly from an alder carr and adjacent woodland.

There does not seem to be any value either in recording the present material in more detail or in pursuing further analyses for these samples unless there are clear archaeological questions to address.

The material from Context 1004 would be suitable for dating by either accelerator mass spectroscopy (of contained fossils), or standard radiometric dating of a whole-sediment subsample, if this would be of interpretative value; AMS dating of contained fossils being the preferred option.

Recommendations

No further work on the current material is recommended unless dating of material from Context 1004 would provide information of use in the interpretation of other (non-environmental) aspects of the site, or there are specific archaeological questions to be addressed.

Retention and disposal

All of the current material should be retained for the present.

Archive

All material is currently stored by Palaeoecology Research Services (Unit 8, Dabble Duck Industrial Estate, Shildon, County Durham), along with paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Nick Pearson and Anthony Dickson of On-Site Archaeology for providing the material and the archaeological information. Allan Hall and Harry Kenward wish to thank English Heritage for permission to undertake this evaluation.

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