

Palaeoecology Research Services

**Evaluation of biological remains from a watching brief at  
Airton, North Yorkshire (associated with the Malham to  
Hellifield water pipeline) (site code: OSA02WB23)**

by

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**Summary**

*The washover and residue from a single pre-processed bulk sediment sample, recovered from a fill of a partially excavated stone-lined well of medieval date, at Airton, North Yorkshire (as part of a watching brief associated with the Malham to Hellifield water pipeline), were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.*

*Ancient biological remains recovered from the sample were restricted to small amounts of charcoal, charred grain, and bone. The small assemblage of plant remains is not thought worthy of further analysis. In passing it may be remarked that the form of the wheat grains is consistent with a date in the medieval or post-medieval period. The vertebrate remains recovered were too few to be of interpretative value.*

*No further work on the biological remains from this deposit is warranted unless the context is particularly critical.*

*Any remaining sediment from this sample may be discarded unless it is to be processed for the recovery of non-biological remains.*

**KEYWORDS:** AIRTON; MALHAM TO HELLIFIELD WATER PIPELINE; NORTH YORKSHIRE; WATCHING BRIEF; MEDIEVAL; CHARRED PLANT REMAINS; VERTEBRATE REMAINS

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## Evaluation of biological remains from a watching brief at Airton, North Yorkshire (associated with the Malham to Hellifield water pipeline) (site code: OSA02WB23)

### Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by On-Site Archaeology, at Airton, North Yorkshire (NGR SD 903 595), during April 2002, as part of a watching brief along the route of the Malham to Hellifield water pipeline.

The site was located on the edge of the village of Airton and the sampled feature may be associated with the former medieval manorial complex of Scosthrop.

The washover and residue from a single pre-processed bulk sediment sample, from a fill of a partially excavated stone-lined well (associated with a complex of stone foundations) of medieval date, were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

### Methods

A single bulk sediment sample ('BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) was processed to 1 mm (with a 300 micron sieve for the lighter washover fraction) by the excavator.

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

### Results

Field F29: Context 1023 [fill of medieval stone-lined well]  
Sample 1/BS (approximately 20 kg sieved to 1 mm with 300 micron washover)

The washover from the single sample submitted consisted of about 60 cm<sup>3</sup> of charred cereal grain with a little charcoal (to 20 mm in maximum dimension, probably oak, *Quercus*). The grain was nearly all a short-squarish wheat, presumably bread wheat (*Triticum 'aestivo-compactum'*) though a few oat (*Avena*) grains were also noted and a single barley (*Hordeum*). Other charred remains included a very few taxa in small numbers which presumably arrived as weeds of the crop or were charred incidentally during the formation of the components of the deposit.

The small residue (of 0.3 kg dry weight) was mostly stones (to 60 mm) and gravel, with some charcoal (to 30 mm) and a few charred grains (as from the washover). Seventeen fragments of bone were also present. The bones were mostly unidentified fragments of cranium, but a single herring (*Clupea harengus* L.) vertebra and two amphibian long bones were noted.

### Discussion and statement of potential

The small assemblage of plant remains is not thought worthy of further analysis. In passing it may be remarked that the form of the wheat grains is consistent with a date in the medieval or post-medieval period.

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

### Recommendations

No further work on the biological remains from this deposit is warranted unless the context is particularly critical.

## **Retention and disposal**

Any remaining sediment from this sample may be discarded unless it is to be processed for the recovery of non-biological remains.

## **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**

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## **References**

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