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**Evaluation of vertebrate remains from The Cockpit, Richmond Castle,
Richmond, North Yorkshire (site code: CRC00)**

by

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Summary

Excavations prior to the development of The Cockpit (a walled enclosure), at Richmond Castle, Richmond, produced 2 sediment samples and a very small assemblage of bone. This material was submitted to the EAU for evaluation of its bioarchaeological potential.

A large and unusual assemblage of bones, most of which were identified as fish remains, were recovered from Sample 32501 (Context 325AA). The deposit is believed to be a garden soil associated with the establishment of a vinery. The use of bone meal, animal carcasses and waste as essential fertiliser for vines is well known, and it could be argued that this is exactly what the assemblage from this sample represents.

The small hand-collected assemblage is of little interpretative value and appears to represent domestic waste. Variable preservation also suggests the presence of some reworked material.

KEYWORDS: THE COCKPIT; RICHMOND CASTLE; RICHMOND; NORTH YORKSHIRE; POST-MEDIEVAL; ANIMAL BONE; FISH

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Introduction

An archaeological intervention was undertaken by Northern Archaeological Associates at Richmond Castle, Richmond, in January 2000 in advance of the development of the area known as the Cockpit. Most of the deposits were described by the excavator as garden soils or redeposited top soil and all of 19/20th century date. Two sediment samples ('GBA' and 'BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) and a small assemblage of hand-collected bone (800.5g) recovered from the excavated deposits 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*. Sample 12101 (Context 121AA) was processed, following the procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986), whilst 18 kg of sediment from Sample 32501 (Context 325AA) were bulk-sieved to 300µm.

The flots and residues resulting from processing were examined for plant and invertebrate macrofossils and the residues were sorted for bone, and other biological and artefactual remains.

All of the hand-collected bone was recorded in detail; subjective records were made of preservation, angularity (i.e. the nature of the broken surfaces) and colour, whilst quantities and identifications were noted where appropriate. Additionally, semi-quantitative information was recorded for each context concerning fragment size, dog gnawing, burning, butchery and fresh breaks. Fragments not identified to species were recorded as unidentifiable. Brief notes were made on the preservation and identifications of the vertebrate remains from Sample 32501 (Context 325AA).

Results

Context 121AA

Sample 12101/T (3kg sieved to 300µm and washover to 300µm)

Just moist, light yellow-brown, stiff and slightly sticky (working soft and slightly plastic), silty clay to clay silt, with small and medium-sized (6-60 mm) stones and traces of ?charcoal. Modern rootlets were noted.

No biological remains of any interpretative value were recovered from the washover.

The small residue was composed mainly of sand, gravel and stones (to 60mm), with traces of brick/tile. No other remains or artefacts were present.

Context 325AA

Sample 32501/BS (18 kg sieved to 300µm)

Just moist, mid greyish-brown, crumbly to unconsolidated, slightly sandy, clay silt, with bone, particularly fish, being abundant.

An extremely large residue was produced, which was made up almost exclusively of vertebrate remains and what appeared to be cinder. An examination of the large quantities of bones present in the unsorted residue showed that they were almost entirely the remains of marine, estuarine and possibly freshwater fish. Preliminary identifications indicated a wide range of species of varying size, which included large Gadidae, Pleuronectidae, Clupidae, Scombridae and Cyprinidae. Some of the fish fragments had been burnt. In addition to the remains of fish, there was also evidence of other taxa in the sample including the bones of rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus* (L.)), chicken and Corvidae.

Hand-collected vertebrate remains

The hand-collected vertebrate remains (representing six contexts) from the site amounted to only 78 fragments, of which 44 were identifiable to species (Table 1). Most fragments were well-preserved and fawn in colour, but some fragments, particularly from Contexts 116 and 346, were rather battered in appearance. This may suggest that some of the bones in these deposits may have been redeposited. Evidence for butchery was occasionally noted, including a number of large mammal sized rib fragments that had been sawn.

The remains of domestic species, such as cattle, caprovids, pigs and chickens were present, along with a small quantity of rabbit bones. Fish bones were mainly large Gadidae, including fragments of ?ling (cf. *Molva molva* (L.)) and cod (*Gadus morhua* L.). Ten crab (*Cancer pagurus* L.) claw fragments were also noted.

Although too few fragments were recovered for any detailed conclusions to be drawn, most of this assemblage is characteristic of domestic refuse.

Discussion and statement of potential

The deposit from which Sample 32501 was taken was thought to be associated with the 19th century establishment of a vinery in the area of The Cockpit at Richmond Castle. The use of bone meal, animal carcasses and waste as essential fertiliser for vines is well known, and it could be argued that this is exactly what the assemblage from this sample represents.

The hand-collected material probably represents kitchen/domestic waste and may have been disposed of in this area for use as fertiliser, alternatively, this assemblage may have been reworked from earlier deposits, possibly during the cultivation of the area as a garden.

Recommendations

An interesting perspective upon Victorian garden archaeology may be gleaned from analysis of this assemblage. Although outside the remit of this project, a brief analysis of the assemblage recovered from the sample should be undertaken in order to establish what vertebrate taxa are represented, and what skeletal elements are present. This would provide more detailed evidence of the components of the sample and whether whole carcasses or mixed bone waste was originally used in the vinery.

No further work is warranted on the hand-collected assemblage.

Retention and disposal

The bone assemblage from Context 325AA should be retained for the present. All other material examined during the evaluation may be discarded.

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.

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References

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Table 1. Hand-collected remains from the Cockpit, Richmond Castle, Richmond.

Species		Fragment count
<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i> (L.)	rabbit	7
<i>Canis</i> f. domestic	dog	1
<i>Sus</i> f. domestic	pig	7
<i>Bos</i> f. domestic	cow	4
Caprovid	sheep/goat	6
<i>Anas</i> sp.	duck	1
<i>Gallus</i> f. domestic	chicken	5
Gadidae	cod family	11
Unidentified fish		2
<i>Cancer pagurus</i> L.	edible crab	10
<i>Sub-total</i>		<i>54</i>
Unidentifiable		34
<i>Sub-total</i>		<i>34</i>
Total		88