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**Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at  
Yearsley House, York (site code: YYH00)**

by

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**Summary**

*Samples of sediment, of medieval/post-medieval date, recovered from excavations at Yearsley House, York, have been evaluated for their potential for bioarchaeological analysis.*

*The very few ancient biological remains recovered were limited to small fragments of charcoal of no interpretative value.*

*No further work is recommended on the current material.*

**KEYWORDS:** YEARSLEY HOUSE; YORK; EVALUATION; MEDIEVAL; POST-MEDIEVAL; FIELD SYSTEM; PLANT REMAINS; CHARRED PLANT REMAINS; INVERTEBRATES

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## Introduction

Archaeological evaluation trenching was carried out by Northern Archaeological Associates (at the request of Alfred McAlpine Homes Yorkshire Limited) on land immediately to the east of Yearsley House, York (NGR: SE 6112 5357), in April 2000.

Three sediment samples ('GBA'/'BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) from three contexts were recovered from the deposits. The draft archaeological evaluation report states that 'The features identified during the evaluation trenching were agricultural in nature, and comprised the remains of furrows and a number of probable boundary ditches, part of a medieval or post-medieval field system'.

All of the samples were submitted to the EAU for evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

## Methods

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

Plant macrofossils were examined from the residue and washover resulting from processing. The residue was also examined for other biological and artefactual remains.

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

## Results

The results are presented in context number order. Archaeological information, provided by the excavator, is presented in square brackets.

### Context 104 [Ditch fill]

#### Sample 104AA/T (3 kg sieved to 300 microns, with washover)

Moist, mid grey brown (locally more grey or somewhat orange-brown), plastic, silty clay with flakes of charcoal and traces of modern roots and seedlings present.

The washover consisted of about 100 cm<sup>3</sup> of modern rootlets with a little charcoal (to 15 mm in maximum dimension), a few seeds, some beetle fragments, and some modern grass leaf fragments and a modern earthworm egg capsule. The small residue was of reddish iron-concreted silt, with a little rounded brick/tile (to 5 mm), very decayed bone, burnt bone, and coal (all up to 15 mm).

The small range of uncharred seeds of fruits were from weeds and woody taxa, including oraches (*Atriplex*), hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), and elder (*Sambucus nigra*), some or all of which are quite likely to have been of recent origin (there were also single seeds of a few other taxa which certainly were not ancient, to judge from the presence of starchy reserves). The small numbers of beetle sclerites present were rather poorly preserved and seem likely, too, to be modern. They are from taxa consistent in their ecological implications with the plant remains in indicating weedy vegetation such as that found on a ditch bank in the corner of a field.

**Context 302** [Relict plough soil]

**Sample 302AA** (Description only)

Moist, mid slightly greyish brown, stiff (working plastic), slightly silty clay (locally somewhat gleyed). Fragments of brick/tile (to 20 mm) and modern rootlets were present.

No further investigation of this sample was undertaken.

**Context 505** [Relict plough soil]

**Sample 505AA** (Description only)

Moist, light grey-brown to light orange-brown (mottled on mm- and cm-scales, somewhat gleyed), brittle and crumbly (working slightly plastic), clay sand. Occasional modern roots and ?root channels/worm burrows were present.

No further investigation of this sample was undertaken.

## **Discussion and statement of potential**

On inspection, the deposits represented by samples from contexts 302 and 505 both appeared to be natural subsoils with no bioarchaeological potential.

The processed subsample from Context 104 yielded no interpretatively useful ancient biological remains.

Further excavation of the site seems unlikely to produce useful quantities of ancient biological remains. However, should obvious concentrations of charred, or other bioarchaeological, material be encountered then an effort should be made to sample and examine them.

## **Recommendations**

No further work on these samples considered in this report is recommended.

## **Retention and disposal**

The current material need not be retained.

## **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**

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## References

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*Table 1. List of sediment samples from excavations at Yearsley House, York, with notes on their treatment.*

<b>Context</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Notes</b>
104	104AA	Sample description. 3 kg processed to 300 microns, with washover.
302	302AA	Sample description only.
505	505AA	Sample description only.