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**Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at,  
former convent school, St Thomas Street, Scarborough  
(site code: STS99)**

by

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**Summary**

*Two sediment samples from deposits revealed by excavations at former convent school, St Thomas Street, Scarborough were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.*

*The biological remains recovered were restricted to small amounts of charred and uncharred plant material (including oat) but these were too few and too poorly preserved to be of interpretative value.*

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

**KEYWORDS:** FORMER CONVENT SCHOOL; ST THOMAS STREET; SCARBOROUGH; NORTH YORKSHIRE; EVALUATION; ROMAN; PLANT REMAINS; CHARRED PLANT REMAINS

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## Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at former convent school, St Thomas Street, Scarborough (site code: STS99)

### Introduction

An archaeological excavation was carried out by Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society at the site of the former convent school, St Thomas Street, Scarborough, in 1999.

Two sediment samples ('GBA'/'BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) from two contexts were recovered from the deposits. One layer (104) produced exclusively Roman pottery and the other (106) was thought to be contemporaneous with this (based on stratigraphic position as no dateable artefacts were recovered from this deposit).

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

### Methods

The submitted sediment samples were inspected in the laboratory and their lithologies recorded using a standard *pro forma*. Both 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 flots resulting from processing. The residues were 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 (sample numbers have been derived from the context numbers for internal record keeping purposes). Archaeological information, provided by the excavator, is presented in square brackets.

**Context 104** [Fill of a shallow gully (F103) cut into natural clay. The feature produced exclusively Roman period pottery. The gully was sealed below a soil horizon previously sampled by the EAU (Sample 800601/T, Hall *et al.* 1996) which was itself sealed below a clay dump interpreted as the base of the medieval town rampart]

**Sample 10401** (1 kg processed to 300 microns with paraffin flotation)

Just moist, light to mid grey-brown, crumbly (working soft and sticky and slightly plastic when wetted), clay silt.

The subsample yielded a moderate-sized residue of concreted (iron-rich, ?pan-like) sediment and a trace of charcoal (to 5 mm in maximum dimension, including traces of coniferous charcoal to 2 mm). On testing with dilute hydrochloric acid, the concretions were found to be non-calcareous and rich in sand; no eggs of intestinal parasites were observed. The tiny flot contained a trace of fine charcoal. No invertebrate remains were recovered.

**Context 106** [Fill of a circular feature 0.6m in diameter and cut 0.12m into the natural clay (F105). No pottery was found in this feature though as it was within 1.0m of gully F103, and in the same stratigraphic position, it is likely to be contemporary].

**Sample 10601** (1 kg processed to 300 microns with paraffin flotation)

Moist, mid to dark grey to black, soft to crumbly (working plastic), ?slightly silty clay with clasts (10-20 mm) of light to mid brown, soft clay. Fine charcoal (with larger fragments to 10 mm) was abundant (and probably responsible for the dark colour of most of the matrix) and stones (2 to 6 mm) were present in the sample.

The small residue consisted of granular black sediment, mostly charcoal and other burnt material; the tiny flot contained spicular charcoal (perhaps largely cereal chaff) and uncharred oat (*Avena*) 'bran', as well as charred oat grains and chaff. Amongst the larger fragments were some spikelets clearly recognisable as wild oat, *A. fatua* L. There were also some other cereal grains and a few weed seeds. No invertebrate remains were recovered.

## Discussion and statement of potential

The remains recovered from the samples were too few and too poorly preserved to be of interpretative value. However, should further excavation reveal deposits with obvious concentrations of charred plant, or other bioarchaeological remains, then an effort should be made to sample and examine them.

## Recommendations

No further work on the 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.

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*Table 1. List of sediment samples from excavations at former convent school, St Thomas Street, Scarborough, with notes on their treatment.*

Context	Sample	Notes
104	1	Sediment description. 1 kg processed to 300 microns with paraffin flotation
106	2	Sediment description. 1 kg processed to 300 microns with paraffin flotation