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Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at sites on the line of the Transco West Hull pipeline (site code: OSA01EV05)

by

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Summary

A series of sediment samples and a tub of hand-collected bone, from deposits of medieval date, revealed by excavations on the line of the Transco West Hull pipeline, were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

The few biological remains recovered from the single sediment sample processed were of no interpretative value. All of the remaining sediment samples may be discarded unless they are to be sieved for small bone and/or artefact recovery.

Vertebrate remains were rather scarce from the deposits excavated at Field 14 and Field 61 and these sites show little potential for the recovery of vertebrate remains. Deposits revealed during excavations at Field 68 were slightly more productive, with the recovery of a small but well preserved assemblage of bone. However, insufficient fragments were recovered for meaningful interpretation of the deposits and no further work is warranted on the current material.

KEYWORDS: TRANSCO WEST HULL PIPELINE; EVALUATION; MEDIEVAL; PLANT REMAINS; VERTEBRATE REMAINS;

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Introduction

Archaeological evaluation excavations were carried out by On-Site Archaeology at sites on the line of the Transco pipeline West Hull pipeline.

A series of sediment samples ('GBA'/'BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) and a tub (approximately 10 litres) of hand-collected bone, were recovered from the deposits. Preliminary evidence suggested a medieval date for the deposits.

All of the material was submitted to the EAU for an evaluation of its bioarchaeological potential.

Methods

Sediment samples

The sediment samples were inspected in the laboratory. One of the samples was selected for evaluation and its lithology was recorded, using a standard *pro forma*, prior to processing, following the procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986), for recovery of plant and invertebrate macrofossils. The washover and residue were examined for plant remains. The washover was also examined for invertebrate remains, and the residue was examined for other biological and artefactual remains.

Hand-collected vertebrate remains

For each context (or sample) subjective records were made of the state of preservation, colour of the fragments, and the appearance of broken surfaces ('angularity'). Additionally, where more than ten fragments were present, semi-

quantitative information was recorded concerning fragment size, dog gnawing, burning, butchery and fresh breakage. Where possible, fragments were identified to species or species group, using the reference collection at the EAU.

Results

Archaeological information, provided by the excavator, is presented in square brackets.

Field 61, Trench 3 [Buried ?peat layer]

Sample 1/T (2 kg sieved to 300 microns with washover)

Moist to wet, dark grey-brown, soft and sticky (working more or less plastic and slightly sticky), moderately humic, sandy clay silt with some stones (2 to 20 mm, including flint) present.

The tiny washover consisted of modern rootlets; the only identifiable plant macrofossil remains were traces of seed fragments of chickweed, *Stellaria media* (L.) Vill. There was a moderate-sized to large residue of about 300 cm³ of clean quartz sand, grit and angular and rounded gravel (to 25 mm).

Hand-collected vertebrate remains

The results of the evaluation are presented by Field.

Field 14

Only a single context (4003) from this site produced bone. This deposit produced only two unidentified shaft fragments. Both were extremely poorly preserved, with the whole surface of the bones destroyed by probable chemical action.

Field 61

This site produced a total of two bone fragments from two deposits (Contexts 1000 and 2006). Both were well preserved and were identified as a cow mandibular tooth (M3, Context 2006) and a medium-sized mammal shaft fragment (Context 1000).

Field 68

Deposits from Field 68 (Contexts 3000, 3001, 3004 and 5003) produced 41 fragments, most of which were recovered from Context 5003. Eighteen of the fragments were identified to species (Table 1). On the whole, vertebrate remains from this site were well preserved, although some variability of angularity (the nature of the broken edges) was apparent in material from Contexts 3000 and 3001. Material from these deposits included fragments that had rounded edges and were rather battered in appearance. Dog gnawing was apparent on some of the bones and evidence for butchery was noted on many of the cattle fragments. A horse humerus recovered from Context 3000 had a series of knife marks across its shaft, probably indicating skinning.

Remains of cattle were most numerous, closely followed by those of horse, with caprovids represented by a total of only two fragments. Dog bones, including skull and maxilla fragments, were identified from Context 5003. This deposit also included a cat femur. Four of the fragments were measurable.

Discussion and statement of potential

The few biological remains recovered from the sediment sample were of no interpretative value.

Vertebrate remains were rather scarce from the deposits excavated at Field 14 and Field 61 and these sites show little potential for the recovery of vertebrate remains.

Deposits revealed during excavations at Field 68 were slightly more productive, with the recovery of a small but well preserved assemblage of bone. Insufficient fragments were recovered for meaningful interpretation of the deposits and no further study of the material is warranted.

Recommendations

No further work is required on the current material and it seems unlikely that study of

other samples from these deposits would be productive.

However, the vertebrate assemblages do show that some of the deposits (particularly those from Field 68) contained well preserved bones. The potential to recover larger and more interpretatively useful vertebrate assemblages should be borne in mind if the event of further excavation of these areas in the future.

Retention and disposal

All of the remaining sediment samples may be discarded unless they are to be sieved for small bone and/or artefact recovery.

The vertebrate assemblages should be retained for the present.

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 vertebrate remains recovered from excavations at Field 68. **Key:** meas = number of measurable fragments.

Species		meas	Total
<i>Felis f. domestic</i>	cat	-	1
<i>Canis f. domestic</i>	dog	1	4
<i>Equus f. domestic</i>	horse	2	5
<i>Bos f. domestic</i>	cow	-	6
Caprovid	sheep/goat	1	2
Unidentified		-	23
Total		4	41