



*Reports from the
Environmental Archaeology
Unit, York*

**Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at
City Arms, Fawcett Street, York (site code: 2001.10748)**

by

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Summary

A single sediment sample and approximately six litres of hand-collected bone from deposits of Roman to post-medieval date, revealed by excavations at City Arms, York, were submitted for an evaluation of their bioarchaeological potential.

Only traces of charcoal were recovered from the sample and no invertebrate remains were seen. A small assemblage of vertebrate remains, including some fairly well preserved fish bones, was recorded from the residue.

Although insufficient fragments were recovered for any meaningful interpretation of the deposits, the vertebrate assemblage shows that some deposits from this site have the potential for the recovery of well preserved bones—this should be borne in mind in the event of future excavations in the area.

No further work is recommended on the current material.

KEYWORDS: CITY ARMS; FAWCETT STREET; YORK; EVALUATION; ROMAN TO POST-MEDIEVAL;
CHARRED PLANT REMAINS; VERTEBRATE REMAINS

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Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at City Arms, Fawcett Street, York, (site code: 2001.10748)

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation excavation was carried out by York Archaeological Trust at City Arms, Fawcett Street, York in summer 2001.

A single sediment sample ('GBA'/'BS' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) and approximately six litres of hand-collected bone were recovered from the deposits. Preliminary interpretation of the evidence gave dates from Roman to post-medieval for the deposits.

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

Methods

Sediment sample

The sediment sample was inspected in the laboratory and its lithology 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

Data for the vertebrate remains were recorded electronically directly into a series of tables using a purpose-built input system and *Paradox* software. 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. Fragments not identifiable to species were grouped into categories: large mammal (assumed to be cattle, horse or large cervid), medium-sized mammal (assumed to be caprovid, pig or small cervid) and completely unidentifiable.

Results

Sediment sample

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

Context 1015 [fill of a feature cutting through a silted-up Roman ditch]
Sample 1/T (3 kg sieved to 300 microns with washover)

Moist, mid to dark grey-brown, soft and slightly crumbly (working soft and slightly sticky), sandy clay silt to silty clay. Stones (20 to 60 mm) and ?rotted charcoal were present in the sample.

There was a moderate-sized to large residue of about 350 cm³ of sand and angular gravel (to 45 mm in maximum dimension), with a little bone, traces of charcoal and of brick/tile. There was also at least one modern tar-coated stone clast, presumably from tarmac. The tiny washover of a few cm³ comprised charcoal (to 10 mm) and many fine (<5 mm) pale brown, slightly calcareous fragments which may have been bone. There were no recognisable invertebrate remains.

Vertebrate remains from this sample amounted to approximately 120 fragments (all of which were <50 mm in maximum dimension). Most fragments were

unidentified but a small number of well preserved fish remains (34 fragments) were present. The latter included eel (*Anguilla anguilla* (L.)), herring (*Clupea harengus* L.) and cyprinid vertebrae. Other fragments could not be identified to species.

Hand-collected vertebrate remains

Little hand-collected vertebrate material was recovered from this site. Six deposits produced a total of 105 fragments, of which 45 came from Contexts 1000 (unstratified material) and 2000 (medieval to post-medieval plough soil). Material from these two deposits was briefly scanned, but not recorded in any detail. The remaining material (60 fragments) was mostly recovered from the fills of a Roman ditch, a post-Roman feature which cut the ditch, and a post-medieval pit fill.

Preservation was reasonably good throughout, although bones from Contexts 1012 and 1015 were somewhat battered in appearance, and a number of fragments had rather eroded surfaces. Not surprisingly, material from Context 2000 was extremely variable, both in preservation and in colour and a single fragment of a human humerus shaft was identified from this assemblage.

Most fragments (53) were unidentified, with the few identified fragments representing cattle (4 fragments), sheep/goat (1) and pig (2) remains. Only one measurable bone was noted.

Discussion and statement of potential

There is no justification for further work on the sample and—if the sample is representative—the potential for study of plant or invertebrate remains from the deposits at this site is low.

Vertebrate remains were rather scarce from the excavated deposits. Those which were recovered were reasonably well preserved, however (particularly the fish remains from Context 1015). Although insufficient fragments were recovered for any meaningful interpretation of the deposits, the vertebrate assemblage shows that some deposits from this site have the potential for the recovery of well preserved bones—this

should be borne in mind in the event of future excavations in the area.

Recommendations

Given the paucity of remains and the broad dating of the deposits, no further work is recommended on the current material.

Retention and disposal

The current material 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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