

Reports from the Environmental Archaeology Unit, York 2001/45, 3 pp.

Evaluation of vertebrate remains from excavations at 20-30 Lawrence Street, York (site code: 2001.10752)

by

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Summary

This report evaluates the potential of a small assemblage of hand-collected vertebrate remains recovered from deposits revealed by excavations at 20-30 Lawrence Street, York. The deposits which produced the bones were believed to be post-medieval in date.

The small, and mainly well-preserved, vertebrate assemblage included the remains of cattle, caprovids and pigs, but there were insufficient fragments to be of any interpretative value.

Further analysis of the vertebrate remains recovered from the current excavations is not warranted. In view of the good preservation of the bones, additional excavations may produce a moderate-sized and useful assemblage.

KEYWORDS: 20-30 LAWRENCE STREET; YORK; EVALUATION; POST-MEDIEVAL; VERTEBRATE REMAINS

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10 August 2001

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Introduction

An archaeological evaluation excavation was carried out by York Archaeological Trust at a site at 20-30 Lawrence Street, York (NGR TA **), in July 2001.

A third of a box of bone (approximately 7 litres) was recovered from the deposits. Dating information provided by the excavator suggested a post-medieval date for most of the deposits containing bone, with residual 10th century pottery noted from Contexts 4013, 4019 and 4030. Roman pottery recovered from Context 4023 was also thought to be residual.

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

Methods

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 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

Hand-collected vertebrate remains

Most of the small vertebrate assemblage from this site was recovered from six posthole fills in Trench 4 (Contexts 4005, 4013, 4019, 4023, 4027 and 4030), with only a single fragment from Trench 2 (Context 2013).

Preservation of the bones was generally fairly good, although a few poorly preserved fragments were noted from Context 4030. Material from this deposit tended to be rather fragmented and also included several scorched bones. Colour of the fragments was fawn or brown with little variation within contexts. However, black mottling was observed on a few bones from Contexts 4005 and 4030.

The assemblage amounted to 67 fragments, of which 22 were identified to species. Context 4030 produced over 80% (55 fragments) of the bones. Remains of the usual domesticates (cattle, caprovid and pig) were identified and much of the unidentified fraction represented large and medium-sized mammal, probably mainly cattle and caprovid bones.

Material from Contexts 4023 and 4030 included a number of sheep crania that had been chopped longitudinally, presumably for removal of the brain. These skulls had also had their horncores deliberately removed. Few fragments of use for providing biometrical and age-at-death data were recovered.

of York, along with paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here.

Discussion and statement of potential

The small assemblage of vertebrate remains included primary butchery waste represented by caprovid crania and cattle mandible fragments. Preservation was reasonably good, but most of the deposits were rather broadly dated —the pottery spot dates spanning several hundred years. The presence of residual 10th century and Roman pottery sherds within several deposits also prevents the confident determination of the provenance and date of the bones. Additionally, both the size of the vertebrate assemblage and the small number of fragments providing biometrical and age-at-death information were insufficient for further analysis to be worthwhile.

Recommendations

No further work is recommended on the current material.

However, vertebrate remains recovered from the deposits were mostly well preserved and, on the whole, did not appear to include redeposited material. It is likely that any larger-scale excavations in this area would produce a moderate-sized, and more interpretatively valuable, assemblage of bone.

Retention and disposal

All of the current material should be retained for the present.

Archive

All material is currently stored in the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Jane McComish of York Archaeological Trust for providing the material and the archaeological information.