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**An evaluation of biological remains from  
excavations at 47 Blossom Street, York  
(YAT site code 1991.22)**

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## Methods

Two samples of putative garden soil were submitted for analysis. The sediments were inspected and described in the laboratory, 3 kg subsamples being taken and submitted to disaggregation and paraffin flotation following methods described by Kenward *et al.* (1980). The resulting flots were examined for plant and invertebrate remains and washovers were obtained from the residues to provide further assemblages of plant remains. The residues were also examined for their content of other components.

## Results

The samples are considered in context number order, with relevant archaeological information or excavator's queries in brackets.

Context 1017, sample 1 [is it a garden soil?]: mid grey-brown, just moist, crumbly (to plastic when worked), slightly sandy clay silt with traces of charcoal and small bone fragments, mortar, brick/tile and small patches of somewhat orange-brown clay; there was a characteristic 'earthy' texture.

There were a few arthropod remains of no interpretative value in the flot, but fragments of what appeared to have been earthworm egg capsules were numerous. There were also some curious structures consisting of septate elongate tubes, several tubes being joined together in radiate clusters, with scattered curved spine-like processes arising from the surface. The most probable identification for these is that they are resistant fungal structures, perhaps some kind of spore. Many soil fungi produce tough, readily preserved resting structures of some kind. The small washover comprised less than 10% of the volume of the residue after sieving; it consisted mostly of coal and charcoal with tiny bone fragments and a few seeds of taxa commonly encountered in urban archaeological build-up with poor preservation. The residue comprised sand and gravel with stones and brick/tile to 40 mm, mortar and coal to 30 mm, a few small fragments of cinders and an iron nail. There is nothing to indicate positively that this soil was cultivated.

Context 1021, sample 2 [is it a garden soil?]: mid grey-brown, just moist, crumbly (to plastic when worked), somewhat heterogeneous silty clay with traces of charcoal, rotted mortar, brick/tile and some patches of dark yellow-brown material; a somewhat 'soil' like appearance.

There was a rather small residue from the 3 kg subsample, most of it sand with stones to 60 mm, rather abundant brick/tile (to 40 mm) and a little mortar and coal. The washover, about 5% by volume, comprised coal, charcoal, cinders and a few very decayed wood fragments, with a little bone and burnt bone. There were very few charred and uncharred

plant remains of no interpretative value. There were many fragments of probable earthworm egg capsules in the flot and numerous of the same ?fungal structures recorded from sample 1. A small number of insect remains were present; all were rather reddened and perhaps represented fairly recent intrusions already beginning to oxidise in a well aerated deposit.

### Implications

The observations of the limited biota and the general nature of these two samples have produced nothing to contradict their interpretation as coming from strongly disturbed and well aerated layers; while the evidence is weak, the plant and animal remains give subjective indications of such an origin and therefore it is possible that the deposits were garden soil. No purpose would be served by further biological investigation of this material.

### Reference

Kenward, H. K., Hall, A. R. and Jones, A. K. G. (1980). A tested set of techniques for the extraction of plant and animal macrofossils from waterlogged archaeological deposits. *Science and Archaeology* 22, 3-15.