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**Assessment of biological remains from The Crown Hotel, Boroughbridge, North
Yorkshire (site code HARGM:9553)**

by

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Summary

Three sediment samples and a single box of bone were submitted for assessment, and all were examined. Organic remains were scarce in all three samples; no insect remains were recovered and charred cereal grains and weed seeds were the only plant remains present.

A very small vertebrate assemblage was recovered (63 fragments of which 28 were identifiable to species), consisting entirely of the remains of domestic species. Biometrical data was recorded and could be used as part of a synthetic project with other material of this date.

KEYWORDS: CROWN HOTEL; BOROUGHBRIDGE; NORTH YORKSHIRE; MEDIEVAL; VERTEBRATE REMAINS; PLANT REMAINS; ASSESSMENT

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Introduction

An evaluation excavation was undertaken by On-Site Archaeology during May 1999 at The Crown Hotel, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire (NGR: SE 39650 66875). Three sediment samples and a single box of hand-collected bone (approximately 10 litres) were presented for assessment. The samples and vertebrate remains were recovered from contexts associated with two ditches. Pottery spot dates indicated a mid-14th Century date for most contexts, the exceptions being Contexts 3000 (dated 17th-18th C) and 3020 (11th-12th C).

Methods

Sediment samples

The material was initially inspected in the laboratory and described using a standard *pro forma*. A 2kg subsample of each of the three (*sensu* Dobney *et al* 1992) samples was processed as a 'GBA' sample for the recovery of invertebrate remains and plant macrofossils following procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986).

Flots and residues were examined for the remains of plants and insects.

Vertebrate remains

For the vertebrate remains, data 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, 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 Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York. Fragments not identifiable to species were grouped into categories: large mammal (assumed to be cattle, horse or large cervid) and medium-sized mammal (assumed to be caprovid, pig or small cervid).

Measurements for mammals were taken (where appropriate) according to the system of von den Driesch (1976), with additional measurements following those outlined by Dobney *et al.* (forthcoming).

Total numbers of fragments by species were recorded, together with the number of measurable fragments and those yielding ageing information. As well as counts of fragments, total weights

were recorded for all identifiable and unidentifiable categories.

Results

Sediment samples

Table 1 gives a list of the samples, the action taken and the retention/disposal requirements. In this section the material is discussed in chronological order. Archaeological information is given in square brackets after the sample number.

Context 3020, Sample 2/T

[fill of ditch 3021, 11th/12th century]

Moist, mid brown, soft (working soft), clay silty sand with stones (2-60 mm), pot and charcoal present.

The small washover consisted of charcoal (to 10 mm), with traces of charred cereal grains (?oats, cf. *Avena*, and ?barley, cf. *Hordeum*). The single charred achene of corn marigold, *Chrysanthemum segetum*, is likely to have been a crop contaminant, whilst the well-preserved uncharred fruits of dandelion (*Taraxacum*) must be modern. No insect remains were recovered. The small residue consisted chiefly of sand and stones (as for sample 1) with pottery, and bone present. Two mammal bone fragments and two amphibian pelvis (too broken for identification to species) were recovered.

Context 3027, Sample 1/T

[Fill of ditch 3003, mid 14th century]

Moist, mid brown (with orangish patches), soft slightly sticky (working soft to slightly plastic), slightly sandy clay silt, with stones (6-60 mm), white flecks and pot present. Modern seedlings were also noted.

The very small washover comprised only a little fine (<10 mm) charcoal, with traces of charred cereals, including one tentatively identified wheat (*Triticum*) grain, and of small (<3 mm) charred legume seeds (probably a crop contaminant). The well-preserved uncharred dandelion fruits and uncharred elder (*Sambucus nigra*) seeds are no doubt post-depositional in origin. No insect remains were recovered. The small residue consisted chiefly of sand and stones with ?slag, and bone present. Nine unidentifiable scraps of bone were recovered and these included six mammal, one amphibian and two fish fragments.

Context 3034, Sample 3/T

[upper fill of ditch 3003, seals 14th century deposit 3027]

Just moist, mid to dark brown (darker and paler in places), crumbly to soft (working soft), sandy silt with some lumps coated with fine and rotted charcoal, small lumps of orangish and buff coloured sediment (more sandy). In addition, rotted mortar, brick/tile, coal, charcoal (mostly very rotted) and mammal bone were present.

The small washover consisted largely of a few tens of rather poorly preserved (puffed and often eroded) charred cereal grains of which all but one appeared to be bread/club wheat, *Triticum aestivo-compactum*; there was one tentatively identified grain of barley (*Hordeum*). The only other identifiable plant remains were a single charred seed of the cornfield weed corn gromwell, *Buglossoides arvensis*, likely to have been a contaminant of the cereals. No insect remains were recovered.

The moderate-sized residue consisted chiefly of sand, stones, brick/tile, coal and cinders. Charcoal, bone and shell were present. A total of 27 bone fragments was recovered, of which nine were unidentifiable mammal bone fragments, the rest being fish, including several pieces of fish scales. Small pieces of mussel shell were also noted.

Hand-collected vertebrate remains

Vertebrate remains were recorded from all six contexts submitted for assessment. Overall preservation was described as fair, except for Contexts 3027 and 3055 which also contained well preserved fragments. Angularity (appearance of broken surfaces) was mostly noted as battered or spiky. Colour was recorded as variable, ranging from fawn to brown.

The degree of fragmentation of the bones was moderate, most fragments being between 5 and 20 cm in largest dimension. Dog gnawing and fresh breakage were evident on 0-50% of fragments in most contexts. Burnt fragments were noted in Context 3020 only. Butchery was recorded on more than 10% of fragments in all contexts.

A total of 63 fragments (weighing 1914 g) was recovered, of which 28 (weighing 1174 g) were identifiable to species (Table 2). Species present included cattle (10 fragments), caprovid (6), pig (5), horse (2), dog (4), and a single cat bone. One juvenile cattle bone was noted, together with nine measurable adult bones (measurements in Table 3).

A range of skeletal elements was represented for all species, but insufficient fragments were recovered for any specific waste disposal patterns to be recognised.

Discussion and statement of potential

Sediment samples

The few, and mostly rather poorly preserved ancient biological remains are of very little interpretative value.

Vertebrate remains

The vertebrate remains from the Crown Hotel amounted to a very small assemblage, on which no further work is recommended. However, as the material is tightly dated, the measurements could be usefully incorporated into a synthetic project, bringing together many small medieval assemblages from the region.

Recommendations

Sediment samples

It is not likely to be profitable to carry out any further work on this material, though other deposits from the area to be excavated may yield further evidence for cereals or other crops, which should be sought.

Vertebrate remains

No further work is recommended on the current vertebrate material.

Retention and disposal

The present sediment sample material is not worth retaining in the long term. The vertebrate remains 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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Table 1. List of samples from The Crown Hotel, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire.

Context	Sample	Action taken	Retention/disposal
3020	2/T	2kg sieved to 300 µm after being soaked, washover sieved to 300 µm, residue dried	Need not be retained.
3027	1/T	2kg sieved to 300 µm after being soaked, washover sieved to 300 µm, residue dried	Need not be retained.
3034	3/T	2kg sieved to 300 µm after being soaked, paraffin flotation carried out, residue dried	Need not be retained.

Table 2. Vertebrate remains from The Crown Hotel, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire.

Species		No. juvenile	No. measurable	Total no. fragments	Weight (g)
Dog	<i>Canis f. domestic</i>	-	2	4	99.2
Cat	<i>Felis f. domestic</i>	-	-	1	1.7
Horse	<i>Equus f. domestic</i>	-	-	2	238.0
Pig	<i>Sus f. domestic</i>	-	2	5	117.4
Cow	<i>Bos f. domestic</i>	1	2	10	685.8
Sheep/goat	Caprovid	-	3	6	31.6
Subtotal		1	9	28	1173.7
Large mammal		-	-	23	663.3
Medium-sized mammal		-	-	12	77.3
Subtotal		-	-	35	740.6
Total		1	9	63	1914.3

Table 3. Measurements of vertebrate remains from The Crown Hotel, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire.

Context	Date	Species	Element	Side	Measurements			
3002	mid 14th C	Cow	Calcaneum	r	Gl=115.85	BS=34.90	C=24.60	C+D=42.71
3002	mid 14th C	Cow	Metatarsal	l	Bp=52.38	Dp=49.61		
3027	mid 14th C	Dog	Tibia	r	Gl=201.15	SD=15.21	Bd=24.54	Dd=17.39
3055	?14th C	Dog	Tibia	l	Gl=137.64	SD=7.75	Bd=14.93	Dd=10.53
3002	mid 14th C	Pig	Radius	r	Bp=30.25	SD=19.21		
3027	mid 14th C	Pig	Humerus	l	BT=32.34	HTC=20.99		
3002	mid 14th C	Sheep/goat	Metacarpal	l	Bp=22.22	Dp=14.95		
3002	mid 14th C	Sheep/goat	Metacarpal	l	Gl=107.98	Bp=21.41	Dp=16.65	SD=12.89
3027	mid 14th C	Sheep/goat	Metatarsal	l	Bp=18.94	Dp=18.92	SD=10.15	