

Longstone Edge, Derbyshire – Statement about the bone assemblages, samples and requirements for assessment

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Animal bones were recovered by hand-excavation, by wet-sieving and in the flotation heavy residues, and bones have been observed in the flots also (Smith 2000). Table 1 lists all contexts with hand-collected bone, bones sorted from sample heavy residues and observed in flots. For each sample, the counts of >4mm and 2-4mm sorted bone are provided (the data are taken from the Sample evaluation sheets) and the availability (but not counts) of sorted >1mm bone is indicated. Bag counts of hand-collected bone are indicated also (in general these include only a few fragments each). The retained residues and flots are indicated by box number. The contexts are ordered by area and chronological phase.

Hand-collected bones

The hand-collected remains include primarily the main domestic taxa, cattle, sheep/goat and pig, but a range of other species is present, including large canid, fox?, hare, red deer?, mustelidae, rodents (including water vole) and birds. Bones of foetal and very juvenile medium size mammals (possibly sheep/goat and pig size) were observed. The preservation is varied, and many bones are weathered, suggesting that some remains were exposed for a period of time.

Samples and sorted bone

Soil samples were taken from 45 contexts for flotation and/or wet-sieving (Table 1). A total of 66 samples were recovered from 30 contexts in Barrow 1 and 25 samples were taken from 15 contexts in Barrow 2. A number of samples include many subsamples. The >4mm fraction of all residues has been completely sorted, the 2-4mm fraction of only a few samples has been sorted, and a portion of the >1mm residue of six samples has been sorted for assessment. For some samples, the >4mm bones have been sorted by taxon and/or bodypart (e.g. rodent humeri, mandibles, maxillae; amphibia; rare taxa: mole, small bird, small mustelid).

The sieved fractions include primarily microvertebrate remains. A scan of boxes 49 (>4mm and 2-4mm), 50 (>4mm) and 100 (>1mm) shows that the sorted bones include mainly vole mandibles and isolated teeth (probably mainly of Northern water vole, *Arvicola terrestris*) and rodent postcranial bones (again, the size of the Northern water vole or rat). Bones of large amphibians (probably toad) are common also. Teeth of the smaller voles, and limb bones of small mammals are present but less common, probably due to the mesh size. The 2-4mm and >1mm fractions include bones and teeth of smaller taxa, and metapodials of the larger rodents?, but an assessment is necessary to determine the relative frequency of the smaller species.

Assessment

An assessment is required to determine the potential of the hand-collected and sieved/floated assemblages, describe the methodology, and outline time and cost

estimates for analysis. In this case, the microfauna may provide important clues about the taphonomic history of the barrows, including access to and exposure of the structures in different periods.

The assessment should focus on a proportion of the assemblage with the aim of determining the potential information available for different phases and areas, and/or identifying those parts of the assemblage that are worth studying in full. Depending on the range of contexts and homogeneity of the assemblage, the assessment should focus on 30% or less of the material. The aim is not to undertake a detailed study, but to quantify the number of specimens, which provide a specific type of information (according to a proposed methodology). Statements about the deposits will require some preliminary quantification (for example of taxonomic distribution, bodypart representation, etc), but this should not be in the detailed manner of an analysis. The data should however provide a basis from which to judge the proposed time and cost estimates. For example, depending on the methods used, the number of identifiable specimens, number of teeth and/or bones providing ageing and/or sexing data, number of measurable elements, and statements about preservation and skeletal element representation should be provided and potential totals extrapolated from these data. Other aspects appropriate to the type of assemblage should be recorded in this manner.

In addition to the assessment of the sorted bones, the potential of the bones from the smaller fractions needs to be assessed, in order to determine if further sorting is required. The 2-4 mm fractions and >1mm fractions of a few samples have been sorted but further processing may be required. The residues will have to be examined/scanned, in order to determine this. The flots may be scanned also, for the presence of taxa not observed or less common in the heavy residues or sieved assemblages.

An outline of the various tasks should be provided, including number of days required and cost. For example:

Preliminary tasks

-sorting residues*	x days	£ y
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Analysis

-recording	x days	£ y
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-analysis	x days	£ y
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-report writing	x days	£ y
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-edit for publication	x days	£ y
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<i>Total</i>	xxx days	£ yyy
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* tasks such as sorting may be undertaken in house but estimates are required.

Reference cited

Smith, W., 2001 *Assessment of charred plant remains from Bronze Age barrows at Longstone Edge, Derbyshire*. Unpublished assessment report, Centre of Archaeology, English Heritage, Portsmouth.