

The deposits at 8 High Ousegate were exposed during construction work in a cellar. This report deals with a richly organic layer immediately overlying late Roman deposits. It gave a radiocarbon date of 470 ± 80 ad (BAR 2708), and is thus of considerable interest as a rare representative of the immediately post-Roman history of the central area of York.

A single sample has been submitted to analysis for plant remains, the eggs of human intestinal parasites, and insects. No parasite eggs were recovered. The very small seed assemblage (a few tens from 0.5 kg) included primarily weeds typically associated with human occupation, and gives no further positive evidence.

Insects were extracted using methods described by Kenward et al. (1980). The flot was very rich in insect remains, but most were unidentifiable fragments, probably mostly of immature stages of beetles and flies. There were abundant fragments recognisable as fly puparia, including Sphaeroceridae (the majority) and a few pieces which were probably Muscidae.

The beetles and bugs recovered from the sample are moderately well preserved, but their concentration was not high (the minimum number of individuals is estimated to be about 70, from 4 kilogrammes of deposit). About 43 beetle and bug taxa were present. The assemblage is not large enough for detailed interpretation and processing more of the sample would not significantly improve matters*. For this reason the fauna has not been subjected to detailed analysis, but examined in alcohol, a list of taxa with their estimated abundance being recorded (Table 1). For a few critical identifications specimens were transferred to damp filter paper. The assemblage is not large enough for detailed interpretation. It is, however, rather distinctive and a large part of it appears subjectively to be derived from a single breeding community.

The first impression is that the fauna is one which might be recovered from an Anglo-Scandinavian cess-pit; while there are no obligate foul-matter species (other than the highly mobile Aphodius), and while the assemblage is not typical of Anglo-Scandinavian cess-pits, it is certainly well within the observed range of variation. However, the range of seeds recovered and lack of parasite eggs strongly argue against the deposit containing human faeces, while the radiocarbon date places its likely origin before the Anglo-Scandinavian period.

* Experience has shown that doubling sample size generally only slightly increases minimum number of individuals when concentration is low.

A possible explanation of its nature - by no means certain - is that an area within the collapsing Roman building became waterlogged so that organic refuse became somewhat foul and provided a habitat for the beetles. The sphaerocerid flies probably do not indicate very foul conditions, and are ecologically compatible with the beetle fauna (indeed, many of the beetles may have been predatory upon the fly larvae). The refuse was probably dumped by humans as a number of the beetles are favoured by human activity, but could conceivably have had a natural origin - for example in bird nesting material. The building may still have been roofed at this stage, and openings relatively restricted, just sufficient to allow the entry of a few 'outdoor' insects. In this context, the presence of *Trechus micros* and *Coprophilus striatulus* as major components of the fauna is interesting. These species have occasionally been numerous in assemblages regarded as having a subterranean character, and the dark damp conditions within a crumbling building may have been attractive to such cryptic animals.

References

Kenward, H. K., Hall, A. R. and Jones, A. K. G. (1986). A tested set of techniques for the extraction of plant and animal macrofossils from waterlogged archaeological deposits. *Science and Archaeology* 22, 3-15.

Table 1. 8 High Ousegate Sample 6: List of Beetle (Coleoptera) and Bug (Hemiptera-Heteroptera) taxa recorded. Quantification is approximate and the RHI was estimated as one unless otherwise stated.

Heterogaster urticae (Fabricius)
 Trechus micros (Herbst) (several)
 Pterostichus ?melanarius (Illiger)
 Harpalus rufipes (Degeer)
 Helophorus sp.
 Cercyon ?analis (Paykull)
 Cercyon sp. (not analis)
 Hister sp. (2)
 Ptenidium sp. (2)
 Scydmaenidae sp.
 Catops sp.
 Onalium ?rivulare (Paykull) (2)
 Onalium sp. (not rivulare)
 Onaliinae sp.
 Coprophilus striatulus (Fabricius) (several)
 Carpellinus ?bilineatus Stephens (several)
 Anotylus complanatus (Erichson) (several)
 Anotylus rugosus (Fabricius) (2)
 Oxytelus sculptus Gravenhorst
 Lathrobium sp.
 Gyrohypnus fracticornis (Muller) (several)
 Heobisnius sp. (2)
 Philonthus sp. (large, c.f. politus (Linnaeus)) (several)
 Philonthus sp. (medium size)
 Creophilus maxillosus (Linnaeus)

Tachinus laticollis (Gravenhorst) or marginellus (Fabricius)
T. ?signatus Gravenhorst
?Aleochara sp.
Aleocharinae spp. (probably three species)
Euplectini sp.
Trox scaber (Linnaeus)
Aphodius ?prodromus (Brahm)
Aphodius ?granarius (Linnaeus)
Elateridae sp.
Omosita sp.
Cryptophagus sp.
Atomaria sp.
Ephistemus globulus (Paykull)
Lathridius minutus (Linnaeus) group (2)
Corticaria sp.
Notaris acridulus (Linnaeus)

Note: The computer technique used in the production of this internal report precludes the use of underlines. Genus and species names are thus not conventionally indicated.