

7 Northgate, Cottingham (COT99): brief notes on biological remains from three samples.

Three samples of sediment from deposits associated with an Augustinian Priory founded at Cottingham, East Riding of Yorkshire, *circa* 1321 were examined. Brief notes on the biological remains recovered from these samples are presented below.

Context 6 [Black organic silt, primary fill of moat]

Sample 1/T (2 kg)

The large residue of about 600 cm³ consisted mainly of organic material: woody and herbaceous detritus in the form of straw-like fragments and some twigs and wood chips and other fragments, with some sand and chalk gravel (the mineral component being about 100 cm³). Preservation was excellent (some moss shoots retained green coloration, and there were some fruits in nearly perfect condition). Prominent amongst the identifiable plant remains were fruits of terrestrial taxa, especially ash, *Fraxinus*—of which there were fruits, seeds, wood (including chips), twigs and buds—with elder, stinging nettle and some aquatic and aquatic marginal plants, such as water-plantain (*Alisma*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), hemp-agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*) and pondweeds (*Potamogeton* spp.).

Overall, the plant assemblage indicated deposition in water with a diverse flora of woodland margin, scrub or hedgerow close to the moat. There was, however, some occupation material in the form of the straw-like material (though given the other plant remains recorded, this seems more likely to have been cut grassland or wetland vegetation, i.e. hay, than cereal straw), with traces of bracken, charcoal, and a mussel (*Mytilus edulis*) shell valve. Remains of plants likely to have been used as food or for some other purpose were, however, lacking.

Also of note was an extremely rare record for fruits of *Geranium* (apparently both *G. robertianum* and *G. purpureum*).

The abundant invertebrate remains (including immature insects) were also very well-preserved and, again, indicated a rich aquatic environment with much vegetation and no indication of dumping (although there was some indication of human influence denoted by the presence of several beetle taxa: *Lathridius minutus* group, *Gyrohypnus* sp., *Anobium punctatum* (Degeer) and *Monotoma* sp.). The small assemblage of molluscan remains was also predominantly of freshwater forms (including *Bythinia tentaculata* - shells and operculae, freshwater bivalve (*Pisidium/Sphaerium*), *Succinea* sp., and a planorbid). Two land snails of the catholic genera *Trichia* and *Oxychilus* were also noted.

Context 105 [Reddish brown ash probably from a hearth]

Sample 2 (0.5 kg)

The moderately large residue of about 100 cm³ comprised burnt soil with a little charcoal; the minute flots contained a few rootlets, one fragment of an uncharred teasel (*Dipsacus*) fruit and a fragment of a shoot of a conifer, perhaps some member of the cypress family (Cupressaceae)

probably a contaminant. There were also two poorly preserved charred bread/club wheat (*Triticum aestivo-compactum*) grains. These remains are too sparse to offer useful interpretative information and a larger subsample seems unlikely to furnish much more.

No invertebrate remains were seen in the sample.

Context 112 [Pit fill]

Sample 3/T (0.5 kg)

The moderately large residue of about 75 cm³ was mainly mineral material (gravel and some sand), with some quite well preserved charred cereals plus chaff and weed seeds; a little more of same material was recorded from the tiny flot. The cereals included oats, barley, rye and wheat, the weed seeds (rather unusually) including scentless mayweed (*Matricaria perforata*) as well as the more commonly encountered stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*) and black bindweed (*Bilderdykia convolvulus*). A larger subsample might be worth pursuing to amplify the evidence noted here, which indicates that the pit fill perhaps contains some food refuse, although the presence of charred weed seeds and cereal grains and chaff may instead indicate the plant remains represent burnt straw.

No invertebrate remains were seen in the sample.

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