

Assessment of the land and freshwater snails recovered during excavations
in Lincoln

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10 June 1993

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Introduction

Sampling for plant remains was undertaken as a part of some of the excavations in the city, and the flots of some of these samples were observed to contain land snails. Short reports and lists of the marine and land Mollusca collected by hand from excavations at Silver Street (Evans 1975) and Saltergate (Evans 1975b) exist, as well as more detailed reports on the land and freshwater snails from excavations in St. Benedict's Square (French 1987) and Brayford Wharf East (French 1982).

Aims of the assessment of the land snails

The strategy which underlay the molluscan assessment for the city of Lincoln was governed by two main considerations. Firstly, only samples which were rich in land and/or freshwater snails were sought, as small assemblages would yield little useful information. Secondly, consideration was given to the context type, and to a lesser degree, the period. The assessment also had to be carried out urgently, and this also had a bearing on the methods used and the detail of recording carried out.

Methods

All of the flots which had been examined for charred plant remains by Lisa Moffatt were also scanned to determine the following:

- Whether the sample contained large numbers of land and freshwater snails
- Whether a wide range of species was represented
- The state of preservation of the molluscs
- Whether not the context might be worth recording further

Results

The majority of the contexts contained few, or no, land or freshwater shells. However, the following contexts were thought to be worth recording in more detail.

Saint Mark's Church (sm76)

DCG A Roman ditch probably dating from the mid to late second century AD; flot size 2000ml; contains abundant freshwater snails, and includes the genera Lymnaea and Planorbis.

DGA Described as "marsh?" and dated as Roman, (mid to late second century to early or middle third century AD); flot size 600ml; freshwater genera were observed, including Bythinia spp, Lymnaea spp, and Planorbis spp.

Saint Benedict's Square (sb85)

84 Described as a "layer" and dated as Saxon; flot size 130ml; freshwater, damp and drier habitat genera represented including Bythinia spp, Carychium spp, and Planorbis spp. This context was not one of those discussed by French.

4-7 Steep Hill (sh74)

NU Described as a "drain", and dated post-medieval; small flot; shade and grassland taxa represented, including Cochlicopa sp., Pupilla sp., Discus rotundatus, and Trichia sp. Probably not worth further recording unless very specific archaeological questions can be answered by doing this.

Hungate (h83)

1309 Described as a "drain" and dated to the Roman period; flot size 70ml; freshwater, damp or shaded and grassland taxa represented, including Planorbis spp, Cochlicopa sp, Discus rotundatus, Oxychilus sp. and Trichia sp.

1335 Described as a "culvert", and dated to the Roman period; small flot; freshwater or damp grassland, shade and grassland taxa represented, including Lymnaea spp., Cochlicopa sp., Vallonia sp, Discus rotundatus, and Oxychilus sp.

Brayford Wharf East (bwe82)

The sequence through the alluvial deposits at the site described by French gives a very useful environmental history of the river, and is probably as detailed as is practical to be. The following contexts, whilst containing useful assemblages of land and freshwater snails, are unlikely to add substantially to French's account.

63 Described as a "peat", and dated to the Roman period (in the bone database it is described as a "layer" and dated from mid to late third century to mid to late fourth century); flot size 1300ml; rich, probably mostly freshwater assemblage, including Bythinia sp., Planorbis sp., Bathyomphalus sp., Clausilia sp., Pisidium sp. and/or Sphaerium sp., and ostracods.

66 Described in the bone database as a "layer", and dated to the Roman period (from early to mid third century); a rich freshwater assemblage, including Bythinia spp, Planorbis spp, Armiger crista, and Pisidium spp.

98 Described as a "water deposit", and dated to the Roman period; flot size 550ml; rich freshwater assemblage with dry land component, including Bythinia sp., Lymnaea sp., Planorbis sp., Bathyomphalus sp., Cochlicopa sp., Vallonia sp., Discus rotundatus and ostracods.

Dickinson's Mill (dm72)

AK Described as a "wharf", and dated to the medieval period; flot size 100ml; freshwater assemblage, containing large individuals, and including Bythinia sp., Lymnaea spp, and Planorbis sp.

Conclusion

The samples worth looking at are few, and do not represent a convincing chronological or topographic sequence, and would thus have to be treated solely as spot finds to aid in the interpretation of their particular contexts.

		Roman	Saxon	Medieval	Postmedieval
sm76	Wigford	2			
sb85	Wigford		1		
bwe82	Wigford	3			
dm72	Wigford			1	
sh84	Lower Town				1
h83	Lower Town	2			

Table 1. The occurrence of samples which contain large quantities of land snails, indicating their chronological and geographical location.

On this basis, it is unlikely that further work on the land snails from the city of Lincoln can be justified at this stage, although the waterfront sites, which have not been assessed in this exercise, may yield useful information.

References

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