1.1 Oysters and Other Marine Molluscs

by Jessica M. Winder

Introduction

1.1.1 Shells of the common flat oyster *Ostrea edulis* L. together with a single specimen of common whelk (*Buccinum undatum* L.) were recovered during the watching brief. Shells were recovered by hand retrieval and sieving of bulk samples. It was hoped that the study of marine molluscs would assist in the understanding of the manipulation and consumption by humans of natural resources and the way in which population increase and concentration might have affected natural resource exploitation and accelerated environmental change.

Methodology

1.1.2 The shells from each context were identified, where possible, and counted. Oyster valves were separated into left and right valves, and further divided into shells suitable or unsuitable for measuring and detailed recording of features. A sub-sample of contexts containing at least thirty measurable left or right valves would be selected as suitable for use in statistical comparisons of size or comparisons of evidence for epibiont infestation (Winder 1993) were it available.

Quantification

1.1.3 Table 5 presents the numbers of shells from each context with comments on their condition. Thirty-four oyster valves and eleven fragments were recovered from four contexts together with a single whelk. The number of shells and shell fragments in each context is therefore very small.

Provenance

1.1.4 The provenance of the marine mollusc material cannot be determined. The state of preservation of the shells is generally fair with robust and thick shells that are broken but have not been etched or worn. The quantity of the shell material is insufficient to allow any further investigation by means of statistical comparisons.

Conservation

1.1.5 Long term storage, should it be deemed necessary or desirable, would require the shells to be kept dry, in sealed polythene bags, with minimisation of mechanical damage. Regarding retention/discard policy, it is suggested that there is little merit in retaining this assemblage of material.

Comparative material

1.1.6 This assemblage of material is too small and poorly preserved to be of value for comparison with material from elsewhere, whether within or from outside the CTRL project.

Potential for further work

1.1.7 There is no potential for this assemblage of marine molluscan material to address the original Landscape Zone Aims or the Fieldwork Event Aims.

Bibliography

Winder, J M, 1993, A study of the variation in oyster shells from archaeological sites and a discussion of oyster exploitation, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Southampton

Table 6: Summary of marine molluscs

Context number	Left valve (LV) oyster	Unmeas-urable LV oyster	Right valve (RV) oyster	Unmeas-urable RV oyster	Total valves oyster (P = present)	Other species	Comments on oysters
8	2	3	-	4	9	-	Plus 1 fragment each of LV and RV. Thick, robust, broken but not etched, eroded or worn. Irregularities. Triangular shape to 1.
11	-	2	-	2	4	-	Plus approx. 10 minute fragments.
						-	
13	2	2	2	F	6	-	1 LV exceptionally large and thick with massive hinge scar.
14	2	2	10	1	15	1 *Buccinum undatum* intact	Mixture thin & thick and various sizes. I v. thick & heavy. RV. Broken but not worn or eroded. Glossy interiors ?organic content