

APPENDIX 1 - PLANT REMAINS

Assessment of Charred Plant Remains

by Ruth Pelling

Introduction

Samples were taken during the investigation for the recovery of charred plant remains and charcoal. Two samples were taken from a late Iron Age - early Roman ditch (807). Six samples were taken from three 13th to 14th century AD pits. The six medieval samples were processed by bulk water flotation and the flots collected onto 250µm mesh sieves. Flots were air dried slowly before being submitted for assessment.

Methodology

The volume of deposit processed ranged from 8 to 34 litres. Each flot was assessed by scanning under a binocular microscope at x10 magnification. Any seeds or chaff noted were provisionally identified and an estimate of abundance made. Random fragments of charcoal were fractured and examined in transverse section at x10 and x20 magnification.

Quantification

Five medieval pit samples were assessed (Table 6). Low levels of *Quercus* sp. (oak) charcoal were present in four samples with moderate quantities in the fifth. Cereal grain was present in one sample only (4, context 818) but was not identifiable to species. Cereal chaff was limited to a single glume base noted in sample 5 (context 820). Weed seeds were noted only in sample 5.

Provenance

The samples were taken from the primary and upper layers of three medieval pits.

Conservation

The flots are in a stable condition and can be archived, although it is not necessary to retain the flots for long-term storage.

Potential for further work

Given the absence of good cereal assemblages and charcoal other than oak the samples offer no potential for further work. It is not possible to comment on the cereal economy of the site or the nature of the features excavated. The glume base is likely to be the product of residual contamination from features of Roman or prehistoric date. The very low potential of these samples suggests that little would be learnt from analysis of the samples from the Roman ditch.

Table 6: Summary of charred plant remains

Sample Details						Flot Details					
Sample	Context	Fill of	Feature	Spotdate	Sample size (l)	Flot size (ml)	Grain	Chaff	Weed seeds	Charcoal	Comments
3	817	816	Pit	13th-14th	10	10	-	-	-	+	
4	818	816	Pit	13th-14th	30	10	+	-	-	+	roots/moss
5	820	819	Pit	13th-14th	34	100	-	+	+	++	
6	821	821	Pit	13th-14th	12	10	-	-	-	+	
8	824	824	Pit	13th-14th	8	10	-	-	-	+	

+ = 1-10 items / charcoal present

++ = 11-50 items / moderate charcoal