

# Assessment of environmental samples from XSW11

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Human Environment  
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# 1 Environmental material from samples

## 1.1 Site archive and assessment: finds and environmental

Category	Description	Weight
Bulk Soil Samples	Wet flots from 8 samples	2 standard archive boxes

## 1.2 Introduction/methodology

During excavation environmental samples were taken for the retrieval of archaeobotanical and other organic remains in order to assess their potential to contribute to the interpretation of the site.

These samples were processed by wet sieving to a mesh size of 0.25mm. The residues were stored in water to maintain waterlogged conditions. The residue was dried and sorted by eye for artefacts and environmental material. The residue was scanned briefly, using a low-powered binocular microscope, and the abundance, diversity and general nature (method of preservation, unusual features) of plant macrofossils and any faunal or artefactual remains were recorded on the MOLA Oracle database. The following two scales were used to record this material:

Abundance 1 = 1–10 items, 2 = 11–50, 3 = 50+ items

Diversity 1 = 1–3 items, 2 = 4–7 items, 3 = 7+ items

Tables 1 to 3 below present the processing details and composition of each sample.

## 1.3 Results

Plant material was preserved by charring and waterlogging.

### *Charred remains*

Small wood charcoal fragments were noted in samples {9} from [4], {11} from [5] and {15} from [8]. Charred seeds of indeterminate type were also noted in sample {16} from [7].

### *Waterlogged remains*

Waterlogged wood was the most common organic remain identified in the samples. In samples {3} and {4} from [2], {11} from [5], {12} [5] and {16} from [7], catkins of alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) were also frequently noted. These samples also generally contained well preserved seed assemblages, with alder seeds perhaps unsurprisingly common. Seeds of carrot family taxa (Apiaceae) were also occasionally noted. Sample {16} from [7] produced the largest waterlogged plant assemblage, with hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*), mosses (Bryophyta) and a large seed assemblage including holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and crowfoot (*Ranunculus* subgen. *Batrachium*). Holly seeds were also recorded in {15} from [8], but as a

large assemblage of roots was also recorded here, it is certainly plausible that these are intrusive from [7] above.

### *Faunal remains*

Fragments of beetle remains were recorded in {3} from [2]. Larvae of caddis fly were noted {16} [7].

## 1.4 Summary

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The assemblages from the peat deposits [2], [5] and [7] contained moderately well preserved plant assemblages, dominated by wood fragments and woodland taxa, with some wetland type taxa also present.

## 1.5 Assessment work outstanding

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None.

## 1.6 Potential of the material

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The assemblages from the peat deposits have the potential to contribute to the reconstruction of the depositional environments at the site. The assemblages also contain material suitable for radiocarbon dating.

The environmental assemblage from the clay deposit [4] and the sand layer [8] were less productive, and in the case of [8], the material was possibly intrusive.

## 1.7 Significance of the data

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The data recorded from the samples are of significance to the site and its local environment.

## 1.8 Method statement

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The five samples relating to the peat deposits should be analysed and reported on, and the assessment data relating to the other deposits included in this analysis.

Analysis of 5 rich to moderate samples	3 days
Data entry	0.25 days
Report writing	1.5 days
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.75 days</b>

## 1.9 Tables

2	3	INV BEETLES	1	1	
		WLG MISC	3	1	WOOD CK
		WLG SEEDS	2	2	APIA FOEVU CAR THA ALNGL
	4	WLG MISC	3	1	WOOD, CK
		WLG SEEDS	1	1	RUBFRID
4	9	CHD WOOD	1	1	
		WLG MISC	1	1	WOOD
		WLG SEEDS	1	1	ALNGL
5	10	WLG MISC	1	1	WOOD
		WLG SEEDS	1	1	ALNGL SAM
	11	CHD WOOD	1	1	
		WLG MISC	3	1	CK WOOD
		WLG SEEDS	2	1	APIA RUB ALNGL
	12	WLG MISC	3	1	WOOD CK
WLG SEEDS		2	1	ALNGL RUB	
7	16	CHD SEEDS	1	1	INDET FRAG
		INV PUPARIA	1	1	CADDIS
		WLG MISC	3	2	WOOD CK CORAV BDS BRYO
		WLG SEEDS	2	2	APIA ALNGL ILEAQ RANBA
8	15	CHD WOOD	1	1	
		WLG MISC	2	1	WOOD BD RT
		WLG SEEDS	2	2	ILEAQ APIA RUB

Table 1 Organic remains from samples

Context	Sample	Processed vol.	Wlogged sieved vol.	Wlogged sieve size	Unprocessed
1	2	1	10	0.25	Y
2	3	1	10	0.25	Y
2	4	1	10	0.25	Y
4	8	1	18	0.25	Y
4	9	0.02	18	0.25	Y
5	10	1.5	10	0.25	Y
5	11	1	10	0.25	Y
5	12	1	?	0.25	U
7	16	1	10	0.25	Y
8	15	0.15	10	0.25	Y

Table 2 Processing details of samples