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Plant Remains from Salisbury Road, Amesbury

Chris Stevens

Fifteen samples were taken and processed from the excavations. Examination showed most to be relatively rich in charred plant remains. The samples were mainly from the Late Saxon period, although two (pit 518, and ditch 106) date from deposits extending into the early medieval period.

Most samples produced evidence for grains of free-threshing wheat *(Triticum aestivum sl*), hulled barley (*Hordeum vulgare sl*) and rye (*Secale cereale*), wheat seemingly the dominant crop. Evidence for rachises of all these cereals was recovered, although never in the same quantities as grains. Few of the rachises fragments were identifiable beyond genus, although single examples indicated the presence of 6-row barley and hexaploid, bread or club, type wheat.

Free-threshing wheat and hulled barley often appear as the dominant crops in Wessex during this period. Rye (*Secale cereale*) has been recovered from middle and later Saxon sites (Carruthers 1991; Hunter 2005; Stevens 2006), but is often absent from earlier Saxon settlements (Wessex Archaeology 2003; 2004; 2006). Notably rye seems to have gained in importance in the region from the late Saxon period into the early medieval period (Green 1994; Stevens 2007), something that is reflected upon this site.

Remains of leguminous crops, in particular pea (*Pisum sativum*) and horse-gram (*Vicia faba*) were frequent, while at least two samples contained probable seeds of lentil (*Lens culinaris*). Both pea and bean are common finds from Saxon sites in southern England (Carruthers 1991; Green 1994), while finds of lentil are rarer. However, lentil has been recovered from other middle to later Saxon sites in Wessex (Caruthers 1991; 2005; Green 1994; Hunter 2005; Clapham 2005; Stevens 2006).

Lentil favours warmer climates and is not a crop that today grows well in many parts of Britain. The appearance of this crop upon more rural settlements within the Late Saxon period, continuing into the early medieval period, suggests local cultivation (Greig 1991; Wessex Archaeology 2005; Stevens 2004), and can be seen as consistent with the proposed warming of the British climate from *c.* 900 AD, accumulating in the warmest phase between *c.* 1150 and *c.* 1250 (Lamb 1977, 435; Astill and Grant 1988).

As is often seen on Saxon settlements fragments of hazelnut signify the exploitation of wild resources to supplement the cereal diet. Pit 607 contained some mineralised material, that in the case of bramble (*Rubus* sp.) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*) may represent further exploited wild plants, although the presence of other wild species; hedge parsley (*Torilis* sp.) and nettle (*Urtica urens*) may indicate that all come from local scrub and hedgerows.

The dominance of grain suggests crops arrived at the settlement relatively processed, having been threshed, winnowed and sieved in the field. The weed flora was generally small, with large seeded weed seeds such as corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), vetches/wild pea (*Vicia/ Lathyrus* sp.), persicaria (*Persicaria maculosa/lapathifolia*), corn gromwell (*Lithospermum arvense*) and knotgrass (*Polygonum aviculare*) present, all of which are common grain contaminants removed only by hand in the final processing stages. It is probable that not all grain sized seed-heads were removed by sieving accounting for the presence of a seedhead of poppy (*Papaver* sp.) and numerous seeds of stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*). This latter species is common on heavy-clay soils and appears to be a frequent weed of Saxon crops, doubtless grown on such soils.

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60033 Charred Plant remains analysis table.																
	PHASE	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
		LS	SN/EM	LS	LS	LS	LS	EM	LS?	LS	LS	LS	LS	LS	LS	LS
	Feature Type	pit	pit	pit	ditch	ditch	ditch	ditch	ditch	ditch	ditch	pit	ditch	ditch	ditch	beam-slot
Key: Scale of abundance: A*** = exceptional,	Feature No	428	518	607	110	110	110	106	503	522/407	507	523/518	523/416	519/115	519/432	428/116
A** = 100+, A* = 30-99, A = >10, B = 9-5, C =	Context	429	514	608	107	108	109	105	502	409	506	515	414	114	435	117
<5; Bioturbation proxies: Roots (%), Uncharred	Sample	4	5	100	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	6	7	5	8	6
seeds (scale of abundance), F = mycorrhyzal	Size (L)	20	20	20	16	10	10	10	10	20	20	8	20	10	9	10
fungi sclerotia, E = earthworm eggs, I = insects;	Flot Size ml	100	175	250	125	160	60	125	60	160	150	250	100	100	175	60
Sab/f/c = small animal/fish bones/charred faecal pellets, Moll-t = terrestrial molluscs, Moll-f =	Roots %	20	15	80	10	30	20	30	2	40	20	60	10	50	30	40
aquatic molluscs, Moll-m = marine molluscs;	Grain	A*	A*	A**	A**	A**	A	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*
Analysis: C = charcoal, P = plant, M = molluscs,	Chaff	-	-	C	C	C	-	C	C	C	-	C	B	-	-	-
C14 = radiocarbon	Charred Other	B	B	B	A(h)	A	A	B(h)	B(h)	B(h)	C(h)	B	B	C	B(h)	beam-slot
Phase: LS = Late Saxon, EM = Early Medieval,	Charcoal >4mm (ml)	1	5	10	10	5	0.5	10	1	1	2	6	2	10	0.2	0.5
SN = Saxo-Norman	Charcoal >2mm (ml)	1	5	10	8	10	2	10	6	1	2	4	5	10	0.2	8
Cereals																
Hordeum vulgare L. sl (grain)	barley	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-
H. vulgare L. (6-row rachis fragment)	barley	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Triticum cf. aestivum L. sl (grain)	bread wheat	+	+	+	++	+	+	+	+++	+	+	+	+	+	+	1
Triticum cf. aestivum L. sl (rachis fragment)	bread wheat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
T. cf. turgidum L. (tetraploid rachis fragment)	tetraploid rachis fragment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
Secale cereale L. (grains)	rye	-	-	++	10+	-	-	-	5+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-
Secale cereale L. (rachis)	rye	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Crop Species																
Corylus avellana L. (fragments)	hazel	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Vicia faba var. minor L.	broad bean	-	+	2	+	cf.+	cf.+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Lens culinaris Medik.	lentil	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	cf.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vicia /Pisum sativum/Lens culinaris	pea/bean/large vetch	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pisum sativum L.	pea	-	+	3	-	cf.+	cf.+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Species																
Papaver L. sp. (seed head)	poppy	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Urtica urens L.	small nettle	-	-	+m	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Atriplex sp. L.	oraches	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Agrostemma githago L.	corn cockle	-	-	+	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Persicaria lapathifolia (L.) Gray/P. maculosa Gray	persicaria	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Polygonum aviculare L.	knot grass	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Rumex sp. L.	docks	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brassica sp. L.	cabbage, wild mustard	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rubus sp. L.	brambles	-	-	+m	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vicia L./Lathyrus sp. L.	vetch/pea	-	+	+	++	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+
Torilis sp. Adans.	hedge parsley	-	-	+/+m	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lithospermum arvense L.	corn gromwell	-	-	+m	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
Odontities vernus (Bellardi) Dumort.	red bartsia	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Galium aparine L.	cleavers	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Sambucus nigra L.	elder	-	-	+m	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anthemis cotula L.	stinking chamomile	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Anthemis cotula L. (seed head)	stinking chamomile	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poa sp. L.	meadow grass	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Avena sp. L. (grain)	oat grain	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Bromus sp. L.	brome	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-