

MARINE SHELL FROM SCARBOROUGH FUTURIST THEATRE (FTS18)

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INTRODUCTION

A small assemblage of marine shell was recovered during excavations at the Futurist Theatre by NAA in 2018. The assemblage was recovered by hand during excavation and from bulk environmental samples.

METHODS

Marine shells were identified to as low a taxonomic level as possible using published identification guides (McMillan 1968; Hayward and Ryland 1995) and NAA's reference collection. Bivalves were sided to allow accurate calculation of minimum number of individuals (MNI), and shells were assessed for modification by people or animals. Data were recorded in an excel spreadsheet.

RESULTS

In total, 21 marine shell and marine shell fragments were recovered from seven contexts (Table 1). The assemblage contained both gastropods and bivalves, with six taxa represented. All specimens were sun bleached with worn surfaces.

The assemblage included European flat oyster (*Ostrea edulis*), dog whelk (*Nucella lapillus*), periwinkle (*Littorina littorea*), edible cockle (*Cerastoderma edule*), mussel (*Mytilus*), and cf. common limpet (*Patella* cf. *vulgata*). Each taxon was represented by a single specimen, each from a separate context. The exception to this was the European flat oyster; where 12 fragments representing four right and three left valves from four contexts were recovered.

The majority of the marine shells from this assemblage were found in pits, with the exception of those collected from context 524 being from within vertical flagstones. All the shell was found in contexts that included pottery, which would suggest Medieval in date.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

All of the taxa represented are common to the East Yorkshire coast. All of the species identified, except for the dog whelk, are edible and possibly represent food waste. However, given the proximity of the site to the beach, it is equally, if not more likely that many of the specimens have been deposited through natural dispersal by animals, or represent collection of shells by people during beach visits. The oysters, while native to the East Yorkshire coast, were unlikely collected from the beach, and are more likely to represent food waste, oysters being a popular seaside food.

However, the assemblage is small, and therefore conclusive interpretation is not possible.

RECOMENDATIONS

No further work is recommended, and the material may be discarded on completion of the project. This report and the associated excel spreadsheet should be retained within the site archive as a record of the marine shell recovered from the site.

REFERENCES

Hayward, P. J. and Ryland, J. S. (1995) *Handbook of the Marine Fauna of North-West Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McMillan, N. F. (1968) *British Shells*. London: Frederick Warne & Co. Ltd.