APPENDIX 7. AMINO ACID RACEMIZATION (AAR) DATING REPORT
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## Medway Valley Palaeolithic Project:

Amino acid racemization analysis

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L-Asp


D-Asp

## Summary

This report documents the attempts to conduct amino acid racemization analysis for age estimation on the intra-crystalline protein fraction of Bithynia tentaculata opercula as part of the Medway Valley Palaeolithic project. It is concluded that the East Mersea Restaurant site is of Ipswichian (MIS 5e) age. All the other sites in the study are consistent with ages in MIS 9 and MIS 11. The pattern of protein decomposition, resulting in low levels of degradation within cold stages, along with the natural variability of the samples, precludes any further definitive age attributions to be made. Further data from the other geological investigations at the sites themselves may help resolve this. However, it is likely that the samples from the Barling Gravel and Apton Hall Farm are the youngest and those from Bradwell Hall are the oldest within this MIS 9/11 cluster.

## Keywords

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## Introduction

The Medway Valley Palaeolithic Project (MVPP) is focused on areas of Kent and Essex either side of the Thames Estuary in order to aid the management of the important Palaolithic resource contained within this region. As part of this project a regional Palaeolithic Research Framework was developed, including an integrated chronological and stratigraphic framework for sand/gravel aggregate deposits. This research included amino acid geochronology as part of the chronostratigraphic scheme.

Amino acid analyses were undertaken at the York Laboratory (NEaar) from key sites (Apton Hall Farm, Barling Gravel, Bradwell Hall, East Hyde, East Mersea Restaurant site and Shoeburyness). This involves isolating the intracrystalline protein fraction of gastropod shells and, in particular, the calcitic opercula from the fluvial gastropod Bithynia tentaculata, for which an excellent and growing database of protein degradation data has recently been assembled (Penkman, 2005).

This report details attempts to obtain age estimates on the Medway Valley material using amino acid racemization (AAR).

## Amino Acid Racemization Geochronology

A new technique of amino acid analysis has been developed for geochronological purposes (Penkman, 2005), combining a new ReversePhase High Pressure Liquid Chromatography method of analysis (Kaufman \& Manley, 1998) with the isolation of an "intra-crystalline" fraction of amino acids by bleach treatment (Sykes et al., 1995). This combination of techniques results in the analysis of D/L values of multiple amino acids from the chemically-protected protein within the biomineral; enabling both decreased sample sizes and increased reliability of the analysis. Amino acid data obtained from the intra-crystalline fraction of the calcitic Bithynia opercula has been found to be a particularly robust repository for the original protein. This has enabled an increased level of resolution and therefore this material has been focused on in this study.

## Theory

Amino acids, the building blocks of proteins, occur as two isomers that are chemically identical, but optically different. These isomers were designated as either D (dextro-rotary) or L (laevo-rotary) depending upon whether they rotate plane polarised light to the right or left respectively (Fig. 1). In living organisms the amino acids in protein are almost exclusively $L$ and the D/L value approaches zero ${ }^{1}$. The potential application to geochronology arises

[^0]from the fact that after death amino acid isomers start to interconvert. This process is commonly termed racemization. In time the D/L value approaches one. The proportion of $D$ to $L$ amino acids is therefore an estimate of the extent of protein degradation, and if this is assumed to be predictable over time can be used to estimate age. Other indications of protein decomposition, such as the degradation of unstable amino acids, can also be used to estimate the age of a sample.


Figure 1: L- and D- amino acid structure

## Mechanisms of racemization

The rate of racemization is governed by a variety of factors, most of which have been studied in detail only for free amino acids. North East amino acid racemization (NEaar) analyse the intra-crystalline amino acid fraction and in this way, within a closed environment in which other factors (water content, concentration of cations, pH ) are constant, the extent of racemization is a function of time and temperature. Over a small geographical area, such as that represented in this study, it can be assumed that the integrated temperature histories are effectively the same. Any differences in the extent of decomposition of protein within the sample are therefore age-dependent.

## Intra-crystalline protein decomposition

The organic matter existing within individual crystals (intra-crystalline fraction) is believed to be a more reliable substrate for analysis than the whole shell (Sykes et al., 1995; Penkman, 2005). The initial bleaching step in the recovery of the intra-crystalline fraction removes both secondary contamination and the organic matrix of the shell. This organic matrix degrades and leaches at an unpredictable rate over time, leading to variation in the concentration and $D / L$ of the amino acids. Thus, as appears to be the case in ostrich eggshell (Miller et al., 2000), the D/L values of amino acids in the intra-crystalline fraction of shells have been analysed; in the case of ostrich eggshell no bleaching step was used. The molluscan racemisation
data reported therefore contrasts with previous work that examined D/L values from whole mollusc shells containing both intra- and inter-crystalline material.

This isolation of the intra-crystalline fraction is believed to provide a closed system repository for the amino acids during the burial history of the shell. Only the amino acids within this fraction are protected from the action of external rate-affecting factors (except temperature), contamination by exogenous amino acids and leaching. Amino acids within the whole shell are not protected and can be leached out into the environment. Figure 2 shows a schematic of the intra-crystalline fraction with respect to the whole shell. The low level of Free amino acids observed in the inter-crystalline fraction of unbleached samples (Penkman, 2005) indicates that these have been lost through diagenesis, and as these tend to be more highly racemised than the Total fraction, this loss would lead to a lower than expected D/L for the Total fraction of the whole shell.


Figure 2: Schematic of intra-crystalline amino acids entrapped within carbonate crystallites. Unlike the proteins of the organic matrix between the crystallites, which leach from the shell with time, in a closed "intra-crystalline" system the amino acids are entrapped. Thus the relationship between the DL ratios of different amino acids and between free (non-protein bound) and total (both free and originally protein-bound amino acids, released by acid hydrolysis) amino acids is predictable. Analysis of the whole shell would result in lower than expected $D / L$ for the total fraction, due to the loss of the more highly racemised frees.

Once a closed system inside mollusc shells has been isolated, then the kinetics of protein decomposition are much simpler to predict. In this laboratory the concept of age estimation using the extent of overall Intracrystalline Protein Degradation (ICPD) has been devised, which links the
hydrolysis, racemisation and decomposition of all the amino acids isolated by this method. The concept behind the IcPD is to combine multiple information from a single sample to derive an overall measure of the extent of diagenesis of the protein in that fossil. Similar ideas have been used before, although not in such a comprehensive way. Divergence from the normal in a plot of $A / l$ vs Gly/Ala is thought to indicate leaching in molluscs (Murray-Wallace and Kimber, 1987). Kaufman (2000) used ratios of Asx to Glx to screen out samples with any unusual values.

Traditionally AAR studies targeted a single amino acid racemisation reaction, that of L-isoleucine to D-alloisoleucine (A/I), due to the technical ease of separation and its slow rate of racemisation. The approach used in this study diverges from this, as dates are derived from the analysis of multiple amino acids. Whilst racemisation rates differ between individual amino acids, they should be highly correlated in a closed system. By linking together different amino acids, and then linking this to a temperature driven model of decay, which includes hydrolysis, racemisation and degradation, the extent of protein degradation can be derived. The pattern of decomposition appears to be different between mollusc genera, requiring separate models for each genus or species studied.

If a closed system is isolated, it should be possible to predict the relationship between geological time and ICPD increase, using not just racemisation but other measures of protein decomposition, such as total and relative concentrations. It follows from the innovations above that, assuming sampling is from an idealised closed system, the pattern of protein decomposition governs the observed racemisation of (a) free amino acids and (b) the total system, (c) the percentage of free amino acids and (d) the total concentration of amino acids.

This model can also be used as a method of assessing the internal reliability of each biomineral used and to determine how closely these substrates approximate to a closed system. Subsequently palaeotemperature information can be included and estimates made of the link between degradation and absolute age in environments with fluctuating temperatures. If an accurate temperature model is used, then age estimates can be derived directly from the IcPD data, although the results presented here do not incorporate any palaeotemperature information and are presented simply as a relative dating tool.

## Materials and Method

## Materials

Molluscan samples were collected and supplied by David Keen and Richard Preece from 37 samples consisting of eight sites. Amino acid racemization (AAR) analyses were undertaken on 33 individual Bithynia tentaculata
opercula and 4 individual Bithynia troschelii opercula. Bithynia tentaculata opercula were analysed from 8 horizons:
5 from Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF 05 <3A> (NEaar 3737-3739, 38263827);

5 from Barling Gravel, $05<5>$ (18) (NEaar 3740-3742, 3828-1829);
5 from Bradwell Hall, JCB bulk 13, MIS 11 (NEaar 3731-3733, 3822-2823);
5 from East Mersea Restaurant Site, Sample 3, MIS 5e (NEaar 3728-3730, 3820-3821);
4 from Shoeburyness borehole S1, 13.9 m (NEaar 3746-3748, 3831);
1 from Shoeburyness borehole S1, 14.42-14.44 m (labelled Shoeburyness Channel; NEaar 3132);
3 from East Hyde borehole EH1, 7.55 m (NEaar 3101-3103) and
5 from East Hyde borehole EH1, 9.2 m, MIS 11 (NEaar 3734-3736, 38242835).

4 Bithynia troschelii opercula (NEaar 3743-3745, 3830) were also analysed individually from Barling Gravel, 05 <5> (18).

## Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF 05 <3A>

 TQ 888931A borehole was drilled as part of the MVPP project at Apton Hall Farm, designated BH 1 . This provided a similar sedimentary sequence to that obtained by Roe $(1994,1999)$ at Canewdon, but no pollen assessment was undertaken so the two sequences cannot be correlated in detail. The opercula were obtained from the silty clay, above the sands and gravels, which rested on bedrock. Sample 3a is an amalgamation from samples taken between 5 and 5.5 m . Ostracods were most abundant at 4 and 5 m depths, all brackish. Opercula found at c. 5 m depth. An OSL sample was also taken from the base of this sequence, but has not been dated as part of the current round of post-excavation analysis.

Barling Gravel, 05 <5> (18)
TQ 938906
The samples taken from the Barling Gravel were obtained from a new section (S1) described during the MVPP project, from sample 5, near the base of the sequence. The gravel is believed to overlie the Barling Channel (Bridgland et al., 2001), although the relationship was not seen in this exposure. The sediment consisted of horizontally bedded very sandy gravel with an organic clay matrix and frequent silty clay drapes, designated as Context 18. The sediments are characteristic of deposition in a cold environment. It is possible that some of the molluscan material found may have been reworked into the cold stage deposits from the interglacial channel deposits at the site. The opercula samples directly underlie OSL sample BLNG05-05, which provided an age estimate of MIS 6. However, the OSL dates in this sequence are inverted.

Samples from Bradwell Hall were obtained from a new test pit (TP7), context 72. No pollen assessment has been undertaken. The molluscan assemblage included the characteristic "Rhenish fauna". It is thought that this channel can be correlated with the Tillingham Channel at East Hyde (Roe, 2001). OSL samples have also been taken from this site, but from a different unit (finegrained gravel) whose stratigraphic relationship to the channel deposits is unclear (TP5, context 55). Gibbard et al. (1996) believed the fine-grained gravel to overlie the channel deposits, but evidence of this was not seen in the MVPP investigations.

East Mersea Restaurant Site, Sample 3, MIS 5e
TM 053136
The second of the two channel deposits at Cudmore Grove has less extensive exposures, and is essentially a fossiliferous gravel, buried by modern beach sand (Bridgland et al, 1995). The deposits are probably of Ipswichian age, since they contain the remains of Hippopotamus.
The samples from this site were archive material obtained from Richard Preece, University of Cambridge, identified as Sample 3 (from Unit 2 [sandy silt with bones and shells]).

Shoeburyness borehole S1, 13.9m and 14.42-14.44 m
TQ 93375-85483
Opercula from Shoeburyness were obtained as archive material from borehole S1 (Roe, 1994; 1999) from Richard Preece, University of Cambridge. This borehole material is stored in archives managed by the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge. One operculum was obtained from 14.42-14.44 m (labelled 'Shoeburyness Channel') with further samples from a depth of 13.9 m . Ostracod analysis suggests that these samples come from a freshwater depositional environment, with brackish influence coming above c. 10 m depth. Detailed pollen analysis has also been undertaken on this borehole (Roe, 1999) and the samples come from within a birch-pine phase which is postdated by the development of mixed-oak woodland.

## East Hyde borehole EH1, 7.55 and 9.2m MIS 11

TL 98040408
The archive borehole EH1 from the Asheldham/Tillingham Channel (Roe, 1994; 2001) was sampled at two depths for opercula, 7.55 m and 9.2 m (this latter is right at the base of the sequence). This borehole material is stored in archives managed by the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge. Ostracod analysis suggests freshwater influence most notable below 8.5 m ,
with more brackish conditions indicated above this. Thus, the 9.2 m sample definitely came from the freshwater phase, with the 7.55 m sample from the transition zone between freshwater and estuarine conditions. The Rhenish molluscan fauna was reported at a depth of 7.53 m (Roe, 1994). Pollen assemblages from the East Hyde sequence were assigned by Roe (1994) to the late temperate substage of an interglacial (mixed-oak replaced by coniferous forest) and contained 'Type X'. An Azolla plant macrofossil was also reported from the sequence (Roe, 2001).

## Sample Preparation

Shells were examined under a low powered microscope and any adhering sediment removed. The shell samples were then sonicated and rinsed several times in HPLC-grade water. The shells were then crushed to <100um. Only bleached samples were analysed.

## Bleaching

$50 \mu \mathrm{l}$ of $12 \%$ solution of sodium hypochlorite at room temperature was added to each milligram of powdered sample and the caps retightened. The powders were bleached for 48 hours with a shake at 24 hours. The bleach was pipetted off and the powders were then rinsed five times in HPLC-grade water and a final rinse in HPLC-grade methanol (MeOH) to destroy any residual oxidant by reaction with the MeOH . The bulk of the MeOH was pippetted off and the remainder left to evaporate to dryness.

## Hydrolysis

Protein bound amino acids are released by adding an excess of 7 M HCl to the bleached powder and hydrolysing at $110^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ for 24 hours $\left(\mathrm{H}^{*}\right)$.
$20 \mu \mathrm{l}$ per milligram of sample of 7 M Hydrochloric Acid ( HCl ) was added to each Hydrolysis ("Hyd", $\mathrm{H}^{*}$ ) sample in sterile 2 ml glass vials, were flushed with nitrogen for 20 seconds to prevent oxidation of the amino acids, and were then placed in an oven at $110^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$ for 24 hours. After 10 minutes in the oven, the caps of the 2 ml vials were re-tightened to prevent the samples drying out.

After 24 hours, the samples were dried in a centrifugal evaporator overnight.

## Demineralisation

Free amino-acid samples ("Free", F) were demineralised in cold 2 M HCl , which dissolves the carbonate but minimises the hydrolysis of peptide bonds, and then dried in the centrifugal evaporator overnight.

## Rehydration

When completely dry, samples were rehydrated with $10 \mu \mathrm{l}$ per mg of Rehydration Fluid: a solution containing $0.01 \mathrm{mM} \mathrm{HCl}, 0.01 \mathrm{mM}$ L-homo
arginine internal standard, and 0.77 mM sodium azide at a pH of 2. Each vial was vortexed for 20 seconds to ensure complete dissolution, and checked visually for undissolved particles.

Approximately $20 \mu \mathrm{l}$ of rehydrated sample was then placed in a sterile, labelled 2 ml autosampler vial containing a glass insert, capped and then placed on the autosampler tray of the HPLC.

For each set of sub-samples a blank vial was included at each stage to account for any background interference from the bleach, acid, or rehydration fluid added to the samples.

## Analysis of Free and Hydrolysed Amino Acids

Amino acid enantiomers were separated by Reverse Phase High Pressure Liquid Chromatography (RP-HPLC). NEaar uses the method of Kaufman and Manley (1998) using an automated RP-HPLC system. This method achieves separation and detection of $L$ and $D$ isomers in the sub- picomole range.

Samples $(2 \mu \mathrm{l})$ were derivitised with $2.2 \mu \mathrm{l}$ o-phthaldialdehyde and thiol N -isobutyryl-L-cysteine automatically prior to injection. The resulting diastereomeric derivatives were then separated on Hypersil $\mathrm{C}_{18}$ BDS column (sphere d. $5 \mu \mathrm{~m} ; 250 \times 3 \mathrm{~mm}$ ) using a linear gradient of a sodium acetate buffer ( 23 mM sodium acetate, $1.3 \mathrm{mM} \mathrm{Na} 2_{2}$ EDTA; pH6), methanol, and acetonitrile on an integrated HP1100 liquid chromatograph (Hewlett-Packard, USA).

Individual amino-acids are separated on a non-polar stationary phase according to their varied retention times: a function of their mass, structure, and hydrophobicity. A fluorescence detector is used to determine the concentrations of each amino-acid and record them as separate peaks on a chromatogram. A gradient elution programme was used to keep the retention time to below 120 minutes.

The fluorescence intensity of derivitised amino acids was measured ( $\mathrm{Ex}=230$ $\mathrm{nm}, \mathrm{Em}=445 \mathrm{~nm}$ ) in each sample and normalised to the internal standard. All samples and blank extracts that had been subjected to identical preparation procedures were run in triplicate. Quantification of individual amino acids was achieved by comparison with the standard amino acid mixture.

External standards containing a variety of D- and L- amino acids, allowing calibration with the analyte samples, were analyzed at the beginning and end of every run, and one standard was analyzed every ten samples. Blanks were randomly interspersed amongst the standards.

The $L$ and $D$ isomers of 10 amino acids were routinely analysed. During preparative hydrolysis both asparagine and glutamine undergo rapid irreversible deamination to aspartic acid and glutamic acid respectively (Hill,
1965). It is therefore not possible to distinguish between the acidic amino acids and their derivatives and they are reported together as Asx and Glx.

## Results and Discussion

In total we conducted 148 analyses, all of which were on bleached samples. As previously observed, bleaching reduced the yields of amino acids and also increased reproducibility.

The extent of racemization in five amino acids (D/L of Asx, Glx, Ser, Ala and Val), along with the ratio of the concentration of Ser to Ala ([Ser]/[Ala]), are reported for both the Free and Hyd fractions (Appendix 4). These indicators of protein decomposition have been selected as their peaks are cleanly eluted with baseline separation and they cover a wide range of rates of reaction. It is expected that with increasing age, the extent of racemization (D/L) will increase whilst the [Ser]/[Ala] value will decrease, due to the decomposition of the unstable serine.

On the basis of the relative D/L values and concentrations (Appendix 4) the amino acid data from the opercula from the East Mersea Restaurant site were consistent with a correlation with MIS 5 e . The data from all the other sites analysed indicated an age assignment within MIS 9 or MIS 11. Data from other MIS 9 and MIS 11 sites are also presented for comparison. Discussion of data from opercula from Clacton and Cudmore Grove are also discussed. Channels of different ages are present at Clacton (Warren, 1955) but the material from Clacton analysed in the present study comes from samples correlated with the Lower Freshwater Bed at West Cliff, attributed to MIS 11 (Bridgland et al., 1999). The Cudmore Grove channel deposits are exposed on the foreshore of Mersea Island at Cudmore Grove. The main deposit, containing Middle Pleistocene sediments, was originally associated with the main Thames-Medway system and therefore correlated with the Clacton Channel deposits of the Hoxnian, but are now thought to represent a tributary of the river and likely to be of the interglacial following this (Roe et al., in prep). These two sites represent intra-crystalline protein degradation values from an early MIS 11 site (Clacton) and a late MIS 9 site (Cudmore Grove), which may aid interpretation of the Medway dataset.

The data obtained from Asx, Glx, serine (Ser), alanine (Ala) and valine (Val) is discussed in detail below. Sample EH9.2Bto1bF (NEaar 3734) from East Hyde borehole, 9.2 m , has abnormally low levels of protein degradation in the Hyd fraction compared to that of the Free fraction, indicative of a compromised system. If the amino acids were contained within a closed system, the relationship between the Free and the Hyd fractions should be highly correlated, with non-concordance enabling the recognition of compromised samples (Preece \& Penkman, 2005). This operculum from East Hyde showed this non-concordance and so was rejected from the dataset.

The pattern of protein degradation with time is slightly different for the opercula of Bithynia troschelii compared to that of the B. tentaculata opercula.

Amino acid racemisation is governed by the original protein sequence and conformation. Whilst developing the research into closed-system protein degradation it became clear that the reaction rates were species-specific, even in the intra-crystalline fraction. This necessitates the comparison of amino acid data only within a single species, meaning that the Bithynia troschelii data cannot be directly compared to the B. tentaculata data. Whilst analyses at NEaar have shown that the differences in amino acid composition and protein decay patterns between the B. tentaculata and B. troschelii opercula are negligible (Penkman et al., submitted 2006), direct comparison of the data between these two species should not yet be undertaken. As B. troschelii opercula were analysed only from the Barling Gravel, all the age interpretation made in this study is based on the B. tentaculata dataset.

## Aspartic acid / Asparagine (Asx)

Asx is one of the fastest racemizing of the amino acids discussed here (due to the fact that it can racemize whilst still peptide bound; Collins et al., 1999).
This enables good levels of resolution at younger age sites, but decreased resolution beyond MIS 7 .
The values of Asx D/L for the Free and Hyd samples for East Mersea
Restaurant Site are the lowest in this set of samples, consistent with a correlation with the Ipswichian.
The $D / L$ values for the other sites fall within the range of that expected from MIS 9 and MIS 11 material (Fig. 3).
There is overlap between the Asx D/L data from MIS 9 and MIS 11 sites (Fig. 3, first two columns in each graph), due to the plateauing of the increase in $D / L$ at these timescales. This therefore makes discrimination to an interglacial level difficult using this amino acid. However, the data from Apton Hall Farm and the Barling Gravel fall at lower values, with Bradwell Hall tending to yield higher ratios. The spread of data from Barling Gravel is quite high, with one sample (BaGBto4, NEaar 3822) falling at higher values than the rest of the cluster from that site.


Figure 3: D/L values of Asx for the Free amino acid (FAA; bF; left) and Total Hydrolysable amino acid (THAA; bH*; right) fraction of bleached (intra-crystalline) Bithynia opercula from Apton Hall Farm (AHF), Barling Gravel (BaG), Bradwell Hall (BH), East Mersea Restaurant site (EM), Shoeburyness borehole 13.9m (S13),

Shoeburyness borehole 14.42 m (S14), East Hyde borehole, $7.55 \mathrm{~m}(\mathrm{EH} 7$ ) and East Hyde borehole, 9.2 m (EH9). The species of Bithynia analysed from all sites is B. tentaculata, but B. troschelii is also analysed from Barling Gravel (BaG tr). The data for other MIS 9 sites (including Purfleet, Cudmore Grove and Grays) and MIS 11 sites (including Swanscombe, Ebbsfleet, Woodston, Clacton, Elveden, Beeches Pit and Hoxne) have also been plotted for comparison. For each site, the base of the box indicates the 25th percentile. Within the box, the solid line plots the median and the dashed line shows the mean. The top of the box indicates the 75th percentile. Where more than 9 data points are available, the $10^{\text {th }}$ and $90^{\text {th }}$ percentiles can be calculated (shown by lines below and above the boxes respectively). The results of each duplicate analysis are included in order to provide a statistically significant sample size. Note different scales on the $\mathbf{y}$ axes.

The plot of Free to Hyd data from each sample can also be used as a relative timescale, with younger samples falling towards the bottom left corner of the graph and older samples falling towards the upper right corner, along the line of expected decomposition. The data from the Medway samples have been plotted in this way (Fig. 4), along with data from two relevant sites (enclosed symbols), that of Clacton (MIS 11) and Cudmore Grove (MIS 9). It is clear from this plot that the natural variability within the data does not allow a clear distinction of any of the sites except the East Mersea Restaurant site.

The Free Asx values for EH9.2Bto1 (NEaar 3734) are similar to that from the other samples from this site. However, the values obtained from the Hyd fraction are much lower than expected. When the Free to Hyd graph is plotted (Fig. 4), this sample falls significantly off the expected line. This suggests that this operculum's closed system had been compromised.


Figure 4: D/L Hyd vs D/L Free for Asx in Medway Bithynia opercula, compared to Clacton and Cudmore Grove samples and the trendline observed for fossil samples (in blue). Note the abnormal DL ratios for one of the East Hyde borehole 9.2 m samples.

## Glutamic Acid/Glutamine (GIx)

Glx is one of the slower racemizing amino acids discussed here and so the level of resolution from young sites is less than that seen with faster racemizing amino acids such as Asx. However, the low levels of racemization do help discriminate between material of MIS 9 and MIS 11 age. It is noteworthy that Glx has a slightly unusual pattern of racemization in the free form, due to the formation of a lactam (see Walton, 1998). This results in difficulties in measuring Glx in the Free form, as the lactam cannot be derivitized and is therefore unavailable for analysis.
The values of Glx D/L in the Hyd fraction for East Mersea Restaurant site are significantly lower than those observed for the other samples in this study, and are consistent with a correlation with the Ipswichian.
The $90 \%$ confidence limits of the data presented for the MIS 9 and MIS 11 sites in Fig. 5 do not overlap, therefore it should be possible to discriminate between sites of these ages with enough samples. However, for the Hyd fraction much of the Medway dataset falls between these two intervals, indicating that the samples fall either late within MIS 11, or early within MIS 9. The extremes of these interglacials can be demonstrated by comparison with two sites in particular, that of Clacton, which is believed to have been deposited early within MIS 11, and that of Cudmore Grove, which is proposed to represent sediments laid down late within MIS 9 (Fig. 6).
Bradwell Hall seems to have the highest values in both the Free and the Hyd fractions, and so is likely to correlate with MIS 11.


Figure 5: D/L values of Glx for the Free amino acid (FAA; bF; left) and Total Hydrolysable amino acid (THAA; bH*; right) fraction of bleached (intra-crystalline) Bithynia opercula from the Medway sites and for the database of MIS 9 and MIS 11 material. For a full description of this figure see the legend for Figure 3.

Both the Free and Hyd Glx values for sample EH9.2Bto1 are abnormally low and fall off the expected line, indicative of compromised material (Fig. 6).


Figure 6: D/L Hyd vs D/L Free for Glx in Medway Bithynia opercula, compared to Clacton and Cudmore Grove samples and the trendline observed for fossil samples (in blue). Note the abnormal DL ratios for one of the East Hyde borehole $\mathbf{9 . 2 m}$ samples.

## Serine (Ser)

Serine is one of the most unstable amino acids, with fast rates of racemisation and decomposition. This results in highly variable data and limits its usefulness in discriminating between sites at the timescales in this study. However, whilst the degree of racemization observed in the samples from MIS 9 and MIS 11 sites is uninformative in separating them, they do tend to fall at higher values than that of the East Mersea Restaurant Site (Fig. 7). One of the Bradwell Hall samples (BHBto3, NEaar 3733) has very low values but variable replicates, so the Ser data from this sample needs to be treated with caution.


Figure 7: D/L values of Ser for the Free amino acid (FAA; bF; left) and Total Hydrolysable amino acid (THAA; bH*; right) fraction of bleached (intra-crystalline)
Bithynia opercula from the Medway sites and for the database of MIS 9 and MIS 11 material. For a full description of this figure see the legend for Figure 3.

## Alanine

Alanine (Ala) is a hydrophobic amino acid, whose concentration is partly contributed from the decomposition of other amino acids (notably Serine). Ala racemises at an intermediate rate, so is one of the amino acids that may help distinguish samples at these timescales.
Again, the East Mersea Restaurant Site is easily separable from all the other sites (Fig. 8), with ratios consistent with a MIS 5e correlation.
The highest Ala D/Ls are obtained from the Bradwell Hall site, making this site again likely to be of MIS 11 age. The Barling Gravel samples yield some of the younger ratios within this group, which may be interpreted as likely to be of MIS 9 age. Apton Hall Farm also appears to have ratios consistent with MIS 9. The intermediate values of the other sites make it difficult to determine whether they fall late within MIS 11 or early within MIS 9.


Figure 8: D/L values of Ala for the Free amino acid (FAA; bF; left) and Total Hydrolysable amino acid (THAA; bH*; right) fraction of bleached (intra-crystalline) Bithynia opercula from the Medway sites and for the database of MIS 9 and MIS 11 material. For a full description of this figure see the legend for Figure 3.

When the Free to Hyd graph is plotted (Fig. 9), the EH9.2Bto1 sample falls at lower values than expected. The Bradwell Hall samples have the highest values within the MIS 9/11 group, with the Barling Gravel samples falling lowest.


Figure 9: D/L Hyd vs D/L Free for Ala in Medway Bithynia opercula, compared to Clacton and Cudmore Grove samples.

## Valine (Val)

Valine has extremely low rates of racemisation, and so is one of the more useful amino acids for age discrimination within material of this age.
The East Mersea Restaurant site yields the lowest Val D/L values in both the Free and the Hyd fraction (Fig. 10), consistent with a correlation with MIS 5e. The other sites again fall within the range of MIS 9 and MIS 11 sites (Fig. 10). The Apton Hall Farm and Barling material have the lowest ratios, indicating a MIS 9 age. Bradwell Hall has the highest ratios, which make it more likely that these represent MIS 11 samples. The Shoeburyness and East Hyde samples again have intermediate ratios, at the lower end of the MIS 11 values and the higher end of the range of MIS 9 values. This therefore indicates that they either fall towards the end of the MIS 11 interglacial or at the beginning of the MIS 9 interglacial.


Figure 10: D/L values of Val for the Free amino acid (FAA; bF; left) and Total Hydrolysable amino acid (THAA; bH*; right) fraction of bleached (intra-crystalline) Bithynia opercula from the Medway sites and for the database of MIS 9 and MIS 11 material. For a full description of this figure see the legend for Figure 3.

The Free to Hyd plot of Val D/L separates out the sites of Clacton and Cudmore Grove distinctly (Fig. 11). Whilst the East Mersea restaurant site plots at significantly lower values, consistent with an Ipswichian age, the other Medway sites fall between Cudmore Grove (MIS 9) and Clacton (MIS 11). The Barling and Apton Hall Farm samples tend to fall closer to Cudmore Grove, indicating a MIS 9 age. The Bradwell Hall data has the highest values within the Medway dataset and fall closest to the Clacton data, indicating that this site is likely to be of MIS 11 age.


Figure 11: D/L Hyd vs D/L Free for Val in Medway Bithynia opercula, compared to Clacton and Cudmore Grove samples and the trendline observed for fossil samples (in blue).

The same problematic sample from East Hyde borehole 9.2m, identified for Asx, Glx and Ala, is also seen to a lesser extent with divergence in the DL ratios of Val, further confirming that this sample is compromised.

## [Serine]/[Alanine]

The ratio of the concentrations of Serine and Alanine provides a useful tool for age estimation. Serine is a very unstable amino acid, and it can degrade via dehydration into alanine (Bada et al., 1978). As the protein within a sample breaks down, the concentration of serine will decrease with an increase in the concentration of alanine, thus the [Ser]/[Ala] value will decrease with increasing time. In order to ease the interpretation, the y-axes in Fig. 12 are plotted in reverse, so that the direction of increase in protein degradation is the same as for the racemisation graphs.

The samples from the East Mersea Restaurant site fall at higher (and therefore less degraded) values than for the other sites. The second replicate analysis of one of the East Mersea Hyd samples (EMR3Bto5, NEaar 3821) has lower Ser concentrations than the first replicate, and therefore falls at lower values than the other samples; it is likely that this is due to an analytical problem and the first analysis is probably correct.
Interestingly the B. troschelii data from Barling falls at lower values, although this is likely to be due to the slight differences in protein composition between the two species analysed here.
On the basis of the [Ser]/[Ala], it is very difficult to separate these sites out on basis of age, other than to say that they are all likely to be of MIS 9 or MIS 11 age.


Figure 12: [Ser]/[Ala] for the Free amino acid (FAA; bF; left) and Total Hydrolysable amino acid (THAA; $\mathrm{bH}^{*}$; right) fraction of bleached (intra-crystalline) Bithynia opercula from the Medway sites and for the database of MIS 9 (represented by Cudmore Grove) and MIS 11 (represented by Clacton) material. For a full description
of this figure see the legend for Figure 3. The $y$-axes for the [Ser]/[Ala] data are plotted in reverse, so that the direction of increased protein degradation for each of the indicators remains the same.

In the Free vs Hyd plot (Fig. 13) the large spread of data in the Barling samples is evident - the two outliers being sample BaGBto2 (NEaar 3741) lying at younger values and BaGBto4 (NEaar 3828) lying at older values. The Apton Hall Farm samples plot close to the Cudmore Grove samples, indicating a MIS 9 age. The compromised sample EH9.2Bto1bF plots clearly away from the other samples at much higher [Ser]/[Ala] values than expected.


Figure 13: [Ser]/[Ala] Hyd vs D/L Free in Medway Bithynia opercula, compared to Clacton and Cudmore Grove samples. As the [Ser]/[Ala] value decreases with increasing protein decomposition, the axes of this plot has been reversed so that the direction of protein decomposition is the same as that for the $\mathrm{D} / \mathrm{L}$ graphs, with younger samples falling to the bottom left corner and older samples falling to the top right corner of the graph.

## Discussion

## East Hyde borehole compromised sample

Sample EH9.2Bto1bF (NEaar 3734) from East Hyde borehole, 9.2m, has abnormally low levels of protein degradation in the Hyd fraction compared to that of the Free fraction, indicative of a compromised system. The data from this sample has therefore been rejected from the analyses. There are significant indications that the integrity of the closed system of intra-crystalline
protein has been compromised in some way. Therefore no age estimation can be made from this sample.

If the sample had been contaminated by microbial action or undergone recrystallisation during its burial history, then the Free to Hyd values of one or more of the amino acids will not match. When the Hyd ratios are compared to the Free ratios from the same sample, they fall clearly well out of the range of any operculum or shell yet analysed (Figs. 4, 6 \& 13). If the amino acids are contained within a closed system the relationship between the Free and the Hyd would be highly correlated, as evidenced by the tight clustering of Free to Hyd ratios observed for the other opercula (Penkman, 2005; Preece \& Penkman, 2005). That these samples plot well away from these general trends is an indication that post-mortem protein contamination or leaching has occurred.

In the case of the single Bithynia tentaculata opercula from East Hyde borehole, 9.2 m , the original amino acid composition has clearly been compromised and no age assignment is possible for these samples. The tight correlation of the Free to Hyd ratios allows this alteration to be recognised, and therefore data from the opercula to be rejected. Analysis of just one of these fractions could lead to an erroneous age assignment, without recognition of the composition discrepancies. It is therefore essential that any amino acid analysis is conducted on both the Free and the Hyd fractions from the same sample, and that age correlations using amino acids are not made on the basis of single samples.

The Free amino acid levels from this sample indicate far more protein decomposition than the Hyd amino acids from the SAME shell. One possible explanation for high Free and low Hyd values is corrosion. If dissolution was the cause then the Free values would be as high or higher than in a reliable sample, whilst the Hyd values would be depressed, as observed in this material.

## Comparison with other sites

The analysis of the closed system of protein within shells allows a new concept of age estimation to be developed, which incorporates multiple amino acid data to give a single measure of the overall extent of protein breakdown within a sample. This measurement, the Intra-crystalline Protein Degradation value (ICPD, formerly DMK) simplifies the presentation of the data to two compound values for each sample, one for the Free and one for the Hydrolysed amino acids. As these should be highly correlated, they can be cross-plotted, giving an aminostratigraphic framework with younger samples lying at low values and older samples with higher values, given a similar temperature history for all the sites. A study has been undertaken of interglacial sites within the UK which has allowed the tentative correlation of the aminostratigraphic framework to the Marine oxygen Isotope stage (MIS) record (Penkman, 2005).

On the basis of the relative D/L values and concentrations (Appendix 4; Fig 14) the amino acid data from the opercula from East Mersea Restaurant site, when compared with unpublished values from Quaternary sites within the UK (Penkman, 2005) are consistent with an age assignment within MIS 5 e . The amino acid data from the opercula from the other Medway sites are all consistent with an age assignment between MIS 9 and MIS 11. It is likely that the material from Barling and Apton Hall Farm is of MIS 9 age, and that Bradwell Hall is of MIS 11 age. The samples from Shoeburyness and East Hyde fall between the ranges of these two interglacials, and so are likey to correspond to either an early part of MIS 9 or a late part of MIS 11.


Figure 14: Hyd vs Free for DMKv2.0Glx in Bithynia tentaculata opercula from the Medway, along with data from Cudmore Grove and Clacton. The error bars represent the range of data observed in UK sites correlated with MIS 5a-11 and within the Cromerian.

## Temperature effects on protein degradation

Using modelled protein degradation, it is possible to use estimates of temperature variation in the UK (based here on a combination of long marine and ice core data and terrestrial palaeoclimatic estimates) to produce a curve which illustrates the increase in the IcPD value (i.e. extent of intra-crystalline protein degradation) with time. For example, in Fig. 15, a temperature model for a particular site is estimated by interpreting the evidence from two global climate records, at different offset temperatures. Models of protein
decomposition, based upon those presented in Collins and Riley (2000), is run with this temperature estimation. A stepwise increase in the predicted ICPD is observed (Fig. 15): the rate plateaus in the glacials and rises rapidly in the interglacials, as the activation energies of all the key reactions are in the region of $100-130 \mathrm{~kJ} \mathrm{~mol}^{-1}$. In the Quaternary it is predicted that during the cold stages little or no racemisation will have occurred in pleniglacial sediments as found in the UK, whereas in warm stages the increase in temperatures will have had a significant impact on the rate of racemisation.


Figure 15: Example of the output from the IcPD model. The upper diagram shows two different temperature records: a benthic stack (a: Karner, 2001) and an Antarctic ice core (b: Augustin et al., 2004). The lower diagram illustrates the effect of the two temperature records on the predicted IcPD. The stepped nature of the increase in racemisation with age is caused by the much faster rates of racemisation in warm than
in cold stages. Also observe that the ability to discriminate between isotope stages declines with time, because of the tendency for the reaction to slow (believed to be due to a restriction in available water for hydrolysis). As can be seen, the selection of both the temperature record and the offset temperature can have a significant effect on the extent of the IcPD, and hence any absolute age predictions. It is for this reason that the amino acid results presented are purely in an aminostratigraphic form.

Using the thermal models leads to a greater understanding of the sensitivity of the IcPD to subtle changes in temperature and also to the range of values that can plausibly be considered to belong to a single isotope stage. However, the determination of absolute dates is highly dependent on the accuracy of the temperature record, and at this stage is not good enough to be used to determine absolute age estimates from amino acid racemisation data. The models are presented here in order to demonstrate the difficulties of distinguishing samples from the end of one interglacial from the beginning of the following interglacial.

The mechanism of the protein breakdown reactions means that increased degradation occurs during warm stages and there is a slowing in the rates of degradation in cold stages. As so little decomposition occurs in the cold stages, and there is a degree of natural variability in biological samples, it can be difficult to discriminate the end of one warm stage from the beginning of the next. Additional information from these sites would be extremely useful in narrowing down the range of ages possible from the amino acid data alone. In several cases environmental or other data from sites have constrained the time period of a site to early or late within an interglacial, enabling the amino acid data to then pin it to a specific MIS.

## Conclusions

Out of the 37 Bithynia tentaculata opercula samples analysed in this study, only 1 did not enable relative age estimations to be determined. The one operculum sample analysed from East Hyde borehole 9.2m (EH9.2Bto1, NEaar 3734) showed that the intra-crystalline fraction of protein had been compromised at some point during the burial history of the sample. This is an extremely unusual occurrence with this material, which has been found to be a particularly robust repository for the original protein, with a normal success rate of recovery of $\sim 97 \%$.

## Age of the sites

In this study the amino acid data has been used as a relative dating technique to present an aminostratigraphy for the area in question. The conversion of relative sequences into absolute dates and accurate correlation between different areas is currently being undertaken, but preliminary correlations have been made to the MIS record.

In order of youngest to oldest we would place the sites as follows:

East Mersea Restaurant site: has significantly lower protein decomposition that any of the other sites analysed in this study. The amino acid data from this site is similar to that obtained from other Ipswichian (MIS 5e) sites (including Bobbitshole, Trafalgar Square, Coston, Shropham, Tattershall Castle, Cropthorne New Inn, Eckington and Itteringham).

Data from all the other sites fall within the range of MIS 9 sites (such as Grays, Cudmore Grove, Hackney and Purfleet) and MIS 11 sites (including Hoxne, Swanscombe, Ebbsfleet, Elveden, Woodston, Barnham and Beeches Pit). The levels of natural variability within the samples and the low level of protein breakdown observed in cold stages limits the interpretation of the data. However, tentative conclusions can be drawn to attempt to separate out these sites.

It appears that Apton Hall Farm and Barling form the youngest samples of this group and are therefore likely to correlate with MIS 9. The pollen correlation of the Apton Hall site indicates that these sediments were deposited in an early phase of an interglacial, which makes a MIS 9 age far more likely than an early MIS 11 age.
It is noted that the Barling dataset had a greater variability than observed in the other sites.

The opercula from Shoeburyness and East Hyde have intermediate values, and therefore are likely to derive from interglacial sediments that were formed either late within MIS 11 or early within MIS 9. The opercula from Shoeburyness were taken from a pre-oak pollen zone, correlated with the beginning of an interglacial, with birch and pine pollen dominant (Roe, 1999). In conjunction with this, the amino acid results would therefore suggest a correlation with early MIS 9 rather than early MIS 11. However, the levels sampled at East Hyde contain pollen correlated with a later temperate zone 3 (Roe, 2001). The amino acid data would therefore support an age for this deposit late within MIS 11.

The samples from Bradwell Hall seem to have the greatest extent of protein degradation within the sample set. It is likely that these samples correlate with MIS 11, confirming the suggested geological correlation with the Tillingham Channel at East Hyde.

Further information on the sites under study may help resolve the amino acid age determinations further.

## Acknowledgements

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## Appendix 1: Glossary

$18 \mathrm{M} \Omega$ water: The water has a resistivity of $18 \mathrm{M} \Omega / \mathrm{cm}$, indicating a lack of ions.

HPLC grade water: In addition to low ion content, HPLC grade water has a low organic content (typically < 2 ppb ).

Amino acids: the building blocks of proteins and consist of an alpha carbon atom $\left(\mathrm{C}_{\alpha}\right)$ which has four different groups bonded to it: an amino group $\left(-\mathrm{NH}_{2}\right)$, a carboxyl group $(-\mathrm{COOH})$, a hydrogen atom ( -H ), and a side chain, (often called an R group). About 20 amino acids normally occur in nature and some of these can undergo further modification (eg the hydroxylation of proline to hydroxyproline). The amino acids are commonly known by three letter codes (see Appendix 3: Abbreviations). They exist free in the cell, but are more commonly linked together by peptide bonds to form proteins, peptides, and sub-components of some other macromolecules (eg bacterial peptidoglycan).

Amino acid isomers: amino acids occur as two stereoisomers that are chemically identical, but optically different. These isomers are designated as either D (dextro-rotary) or L (laevo-rotary) depending upon whether they rotate plane polarised light to the right or left respectively (Fig 6). In living organisms the amino acids in protein are almost exclusively $L$ and the D/L ratio approaches zero. Two amino acids, isoleucine and threonine, have two chiral carbon atoms and therefore have four stereoisomers each. As well as racemization, these two amino acids can undergo a process known as epimerization. The detection of the L-alloisoleucine epimer (derived from Lisoleucine) is possible by conventional ion-exchange chromatography, and was thus the most commonly used reaction pathway in geochronology.

Asx: Measurements of aspartic acid following hydrolysis also include asparagines, which decomposes to Asx. This combined signal of aspartic acid plus asparagine (Asp +Asn) is referred to as Asx (Hill, 1965).

D-amino acid: dextrorotary amino acid, formed following synthesis of the protein as it degrades over time (remember as "dead amino acid").

IcPD: Intra-crystalline Protein Degradation. This is the measure of the overall extent of protein breakdown in the closed system of the intra-crystalline fraction of a shell. Conventional racemization analysis tends to report an allosioleucine / isoleucine ( $\mathrm{A} / \mathrm{I}$ or $\mathrm{D} / \mathrm{L}$ ratio). This amino acid ratio has the advantage of being relative easy to measure and also sufficiently slow to be used to "date" sediments in the European Quaternary.

Our IcPD approach utilises multiple amino acids. However we have avoided trying to give a whole series of $D / L$ values for each amino acid in each sample. Instead we are using a theoretical model of protein degradation. The model outputs are then used to compare observed D/L values of any amino acid against the $\mathrm{A} / \mathrm{I}$ value at the same stage of protein decomposition. The
relative rate of racemization of any amino acid (its DL ratio) is then reported as an A/l equivalent - which as a working title we have named the Intracrystalline Protein Degradation value (or ICPD) (Collins Penkman and Kaufman in prep).

Instead of getting a single A/l ratio we obtain a series of (IcPD) values, currently IcPD Asx, IcPD Glu, IcPD Phe, IcPD Ala, IcPD val. Other ratios, notably ICPD ser, are not currently of implemented in the model - ie we don't have a good degradation model for this amino acid yet.

Because each amino acid has its own particular characteristics, only in a well behaved system will IcPD Asx $=\mathrm{IcPD}_{\text {Glu }}=\mathrm{IcPD}_{\text {Phe }}=\mathrm{IcPD} D_{\text {Ala }}=\mathrm{IcPD}$ val. If an amino acid has an unusually low ratio (due to modern contamination) or unusually high racemization (due to inclusion of bacterial cell wall contaminants) either some or all of the amino acids will no longer fit to the idealized degradation model. Indeed we can use elevation of IcPD ${ }_{\text {Asx }}=\mathrm{IcPD}$ Glu and $=\operatorname{IcPD}$ Ala to provide a bacterial contamination index. We have not done so in this case as there was no evidence of contamination.

IcPD values: Intra-crystalline Protein Degradation value, a summary value obtained from multiple amino acid D/L values from a single sample all normalised to a common model of protein degradation and racemization.

Enantiomers / optical isomers: mirror image forms of the same compound that cannot be superimposed on one another.

Epimerisation: the inversion of the chiral $\alpha$-carbon atom.
Free amino acid fraction: The fraction of amino acids directly amenable to racemization analysis. Only amino acids which have already been naturally hydrolysed (over time) are measured. These are the most highly racemized amino acids.


Hydrolysis: A chemical reaction involving water leading to the breaking apart of a compound (in this case the breaking of peptide bonds to release amino acids).

L-amino acid: laevorotary amino acid, the constituent form of proteins (remember as "living amino acid").

Peptide bond: an amide linkage between the carboxyl group of one amino acid and the amino group of another.

Racemization: the inversion of all chiral carbon atoms, leading to the decrease in specific optical rotation. When the optical rotation is reduced to zero, the mixture is said to be racemized.

Stereoisomers: molecules of the same compound that have their atoms arranged differently in space.

Total amino acid fraction: The extent of racemization of all amino acids in a sample, determined following aggressive high temperature hydrolysis with strong mineral acid, which has the effect of breaking apart all peptide bonds so that the total extent of racemization in all amino acids both free and peptide bound are measured.

Zwitterion: A dipolar ion containing ionic groups of opposite charge. At neutral pH the ionic form of amino acids which predominates is the zwitterions

## What does the date estimated from IcPD mean?

The date is our best estimate based upon the temperature history of the site. If we wanted to constrain this further we would need reliable independent dates. There are considerable differences in racemization rates between different molluscs. This reflects differences in rates of decomposition of proteins within the shell - the so-called species effects (Lajoie et al, 1980).

## Appendix 2

## Past Use of Amino Acid Racemization Dating.

The presence of proteins in archaeological remains has been known for some time. Nearly fifty years ago Abelson (1954) separated amino acids from subfossil shell. He suggested the possibility of using the kinetics of the degradation of amino acids as the basis for a dating method (Abelson, 1955). In 1967 Hare and Abelson measured the extent of racemization of amino acids extracted from modern and sub-fossil Mercenaria mercenaria shells (edible clam). They found that the total amount of amino acids present in shell decreased with the age of the shell. The amino acids in recent shell were all in the $L$ configuration and over time the amount of $D$ configuration amino acid increased (Hare and Abelson, 1967). However, even after 35 years this method of dating is still subject to vigorous debate, with the application of AAR to date bone being particularly controversial (Bada 1990; Marshall 1990). Major reviews of AAR include: Johnson and Miller (1997), Hare, von Endt, and Kokis (1997), Rutter and Blackwell (1995), Murray-Wallace (1993), Bada (1991) and Schroeder and Bada (1976). Racemization is a chemical reaction and a number of factors influence its rate (Rutter and Blackwell, 1995). These include: amino acid structure, the sequence of amino acids in peptides, pH , buffering effects, metallic cations, the presence of water and temperature. To establish a dating method the kinetics and mechanisms of the racemization (and epimerization) reaction of free and peptide bound amino acids need to be established. To this end various workers in the late 1960s and the 1970s studied free amino acids in solution and carried out laboratory simulations of post mortem changes in the amino acids in bone (Bada, 1972) and shell (Hare and Abelson, 1967; Hare and Mitterer, 1969). Attempts have also been made to relate the kinetics of free amino acids, with those in short polypeptides and the proteins in various archaeological samples (Bada, 1982; Smith and Evans, 1980).

The ability of this technique to be used as a geochronological and geothermometry tool has led to its use in many environmental studies, with research into AAR in terrestrial gastropods (Goodfriend, 1991; 1992), bivalves (Goodfriend and Stanley, 1996), foraminifera (Harada et al, 1996), ostrich egg shells (Miller et al, 1992; 1997) and speleothems (Lauritzen, 1994). Studies within UK deposits have been based on early methods of chemical separation, using lon-Exchange liquid chromatography, able to separate the enantiomers of one amino acid found in proteins, L-isoleucine (L-lle, I), from its most stable diastereoisomer alloisoleucine (D-aile, A). By analysing the total protein content within marine (Bowen \& Sykes, 1988) and non-marine mollusc shells (Bowen et al., 1989) from UK interglacial sites, an amino acid geochronology was developed using the increase in $\mathrm{A} / \mathrm{I}$, correlating with the marine oxygen isotope warm stages.

## Appendix 3

Abbreviations used in this report

| Abbrev | 1-letter code number of chiral centres |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Ala | A | 1 | Alanine |
| Arg | R | 1 | Arginine |
| Acn |  |  | acetonitrile |
| AA |  |  | Amino acid(n) |
| Asn | N | 1 | Asparagine |
| Asp | D | 1 | Aspartic acid |
| Asx |  |  | Asparagine + Aspartic acid + succinimide |
| Asu |  |  | Succinimide |
| Cys | C | 1 | Cysteine |
| DCM |  |  | Dichlormethane |
| GABA |  |  | $\gamma$-Aminobutyric acid |
| Gln | Q | 1 | Glutamine |
| Glu | E | 1 | Glutamic acid |
| Gly | G | 0 | Glycine |
| His | H | 1 | Histidine |
| HPLC |  |  | High-Performance Liquid Chromatography |
| Hyp |  |  | Hydroxyproline |
| IBD(L)C |  |  | N-Isobutyryl-D(L)-Cysteine |
| 1 le | I | 2 | Isoleucine |
| Leu | L | 1 | Leucine |
| Lys | K | 1 | Lysine |
| MeOH |  |  | Methanol |
| Met | M | 1 | Methionine |
| Nle |  |  | Norleucine |
| OPA |  |  | ortho-Phthaldialdehyde |
| Orn |  |  | Ornithine |
| Phe | F | 1 | Phenylalanine |
| Pro | P | 1 | Proline |
| Ser | S | 1 | Serine |
| Thr | T | 2 | Threonine |
| Trp | W | 1 | Tryptophan |
| Tyr | Y | 1 | Tyrosine |
| Val | V | 1 | Valine |

Appendix 4
Data sheets from Medway

| eaar | File | Genus Species | materials location |  | Asx conc pmol/mg | Glx conc pmol/mg | Ser conc pmol/mg | Gly conc pmol/mg | Ala conc $\mathrm{pmol} / \mathrm{mg}$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 3737bF | G238-0406 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | F | 1546 | 219 | 422 | 1247 | 1261 |
| 3737bF | G238-0415 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | F | 1563 | 219 | 433 | 1251 | 1291 |
| 3737bH* | G238-2543 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | $\mathrm{H}^{*}$ | 2691 | 1768 | 646 | 2472 | 1889 |
| 3737bH* | G238-2553 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | $\mathrm{H}^{*}$ | 2649 | 1727 | 636 | 2632 | 1891 |
| 3738bF | G238-1428 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | F | 2305 | 294 | 708 | 1607 | 1659 |
| 3738bF | G238-1464 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | F | 2316 | 295 | 705 | 1194 | 1657 |
| 3738bH* | G239-0204 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | $\mathrm{H}^{*}$ | 3649 | 2190 | 918 | 3054 | 2110 |
| 3738bH* | G240-0203 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | $\mathrm{H}^{*}$ | 3603 | 1881 | 975 | 2219 | 2303 |
| 3739bF | G238-1529 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | F | 2127 | 272 | 651 | 1538 | 1462 |
| 3739bF | G238-1565 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | F | 2139 | 256 | 656 | 1057 | 1489 |
| 3739bH* | G239-0305 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | $\mathrm{H}^{*}$ | 3436 | 2023 | 887 | 3280 | 2182 |
| 3739bH* | G240-0304 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | $\mathrm{H}^{*}$ | 3461 | 1677 | 1089 | 2652 | 2782 |
| 3826bF | G244-2455 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | F | 2222 | 268 | 671 | 1627 | 1696 |
| 3826bF | G244-2463 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | F | 2134 | 247 | 619 | 1236 | 1684 |
| $3826 \mathrm{bH} *$ | G244-3787 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | $\mathrm{H}^{*}$ | 2536 | 1629 | 595 | 2361 | 1670 |
| 3826bH* | G244-3795 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | $\mathrm{H}^{*}$ | 2755 | 1814 | 625 | 2555 | 1801 |
| 3827 bF | G244-2556 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | F | 2646 | 288 | 789 | 1495 | 1754 |
| 3827 bF | G244-2564 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | F | 2422 | 256 | 718 | 1158 | 1657 |
| 3827bH* | G244-3888 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | $\mathrm{H}^{*}$ | 3853 | 2280 | 887 | 3211 | 2201 |
| 3827bH* | G244-3896 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Apton Hall Farm borehole, APHF $05<3$ A> | $\mathrm{H}^{*}$ | 3846 | 2289 | 802 | 2852 | 2200 |
| 3740bF | G238-0508 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Barling Gravel, $05<5>$ (18) | F | 1681 | 239 | 534 | 1301 | 1363 |
| 3740bF | G238-0517 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Barling Gravel, $05<5>$ (18) | F | 1677 | 234 | 520 | 1191 | 1373 |
| $3740 \mathrm{bH} *$ | G238-2644 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Barling Gravel, $05<5>$ (18) | $\mathrm{H}^{*}$ | 2950 | 1836 | 708 | 2479 | 1975 |
| 3740bH* | G238-2654 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Barling Gravel, $05<5>$ (18) | $\mathrm{H}^{*}$ | 2594 | 1546 | 626 | 1964 | 1800 |
| 3741bF | G238-1630 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Barling Gravel, $05<5>$ (18) | F | 1965 | 262 | 603 | 1363 | 1452 |
| 3741bF | G238-1666 | Bithynia tentaculata | operculum Barling Gravel, $05<5>$ (18) | F | 1918 | 247 | 597 | 1016 | 1424 |




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| 3737 bF | G238-0406 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 556 | 184 | 607 | 245 | 0.74 | 0.38 | 0.90 | 0.45 | 0.27 | 0.33 | 0.41 |
| 3737 bF | G238-0415 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 559 | 174 | 580 | 231 | 0.74 | 0.38 | 0.95 | 0.46 | 0.26 | 0.34 | 0.41 |
| $3737 \mathrm{bH} *$ | G238-2543 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 1090 | 425 | 1187 | 441 | 0.65 | 0.27 | 0.69 | 0.38 | 0.20 | 0.34 | 0.30 |
| $3737 \mathrm{bH} *$ | G238-2553 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 1091 | 416 | 1214 | 455 | 0.63 | 0.28 | 0.68 | 0.38 | 0.20 | 0.34 | 0.30 |
| 3738 bF | G238-1428 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 663 | 208 | 650 | 211 | 0.73 | 0.37 | 0.93 | 0.46 | 0.25 | 0.43 | 0.40 |
| 3738 bF | G238-1464 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 662 | 200 | 669 | 239 | 0.73 | 0.36 | 0.92 | 0.45 | 0.24 | 0.43 | 0.39 |
| $3738 \mathrm{bH} *$ | G239-0204 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 1078 | 271 | 1131 | 372 | 0.63 | 0.27 | 0.68 | 0.37 | 0.20 | 0.43 | 0.30 |
| $3738 \mathrm{bH}^{*}$ | G240-0203 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 1189 | 367 | 1132 | 406 | 0.63 | 0.28 | 0.68 | 0.37 | 0.20 | 0.42 | 0.30 |
| 3739bF | G238-1529 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 607 | 190 | 607 | 208 | 0.73 | 0.36 | 0.97 | 0.43 | 0.24 | 0.45 | 0.39 |
| 3739bF | G238-1565 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 635 | 170 | 633 | 229 | 0.73 | 0.35 | 0.94 | 0.42 | 0.23 | 0.44 | 0.38 |
| $3739 \mathrm{bH} *$ | G239-0305 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 1179 | 432 | 1249 | 434 | 0.63 | 0.26 | 0.69 | 0.36 | 0.18 | 0.41 | 0.28 |
| $3739 \mathrm{bH} *$ | G240-0304 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 1538 | 457 | 1516 | 547 | 0.63 | 0.26 | 0.69 | 0.36 | 0.18 | 0.39 | 0.28 |
| 3826 bF | G244-2455 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 677 | 248 | 839 | 327 | 0.75 | 0.38 | 1.00 | 0.45 | 0.25 | 0.40 | 0.41 |
| 3826 bF | G244-2463 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 660 | 234 | 809 | 337 | 0.76 | 0.39 | 0.98 | 0.45 | 0.26 | 0.37 | 0.42 |
| $3826 \mathrm{bH} *$ | G244-3787 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 926 | 358 | 1096 | 401 | 0.65 | 0.26 | 0.68 | 0.37 | 0.18 | 0.36 | 0.29 |
| $3826 \mathrm{bH} *$ | G244-3795 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 1021 | 395 | 1191 | 432 | 0.65 | 0.28 | 0.66 | 0.37 | 0.19 | 0.35 | 0.30 |
| 3827 bF | G244-2556 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 694 | 214 | 753 | 261 | 0.74 | 0.37 | 1.00 | 0.44 | 0.25 | 0.45 | 0.40 |
| 3827 bF | G244-2564 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 666 | 198 | 715 | 276 | 0.74 | 0.37 | 0.99 | 0.45 | 0.27 | 0.43 | 0.41 |
| $3827 \mathrm{bH} *$ | G244-3888 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 1241 | 446 | 1355 | 484 | 0.63 | 0.26 | 0.69 | 0.36 | 0.19 | 0.40 | 0.29 |
| $3827 \mathrm{bH} *$ | G244-3896 | B. tent op | Apton Hall Farm | 1258 | 454 | 1344 | 483 | 0.63 | 0.26 | 0.68 | 0.36 | 0.18 | 0.36 | 0.29 |
| 3740 bF | G238-0508 | B. tent op | Barling Gravel | 558 | 218 | 631 | 207 | 0.73 | 0.36 | 0.98 | 0.44 | 0.25 | 0.39 | 0.39 |
| 3740 bF | G238-0517 | B. tent op | Barling Gravel | 556 | 203 | 620 | 205 | 0.73 | 0.37 | 0.96 | 0.45 | 0.24 | 0.38 | 0.39 |
| $3740 \mathrm{bH} *$ | G238-2644 | B. tent op | Barling Gravel | 1324 | 536 | 1530 | 607 | 0.59 | 0.24 | 0.62 | 0.32 | 0.15 | 0.36 | 0.25 |
| $3740 \mathrm{bH} *$ | G238-2654 | B. tent op | Barling Gravel | 1191 | 461 | 1372 | 564 | 0.58 | 0.23 | 0.62 | 0.32 | 0.15 | 0.35 | 0.25 |
| 3741 bF | G238-1630 | B. tent op | Barling Gravel | 625 | 206 | 591 | 220 | 0.72 | 0.36 | 1.00 | 0.43 | 0.24 | 0.42 | 0.38 |
| 3741 bF | G238-1666 | B. tent op | Barling Gravel | 639 | 204 | 637 | 246 | 0.71 | 0.36 | 0.98 | 0.43 | 0.24 | 0.42 | 0.38 |



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