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AMK Report 2542

A report on the seeds recovered from the site of the deserted medieval village at West Whelpington, Northumberland.

By: J. Greig.

The small number of seeds recovered from this sample are listed in alphabetical order; the plants from which they came belong to two main vegetation types --- weeds of disturbed ground, especially those found on acid, sometimes damp soils, and on high ground, and secondly plants usually associated with stream sides and damp meadows.

The weed flora includes rather catholic plants like Atriplex (orache), Rumex (dock) and Urtica (nettle), together with plants that are more specific in their habitat requirements like Potentilla (tormentil) which is common on acid upland soils. All of these plants would be expected around the site today, especially on the spoil tips. There are also such plants as Juncus (rush) and Isolepis (bristle scirpus) which would not be unexpected growing in damp parts of the site.

The waterside flora includes a group of Carex (sedge) species and other plants like the tiny Montia (blinks) and Ranunculus subg. Batrachium (water crowfoot) which only grow in or very near water. Such plants would not be expected to be found growing in the immediate vicinity of the site unless there was a village pond on the hill ---- otherwise they would represent vegetation that had been brought in, perhaps from along the banks of the Wansbeck. It appears from experience in other organic deposits in archaeological sites that it was common practice to bring in waterside plant matter, perhaps for roofing, flooring, or bedding material.

The context in which this material was found was very shallow, but it appeared to be well sealed and safe from the risk of contamination from rodent nests etc. The preservation of the seeds was quite good, perhaps due to the airtight sealing of clay on top of the layer sampled

J.R.A. Greig 23rd June 1976

## MACROFOSSILS

|  |                     |             |                      |
|--|---------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| <u>Atriplex</u> sp.  | (orache)            | 3 seeds     | common weed          |
| <u>Carex</u> cf. <u>acutiformis</u> Ehrh.                  | (lesser pond sedge) | 1 nut       | ponds, wet meadow    |
| <u>Carex</u> cf. <u>disticha</u> Huds.                     | (brown sedge)       | 1 nut       | fens, marshes etc    |
| <u>Carex</u> cf. <u>flacca</u> Schreb.                     | (glaucous sedge)    | 3 nuts      | ubiquitous           |
| <u>Carex</u> indet.  |                     | 2 nuts      |                      |
| <u>Galeopsis</u> sp.                                       | (hemp-nettle)       | 2 nutlets   | weed of arable land  |
| <u>Isolepis</u> <u>setacea</u> (L.) R.Br.                  | (bristle scirpus)   | 1 nut       | damp meadows         |
| <u>Juncus</u> sp.  | (rush)              | 3 seeds     |                      |
| <u>Montia</u> <u>fontana</u> L.                            | (blinks)            | 3 seeds     | wet flushed, streams |
| <u>Potentilla</u> <u>erecta</u> (L.) Rausch                | (common tormentil)  | 2 seeds     | acid soils, uplands  |
| <u>Ranunculus</u> subgenus <u>Batrachium</u> (DC.) A. Gray | (water crowfoot)    | 1 achene    | streams              |
| <u>Rubus</u> <u>fruticosus</u> agg. L.                     | (bramble)           | 2 seeds     | ubiquitous           |
| <u>Rumex</u> cf. <u>obtusifolius</u> L.                    | (broad-leaved dock) | 2 perianths | disturbed ground     |
| <u>Rumex</u> indet.  |                     | 54 fr.      |                      |
| <u>Stellaria</u> <u>media</u> (L.) Vill.                   | (chickweed)         | 4 seeds     | ubiquitous           |
| <u>Urtica</u> <u>dioica</u> L.                             | (stinging nettle)   | 36 achenes  | ubiquitous weed      |
| <u>Urtica</u> <u>urens</u> L.                              | (small nettle)      | 3 achenes   | weed                 |