

Queen Street, Kings Lynn: Biological Remains

Peter Murphy; with reports on Foraminifera by Professor B.M. Funnell, and on Fishbone by Dr A. Wheeler.

Small samples were taken from the section exposed in the contractor's excavations in order to establish the character and probable origin of the deposits between the successive floor levels within the building. Botanical material was recovered from 2.5l. samples ~~of layers 2, 3 and 13~~ by water flotation, collecting the flot in a 250 micron mesh sieve. The non-floating residue was washed through a 500 micron mesh sieve, and molluscs, bone and avian eggshell extracted from the dried residue. Smaller samples from the dark bands within layers 1 and 4 were also examined. Foraminifera were extracted from samples of layers 1 and 2.

1. Plant remains.

Context No.	2	4	13
* <u>Hordeum</u> sp. Hulled barley	4	-	3
* <u>Triticum aestivum</u> s1 Bread/Club wheat	-	-	1
* <u>Avena</u> sp. Oats	1	-	2
* Cereal indet. Unidentified cereal	3	-	2
<u>Characeae</u> indet. Stonewort (oogonia)	8	-	1
<u>Papaver argemone</u> L. Prickly-headed poppy	3	-	-
* <u>Brassica/Sinapis</u> sp. Cabbage-type	3	-	100+
* <u>Atriplex patula/hastata</u> Orache	-	-	1
* <u>Leguminosae</u> indet. Vetch(?) (cotyledon)	1	-	1
* <u>Polygonum</u> c.f. <u>persicaria</u> L. Persicaria	-	-	16
<u>Polygonum</u> cf. <u>aviculare</u> agg. Knotgrass	1	-	-
<u>Polygonum</u> sp.	-	-	1
* <u>Corylus avellana</u> L. Hazel (frags)	-	+	+
<u>Anthemis cotula</u> L. Stinking mayweed	-	-	2
* <u>Compositae</u> indet.	-	-	1
<u>Juncus</u> spp. Rushes	20	-	100+
<u>Cyperaceae</u> indet.	-	-	1
* <u>Bromus mollis/secalinus</u> Brome grass	1	-	1
* <u>Gramineae</u> indet. Grasses	2	-	1
* <u>Gramineae</u> indet. Grasses (culm node)	1	-	-
Unidentified	6	-	-

Table 1 : Plant remains identified

Unless otherwise indicated taxa are represented by fruits or seeds. Carbonised specimens are indicated by an asterisk.

These assemblages consist principally of carbonised cereals, hazel-nut shells and seeds of common arable weeds. Wetland species (rushes and stonewort) are also represented. Assemblages of this character are extremely common in medieval refuse deposits

2. Foraminifera (Table 2)	2		1	
Context Number				
<u>Planorbulina mediterraneensis</u> (24)(22,38)	1	1%	16	18%
<u>Miliolinella subrotunda</u> (18,19,34,35,50) (24,40,56)	44	39%	24	27%
<u>Nonion depressulus</u> (22,38)(19)	19	17%	10	11%
<u>Ammonia beccarii</u> (23) (20)	2	2%	7	8%
<u>Elphidium articulatum</u> (20,36,52,53) (26,42,58)	38	34%	29	32%
<u>E. sp.</u> (21) (27)	5	4%	3	3%
<u>Oolina sp.</u> (25)	1	1%		
<u>Quinqueloculina seminulum</u> (26)	1	1%		
<u>Cibicides lobatulus</u> (27)	1	1%		
<u>Quinqueloculina sp.</u> (23)			1	1%
Spat valves (single) } (29,30)			2	
(double) }			2	
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	112	(100%)	90	(100%)

It is not possible to distinguish between an estuarine shore or estuarine flood source, but the samples certainly contain a Holocene-Recent shallow-water marine fauna.

3. Molluscs (Table 3)

Context No.		1	2	4	7	13
<u>Buccinum undatum</u> L.	Whelk	+	+	-	-	+
<u>Cerastoderma (Cardium)</u> sp.	Cockle	-	+	+	+	-
<u>Hydrobia ulvae</u> (Pennant)	-	-	-	-	-	2
<u>Mytilus edulis</u> L.	Mussel	+	+	-	+	+
<u>Ostrea edulis</u> L.	Oyster	-	+	+	+	+
<u>Pupilla muscorum</u> (L)	-	-	-	-	1	-
<u>Succinea</u> sp.	-	-	1	-	-	-
Unidentified bivalve frag.	-	-	+	-	-	-

Table 3 : Molluscs

The marine species are represented by non-hinge or non-apical fragments in most cases.

Most of the shell fragments are of edible marine species. H.ulvae is a brackish-water gastropod common in estuaries, P.muscorum is a xerophile abundant on sand dunes and the genus Succinea includes several marsh and freshwater snails.

4. Fishbone (Table 4)

(Reports not yet received)

5. Miscellaneous faunal remains

Small fragments of barnacles and of polyzoan colonies, probably originally attached to mollusc shells were present in layers 2. and 7. Scraps of avian eggshell and mammal bone (including a bone fragment chewed by a dog) were extracted from layers 2, 4 and 13.

Discussion

The deposits lying between the floor levels are clearly of two types. The first, consisting of slightly organic sands and silts, including food refuse, may loosely be described as 'occupation deposits'. It seems unlikely, however, that these layers represent in situ accumulations of domestic refuse within the building, but are more probably dumped deposits of soil imported to raise the floor level. The material from these layers need not therefore

necessarily be related to the occupation of the building. The 'clean' sand and silt layers are interpreted as flood deposits. Although the foraminifera which they contained could equally well indicate an intertidal source, the regular horizontal laminations of more humic material are unlikely to have been produced during the deliberate dumping of sand from the foreshore.

Queen Street, King's Lynn : Sediments and floor levels

9. Floor. Mortar/plaster and crushed chalk.
8. Firm homogeneous fine sand and silt; light yellowish-brown (10YR5.5/4); tile fragment. (10 cm. thick).
7. Friable fine sand and silt; brown (10YR4/3); large fragments of tile and mortar; charcoal and food debris. (7 cm.)
5. Floor. Mortar/plaster and crushed chalk.
4. Firm homogeneous fine sand and silt; light yellowish brown (10YR 5.5/4); includes dark grey to black bands, under 1 cm. thick, at 3 cm. and 7 cm. depth; the bands include charcoal and food debris. (10 cm.)
3. Floor. Mortar/plaster and crushed chalk.
2. Firm fine sand and silt; predominantly dark greyish brown (10 YR 4/2.5) with darker and paler lenses; pottery, plaster, occasional 10 cm. flint cobbles; charcoal and food refuse. (16 cm.)
1. Firm homogeneous fine sand and silt; light yellowish brown (10YR 5.5/4); dark grey to black bands under 1 cm. thick at 2 cm. and 8 cm. depth; the bands include charcoal and food debris. (17 cm.)
13. Firm fine sand and silt; dark greyish-brown (10YR 4/2.5); pottery, daub, plaster; charcoal, food debris. (10 cm. exposed.)

It is interesting to note that layers 1 and 2, interpreted as a flood deposit and an 'occupation layer' respectively, contained a similar range of foraminifera. This suggests that the mineral component of layer 2 was originally a flood or foreshore deposit subsequently mixed with organic refuse.