ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY

REPORT

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SERIES/No	CO [illegible]RACTOR
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TITLE	Molluscs; St Barnabas' Hospital, Thetford, Norfolk

St Barnabas' Hospital, Thetford, Norfolk : Molluscs

The acidic soil conditions had led to the destruction of all land molluscs, with the exception of the large, more durable shells of Helix aspersa which were themselves often in a rather fragile state. Marine molluscs survived, but in a generally poor state, often badly eroded.

The taxa identified are listed in Table 1, and the results are summarised in Table 2.

Ostrea edulis L.	(oyster)	191
Mytilus edulis L.	(mussel)	66
Cerastoderma edule (L)	(cockle)	10
Littorina littorea (L)	(winkle)	3
Nucella lapillus (L)	(dog-whelk)	2
Helix aspersa Muller	(garden snail)	14

Table 2 : Molluscs (minimum nos. of individuals) collected by hand.

Shells from content 22, a layer consisting almost entirely of mussel shells, were not included in the calculation of shell numbers summarised in Table 2. This layer contained very large quantities of mussel shells so its inclusion would have completely biased the totals in favour of mussels.

Many of the oyster shells have been attacked by a boring organism possibly a boring sponge, and some specimens are completely riddled with perforations. (c.f. Korringa, 1954, 32) Serpulid worm tubes are common, and some lower valves have attached themselves to shells of dead oysters, and in one case to a rounded flint pebble. Several of the mussel shells have a heavy incrustation of Balanus balanoides.

Too few of the shells were well enough preserved for measurements to be worthwhile.

Discussion

The only comparable assemblage of shells at present available for this period in East Anglia comes from Great Yarmouth. (Jones 1976, 225). Both of these Late Saxon assemblages differ from those of Roman sites in the area (Bond 1977; Jones 1977; Murphy 1978) in that Ostrea edulis, the flat oyster, is not overwhelmingly the most important shellfish. Other species were extensively exploited. At Thetford, the fact that many of the oysters came from beds infested with boring organisms, some of which can taint the flesh, may have encouraged the consumption of mussels.

References

Bond, J.M. (1977) 'Mollusca from the Roman fort at Brancaster' A.M. Lab. Report 66/77.

Jones, A. (1976) 'The Molluscan Remains' in Rogerson, A. 'Excavations on Fuller's Hill, Great Yarmouth. East Anglian Archaeology Report No. 2., 131-246.

Jones, A. (1977) 'Molluscan Remains' in Rogerson, A. 'Excavations at Scole 1973' East Anglian Archaeology Report No. 5, 97-222.

Korringa, P. (1954) 'The shell of Ostrea edulis as a habitat' Archives Neerlandaises de Zoologie, X; 32-152.

Murphy, P. (1978) Icklingham : Marine Molluscs A.M. Lab. Report.

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Table 1 : Molluscs from St Barnabas' Hospital, Thetford

Context No.	Ostrea		Mytilus	Cerastoderma	Littorina	Nucella	Helix
	UV	LV					
1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
7	1	2	-	-	-	1	1
8	6	5	-	-	-	-	-
9	2	1	-	-	-	-	1
11	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	-	(1)	1	-	-	-	-
17	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
20	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
21	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
22*	-	-	66	4	-	-	-
25	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
26	3	3	-	-	-	-	-
27	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
28	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
29	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
30	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
31	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
32	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
33	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
34	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
35	-	3	6	-	-	-	-
36	1	-	(1)	-	-	-	-
39	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
43	3	5	12	1	1	-	1
44	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
46	2	2	1	-	-	-	-
49	7	5	8	-	-	-	-
50	2	1	3	-	-	-	-
52	-	2	-	-	-	-	(1)
54	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
57	1	2	(1)	2	-	-	-
58	-	2	(1)	-	-	-	(1)
59	6	7	6	-	-	-	-
60	3	1	-	-	-	-	-
62	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
64	5	9	2	(1)	-	-	(1)
65	5	3	2	-	-	-	(1)
66	1	-	1	-	-	-	-

Context No.	Ostrea		Mytilus	Cerastoderma	Littorina	Nucella	Helix
	UV	LV					
67	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
70	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
74	11	16	(1)	1	-	-	-
75	1	5	1	(1)	-	1	-
76	-	1	(2)	1	1	-	-
77	1	3	-	-	-	-	-
79	3	1	-	-	-	-	-
84	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1)
86	1	2	-	-	1	-	-
94	-	(1)	-	-	-	-	-
97	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
102	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
105	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
107	(1)	-	1	-	-	-	-
110	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
112	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
113	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
116	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
122	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
130	3	-	(1)	-	-	-	-
140	(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-
148	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
149	1	-	7	-	-	-	-
150	2	-	1	-	-	-	-
153	(1)	-	4	-	-	-	1
155	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
159	24	25	-	-	-	-	-
160	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
166	9	8	-	-	-	-	-
167	2	4	-	-	-	-	-
174	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
175	1	1	(1)	-	-	-	-
178	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1)
198	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
203	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
204	3	4	12	3	-	-	-
205	1	1	4	-	-	-	-
206	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
207	1	1	(1)	-	-	-	-
208	3	2	-	-	-	-	-
209	-	1	-	-	-	-	-

Context No.	Ostrea		Mytilus	Cerastoderma	Littorina	Nucella	Helix
	UV	LV					
214	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
217	2	2	(1)	-	-	-	-
218	3	5	-	-	-	-	-
220	-	-	(1)	-	-	-	-
224	(1)	-	3	1	-	-	-

*from 500 cc. soil sample