

# ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY

## REPORT

2843

<b>SERIES/No</b>	CONTRACTOR
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<b>TITLE</b>	Hales Court, Nr Loddon, Norfolk

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A 1 kg. soil sample, taken from beneath the foundations of the late 15th century building on the site close to the edge of the moat (Trench A1, 21) was submitted for examination. This was of a gleyed calcareous grey (10 YR 5.5/1) clay with common distinct yellowish-brown mottles; slightly stony including angular and sub-angular flints up to 20 mm., rounded chalk pebbles up to 18 mm, and derived fossils.

The sample was disaggregated using hydrogen peroxide. Macroscopic plant remains were extracted by flotation, collecting the flot in a 250 micron mesh sieve, and the non-floating residue was washed through a 500 micron mesh sieve before sorting. Molluscs, insect remains, Cladocera, Ostracoda, seeds, charcoal and small fragments of mammal bone were recovered, but only the plant remains and molluscs have been examined in detail.

1. Plant remains

A few, rather poorly-preserved fruits and seeds were recovered. These are all types which seem to be relatively resistant to microbial attack, capable of surviving in incompletely anaerobic conditions. The taxa identified are listed in Table 1.

<u>Papaver rhoeas</u> L. (corn-poppy)	3
<u>Umbelliferae</u> indet.	1
<u>Urtica dioica</u> L. (stinging-nettle)	27
<u>Sambucus nigra</u> L. (elder)	2
<u>Juncus</u> sp. (rush)	1
<u>Quercus</u> sp. (oak-charcoal)	+
<u>Fraxinus</u> sp. (ash-charcoal)	+

Table 1 : Plant remains (taxa are represented by fruits or seeds unless otherwise indicated).

2. Molluscs

The snail-shells from the sample are well-preserved, retaining fine surface details and pigmentation. They are listed in Table 2.

<u>Carychium tridentatum</u> (Risso)	2
<u>Vallonia costata</u> (Müller)	3
<u>Clausilia</u> sp. <sup>1</sup>	1
<u>Cecilioides acicula</u> (Müller)	1
<u>Hygromaria hispida</u> (L)	2
<u>Helicidae</u> indet. <sup>1</sup>	1
<u>Helicidae</u> indet. <sup>2</sup>	1
<u>Discus rotundatus</u> (Müller)	4

Table 2 : Molluscs

1 - non-apical or apertural fragments  
2 - very immature apex.

### Discussion

The sediment itself has been produced by weathering and re-working of the Lowestoft Till. Although it was completely waterlogged when excavated, the biological remains suggest that it was not formed in permanent standing water; aquatic plants and snails are absent. On the other hand there must have been small temporary bodies of water in the vicinity to provide habitats for the Cladocera and Ostracoda - small aquatic crustaceans, capable of surviving periods of desiccation in resting forms. The seeds and snails, though few in number, can be interpreted as representing waste ground, fairly densely overgrown with nettles and elder, the soil surface being covered with leaf litter and other plant debris. Vallonia costata is the only snail normally characteristic of more open conditions, but this species has also occasionally been found on walls, in rubbish tips and rarely in woodland (Evans, 1972: 156).

The deposit therefore appears to have formed in terrestrial conditions. It seems possible that it could represent material excavated during the digging of the moat, or alternatively be part of a soil profile truncated during building; it resembles the B/Cg and Cg horizons of the Hanslope Soil Series, developed on Chalky Boulder clay (Corbett and Tatler, 1970; 41). The waterlogged conditions present today probably would not have existed when the moat itself was deeper.

Corbett, W and Tatler, w. (1970) Soils in Norfolk Sheet TM49 (Beccles North) Soil Survey Record No. 1 Harpenden.

Evans, J.G. (1972) Land Snails in Archaeology London.

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