AML Report. 3041

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HIBALDSTOW : MOLLUSCA

Report by R. A. D. Cameron on samples provided by M. Girling via J. R. Grieg

Six soil samples were investigated. The mollusca found in each are listed at the end of this report.

Five of the samples are very similar in their mollusca, containing, almost exclusively, snails characteristic of dry open habitats - e.g. grazed chalk grassland. These samples are:

Hib 77 4K/F8 S.E. Quad KB9.
Hib 77 4K/F8 S.W. Quad.
Hib 77 Area 4 KAQ F8 1.
Hib 76 ALD Snails (Hib 76 ALD residue had no mollusca).
Hib 77 2C (157) C.M.C. soil sample.

The open nature of the habitats involved is indicated by the high frequencies of Vallonia spp, Pupilla muscorum and Helicella itala. Cepaea spp, Trichia hispida Cochlicopa sp, Vitrina pellucida are more catholic in their habitat preferences, but all the assemblages are compatible with an open, dry environment. Aegopinella nitidula is the only shade demanding species found, and it is represented by one shell only.

By far the most abundant species in these samples is Cecilioides acicula, a burrowing snail typical of loose chalky soils. Many of the specimens are clearly fresh - i.e. of very recent origin. Because of the burrowing habit of this snail no conclusions can be drawn from it.

Faunas of this type would not be found on modern arable land, but might survive arable agriculture of earlier periods (c.f. Evans, J.G. 1972. Land snails in archaeology. London: Seminar Press).

The remaining sample: (Hib 77, F244, 5th sample.) is very different. There are a very large number of specimens, and there is a mixture of terrestrial and freshwater species. Many of the latter have not been identified to species - the Pisidium species are very difficult to determine and will have to be sent elsewhere if identification is required.

The whole assemblage is characteristic of fen vegetation - alkaline wetland not subject to much trampling or grazing and therefore not much used by man or animals.

Some of the terrestrial snails are more typical of grassland than of fen (e.g. P. muscorum. Vallonia spp, Vertigo pygmaea and a few are typical of shaded habitats (e.g. Oxychilus spp, Discus rotundatus. These might well have been washed into the fen from neighbouring habitats.

List of mollusca by site/sample. (Nomenclature follows Kerney, M. P. & Cameron, R. A. D. 1979. A Field Guide to the land Snails of Britain & N.W. Europe. London: Collins.)

Hibaldstow '77 4K/F8 SE Quad KB9

Aegopinella nitidula 1
Cecilioides acicula 86 (many fresh)
Cochlicopa lubrica (agg) 1
Pupilla muscorum 2
Trichia hispida 2
Vallonia excentrica 2
Vitrina pellucida 1

Hibaldstow '77 4K/F8 SW Quad.

Cecilioides acicula 67 (many fresh)
Cepaea sp (juv). 1
Helicella itala 1
Trichia hispida 4
Vallonia excentrica 4

Area 4 KAQ F8 (1)

Cecilioides acicula 72 (many fresh)
Cochlicopa lubrica (agg) 1
Pupilla muscorum 1
Trichia hispida 1
Vallonia excentrica 5

Hibaldstow '76 ALD Snails

Cecilioides acicula 12 (some fresh)
Cochlicopa lubrica (agg) 2
Helicella itala 1
Helicid protoconch indet. 1
Pupilla muscorum 2
Trichia hispida 2
Vallonia costata 3

Hibaldstow '77 2C (157) C.M.C. soil sample

Cecilioides acicula 15.

Hibaldstow '77 F244 5th Sample.

1) Terrestrial species

Carychium minimum 10
Carychium tridentatum 2
Cepaea sp fragments
Discus rotundatus 1
Euconulus fulvus (agg) 1
Nesovitrea hammonis 3
Oxychilus spp indet. 2
Pupilla muscorum 5
Punctum pygmaeum 2
Succinea/Oxyloma spp 3
Vallonia costata 1
Vallonia excentrica 1
Vertigo pygmaea 4
Vertigo antivertigo 3
Vitrea crystallina 1

2) Freshwater species

Lymnaea truncatula 3
Lymnaea pereger numerous fragments
Planorbids indet. C.20
and numerous Pisidium/Sphaerium spp indet.

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February, 1980