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3198

SITE 141

Treasury

Molluscs

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IDENTIFICATION

I. T.1.

Mytilus edulis L. 1

Ostrea edulis L. lv. 1

uv. 1

Cerastoderma edule (L.) 1

I. Tr.2

Ostrea edulis L. lv. 1

uv. 1

I. Tr.2. 8

Ostrea edulis L. lv. 4

uv. 1

620210

Buccinum undatum L. 2

Mytilus edulis L. 7

Ostrea edulis L. lv. 2

uv. 5

SW 5'-6'

Ostrea edulis L. lv. 1

NE 9'-10'

Ostrea edulis L. lv. 2

uv. 1

SE 9

Planorbarius corneus (L.) 1

Ostrea edulis L. uv. 1

NW 9'-10'

Cerastoderma edule (L.) 1

Ostrea edulis L. lv. 1

uv. 3

XVII Ditch M.1.

Buccinum undatum L. fgt.

Lymnaea peregra (Müll.) 1

Planorbis planorbis (L.) 6

Planorbis corneus (L.) 11

Cepaea spp. 2

Helix aspersa Müll. 9

Unio cf. tumidus Philipsson 2

Anodonta anatina (L.) 1

Mytilus edulis L. 8

Cerastoderma edule (L.) 1

Ostrea edulis L. lv. 9

uv. 11

IX Pit S1.

Ostrea edulis L. lv. 20

uv. 19

VII Pit S2.

Mytilus edulis L. fgts.

Ostrea edulis L. lv. 15

uv. 20

IX Pit S4.

Ostrea edulis L. lv. 1

uv. 2

IX Pit S5.

Ostrea edulis L. lv. 7

uv. 12

XVII (7)

Buccinum undatum L. 1

Helix aspersa Müll. 3

Mytilus edulis L. 6

Cerastoderma edule (L.) 1

Ostrea edulis L. lv. 148

uv. 127

Notes on the above list of identifications: Bivalve counts are for individual valves. lv. = lower valve; uv. = upper valve. fgt. = fragment.

MEASUREMENTS AND OTHER OBSERVATIONS

All complete shells of Ostrea were measured, length being the measurement taken. But only one collection, that from XVII (7), contained enough shells for valid comments to be made. The total range in a sample of 115 lower valves was from 4.5 cm to 8.5 cm, and in a sample of 102 upper valves was from 4.0 to 8.8 cm. Most, however, were in the range from 5.4 to 7.5 cm (lower valves) and 5.0 to 6.7 cm (upper valves). This is not exceptionally large, modern specimens reaching at least 10.2 cm and more. And some archaeological specimens that I have seen (e.g. from Baconsthorpe Castle) are significantly larger, attaining 13.0 cm. There was no indication that the specimans had come from other than a single population, and hence collecting area. The size of the oysters from the other samples was in the same range.

There was little to be gained from measuring the specimens of other species as the samples were meagre. All, however, were in the present-day marketable range.

Some of the oyster shells were compressed, being exceptionally short and broad. And some were cemented to each other in pairs. Both these facts suggest crowding in the beds.

Several oyster shells showed signs of predators or ectoparasites. These were as follows:

1) A few had small (1.5 mm - 2.0 mm diam.) extremely regular holes drilled partially from the outside or completely through the valve. These were probably caused by one or other of the various gastropods that feed on oysters such as Ocenebra erinacea (L.), the sting winkle.

2) A variety of channels and burrows into the outer surface of the lower valves, but not penetrating the shell cavity. These are caused by a variety of creatures such as sponges and bristle worms. Infestation in the Treasury collections was very light being present in less than a dozen specimens.

3) Three shells had barnacles or barnacle bases on them.

COMMENTS

The shells in the Treasury collections can be put into two groups in so far as their origin on the site is concerned. First there are those that were brought to the site by man for food. And second there are those whose presence is incidental, being determined by man only to the extent that he has created a suitable habitat for them.

In the first category are: Buccinum undatum (whelk), Mytilus edulis (common mussel), Ostrea edulis (common European oyster) and Cerastoderma edule (edible cockle). All these are marine. Clearly the oyster was the most favoured species.

In the second category are Helix aspersa and the group of shells from Site XVII, Ditch M.1. These are all freshwater (Lymnaea, Planorbarius, Planorbis, Unio and Anodonta) or terrestrial (Helix aspersa and Cepaea). The collection is clearly incomplete being a poor selection of a few of the larger and more conspicuous shells noted during excavation, but a few useful comments may be made. The freshwater species are those that generally inhabit large bodies of slowly-moving or

standing water. They are certainly not "slum" species and would not tolerate intermittent drying. This suggests flooding of the site. The terrestrial species could have been incorporated by flooding.

It is marginally possible that Helix aspersa (a land snail) and Anodonta anatina (a freshwater bivalve) were food species.