

Kelvedon, Essex (KL 77): Charred plant remains.

38 consisted of the base of a pot with its soil filling intact. This was washed out under running water. Charred plant remains were extracted from the disaggregated soil by water flotation, collecting the flot in a 0.5mm mesh. The residue was then wet-sieved over the same mesh, and both flot and residue were dried before sorting. The soil proved to have contained eight wheat grains (Triticum sp) with some cereal grain fragments, small charcoal fragments and some scraps of burnt bone. Whether the bone and cereals represent food debris originally associated with the pot, or merely refuse in the general matrix of the deposit cannot be determined.

Two small samples of charred plant remains and burnt bone fragments extracted by dry sieving from 115 were also examined. Material from inside the pot included charred grass or cereal culm fragments, charcoal fragments and two indeterminate seeds. In the sample from outside the pot there were several complete and fragmentary tubers of the onion couch (Arrheratherum elatius var. bulbosum), some grass or cereal culm fragments and two indeterminate seeds, one probably of the Leguminosae. Onion couch tubers have been found in Bronze Age cremations from Abingdon, Oxfordshire (Jones 1978), North Shoebury, Essex and Rush Green, Clacton, Essex (Murphy, forthcoming), but this appears to be the first record from a comparable Roman context. Deliberate deposition of these edible tubers is possible, but they may merely be the remains of onion couch plants, uprooted and used as kindling.

Jones, M. (1978)

The plant remains, pp. 93-110, in Parrington, M. The excavation of an Iron Age settlement, Bronze Age ring ditches and Roman features at Ashville Trading Estate, Abingdon, Oxfordshire 1974-6. CBA Res. Rpt. No. 28.