

Site: Middlesborough, Colchester
County: Essex
Reference No: MID
Type of site: Urban excavation
Period: Roman, Medieval and Post-medieval
Geology: Terrace sands and gravels
Director: P. Crummy
Type of material: Miscellaneous samples

Middlesborough, Colchester

The samples received for examination were in general of dry sandy sediments mostly unsuitable for the preservation of biological remains. They have been examined relatively rapidly.

Few conclusions can be drawn from the results. The contents of the pots do not differ significantly from typical medieval and post-medieval refuse deposits. The samples from the medieval drains are similar in character; only 169 produced definite evidence for the presence of water (ostracods). Sample 21 contained relatively large quantities of charred plant material, presumably representing a slow accumulation from a variety of sources. The deposit from the kiln flue (sample 179) has some resemblances to an organic lake mud, but I can offer no explanation for its presence. The mineralised fruitstones are all of species common in medieval and post-medieval contexts.

Middlesborough, Colchester: Notes on samples

All samples dry unless otherwise noted.

1. Pot contents - med. and post-med.
 - 8 (2-0 kg) Sample of coal + coal dust with some sand
 - 16 (0-9 kg) Dark greyish-brown (10 YR 3.5/2) sandy loam with brick/tile fragments, small quantity of charcoal, two seeds of Sambucus nigra, bone fragments, cockle shell frags.
 - 33 (1.2 kg) Brown (10 YR 4/2; 4/3 (speckled)) sand with brick/tile fragments, coal, small charcoal frags, one S.nigra seed
 - 165 (1.2 kg) Dark reddish brown (5 YR 3/3) sandy clay loam with pottery, brick/tile frags, bird bone, small bone frags, mussel shell.
2. Samples 9, 99, 100, 100; from Feature 136, a medieval well. (wet)
Not examined - the samples produced 18th century pottery - apparently contaminated.
3. Samples from medieval drains.
 - 11 (1.0 kg) Brown (7.5 YR 5/4; speckled) sand with brick/tile frags, coal, small charcoal scraps, ? intrusive insects, fish-scales, bone fragments, shell fragments of cockle and Helix aspersa.
 - 169 (0.4 kg) Dark brown (7.5 YR 4/2) sandy silt loam with pottery, mortar/plaster, charcoal, small mammal and amphibian bone, shells of Discus rotundatus (2), Helix aspersa (frags), Trichia hispida (c.f.T), Limacidae (1), Zonitidae (1), ostracod valve.
4. Sample 21 - topsoil layer - pre mid 13th century. (7.7kg). Very dark greyish-brown (10 YR 2.5/2) sandy loam with pottery; large tile/brick fragments; abundant charcoal; fruits and seeds of S.nigra (3), Conium maculatum (5; frags), Leguminosae indet, Gramineae (caryopses in lemma and palea), Triticum sp. (4 wheat caryopses), grass culm node; small mammal bone; bone fragments; shell fragments of oyster, mussel, whelk.
5. Sample 179; from 1st-2nd c. kiln flues. (0.4 kg). (wet) Very dark brown (10 YR 2/1.5) silty clay. Much amorphous organic detritus and ? thallus fragments of Chara sp.

6. Sample A51, Feature 45 (Post-med pit)
Prunus c.f. spinosa (sloe) 4 (mineralised)
7. Sample A363, Feature 87 (medieval cistern)
Prunus c.f. avium (cherry) 7 }
Prunus sp. 5 } mineralised
8. Sample A480, Layer 234 (post-med)
Prunus avium (cherry) 1 (mineralised)
9. Sample A554, Feature 486 (med/post-med pit)
Mineralised stem + wood fragments
10. Sample A784 (Post-med drain)
Clay concretion