

Runnymede: seed flora from layer 35

J.R.A. Greig

About 1700 seeds have been identified, the large number being justified by the large and interesting flora which is very relevant to the human occupation of the site.

Spelt wheat seems to be the most abundant crop found, although this may be more from greater preservation than abundance.: the processing of glumed wheats gives more chance of charring, which is the best means of preservation, although some waterlogged remains are also present. Present knowledge of Bronze Age crops is so small that hardly any British sites with spelt have so far been found, although its presence is not unexpected. There is also some barley, and signs of rye, although the latter may have been present as a weed in cornfields rather than having been cultivated as a crop in its own right.

Waterlogged flax and cabbage/mustard are present, and many of the wild plants (such as watercress) were doubtless eaten as well.

Some of the weeds are likely to have grown in fields of crops, such as the charred bindweed seed which may have been charred by being processed along with cereals. Many of these are chiefly found where there are light soils, and ease of tilling may have been one of the advantages of the area around Runnymede. The more general weeds are also commonly found wherever there is disturbed ground such as in non-cereal crops and in other places. The weed flora is smaller than that of Roman and later sites, either because some weeds had not yet arrived in northern Europe, or because of different farming methods.

There is a fairly large grassland component (supplemented by the pollen flora) which would not be characteristic of an occupied site. Some of this is from a damp grassland which could have grown along the river bank, but rather more is from a drier grassland. In both cases calcareous soil is suggested by some of the plants. The pollen and seeds from this vegetation could have arrived in hay or the dung of herbivores.

Animal husbandry is also suggested by the evidence of thorny hedge plants like sloe and buckthorn, which, together with ditches, may have been used to confine stock to certain areas, a conclusion which was first drawn from evidence from the Netherlands.

A small piece of evidence of woodland comes from some herbs, although the site itself does not seem to have been wooded.

Various wetland plant communities are well represented. They could have grown along the river bank or in a slow river, or their seeds could have come from flood debris from upstream. They are of less archaeological interest than the other plant communities.

Runneymede

Cultivated crops

Triticum spelta, *Hordeum*, *Secale*, *Linum usitatissimum*. *Brassica*

Weeds mainly of arable land

Papaver argemone, *Aphanes*, *Polygonum convolvulus*, *Galium*, *Cerastium*

Other arable and more general weeds

Fumaria, *Thlaspi*, *Erysimum*, *Stellaria*, *Chenopodium*, *Atriplex*,

Aethusa, *Galeopsis*, *Sonchus*, ? *Urtica urens*

Hedges

Rhamnus, *Rubus*, *Prunus*, *Solanum*, ? *Sambucus* ? *Sorbus*

Dry grassland, wayside

Ranunculus a/r/b, *linum catharticum*, *Potentilla* spp., *Malva sylvestris*

Pastinaca, *Torilis*, *Daucus*, *Rumex*, *Linaria*, *Rhinanthus*, *Mentha*

arvensis, *Prunella*, *Scabiosa*, *Arctium*, *Carduus*, *Cirsium*, *Leontodon*,

Taraxacum. *Plantago* *Gramineae*

Damp grassland

Thalictrum, *Hypericum*, *Lychnis*, *Conium*, *Carex hirta*, *Glechoma*

Marsh

Ranunculus lingua, *sardous*, *sceleratus*, *Barbarea*, *Montia*, *Apium*,

Polygonum lapathifolium, *hydropiper*, *Scrophularia*, *Lycopus*,

Eupatorium, *Eleocharis*, (fens: *Carex* cf. *lepidocarpa*, *elata*,

disticha) *Polygonum minus*

Water

Ranunculus subg. *Batrachium*, cf. *Nymphaea alba*, *Nasturtium officinale*,

Alisma, *Sagittaria*, *Potamogeton*, *Zannichellia*, *Scirpus*, *Schoenoplectus*

Carex cf. *pseudocyperus* *Chara*, *Alnus*

Woodland

Moehringia, *Ajuga*, *Pteridium*, *Fragaria*

Various

Viola, *Epilobium*, *Urtica dioica*

* = charred

N ₁ Chara (oogonia)	7	
O ₁ Pteridium aquilinum (frond fragments)	3	bracken
M Ranunculus a/r/b	53	buttercups
Ranunculus sardous	2	weed damp pl.
Ranunculus cf. lingua	1	spearwort; marshes
P ₁ Ranunculus sceleratus	3	pond edges
N ₁ Ranunculus subgenus Batrachium	48	mud, streams
Thalictrum flavum	4	marshy meadows
cf. Nymphaea alba	1	ponds
J ₁ Papaver argemone	3	weed; light soil
K Fumaria sp.	1	" " "
C Brassica cf. rapa	1	
C Brassica sp.	21	
V Thlaspi arvense	2	arable weed
P ₃ Barbarea vulgaris	39	damp pl
Nasturtium officinale	2	streams
Erysimum cheiranthoides	2	arable weed
Viola sp.	1	
Hypericum cf. tetrapterum	2	damp meadows
Lychnis flos-cuculi	2	damp meadows
Cerastium cf. glomeratum	4	? arable weed
K Stellaria media	87	general weed
O ₆ Moehringia trinerva	1	woodland
Montia fontana ssp. chondrosperma	1	wet sand/gravel
V Chenopodium cf. album	114	general weed
K Chenopodium ficifolium	18	
K Atriplex sp.	62	
Malva sylvestris	6	waysides
D Linum usitatissimum	4	crop
M ₃ Linum catharticum	2	grassland
Rhamnus catharticus	5	calc. hedges
O ₁ Rubus fruticosus agg.	16	
Potentilla sterilis	1	woods
Potentilla anserina	1	waysides
P ₁ Potentilla reptans	12	waysides
O ₅ Fragaria vesca	1	
J ₁ Aphanes arvensis	1	
Rosa/Rubus (thorns)	2	
O ₁ Prunus/Crataegus (Thorns)		
Prunus spinosa	1	

cf. Sorbus	2	
Epilobium sp.	4	
N ₁ Oenanthe aquatica	7	slow/stagnant water
K Aethusa cynapium	7	arable weed
L ₃ Conium maculatum	16	damp waysides
cf. Apium nodiflorum	5	ditches
L ₂ Pastinaca sativa	2	calc. grass
Torilis japonica	2	waysides
Daucus carota	1	calc. grass
Umbelliferae	5	
L ₄ Polygonum aviculare	54	general weed
P ₁ Polygonum lapathifolium	7	waste, wet pl
P ₁ Polygonum hydropiper	2	damp pl
P ₁ Polygonum minus	7	wet pl
J ₁ Polygonum convolvulus (1*)	7	arable weed
Rumex acetosella	1	grassy pl
Rumex conglomeratus	10	
Rumex cf. conglomeratus	14	
Rumex sp.	67	
L ₁ Urtica urens	121	arable
P ₃ Urtica dioica	453	
O ₁ Betula sp. (some very fresh looking !)	4	
N ₄ Alnus sp. glutinosa	48	
P ₄ Solanum dulcamara	12	hedges
Linaria vulgaris	6	grassy pl
Scrophularia cf. umbrosa	7	damp pl
Rhinanthus sp.	2	grassy pl
M ₃ Mentha cf. arvensis		
N ₁ Mentha cf. aquatica		
N ₂ Lycopus europaeus	19	marshes
M ₁ Prunella vulgaris	3	grassy pl
Galeopsis segetum	3	
Galeopsis tetrahit/speciosa	5	
P ₃ Glechoma hederacea	2	woods, grassland
Ajuga reptans	1	damp woods
Labiatae	2	
L ₄ Plantago major	3	waste pl
J ₁ Galium cf. spurium	3	arable weed
O ₁ Sambucus nigra	10	
Scabiosa columbaria	1	calc. grassl.
P ₂ Eupatorium cannabinum	26	marshes

	Arctium lappa	1	waysides
L3	Arctium minus	1	"
	Arctium sp.	8	"
2P3	Carduus sp.	8	"
L3	Cirsium vulgare	7	"
L3	Cirsium cf. arvense	39	"
M1	Leontodon sp.	2	grassland
	Sonchus arvensis	2	various
K	Sonchus oleraceus	2	arable
K	Sonchus asper	31	arable
M	Taraxacum sp.	1	grassland
N1	Alisma lanceolatum	6	shallow water
	Sagittaria sagittifolia	6	"
	Potamogeton sp.	16	"
N1	Zannichellia palustris	14	rivers
N1	Eleocharis palustris/uniglumis	4	marshes
N2	Scirpus maritimus	24	tidal rivers
NL	Schoenoplectus lacustris	2	rivers
	Carex cf. lepidocarpa	3	fens
	Carex cf. pseudocyperus	2	rivers
P1	Carex hirta	6	damp meadows
	Carex elata	4	fen ditches
	Carex disticha	1	fens
	Gramineae		
A	Triticum spelta *		
A	Hordeum vulgare *		
A	Secale cereale *		

1678 so far