

GARDENERS CORNER, ALDGATE

Environmental Report

by

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Introduction

Gardeners Corner (N.G.R. TQ) lies outside the walled Roman and medieval city. The excavation revealed a series of pits, the majority of which are dated to the Tudor period. Much of the area had been quarried during the 14th and 15th century and any evidence of the earlier Roman cemetery had been eradicated. Part of the cemetery had been located at Cutler Street approximately 300 metres to the north-west during the excavations between February 1978 and March 1980 by the Department of Urban Archaeology for the Museum of London. It is likely that both areas may have developed similarities over the following centuries.

The area surrounding Cutler Street was used mainly for agricultural purposes for the next twelve centuries after the Roman period as documentary evidence indicates that it was part of the Convent Garden of Holy Trinity Priory before the Dissolution (1). Gardeners Corner is situated approximately 100 metres north-east of Holy Trinity Priory and may have been incorporated into the Convent Garden. The Priory was passed to Lord Audley at the time of the Dissolution, who left it to Magdalene College, Cambridge in 1542 and subsequently became the property of the Queen in 1574. At this time the area was little more than fields and hedgerows. A woodcut by Ralph Agas dated between 1560-1570 shows arable land and pasture to the north and east of the Priory.

The Botanical Evidence

Five samples were analysed for seed remains, four pit fills and one ditch fill. Each sample was wet sieved through a series of meshes, the finest 500µ, and the residues sorted. No standard weight-size was used in the sampling but the quantity used for each sample can be found at the bottom of the table of results.

- Sample 14 = Fill 126 from a truncated, square pit lined with wattle F125 dated to the
- Sample 23 = Fill 135, a black organic clay layer from a barrel-lined pit F134 dated possibly to the 16th century.
- Sample 24 = Layer 136, a bone layer from F134, immediately below layer 135. No specific date known at present.
- Sample 25 = Fill 157, a clay layer within the lining of F134, containing slag and scraps of shoe leather.
- Sample 34 = Layer 222, a primary fill of a ditch, possibly dated to the 15th century.

Results

The total number of species found can be seen in the table of results each with its own habitat preference in the far right-hand column. Many of the seeds are indicative of waste, disturbed and arable land and probably reflect the environs, not necessarily the functions of the features.

Layers 135 and 136 of F134 may represent backfilling after the site had fallen to disuse when rubbish and earth from the vicinity were used. ^{for this purpose} Very few seed remains were found in layer 135 and this may reflect the nature of the backfill, mainly straw organic and many of the seeds may have been washed through to the underlying layers. Layer 136 yielded many seeds indicative of waste and arable land and this possibly reflects the type of environment that presided during the 16th century as noted by the documentary evidence.

Layer 157, within the barrel-lining of F134 could indicate the function of the pit (e.g. tanning) prior to backfilling but this would involve analysis of the content for tannins and uric acid, and not botanical remains alone.

The seeds do again indicate a wasteland and arable situation.

Layer 222 from the ditch contains a few species which prefer a fairly wet or damp environment in addition to the wasteland species. Water from rainfall or industrial use may have accumulated in the bottom of this feature and create a favourable situation for such plants to grow but any evidence to suggest the use of the ditch cannot be found on botanical evidence. Given that the date may be possibly 15th century it may have formed part of a drainage system when the area was part of the Convent Garden.

Layer 126 from F125 yielded similar botanical evidence to the other samples but in less quantities. As the pit had been truncated there may have been contamination but again little can be deduced on the function of the pit.

Summary

From the evidence of the botanical remains and documentary evidence a general statement could be made about the environs after the Dissolution i.e. a wasteland and pastureland with possible arable land in the vicinity of Gardeners Corner. It is possible that development into an east-end suburb began in the latter years of the 16th century near the site. Cutler Street, according to cartographic evidence, had by 1634, developed in this way.

- (1) Armitage P, Davis A, Straker V.: Cutler Street- Horn-core pits Level 111 archive report.

SEEDS	COMMON NAME	Pit 125	Pit 134			Ditch	Habitat
		126	135	136	137	222	
<u>Ranunculus acris</u> L./ <u>repens</u> L./ <u>bulbosus</u> L.	buttercup	7	18	73	6	310	G
<u>R. sceleratus</u> L.	celery-leaved crowfoot	5	-	-	-	118	A, B
<u>R.</u> sub-genus <u>Bratrachium</u>		2	-	-	-	-	A, B
FUMARIACEAE							
<u>Fumaria officinalis</u> L.	common fumitory	3	-	-	2	-	Da
CRUCIFERAE							
<u>Brassicaceae</u> sp		2	-	-	2	73	-
CARYOPHYLLACEAE							
<u>Agrostemma githago</u> L.	corncockle	-	-	1	1	6	Da
cf. <u>Agrostemma githago</u> L.	corncockle	+	-	-	-	+	Da
<u>Silene</u> cf. <u>vulgaris</u> (Moench) Garke	bladder campion	-	-	-	-	53	Da
<u>Silene</u> sp		4	-	-	2	-	-
<u>Stellaria graminca</u> L.	lesser stitchwort	2	-	-	-	1	G, S
<u>S.</u> cf. <u>media</u> group L. Vill	chickweed	3	-	57	1	-	Da, D
<u>Cerastium</u> sp.	chickweed	-	-	-	-	3	-
CHENOPODIACEAE							
<u>Atriplex</u> sp.	orache	14	-	57	24	13	-
<u>Chenopodium album</u> L.	fat hen	5	-	6	8	13	Da, D, U
<u>Ch. murale</u> L.	nettle-leaved goosefoot	-	-	356	24	-	D
<u>Chenopodium</u> sp.		-	-	35	-	-	-
gen. et sp. indet.		4	-	-	10	-	-
VITACEAE							
<u>Vitis vinifera</u> L.	grape	-	-	-	-	4	C
MALVACEAE							
<u>Malva sylvestris</u> L.	common mallow	4	-	228	414	50	D, U
LINACEAE							
<u>Linum usitatissimum</u> L.	cultivated flax	-	-	-	-	2	C
ROSACEAE							
<u>Agrimonia eupatoria</u> L.	common agrimony	-	-	1	-	-	Da, H
<u>Fragaria vesca</u> L.	wild strawberry	-	-	-	-	1	G, S, U
<u>Rubus idaeus</u> L./ <u>fruticosus</u> agg.	raspberry/blackberry	2	-	1	2	1	D, H, S, U
UMBELLIFERAE							
<u>Conium maculatum</u> L.	hemlock	2	-	-	5	1	B, D, S, U
cf. <u>Conium maculatum</u> L.	hemlock	+	-	-	-	-	B, D, S, U
<u>Daucus carota</u> L.	wild carrot	1	-	-	-	-	G
<u>Oenanthe</u> sp.	water dropwort	-	-	-	-	2	-
POLYGONACEAE							
<u>Polygonum aviculare</u> agg.	knotgrass	1	-	2	5	13	D, Da
<u>P. convolvulus</u> L.	black bindweed	-	-	-	1	14	Da, D, U
<u>P. lapathifolium</u> / <u>nodosum</u>	pale persicaria	1	-	-	13	-	Da, D, B
<u>P. persicaria</u> L.	persicaria	-	-	67	-	1	Da, D, B
<u>Rumex</u> sp.	dock	3	2	11	32	310	

+ denotes seed fragments

continued

SEEDS	COMMON NAME	126	135	136	157	222	Habitat
URTICACEAE							
<u>Urtica dioica</u> L.	stinging nettle	16	-	113	2	2	D, H, S, U
<u>U. urens</u> L.	small nettle	5	-	91	-	23	Da, D
MORACEAE							
<u>Ficus carica</u> L.	fig	4	-	1	1	-	C
SOLANACEAE							
<u>Hyoscyamus niger</u> L.	henbane	1	-	-	-	-	Da, U
<u>Solanum nigrum</u> L.	black nightshade	-	-	106	1	9	D, U
LAMIATAE							
<u>Lamium album</u> L.	white dead-nettle	-	-	-	3	-	D, H,
<u>L. amplexicaule</u> L.	henbit	-	-	-	-	1	Da
<u>L. purpureum</u> L.	red dead-nettle	-	-	-	2	6	Da
<u>Lamium/ marrubium</u> sp.		6	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Lamium</u> sp.	dead nettle	-	-	4	1	1	-
<u>Mentha</u> sp.	mint	-	-	1	-	-	-
<u>Prunella vulgaris</u> L.	self-heal	1	-	-	-	4	D, G, U
<u>Stachys</u> sp.	woundwort	-	-	-	-	1	-
RUBIACEAE							
<u>Galium cf. mullago</u>	hedge bedstraw	-	-	-	-	5	H, S, B
CAPRIFOLIACEAE							
<u>Sambucus nigra</u> L.	elder	23	-	23	36	27	D, S, U
cf. <u>Sambucus nigra</u> L.	elder	+	-	-	-	-	D, S, U
DIPSACEAE							
<u>Knautia arvensis</u> (L.) Coult	field scabious	-	1	-	-	13	B, G
<u>Scabiosa columbaria</u> L.	small scabious	-	-	-	-	4	B, G
COMPOSITAE							
<u>Anthemis cotula</u> L.	stinking mayweed	2	-	-	1	4	Da, D, U
<u>Aethusa cynapium</u> L.	fool's parsley	-	-	-	2	-	Da
<u>Carduus/ Cirsium</u> sp.	thistle	-	-	1	1	-	-
<u>Centaurea</u> sp.		-	-	-	-	12	-
<u>Chrysanthemum segetum</u> L.	corn marigold	-	-	1	-	1	Da, U
<u>Hypochoeris radicata</u> L.	cat's ear	-	-	-	1	-	G
<u>Lapsana communis</u> L.	nipplewort	-	-	2	6	5	D, H, U
<u>Senecio vulgaris</u> L.	groundsel	-	-	-	-	1	Da, D
<u>Sonchus asper</u> (L.) Hill	sow thistle	2	-	2	1	1	Da, D
<u>S. oleraceus</u> L.	milk thistle	3	-	10	-	4	Da, D, B
<u>Taraxicum officinale</u> Weber	common dandelion	-	-	-	5	-	D, G
JUNCACEAE							
<u>Luzula campestris</u> (L.) DC	field woodrush	-	-	-	1	-	G
CYPERACEAE							
<u>Carex</u> sp.	sedge	7	1	2	1	7	B, G, M, U
<u>Eleocharis</u> sub genus <u>palustris</u>	common spike rush	2	-	-	-	-	A, B, M, U
GRAMINEAE							
<u>Avena</u> sp.	oat	-	-	1	-	-	C
<u>Bromus</u> sp.		-	-	-	-	11	-
<u>Hordeum</u> sp.	barley	-	-	1	-	-	C
gen et sp. indet	grasses	-	10	-	2	-	-

continued

SEEDS	COMMON NAME	126	135	136	157	222	Habitat
UNIDENTIFIED		4	-	6	-	5	-
Weight of sample (kg)		2.5	2.8	2.0	5.0	1.5	

Habitat information: A, aquatic; B, bankside streamside, waters edge; C, cultivated; D, disturbed and waste ground; Da, disturbed ground including arable; G, grassland; M, marsh; H, hedgerows; S, scrub and woodland; U, plants of use to man (eg. food fibres, dyes, medicinal)