

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
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MANOR FARM, GREAT BADDOW, ESSEX:
CARBONISED PLANT REMAINS FROM
LATE BRONZE AGE CONTEXTS

Peter Murphy BSc MPhil

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Summary

Samples from a Late Bronze Age enclosure ditch and post-holes produced exceedingly sparse assemblages including wheat grains and a spelt glume base. The more extensively sampled nearby contemporary enclosure at Springfield Lyons also produced very little material from this type of context: cereals etc. came mainly from internal pits (AM Lab Report 11/90). The evidence from Manor Farm, so far as it goes, is consistent with a similar pattern of cereal refuse discard.

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Manor Farm, Great Baddow, Essex (MF90) : Carbonised plant remains

Introduction

Excavations were undertaken prior to scheduling at this crop-mark site by Essex County Council Archaeology Section in order to assess whether the similarity of the large circular ditched enclosure to that excavated at Springfield Lyons (Buckley and Hedges 1987) indicated a similar date and function. The Springfield enclosure contained round-houses, pits and other features and was of Late Bronze Age date. Excavation was limited at Manor Farm to part of the enclosure ditch and some internal post-holes. Samples for bulk flotation using 0.5mm collecting meshes were collected from these features (Table 1).

Results

Carbonised plant remains recovered were exceedingly sparse, despite fairly extensive sampling. The samples produced only very small amounts of charcoal, usually in small fragments, with a few remains of charred cereals, weed seeds and a possible tuber (Table 2). Amongst the cereal remains only wheat (Triticum sp) is represented, by deformed and poorly-preserved grains. A single glume base from the top fill of the enclosure ditch establishes the presence of spelt, Triticum spelta L.

Conclusions

Extensive sampling during the Springfield Lyons excavation produced some quite large assemblages of carbonised cereals and weed seeds but these came mostly from pits in one localised area of the enclosure. Post-holes and the fills of the enclosure ditch at Springfield usually included rather low densities of plant material and some samples from these types of feature produced no material at all, particularly the lower ditch fills (Murphy 1990). Similar patterns of refuse disposal at Manor Farm would be expected to result in only low densities of plant material in the enclosure ditch and post-holes at the periphery of the enclosure. This is, in fact, the result obtained: the very sparse material from Manor Farm indicates that there was no significant disposal of cereal refuse in the area examined. The top fill of the enclosure ditch (24) included a spelt glume base, though clearly this might post-date the main phase of Late Bronze Age activity at the site.

References

- Buckley, D.G. and Hedges, J.D. (1987) The Bronze Age and Saxon settlements at Springfield Lyons, Essex. An interim report. Essex County Council, Occasional Paper No.5. Chelmsford.
- Murphy, P. (1990). Springfield Lyons, Chelmsford, Essex: Carbonised plant remains from Neolithic, Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Early - and Late-Saxon contexts. Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report 11/90. HBMC : London.

Context		Sample No.	Volume(litres)
13	Post-pipe	1	15
14	Post-packing	2,3	15x2
31	Post-pipe	4	15
32	Post-packing	5,6,7	15x3
37	Post-hole fill (top)	8,9	15x2
38	Post-hole fill (base)	10,11,12,13	15x4
24	Top fill of LBA ditch	14,15,16,17,18	15x5
29	LBA ditch fill	19,20,21,22,23	15x5
41	LBA ditch fill	24,25,26,27,28	15x5
42	LBA ditch fill	29,30,31,32	15x4
34	LBA ditch fill	33,34,35,36	15x4
45	LBA ditch fill	37,38,39	15x3
35	LBA ditch fill	40	15

Table 1 : Manor Farm, Great Baddow, (MF90) : Contexts sampled

Context	Sample No		
32	6	Cereal indet	1
37	9	<u>Triticum</u> sp	1
38	13	Cereal indet (frag)	+
24	14	<u>Triticum</u> sp	1
		<u>Triticum spelta</u> (glume base)	1
24	15	Polygonaceae indet	1
24	17	Cereal indet (frags)	+
29	20	Indet seed	1
42	31	Cereal indet	1
34	34	cf. <u>Arrhenatherum elatius</u> (tuber)	1
		Indet seed	1
34	36	<u>Triticum</u> sp	1

Table 2 : Manor Farm, Great Baddow (MF90) : Carbonised plant macrofossils