

ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY

REPORT

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SERIES/No

CONTRACTOR

AUTHOR

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TITLE

Botanical report on Moat deposits
at Blackgate, Newcastle, including
C17 ? night soil

Botanical Report on Moat Deposits at Blackgate, Newcastle, including 17th century ?Night Soil.

Excavator B. Harbottle

Funding Body Tyne and Wear

2 Kg of this dark silty material containing a considerable amount of ash was washed and subjected to paraffin flotations. The following plant remains were extracted and identified:

<u>Atriplex patula</u> L./ <u>hastata</u> L.- Orache	2 seeds
<u>Carex</u> spp.- sedges	18 nutlets
<u>Chenopodium album</u> L.- Fat Hen	16 seeds
<u>Galeopsis tetrahit</u> L./ <u>speciosa</u> Hull- Hempnettle	1 nutlet
Gramineae- grasses	5 caryopses
<u>Polygonum aviculare</u> L.- Knotgrass	12 fruits
<u>Prunella vulgaris</u> L.- Self Heal	5 nutlets
<u>Ranunculus</u> sect. <u>Ranunculus</u> - Buttercup	7 achenes
<u>Raphanus raphanistrum</u> L.- Wild Radish	1 seed
<u>Rubus fruticosus</u> aggr.- Blackberry	1 achene
<u>Rumex, crispus</u> T.- Dock	1 nutlet
<u>Stellaria alsine</u> Grimm.- Bog Stitchwort	1 seed

The blackberry pip could be of faecal origin, but, from this sample at least, it would seem that fruit was not a major component of the diet. The seeds of Fat Hen and Knotgrass were both eaten in prehistoric times, but are more likely in this case to represent simply the remains of plants growing locally.

The majority of species are weeds of waste places and are commonly found in deposits from urban sites. Fat Hen is frequent on nutrient-rich soils, while Knotgrass, because of its creeping habit, is

common in well-trodden areas. Urache, hemp nettle, docks, buttercups and
stiff heal are common in waste and grassy places. Damper conditions are
indicated by the bog stitchwort and the sedges.

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