



making sense of heritage

# Mythe to Mitcheldean Mains Reinforcement, Gloucestershire

Molluscs

*By Sarah F Wyles*



## 84960 MYTHE TO MITCHELDEAN, GLOUCESTERSHIRE: MOLLUSC ASSESSMENT

Sarah F Wyles

May 2014

### Introduction

A total of 13 small samples were taken in five sequences from Early Romano-British boundary ditch groups 340, 319, 318 and 317 in Area D1, Romano-British boundary ditch group 321 in Area D2, and Romano-British boundary ditch 200 in Area C. These were processed for the recovery of molluscs.

### Methods

The samples of 600-2000g were processed using standard methods (Evans 1972) with the flots collected on a 0.5mm mesh. The flots were assessed by scanning under a x 10 – x 40 stereo-binocular microscope to provide some information about shell preservation and species representation. The numbers of shells and the presence of taxonomic groups were quantified. Nomenclature is according to Anderson (2005) and the habitat information follows Kerney (1999). The results are presented in Table 1.

### Results

#### *Early Romano-British*

Shell numbers were relatively low in the samples from the Early Romano-British boundary ditches in Area D1. The terrestrial element of these assemblages was generally dominated by the open country species, in particular *Vallonia* sp., and appears to be broadly indicative of an area of open grassland in the vicinity of the ditch. The shade-loving element within these assemblages is more likely to be indicative of areas of longer grass rather than the presence of woodland or scrub/hedgerows in the immediate vicinity.

The local aquatic environment represented by the aquatic species within these assemblages appears to be generally one of fluctuating localised flooding and damp grassland as reflected by the presence of shells of the amphibious species *Galba truncatula*. A more permanently wet environment within ditch 819 group 340 context 820 series 22, probably of stagnant rather than flowing water, is indicated by the high number of shells of *Gyraulus crista* together with a few shells of *Radix balthica* within this deposit. However this wetter environment is very localised with the aquatic element of the assemblage from ditch 819 group 340 context 820 series 13 only being represented by shells of *Galba truncatula*.

#### *Romano-British*

Larger mollusc assemblages were recovered from Romano-British boundary ditch groups 321 in Area D2 and 200 in Area C.

The assemblage recorded from boundary ditch 321 is indicative of an open grassland environment, being dominated by the open country species *Vallonia* sp., the intermediate species *Trochulus hispidus*, and the shade-loving species *Carychium* sp. and *Aegopinella nitidula*. The small aquatic environment may also reflect localised flooding and areas of damper grassland. The presence of the shade-loving species *Clausilia bidentata* may be indicative of the presence of a small woody shady environment in the vicinity such as scrub or woodland.

The mollusc assemblages from Romano-British ditch group 200 in Area C were again generally indicative of an open grassy environment. The shade-loving element of the assemblage from context 1119 within this ditch group may be reflective of

some woodland element being present in the vicinity as shown by the presence of *Merdigera obscura*, *Clausilia bidentata* and *Acanthinula aculeata* in particular. The local aquatic environment is likely to be one of localised, probably seasonal, flooding and damp grassland. This is hinted at by the high numbers of the amphibious species *Galba truncatula* in the assemblage from context 1121 within this ditch.

The molluscs recovered within the 47 bulk samples were also scanned to ascertain the range of species present. Similar ranges of species were observed within these samples to those seen within the mollusc samples. The mollusc assemblages within the bulk samples from Area C also indicated the presence of a woodland environment in vicinity of this Area. The majority of the aquatic species observed in the bulk samples were the amphibious species *Galba truncatula* and *Anisus leucostoma*, although there was more evidence from the Romano-British boundary ditch 954 in Area D2 for long wet grass and a more permanent aquatic environment with the presence of *Gyraulus crista*, *Radix balthica* and *Pisidium* sp. within the assemblage.

### Summary

The mollusc assemblages reflect a broadly open environment. This is generally typical for the Late Iron Age/ Early Romano-British and Romano-British periods and was also indicated by the mollusc assemblages from Bishop's Cleeve (Lovell *et al* 2007) and from near Tewkesbury (Wilkinson 2004). The open grassland appears to have been longer and damp in some areas near these ditches. There may have been some kind of woodland environment in the vicinity of Area C and possibly some scrub or woodland on the edge of Area D2. There is evidence for fluctuating localised flooding and areas of more permanent water across the site.

### References

- Anderson, R., 2005, An annotated list of the non-marine Mollusca of Britain and Ireland, *Journal of Conchology* 38, 607-637
- Evans, J G, 1972, *Land Snails in Archaeology*, London: Seminar Press.
- Kerney, M P, 1999, *Atlas of the Land and Freshwater Molluscs of Britain and Ireland*, Colchester: Harley Books.
- Lovell, J., Timby, J., Wakeham, G. and Allen, M.J., 2007 Iron Age to Saxon Farming Settlement at Bishop's Cleeve, Gloucestershire: excavations south of Church Road, 1998 and 2004, *Trans. Bristol Gloucestershire Archaeol. Soc.* 125, 95-129
- Wilkinson, K. 2004, 'Mollusca', in Walker, G., Thomas, A. and Bateman, C., 'Bronze-Age and Romano-British Sites to the South-East of Tewkesbury. Evaluations and Excavations 1993-7', *Trans. Bristol Gloucestershire Archaeol. Soc.* 122, 29-94

Table 1 Assessment of the Molluscan Remains

Area	D1													D2	C				
Phase	Early Romano-British													Romano-British					
Group	Boundary ditch																		
Group Number	340	319	318	319	340	340	340	340	317	340	340	321	200	200	200				
Feature Type	Drainage Ditch													Ditch					
Feature	867	867	832	367	819	876	867	826	819	819	816	1114	1114	1114	1114				
Context	801	830	833	831	820	822	801	828	820	820	854	1117	1119	1119	1121				
Series	10			13			22												
Sample	6	7	8	9	11	12	18	19	20 M	17 M	54M	1500g	1500g	55M	56M				
Vol (L)	1500g	2000g	1500g	2000g	1500g	1500g	1400g	600g	1500g	1500g	1500g	1500g	1500g	1500g	1500g				
Open country species																			
<i>Pupilla muscorum</i>	C	C	C	-	B	-	C	-	C	C	C	C	C	C	-				
<i>Vertigo</i> spp.	C	C	C	-	C	-	-	-	C	C	-	-	A	C	C				
<i>Helicella itala</i>	-	-	-	-	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
<i>Vallonia</i> spp.	B	C	A	-	A	-	B	C	B	A	A	A	A	A	A				
Intro. Helicellids	-	-	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Intermediate species																			
<i>Trochulus hispidus</i>	C	C	C	-	B	-	-	-	C	A	-	-	C	C	B				
<i>Cochlicopa</i> spp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C	-	-	B	C	C				
<i>Cepaea</i> spp.	-	+	C	-	-	+	+	-	-	B	+	C	C	C	C				
<i>Punctum pygmaeum</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C	-	-	C	-	-				
<i>Vitrina pellucida</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C				
<i>Limax/Deroceras</i>	-	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	C	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Shade-loving species																			
<i>Carychium</i> spp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	C	-	C	A	-	-	C	C	C				
<i>Discus rotundatus</i>	C	+	+	-	C	-	+	-	B	B	C	C	A	C	C				
<i>Oxychilus cellarius</i>	C	-	-	-	C	-	-	-	-	C	-	-	C	C	C				
<i>Aegopinella nitidula</i>	-	-	-	-	C	C	-	-	-	A	-	-	B	B	B				
<i>Acanthinula aculeata</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	-	-				
<i>Clausilia bidentata</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C	-	-	C	+	+				
<i>Merdigera obscura</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C	-				

Area	D1														D2	C
Phase	Early Romano-British														Romano-British	
Group	Boundary ditch															
Group Number	340	319	318	319	319	340	340	340	340	317	340	340	321	200	200	200
Feature Type	Drainage Ditch														Ditch	
Feature	867	867	832	367	819	876	867	826	819	814	814	814	816	1114	1114	1114
Context	801	830	833	831	820	822	801	828	820	820	820	820	854	1117	1119	1121
Series	13															
Sample	6	7	8	9	11	12	18	19	20 M	22	20 M	17 M	54M	55M	56M	56M
<i>Vitrea</i> spp.	-	-	-	-	-	C	-	-	-	-	-	C	-	C	-	-
Fresh and Brackish water species																
<i>Galba truncatula</i>	A	A	B	-	B	-	C	C	B	C	B	C	-	C	-	A*
<i>Radix balthica</i>	-	C	-	-	-	-	C	-	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	C
<i>Gyraulus crista</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Anisus leucostoma</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C	-	-
<i>Bithynia operculum</i>	-	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Pisidium</i> spp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	-	-	-	-
<b>Approx totals</b>	30	20	30	0	35	2	12	5	40	90	12	85	100	100	100	100

Key: A\* = 30+, A = 10-30, B = 5-9, C = < 5, + = present



Wessex Archaeology Ltd registered office Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB  
Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 [info@wessexarch.co.uk](mailto:info@wessexarch.co.uk) [www.wessexarch.co.uk](http://www.wessexarch.co.uk)



FS 606559

Wessex Archaeology Ltd is a company limited by guarantee registered in England, company number 1712772. It is also a Charity registered in England and Wales, number 287786; and in Scotland, Scottish Charity number SC042630. Our registered office is at Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.