
15 Insects *by Harry Kenward*

Insect and other invertebrate remains from sediment samples were submitted for identification and cataloguing, to ascertain whether they were ancient or modern and, if ancient, to establish their interpretative value. The samples were principally from the great drain and associated middens.

A series of small groups of invertebrate remains was identified. The material was generally of little interpretative significance and in some cases clearly of modern origin. The insects with more-or-less entire appendages and the Euophryum weevil (a wood-borer from Australasia) are certainly modern. Indeed, the entire fauna may be intrusive.

The remains from the great drain were diverse and rather abundant (see 4.7.2 Great drain fills). They fell into two groups: free remains and a single rounded compressed pellet measuring about 21 mm by 13 mm by 5 mm. The latter was composed of centipede (*Lithobius* sp.) and woodlouse (*Oniscus asellus*) remains, some still associated as almost entire individuals and some separated. The quantities of the two species were about equal. This was clearly a pellet or dropping from an insect-feeding vertebrate. Possible sources are frogs and toads, mammalian insectivores (perhaps hedgehog), and

birds. The lack of a fine matrix perhaps indicates a bird pellet rather than faeces, unless some process has differentially removed fine matter. In contrast, the species present suggest a ground-feeder, perhaps a large amphibian or (more probably) a hedgehog. There were no obvious indications that this material was of recent contaminative origin, nor that it was ancient. The presence of *Megaselia* fly puparia indicate some kind of decaying matter, but it is suspected that the invertebrate corpses themselves might have provided food for these very catholic flies.

Some of the woodlouse remains were well preserved, but others, both in the pellet and the free material, showed characteristic decay which casts light on the puzzle of the rarity of fossils of these animals in most assemblages preserved by anoxic waterlogging. The cuticles were clearly eroded. Some areas had an appearance reminiscent of very decayed oyster shell, and were extremely fragile and crumbly. Such fossils would undoubtedly disappear from the record very easily. It was also observed that some of the centipede remains appeared to have mineral deposits forming on them, perhaps an early stage of mineral replacement.