

Title: Medieval, waterlogged and rural: insect and plant remains from a Cistercian grange at Bey More, Co. Meath

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Abstract

The analysis of insect and plant remains is now a reasonably well-established aspect of excavation in medieval urban centres across northern Europe. Deep layers of waterlogged organic material can be found in towns across the continent, from Novgorod in the east to Dublin in the west. Examination of these deposits has fostered a growing understanding of the urban flora and insect fauna of these places in the medieval period. But contemporary waterlogged deposits can also be found on rural excavations. Analysing these affords an opportunity to broaden the scope of our knowledge, beyond the urban, to investigate environment and living conditions in the countryside. In this paper we will present the analysis of the relatively rare rural waterlogged deposits from a Cistercian grange at Bey More in County Meath, where the majority of the activity dated from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. We will use the results from Bey More to highlight some of the key aspects of life at the grange and, drawing on existing studies of contemporary urban deposits, gauge some of the differences between town and country life in the medieval period.