

ENVIRONMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY

MoLAS employs staff with expertise in botanical and faunal remains, soils and human osteology. Their work in these areas provides evidence for palaeoecology, diet, slaughter, butchery, agriculture and animal husbandry, trade patterns, refuse disposal, industrial and craft activities, demography and health. In addition to carrying out project work, environmental archaeology staff can provide lectures and workshops on all aspects of their work.

The environmental archaeology staff based at 46 Eagle Wharf Road offer a range of services, as follows.

On-site sampling and sample processing, including advice on sampling strategies, which can be given from the office or in the field. Environmental staff can also advise on the appropriate method for sampling of archaeological deposits, whether by hand-collection, monolith tins, or hand and power augers. Processing the collected samples may involve wet sieving and flotation of bulk soil samples, and is now undertaken in our purpose-built facility, designed to provide an efficient and cost-effective service. Processing is followed by sorting of residues and flots, and preparation of accompanying documentation.

Archaeobotany includes the identification and interpretation of archaeological and modern plant remains, species identification of archaeological and modern wood, and desktop studies of palaeoecology and landscape change.

Experts in **human osteology** provide advice on strategies relating to the treatment of human remains, ethical and legal requirements for the excavation and clearance of cemeteries, charnel pits, crypts and vaults. This often includes the recording, analysis and interpretation of human skeletal remains, including cremations, from any period or region. Years of experience has made us an acknowledged leader in this field, with special expertise in dealing with large and complex assemblages. Advice can also be given on chemical and other microanalysis of bone, C 14 dating, chemical analysis for evidence of diet/past pollution and DNA analysis. Over the coming years our osteologists will be working on the analysis of the 11,000 medieval skeletons which make up the Spitalfields assemblage and providing cutting-edge research to the development of the Wellcome Osteological Research Database (WORD) project. This has led to the creation of a Centre for Human Bio-Archaeology within the LAARC which represents the latest best practice and cements our world-leading reputation in this area.

Osteologists work together with **forensic archaeologists** to provide both on- and off-site identification of human bone. This may include osteological analysis to determine age, sex, and health status of skeletal material, and advice on preparation of specialist evidence.

Experts in the study of **faunal remains** work on the identification and interpretation of archaeological or modern animal bones. These include all vertebrate groups, with special expertise in fish, birds, and mammals. We can also provide identification and interpretation of terrestrial, freshwater and marine mollusc shells and crustaceans, and freshwater and marine bryozoans.