



photo credit: Bob Peacock

The Stirling Castle wreck site lies off the south east coast of England, c. 8.5 km north-east of Deal, Kent (NGR 644689 158640, WGS84 51° 16.46 N 01° 30.41 E). It was one of the 30 great ships built as part of Samuel Pepys 1677 shipbuilding programme. It wrecked during the Great Storm of 1703. After its discovery in 1979, the ship was rapidly re-buried by the shifting sands.

One sample which was known to contain a large amount of grape seeds, was analysed, to quantify the seeds, and check whether other plant remains were present. The sample contained 369 fully mature grape seeds, 154 immature or undeveloped grape seeds and 72 fragments of grape skin. These could be the remains of dried grapes or raisins. However the recovery of vine stalks from the same sample suggests the presence of fresh grapes.

Other plant remains (probably straw) recovered in the sample might belong to the container in which the grapes were found, although no information concerning the container survives. It is also possible that this material represents the remains of straw used as packing material to stop the grapes from spoiling (cf. Stainforth 1979, 150).

Half of the grape seeds and skin fragments have been stored in distilled water and kept refrigerated to allow for potential DNA analysis in future.

## Reference

Stainforth, A R, *Cereal Straw*, Oxford: Oxford University Press