ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY REPORT

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AUTHOR		P Murphy	Oct 1978
TITLE		Buxton Mill, River valley	Norfolk c(238228), sediments

Buxton Mill, Norfolk c. (238228) : River valley sediments

Whilst excavations were being made to the south-west of Buxton Mill during the construction of the new mains sewerage scheme, a sherd from the base of a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age-type jar was recovered by Mr J. LeFevre. This sherd was unstratified, but clearly came originally from river gravel underlying the valley peat.

When the site was visited further excavations were underway. The visible stratigraphy was:

- 0-50 cm. Disturbed humified peat with some dumped chalk rubble (Disturbed Ao and Bo horizons).
- 50-220 cm. Very dark brown (10YR2/2) fibrous peat; some <u>Phragmites</u> remains; few twigs (<u>Alnus</u> or <u>Corylus</u>) near base.

The floor of the trench, despite pumping, was wet and very disturbed, but the upper surface of the river gravel had just According to the site foreman this gravel was been reached. at least 5.5 m. thick, becoming coarser with large cobbles and some iron-panning at depth. Although the gravel was not seen in situ, large blocks brought up in the J.C.B. bucket were examined on the spoil heap. These blocks included both clean gravel, (a loose greyish-brown to light brownish grey sand with many rounded and sub-angular flints apparently containing no organic matter), and also a slightly more cohesive sediment with the same mineral matrix but including more organic matter and charcoal flecks visible to the naked eye. A small sample of this latter sediment produced charcoal fragments up to 10 mm., seeds of Sambucus nigra, small-mammal and fishbone, scraps of large mammal bone and chips of burnt flint. Detailed study of these unstratified biological remains was not thought profitable.

Discussion

It is probable that the pottery sherd was originally derived from the more cohesive slightly organic gravel-based sediment, associated with the charcoal and other biological remains. This can be interpreted as representing a spread of domestic debris on a stable gravel surface, subsequently covered by eutrophic valley peat. The sherd would currently be dated to c. 600-400 B.C. (T. Gregory, pers. comm.) and this provides a terminus post quem for the beginning of peat development in this particular part of the Bure Valley.

Evidence for higher ground water levels, reflected by changes in peat stratigraphy at about this time in the Yare valley is summarised by Coles (1977, 296); and in the lower Bure Valley a similar, and probably contemporary, change from brushwood peat formation to the development of reed peat has been observed (Tatler and Corbett 1977, 17). These changes in peat stratigraphy, and the beginning of peat formation at Buxton Mill can all be related to the climatic deterioration of the first millenium b.c. (Piggott 1972). Given the gentle gradients of the rivers draining, East Norfolk even relatively small increases in rainfall would have had marked effects on ground-water levels, permitting the accumulation of brushwood and reed peats on lower gravel terraces which formerly were at least seasonally habitable.

References

Coles, P.B.L. (1977)	The Holocene Foraminifera and Palaeogeography of Central Broadland. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of East Anglia.	
Piggott, S. (1972)	'A note on the climatic deterioration in the first millenium BC in Britain. Scottish Archaeological Forum 4, 109.	
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Achnowledgement

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