A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE PLANT REMAINS FROM FISKERTON

James Greig

So far, four pollen samples have been prepared from the Fiskerton section, from 75, 100, 150 and 200 cm. below the present day ground surface (see table 1), although only the samples from 100 and 150 cm contained pollen. The 75 cm sample may be from a level where drying out has destroyed the pollen, and the mineral material at 200 cm may not have accumulated in such a way as to trap pollen. The two pollen spectra (table 2) are almost identical and are therefore discussed together, and it assumed that the seeds from the 75 cm sample (which also provides the insect remains) are derived from similar conditions to those which apply to the pollen samples. The results are discussed in terms of the different types of vegetation that is probably represented by the pollen, seeds and insect results.

Dry land Forest, woodland

The main forest trees, oak elm and lime are present, although in rather modest amounts, so the landscape at this time probably contained scattered woodland at some distance from the site. Other trees and shrubs like hazel birch, pine, ash, buckthorn and ?guelder rose/wayfaring tree probably represent more disturbed and scrubby woodland, or hedgerows.

Wetland carr

This seems to be abundantly represented. Alder is the most abundant type in both the pollen and the seed lists, so it seems likely that there was plenty of it growing on the spot. Pollen and seeds show other likely members of the very local vegetation, like Cyperaceae (e.g. sedges), Umbelliferae (e.g. water dropwort), Alismataceae (e.g. water plantain). Further pollen records show the likely local presence of water milfoil, purple loosestrife , pondweed , bogbean and bulrush/spikerush, and seeds show that water lily and gypsywort were there. This vegetation would grow in places ranging to merely damp through to standing water where a slow current would permit them to survive, to a river margin seems a highly likely interpretation of the local conditions, This conclusion agrees very well with the findings of beetles of shallow water and reedbeds.

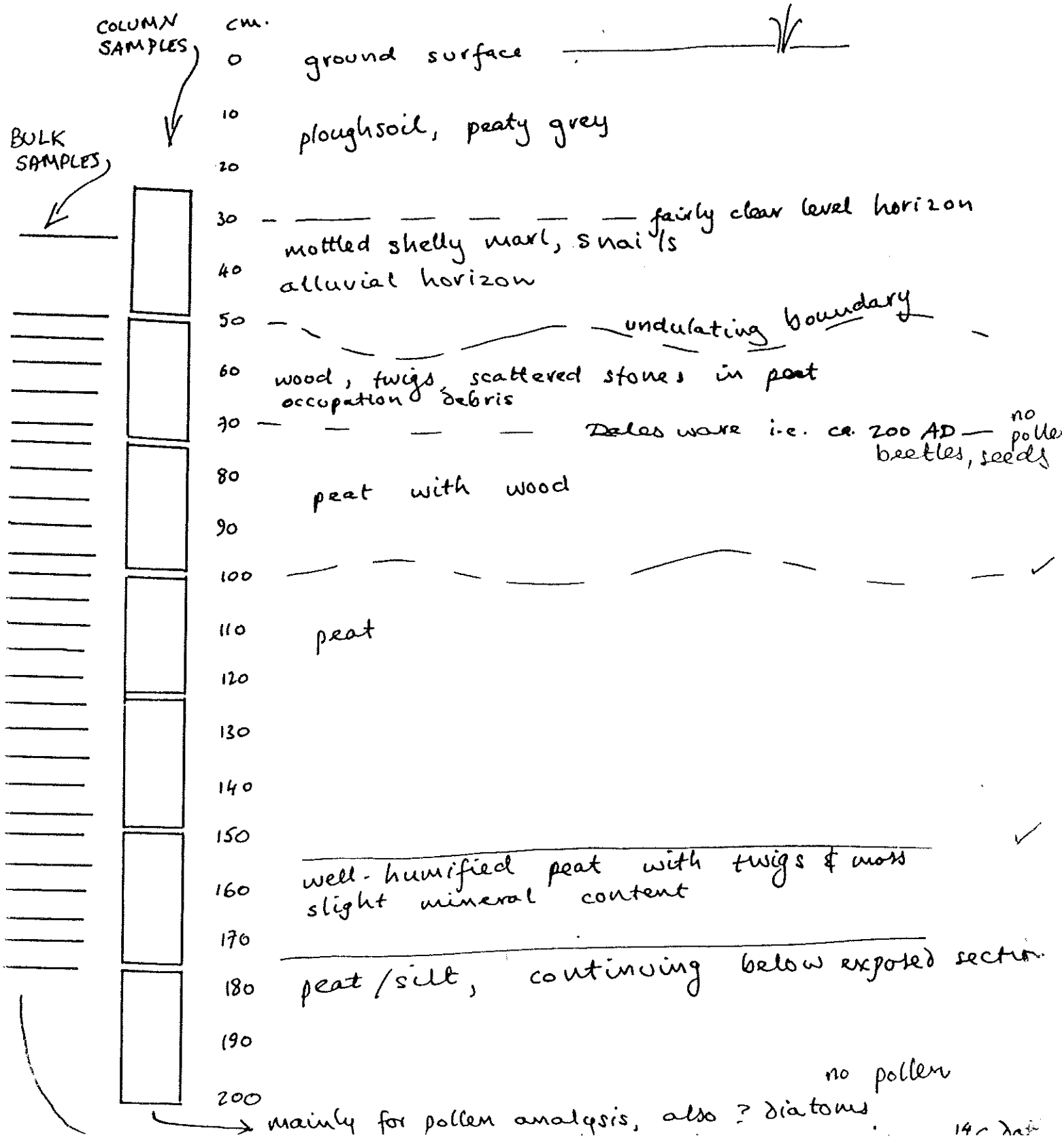
Dry land plants on the site ?

The seed list, although small, includes records of several plants which do not belong in the wetland list, yet the presence of seeds whose natural distribution is not very great, suggests that these plants occurred on

Table 1

FISKERTON Lincs

fieldwork 19th June 1981 Jas Greig



the site in some form or other. They may have grown on a somewhat drier area, or they may have been brought in from dry land for some purpose or other. Some, like the sloe, elder, woody nightshade and bramble are usually found in hedgerows and along footpaths. The pollen records of buckthorn, guelder rose/wayfaring tree and nettle may also belong with this group although pollen can travel from its source, so the local origin of these plants is less certain.

Dry land: pasture

Large amounts of grass pollen are present, and although some of this could have come from wetland grasses in the alder carr, the pollen records of dry grassland taxa like plantain and yellow rattle type make pasture land seem to be the likely source of this pollen. Better evidence, perhaps, comes from the records of beetles of this sort of land, together with dung beetles.

Arable farming

This is not much in evidence, apart from some Cerealia type pollen which probably comes from cereals rather than from wetland grasses with large pollen. There are also records of plants of disturbed ground like mugwort and goosefoot.

Interesting records

A pollen grain of Adoxa (moschatel) is unusual, although the plant has a fairly wide distribution in places like hedgebanks.

Discussion

The evidence is of riverside vegetation in the immediate locality, some hedgerow and pathway plants, and pasture and scattered woods on the dry land. The hedgerow plants are of especial interest because they are thought to have been encouraged by prehistoric stockmen to form useful hedges whose thorns would be impenetrable to stock, and there is good evidence that this was the case in the Netherlands (Groemnan-van Waateringe 1978), and this may be an example here. Was the trackway across the River Witham in fact a droveway ?

Reference

Groenman-van Waateringe, W. (1978) The impact of Neolithic man on the landscape of the Netherlands, pp. 135-146 in: Limbrey, S. & Evans, J.G. (Eds) The effect of man on the landscape: the Lowland Zone. CBA Research Report 21. London.

TABLE 2

(* = not in % sum) sample:	75	100	150	(75 cm: % seeds, 100 & 150: % pollen)	
Pinus	-	1	-	pine	woodland
Ranunculus type	-	-	+	buttercup	grassland
cf. Nuphar	2	-	-	waterlily	shallow water
Cruciferae	-	1	-	crucifers	various
Chenopodiaceae	-	1	-	goosefoots	disturbed ground
Tilia	-	+	+	lime tree	woodland, forest
Rhamnus catharticus	-	1	2	purging buckthorn	scrub, rich fen
Leguminosae	-	+	-	legumes	various
* Filipendula	-	-	1	meadowsweet	wet grassland
Rubus fruticosus	3	-	-	bramble	hedgerows
Prunus spinosa/Prunus t.	1	+	-	sloe	hedgerows
* Lythrum	-	-	1	purple loosestrife	wetland
* Myriophyllum	-	+	-	milfoil	shallow water
? Oenanthe aquatica/ Umbelliferae	2	3	1	water dropwort	wet places
Urtica	-	2	4	nettle	various
Ulmus	-	+	1	elm	woodland etc.
Betula	-	3	2	birch	woodland etc.
* Alnus glutinosa/Alnus t.	42	72	63	alder	alder carr etc.
Corylus type	-	30	22	hazel	various
Quercus	-	15	18	oak	woodland, forest
Salix	-	3	-	willow	various
Fraxinus	-	1	5	ash	open woodland etc.
* Menyanthes	-	-	+	bogbean	wet places
Solanum dulcamara	9	5	2	woody nightshade	various
Rhinanthus type	-	+	-	e.g. yellow rattle	grassland
? Mentha	1	-	-	? mint	
Lycopus europaeus	1	-	-	gypsywort	damp places
Stachys type	-	-	+	e.g. self-heal	various
Plantago lanceolata	-	3	1	ribwort plantain	grassland
Sambucus nigra	1	-	-	elder	waste places
Viburnum type	-	-	+	guelder roses	scrub, hedges
Adoxa moschatellina	-	-	+	moschatel	hedges etc.
Artemisia	-	1	-	mugwort	disturbed ground
Compositae (T)	-	1	-	e.g. daisies	various.
cf. Carduus type	-	+	-	thistles	various
Compositae (L)	-	+	-	e.g. dandelions	various
* Alismataceae	1	1	1	water plantains	shallow water
* Potamogetonaceae	-	-	1	pondweeds	shallow water
* Sparganium/Typha angust.	-	96	11	spikerush etc.	reedswamps
* Carex spp./Cyperaceae	35	10	5	sedges etc.	various
Gramineae	-	52	62	grasses	various
Cerealia type	-	3	+	? cereals	cultivated land
total seeds, pollen	156	200	266	(in sum used as % base)	