probably intended to protect a steep silt bank, extended southeastward from the end of the framework. All that the associated silts yielded was a few lumps of stone and fragments of brick.

No documentary or cartographic evidence directly relating to the age of the structures has so far come to light, but their context, the construction materials and methods, and the freshness of the timbers all point to dates in the late nineteenth or earliest twentieth century as most likely. The location and architecture of the structures suggest that what is exposed on the eroding cliff are parts of jetties at which small boats could berth. As there is no evidence of roads or tracks linking them across the Lydney Level with the hinterland, it must be supposed that whatever cargoes were either landed or shipped at the jetties pertained to the level alone. It seems likely that these cargoes were chiefly of sheep and cattle intended for fattening or for market. Warth Brook, with its jetties as described above, cannot be regarded as other than a very minor haven, but it lies in a long tradition of trading by water at ports along the estuarine shores of the Forest of Dean (Herbert 1979; Fulford *et al.* 1992; Green 1997, 1999), including landing places at other sites on the Lydney Level (Smith 1976; Herbert 1996a, b; Green 1997).

The probable jetties at Warth Brook seem to be an example of landing places built for the convenience of one or two local landowners, but otherwise considered too unimportant to be placed on documentary record or acknowledged officially. Structures of a similar character and status may be expected to have a wide occurrence elsewhere on the coastline of the Severn Estuary Levels. Given the changeable character of the estuary, some of these structures may have already been lost to erosion, whereas others may lie buried in silt, awaiting exhumation. For example, at Horse Pill, 4 km downstream from Cone Pill, the alluvium preserves a variety of early modern pottery and clay tobacco pipes, and a vessel, the *Francis*, is known to have traded on at least one occasion from there in the late sixteenth century (Waters 1977). There is, however, neither an archaeological record of wharfage at the site, nor any known official recognition of Horse Pill as a port.

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SOMERSET WETLAND ARCHAEOLOGY 1999

By Richard Brunning

Baltmoor Wall, Athelney

Work by Exeter Archaeology, funded by the Environment Agency, produced evidence for a Dark Age clay bank at the foot of the western end of Athelney Hill overlying an organic layer (445-663 cal AD) which was resting on a buried soil. This bank was subsequently cut by a ditch with a fill containing burnt grain dated to 604-774cal AD. A section through Baltmoor Wall revealed material suggestive of iron working activity. A peat layer above this context produced a date of 445-663 cal BC. On the south side of the hill a peat layer was encountered in a borehole. The top of this peat was still being formed at a very late date (1201-1257 cal AD). A full report is not yet available.

Roman salterns, Huntspill River

Four circular settling tanks were identified from a Roman saltern in the south bank of the Huntspill River (Site 121 in Grove and Brunning 1998, fig.1). Pottery from the Roman sites on the Huntspill is

being analysed by Rachel Seager Smith of Wessex Archaeology but the intended sampling and recording was halted by high water levels.

West Waste, Glastonbury

Two radiocarbon dates have been received for the prehistoric occupation evidence on the lias outcrop on Godney Moor which was mentioned in the last issue (Brunning 1998). Mesolithic flint was recovered from the site but the charcoal has been dated to the early third millennium BC (C. Hollinrake pers. comm.).

Withy Bridge, Huntspill

A palaeoenvironmental core from the north bank of the Huntspill has been analysed as a student project by Emma Vickery. Two thin (120-140 mm) peaty layers existed sandwiched between layers of clay. Pollen, foraminifera and plant macrofossil analysis suggested that both peaty layers were formed in a high salt marsh or terrestial environment with the clays representing transgressive phases of low salt marsh or mud flat environments. The lower peaty mud had a two sigma date of 1521-1316 cal BC and the upper peat a date of 895-674 cal BC. Other student pollen analysis projects at Ivythorne, Aller and Chedzoy in Sedgemoor all experienced very poor pollen survival.

Figure 1: Two circular settling tanks at the Roman saltern, Huntspill River.

Peat soil wastage report

A report on peat soil conservation has been produced for English Nature and the Environment Agency based on information from Somerset (Spoor et al 1999). The report identified the minimum conditions required to prevent peat soil wastage. The two relevant parameters were ditch spacings and ditch water levels.

Spring and summer ditch water levels *c.*30cm below mean field level should prove satisfactory for peat protection but if they fall below *c.*50cm peat wastage and deterioration is likely to increase significantly. Ditch spacings would vary depending on peat permeability, peat depth and land use. As a rough guide ditch spacings should not exceed 40 m and 60 m on the less and more permeable soil respectively.

Glastonbury Lake Village book

The most up to date review of the famous Iron Age 'lake village' north west of Glastonbury has been reprinted. 'Industrious and fairly civilised: The Glastonbury Lake Village' by John Coles and Steve Minnitt, is now available again in limited numbers. The first print run in 1995 ran out in a few weeks so as a special offer to SELRC members you can order a copy for £15 and have it posted to you for free. Please make cheques payable to 'Somerset County Council' and send to the address below.

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