In late June 1910, Professor Thomas McKenny Hughes received news that large bones had been spotted buried in a layer of pebbles below several metres of gravelly sand in Cardo's Pit near the village of Barrington, just 7 miles from Cambridge. The quarry was one of many which were dug in Cambridgeshire to recover phosphate nodules – the so-called 'coprolite pits'.

Over the previous two decades quite a lot of fossil bones had been found in Barrington's coprolite pits, so the find was not that unusual. However, the Professor was still interested in any finds from Barrington since they were known to belong to animals, which lived in the Ice Age.

What surprised the geologists was the abundance and completeness of some of the skeletal remains, which were significantly better than anything previously found. Also surprising was that despite the deposits belonging within the 'Ice Age', the fossils showed that the climate of the time must have been warmer than it is today in Cambridge.

Most impressive of the finds were the hippopotamus bones which included an undamaged skull and teeth, a long section of the backbone, the pelvis and limbones. Luckily much of July 1910 had exceptionally fine dry weather and as it was the university vacation all the Museum staff, the lecturers and some of the students were able help with the hard work of excavating the finds from below the Ice Age sediments.

They finally recovered the remains of some 13 different mammal species. Altogether they presented an extraordinary picture of life in Late Ice Age times. Most of the big plant eaters were extinct species including the straight-tusked elephant *Palaeoloxodon antiquus,* narrow-nosed rhinoceros *Stephanorhinus hemitoechus,* steppe bison *Bison priscus,* wild cattle called the aurochs *Bos primigenius,* three species of deer including the extinct giant deer *Megaloceros giganteus* and the living hippo species *Hippopotamus amphibius.* They were accompanied by predatory meat eaters – the extinct cave lion *Panthera leo spelaea,* the living wolf *Canis lupus*; red fox *Vulpes vulpes;* spotted hyena *Crocuta crocuta* and the omnivorous brownbear *Ursus arctos*.

Plant pollen recovered from the sediment showed that the environment had high frequencies of grasses and herbs along with trees and shrubs represented by oak (*Quercus*), pine (*Pinus*), hazel (*Corylus*), willow (*Salix*) and maple (*Acer*), alder (*Alnus*)and elm (*Ulmus*). This vegetation is very similar to that of Cambridgeshire today and it is likely that the climate was only slightly warmer.

Today we know that the Barrington deposits along with their animals and plants are around 120,000 years old. They belong to what is known as the Ipswichian interglacial, one of many warm intervals within the Ice Age.

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