

The Barrington Beds (between 3-4m thick), famous for their rich fossil content of Ipswichian age (c. 120,000 yrs Before Present) interglacial biota are the remnants of a high river terrace cut into its northern bank by the greatly enlarged Ashwell River Cam or Rhee, 11 km SW of Cambridge.

The Barrington Beds consist of grey gravelly silt, sand and loam with a basal conglomeratic layer of pebbles, bones and shells. The pebbles consist of a mix of rounded flints, chalk, phosphatic nodules ('coprolites'), assorted igneous and metamorphic rocks and some remanie *Gryphaea* fossils. Some of the pebbles are scratched, suggesting derivation from a till. Higher ground to the north is capped by Chalky Boulder Clay.

The environment of deposition was a wide river floodplain covered with grasses and herbs and stands of woodland further away on slightly higher and better drained ground

The terrace lies some 6 m above the modern floodplain alluvium. The river cut its broad valley into the Chalk Marl (of Lower Chalk age c 95 myr) and Gault Clay of Albian age (c. 100 myr). Consequently there is a significant unconformity between the Barrington Beds and the Chalk Marl. What Cenozoic sediments were deposited in the area were probably eroded during successive glaciations and interglacial flooding of the region.

Douglas Palmer, Sedgwick Museum