Down By The River
Archaeological, Palaeoenvironmental and Geoarchaeological Investigations of The Suffolk River Valleys
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Key Features:
· Major series of palaeoenvironmental and geoarchaeological studies of the Suffolk river valley floodplains backed by radiocarbon dating and assessment of preservation and conservation.
· First synthesis of the timing, pattern and process of fluvial development, human activity and landscape change during the Holocene of the region including construction and use of Iron Age post alignment structures.
· Discusses and evaluates sampling and analysis techniques employed in the study and their applicability to other similar environmental research.

Whilst East Anglia has long been known as a key area for the preservation of important Palaeolithic archaeological and palaeoenvironmental deposits, relatively little study of the Holocene record has previously been carried out. This series of detailed studies presents the results of palaeoenvironmental, archaeological and geoarchaeological investigations focused on the Post-Glacial record preserved in the valleys of the Suffolk rivers. Five floodplain sites (Beccles, Hoxne, Hengrave, Ixworth and Brandon) were cored for palaeoenvironmental assessment, further sampling and radiocarbon dating and the results are described. In addition, a summary is presented of the results of palaeoenvironmental and geoarchaeological investigations carried out as part of archaeological mitigation associated with commercial developments. Together, the results demonstrate the largely untapped research potential of the Suffolk river valleys and provide hypotheses concerning the timing, pattern and process of fluvial development, human activity and landscape change during the Holocene. Bank realignment work at Beccles in the lower Waveney Valley resulted in the discovery of three late prehistoric wetland archaeological sites at Beccles, Barsham and Geldeston. These each consisted of triple alignments of timber posts constructed across the floodplain during the later Iron Age, with evidence for continuing activity in the Romano-British period. The final chapter presents a summary of the current state of knowledge of Holocene environmental change and the archaeological record in Suffolk. The possible form and function of the Waveney timber alignment structures is discussed and compared to other similar sites from around the United Kingdom. It is suggested that these structures may have acted to delineate routeways to, from and across the river and also as territorial markers associated with river travel, both local and perhaps into the southern North Sea. A discussion of specific techniques employed during the work at Beccles, including the trialing of a novel geophysical approach at the site and 3-D digital recording of the timbers is presented and the volume concludes with a brief summary of research questions for future palaeoenvironmental and archaeological study.