

Keep in touch with GeoSuffolk Times. Welcome to issue number 15 of our newsletter - for those who value Suffolk's geodiversity. Caroline Markham 16.01.13 www.geosuffolk.co.uk

Geology: Recommended for Life!

It has been said that for geologists life is a field trip. Try these!

Vertigo – stand very close to the base of the magnificent black flint tower of Lavenham Church and look up. Loneliness – sit on the shore by the lighthouse at Orford Ness and look out to sea. Wonder – look close-up and carefully at a face of fossil shells (e.g. Butley Forest crag pit or Newbourne Great Pit) and ponder extinction and those we shall never see alive.

And more? Experience (at a safe distance) a large catastrophic mass-wasting event. Paddle at the sea shore, preferably at night, to experience Noctiluca bioluminescence. Find a megalodon tooth. Find a flint hand-axe. Experience an earthquake, a volcanic eruption; fall in love. Bob Markham (RM)



Question?

It is good to see the use of natural stone in a modern public sculpture. The 'Question?' by Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell at University College Suffolk waterfront plaza in Ipswich recently received a Commendation at the Ipswich Society Awards Evening. I talked to Adam Stone, Technical Director of CWO Ltd at that event and he pointed me towards the sources of the rocks. The marble is from Estremoz in the Alentejo Region of Portugal and the dark rock (not a 'granite' except in a commercial sense!) is 'Nero Assoluta' dolerite (the term also applies to basalt) from Rosario in the Colonia Department of southern Uruguay. RM

Have you read?....

Burrowing into the past: history of research on the Norwich and Weybourne Crag voles (Arvicolidae, Rodentia) by David F Mayhew. The Crag deposits of Suffolk are well known for fossil mammal remains and this review article on voles in *A Celebration of Suffolk Geology* is a welcome addition to the literature.

Voles are food for many carnivores; and their teeth and sometimes bones are commonly fossilised from pellets and scat. There are hundreds of fossil teeth from dozens of species, all extinct, in various collections in East Anglia. The first was recorded in 1860 by Richard Owen and recently a new (extinct) species, *Mimomys glendae*, has been found at Covehithe (see GeoSuffolk Times 12). Other important find sites in Suffolk include Easton Bavents, Bulcamp, Sizewell, and Thorpeness/Aldringham. David Mayhew has spent 40 years researching these fossils. Voles evolved rapidly during the Pliocene and Pleistocene and he has used them to inform the stratigraphy of the Norwich Crag and correlate more accurately UK deposits with those on the continent.

Visit www.geosuffolk.co.uk for a list of contents of *A Celebration of Suffolk Geology* and information on how to buy it. CM

David Mayhew 1948 – 2012

David became familiar with Suffolk through childhood summer days in the 1950s being spent at Iken Cliff. His 1975 PhD thesis at Cambridge University was *The Quaternary History of some British Rodents and Lagomorphs*. He would soon become resident in the Netherlands, continuing his research on fossil voles' teeth (see above). He was still working on some of my fossil vole material until the last. There is a photograph of David in issue 32 of Deposits magazine. RM

February 16th 10am-4pm
North Romford Community Centre,
Collier Row, Romford.

The Essex Gem & Mineral Show
Admission £1.50.

See www.erms.org for more
information

News: Geodiversity Providers and Owners

Condition Monitoring

GeoSuffolk has condition monitored three of the public County Geodiversity Sites designated last year. The well at Leiston Longshop Museum and the St James Church complex at Dunwich both achieved *Good Improving* status. Both the well at Leiston and the Leper Chapel in the Dunwich churchyard have undergone remedial work recently, making them sound for some time to come. The Norwich Crag gravel pit at St Helena's Walks Dunwich received a *Good Steady* rating. It has recently been deepened by the Forestry Commission, with the faces mainly graded for safety. This information has been passed to Suffolk County Council and Natural England. Thank you to the landowners for maintaining them so well. CM

Fossil Plant Day at Ipswich Museum

This event on November 24th 2012 attracted 60+ people, mostly families with children. In the Geology Gallery, GeoSuffolk helpers showed handling specimens – many from the Carboniferous Coal Measures - and on display were fossils from the reference collection ranging from the Devonian through to Holocene in age and including ginkgo and glossopteris leaves. In the Activity Room children could make models of club mosses and other fossil plants and there was a display of modern plant material, including cycads and horsetails. CM

GA Festival of Geology

The Geologists' Association Annual Festival of Geology at University College London is an excellent opportunity to advertise Suffolk's geology to others. This year on November 10th, GeoSuffolk took its 10th birthday celebrations to London, decking its stand with anniversary bunting and photo-displays of the big event in Christchurch Park Ipswich last May. A *Celebration of Suffolk Geology* proved popular with brisk sales and many complimentary comments. CM

Management at Rockhall Wood SSSI

On November 23rd, with the permission of the landowner and Natural England, GeoSuffolk carried out remedial work at this important Coralline Crag SSSI at Sutton Knoll. The site is on private land, but the north face is visible from the nearby public footpath where GeoSuffolk has erected an interpretation panel. So work started here, with the digger clearing talus from the base of the exposure to make it more visible. Then, in the bullockyard pit on the east side of the Knoll the excavations were refreshed to show the stratigraphy of the Coralline Crag more clearly. CM

Aspal Close CGS

This public County Geodiversity Site in Beck Row has a network of shallow depressions some 50-100m across. Site investigations by GeoSuffolk last year suggested they could be of periglacial origin, possibly ground-ice depressions formed during a cold phase of the Ice Age. See *Dips and Dells at Aspal Close* by Caroline Markham, in White Admiral no. 83, Autumn 2012.

<http://www.sns.org.uk/files/pdfs/wad83.pdf> CM

Peter Underwood 1924-2012

Peter was a geography teacher at Northgate Grammar School for Boys in Ipswich and helped when I took A level geology there. Some years later, Caroline taught geography there in his department. When Peter was a young man, Bawdsey was the favourite beach for the family, accompanied by a geological hammer. Later, with a young family of his own, the geology of Shotley peninsula was a favourite topic to discuss with his children. Peter was a member and supporter of the Ipswich Geological Group, and led trips to Cobbolds Point, Felixstowe (London Clay) and to the Stoke Bridge Ipswich sarsens, arranged as a work of art under the support of the Ipswich Society, of which Peter was a Vice-President. He received the MBE in 1998 for his work in connection with the Ipswich Society and with conservation in Suffolk. There is a photograph on the front cover of the Ipswich Society Newsletter 133. October 1998. RM

Snippets

- The recently published *Suffolk Natural History*, 2012, has geological articles on Nacton and Harkstead by Roger Dixon and Rushford by Richard West and Rendel Williams.
- The government announced in December 2012 that the Stour and Orwell estuaries will become a Marine Conservation Zone.
- The Sudbury Society Newsletter for Autumn 2012 has a report by Heather Coltman on a talk on Sudbury's Chalk by Ashley Cooper. If you were not at the talk try Ashley's excellent book *Our Mother Earth* (Bulmer Historical society 1998) – chapter 2 includes the *White Cliffs of Sudbury* and inhabitants' memories of the chalk pits.
- Since our visit to Corton cliff in September 2012 (see GeoSuffolk Times 14), a section of the sea wall below Corton village has been closed due to instability of the cliff. The East Anglian Daily Times 15.01.13 reports drainage work is being carried out.
- In November CM won second prize in the GA's photo competition with an image of flint galetting at Wiveton Hall in Norfolk. See www.geologistsassociation.org.uk CM/RM