

# GEOSUFFOLK TIMES

**Newsletter 41**  
**July 2019**

The Quarry at Rockhall Wood SSSI

Welcome to issue no.41 of GeoSuffolk Times.

Caroline Markham 18.07.19 [www.geosuffolk.co.uk](http://www.geosuffolk.co.uk)

## Blue Peter Rhinoceros

The children's programme Blue Peter celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> year in 2018. It reminded me of when 7 year old Russell Wickwar of Henley near Ipswich brought in and presented to Ipswich Museum a right lower jaw of a woolly rhinoceros, of Devensian age, from Redlands pit, Needham Market. Russell was so excited by this find that he wrote to Blue Peter about it and, as a result, Russell and I were invited to London to appear on the TV programme with the jaw. So we went to the BBC Television Centre in Wood Lane, London on Tuesday April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1987, with Mark Curry as our presenter, but Janet Ellis introduced the feature, 'If we ever held a survey about Blue Peter viewers' most popular hobby, there's one topic that would win hands down – fossils and dinosaurs'. We had two rehearsals and then (17.05-17.30 hours) it was live transmission.

Bob Markham (RM)

## **Meet GeoSuffolk**

**Wednesday August 14th Understanding Nature**, a Suffolk Naturalists' Society workshop for wildlife educators at the University of Suffolk. The talks include one by RM - with fossils to illustrate evolution. To book: <http://www.sns.org.uk/files/pdfs/SNS%20Understanding%20Nature.pdf>

**Sunday August 18th Knettishall Heath Summer Fayre.** GeoSuffolk has a stand at this Suffolk Wildlife Trust event. <https://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events/2019-08-18-knettishall-fair>

**Wednesday August 21st Ask the Expert** at Ipswich Museum. GeoSuffolk will be there from 10.30-3.30, so do bring along your geo-finds to discuss with us.

<https://ipswich.cimuseums.org.uk/events/asktheexpert>

**Sunday September 15th Heritage Open Day.** Meet GeoSuffolk at Blackfriars in Foundation Street, Ipswich to learn about its building stone.

<http://www.ipswichsociety.org.uk/events/2018-heritage-open-days-ipswich/>

## A Geo-Panel at Westleton Common

Managed by Westleton Parish Council, this disused quarry is valued for its heathland, developed on the free-draining Norwich Crag Gravels. The new panel, funded by the SNS and designed and created by GeoSuffolk, encourages the viewer to investigate the large, rounded cobbles which exemplify this 1.5-2 million year old marine deposit. It tells the story of their interpretation starting with Sir Joseph Prestwich who named them the 'Westleton Sands and Shingle' in 1871. Aware of the unique landscape (including some of the highest sea cliffs in Suffolk) which the Norwich Crag gravels give rise to, and their long history of academic study at this site, GeoSuffolk designated it a County Geodiversity Site in 2011, and has contributed to its management since then. See <http://geosuffolk.co.uk/index.php/geology-and-sites> to download the panel.

CM



Unveiling the panel

## What Price Copper?

Sackers (scrap metal and waste recycling), based at Great Blakenham, have invested in a cable granulator machine (the only one of its size in East Anglia) to process cables to recover the copper (plastic and steel are also recovered). 'Recycling copper uses much less energy, about 10 gigajoule/tonne, that's only 10% of the energy needed for extraction.' (From report in local newspaper.)

RM

### Suffolk's Crag Coprolites

GeoSuffolk has just published a leaflet, written by Bob Markham, which chronicles the quirky history of Suffolk's 19<sup>th</sup> century coprolite industry, with places to visit for evidence of its existence, including Coprolite Street in Ipswich, site of Packard's first fertiliser factory. There are photographs of fossils found with the coprolites and suggested locations where you may see the coprolite beds in the Red Crag today. Thanks to funding from the Ipswich Institute and Ipswich Society, it is available free of charge at Ipswich Museum and other outlets in Ipswich/Woodbridge/Felixstowe, or download from <http://geosuffolk.co.uk/index.php/archive/geosuffolk-leaflets>. The following paragraph takes the local fertiliser story into the 20th century. CM

### Fisons Factories

The Grade II Listed North Warehouse at the former Fisons Fertiliser factory in Paper Mill Lane, Bramford was destroyed by fire in May 2019. Local people may also remember Fisons former Cliff Quay Works (opened 1933/34) in Ipswich. The factory and adjacent Acid Plant produced superphosphate (by the Oberphos process). Most of the raw material was received by sea, including rock phosphate (that from Florida often contained small fossil shark teeth) and pyrites (perhaps from Spain). The rock phosphate was crushed then ground to a fine powder before taking to the Acid Plant. Acid was made by roasting the pyrites to obtain sulphur gas which condensed to produce sulphuric acid. Receptacles, pipes and storage tanks in the Acid Plant were all made of lead. RM

### Publications

- **Earth Heritage** 51 has an article describing GeoSuffolk's identification days at Ipswich and Colchester Museums and Brandon Country Park. If you haven't yet found this online geo-magazine it's worth a look. CM  
<http://www.earthheritage.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/Earth-Heritage-51-final.pdf>
- **Down to Earth** magazine 104 featured a pebble from Southwold. A thin section showed it to be 'snowflake basalt', a volcanic rock with feldspar in a star pattern – possibly from ship ballast. RM
- The latest issue of **Deposits** magazine, no.58 (produced by UKGE Ltd in Suffolk) contains an article, 'Flints in the Late Cretaceous Chalk of NW Europe' by Rory Mortimore. Recommended. RM

### Museums News

- The shop at **Christchurch Mansion**, Ipswich has been selling porcelain tiles with a printed marble effect, based on the marble forming the fire surround in the Rococo Room. White with grey veins and shading, it reminds me of some varieties of Arabescato marble from Italy. RM
- **Gainsborough's House** at Sudbury has a 'Buy a Brick' scheme for new galleries and a crinkle-crankle boundary wall. At £20 a brick, the project will use thousands of Bulmer Bricks (see GeoSuffolk Times no.24 for Peter Minter's Bulmer book.) RM
- One of the display cases at **Sudbury Heritage Centre** (at the town hall) contains a number of Iron Age baked clay sling bullets (average weight stated as c.20 grams). A Suffolk Institute paper 'Archaeology in Suffolk 1989' informs that they are from an excavation in the garden of Stour House, Gregory Street, Sudbury. To help distinguish from similar-looking material, they have a uniformity of size and shape, and are not so dense as most 'stones'. (For the photo archive at the Heritage Centre see GeoSuffolk Times no. 36.) RM
- **Ipswich Museum's** Summer of Science runs for the duration of the school summer holidays and includes Discovery Day: Fossils on August 6<sup>th</sup> – a free drop-in event from 10.30am-2pm. 'Lots of fossils around the museum for you to look at and touch.' CM

### Snail Coiling

Further to the articles in GeoSuffolk Times 31 and 33, a single DNA sequence, the LsDia1 gene, has been found to be the blueprint for right-handed coiling in the gastropod *Lymnaea* (and in all gastropods?). The genetic code for left-handed coiling is a mutation, giving a very similar gene, LsDia2. (From Development Research in Nature 23 May 2019.) Thanks to Alan Lord for bringing this to my attention. RM

### Rockhall Wood SSSI

Our new GeoSuffolk Times banner shows part of the Quarry pit at Sutton. We recently re-excavated this to reveal the Coralline Crag sequence for which this pit is designated. It awaits further clean-up management and geological investigation work. Watch this space!

CM

