

GEOSUFFOLK TIMES

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Newbourne Great Pit CGS February 2020

Welcome to issue no.46 of GeoSuffolk Times. Caroline Markham 30.07.20 www.geosuffolk.co.uk

Hamlet and Hot Dogs

When I was at school (over six decades ago) Ipswich Museum displays included an odd-shaped flint labelled as resembling Ally Sloper. This was a bit of a mystery to me, but I found out that he was a fictional comic-strip character. Such 'figure stones' and 'animistic flints' have long exercised people's imaginations. Thomas McKenny Hughes (1832-1917), Woodwardian Professor of Geology at Cambridge University (he succeeded Adam Sedgwick in 1873) used to display a collection of such flints at the Sedgwick Museum. They included a 'camel's head', a 'weasel' and a 'lumpy whale' - as also recognised in clouds by Hamlet and Polonius (Hamlet, Act III, Sc ii), but flints, unlike clouds, retain their fanciful shapes for our amusement.

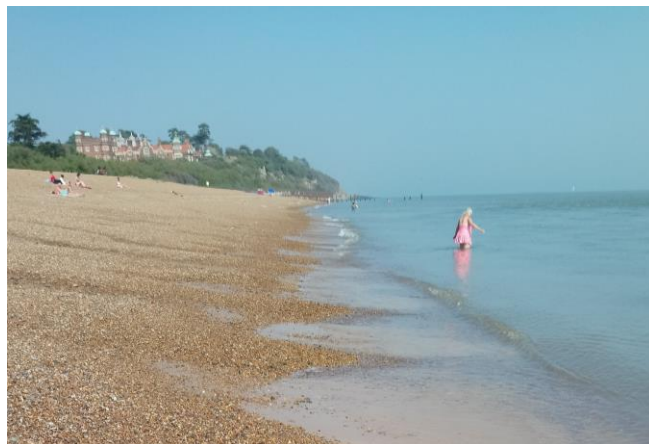
One Suffolk person (name and town withheld) in the 1930s had a collection weighing about two tons! W. Underwood wrote of 'animistic forms' for the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia in 1911 and W. M. Newton of 'Palaeolithic figures' for the British Archaeological Association in 1913. There is a splendid specimen for your imagination in our *Flint* leaflet. And for the real enthusiast, have a look at the concretions in the glacial clays and sediments of the St Croix River in Minnesota, USA. As well as outlines of animals, the shapes are also recorded as looking like hot dogs and bow ties. Bob Markham (RM)

Essex Rocks

The Essex Rock and Mineral Society (ERMS) has published 'Essex Rocks – Lost Worlds in Deep Time'. An imaginatively illustrated stratigraphy of Essex Gault Clay up to glacial tills - highly recommended for use in Suffolk, this new chart costs £2. For more see <http://www.erms.org/posterswallcharts.html>

The Suffolk Dragon

With our new-found freedom this summer, GeoSuffolk's latest leaflet, hot off the press, gives a variety of ideas for exploring the geology of our coast. Written by CM and RM with funding by Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, it covers localities from Corton to Bawdsey (photo below). We have sent copies to libraries along the coast and will make it available at other venues as they open up to the public. Meanwhile download it from our website. CM



Alice B Woodward

In 2018, whilst travelling on the Metropolitan Line through Pinner, I noticed an advertisement for an exhibition of Peter Pan illustrations at the Heath Robinson Museum. The surname of the artist, Alice Bolingbroke Woodward (1862 – 1951), sounded familiar - her grandfather was Samuel Woodward of Norwich, known as the 'Father of Norfolk Geology'. Alice Woodward also did scientific illustrations, including for her father, Henry, Keeper of Geology at the Natural History Museum. Some fifty of her illustrations are available as postcards (and some at least as jigsaw puzzles). I particularly like the *Plesiosaurus*, the *Machaerodus* sabre-tooth cat with stripes, and the Mammoth in rather miserable-looking rain. Oh, and Peter Pan and friends are also available on cards! RM

Finds in Difficult Times

In October 1942 a woolly rhinoceros skull was found by a Mr Bates of Bungay in an excavation for gravel (and said to be from a depth of 20 feet and about at the level of the River Waveney) at Homersfield on the Flixton Hall Estate of Sir Shafto Adair, Bt, J.P.. The gravel was being dug for airfields for the United States Army Air Force. The skull was taken to Ipswich Museum by Rev. W.M. Lummis of Bungay on behalf of Sir Shafto.

Owing to the difficulties of obtaining photographic supplies during the Second World War, Guy Maynard, Curator of Ipswich Museum, had water-colour drawings of the skull and a reconstruction of the animal prepared. On Friday 19th March 1943 he caught the 10.15 train from Ipswich to Beccles, changing there onto another train (line now closed) to Homersfield and then to Flixton Hall. He had lunch with Sir Shafto Adair and his agent, presented Sir Shafto with drawings, notes and photographs (he had managed to do this) of the woolly rhinoceros, before going to the pits to see the site of the discovery. He then caught a train (line now closed) to Tivetshall junction on the Norwich line and thence back to Ipswich. RM

Ten Years of the Pliocene Forest

We continue our focus on Pliocene flora with the article below on *Pinus coulteri* from Barry Hall. This specimen has done well in our Pliocene Forest at Rockhall Wood SSSI - created with reference to the Coralline Crag pollen record - and is one of the tallest trees now. CM

The Coulter pine, or Big Cone pine, is an evergreen coniferous tree, growing up to 24 metres with a single trunk and horizontal to upswept branches. It is native to the coastal mountains of northern Mexico and southern California. Isolated groves can be found as far north as the San Francisco Bay area. Its natural habitats are dry rocky slopes, flats and chapparal at 300-2100 metres, preferring a poorer, well drained sandy soil with a neutral to acid pH. It is sun loving, drought tolerant and therefore suitable for problem areas such as Sutton Knoll! Planted in November 2011 at a height of 50 cms our specimen is now in excess of 8 metres although it is still probably a bit young to bear cones. Leaves are needle like, a glaucous grey-green in colour and in bundles of three. However, its outstanding characteristic are the large spiny cones, 20- 40 cms in length and weighing 2-5 kilograms. They are the largest cones of any pine species. However, the timber is light, weak, coarse grained and rarely used except as fuel wood. BH

Top Five Geosites for a Summer Visit

1. Walk amongst Norwich Crag gravels on **Westleton Common CGS**. This County Geodiversity Site (CGS) is based on a series of disused gravel pits, colonised by heathland vegetation. Park at TM 443687 and walk to the south-east side of the common for the best exposures, passing GeoSuffolk's explanatory panel on the way.
2. For a more dramatic view of Norwich Crag gravels, visit **Minsmere Cliffs CGS** at the National Trust site. Walk north along the beach to follow the channels of 'Westleton pebbles' in the cliff exposures. This NT site with its cafe is open now, but you need to book car parking.
3. **Aspal Close CGS** in Beck Row provides accessible walks through periglacial 'hummock and hollow' landscape with a backdrop of ancient oak trees and Breckland flora. GeoSuffolk's Breckland leaflet gives more information on the landscape, also see <https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/leisure/Parks/upload/AspalCloseSiteMapLeafletWSC.pdf>
4. **Rockhall Wood SSSI** in Sutton is undoubtedly the best exposure of Coralline Crag in Suffolk (i.e. anywhere) with a hundred or so metres of quarry face viewable from the footpath at TM 305441. This is on private land, but views of the Pliocene Forest are a bonus, plus GeoSuffolk's explanatory panels.
5. **Abbey Gardens** in Bury St Edmunds provides accessible walks 'through history' - illustrated by an astonishing variety of building stones. GeoSuffolk Notes 10 has an annotated map. CM



Suffolk Walls Survey

If you like the photo of Abbey Gardens above, building stones might be your preferred choice for excursions this summer. There is a version of the ERMS form (see GeoSuffolk Times 43), amended for Suffolk, on the *Built Environment* page of our website. Have a go at recording, we would love to receive your results. CM

GeoSuffolk's web site is a good source of information about our county's geology. The leaflets and notes mentioned here are in the *Archive* and the panels are on the *Geology and Sites* page. www.geosuffolk.co.uk