

GEOSUFFOLK TIMES

Newsletter 48

January 2021

www.geosuffolk.co.uk Caroline Markham 10.01.21

Richard West: 1926-2020

Richard West, Professor of Botany at Cambridge University, Fellow of the Royal Society, was also a good friend to local geology, from his PhD work on fossil pollen at Hoxne, Suffolk in the 1950s to his (joint-authored) paper on Leet Hill, Norfolk published in Quaternary Newsletter October 2020. I first met Richard when I was geologist at Norwich Castle Museum. One particular memory is of one day in 1964 when we carried out excavations into the Cromer Forest Bed at Paston, east of Mundesley, Norfolk. The well-known Laminated Beds (of sand and clay) were well-exposed (about 4 feet) at the base of the cliff, overlain by sands (3 feet) with fragmentary mussel shells. We excavated below beach level (proving another 3 feet of Laminated Beds, from which Richard took samples to look for fossil pollen) and then down into the Elephant Bed (for nearly 4 feet until stopped by water) – mainly sand and gravel, the lower part with prominent quartz pebbles and also clay pebbles and fragments of bones and antlers. More recently, rather over ten years ago, Richard advised GeoSuffolk on plants (based on his research on Coralline Crag pollen) for the innovative Pliocene Forest project. Pollen in the crag is wind-blown, so bee-pollinated plants (based on the pollen in the non-marine Reuver Clay of the Netherlands) were also sourced, another particular memory being of lunch at Ramsholt five years ago. Richard (Professor of pollen and plants) and Barry Hall (GeoSuffolk's professional horticulturalist) deeply engrossed in which plants and how well they might grow.

Bob Markham (RM)



Surveying SSSIs for the Geology Trusts

The GT has been contracted by Natural England to assess several geological SSSIs. County groups which are members of the GT have been asked to carry out this work and GeoSuffolk has taken responsibility for 11 Suffolk SSSIs: The Cliff, Gedgrave (in the Alde-Ore SSSI); Beeches pit and High Lodge (both in Breckland Forest SSSI); Buckanay Farm pit; Chillesford Church pit; Flixton Quarry; Gedgrave Hall pit; Great Blakenham pit; Hascot Hill pit; Richmond Farm pit, Gedgrave; Stoke Tunnel cutting, Ipswich. You can find the citations, maps, etc. at

[Site Search \(naturallengland.org.uk\)](http://Site Search (naturallengland.org.uk)).

Suffolk's three weeks in (covid-19) Tier 2 during December gave us the opportunity to visit Flixton Quarry (River Waveney terraces), the three Coralline Crag sites in Gedgrave (more on them on the next page) and Buckanay Farm pit in the Red Crag. This last was, as always, an astonishing site in the winter sunshine (see the new GeoSuffolk Times banner above) and we have been pleased to report the good condition of the exposures, showing sedimentary structures – megaripples, lag deposits, cross-cutting, fissures – as per the citation. It is on private property but can be seen from the footpath between Alderton and Shinglestreet.

CM

The Pliocene Forest

The owners of Rockhall Wood SSSI (on which the Pliocene Forest is growing) at Sutton have informed me that they require a lease on the site, at a peppercorn rent, to secure the position of themselves and of GeoSuffolk using the site. I have had amicable conversations with the owner, but as GeoSuffolk work on sites is all voluntary we can go no further and have withdrawn from this site.

I thank all the individuals, families and organisations, national and international, who have contributed to this climate-change interpretation project, and Barry Hall who developed and cared for the Pliocene Forest – shown left in October 2020.

RM

There is more on the Pliocene Forest on our web page at [Pliocene Forest \(geosuffolk.co.uk\)](http://Pliocene Forest (geosuffolk.co.uk)).

Megalodon, North Sea Cores and PPE

The November issue of GeoScientist (the Geological Society of London magazine) is of particular interest to this region with three relevant articles:

- 'Scaling a Giant' by Jack Cooper reconstructs the Megalodon, complete with "a dorsal fin as large as a human adult" – plus photos of fossil teeth.
- 'New Homes for Old Core' by Kirstie Wright and Henk Kombrink relates the authors' initiative to repurpose North Sea core samples from the petroleum industry for educational purposes.
- 'A Change in Time of Crisis', the editorial by Amy Whitchurch suggests that future geologists may use the lithified remnants of PPE as a geological marker. Also see 'Golden Spike' by RM in GeoSuffolk Times no. 45 (May 2020) in which he suggests this pandemic may create an easily measurable Anthropocene marker.

GeoScientist is online at

[The Geological Society \(geolsoc.org.uk\)](http://geolsoc.org.uk).

CM

Snippets

- Karen Banton of Ipswich Museum features several fine images of specimens in her Ipswich Museum blog 'Unboxing Boxstones'.
[Unboxing Boxstones | Colchester + Ipswich Museums \(cimuseums.org.uk\)](http://cimuseums.org.uk)
- Gerald Lucy's Rock Gallery Site is the main agent for sales of GeoSuffolk's book, 'A Celebration of Suffolk Geology' during these difficult times – thank you Gerald. [Fossils and natural crystals for sale \(therockgallery.co.uk\)](http://therockgallery.co.uk)
- The Ipswich Society January Newsletter features 'Ipswich Rocks', an article on Ipswich building stones by CM and RM – an interesting winter exercise walk. [Newsletter, January 2021 \(issue 224\) » The Ipswich Society](#)

Measures....

The importance of Carboniferous geology may sound far removed from rural south Norfolk, but not for Mike Leeder, Professor Emeritus at the University of East Anglia, Norwich. Today, Mike is the author of 'Measures for Measure: Geology and the Industrial Revolution', published by Dunedin, 2020 (ISBN 9781780460819) – a wonderful Christmas present for me. A younger Mike attended Diss Grammar and the City of Norwich Schools, and an early contribution to geology – on belemnites from Claydon, Suffolk – appears in Ipswich Geological Group Bulletin no.5 (1969). [Ipswich Geological Group \(geosuffolk.co.uk\)](http://geosuffolk.co.uk)

RM



Basil Brown, Sutton Hoo and fossils

'The Dig,' based on a novel by John Preston (2007), is scheduled to be available on Netflix on 29th January. Although advertised as a documentary, it is a fictionalised account (but I am still looking forward to seeing it), so may I recommend the factual story in my(!) book 'Sutton Hoo through the rear view mirror 1937-1942', published by the Sutton Hoo Society 2002. Star of the ship excavation was Basil Brown of Rickinghall (died 1977 aged 89). I never met Basil Brown but saw him on his visits to the Archaeology Department at Ipswich Museum. His last geological donations to the museum were an ammonite from Westhorpe and a *Stigmaraia* from Wattisfield (both glacial erratics) in 1956. This was also the first year I donated a specimen (a Megalodon tooth from Bawdsey) to the Museum. RM

Coralline Crag at Gedgrave

Just before Christmas GeoSuffolk surveyed the Coralline Crag SSSIs at Gedgrave for the GT. Richmond Farm pit is on private land but can be seen from the road from Orford to Gedgrave Hall.



This is the 'Rock Bed' (hard enough to have been used as a building stone) so it has stood the test of time and still displays excellent exposures of large cross-bedded units - with very little change since the Victorians recorded it. It has been suggested that rock for Wantisden and Chillesford Churches was taken from here.



Gedgrave Cliff is a natural river cliff, close to the Butley ferry crossing. It is on private land, not far from the footpath down to the ferry (a lovely walk on a nice day). It is mostly vegetated but there is still visible a small exposure of cross-bedded Coralline Crag from the NE 'facelift' in 2014. CM