

# GEOSUFFOLK TIMES

Newsletter 61  
April 2024

Caroline Markham 25.04.24. The GeoSuffolk Gallery, Events and back issues of GeoSuffolk Times can be found at <https://geosuffolk.co.uk>

## Keeping your geological site free of trees

A visitor to Stoke Tunnel SSSI in Ipswich will notice that the flat area, although well-grassed, has no trees (except for the specially planted boundary ones). This area used to be part of the yard of the former Ipswich steam locomotive depot. Upon arrival at the engine maintenance shed at the end of its day's work the locomotive was placed over the ashpit in order to drop the debris of its burnt coal. The ash was disposed of on the yard surface and used to inhibit weed growth (this information from an Ipswich and District Historical Transport Society newsletter). An excavation showing railway ash overlying an interglacial deposit at Stoke (in 1967) may be seen in the Gallery on the GeoSuffolk web site. The ash is still serving its purpose inhibiting growth of trees and shrubs on the SSSI – always a plus on an integrity site. Bob Markham (RM)

## Sutton Church CGS

In early April GeoSuffolk condition monitored this County Geodiversity Site designated for its building materials used in the 1854-60 restoration.



Waste products from the 19th century 'coprolite' pits of Sutton include Box stones and flints with Red Crag barnacles adhering. We noted that the CGS is in GOOD condition. CM

## Meet GeoSuffolk

On May 31st at the Wild in the Stour Valley event in Sudbury we will focus on *Fossils, Nature's Time Travellers*. See GeoSuffolk's Events page for more. On June 2nd at Melton Old Church (2-4.30pm) we will celebrate the first Palaeontographical Society Memoir, (1848), *The Crag Mollusca* by Searles Valentine Wood who has a memorial in the church.

Harwich Formation at Nacton Cliff CGS March 2023

## Dinosaur Tracks Uncovered



The dinosaur trackway set into the wall at Ipswich Museum has been revealed this month after 20+ years covered from view. Here Natural Science Curator Simon Jackson can be seen considering a tracing of the footprints (with the real thing behind him). Dr Jackson is an authority in this field, and we await his interpretation in the new display (due to be opened in 2025). CM

## More Easton Bavents

The Spring 2024 edition of Suffolk View mentions a recent planning application for new houses at Easton Bavents, renowned for its history of coastal erosion. It would be possible for the new houses to be lifted/deconstructed and moved further inland.

See [Suffolk View magazine - Spring edition now available - Suffolk Preservation Society \(suffolksociety.org\)](https://suffolksociety.org)

Easton Bavents has lost land and dwellings (which are relatively few) for a very long time. Matters reached a wide audience in 2002 with conflict between property occupiers 'sacrificial sea defences' and English Nature's (now Natural England) geological SSSI. In 2011 the Pathfinder Scheme allowed transfer of residential rights, permitting home-owners to relocate inland and keeping the same planning permission (see GeoSuffolk Times 8, April 2010). RM

### Pygocardia breaks

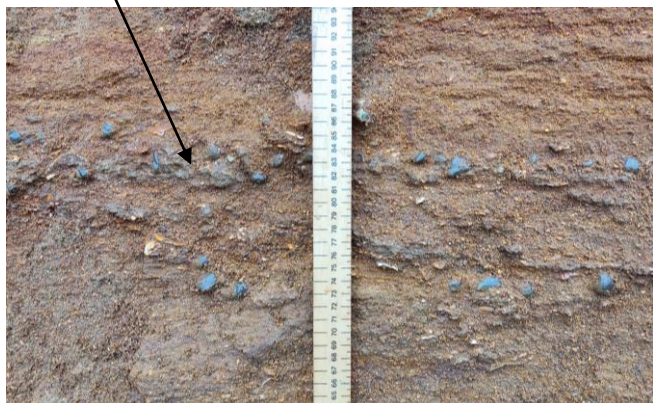
The German palaeontologist Wilhelm Freudentberg (1881-1960) was attached to the German army as a geologist during World War I, when fortifications were being constructed to the west of Antwerp. The excavations were in Scaldisian sands (Pliocene age) containing shells of the bivalve *Cyprina tumida* – better known as *Pygocardia rustica* and first recorded by James Sowerby (tentatively as *Venus rustica*) in his *Mineral Conchology* in 1818, from the Crag of Hollesley, Suffolk.

Wilhelm Freudentberg noted that some of the shells from near Antwerp had a V-shaped break into them neat the scar (depression) of the attachment of the anterior closing muscle. He favoured that they had been humanly opened, recording this in *Praehistorische Zeitschrift*, 11, 1-56 (a shell with a 'cut mark' is illustrated on page 33).

This invited a look at some Suffolk Crag examples. One I found in the Coralline Crag in an excavation at Sutton in 1977 had a V-shaped piece broken off in the 'correct' position. However, the V pointed in a different direction, one side was part of a larger crack, and the broken edges appeared relatively fresh. RM

### Coast & Heaths Natural Landscape Work Party

On March 12th GeoSuffolk and the C&H NL Work Party cleared a Red Crag pit in Ramsholt. Situated on private land this has 8m vertical sections showing current bedding with thin, pebbly 'coprolite' lag deposits, shell avalanches, mud drapes. Eleven of us braved the drizzle (although it was surprisingly sheltered in the pit) and cleared talus from about half of the faces, exposing the more-or-less continuous coprolite bed along 50+ metres of the quarry.



We last visited in 2018, so hopefully we have kept it clear for another six years! Thank you to all volunteers. CM

### Pliocene Forests

The newly established Pliocene Forest in Sutton, adjacent to the footpath between Wood Hall and Rockhall Wood SSSI, is doing well in this year of high rainfall, with most of the saplings showing new growth this spring. CM



This *Aesculus chinensis* (Chinese buckeye, horse chestnut) is representative of the flora of the Reuver Clay of the Netherlands. Studied by Clement and Eleanor Mary Reid in the early 20th C, this is close to our Suffolk Red Crag in age. *Aesculus chinensis* is native to northern China now.

### The Withipoll Slab

Standing against a wall immediately to the east of Christchurch Mansion in Ipswich is a large slab of rock, about 10 feet tall by 5 feet wide, containing an indent. GeoSuffolk members looked at this some years ago – it appeared to be a muddy limestone (it was flaking by weathering) with (in a position difficult to study them) fragments of crinoids/corals. An article by D N J MacCulloch and J M Blatchly in *Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society* (Vol XII, Part III, No. XCIV) informs: it is stated to be Tournai marble\* and may have come to Ipswich via Scotland in about 1560 (\*actually a limestone). I thank Carrie Willis of Ipswich Museum for bringing this paper to my attention. RM

### Percy Boswell (1886-1960)

Percy Boswell spent his early years in Wellesley Road, Ipswich. He gained his doctorate (on Eocene sands) at Imperial College, London and in 1915 became Scientific Advisor (Geological) to the Ministry of Munitions – to develop home resources of sands for glass-making, foreign supplies having been cut off by the war. Later, whilst Professor of Geology at Liverpool University he wrote the Ipswich (1927), Woodbridge & Felixstowe (1928) and Sudbury (1929) Geological Survey Memoirs. GeoSuffolk is hoping to have a geological display, including about Percy Boswell at the Clifford Road Air Raid Shelter Museum (close to Wellesley Road) in Ipswich at their D Day event on June 9th – keep an eye on our Events page.