

GEOSUFFOLK TIMES



Newsletter 65
April 2025

Caroline Markham 19.04.25. GeoSuffolk leaflets and more can be found at www.geosuffolk.co.uk

Mollusk of the Year 2025

March was voting time in the 2025 International Mollusk of the Year competition, run by the Senckenberg Society for Nature Research. Senckenberg would sequence the complete genome of the winner. There were five candidates on the voting list, including the marine bivalve *Arctica islandica*. As perhaps the longest lived (in excess of 300 years) non-colonial extant animal, and as fossil specimens from the Coralline Crag are providing information on Pliocene sea temperatures (by studying annual growth increments), I voted for *A. islandica*. Came April 3rd, official press release day – *A. islandica* did not win. The winner was the deep-sea octopus, *Muusoctopus* - but there is still some geological interest. The females of one species incubate their young in the warm waters of hydrothermal vents.

Bob Markham (RM)

Bull Head Flints



These green-coated flints photographed by Howard Mottram in a wall at Sproughton are from the Bull Head Bed at the base of the local Thanet Beds which rest on the Chalk. The green colour is due

to glauconite staining. The flints have also been fractured and stained by iron oxide. The former pits in Papermill Lane, Bramford had fine exposures of the Bull Head Bed.

RM

Meet GeoSuffolk

At the family day run by the Stour Valley Educational Network SVEN, at Friars Meadow, Sudbury, May 30th, 11am-4pm. GeoSuffolk will have a stand featuring some of the Mendlesham glacial erratics. For more information see the Dedham Vale NL web site

12th C Tournai Limestone font in St Peters, Ipswich

Glacial Erratic Fossils from Mendlesham

A visit to Mendlesham in February gave GeoSuffolk the opportunity to view the collection of the late Roy Colchester. Amongst the items were fossils collected from the Chalky Boulder Clay on the fields around Mendlesham. There were belemnites, gastropods, bivalves, echinoids, ichthyosaur vertebrae and a piece of Jurassic wood. These specimens have been made more scientifically valuable by their recorded location within a few square kilometres of Mendlesham. They give clues to their original home and the movement of the ice sheet. 21 specimens, including the two below have been donated to Ipswich Museum.



These Jurassic Ichthyosaur vertebrae were found when a cutting was made under the A140 for the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway. The larger specimen is 11 cm across and the smaller one 7cm across – so quite an impressive animal.

Roy Colchester was a relative of William Colchester (1813-1898) who owned Kyson brick pit, Woodbridge and Dovercourt coprolite works, and has specimens (Eocene shark teeth from Kyson) in Ipswich Museum.

CM

Red Crag Monkey Tooth

A monkey tooth from the Red Crag at Waldringfield, and preserved in the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge has been recorded by Martin Pickford et al, in Fossil Imprint, 2023, 79 (1) pp26-36 [Macaque molar from the Red Crag Formation, Waldringfield, England](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0015075923000011)

Howard Mottram Articles

The Suffolk Naturalists' Society Transactions 2024 has published *The Chillesford Clay – muddying and unmuddying the waters*, vol 60, pages 8-17.

The Bulletin of the Geological Society of Norfolk 2025 has published *Quartzose sands and gravels near Bury St Edmunds: Anglian outwash, not pre-glacial Ingham/Bytham fluvial deposits*, vol 75, pages 2-12.

Bury St Edmunds – a plaque



Whilst on a field meeting recording building stones in Bury St Edmunds, GeoSuffolk viewed this plaque to William Hyde Wollaston, 'Physiologist-Chemist', on no 1 Angel Hill. (He was born in 1766, not 1776 as on the plaque.) He discovered the chemical elements Palladium and Rhodium. The mineral Wollastonite, a calcium silicate, commonly found in skarn (metamorphosed carbonate rock with notable silica content) is named after him. The Geological Society of London's Wollaston medal (made of palladium) is also named after him. Early recipients included: 1837, Proby Thomas Cautley (born Stratford-St-Mary, Suffolk) for palaeontology studies, Sivalik Hills, India and Pakistan; and 1860, Searles Valentine Wood, author of the Monograph of the Crag Mollusca. RM

- and Dinosaurs

The Moyses Hall Museum exhibition (May 3rd - October 5th) 'Prehistoric Beasts: Land, Sea, Sky' includes specimens from the Sedgwick Museum - see.

[Prehistoric Beasts: Land, Sea, Sky](#)

Happy Birthday Ipswich Institute

The Ipswich Institute celebrated its 200th birthday in November 2024 (It was formed as the Ipswich Mechanics' Institute in 1824). They generously helped in financing GeoSuffolk leaflets 'Suffolk's Crag Coprolites' and 'GeoSuffolk looks at the London Clay'. Did it help that I informed them that their Tavern Street premises is built on the London Clay? RM

Geo-Anglia

- The South Western Railway Company has made a study of the UK's best places to find fossils. 23 coastal locations were considered and the winner, announced in February, is Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex. It will be for Red Crag and London Clay fossils – but do not climb on the cliffs and check for low tide.
- A well-illustrated paper on Lithornithiform birds from the London Clay of Walton-on-the-Naze may be found in Papers in Palaeontology, vol 11, part 1, 2025. This has direct relevance to the Eocene of South Suffolk. [Papers in Palaeontology: Vol 11, No 1](#) Thank you to Professor Alan Lord of Senckenberg Gessellschaft für Naturforschung for this information.
- 'In Search of Norfolk's First Stone Churches' by Peter Wade-Martins (BAR Publishing, 2024) features iron-bound conglomerate and grey quartzite, used before limestone ashlar was readily available.
- An online search in the Geology Collection (then 'see more items') in Norwich Castle Museum www.museumscollections.norfolk.gov.uk features approx. 2,000 specimens. Kessingland, Suffolk is represented by Forest Bed *Trogontherium cuvieri* (right mandible) and a horse tooth (this latter has my writing on it from when I was geologist at Norwich Museum, 1961-64. RM

Cones of Percussion at Ipswich Minster



The flints in the Tower Street boundary wall at the northwest corner of Ipswich Minster (formerly St Mary-le-Tower Church) show a fine display of cones of percussion – probably one of the best in East Anglia. These upstanding cone-shaped structures are formed when the flint knapper directs perpendicular pressure on a prepared flint 'core'. Although of interest to us, their location in a 'hidden' corner suggests the Victorian masons considered them to be flawed. CM