

# GEOSUFFOLK TIMES



Caroline Markham 27.07.25. GeoSuffolk Notes and leaflets are in the Archive on [www.geosuffolk.co.uk](http://www.geosuffolk.co.uk)

## Dredging up

When recently asked about Ipswich maritime-related people I immediately thought of Thomas Miller (1841-1928), Engineer to the Ipswich Dock Commission. His record of 18 boreholes on the site of the present-day entrance to Ipswich Dock is published in the Geological Survey's 1885 Memoir. Borehole no.11 showed sand and gravel with boulders of sandstone, and dredging in the Dock also found sandstone boulders.

Thomas Miller recorded mammal bones found when dredging ooze in the New Channel of the River Orwell in 1893 – in May of that year the *Lady Nancy* raised a sawn bone near High Marsh Point. In 1894 bones were found in a peat bed on the west side of the channel in Oyster Creek, and more bones from under a peat bed near Pond Ooze Point. Impressions of leaves of poplar, willow and hazel were also found in the peat bed under the River Orwell. Earlier, in the early 1870s large quantities of hazel nuts and wood were found when the creek leading to the former Halifax shipyard was deepened, the woody material in particular crumbling to dust when it dried. A mammoth tooth was also dredged nearby but probably came from an earlier deposit than most of those finds.

Just over 80 centuries before the present-day, rising sea level submerged the hazel groves of the lower Gipping valley and converted that land into today's Orwell estuary.

(Do not confuse Thomas Miller with Henry Miller (1848-1922), assistant to the Ipswich engineer Peter Bruff, who also recorded geological notes and excavations.)

Bob Markham (RM)

## Meet GeoSuffolk

Humans first discovered Suffolk nearly one million years ago. Since then they have battled the Ice Age, lived with Mammoths, and made machines. Who were these people? What did they look like? What did they leave behind? Visit the GeoSuffolk stand in St Peters by the Waterfront, Ipswich September 13th, 10am - 4pm, for [Heritage Open Days](#).

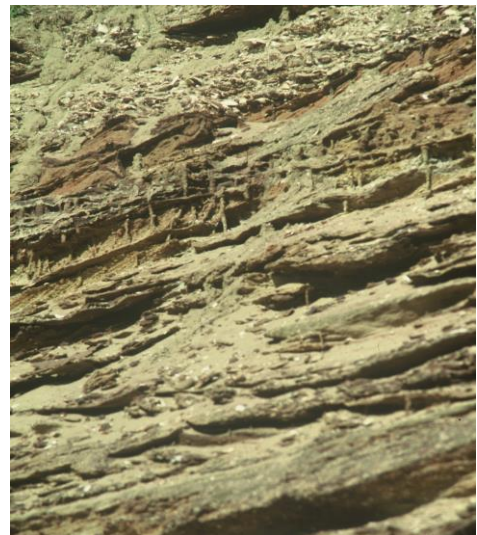
12th C Tournai Limestone font in St Peters, Ipswich

## King Charles III Path

The King Charles III England Coast path from Shotley Gate to Felixstowe Ferry is now open to the public. Seepage erosion where the Red Crag overlies the local London Clay creates much of the scenic interest, with springs, landslips and steep, wooded slopes. There are excellent examples of old rotational slips, with back-tilted trees and showing back-tilted cementstone ('septaria') strata. They include two County Geodiversity Sites - Bridge Wood (Orwell Country Park) and Nacton Cliff (Homewood, Nacton Shore), both exemplified on the Geology and Sites page of GeoSuffolk's web site. Also, Pin Mill Cliff is described in a new GeoSuffolk Note (no.69), also on our website.

RM

## Sizewell Stratigraphy



With Sizewell power stations in the news again, this shows Norwich Crag (pale-coloured, top left) resting on Scrobicularia Crag (Chillesford Sand of authors). Taken in the Pumphouse pit at Sizewell B, 1989.

The Norwich Crag contained the gastropods *Potamides icenicus* and *Hydrobia*, with a basal bed of mammal bones including proboscidea. The Scrobicularia Crag contained the bivalves *Spisula constricta* and *Diplodonta astartea* and was decalcified in its upper part where the vertical trace fossil burrows are weathering out.

RM

### The Building Stones of Suffolk: and the people who worked them.

This new book by Tony Redman is an excellent addition to the geological literature of our county. With the exception of small quantities of Coralline Crag, London Clay cement stones and lots of flint, our Suffolk geology has provided few building stones. Thus, in the Middle Ages, in order to provide stone strong enough for corners, openings and 'raising the walls' the Abbots of St Edmundsbury bought a quarry in Cambridgeshire (for Barnack Stone). The up-side of this geological poverty is a rich diversity of building materials in Suffolk - local, imported, manufactured, and recycled (after the Reformation the Abbey itself became a lucrative source of salvaged building stone). This variety accelerated with the arrival of the railways in the 19th century - the red Mansfield Stone columns of Ipswich Town Hall for example, and the deliberately colourful stones refacing some Suffolk churches, including Dunwich, Hadleigh and Aldeburgh. The middle section of this book is a comprehensive survey of Suffolk building stones – evidence of five years' field work by the author and a really useful aid to practical identification. There is a good section on flint with many examples, including Butley Priory. Other stones include- Totternhoe Chalk in Lakenheath High Street; Old Red Sandstone in the Memorial Hall in Newmarket; the Tournai Stone font in St Peters, Ipswich (see GeoSuffolk Times header).

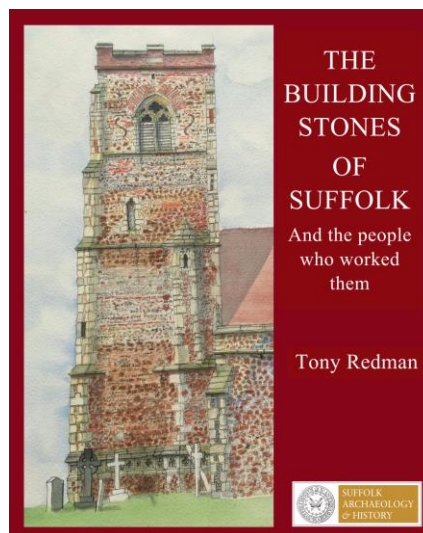
Lastly there is a directory of Suffolk stonemasons, from a 1436 record of John Wode rebuilding the tower of the abbey church in Bury St Edmunds, to the Saunders family, masons in Ipswich from the late 19th century. Portland Stone for the Commonwealth War Memorials was dressed by Saunders, including for the Menin Gate. CM

The Building Stones of Suffolk is published by the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology and History, 2025. ISBN 978-1-8381223-3-1 It has 219 pages including 247 coloured plates, 21 maps, and indexed by name and place.

£25 plus £5 p&p. <http://www.suffolkinstitute.org.uk>

### Stone Conservation

If you are interested in stone masonry there is a talk by stone conservator Antonia Hockton at the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House on September 16th at 7pm. As part of Heritage Open Days it is free – for more information see [Heritage Open Days](#). CM



The front cover shows this depiction of Harkstead church tower, by the author- a good place to see Eocene cementstone.

### Terracotta Fossils

As Ipswich Museum emerges from its scaffolding, Carrie Calver of the Museum took the opportunity to photograph up close the terracotta fossils on the façade. This below shows the spiral ammonite *Turrilites*. Find out more about these terracottas in our leaflet Discover Geolpswich. RM



### Ipswich's River Humber

The Ipswich Society Newsletter no.241 (April 2025) has items of geological interest. 'Ipswich's River Humber' by RM records a lost drainage system on boulder clay, and 'Elizabeth Cobbold' by Robin Gaylard and CM records the blue plaque in Holywells Park. See [www.ipswichsociety.org.uk/newsletter](http://www.ipswichsociety.org.uk/newsletter) RM

### GeoAnglia

I recently noted a painting in Cromer Museum: 'East Beach, Cromer, May 1829' by Caroline Gray (CRRMU 2012.43). It shows panniers; donkeys; beach picking. Is this for building work? GeoSuffolk Times nos 27 and 62 have information about more recent picking flint at Sheringham. RM