

## CLAYDON CHURCH LANE PIT



The former **Chalk** working at Claydon Church Lane shows spectacular artificial cliffs of white Chalk (photo 1). This old pit is now occupied by a housing development accessed from Claydon Church Lane via Hazel Rise.

For many years the pit was worked (photo 2 taken in the 1960s) by a harrow rake for agricultural and other purposes.

The geological period Cretaceous is named from the Latin for Chalk. The Chalk at Claydon belongs to the Campanian Stage of the Cretaceous and was deposited in a marine environment about 82 million years ago. The Campanian is named after Grande Champagne in the northern Aquitaine province of France.

Because of the eastwards dip (sloping) of the Chalk beds in Suffolk, the Claydon Chalk is the youngest Chalk exposed at the surface in the county. The next oldest Chalk beds are exposed in the pits at Great Blakenham to the west (where the chimney was, photo 2). The Claydon Chalk differs from that at Great Blakenham in that flint nodules are much more common, and by the appearance of new species of belemnites (an extinct relative of the living cuttlefish). Other fossils found in the Claydon Chalk include sea urchins, oysters and simple corals.

The Chalk in this pit shows well marked horizontal layers and also vertical and iron oxide-stained jointing. Being a soft limestone, the Chalk often shows solution features; these are usually infilled with younger material.

The pit also has features of later geological age. In places a greenish clay (Thanet Clay, a marine deposit) of Caenozoic age and about 58 million years old rests on the Chalk. In other places Pleistocene 'ice age' boulder clay and other deposits (sometimes overturned), of glacial origin and about 440,000 years old, rest on the Chalk.

The pit used to show superb periglacial 'freeze and thaw' contortions (photo 3), perhaps formed about 18,000 years ago during the last major cold phase of the Ice Age in Suffolk. There are also a few small channels filled with shattered chalk in the upper part of the pit, perhaps dating to the same cold phase.

