

MID SUFFOLK



Discovery  
Project

# Newsletter

December 2007 No. 1

Welcome to the first Mid Suffolk  
Discovery Project Newsletter

The **Discovery Project** is an environmental education project, bringing the natural and built heritage to you in Mid Suffolk and helping you to explore your local area. We are working with schools at our countryside sites, through outreach work and by developing environmental education resources. We are also running events and providing information for all ages to help you discover and enjoy 'the great outdoors' in Mid Suffolk.

We are looking for volunteers to assist with educational, practical or event work or to provide interesting information for displays and educational material. For further information about any aspect of the Project please call the Discovery Project Officer on 01449 724632 or visit our website.



The Mid Suffolk Discovery Project has been made possible thanks to support from the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), funding from Natural England through Defra's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF), Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) support and a grant from Suffolk County Council's (SCC) Corporate Regeneration Fund.

**INSIDE:** Exciting events, fascinating facts, find out what aggregates mean to you and more...

Suffolk  
**Footpath**  
To Gipping River Path

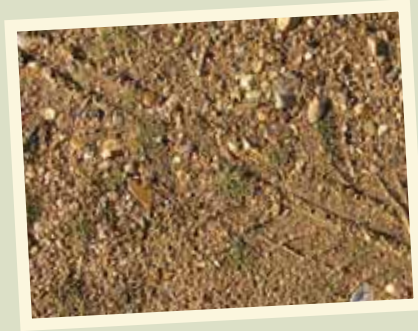
# AGGREGATES TRAIL

It's new, it's different – venture out and explore!  
Find out what quarrying and aggregate  
extraction means for you and your local area.

Follow the Gipping River Path as it winds its way between Barham and Needham Market and discover how aggregate extraction has changed the landscape. This is the first big task for the Discovery Project and is aimed at all ages. We will delve into the past and discover why this area is so important for our everyday lives. We will probe beneath the surface and discover a little about the Gipping Valley thousands of years ago. Look forward to the future and see what is in store for the wildlife as part of the landscape is restored to a wildlife haven.

**‘What’s in it for me?’** you say. Aggregates are a hugely important part of our modern lives, but not many people realise this. Recreational facilities, toothpaste, wildlife habitats and a roof over your head are all created from aggregates or their extraction; they are all around us but what are aggregates?

**Aggregate** is a word not often used in everyday conversation. It means rock that has been broken down into small pieces. This can be by human force or by nature. The aggregates we are discussing in the Gipping Valley are usually sand and gravel, which were eroded and transported during the Ice Age by ice and water. The difficulty is, most of it is below your feet so you just don't see it!



We will illustrate the development of the aggregates industry around Needham Market and along the Gipping Valley and how it has affected the landscape we see today. You will be able to see different stages of extraction and different uses of pits where extraction no longer takes place.

**What the project will do for you:** We'll add new information boards along the Gipping River Path between Needham Lake and Barham Picnic Site, along with extra seating and improved access. We'll design a trail leaflet to guide you along and provide lots of information about the area. We are also producing information for schools – including an education pack, with interesting activities, and a portable set of information boards, with a leaflet to explain the resources available, too.

The information will provide a balanced story, as not everyone is in favour of quarrying.

Along the trail there are opportunities to visit interesting features, for example, the site of a Roman Combretovium at Baylham. This was a Roman fort and settlement.

This is all possible thanks to a £25,000 grant from Natural England's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, as well as match funding.

## Did you know?

The ancient creatures that once roamed the Gipping Valley have even appeared on Blue Peter on BBC One? More about that next issue! You can find out about creatures of the past by reading the Mammoth Trail information board at Needham Lake.

That limestone, which is a rock, is used as the abrasive in your toothpaste?

That if the A14 hadn't been built, and required gravel and sand to be quarried from the area, Needham Lake would not exist as it does today? Approximately 250,000 visits are made every year, which makes it a very popular local facility!

Lafarge has started work quarrying the area known as Gallows Hill, between Needham Market and Barham. This site will be restored in phases and will create a large area that will be managed for wildlife. This whole process will take about 10 years to achieve.

Quarries can be restored to a number of end uses, including recreational sites, heathland, wetland and lakes, retail, housing, agriculture and landfill.

There are 8 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the Gipping Valley. Five are of geological interest and located in extraction pits.

It can take many years of planning to get to the point of extracting aggregate from a site.



Explore  
the great  
outdoors!

# Exciting events

Every year the Countryside Team at Mid Suffolk District Council runs an action packed array of events for all ages to help you enjoy the countryside in Mid Suffolk. This year the programme is full to bursting with activities for you to try, including some with a twist towards gravel and the Gipping Valley (see below). For a copy of the programme, which includes events from January to December 2008, or to book on an event, please call 01449 724633.

## Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> May Gipping Valley Walk

Join us on a walk along this wonderful river from Needham Market to Ipswich searching for herons, kestrels and kingfishers. 12 miles long, returning via the train. Please bring money for train.

10 am – 4 pm

Adults £2.50 Concessions £1.50

Meet at Needham Lake car park (lakeside) Booking essential.

## Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> July

### Ice Age Antics

Discover the ancient past and amazing future of the Gipping Valley. Turn yourself into an ice-age creature for the day, maybe a Woolly Mammoth or Hyena. Make masks and diggers out of recycled material and help create a giant mosaic.

Drop in between 11am and 3 pm. Needham Lake. Children £2.50 (accompanying adults free).

## Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November Evening Inspiration – Hyenas and Porcupines in the Gipping Valley

Join Bob Markham from GeoSuffolk as he explores the ancient creatures that once lived in and around the valley. A fascinating insight into our local area.

7-9pm, Lecture Theatre, Council  
Offices, 131 High Street,  
Needham Market  
Adults £2.50 Concessions £1.50  
Booking essential.



## Do you have a story to tell?

*It would be great to include stories and information from local people in our Aggregates Trail information. Do you have any photos of the Gipping Valley between Needham and Barham that show how it has changed? Have you worked in the aggregates industry and made any exciting discoveries? Do you have any wildlife facts and figures you can discuss with us? If you have a favourite spot along the trail from Needham to Barham, let us know where and why. If you live elsewhere in Mid Suffolk, or further afield, and know of an area, pit or pond that has been created or the landscape has changed due to quarrying, please drop us a line. If you work in education, is there a burning subject you would like us to discuss in our resources? Please get in touch if you have something interesting to share.*

*Thank you*

**Needham Lake** is a Local Nature Reserve in the Gipping Valley.

The lake is a great example of a restored gravel quarry. This popular site is owned and managed by Mid Suffolk District Council. There are three main areas: the lake, Station Field and Kings Meadow.

During the 1970s sand and gravel was extracted and used in the construction of the A14 road. In 1980 the lake was bought by MSDC and partners and has since developed into a mosaic of important habitats for wildlife and a popular place to visit.

We are often asked about the strange object in the centre of the lake, which is an aerator. It helps oxygenate the water and prevent the occurrence of toxic blue-green algae blooms in summer. We also added a tern raft on a very cold spring day in 2007, made by our Junior Rangers,

to encourage Terns (birds) to nest at Needham Lake. The raft will reappear next spring.

Over the years at Needham Lake the car parks have been constructed, as well as the toilet block and information room. In 1986 the lake was extended to create wildlife islands and refuges at the Station Field end. MSDC purchased Mill Meadow, the overflow car parks were put in

revealing some interesting archaeological facts and the bridge was installed to connect the areas on each side of the river.

Walkers, dog owners, families, boating clubs, people fishing, schools, educational and fun activities, including Junior Rangers and our busy volunteer group, all make great use of and enjoy Needham Lake. It is easily accessible and provides a great resource for the local community.

If you follow the hard surface footpath around the lake you will discover, to the north, nearer the Station Field end, a very large rock just off the path at the edge of the lake. This is known as an erratic or 'Glacial Rock' and was discovered when the islands were created. It is Spilsby sandstone and could have been brought here from The Wash/Lincolnshire area by an ice sheet around 440,000 years ago. It contains a number of fossil shells.



**Station Field** is divided into fenced meadows and open grassland. This summer we grazed Highland Cows, owned by Alder Carr Farm, in the meadows to maintain them in a sustainable way, as part of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Animals graze more selectively than a mower and help to increase the variety of plants. The remaining grass was baled and used for animal feed, where possible and is also being used to mulch young trees and hedgerow plants. The long grass is great for bug hunting in the summer!

**Kings Meadow** contains pollarded willows, small ponds and new tree planting. This area can flood in the winter. It is developing into a magical place for schools to visit.

## Interesting websites to visit

[www.afterminerals.com](http://www.afterminerals.com)  
[www.geosuffolk.co.uk](http://www.geosuffolk.co.uk)  
[www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)  
[www.naturalengland.gov.uk](http://www.naturalengland.gov.uk)  
[www.qpa.org](http://www.qpa.org)  
[www.virtualquarry.co.uk](http://www.virtualquarry.co.uk)

[www.suffolk.gov.uk](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk) For example: Home → Environment  
→ Archaeology → Minerals and Archaeology → Archaeology Aggregates  
Education Project or Home → Environment → Minerals and Waste Planning

Visit our website [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk). You could visit the Discovery Project pages in the Tourism and Countryside Section: Home → Tourism and Countryside → Discovery Project

Thanks to Lafarge, GeoSuffolk, the Archaeology and Countryside Teams at SCC for their advice and contributions so far to the Aggregates Trail.

For further information about the Discovery Project or the Aggregates Trail, if you have a story to tell, or are interested in volunteering, please ring the Discovery Project Officer on 01449 724632, email [carrie.bewick@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:carrie.bewick@midsuffolk.gov.uk) or write to Discovery Project, MSDC, 131 High Street, Needham Market, IP6 8DL.

If you require this newsletter in an alternative format please contact us.