

Peterborough Geological and Palaeontological Group



Press release - 23/05/2021

Digging for Knowledge

One of the most important fossil areas in the world underlies the fenlands around Peterborough. During the Jurassic Period, when dinosaurs walked the land and flying reptiles soared in the skies the seas were full of amazing marine reptiles. Fossils of these beasts and the many other animals which shared these ancient seas have been collected from brick pits over the past two centuries and are of huge scientific importance.

This is a new group, though many of our members have been collecting fossils in this area for years, in particular when members of the Stamford and District Geological Society and volunteers working with Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery. Sadly the SDGS has been wound up.

We set up this new group to carry on collecting the fossils from the area and further afield, and to make our finds available for scientific research. Over the years we have made several important discoveries, in particular several specimens of the marine reptiles for which this area is famous. It includes the fine specimen of a young plesiosaur, a long-necked marine reptile, a huge and very rare pliosaur – one of the biggest and most powerful predators of all time, a fish-like ichthyosaur as well as other interesting and unusual fossils.

Many important finds end up in the hands of private collectors. Some of them are aware of their scientific value, but unless they are acquired by an accredited museum they cannot be studied by scientists. It is a tragedy that some collections are lost, thrown away or sold to unknown buyers when circumstances change, and a founding principle of our group is a commitment to ethical collecting. This means that we will keep careful records of the discovery and excavation of important finds and donate them to museums where they will be put on display and studied.

The pandemic has greatly restricted what we have been able to do up to now, and initially the group will start a programme of field trips. In the longer term we want to organise a much wider range of activities, including special events during which we can show off our new finds and give practical demonstrations of fossil preparation, talks by geologists and palaeontologists on different aspects of their science and tours of geological interest.

You can find out more about us on our web site site <http://peterboroughgeology.org/>