

Geoff Toye 1952–2012 – a tribute

Geoff Toye, a long-standing member of the Horsham Geological Field Club, died on the 24th August 2012 aged 60. Geoff acted as Field Trips Organiser for the Club for several years, and arranged and led many field trips both locally and further afield. He was also closely involved in the Club's activities at public events, promoting geology to a wider audience, including children.

Geoff had a great many interests, including archaeology and all aspects of natural history and wildlife – he studied zoology at Southampton University – but I knew him best through our shared interest in geology and fossils.

Geoff's childhood interest in palaeontology had been re-ignited when his wife Gillian took an Open University degree course in the Earth Sciences in the 1990s, and I first met up with them soon after this on various Geologists' Association field trips in Weald Clay brick pits around Horsham, and at various Sussex chalk localities. Geoff quickly became very knowledgeable about the geology of the Horsham area and its many Weald Clay localities, and he soon became a key member of the 'Wealden Team', helping to organise and lead field trips to Weald Clay localities for the Geologists' Association and various geological societies.

His keen powers of observation meant that he made a number of important fossil discoveries. One of his early finds in 1999 was the 'Rudgwick dragonfly', a beautifully preserved pair of colour-banded aeshnidiid dragonfly wings from the Weald Clay brick pit at Rudgwick. The fossil was a new species, eventually being named *Angloaeshnidium toyei* in Geoff's honour and is now housed in Maidstone Museum.

In 2001, on a Geologists' Association field trip to Smokejacks brick pit, Geoff spotted some bones on a freshly scraped slope. Further investigation of the surrounding area revealed more bones, and the discovery of a jaw with teeth enabled the fossil to be identified as the herbivorous dinosaur '*Iguanodon*'. It became apparent that even more of the skeleton was preserved, making it an extremely rare and important find which warranted contacting the Natural History Museum. Over a two week period, Museum staff excavated the fossil which turned out to be one of the most complete and best preserved iguanodonts to come out of the Weald Clay. Geoff's discovery also gave the Natural History Museum the opportunity to undertake a detailed study of the microfossils in the sediments immediately surrounding the fossil, giving further important insights into the Early Cretaceous environment, including the discovery of angiosperm pollen.

Another of Geoff's important finds was the discovery of otoliths (fish ear stones) in the Weald Clay at Langhurstwood brick pit, Warnham in 2005. Although the geology and palaeontology of the Weald has been studied for around 200 years, no one appears to have collected or recorded these otoliths before. However, since Geoff's pioneering discovery, many hundreds more have been found, and it's now unusual not to find an otolith when looking at certain pits in the Lower Weald Clay.

Geoff was extremely knowledgeable about both natural history and palaeontology, and he was always happy to share this knowledge freely with other people. He was a very kind and generous man – always great fun to be with, both in the field and socially. Palaeontology and natural history have lost one of their strongest supporters, and we have all lost a good friend and colleague.

Peter Austen



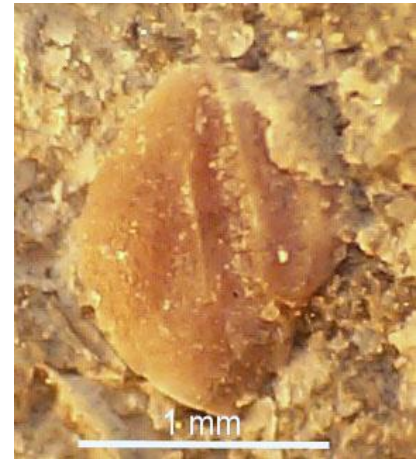
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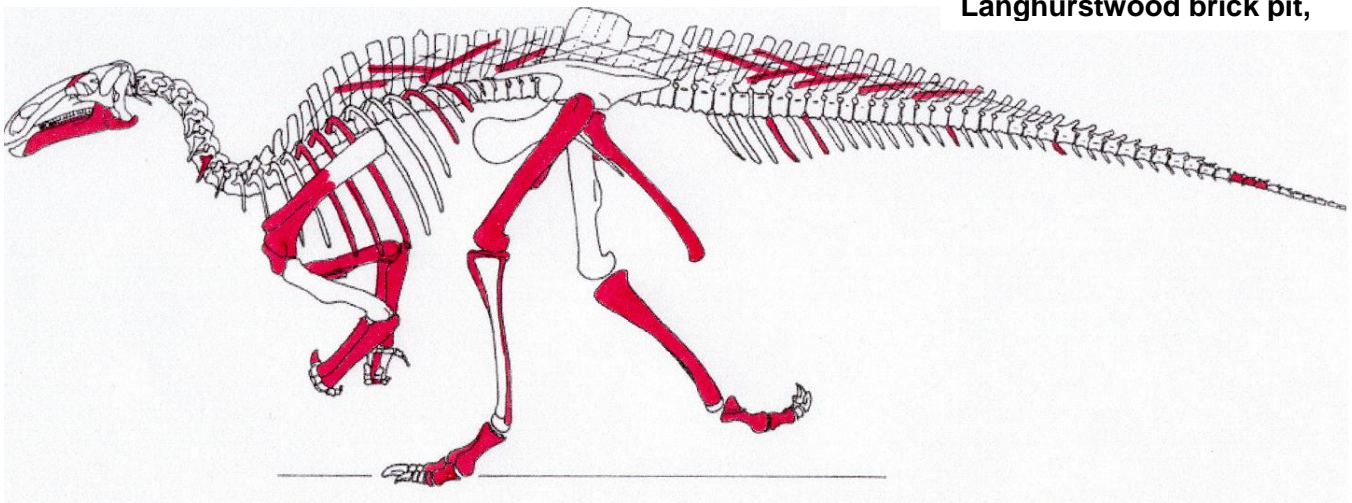
'Rudgwick dragonfly', *Angloaeschnidium toyei*, showing beautifully preserved colour-banded wings. Total wingspan would have been 7 cm.



Lower jaw and teeth of the Smokejacks '*Iguanodon*'.



The first otolith (fish ear stone) to be found in Wealden age rocks - from Langhurstwood brick pit,



Reconstruction of '*Iguanodon*' skeleton, showing the bones found at Smokejacks (shaded red).