

Memories of the Ver – 1593

The Redburne riseth not farre from Flamsted an ancient Baronie, and thence passeth by Redburne, and in her way towards the decayes of Old Verulam, it greeteth the Lady of Pree S. Maria de Pratis is a Nunnerie and a kind neighbor to Albans Abbey. This fall of water, was called Verlame, as Antiquaries observe, and thereof Verolanium, and Verlamecester: whereby it may be gathered that the former Flamsted where this Verlame water first appeareth, should be rather Verlamsted then Flamsted: Flamsted being more easie to be pronounced. This Verlame or Redburne River not much belowe Albans towne, offereth her selfe to the Colne, a river that there imbraceth her, and drowning both the names of Verlame and Redbourne, usurpeth the whole title and glorieito her selfe.

We are grateful to Dr John Catt for extracting this from J. Norden; Speculum Britanniae. The Description of Hartfordshire – Printed by Eliot's Court Press, London 1593. He found this book in the part of the UCL library that deals with ancient books.

Even in those far off days J Norden felt like us in the 21st century that the Ver was hard done by giving up its name to the Colne! The Ver is the longer river at the confluence point. Maybe it's a bit late to start a renaming campaign. The spelling and grammar is very interesting!

Ver Valley Fossils

I have found three fossils in the fields close to the Ver as it flows on its way through Redbourn Parish.

I found the first when, as a fourteen year old schoolboy, I was one of group of local lads employed by Farmer Weir at Redbournbury for the potato gathering season. It was hard work, but great fun, and we did the work in schooltime – and even got paid for it; very welcome in 1953.

My classmate Graham and myself took our find to the science teacher at school, but he showed little interest, and we left school not so long after without getting this intriguing find back. However, I did remember its curious heart shaped form, and the lovely patterns on it.

Thirty plus years later, when looking for a stray golf ball in the field to the north of Luton Lane, close to Redbourn Golf Club's par three course, I found another almost identical fossil.

This time we researched it as a family project, and found that our fossil was formed in the chalk laid down on a tropical sea bed in the Cretaceous Formations, some one hundred and twenty million years ago. It is an echinoid (sea urchin) known as a micraster, and was formed when sediments entered the dead creature's shell-like casing and solidified to form a solid cast, called a "test" by palaeontologists.

Just a few weeks ago, when walking towards Friars Wash (M I Jnc. 9) along the Ver Colne footpath to check river flows, I found my third example of this still intriguing object, which has prompted these notes. What, I wonder, can it tell us about the conditions in those remotely far off days.

If there is anyone out there who can tell us more about these ancient objects, or who has found other fossils in the Ver valley, do please get in touch with us. Perhaps the findings could form the subject matter for a future open meeting speaker.

Reference *British Cretaceous Echinoids, Smith & Wright, Palaeontographical Society 1989-2000.*

Peter Fox- March 08.