

Stone Farm Blaxhall



Sitting outside the aptly-named Stone Farm in Blaxhall, sits a burgeoning boulder which – according to local legend – has magically grown over a period of 200 years from the size of “a small loaf” to a rock weighing more than five tonnes which stands out like a sore thumb in the flat and relatively boulder-free Suffolk.

A sandstone boulder which is almost two metres across and 60cm high, the stone lies between outhouses and an orchard and was, according to a story passed down through the generations, ploughed from a nearby field known as ‘Wrong Land’ at the end of the 19th century by a foreman of Stone Farm.

The foreman dropped the stone in the farmyard and went back to work, noticing some months later that it had started to grow.

It was a common belief in East Anglia that pebbles grew if they were in soil, in exactly the same way that a potato would – another ‘growing’ stone, in Magdalen Laver in Essex once lay across a stream bed but was broken into pieces in 1914 due to locals’ fears that it would eventually dam the brook while a ‘breeding stone’ in South Weald had a cup-shaped hole in which lay a pebble which would grow larger and, if removed, would be replaced with another.

George Ewart Evans spoke of the Blaxhall stone in *Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay*, a study published in 1975 of the rural past in a remote Suffolk village revealed in the conversations of older people who recalled harvest customs, home crafts, dialect, old farm tools, smugglers’ tales and beliefs which stretched back to the time of Chaucer.

He wrote: “Here is a big stone in their midst like an ark that has come from somewhere mysterious. Knowing nothing of prehistory and the ice sheet, there was only one explanation short of the fantastic: the stone grew there.

“And when it is realised that this is an out-of-the-way village, neglected and to a certain extent despised, with little claim to any distinction at all, it is seen that the inducement to believe in a stone that grows is too strong a temptation to be withstood.”

He added that further folklore stated that within living memory a cat had been able to pass beneath the lip of the stone, but that over the years, the lip had increased to allow a dog to pass underneath it with ease.

And more recently, author Tom Cox, in his book 21st-Century Yokel, mentions the stone, saying “old Blaxhallians swear by this legend, although there is no photographic evidence of the stone’s diminutive childhood, nor of its adolescence.”

In Costesti in Romania, so-called ‘living stones’ can be found called ‘trovants’, which is a Romanian term which means ‘cemented sand’.

After heavy rainfall, trovants absorb the rain’s minerals which combine with the chemicals already present in the stone which in turn causes a reaction and pressure inside the rock.

The pressure spontaneously makes the rock ‘grow’ from the centre to its margins, meaning it can seemingly multiply.

It does, however, take around 1,000 years for a trovant to grow just four to five cm.

Despite the scientific explanation, locals still claim the rocks move of their own accord, a phenomenon they attribute to magnetism, alien intervention and strange energy vortexes in the region.

Today, Blaxhall’s sign boasts its own tiny stone underneath the depictions of farm life and motocross (there is a purpose-built track in the village, a sandy circuit which itself hints at the underlying rock formation in the area) which offers a hint to visitors about the village’s curious claim to fame. Meanwhile, in its final resting place, the echo of Suffolk’s glacial past sits silently guarding its future expansion plans.