

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

BRAINTREE DISTRICT



BraG11 Friars Farm Boundary Stone, Black Notley

Site location: On grass triangle in front of Friars Farm.

Grid Reference: TL 7427 1970

Status: public

Summary of the geological interest: A large sarsen stone that is described by English Heritage as a rare survival of a named and dated boundary stone dating back to the 17th century.



Site Assessment. Local Geological Sites (LoGS) in Essex are assessed using criteria based on DEFRA guidance. An assessment form is used which asks key questions under four value categories: scientific, educational, historical and aesthetic. This site has been assessed and qualifies under these criteria.

Scientific interest and site importance:

On a triangle of land at the junction of Dagnets Lane and Friars Farm track is a large sarsen stone incised with the words 'Whit Notly' on the north side and 'Black Notly' on the south side with the date '1679' between. The stone is on the English Heritage Sites and Monuments Register.

A letter in the Essex Countryside magazine of December 1959 states that the stone was found in the adjacent pond by the farmer and placed in this spot in the Summer of 1959 which was, no doubt, its original position.

The date of 1679 is interesting, if it is a contemporary date, because, if so, it must have been familiar to the famous naturalist John Ray, who lived nearby. It is not shown on large scale Victorian Ordnance Survey maps and so the stone may have resided in the pond for a very long time.

Sarsen formation

Sarsens are extremely hard boulders of sandstone that are often used as boundary or entrance markers having been dragged from nearby fields. They formed around 55 million years ago when the climate of Britain was hot and a layer of sand beneath the surface of the ground became cemented with quartz. Research has compared the conditions under which sarsens and puddingstones may have been formed with the present day climate in the Kalahari Desert and parts of Australia. They are thus very resistant to erosion and have survived the rigours of the Ice Age. They were transported from the geological strata where they were formed – the Lower Tertiary Upnor Formation, by large rivers swollen by ice melt, such as the ancestral Thames which once flowed across north Essex.



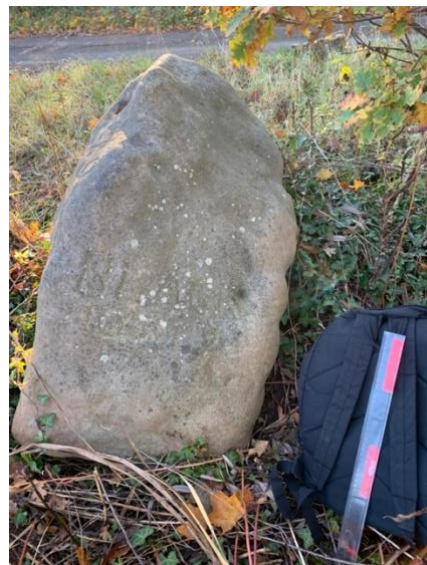
Friars Farm Boundary Stone - looking NE, incised Whit Notly DPotts Nov 2023.



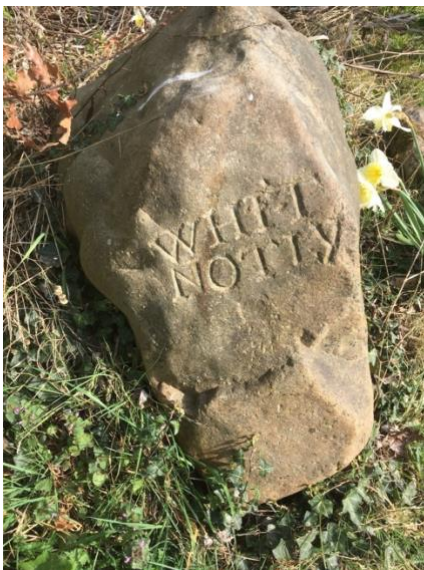
Friars Farm Boundary Stone - looking NW, close-up of year 1679 incision. DPotts Nov 2023



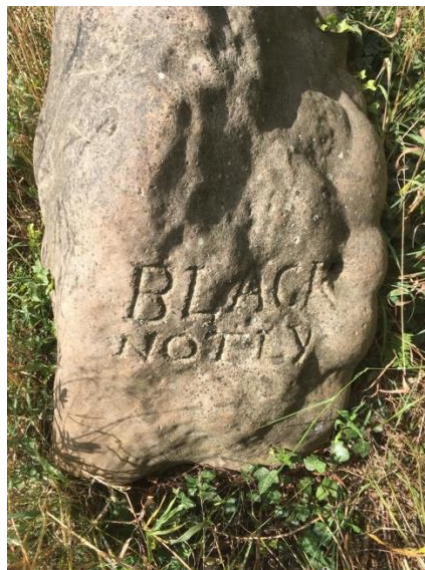
Friars Farm Boundary Stone - looking NW, year 1679 incised, smaller stone in front. DPotts Nov 2023



Friars Farm Boundary Stone - looking SW, Black Notley incised. DPotts Nov 2023



Friars Farm Boundary Stone Photo Gerald Lucy 2022



Friars Farm Boundary Stone Photo Gerald Lucy 2022



Friars Farm Boundary Stone in 2020 (Photo: WH George)