

# LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

## BRAINTREE DISTRICT



### BraG19 Ovington Hall Sarsen Stone, Ovington

**Site location:** An exceptional sarsen stone near the churchyard on the track leading to Ovington Hall.

**Grid Reference:** TL 763426

**Status:** Private – just inside the grounds of Ovington Hall, at the end of the driveway leading to the Hall and St Mary church.

**Summary of the geological interest:**

Large sarsen stones that formed in the local Lower Tertiary deposits are characteristic of this area of north Essex. This is one of the largest.



**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:**

An exceptional sarsen stone, 2 metres (6'6") long, with a mamillated surface can be seen near the churchyard on the track leading to Ovington Hall.

Sarsens are extremely hard boulders of sandstone 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 weathered out of the geological strata where they were formed – the Lower Tertiary Upnor Formation, which outcrops locally.

The remarkable 'mamillated' surfaces are called growth structures which were formed as the quartz slowly crystallised between the sand grains for particular centres.

Note growth of moss now (2023) obscuring the mamilation features.



*Ovington Hall Sarsen Stone - looking SE on track to Hall near churchyard (photo D Potts 2023)*



*Ovington Hall Sarsen Stone - looking west on track to Hall near churchyard (photo D Potts 2023)*



*Ovington Hall Sarsen Stone. Photo Gerald Lucy 2021*



*Ovington Hall Sarsen Stone . Photo Gerald Lucu 2005*