

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

BRAINTREE DISTRICT



BraG23 Stonebridge Hill Sarsen Stone, Halstead

Site location: A large sarsen boulder on the wide grass verge outside Parley Beams Farm east of Halstead.

Grid Reference: TL 8378 2912

Status: Public – at the side of the public road near the farm entrance.

Summary of the geological interest:

A conspicuous sarsen (1.4 metres long) sits in front of Parley Beams Farm at Stonebridge Hill on the main road into Halstead. The upper surface of the stone contains holes that may have originally been rootlets at the time of the stone's formation.



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 account of the stone in the Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society in 1893 (Armfield 1893) states that a much larger stone then lay next to it, but this has now disappeared.

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 weathered out of the geological strata where they were formed – the Lower Tertiary Upnor Formation, which outcrops to the north. It may have been transported in the ice-melt swollen ancestral Thames that flowed through Essex.

Reference: Armfield 1893, Salter 1914



The sarsen stone outside Parley Beams Farm (photo G Lucy)



Stonebridge Hill Sarsen Stone - looking west (photo D Potts 2023)



Stonebridge Hill Sarsen Stone - looking south (photo D Potts 2023)



Stonebridge Hill Sarsen Stone - top of stone looking west (photo D Potts 2023)