

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

BRAINTREE DISTRICT



BraG26 Wickham Hall Farm Sarsen Stones, Wickham St. Paul

Site location: Several sarsen stones near the entrance to Wickham Hall Farm near All Saints Church, in Wickham St. Paul.

Grid Reference: TL 8269 3723

Status: Public – on the verge at the side of a public road.

Summary of the geological interest:

By the road, at the entrance to Wickham Hall Farm near All Saints Church, are several sarsen stones (the largest 180cm x 140cm x 60cm in size).



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:

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 locally.

The formation of silcretes (which includes sarsens and puddingstones) has been the subject of recent scientific debate. 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.

Reference: Lucy 2003a



Wickham Hall Farm Sarsen Stones - stone no.1, at roadside near northerly entrance to farm, looking SE (photo D Potts 2023)



Wickham Hall Farm Sarsen Stone - stone no.2, at roadside near northerly entrance to farm (photo D Potts 2023)



Wickham Hall Farm Sarsen Stone - stone no.3 (largest) near northerly entrance to farm (photo D Potts 2023)