

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

CHELMSFORD DISTRICT



ChG3 Channels Boulders, Little Waltham

Site location: Boulders of puddingstone, sarsen and a gneiss boulder by the entrance to Channels, Belsteads Farm Lane, Little Waltham.

Grid Reference: TL 72382 11185

Status: On private land but accessible at all times

Summary of the geological interest:

By the entrance to Channels is a large boulder of puddingstone on a mound of grass by the roadside. It is one of the largest puddingstone boulders in Essex, measuring 2.1 metres long by 1.2 metres high by 0.4 metres in thickness. Other puddingstones and sarsen boulders are nearby, one puddingstone with a signboard. These boulders were found in the local gravel pit, now the site of housing development.



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

Scientific interest and site importance

They were probably carried to Essex by the River Thames when it flowed north of its present course.

Puddingstone is an extremely hard rock that was formed about 56 million years ago during the Palaeocene period in sandy strata of the Lambeth Group that occur on top of the Chalk. They were formed when the climate of Britain was hot and a layer of pebbles beneath the surface of the ground became cemented with quartz. They are thus very resistant to erosion and have survived the rigours of the Ice Age. The stones in the Chelmsford area are thought to have been carried here by the Thames when it flowed through central Essex about 500,000 years ago and was then a very large river.

Close by are other puddingstone boulders. By the car park is a large sarsen stone (180cm x 100cm x 60cm). Other sarsen stones can be seen by the side of the road nearby. Sarsen stones have a similar origin to puddingstone.

The large boulder of metamorphic rock (gneiss) with a signboard was probably brought from the north by the Anglian ice sheet.



Puddingstone with signboard at Channels 2024



Gneiss boulder at Channels



Puddingstone used as a monument at Channels



Large Sarsen with rootlet holes at Channels