

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

CASTLE POINT DISTRICT



Cpt PG4 Pound Wood, Daws Heath

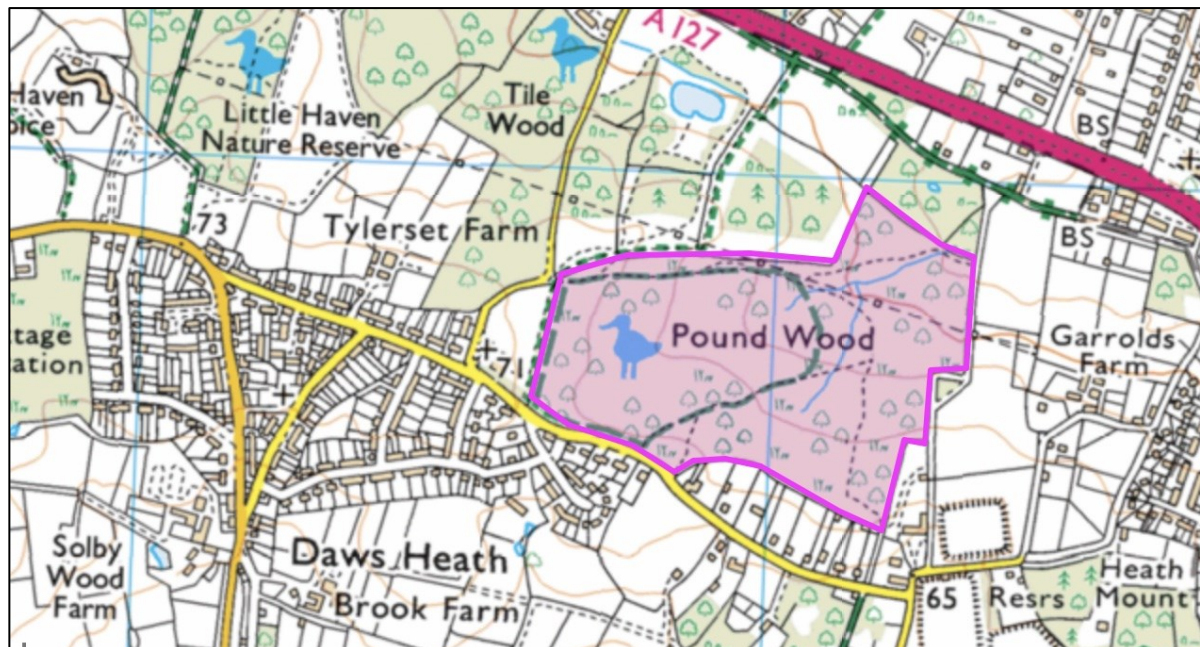
Site location: Northern slope of the ridge of high ground at Daws Heath

Grid Reference: TQ 819886

Status: Open to the public at all reasonable hours

Summary of the geological interest:

The high ground of Pound Wood is capped with ancient gravel, known as Daws Heath Gravel, deposited by a northward-flowing River Medway over 700,000 years ago. It is one of the highest and oldest terraces of the River Medway. The pebbles in the gravel are mainly flint but there is also a proportion of distinctive rocks from the Weald of Kent that proves its Medway origin.



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

The geology of the area consists of the familiar London Clay, overlain by the sandy clay of the Claygate Beds which is present at the lowest part (north end) of Pound Wood. As the ground rises to the south the Claygate Beds become increasingly sandy until they pass into fine yellow Bagshot Sand. The Bagshot Sand is overlain by 'Daws Heath Gravel' which caps the summit of the ridge. The gravel is therefore present at surface at the highest part (south end) of the wood and the rounded pebbles can be seen on the paths and in the roots of fallen trees.

Daws Heath Gravel is an ancient remnant of a formerly much more extensive deposit of river gravel that was left behind by the River Medway when it flowed across eastern Essex in the early part of the Ice Age (see Rayleigh hills). It is one of the oldest of the high-level east Essex gravels and its Medway origin is demonstrated by the presence of numerous pebbles that originated in the Weald of Kent.

In the early twentieth century there were several gravel pits on the Daws Heath ridge and one of these, known as Bramble Hall Pit, is clearly shown on the 1923 Ordnance Survey map just west of Bramble Hall. This pit was visited by the Geologists' Association in 1906 and the report of the visit states that a 'fair sized' boulder of Lower Greensand chert from the Weald was found in this gravel but the age of the gravel and the connection with the Medway was not then appreciated. Other rock types from Kent are also present, including sarsens and a large sarsen (nearly half a cubic metre in volume) was reported to be visible on the surface near where the nearby Little Haven Hospice now stands (Lake et al. 1986 p. 26), but this has not been recently relocated.



Daws Heath Gravel pebbles on the SW side of Pound Wood. Photo: Jeff Seward, 2024.