LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES
UTTLESFORD DISTRICT

UfdG30 Stansted Airport Sarsen Stone, Takeley

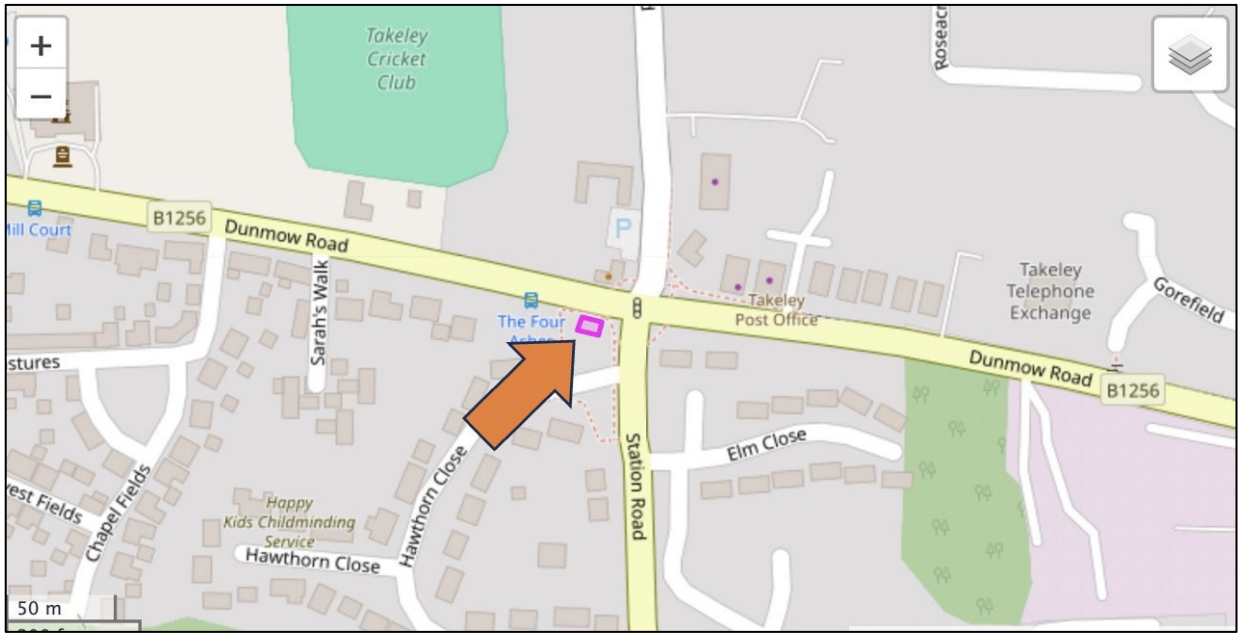
Site location: By the Four Ashes crossroads in Takeley.

Grid Reference: TL 5752 2128

Status: Publicly accessible

Summary of the geological interest:

A sarsen stone about one metre square is situated on the grass by the crossroads. It was found by archaeologists in a Bronze Age pit at Stansted Airport and had clearly been placed in the pit some 3,500 years ago, suggesting that it had ceremonial significance. The stone was moved here in 2003 and provided with a plaque by the Takeley Local History Society.



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

A sarsen about one metre (3 feet) square with an interesting history is situated on the grass adjacent to the Four Ashes crossroads. This stone was discovered in 2000 by archaeologists working for British Airports Authority on land designated for a car park extension at Stansted Airport (grid ref. TL 552 224). It was found in a pit which was part of a complex of Bronze Age dwellings and had clearly been placed in the pit some 3,500 years ago, suggesting that it had ceremonial or ritual significance (Anon 2001). The stone was moved here in 2003 and provided with a plaque by the Takeley Local History Society.

Date of selection/last revision:
March 2024

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. They are thus very resistant to erosion and have survived the rigours of the Ice Age. They originated on the chalk downland north and west of Essex and were carried here by rivers and glaciers. After retreat of the ice they became concentrated in river valleys.

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.

The sarsen stone being excavated at Stansted Airport in 2000.

Photo copyright: Framework Archaeology

The sarsen stone now at Four Ashes crossroads in Takeley

Reference:

ANON. 2001. Bronze Age village found with buried megalith. *British Archaeology*. Issue 59 (June 2001).