

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT



Ufd6 Beaumont Hill Sarsen Stone, Gt. Dunmow

Site location: Beaumont Hill almost opposite the junction with Lime Tree Hill

Grid Reference: TL 6267 2278

Status: Publicly accessible

Summary of the geological interest:

A large sarsen stone 1.6 metres long sits in the grass on Beaumont Hill almost opposite the junction with Lime Tree Hill. Judging from its weathered surface, it has been in this position for a considerable time, probably for several hundred years.



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 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.

References:

LUCY, G. 2003. Essex erratic boulders: a gazetteer. *Essex Naturalist* (New Series) No. 20. Pages 115-134.

SALTER, A.E. 1914. Sarsen, basalt and other boulders in Essex. *Essex Naturalist*. Vol. 17. Pages 186-199.