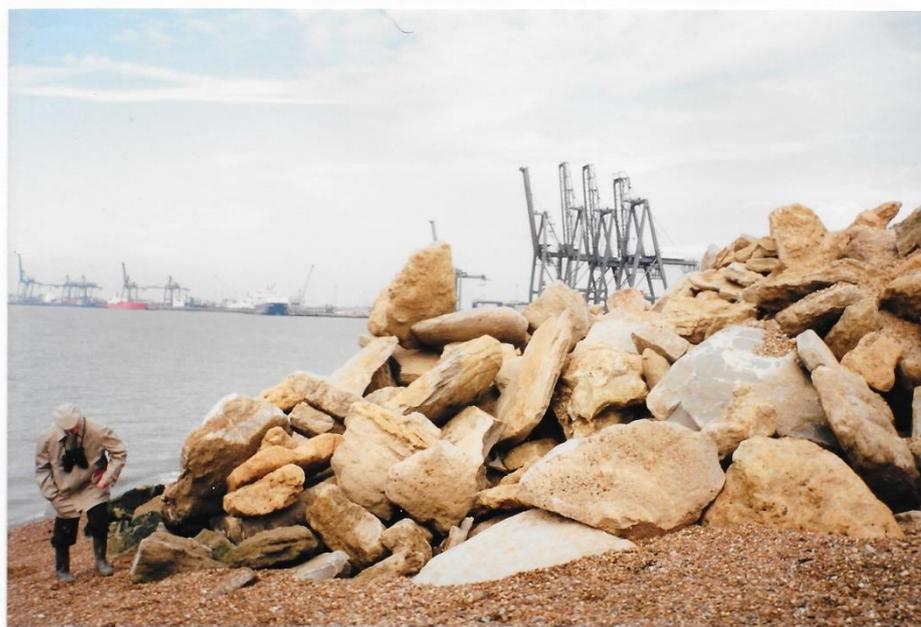


Felixstowe – Harwich Harbour. Stone Beds

There are Victorian records of calcareous sandstones being found in wells in the area, as at Landguard Fort, and more recently a piece of similar rock was found about 6½ metres below OD at Dovercourt (Essex) (photograph in East Anglian Daily Times 22 August 1975) and is now in Colchester Natural History Museum. But it is dredging in Harwich Harbour that has yielded large numbers of these and associated rocks. The Ipswich and District Field Club collected conglomerate in 1903 (see 'Suffolk Field Trips.....' in *A Celebration of Suffolk Geology 2012*, ed. R G Dixon) and Percy Thompson (Essex Naturalist, vol XVI, 1912) recorded sandstone and conglomerate from about 19 feet below low water mark.

Dredging operations by the London Dredging Company in 1975 yielded sandstone, often pebbly, and brown, grey or blue in colour. Wood was common and some lignitic material was associated with iron pyrites. I also found a few pieces of fossil leaves, now in Ipswich Museum.

But it was dredging by the Westminster Dredging Company in 1994 (the main channel was dredged to a minimum depth of 12.5 metres) that yielded a spectacular haul of hundreds of huge boulders, perhaps 7,000 - 8,000 tons in total, some weighing perhaps eight tons. One sandstone boulder I measured was about 11 feet long. There were sandstone boulders; flint-pebble conglomerate boulders (resembling 'Hertfordshire puddingstone' but more easily shattered because of a calcium carbonate, not silica, cement); and flagstone-like boulders. Some blocks had clay pebbles in them; some contained marine molluscs - gastropods such as '*Calyptraea*' and bivalves such as '*Ostrea*'. Other blocks contained leaves and wood, one tree trunk measuring about 5 feet by 7½ inches. Specimens are in Ipswich Museum.



Dredged boulders deposited on the beach at Landguard, Felixstowe (photo Caroline Markham).

Because the material was not seen *in situ*, it is difficult to say exactly where it comes from stratigraphically, but it seems to be from between the Thanet beds and the London Clay. Although superficially like sarsenstones the Felixstowe blocks have a calcareous, not silica, cement. My thanks to Don Black (Port of Felixstowe), John Rowland (Landguard Inspector), Dick Allen and John Bryant (Harwich Harbour Engineers) and Nigel Pryke for their help.