
36 Hauxley

Theme: Climate and landscape change

Location

Hauxley Point, just east of Hauxley Nature Reserve, where you can park [NU 285 023].

Description

In the small cliff below dune sands is layer of peat with ancient tree trunks sticking out of it. Below the peat is a stony clay laid down by an ice sheet during the last glaciation.

The coast is eroding here and new natural and human artifacts appear all the time, especially after winter storms. The peat and the tree trunks are roughly 7000 years old. The glacial clay (geologists used to call it boulder clay but now you will hear them talk about till or diamict) beneath was deposited during the last Ice Age which ended about 15,000 years ago. The sand dunes are more modern and still moving.

Archaeologists have also found human foot prints in the peat and mud on the foreshore. Beneath the sand dunes nearby they found many objects and relics left by peoples of many ages: from the Stone Age — Mesolithic period between 6,000 and 10,000 years ago, to Bronze Age, to medieval, and even bell pits used to mine coal beneath the rocky foreshore.

The peat was once vegetation in a low-lying poorly drained area. The trees, including oak, hazel and alder, are the remains of a forest. Sea level was lower then and the coastline was further east, in fact at one point in time you could have walked to the Netherlands! Stone Age people hunted in the forests and along the seashore.

The site is very close to Northumberland Wildlife Trust's nature reserve at Hauxley. The reserve was created after opencast coal extraction finished. It has a diverse flora and fauna of wetland, scrub, coastal and meadow species. Look out for the orange berries of the sea buckthorn and the birds, waterfowl and waders, which can be watched from the visitor centre and from hides by the ponds.

Photographs

(Photo 36-1) Ancient tree stump sticking out of a peat layer at Hauxley.

(Photo 36-2) Ancient tree trunk sticking out of a peat layer at Hauxley.



(Photo 36-1) Ancient tree stump sticking out of a peat layer at Hauxley.



(Photo 36-2) Ancient tree trunk sticking out of a peat layer at Hauxley.