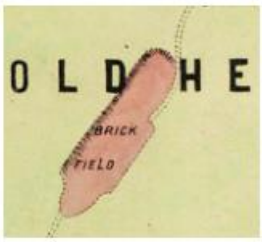
14. Chestnut Drive Brick Pit

Chestnut Drive is sited in one of the dry valleys of the Heath. Beds of sand and silty clay or 'brickearth' are exposed here. A brick pit was sited here in the 19th century, but digging had ceased by 1884, when the Heath became designated as an area for public recreation, and an avenue of chestnut trees was planted. An elevated earth platform lies at the lower end of the Chestnut Drive valley. This was the site of a small market garden, presumably based on a leveled mound of quarry spoil.



1. A map showing the shape of Chestnut Drive brick pit, 1881.

2. A thick deposit of 'brickearth' underlies the head of the valley at Chestnut Drive.

3. Torrent gravels outcropping on the eastern side of the pit at Chestnut Drive.

A 'brickearth' is any kind of sandy clay or 'loam' suitable for making bricks. The 'brickearth' at Chestnut Drive is probably the pale brown silt which outcrops at the northern end of the pit. This fine-grained material is thought to be an example of 'coverloam', a wind-blown deposit which drifted into and partly filled the valley during the last glacial period, over 14,000 years ago

Chestnut Drive is the best place to see the torrent gravels of Mousehold Heath. Look high up on the eastern rim of the pit. The plateau surface of the Heath here has a capping of tough gravel containing large, rounded flint cobbles.

These gravels were laid down on an outwash plain or 'sandur' during the Anglian glacial period. 'Sandurs' form where powerful meltwater streams emerge from the front of a glacier, and dump their bedload of sand, gravel and stones. The layers of coarse sediment form a glacial outwash plain. It takes high-energy conditions to move large stones

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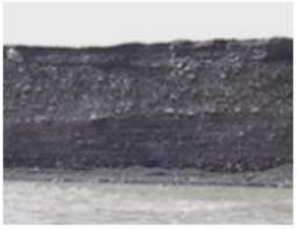
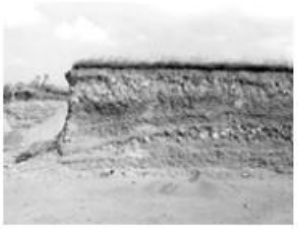
4. A glimpse of the Norfolk environment 440,000 years ago. An ice front and sandur outwash plain at Breidamerjökull, Iceland.



5. Coarse outwash gravels as part of a 'sandur' at Sólheimajökull, Iceland.



6. Outwash gravels exposed in a quarry on Mousehold, 1931.

You can see fine sands and silty brickearths lower down in the pit. These would have been laid down in a much quieter environment near the glacier, perhaps a lake basin. In this way, the geology at Chestnut Drive records the advance of an ice sheet, as the sands and silts representing quieter conditions are replaced (as we go up the sequence) by coarse gravels representing high-energy conditions close to the ice front.

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