GLA 39: Erith Submerged Forest, Potential RIGS
London Borough of Bexley, TQ 526 776
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This is the best place on the Thames Estuary within Greater London for viewing the Neolithic / Bronze Age submerged forest. At low tides whole tree trunks are revealed amongst the root balls and occasional nuts and seeds can also be found. Peat beds are also found on the banks above mean high tide level. At least 5 different ages of peat and trees have been dated ranging from approximately 3,000 years ago until over 5,000 years ago. 15 different tree and shrub species have been recognised of which the majority are alder. Other species include birch, willow, poplar, yew, maple, ash, oak, holly and elm. Shrubs include dogwood, alder buckthorn and buckthorn. The site represents a change from a drier environment when the yew and other 'dry' species were growing, to the wetter environment, produced by rising sea levels, leading to the dominance of alder. Details are described in GA Guide 68, pp. 148-151, which includes full references to the research. A similar exposure can be seen on the north shore of the Thames at Rainham (GLA 46) although it is not as extensive as Erith.

Access
Access to the Thames foreshore is via a path (signed to Erith Yacht Club, TQ 527 779) leading from Manor Road, off the A2016 Bronze Age Way, Erith. After about 150 m a right turn onto the Thames Cycle Route along the top of a barrier as far as a concrete structure with a steel covering and then down to the foreshore (TQ 532 781). The submerged forest can only be seen at low tide. Access to the foreshore itself is potentially dangerous and slippery and should only be attempted on a falling tide and never alone. The site can be seen if walking along the Thames Path Walk and is 200 m to the north of the London LOOP Section 1 (http://www.walklondon.org.uk/section.asp?section=1).

Erith Submerged Forest
Source: London's foundations, page 188 (Jane Sidell)

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