

**GLA 59: Pole Hill, Potential LIGS**

London Borough of Waltham Forest, TQ 3835 9485  
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**View from Pole Hill**

Pole Hill is 91 metres above sea level and from the summit there is a fine panoramic view of London. It lies exactly on the Greenwich Meridian and as the summit is visible from Greenwich a granite obelisk was erected in 1824 to mark the direction of true north from the Royal Observatory which enabled geographers to obtain a zero degree bearing. However, when this was recalculated several years later the true meridian was found to be 19 feet east of the obelisk. Trees now obscure the view to Greenwich but the view down to the Lea Valley and beyond remains.

**Geology of Pole Hill and the brickworks that exploited it**

The hill consists of London Clay capped by Claygate Beds<sup>1</sup>. These are usually exposed at the top of the hill due to erosion by walkers and run off. South of the obelisk a brickworks was established in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and the pit exposed Claygate Beds consisting of alternating layers of sand and loam that were deposited on the floor of a shallow, subtropical sea. The brickworks was extensive, consisting of six kilns, an engine house, a 100 foot long drying house, and several outbuildings. In 1914 it was reported that another brickworks had opened slightly further down the hill, on land known as Park Hill, and the pit serving these works was of great interest as it yielded septarian nodules from the London Clay which contained numerous fossils. Over 25 species of marine molluscs were found here, including a nautilus, sharks teeth and fossil wood. The nodules also contained radiating crystals of barite and small crystals of selenite were abundant in the clay. Both brickworks had closed by 1930 and the land on this side of the hill is now occupied by housing. The fossils, which are about 50 million years old, are preserved in the Essex Field Club's collection (formerly in the Passmore Edwards Museum).

**Access**

Pole Hill is located on a westerly lobe of Epping Forest and is publically accessible from Woodberry Way and other roads close by. It is a short walk from Chingford Station and about a kilometre away from Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, both on the A1069 Station Road/Rangers Road. An exhibition next to the Hunting Lodge, The View, tells the story of Epping Forest. A shop, toilets and refreshments are also available. The Epping Forest Centenary Walk goes through the complex.

*References:*

<sup>1</sup> Bristow, C.R., Ellison, R.A. and Wood, C.J. 1980. The Claygate Beds of Essex. *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association*, 91, pp. 265-269.

View from Pole Hill to the Lea Valley. The obelisk on the left marks the direction of true north along the Greenwich Meridian. The view to the Royal Observatory is now obscured.

Source: London's foundations, page 249 (Peter Collins)



Site Map

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Source: London's foundations, page 247

