

Earth Pyramids in Wyre

GRAHAM HILL



Fig. 1. Sand pillars in the Wyre Forest Visitor Centre car park, 6 November 2019

Graham Hill

In the European Alps erosion of boulder clay gives rise to strange pyramid formations, often topped with a boulder. The pyramids may be tens of metres tall and are formed in clays, rich in boulders, that were deposited during the last ice age. They are formed by the erosive action of water – commonly rain – eroding the clay from around the boulder ‘capstone’ which protects the clay directly below the boulder leaving a tall, slim pillar of clay with a large stone sat on top.

At a much smaller scale the same process occurred in a pile of gravelly sand left in the corner of the car park at the Forestry Commission’s Wyre Forest Visitor Centre.

In this case small pebbles had protected the underlying sand from erosion from rain during the wet autumn of 2019 leaving those pebbles atop a small column of sand (figure 1). Leaves from the adjacent oak trees had protected other parts of the sandy pile too.

These pyramids were only a couple of centimetres tall but were still impressive. These small features highlight the need to look at different scales. We were looking for spiders at the time and had I not been thinking at that small scale these features would have been overlooked. A reminder that interesting things in nature occur at many different scales – and are not always alive!



Wyre Forest Visitor Centre, 13 February 2020,

Rosemary Winnall