

THE HUNDRED PARISHES SOCIETY

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Our area has a good number of so-called "Hertfordshire puddingstones". I am not convinced that Hertfordshire has any real justification for claiming the puddingstone because examples can be found on both sides of the Essex / Hertfordshire county boundary. I recently acquired a copy of "Puddingstone Walks in Essex", a neat little book that describes walking routes which in total pass more than twenty puddingstones or groups of puddingstones in the Essex part of the Hundred Parishes.

A puddingstone is a conglomerate of many small, rounded and colourful pebbles that appear to have been cemented together. Geologists explain that they were formed around 50 million years ago and were deposited in this area by a retreating glacier, possibly only 10,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age.

Some puddingstones lay where they were deposited, whilst others have been moved to more convenient locations and sometimes put to good use. Brent Pelham and Arkesden have incorporated them into their war memorials. Others are visible in Arkesden in the stream of Wicken Water beside the bridge.

Stones have been used as building material within walls in Much Hadham and Wendens Ambo, in Great Hallingbury's church tower and in St Helen's Chapel at Wicken Bonhunt.

One in Standon is proudly displayed, whilst a large puddingstone in Newport seems to have been unceremoniously abandoned beside the approach road to the station. Others stand in Tilty churchyard, by the pump at Ugley Green, in Saffron Walden Museum's grounds, by the Shell House in Hatfield Forest and beside the Yew Tree pub in Manuden.

No doubt there are many more – I would be pleased to hear of any that I have missed – please email me at hundredparishes@btinternet.com, if possible with a photo. Will we find more in Hertfordshire or Essex?

Ken McDonald, Secretary.