

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT



UfdG11 Clatterbury Lane Puddingstone, Arkesden

Site location: At the side of Clatterbury Lane to the south of the village.

Grid Reference: TL 4834 3422

Status: Publicly accessible

Summary of the geological interest:

Almost hidden in vegetation at the side of Clatterbury Lane to the south of the village is a very large and colourful boulder of puddingstone (2 x 1.3 x 1 metres in size). It is close to the road but access is difficult. A.E. Salter, in his 1914 paper, mentions this large puddingstone as being at the side of the road to Wood Hall. Wood Hall is south of the village and there is no doubt that he is referring to this stone. There is no information about why this particular stone was placed in this position.

Arkesden is unique in Essex for the number of boulders that are scattered around the village. They can also be seen in the churchyard, in the stream bed, by the inn, and in private gardens.



Site Assessment. Local Geological Sites (LoGS) in Essex are assessed using criteria based on DEFRA guidance. An assessment form is used which asks key questions under four value categories: scientific, educational, historical and aesthetic. This site has been assessed and qualifies under these criteria.

Scientific interest and site importance

Hertfordshire Puddingstone was formed around 55 million years ago when the climate of Britain was hot and a layer of sand beneath the surface of the ground became cemented with quartz. The formation of silcretes (which includes sarsens and puddingstones) has been the subject of recent scientific debate. Research has compared the conditions under which sarsens and puddingstones may have been formed with the present-day climate in the Kalahari Desert and parts of Australia.

The boulders of puddingstone that are found in Essex most probably originated in Hertfordshire and were brought to Essex by the Thames when it flowed far to the north of its present course. However, the abundance of puddingstones and sarsens in Arkesden raises the intriguing possibility that there might have once been a more local source.

Erratic boulders link geology and social history. This boulder was apparently brought here from somewhere on the Wood Hall estate, probably less than a mile to the south, and transported by horse-drawn sledge (Green 2014).

References:

- GREEN, C. 2014. Silcretes of East Hertfordshire and North-West Essex. Field guide for the Geologists' Association field visit on Saturday 17th May 2014. Geologists' Association.
- LUCY, G. 2003. Essex erratic boulders: a gazetteer. *Essex Naturalist* (New Series) No. 20. Pages 115-134.
- LUCY, G. 2014. The Arkesden boulders. *Essex Naturalist*. Vol. 31 (New Series). Pages 41-43.
- SALTER, A.E. 1914. Sarsen, basalt and other boulders in Essex. *Essex Naturalist*. Vol. 17. Pages 186-199.



*The Clatterbury Lane Puddingstone hidden in vegetation by the side of Clatterbury Lane.
Photo: M. Ralph*