

# LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

## UTTLESFORD DISTRICT



### UfdG31 The Pinnock Stone, Bedlars Green

**Site location:** On the grass by the farmyard of Harps Farm, Bedlars Green.

**Grid Reference:** TL 5209 2051

**Status:** On private land but clearly visible from the public footpath which passes through the farm.

#### **Summary of the geological interest:**

A giant boulder of Hertfordshire puddingstone stands upright in a prominent position on the grass by the farmyard of Harps Farm. It is clearly visible from the public footpath which passes through the farm. Several small sarsen stones are situated nearby. The boulder was recovered from nearby farmland. It is named after the farmer whose plough was frequently hitting the boulder.



**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**

The Pinnock Stone is 1.67 metres high and is one of the most impressive of the Essex puddingstone boulders. It was recovered from farmland in about 2006 on the other side of the M11 motorway (still within Essex) at approx. TL 508 204. Part of the Pinnock Stone consists of sarsen stone (i.e. puddingstone without the pebbles).

Two sarsen stones (the largest 135 x 60 x 30 centimetres in size with root holes) are adjacent to the Pinnock Stone. Three more sarsen stones are situated a short distance away, and another sarsen stone can be seen at the corner of a farm building.

About 60 million years ago, shortly after the extinction of the dinosaurs, this boulder was part of a beach of flint pebbles on the coast of a subtropical sea. About 55 million years ago the sea had retreated and the layer of pebbles was situated beneath the soil in a hot, dry climate similar to that of the Kalahari Desert today. During this time the pebbles were cemented together by quartz, forming an incredibly tough layer of rock.

During the Ice Age, about half a million years ago, rivers and glaciers broke up this layer and scattered the fragments over Hertfordshire and Essex. This boulder is one of these fragments and the original flint pebbles can be clearly seen. Puddingstone is so called because the pebbles give it the appearance of a plum pudding. It is usually called Hertfordshire Puddingstone because these boulders are most commonly found in East Hertfordshire. Some puddingstone is very colourful and in Georgian and Victorian times it was often cut and polished to make jewellery and decorative items such as snuff boxes.

Sarsen stones were formed in the same way but consist of hard, silica-cemented sandstone without pebbles.



*The Pinnock Stone. Photo: G. Lucy*