LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES
UTTLESFORD DISTRICT

UfdG38 Widdington Puddingstone

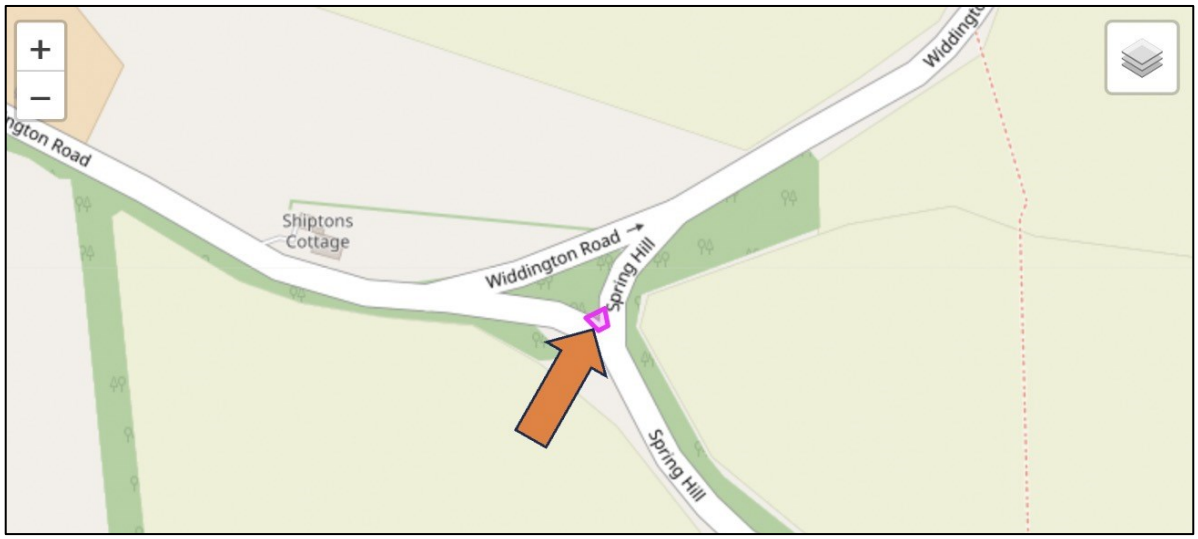
Site location: At the road junction north-west of the village

Grid Reference: TL 5326 3226

Status: Publicly accessible

Summary of the geological interest:

At the road junction north of the village is a puddingstone 1.4 metres x 1 metre in size standing upright on the corner of a large, wooded traffic island. This stone has been in this position for a very long time, may be for centuries, marking the junction of two roads. As a result of road widening the boulder is now at risk from lorries turning this tight corner.



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.*

Summary of the geological interest

Hertfordshire puddingstone is a unique type of rock containing well-rounded flint pebbles bound together with quartz “cement.” It is named after its resemblance to a plum pudding and the fact that it can be found in Hertfordshire “in-situ.” The cement and pebbles are homogeneous and both equally hard, which makes puddingstone a very tough rock and very resistant to erosion. This particular puddingstone boulder is one of the best examples in North-West Essex.

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

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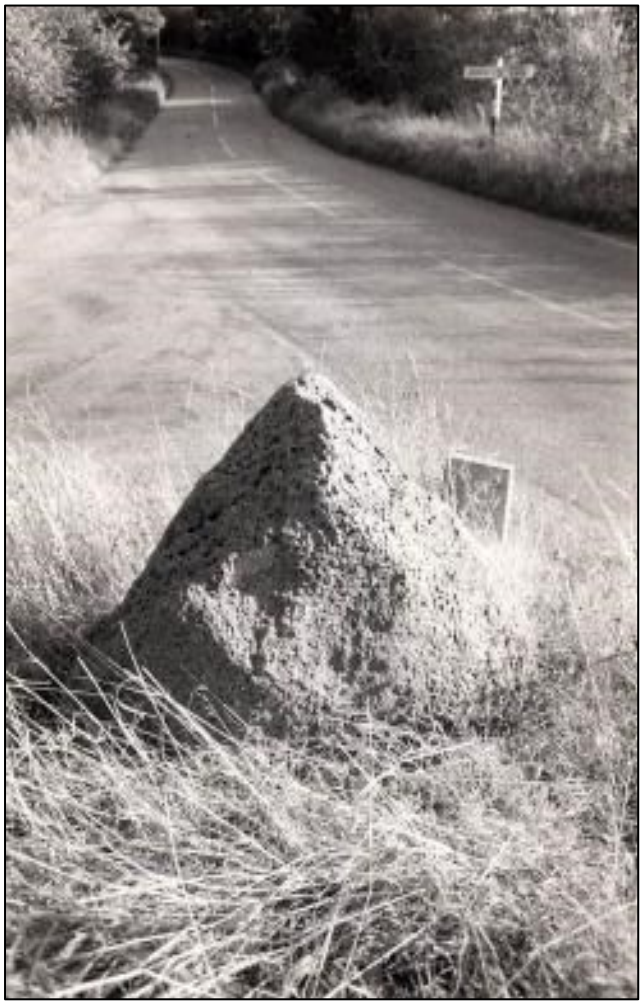
puddingstones) has been the subject of recent scientific debate. Research has compared the conditions under which sarsens and puddingstones may have been formed with the present day climate in the Kalahari Desert and parts of Australia.

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 distribution and abundance of puddingstone in some areas suggests that some occurrences may have a local Essex source.



The Widdington Puddingstone. Photo: G.Lucy

Reference:

LUCY, G. 2003. Essex erratic boulders: a gazetteer. *Essex Naturalist* (New Series) No. 20. Pages 115-134.