



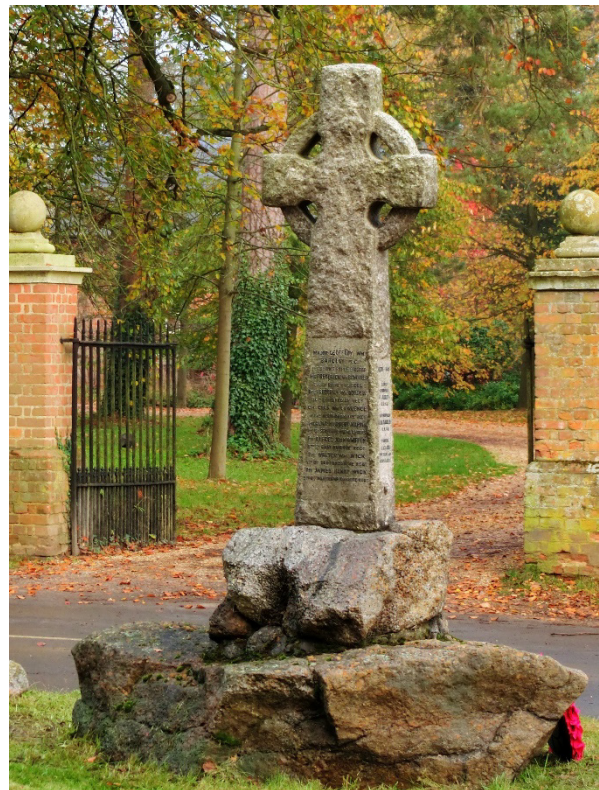
The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about PUDDINGSTONES

The Hundred Parishes area has a good number of so-called “Hertfordshire puddingstones”. Association with the county of Hertfordshire seems rather biased because examples can be found on both sides of the county boundary between Hertfordshire and Essex. *“Puddingstone Walks in Essex”* is 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. Puddingstones are not found in many other places in the UK, or indeed in the world.

Some puddingstones lay where they were deposited, whilst others have been moved to more convenient locations, to be displayed or sometimes put to good use. Arkesden and Brent Pelham have incorporated them into their war memorials, shown respectively on the left and right below.



Other puddingstones are visible in Arkesden in the stream of Wicken Water beside the road 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.

The photo below on the left shows one at the base of an ancient wall in Wendens Ambo. A puddingstone found in Standon many years ago once formed part of the church wall until it was moved in 1904 and put on display – pictured on the right.



In Newport, the puddingstone on the left below seems to have been unceremoniously abandoned beside the approach road to the station, while Ugley Green's stone lies next to the old village pump.



There is a large puddingstone in Little Hadham, beside the brick gateway at Hadham Hall. This stone is passed on walk number 115 which uses a public footpath through the grounds of Hadham Hall. There are at least three more pudding stones in Little Hadham: one on the Ash Valley golf course where a footpath crosses the fairway, one incorporated in the tower of the Church of St. Cecilia, and another in a private garden.

Several more walk routes refer to puddingstones along the way, including numbers 1, 6, 17, 18, 105, 112 and 122.

Many puddingstones seem to have been found below ground: several were unearthed during construction of the A10 at Colliers End, south of Standon and a very large one, believed to weigh 7 tons, was revealed during construction of the Little Hadham bypass in 2020. A lady who had read the original version of this Hundred Parishes article spotted the stone and approached the road-building contractors. Within 48 hours they had retrieved the stone and held it securely until they could position it at a place prepared by Little Hadham Parish Council beside the village sign, shown here on the right.



Below is a close-up of the Little Hadham Bypass stone, clearly showing its multi-coloured pebbles. The tape measure is 60 inches long.



Next, we show a close-up of the large puddingstone that rests by the entrance to The Yew Tree Inn, Manuden – again clearly showing the mix of pebbles.



The stone pictured on the left is near the pond at Hazel End, Farnham. This is not so obviously a puddingstone with only part showing embedded small stones. Sometimes, a large stone may be a sarsen stone – also formed long ago of sandstone but without the tell-tale pebbles.

Other, readily-visible puddingstones may be found in Tilty churchyard, in Saffron Walden Museum's grounds and by the Shell House in Hatfield Forest (they were moved from the lake).

Other stones have been reported on private property.

Please keep a lookout for more.

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Any comments or suggestions for improvement may be submitted by using the Feedback form on the website. The website has many short articles on various aspects of The Hundred Parishes, as well as introductions to individual parishes and to a number of local celebrities, and an extensive What's On section. More than a hundred walk route descriptions can be freely downloaded, with each of the hundred parishes featuring in at least one walk.