

Wye Historical Society



Newsletter March 2021

Society Matters

We are sorry to announce the death of Mary Tidman.

Mary was for many years a staunch member and active supporter of Wye Historical Society.

A valuable contribution was as meetings Secretary, when for a number of years, she arranged for the Speakers at the monthly meetings. In this she was enthusiastic, competent, and imaginative. For some years Mary was our representative on the Kent Association of Local History Societies, reporting to our Committee any matters of moment from that Association.

Another of her interests was her garden, to which she gave loving and knowledgeable care until encroaching disabilities prevented this. A lady of faith, she enriched the community of Wye, and will be sorely missed.

John Makey

We are aware that many of you have not received the Newsletter on a regular basis. We apologise for this but have not found a satisfactory solution so far. You will have received this edition directly to your registered email address together with the information for our AGM.

Should you not receive the newsletter by the end of the month you should be able to download it from our Website. www.wyehistoricalsociety.org.uk

We are currently exploring a meetings venue for our new season, starting in the autumn, providing of course, that current restrictions have been lifted.

Ecumenism in Wye

How the churches in Wye relate to one another

“Ecumenism” is not a word likely to be on many people’s lips! It comes from a Greek word meaning “the whole inhabited world”, it has been used since 325AD in attempts to maintain consistency among Christian beliefs of people wherever they are and however they worship. The 12 disciples of Jesus sometimes argued about what they should believe, so it is no surprise that throughout its history the church has struggled to maintain its unity.

An early challenge resulted in a Council of Bishops to agree a statement which all Christians could accept. That statement, the “Nicene Creed” originated in 325AD and was expanded in 451. Today it is in common usage throughout much of the world, the exception being some Greek and Russian Orthodox churches. Hence the use of “Catholic” in the west, and “Orthodox” in the east. The basis on which East and West broke away from each other appears to be trivial, but was serious, as it challenged the leaders of the church to define the complete Truth upon which all could agree. It became entangled in the ‘correct’ interpretation of Scripture which became evermore complicated, bordering on the impossible. Added to that was the question of ‘authority’, and this continues to be a divisive issue, ranging from the clear authority of the Pope for Roman Catholics, through various systems of church government involving episcopacy or a democratic form and sometimes state involvement, as with the monarch’s place as the head of the Church of England.

Then came the Protestant reformation, with a German Catholic priest, Martin Luther, dramatically nailing his “95 Theses” to the door of his church in Wittenburg in 1517. His protest (hence protestantism) focussed on the meddiaeval sale of indulgences, and led to widespread defections of priests and parishes in Europe. The division was further enhanced when the Frenchman, John Calvin wrote a powerful exposition in his “Institutes” in 1536.

England had its own Reformation, with Lutherism influential in England and Calvinism in Scotland, however the most obvious changes were intstiuted by the monarchs Henry VIII, Mary and Elizabeth I, resulting in the Church of England being a “broad” denomination, containing sacramental (Catholic) and evangelical (Protestant) factions which became known as “High Church” and “Low Church”. Wye appears to have been, like many others, ‘middle of the road’. A significant feature of post-reformation Christianity has been the tendency for further splits to occur such as the Pentecostal Churches, often originating in the USA.

Wye Parish Churchy is “Church of England” and was the only church in the village for several centuries. The present building originated in the 13th century, though in early Saxon times Wye had a church dedicated to St. gregory, the location of the building is unknown. Since its origin, the present building has been altered or restored after significant damage on a numbewr of occasions, with the imposing bell tower being ewrected in the early 18th century.

In 18th century Britain, Methodism emerged, principally under the leadership of John Wesley, a Church of England priest, highly educated, a captivating orator, and a most imaginative and effective organiser. His brother Charles wrote many inspiring hymns. Following a dramatic spiritual experience in May 1738, Wesley became convinced of the priority of preaching the Gospel to as many people as possible. The urgency of this was so compelling that he followed the example of George Whitefield, (a fellow Church of England priest who was a notable evangelist and popular open-air preacher) preaching in the open-air at every opportunity. Some of his most effective preaching was in America, pleading with the Bishop of Oxford (whose responsibility it was) to ordain more priests so that converts could be given sacramental and pastoral care. When the Bishop refused, Wesley felt compelled to ordain men himself, an action which inevitably severed the connection of Methodism with the Church of England.

A most significant development was the organisation of groups of about 12 in each Methodist congregation called Classes. Lay preachers were encouraged to have rigorous instruction in the Bible and in Christian Doctrine. Lay preachers were unpaid as they kept their secular employment, becoming known as “Local Preachers”. Ordained ministers were paid a stipend and because they staid in one place for only a year, became known as “Travelling Preachers”. For well into the 20th century, ministers stayed for 3 years in an appointment, responsible for a circuit of Methodist Chapels in the area and living in a manse.

Canterbury became a significant centre of Methodist activity, and Ashford (which John Wesley visited only once) was under the care of the Canterbury minister. Before the building of Methodist Chapels, Methodists would gather in Cottage Meetings, this occurred in Wye in 1810, established by Richard Robarts, the Ashford minister. Oversight of the Methodists in Wye had always been the responsibility of Ashford but for several decades there were instances of the Wye Methodists having their worship disrupted by disorderly youths, who on occasions, did extensive damage to the building.

In 1818 a prosperous farmer, a Methodist, Thomas Berry, moved with his family to Hastingleigh and soon became the leading layman of the Wye Methodists, taking a lead in building the first chapel in 1824. The site, off B in exchange for what had been Comeridge Street is now part of the Twysden Court development. Numerically, the Methodist cause in Wye flourished but was beset by serious financial problems as all local development had been diverted to Ashford and the workshops of the South Eastern Railway. This resulted in a deterioration of the Chapel, whilst the increase in worshippers indicated the need for a larger building. Most of the potential sites belonged to two prosperous landowners, one of whom, the eccentric Major Sawbridge-Erle-Drax, gave the Methodists a prime site in Bridge Street for what had become an almost derelict chapel. The larger chapel was built in 1869 and proved to be not only an excellent place of worship but a very useful village amenity.

There was very little contact at the time between the Methodists and the Parish Church, in 1889 when the Wye Parish magazine was first published, there was no mention of the Methodist Church or its activities and that remained the case until 1923.

In 1923 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, commended discussion with the Methodist Church at local and congregational level to seek 'greater mutual understanding' and on Sunday July 8th 1923 a visiting Methodist minister preached at Evensong in Wye Parish Church, a methodist Local preacher read one of the lessons and the Methodist congregation came to the service and 'were welcomed to the best seats.'

Sadly this seemed to be a 'one-off', for nothing happened in the way of shared activity for a considerable time, but at least there was mutual recognition between the two churches and in 1949 a major refurbishment of the chapel took place, greetings from the anglican vicar were included in the celebration service.

In 1954, the Roman Catholic Church of St. Ambrose opened in Oxenturn Road, under the care of the priest in Ashford. From then on there were three churches involved in ecumenical events in the village.

A big step forward was taken in 1967, when the Rev'd David Marriott became vicar of Wye, taking a sustained interest in ecumenical relationships. The Methodist minister was invited to make regular contributions to the Parish Magazine and in September 1967 the two Sunday Schools combined, with half the classes meeting in each church. On Ash Wednesday 1984 there was a united service in Wye and a Lent Course the following year. In 1987 a service was held during the week of prayer for christian unity.

From 1999 onwards there was increased observance of the weekm of prayer for christian unity each January and Lent lunches wer4e organised, held in the Methodist hall but arranged by members of the Parish Church, the Catholic Church and the Methodist Church.

On Good Friday there was a Walk of Witness, starting at St. Ambrose, pausing aty the methodist Chapel and concluding at the gate of the Parish Church, prior to the 3 hours of prayer and meditation, held in the Parish Church but including meditations led by a methodist or Roman Catholic.

A separate opportunity for co-operation of church worshippers has for many decades been the Women's World day of Prayer on the first Friday in March. This had started in the USA in the 19th century and was taken up in the UK in the 1930's. In recent decades it has been observed in Wye, with the service venue rotating.

An encouraging aspect of present day ecumenism is that by and large it is carried out in a more relaxed and tolerant way than in the pioneering years of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, so that when we look forward to future years it is in a spirit of optimism for the shared fellowship and worship of christians in Wye; we pray it may be so.

John Makey

WYE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

'Dig for History' project

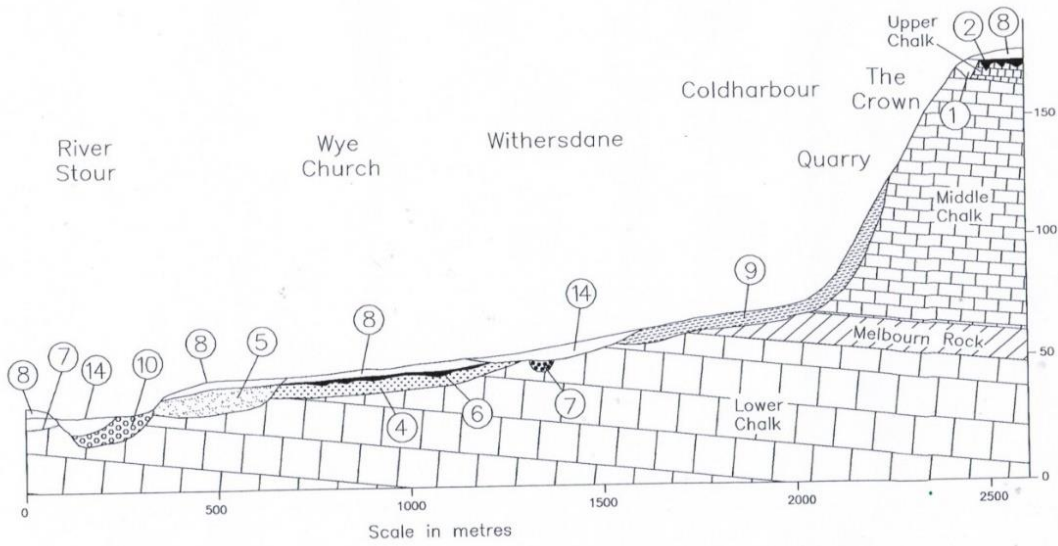
The W.H.S. Committee has been considering activities that can take place in 2021, even if COVID restrictions continue during the early part of the year and has approved an archaeological project to reveal more about Wye in Roman times. The *New History of Wye* pictured Roman Wye as an estate comprised of a large house surrounded by farmland on which there were small industrial units linked to local agricultural and mineral resources, e.g, pottery kilns, primitive iron smelting and blacksmithing, the drying and storage of grain and possibly the processing of wool and leather. The big hole in the evidence was the location and nature of the large house at its centre, which would probably been surrounded by outbuildings and smaller cottages. Over the years there have been three reports of Roman building material being dug up in the Churchfield Way area, and it is likely that the habitation site was under the built-up part of Wye village. The area of most interest comprises Churchfield Way, The Forstal, Abbot's Walk west of the junction with The Forstal, the north side of Bridge Street and the allotments behind.

The plan for the first part of the year is to encourage householders to dig small trial pits in their gardens, in convenient places of course! A suitable size would be a metre wide, two metres long and a metre deep. Objects which were not obviously modern would be kept, with a note of depth, ready for appraisal by a knowledgeable person who would also examine the section shown in the pit. Pit sections of interest and significant finds would be photographed and retained for cleaning and expert appraisal. This would involve Dr. Paul Wilkinson who has agreed to be our consultant and would film suitable footage for possible inclusion in the B.B.C. 'Digging for Britain' Series. Promising areas could possibly be further investigated by geophysical survey

From the historical point of view, the country estate of Roman times seems to have survived to be the 'royal vill' of the Anglo-Saxon period, a seasonal residence of the Kings of Kent and a minor regional centre as head of the 'Wyewara Lathe', extending into the Weald as far as Hawkhurst. This continued as the rich and extensive manor that William the Conqueror gave to Battle Abbey, whose boundaries survive in the unusually extensive parish of Wye. To be able to trace this unit back to Roman times gives Wye an especially rich local history.

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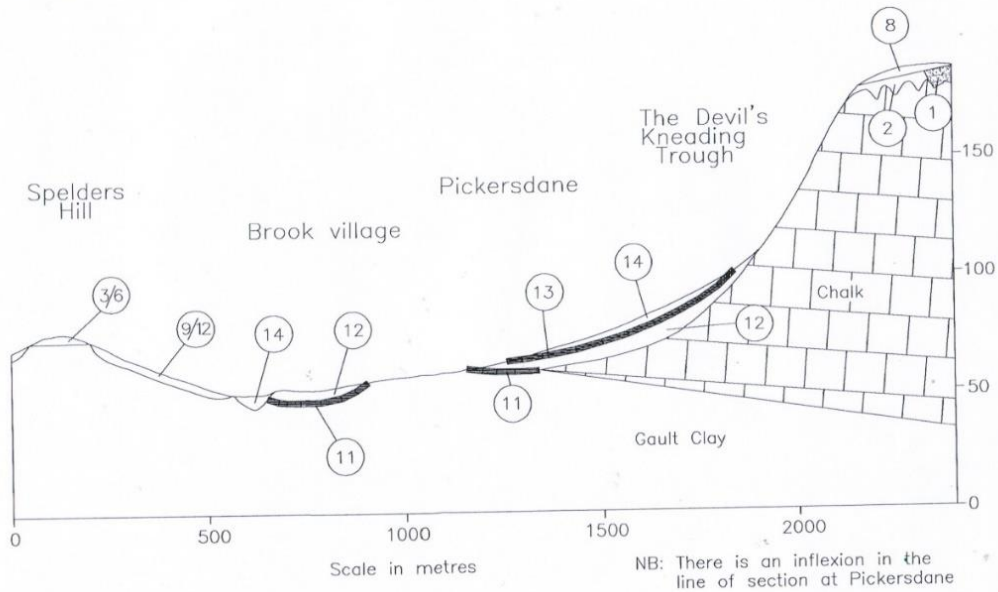
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Cross section through Wye showing superficial deposits

SW
TR060445

NE
TR079457



Cross section through Brook showing superficial deposits

No.	Nature of material	Age (thousand years)	Climate
1	Sand	Pliocene (c. 10,000)	Warm, marine
2	Clay-with-flints	Early Pleistocene (2,000-500)	Mainly sub-tropical
3	River gravel	Anglian (c. 450)	Periglacial
4	Chalky sludge deposit	Saalian (c. 150)	Periglacial
5	River sand and gravel	Saalian (c. 150)	Periglacial
6	Orange-brown soil (angular flints)	Ipswichian interglacial (130-100)	Warm temperate
7	River gravel	Early Devensian (75-25)	Periglacial
8	Loess ('brickearth')	Devensian glacial maximum (25-18)	Periglacial
9	Chalky sludge deposit	Devensian glacial maximum (25-18)	Periglacial
10	River gravel	Postglacial maximum (18-13)	Periglacial
11	Marsh deposits and soil	Windermere Interstadial (13-11)	Cool temperate
12	Very chalky sludge deposit	Loch Lomond Stadial (11-10)	Periglacial
13	Woodland soil	Pre-Neolithic Holocene (10-4)	Warm temperate
14	Recent hill-wash	Post' Neolithic (4-0)	Temperate

Chronological key to superficial deposits around Wye and Brook

Paul Wilkinson, and probably several assistants, will direct the second part of the project, on farmland to the south of Wye. Jim Bradshaw some years ago discovered a rubbish pit filled with late Roman material from around 400 A.D., which included copper coins, a dagger, and a military style belt buckle. The style of belt buckle has been linked to small groups of well-armed Jutish immigrants that were allowed to settle as 'federates' (*foederati*), ostensibly to 'protect' the civilian population after the departure of the Roman legions. The intention is to make a geophysical survey of the settlement site associated with this rubbish pit and verify the results with a few small exploratory trenches. The history of Kent at this period depends mainly on sources from several centuries later of uncertain reliability, as may be judged from the accompanying article. Historians have been looking to archaeological discoveries for indications of what really happened.

PAUL BURNHAM.

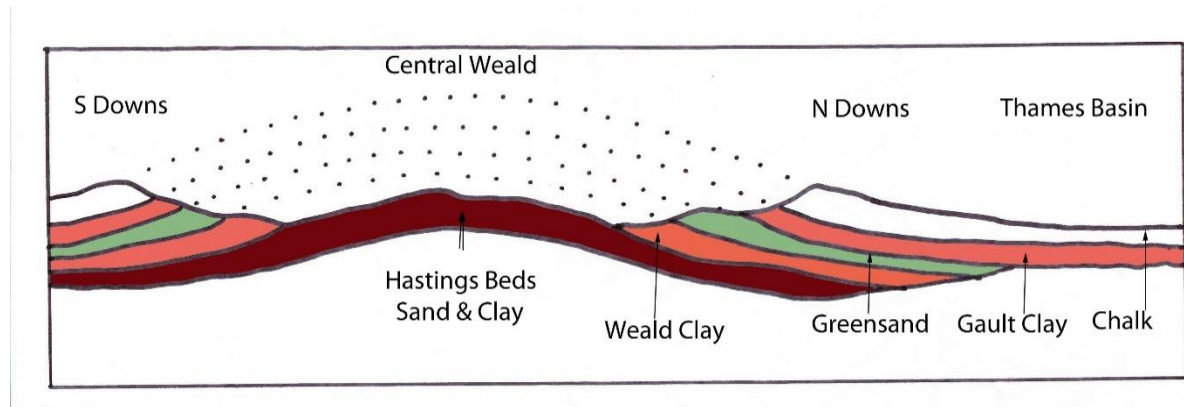
Holmesdale

Holmesdale is not a name one finds on standard OS maps but it is the land on which Wye is situated. It is a rich but narrow band of Gault clay that runs at the foot of the North Downs from Folkestone to Farnham. Indeed, geologically the band runs all the way round the inner ring of chalk hills that form the North and South Downs although it is not so obvious north of the South Downs. To understand how it originated a basic knowledge of the geology underlying the SE is required.

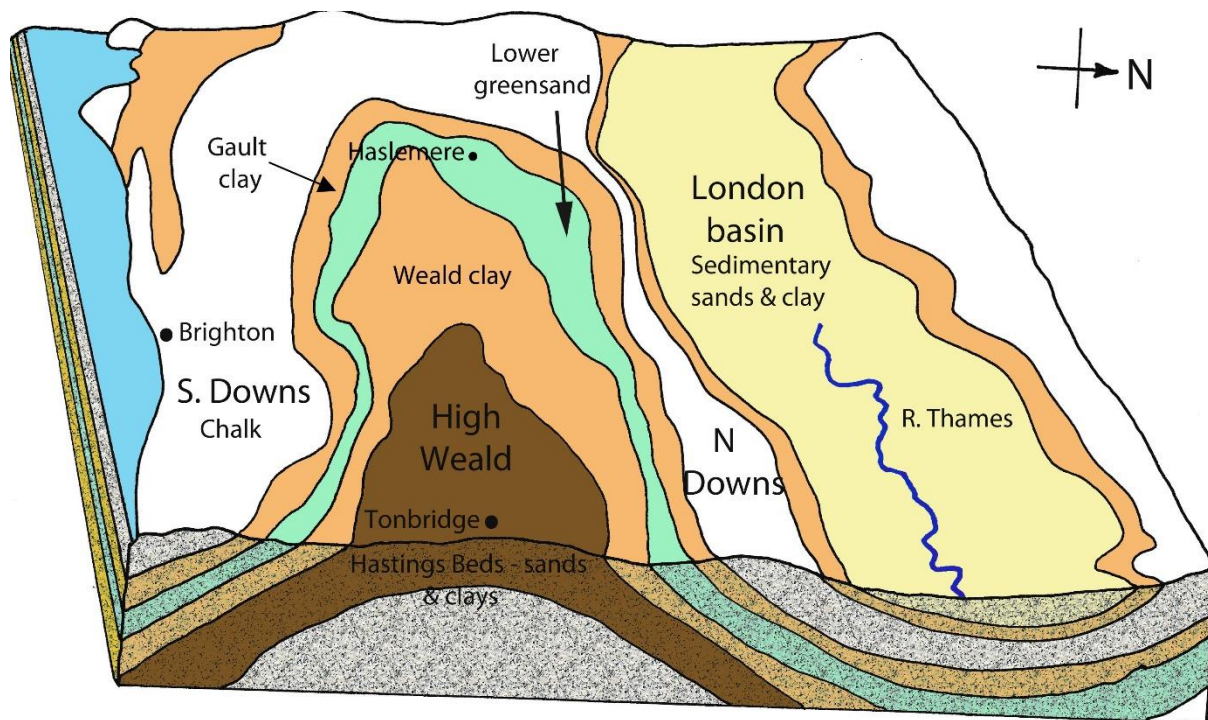
In broad outline, the geology of SE England is remarkably symmetrical. The landscape is formed from sedimentary rock deposited from about 140 million years to 60 million years ago. Over this time the land has changed so much that it is difficult to visualise the topographical connection with the current Kent and Sussex that we are familiar with. North of 'Kent' there was a land mass that has been named the London Platform. The proximity of this to the current position of Kent varied over time leading to different deposits of sedimentary material, from sand to mud, according to the proximity of rivers and the sea and the cycles of uplift and erosion of this platform. First, there was the deposits leading to the Hastings Beds of, predominately, sand then there was the Weald Clay, Greensand and the Gault clay all deposited in turn in a huge freshwater lake as indicated by the types of fossils found within them. After that, the land was under the sea for approximately 40 million years during which deposits of various calcareous sea creatures were deposited on the sea bed forming a thick band of chalk. The SE was then like a flat multi-layered cake until a massive geological event much further south led to huge changes.

This event was, and continues as, the collision of the African tectonic plate with the Eurasian plate in the vicinity of what is now the Mediterranean. The massive forces released caused the land to lift producing ranges of mountains that spread from the Atlas and Pyrenees mountains to the west to the Caucasus in the East with several ranges, such as the Alps, in between. Hence the name for this event – The Alpine Orogeny. The consequences of this almighty collision have not been limited to the Mediterranean area, there has been a 'ripple effect' forming hills much further north including a huge dome over what was to become SE England and NE France that has been called the Weald-Artois anticline.

This dome has since been partially eroded and once the central area of chalk had been worn away, the softer layers underneath eroded more easily. This has led to the topography with which we are familiar, as shown in the figure of a slice across Kent from south (left) to north (right). The upper dotted line shows the original position of the dome.



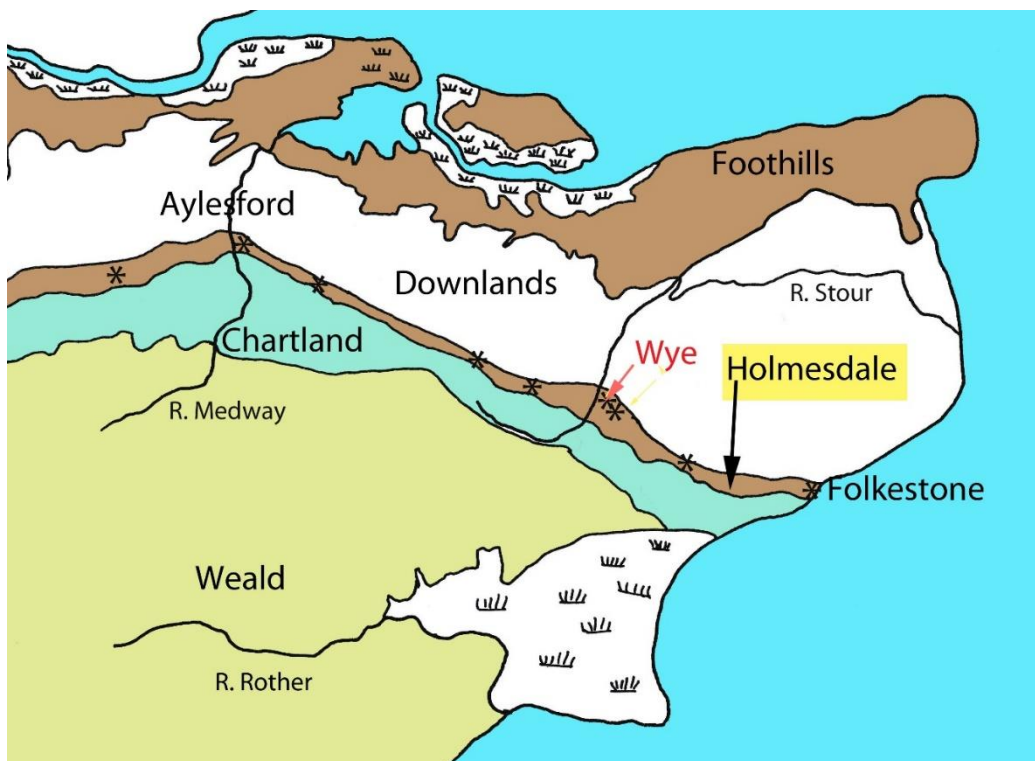
This left what could be imagined as a Roman Amphitheatre with a ring of chalk for seats and a central raised area – the High Weald of the Hastings Beds – for the action to take place on. This simple symmetry was spoilt when the sea broke through the SE portion forming the English Channel initially about 0.45 million years ago. The following figure is an attempt to portrair the geology in 3 dimensions as it exists now.



Three-dimensional drawing of the SE (stippled area underground)

The thin strip of gault clay, forming an inner ring at the foot of the Downs, is rarely more than two miles wide and hardly makes an impression on the topography except for the strip stretching from Folkestone to Farnham that forms the Vale of Holmesdale. The clay is mixed with chalk downwash near the North Downs and is crossed by springs originating at the junction of the chalk with the less penetrable clay. It is heavy to plough but is good agricultural land and, with having a good water supply, it is unsurprising that this land was settled by the Anglo-Saxons and the Jutes. It was the original Kentish Kingdom of the Jutes. The Old Trackway passes along it for much of its way, the proximity to villages being useful for travellers.

The figure below stars many of the settlements that originated in that period. Wye, positioned where the Stour passes through the Downs, was settled even earlier, in the Roman period. Other villages situated where rivers cross this land to pass through the Downs are Aylesford with the Medway and Otford (further west) with the Darent.



Perhaps the reader can guess which villages the unlabelled stars represent.

Graham Bradley