

On a bed of Clay

adapted from an article by Harold Gough



The Parish is mostly situated on a thick bed of blue-grey London Clay, which weathers to brown on exposure. This heavy clay was a suitable base for the dense Blean Woods, which originally covered much of this part of Kent. Superficially there are a number of patches of gravel and brick earth scattered over the Herne/Herne Bay area. Apart from Broomfield and an area on the Golf Course, most of the brick earth is north of the old Thanet Way, or west of Plenty Brook and thus outside the Parish itself. Brick making at Herne Bay ceased around the end of the 19th Century.

The exception to these clay and gravel deposits is a tapering tongue of Tertiary Sands – Oldhaven and Woolwich Beds and Thanet Sand. This enters the Parish from the east near Ford and can be traced as far as the position of the house at Strode Park, by way of Hawe Farm. The Oldhaven and Woolwich Beds maybe seen in exposure at Bishopstone Cliffs – the Glen is properly known as Oldhaven Gap, while the Roman fort at Reculver lies on a mound of Thanet Sands.

This better drained material may well explain the location of Strode and Hawe, both very old sites and probably two of the primary settlements of the area.

Strode, on the low level land below the hill on which the mill stands, gets its name from the Old English word *strod*, meaning marshy ground covered with brushwood. This applies to the land from the Canterbury Road to Plenty Brook and beyond, which may in the recent past have been the bed of a much more significant stream or river.

Hawe's original meaning is a hedged enclosure and must represent the site of an early clearance of the Blean, where the improved drainage was evident.

Where this Tertiary material crosses School Lane, the Streetfield development occupies the site of a 19th Century sandpit. The Rev. J. R. Buchanan in his 'Memorials of Herne' (1887) records the discovery of a brass plate from the church in a cottage window near the pit, with the chalked message to waggoners. 'Key of sandpit at Mr Roote's – the little shop down the lane!



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