

**HANDBOOK TO THE COUNTY OF
KENT: CONTAINING FULL
INFORMATION CONCERNING ALL
ITS FAVOURITE PLACE OF RESORT,
BOTH ON THE COAST AND INLAND**

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Handbook to the County of Kent: Containing Full Information concerning All Its Favourite
Place of Resort, Both on the Coast and Inland by G. Phillips Bevan

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PREFACE.

A CHEAP and portable guide-book seems a fitting accompaniment to a cheap tour; and the Editor has endeavoured to produce one which shall fulfil this purpose, while it directs the attention of the traveller to all that is worth seeing. Superfluous description has been avoided, the object of the work being merely to denote the leading points, and thus not to encumber the tourist with unnecessary remarks, which entail a more or less bulky volume.

1876.

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[Each place is described where marked by capital letters.]

HANDBOOK OF KENT.

(A)—GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

BEFORE commencing in detail to lay out plans for a tour, it is well to study the general outlines and features of the county, which are here given as briefly as possible.

The county of Kent is the ninth largest in England, and covers 1624 square miles. For many reasons—geographical, historical, physical, and commercial—it may be looked upon as the corner stone of Old England; for it is her chief buttress, as it were, against the seas; the route by which nine-tenths of visitors to Britain always approach and always leave her; while the wealth of untold millions comes to the metropolis along the silent highway of the Thames, which washes the Kentish coast. Intrinsically, too, Kent ranks high amongst English counties from her historical associations, her antiquarian remains, her opulence and fertility, and the beauty of her scenery. Her boundaries are: on the N. the Thames, which separates her from the county of Essex, and farther east, the open waters of the North Sea; on the S. the county of Sussex and the English Channel; on the E. and S.E. the Straits of Dover; and on the W. the county of Surrey. The physical features of the county are well marked and easily understood, the hill and valley districts alternating with a singular unanimity of character and direction. There are no mountains or even hills of any magnitude, though there is plenty of high ground, varying from 300 to 800 feet. Commencing with the alluvial valley of the Thames, is a belt of wooded hill running parallel with and a short distance from the river, and forming Greenwich and Shooter's hills,

geologically consisting of the tertiary beds of the London clay, and continuous, in fact, with the beds of the London basin. Although to the S. these beds are soon succeeded by the underlying chalk, they are seen for a considerable distance eastward, forming the greater part of Sheppey island, and not dying out until Herne Bay is reached. The underlying chalk increases in thickness towards the S., until it culminates in the North Downs, a long stretch of rolling high ground with a southern escarpment, entering the county near Westerham and continuing as far as Maidstone with scarcely a check, at an average height of 600 to 800 feet. The tertiary district is intersected by the stream of the Ravensbourne, which rises at Keston, and flows past Lewisham to join the Thames near Deptford; and the chalk district of the North Downs is watered by the Cray and Darent, which run from S. to N., and jointly enter the Thames near Dartford. The great river-valley of the Medway, the principal river in Kent, which rises S. of Edenbridge, and flows past Tunbridge and Maidstone to Rochester and Chatham, for a time deflects the chalk range, which follows its left bank and runs N. to form the high ground about Gravesend, sending out a low spur into the district between Gravesend and the Medway; but on the other side of the valley the chalk hills reappear, and run E. in a most marked and conspicuous range by Lenham and Charing, soon after which they are again interrupted by the Stour valley. N.E. we find these hills occupying the country between Wye, Chilham, and Canterbury; S.E. they continue to Folkestone and Dover, the cliffs between these two places and Walmer rising up to a noble height—the white walls of Old England. To the N. of Canterbury and Walmer the high grounds give way to a large expanse of marshy alluvial land, through which the Stour flows into the sea near Sandwich, and which, in the days of the Roman occupation, was covered with salt water. The chalk, however, reappears in the Isle of Thanet, and attains a considerable thickness in the cliffs of Ramsgate and the North Foreland. Thus it will be seen, that with the exception of the strip of London clay bordering the river, fully one half the county is occupied by the chalk.

To the S. of a line drawn through Sevenoaks, Maidstone, and Ashford, a different arrangement prevails.

From underneath the chalk emerges a thin belt of gault, succeeded by a thicker one of the lower greensand, composing the high and picturesque ridge of hills between Sevenoaks and Tunbridge, and which, farther E., are seen in the Quarry hills on left of the S.E.R., crowned by the church towers of the Sutton villages. The gault and greensand are also found cropping up from below the chalk at Folkestone. The remainder of the county, viz. that between Tunbridge and the Sussex border, extending S.E. to Hythe, is occupied by the Weald clays, forming the district known as the Weald of Kent, and containing most fertile and beautiful scenery. Although there are no regular chains of hills in this portion, the ground is very broken and varied, and some of the elevations, such as at Goudhurst, Bedbury, and near Tunbridge Wells, are from 300 to 500 feet in height. The most southerly corner of Kent is occupied by the Romney Marshes, which, like those of the Stour, are of historic date. Though not scenically interesting, they are of much importance to the county from their rich lands and pastures. Fuller, in his description of Kent, drew good distinctions when he divided the county into "health without wealth," or in other words, the high, breezy, comparatively barren land of the chalk; "wealth without health," or the aguish, damp, rich soil of the marshes; and "health and wealth together," or the pleasant, fertile valleys between the two.

For the purposes of historical mention of Kent, it will suffice to divide the subject into three brief heads—(a) British, Roman, and Saxon occupations; (b) Mediæval; (c) Present; so that the tourist may be able to see at a glance the different groups of the most interesting remains. In the times of the very early settlers, the interior of the county would seem to have been occupied by vast woods, one of which is particularly mentioned as Andred's wood, which came down nearly to the marshes at Appledore. Of this almost primeval forest traces are still found in buried trees and roots; but even after this had disappeared, the country in general was for centuries covered with forest and brushwood, especially in districts like the Weald. The number of places having names ending with "hurst" sufficiently betoken their broken and wooded character; and it is mentioned that even in the days of Elizabeth, the Great