

# Lenham Archaeological Society

## Site 11

### *Sutton Field, Tanyards, and Mills on the Stour at Lenham*

Sutton field is a curious boat shaped field in Lenham just south of the Stour Spring. It has a straight section of the river that bisects it and appears to be an ancient mill race .

In June 2007, St.George's Middle School , Sheppey carried out a Field Study of the source of the Stour with the kind permission of the owner. There are no rivers on Sheppey so this was the closest for them to study. As the stream leaves the village pond and flows through the fields on Tanyard's Farm it cuts straight down the middle of this small meadow called Sutton Field.

There is a "bridge " of large stones that cross the stream and the children cleared some of the water cress and water parsnip that had overgrown this bridge.. Since (.2007 these stones have been moved to a slightly different position; )

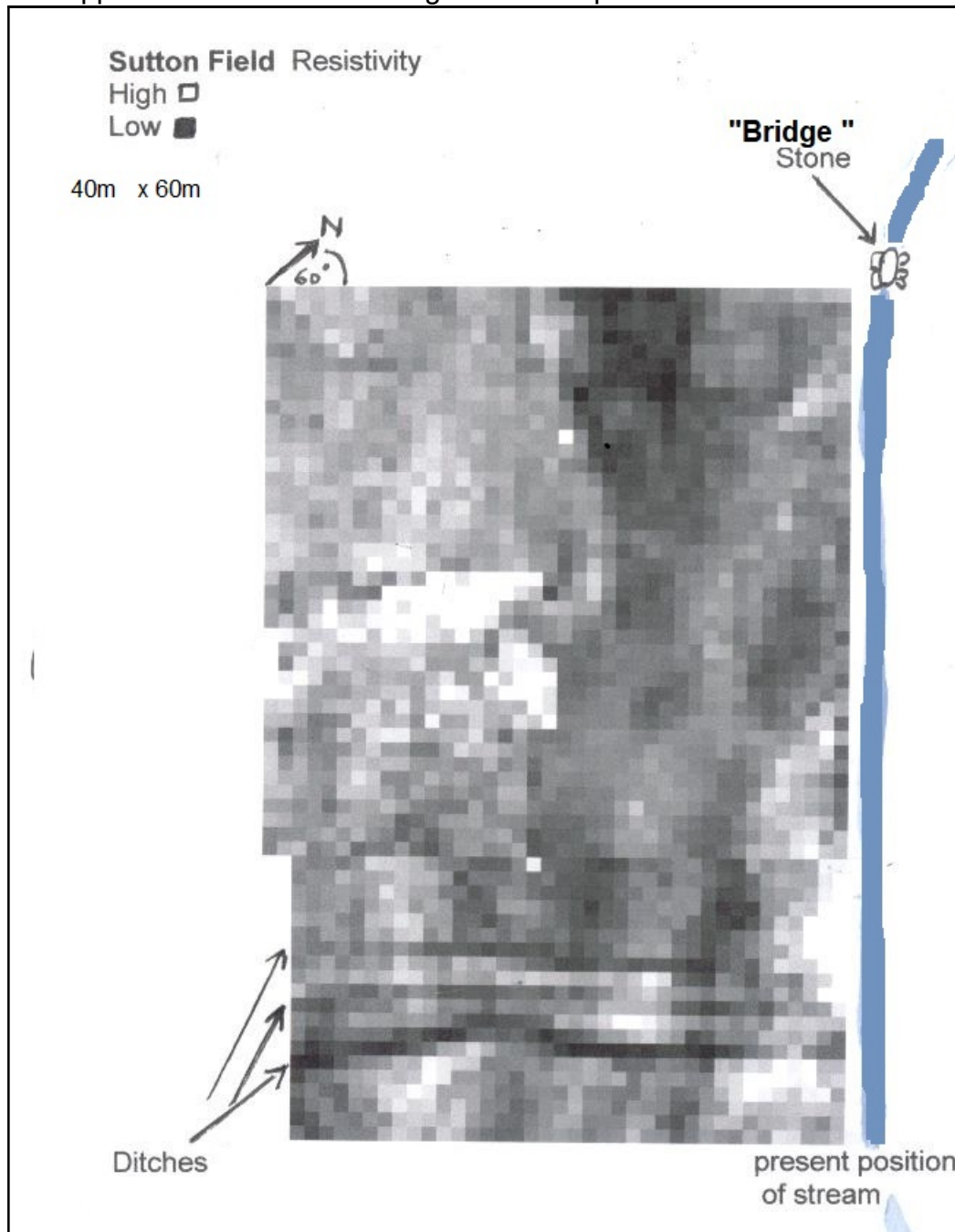
**Sutton Stones; with Des lying on top !**



There is no indication as to when the 'bridge' was positioned as now, resting on other rag-stones and with the stream flowing longitudinally beneath it , Although it the shows considerable wear of feet crossing it.



Sutton field looking North to the Downs (position of the Cross is indicated)  
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 The resistivity shows high spots 25-49 ohms, and lower areas 9 –15 ohms that appeared to indicate a change in stream position.



Three parallel ditches each 1m wide were indicated by the rez. We dug two 1x1m trial trenches and showed they were ditches and were separated by 2m wide banks of flint. The flint appears to be from the deposit from the old river bed. The ditches (in their day) were open for quite some time, evidenced by fill of clean homogenous silt/clay that is peppered with small smooth granular (marble sized ) pebbles of chalk . This might indicate that the ditches were

sluices (with wooden gates ?) to regulate the level of water in the manmade stream/mill race?



The theory these are sluices is also backed by the fact that towards the bottom of the top soil there is a thin band of chalk, varying in thickness, but approx 0.5cm deep, that is discoloured orange by iron seepage. This thin deposit might have occurred from the last time the sluices were opened ... chalk particles rushed out but were not then dispersed by any further flows, the level of the stream thereafter remaining at its present low level.

Only one piece of evidence has so far been found a green glass base of a 17thC cylindrical medicine bottle. The fineness of the glass/colour matches pictures of 17thC bottles.. Note that on the eastside of the stream there is only one ditch shadow.

**In 2019** a mill stone was found when the barns of Tanyards were being converted into houses, possibly of medieval date.

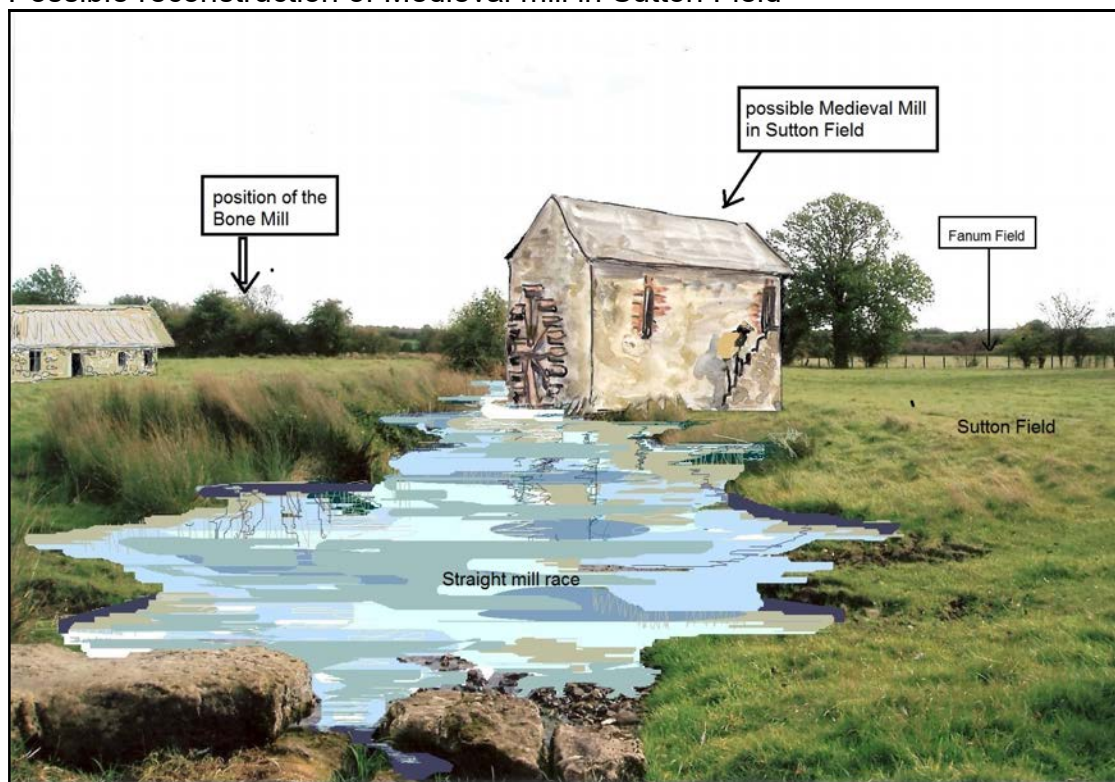
But there may have been more than one mill on Sutton field at different dates. It certainly would warrant an excavation.



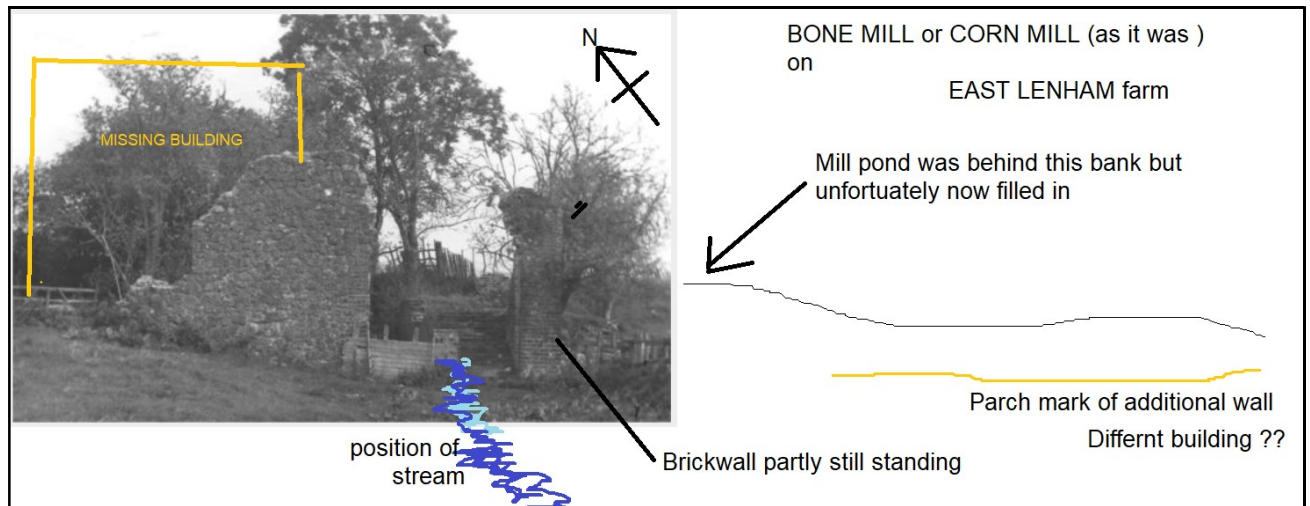


**Mill Stone found at Tanyards**

Possible reconstruction of Medieval mill in Sutton Field



**The Bone Mill** is the modern name for a mill that was still standing last century just a few hundred meters further down the Stour . Dismantled about 1950 and stones used in the churchyard wall that borders Old Ashford Road : many are Bethersden Marble . In the 1800s it was known as a seed mill. About 1980 its mill pond was filled in although the stream still flows through a gap that was once where the water wheel was. The drop is sufficient that if the mill pond were restored it could still power a modern small generator. Villagers still remember walking down to the Bone mill and an enterprising reconstruction could provide Lenham with an interesting feature :-



**Bone Mill as it could be reconstructed.**  
**Still sufficient drop to drive a wheel.**



Stones from the dismantled bone mill, were used in the 20<sup>th</sup> C to form a new Church yard wall bordering Forge House . It is possible that it was originally a Roman mill and there are stones left under the turf to the east of the stream .



Parch mark of wall east of the Bone mill ruins

## Extra note on the Bone Mill

### Bone Mill TQ 9050 5162

For some reason this mill site has missed the SMR list. It was once known as the 'Seed Mill'

It was demolished in the latter half of the 20thC and stones from it were transported to the village of Lenham and were made into a north perimeter wall of the Church Yard. Observation of these show few clues as to their age, the wall is constructed of dressed ragstone with large flint nodules cemented together.

During the construction of this wall one assumes that for some reason the old mounting block was taken apart and reconstructed around the other way. In older photos it has its steps on the left. This might suggest that at one time the road was to the south of the mounting block for in its present position it is the wrong way around for mounting a horse!



Sometime around 1965 the mill pond of the Bone Mill was filled in. One stone that remains (presumably from the mill) is this one that shows a lewis hole for lifting. Perhaps it is older than medieval ??

