

The Saltwood (East) Stream – Eastbridge

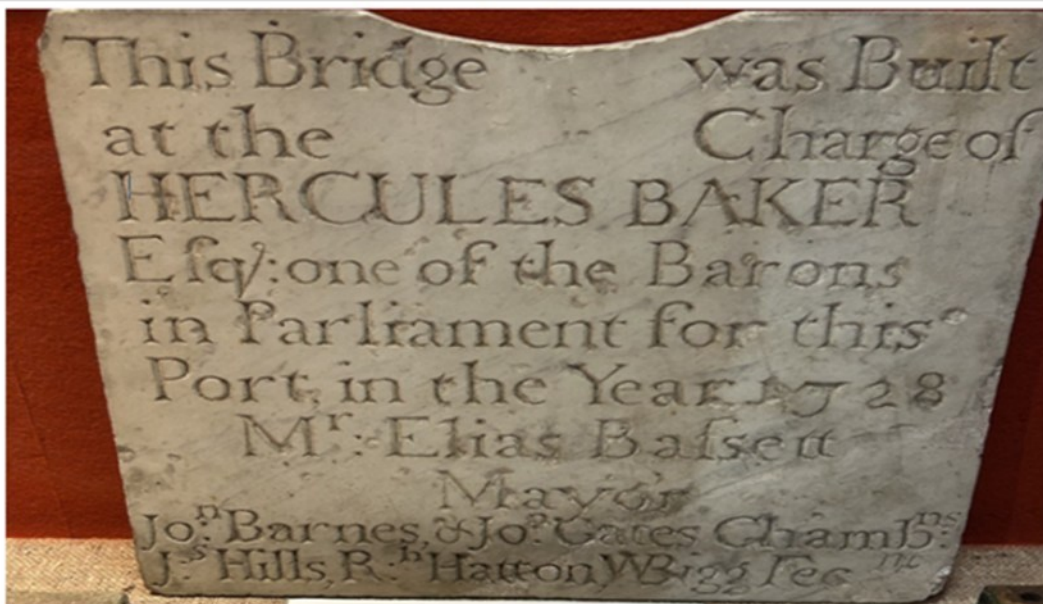
The first stream rises in the hills above Saltwood and comes down through what is now known as the “secret valley.” It passes beneath the railway embankment, which also houses an emergency reservoir. After the embankment, it is joined by a small tributary that runs from the American Garden, past the church, under the farm, and past Saltwood Castle—very likely once feeding the castle moat.

The combined stream continues down the valley, powering the old watermill, before disappearing beneath East Street. A short stretch can still be seen running beside Twiss Road before it eventually joins the Royal Military Canal.

In 1580, this was referred to as the Saltwood Castle stream. It passed under the East Bridge at the entrance to the town, crossed near what is now East Bridge House, and formed one of the principal watercourses entering Hythe.

Although the original bridge has long gone, Eastbridge House preserves the memory of this crossing.

The Plaque displayed in Hythe Museum



Kindly donated by Mr Vernon Morris

This stone plaque records the construction of a bridge in Hythe in 1728 at the expense of Hercules Baker (1683–1744), a Royal Navy captain who served as Member of Parliament for Hythe from 1722 until his death.

Local historian Duncan Forbes writes:

“The old East Bridge once bore an inscription to say that it had been built at the charge of ‘Hercules Baker Esq., one of the Barons in Parliament of this Port, in the year 1728’. Thirteen years later, the same member paid for new water pipes from the town cistern.” — Hythe Haven, p.105.

While Forbes associates the inscription with the Old East Bridge, Hythe Museum, where the plaque is now held, notes that the original bridge on which the plaque was displayed cannot

be confirmed. At the time, there were several bridges crossing streams and drainage channels within the town, and any of these may have been constructed or funded by Baker.

Baker was born in Deal in 1683. He served as MP for Hythe for over twenty years from 1722 until he died in 1744, and in 1736 was appointed Treasurer of the Royal Hospital Greenwich.

The Brockhill / Redbrook (West) Stream – West Bridge

The second stream rises near Mackerel Hole, close to Sandling Station. It flows past Foxhole, under the road near Slaybrook (where it was likely known as the Slay Brook), and continues into the wooded valley. There it is joined by a tributary from Sandling Park.

From this point hence the name old homestead where it was Brook.



Brockhill Stream

it runs through Brockhill Park—Brockhill Stream—and past the of Redbrooks (now gone), probably once called the Red



Turnpike Hill flood defences

Emerging near Turnpike Hill, where flood defences now stand, it flows alongside the London Road, then passes beneath it and continues towards the canal.



London Road



Before the London Road was constructed, Heavywater Mill stood at the bottom of Turnpike Hill. The Old London Road would necessarily have crossed the stream here, explaining the presence of a bridge at that location. A later copy of the 1685 St Bartholomew's Hospital map clearly shows both the stream's course and the road crossing at what is now the junction of Barrack Hill and the Sainsbury's site.

In 1580 this watercourse was described as the Brockhill streams. It flowed in front of what are now the barracks, passed under the West Bridge opposite the Red Lion Inn, continued under houses later built on the north side of Chapel Street, and crossed beneath *Shoemakers' Bridge* near the present Nelson's Head.

The Evolution of the Shoemakers' Bridge Area, Hythe, 1403–1811

In the surviving deeds and conveyances relating to the lands around Shoemakers' Bridge in Hythe, a remarkably continuous picture emerges of waterways, reclaimed marshland, mills, lanes, bridges, and changing ownership from the fifteenth century to the early nineteenth century. The documents repeatedly describe the same landscape features: the haven channel, the Town Dyke, the Back Lane, the watercourse running from the tan yards to Shoemakers' Bridge, the highway to the bridge, and the marshland known as the Old and New Innings. Together, they show how this district developed over four centuries.

The earliest surviving document is dated 12 November 1403. It concerns a lease to John Grove of Hythe, surgeon, for 99 years of 11 perches of land near Shoemakers' Bridge in West Ward. The property abutted the King's Highway leading to the bridge on the north and west, the land of Steven and Elizabeth Stroud on the east, and the common slough or ditch on the south. The document was later endorsed as "Mr Grove's lease of his garden at the Mount." Even at this early date the bridge already served as a recognised landmark and road crossing associated with drainage ditches and managed water.

More than 170 years later, on 10 March 1574, the Corporation of Hythe granted to Martin Allynson of Hythe, miller, two pieces of land called the Town Lands, containing one acre, specifically for the building of a water mill. One parcel abutted the channel going up to the haven beside Shoemakers' Bridge on the west, the Town Dyke on the north, and Town Lands on the south and east. The second parcel abutted the same channel on the east, the highway on the west, the Town Dyke and Shoemakers' Bridge on the north, and Town Lands on the south. The grant reserved a rent of 6s 8d yearly for the first ten years and 10s thereafter. A bond dated the same day accompanied the grant. This deed marks the beginning of a major industrial use of the area, showing the Corporation deliberately exploiting the controlled water system for milling.

By 8–9 June 1583, another Corporation deed confirmed Martin Allynson's possession of the same Town Lands where he had now built a water mill. The property descriptions remained substantially identical, still defined by the haven channel, the Town Dyke, the highway, and Shoemakers' Bridge. This deed also included a warrant of attorney empowering William Dalmyngton to deliver seisin of the premises. The document was written partly in English and partly in Latin.

Only weeks later, on 22 July 1583, Martin Allynson conveyed the Town Lands and newly erected water mill to Leonard Spracklyn of Canterbury, merchant. The same boundaries appear again: the haven channel beside Shoemakers' Bridge, the town ditch, the highway, and adjoining Town Lands. The continuity of description suggests that the mill site had already become a valuable and identifiable property unit.

On 16–17 April 1602, Leonard Spracklyn ("Spracklynge") sold the property to Edward Dawlinge alias Edward Crushe of Hythe, gentleman, for £14. Once again the deeds described two pieces of land called the Town Lands, one acre in total, with the water mill standing upon them. One piece lay beside the haven channel near Shoemakers' Bridge and the town ditch, while the second bordered the channel, the highway, the town ditch, Shoemakers' Bridge, and adjoining Town Lands. Included with the conveyance was a deed dated 17 April 1602 appointing John Grove as attorney for delivery of possession.

On 1 January 1603, the Corporation granted other nearby lands to William Guy and Charles Langdon, sons of Daniel Langdon of Hythe, merchant, deceased. The first parcel consisted of a piece of beach land called "the Hoyer" with a storehouse built upon it, bounded by the common Channel to the east and south and by other beach lands to the north and west. The second parcel, called "The Taynter," contained one acre near Shoemakers' Bridge. It abutted the bridge and a footway leading from the bridge to the Hoyer on the north and east, the "Common Slowe" on the north, the lands of Arnold Hadd and a common carrying way to the Hoyer on the west, and the common lands of the town extending toward the footpath from Shoemakers' Bridge on the south. Annual rents of 12d and 18d respectively were reserved. These descriptions reveal a busy and interconnected landscape of channels, footpaths, carrying ways, storehouses, and reclaimed land.

On 28 May 1616, the water mill property changed hands again. John Cooper of Wye, gentleman, and Elizabeth his wife, together with Bennet Crushe alias Bennet Dawlinge, daughters and co-heirs of Edward Dawlinge alias Edward Crushe, conveyed the Town Lands and newly erected water mill to John Grove of Hythe, jurat. The familiar boundaries reappeared unchanged, preserving the same relationship between the haven channel, the town dyke, Shoemakers' Bridge, and the adjoining lands.

During the mid-seventeenth century the emphasis of the deeds shifts increasingly toward reclaimed marshland and pasture. On 5 July 1658, the Corporation and John Browne of Hythe, clerk and Rector of Hope All Saints, conveyed to Julius Deedes of Newington, gentleman, three pieces of pasture divided into four parts, being part of the Old Innings and containing eleven acres. The lands abutted other town lands occupied by John and Fernando Bassett on the north, the watercourse running from the tanyards to Shoemakers' Bridge and the sea on the north, west, and south, and town lands occupied by Austin Greenland on the south and east. The purchase price was £365, indicating a substantial holding.

Only weeks later, on 30 July 1658, the Corporation and John Browne sold Elizabeth Rainham of Hythe, widow, two acres of pasture in the Old Innings for £75. This parcel abutted land of John Cheeseman to the east, lands lately purchased by Julius Deedes to the south and west, and the Back Lane and watercourse running from the tanyards to Shoemakers' Bridge on the north. These repeated references show that the drainage watercourse and Back Lane had become fixed and important boundaries.

On 11 July 1664, the Corporation granted John Bassett of Hythe, grocer, six acres of freshmarsh in the New Innings occupied by Edward Gilbert. The marsh abutted other town lands occupied by Thomas Little and Robinson Beane on the east, south, and west, and the watercourse running from Eastbridge to Shoemakers' Bridge and thence to the sea on the north. This demonstrates that the water system extending to Shoemakers' Bridge remained central to the management and value of reclaimed land.

Another deed dated 1 September 1666 concerned Reginald Mantell of Ivychurch, yeoman, who conveyed property to John Gray and James Arthur of Hythe, surgeon. One part consisted of a messuage, kitchen, and close in the Middle Ward, while another consisted of a stable and garden in the West Ward. The stable and garden abutted the lane leading from Shoemakers' Bridge to the Mountgate on the north, Town Lands of Hythe on the west and south, and the lands of James Arthur on the east. The consideration was £35. This deed illustrates the growing domestic and agricultural occupation around the roads leading from the bridge.

A closely connected series of deeds survives for a two-acre pasture parcel in the Old Innings formerly occupied by James Arthur. On 10 November 1680, John Doves, grocer, and Elizabeth, his wife, sold the land to Vicesimus Gibson, scrivener, all of Hythe, for £64. The land abutted the property of Julius Deedes, occupied by William Browne on the east, land of Julius Deedes occupied by John Redsole on the west, land of Julius Deedes in his own occupation on the south, and the Back Lane and watercourse running from the tanyards to Shoemakers' Bridge on the north. A performance bond accompanied the deed.

On 5 April 1688, Vicesimus Gibson of Hythe, grocer, conveyed the same pasture land to Thomas Hammond the Elder of Newington, yeoman, and his wife, for £20, together with a performance bond of the same date. The boundaries remained essentially unchanged, still defined by the lands of Julius Deedes and the Back Lane watercourse leading to Shoemakers' Bridge.

Again, on 13 March 1693, Vicesimus Gibson and Mary his wife conveyed the same two-acre pasture to George Chapman, fisherman of Hythe, and Elizabeth his wife, for £72. The deed repeated the familiar boundaries adjoining the lands of Julius Deedes and the watercourse to Shoemakers' Bridge.

By the late eighteenth century, the records increasingly concern houses and gardens along Back Lane near Shoemakers' Bridge. On 26 October 1776, William Oldfield and Mary his wife, Daniel Hobday and Elizabeth his wife, Elizabeth Halke, spinster, and William Gatland of Hawkhurst conveyed to George Halke of Saltwood, labourer, four-fifths of a messuage with garden lately occupied by William Punyer. The property abutted one of the messuages demised at H/U42/T30 on the west, a watercourse on the south, the Back Lane on the north, and a path leading from the town to Shoemakers' Bridge on the east. The consideration was £60.

On 4 April 1795, George Halke, cordwainer of Hythe, William Halke, cordwainer of Dymchurch, and John Halke, butcher of Folkestone, conveyed to Thomas Elgar, blacksmith of Hythe, one messuage divided into two dwellings with two gardens in the Back Lane near Shoemakers' Bridge. The property abutted a watercourse on the south, the Back Lane on the north, the path or road leading from the town to Shoemakers' Bridge on the east, and a passage leading from the Back Lane to the watercourse on the west. The purchase price was £95.

Only three days later, on 7 April 1795, Thomas Elgar conveyed to Henry Elgar, yeoman of Hythe, a messuage with garden occupied by Robert Evenden and formerly by William Punyer and Isaac Hammond. It abutted the other house demised at H/U42/T30 on the west, the watercourse on the south, the Back Lane on the north, and the path from the town to Shoemakers' Bridge on the east. The consideration was £100.

Finally, on 19 February 1811, Thomas Friend conveyed to James Watts, innkeeper of Hythe, one messuage in two dwellings with two gardens in the Back Lane near Shoemakers' Bridge. The boundaries remained almost identical to the 1795 deed: the watercourse on the south, Back Lane on the north, the road leading from the town to Shoemakers' Bridge on the east, and the passage leading from the Back Lane to the watercourse on the west. The price had risen dramatically to £275, and the deed also included a draft assignment.

Taken together, these documents preserve the long evolution of the Shoemakers' Bridge district: from medieval roadside and drainage land to an industrial landscape centred on a water mill and managed waterways, then to reclaimed marsh pasture divided among private owners, and finally into a settled residential district of houses, gardens, lanes, and access paths. Throughout every century, the defining feature remained the same — the interconnected system of channels, ditches, bridges, lanes, and watercourses centred on Shoemakers' Bridge itself.



This annotated map, based on a historic plan of the Royal Military Canal from Hythe Museum shows possible bridge locations and interpretation by I. Pearce & R Butler.

West Bridge was a small bridge on Hythe High Street that crossed a stream flowing through the town in 1837. The newspaper confirms that the stream ran through the High Street area and crossed the roadway in front of the Red Lion Inn, where West Bridge was located. The bridge was a recognised local landmark and was used in business directions at the time, including a baker, William Reynolds, whose premises were described as being “near the West Bridge.”

Source: Extract from “*The High Street in 1837 – Reminiscences of Seventy-two years ago*” (newspaper article provided by user)

The Horn Street Stream and the Haven

A third watercourse, the Horn Street stream, also flowed towards Hythe. By 1580 the outlet of the haven at Shorncliffe had become silted up, preventing the streams from flowing directly into the sea.

Instead, the Saltwood Stream (East Bridge), the Brockhill/Redbrook Stream (West Bridge), and the Horn Street Stream likely joined somewhere opposite Mount Street. From there, they ran through drainage ditches across fields and finally into the haven, which was kept open only with great difficulty and expense.

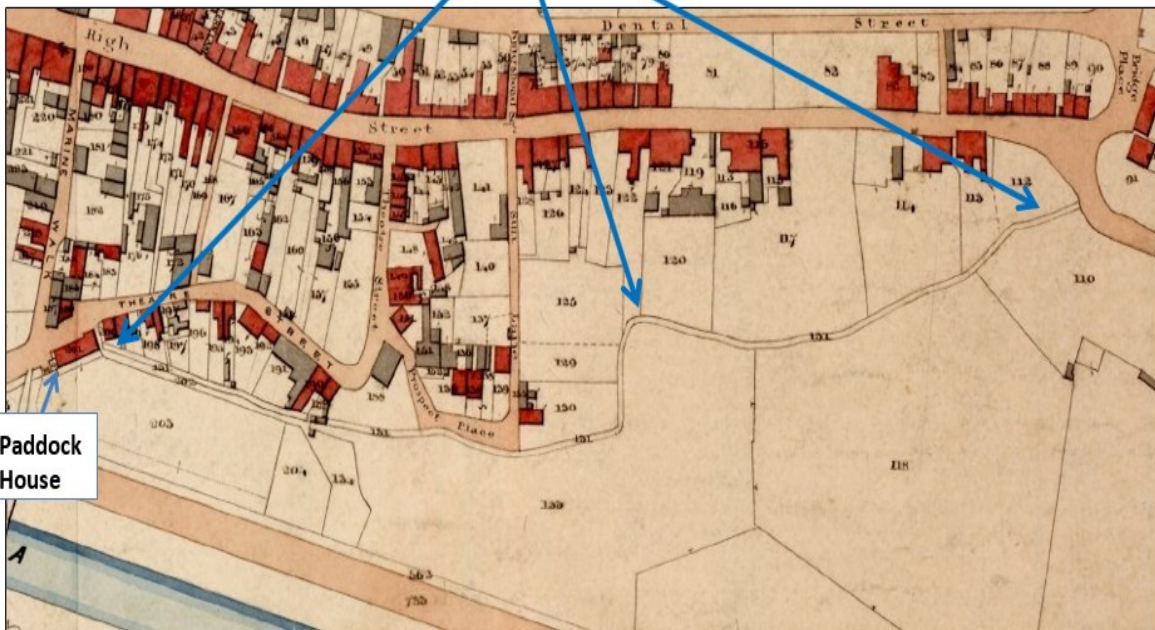
Roads, Bridges, and Changing Landscape

The streams strongly influenced the position of Hythe's early roads. The Old London Road came down from Lympe and crossed the Redbrook near Heavywater Mill. The modern Ashford Road did not yet exist. The road to West Hythe ran along what is now the north bank of the canal. The road to Dymchurch crossed pastureland south of the canal, roughly along today's footpath line.

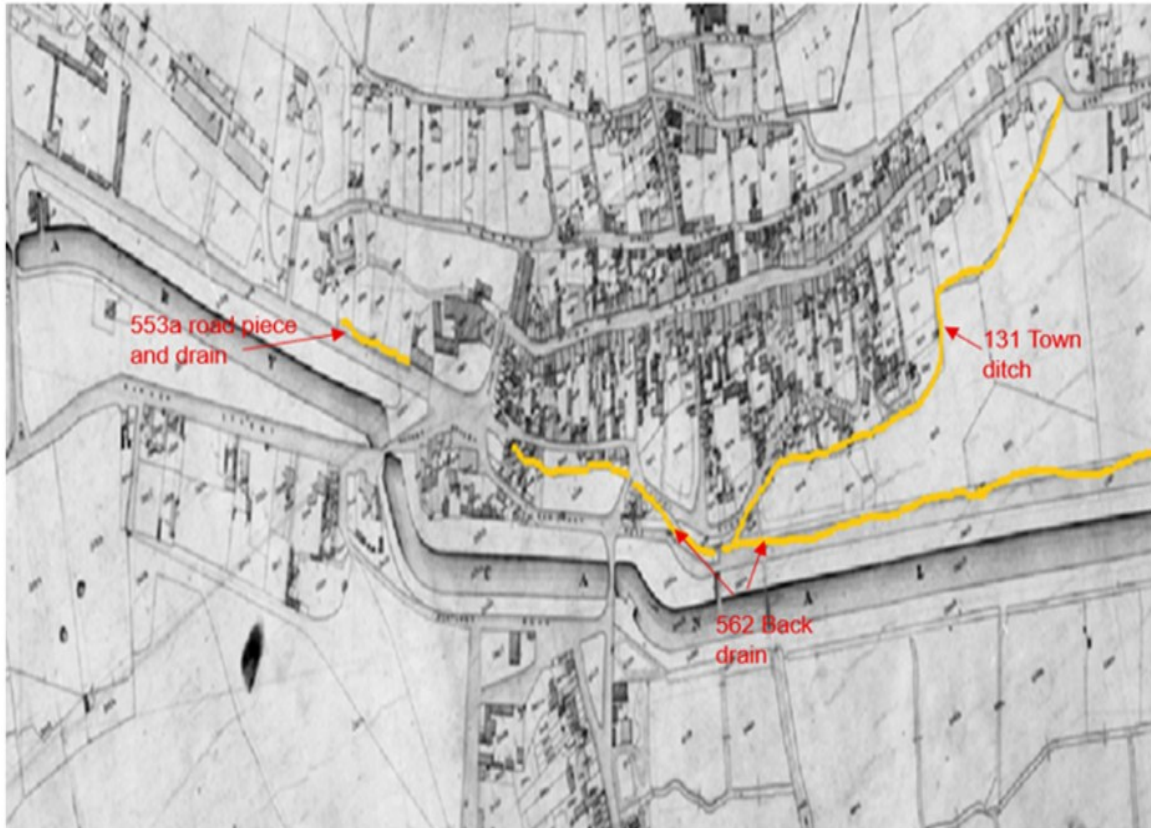
The bridges—East Bridge and West Bridge—were therefore essential crossing points at the town's entrances, shaping movement, trade, and development.

Town Ditch and Drains

131 'Town Ditch', owned by Corporation of Hythe – shown running from where Marine Walk Street meets what is now Prospect Road (then part of Theatre Street) to near East Bridge. The beginning of this, or at least path alongside, follows the line of the current alley that runs beside the small car park in Prospect Road and out to the main road. The rest would now mostly be under the main road. It ultimately seems to discharge into the stream from the mill, then presumably into the canal.



Tithe 1841 -Hythe (The Genealogist)



Summary

Hythe in 1580 was defined by water. Two main Saltwood streams—one entering at Eastbridge and one at West Bridge (Redbrook)—together with the Horn Street stream, converged before reaching the haven. Their crossings determined the location of early bridges and roads, traces of which survive in place names such as Eastbridge House, Slaybrook, and Redbrooks.

Although much of the water now disappears underground or into the canal, the historic routes of these streams still shape the geography of modern Hythe.

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Sources, Acknowledgement, and References

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Date	Document Reference	Summary
12 Nov 1403	Hy/T4/4	Lease to John Grove near Shoemakers' Bridge
10 Mar 1574	Hy/T2/2/1	Fee farm grant to Martin Allynson for water mill
8-9 Jun 1583	Hy/T2/2/2	Corporation confirmation of mill lands
22 Jul 1583	Hy/T2/2/3	Allynson to Leonard Spracklyn
16-17 Apr 1602	Hy/T2/2/5	Spracklyn to Edward Dawlinge alias Crushe
1 Jan 1603	Hy/T2/6	Grant of "The Hoye" and "The Taynter"
28 May 1616	Hy/T2/2/6	Heirs of Dawlinge to John Grove
5 Jul 1658	Hy/T2/9	Corporation and Browne to Julius Deedes
30 Jul 1658	Hy/T2/10	Corporation and Browne to Elizabeth Rainham
11 Jul 1664	Hy/T2/13	Corporation to John Bassett
1 Sep 1666	Hy/T1/8/6	Reginald Mantell to John Gray and James Arthur
10 Nov 1680	Hy/T1/12/1	Doves to Vicesimus Gibson
5 Apr 1688	Hy/T1/12/2	Gibson to Thomas Hammond
13 Mar 1693	Hy/T1/12/3	Gibson to George Chapman
26 Oct 1776	H/U42/T31	Oldfield and others to George Halke
4 Apr 1795	H/U42/T32	Halke family to Thomas Elgar
7 Apr 1795	H/U42/T33	Thomas Elgar to Henry Elgar
19 Feb 1811	H/U42/T36	Thomas Friend to James Watts

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