

Please note this map is not to scale

Kentish Man or Man of Kent?

You've probably heard of the terms 'Kentish Man' and 'Man of Kent', but have you ever wondered what they mean, and which one you might be?

Denise Smith investigates... ▶

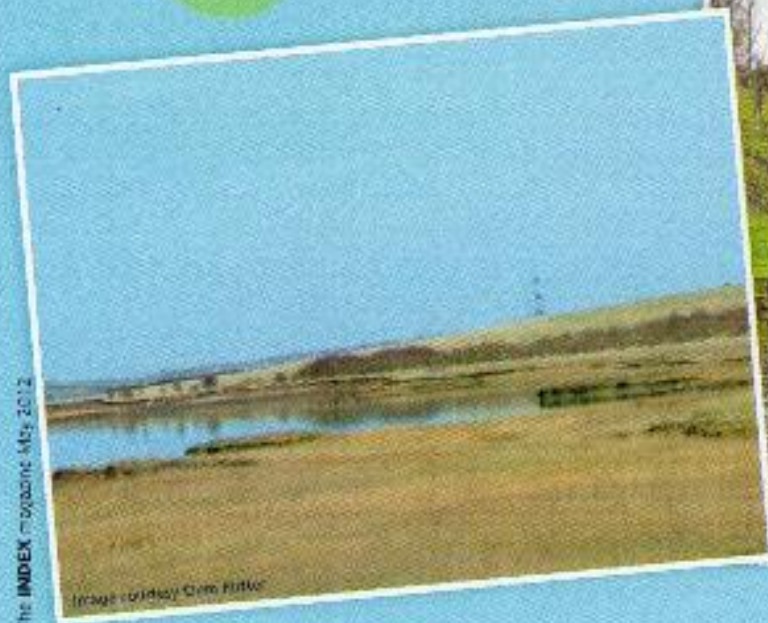


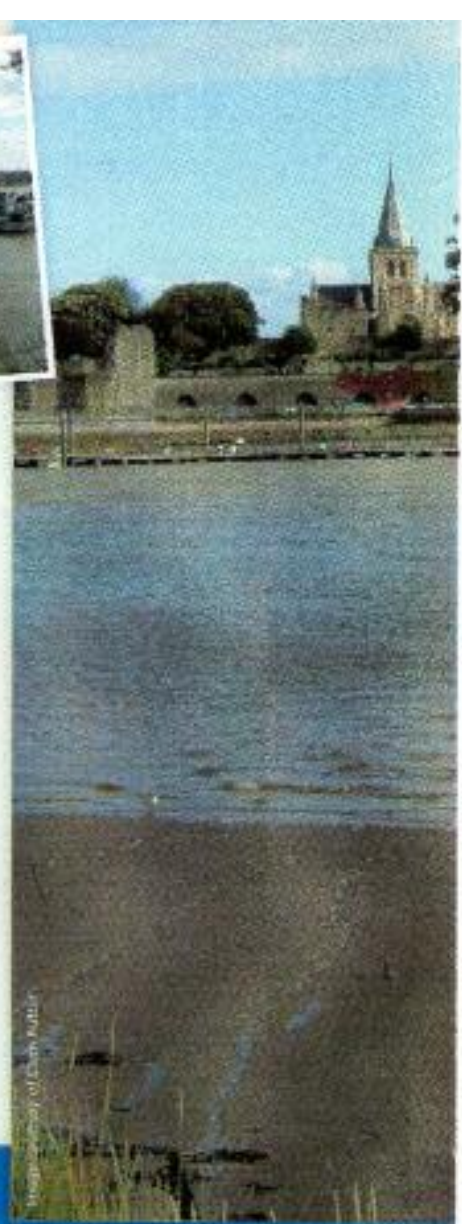
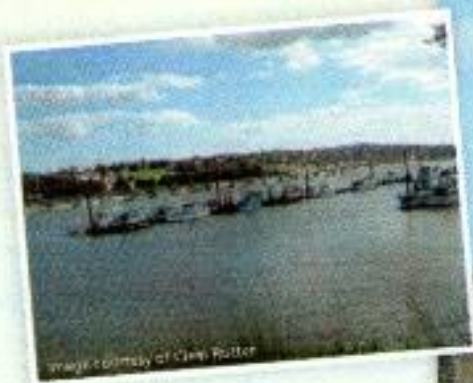
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Image courtesy Lor Flower

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► Kentish Man or Man of Kent?



The answer, it seems, may depend on where in Kent you were born. The traditionally held view is to draw a line down the River Medway – born to the left (west) denotes a Kentish Man; born to the right (east) means a Man of Kent.

A straightforward and precise answer you may think, but as with a lot of things, this is not necessarily so. Further investigation sees the delineation line move.

In a 1798 description of Rainham by author Edward Hasted, he says that the west starts at Gillingham, which is on the right bank of the Medway. It appears there used to be a small hamlet known as Rainham

Mark a couple of miles east of Gillingham. In the hamlet was an ancient boundary stone, since replaced by a milestone, said to be the point where east and west Kent divide. The origin of this division is unknown, but it is considered to date back to the Jutes.

[A quick history lesson: The Romans, who had been rulers for several hundred years, moved out at the beginning of the 5th century. After that, the Saxons moved into West Kent, the Jutes moved into East Kent and the Dark Ages began.]

The Jutes called themselves "Kentlings" or "Men of Kent", and named the two geographical areas of Kent, East Centingas and West Centingas. This division became

more formal at the beginning of the 7th century, when the Church of England split it into two Dioceses, Canterbury and Rochester.

There are those, however, who suggest that birthplace has nothing to do with it. Fast-forward to 1066, and the descendants of the Jutes allegedly fought the invading William the Conqueror with more vigour than their neighbours in the west, who were said to have quickly surrendered. It is suggested that this won those in east Kent a promise from William that there would be no bondsmen or villeins in their part of the county.

This may have led to an entry in a glossary of terms ►

Famous Men & Maids of Kent

William Harvey (1578-1657)
- born in Folkestone

William Harvey is best known as the first person to describe completely, and in detail, the "systemic circulation and properties of blood being pumped to the body by the heart". After his death the William Harvey Hospital was constructed in the town of Ashford.



Zandra Rhodes - born in Chatham

Fashion designer Zandra opened her first shop in 1967; by 1969 she was showing her own collection of designs in New York. In addition to the nine honorary doctorates she holds, Zandra became a CBE in 1997, recognising the contribution she made to fashion and textiles.

Aphra Behn (1640-1689)
- born in Wye

Less well-known, Aphra became attached to the Court of King Charles II, where she was recruited as a spy; her code name is said to have been Astrea. A prolific writer, she became one of the first English women to earn her living as an author.



Sir David Frost, Kt, OBE – born in Tenterden

Journalist, comedian, writer, media personality and daytime TV game show host David Paradine Frost went to school in Gillingham. Sir David started training as a Methodist preacher at 18, but he didn't complete it. A keen sportsman, he also turned down a contract with Nottingham Forest FC.



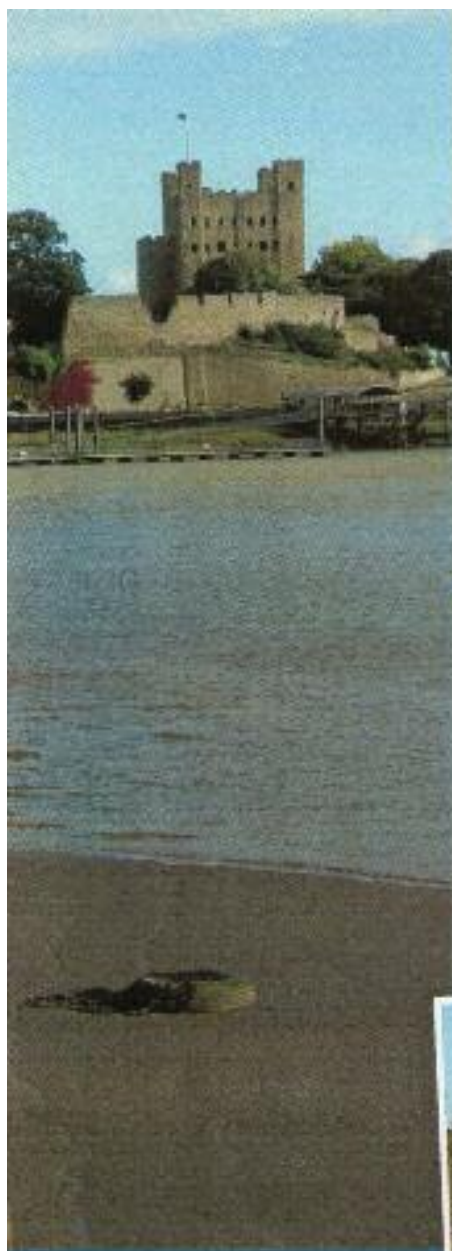


Image courtesy of CEM KADIR

written by the Rev Samuel Pegge in 1735, and quoted in the book *A History of Rochester* by F F Smith, published in 1928. The Rev Pegge suggests that the derivation of calling someone a Man of Kent could, in fact, have nothing to do with birthplace, but rather was a term of honour; a Kentish Man thereby being indicative of an ordinary man.

All clear now? Well, whatever the origin, the tradition lives on in The Association of Men of Kent and Kentish Men (which includes its female counterparts). There are branches across Kent, including Canterbury, Faversham and Whitstable. They adhere to the "Medway definition of birthplace", but have a more

relaxed attitude to those joining, also admitting people who live in Kent. [E](#)

For more information about the society, visit www.kentcountysociety.co.uk/index, or email them on kentcountysociety@gmail.com



Image courtesy of CEM KADIR

Famous Kentish Men & Maids

Katharine Hamnett - born in Gravesend

Katharine is a fashion designer best known for her political, oversized t-shirts and ethical business philosophy. In 1989 she began campaigning for changes in the way the fashion industry operated. She now runs her own fashion lines under strict ethical guidelines.



www.kentcountysociety.co.uk

Edwin Arnold (1832-1904) - born in Gravesend

In his capacity as editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, Edwin Arnold was responsible for sending Stanley to Africa to discover the course of the Congo River. As a poet, he is known for his interpretation into English verse, the life and philosophy of the East.



Peter Tong - born in Dartford

Radio 1 disc jockey and music producer "Pete" Tong started his career at Radio Invicta. He then moved to Radio 1 where he has been ever since. His Friday evening show offers the latest dance and electronic music, and has one of the highest audience figures for any radio programme in the UK.

The Hon Victoria Mary Sackville-West (1892-1962) - born near Sevenoaks

Better known as Vita, she tends to be best known for her passionate affair with novelist Virginia Woolf, and her work at Sissinghurst Castle Garden. She wrote many novels and books of poetry, together with a weekly column in *The Observer*.

