

SHIFTING SANDS, LAYERING MEANINGS

A tale of the Goodwin Sands, told through its social production

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ABSTRACT: The Goodwin Sands is a sandbank located four miles east of Kent, in southeast England. At low tides the intertidal areas become accessible, and this has led to the marine space being put to numerous, often contradictory, uses. The rich history and mythology of the Goodwin Sands is juxtaposed with a contemporary marine consent application to dredge aggregate from the subtidal sandbank areas. This article uses the triad of perceived, conceived and lived space found within Lefebvre's Production of Space thesis to tell a tale of Goodwin Sands. This methodology allows for temporal connections between archival and contemporary expressions of the marine space to be understood. Using the marine consent application as its departure point allows for the story of the Sands to unfold as layered meanings emerge. But this is more than just a story of Goodwin Sands – an attempt to explain what they are – it is an exploration of social production within marine space, and an opportunity to rethink how space is represented within marine planning decision-making.

KEYWORDS: Goodwin Sands, production of space, sandbanks, marine space, marine planning.

Introduction

This article tells a story of the Goodwin Sands, a subtidal and intertidal sandbank located approximately four miles offshore east of the town of Deal, East Kent, in southeast England (Figure 1). It is one of many stories and, whilst attempting to be comprehensive, makes no attempt to be definitive. The story is told through application of Henri Lefebvre's Production of Space thesis (1991) to the (social) marine space, focusing on its representations, and using a marine licence application as both the departure and destination for the journey. The Goodwin Sands were the focus of my doctoral research between 2016 and 2020 in which they were used as a case study for exploring the publicness of marine space, its governance and the decision-making processes related to the consenting of offshore development (Collins, 2020). The use of the Production of Space thesis as a methodology for exploring and telling the story of the Goodwin Sands serves two purposes. The first is to introduce this spatial theory, more commonly found and applied within Urban Design research, to a wider audience of (marine) spatial researchers and cultural theorists. Through this introduction, in which the application of the thesis takes precedence over its critique, the article offers a challenge to other researchers working within marine spatial disciplines. What can be brought offshore from terrestrial theories? Since the 'breakaway' of Marine Spatial Planning as a separate and distinct discipline from

Collins: Shifting sands, layering meanings – the Goodwin Sands

wider Spatial Planning, how well do terrestrial theories survive when put to sea? And similarly, what can be brought back into Terrestrial Planning¹ theory from taking these theories on maritime voyages. The second purpose is a simpler one: the Production of Space thesis provides a framework to explore the multiple meanings attached to spaces, and as a unique space with rich histories and mythologies attached to it, the Goodwin Sands provides a fascinating case study in the application of this theory.



Figure 1 - Chart of Goodwin Sands (OS Data © Crown copyright and database rights 2020 Ordnance Survey; Kent County Council, 2003).

The story of 'the Goodwins' starts with how the space is represented within a marine consenting application to dredge aggregate from the sandbank and within the numerous public objections made against that application. Through the Production of Space thesis, these are seen as examples of *representations of space* and therefore both *ideologically mediated* – designed and presented to privilege a particular position - and *necessarily unable to present a 'concrete' account of the space which they represent* – representations cannot provide the 'full' story. An introduction to Lefebvre's thesis and discussion of its value within spatial planning research is needed before introducing the Goodwin Sands as a contested development space. Following this, representations gained from archival and contemporary documentary research are presented which add multiple layers of stories, myths and factual accounts. As the physical sands have been created through the layering and shifting of sediment over countless generations, so too have the stories and experiences which have given them meaning. Notes from participatory observation and

¹ Or Town and Country Planning, Town Planning or Urban Planning, depending on geographic location and practitioner/researcher age.

field notes from entering this space complete this story. A final discussion reminds us of the power of representations of space, of stories, and how these are necessarily productive forces within our creation of (social) space. The parenthesis around the 'social' of 'social space' is deliberate; the social is implied within space, without it space cannot be afforded meaning and we cannot encounter a physical space without also encountering the multiple conceptions and experiences which have, more than merely shaped it, created it.

The Production of Space

The form of social space is encounter, assembly, simultaneity. But what assembles, or what is assembled? The answer is: everything that there is in space, everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either through their co-operation or through their conflicts. Everything: living beings, things, objects, works, signs and symbols. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 101)

The Production of Space thesis expresses a “dialectic of social space and human action” (Fuchs, 2019: 135; Merrifield, 2000). In other words, the term ‘space’ is reclaimed by Lefebvre as an attempt to understand a place holistically. The Production of Space thesis is, first and foremost, a “critique of technocratic spatial planning” (Wilson, 2011, p. 374), specifically spatial planning’s attempt to separate and schematise development impacts for assessment and mapping purposes, to simplify complexity in order to present neat lines on maps. Of course, for planners, mapping is designed specifically in order to simplify complexity and as such Lefebvre’s thesis can be seen as a thought-experiment of how space *could* be represented in development application and assessment documentation given extensive resources outside of the gift of most, if not all, planning departments and consultancies.

For this article, space is not a neutral concept. It is not being defined as Euclidean. The space in which planning operates, and in which this Goodwin Sands story is told, is socially constructed, imbued with meaning, and actively produced through human activity (Bremner, 2014, p. 19; Lefebvre, 1991). Conceptually, socially constructed space is defined as a ‘concrete universal’. In other words, Lefebvre is suggesting a Marxist-style ‘grand unifying theory’ that can be applied, universally, to everything. As such its description can be considered vague and lacking substance, and it requires a Marxist persuasion to appreciate uncritically. Note here that critiques of the use of power and materiality within Marxist theories apply to this Lefebvorean concept. The Production of Space takes triadic form, in which subjects, objects and activities operate within three ‘levels’ of social space. A dialectical relationship exists “within the triad of the perceived, the conceived and the lived” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). This triadic dialectic is crucial within the Production of Space, as Lefebvre explains:

The perceived-conceived-lived triad (in spatial terms: spatial practice, representations of space, representational space) loses all force if it is treated as an abstract ‘model’. If it cannot grasp the concrete (as distinct from the ‘immediate’), then its import is severely limited, amounting to no more than that of one ideological mediation among others. (1991, p. 40)

This demand provides both a challenge and a possibility. The challenge for spatial understanding is how to schematise and quantify values and impacts within these spatial moments. The possibility is to use this triad, not as an abstract model to evaluate outcomes, but rather as a holistic approach to understanding the value of a space for those

encountering it – members of society, experts, inhabitants and users – and, through this understanding, aim towards grasping the concrete nature of the space under review. In other words, considering the spatial moments or spatial practice (physical space), representations of space (conceived space) and representational space (lived experience) for a particular place allows us to both tell a more *concrete*, or holistic, story of place, and at the same time acknowledge that our stories are necessarily incomplete. This is freeing. This allows spatial stories to remain unfinished, ready for the next author, next actor, next experiencer, to add their chapter.

First Encounters: meeting ‘the Goodwins’ through a consent application

I first encountered the Goodwin Sands through a marine licence application. This may appear a strange beginning, but the benefit of this departure point is that it allows me to see the use of conceived space in all its ideologically mediated – note the distinct Marxist tone here – glory, with the mediation privileging the position of the licence applicant. Of course, no marine aggregate applicant is going to present the case *not* to allow dredging, but the interest in this story comes about from how the case for dredging is made, and the objections that follow. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Consent Decision Report, which was published when permission to dredge was eventually granted, refers to the dredge project as “Aggregate extraction Area 521 – Goodwin Sands” (MMO, 2018a, p. 1). The description of the project continues with the dredge site defined as “Area 521 located approximately 5km offshore of Walmer, Kent in an area named Goodwin Sands” (MMO, 2018a, p. 5). The accompanying location chart, reproduced in Figure 2, provides geographic context to the location of the dredge site in relation to both the intertidal Goodwin Sands sand banks and the East Kent coast. The location chart does not include a scale. Little is learnt about the Goodwin Sands from this slightly blurry image. The poor resolution of this image appears to degrade the importance of the Goodwin Sands.



Figure 2 – Absence of Scale on Consent Decision Report Location Chart. (A simplified representation of the Goodwin Sands. Note poor resolution in original - MMO, 2018a, p. 5).

The EIA itself introduces the Goodwin Sands as the location of the dredging activity (development site) in physical terms. Specific reference made to the area as a (financially) high-value resource:

The location of the proposed dredge area is within the South Goodwin Sands sandbank system. The Goodwin Sands sandbank system is a dynamic, highly mobile environment that contains significant volumes of aggregate resource of various grading for coastal defence, coastal development and construction to supply a range of markets and projects. (Royal Haskoning, 2016, p. 1)

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In this quotation the Goodwin Sands is presented through a reductive description in which the multiple meanings and spatial moments of the Goodwin Sands as *place* are reduced to purely building material. Using the Production of Space as a tool for analysis here allows for a critical consideration of the ideology, or interest, being privileged within this representation.

The representations of (marine) space presented within the application documents appear “tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes and to ‘frontal’ relations” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.33). Ordering the Goodwin Sands locational space in this way appears to devalue the physical space to “merely the raw material out of which the productive forces of a variety of social systems have forged their particular spaces” (1991, p. 31). The predominance of conceived (marine) space within the (marine) planning regime and the linkages between conceived space and spatial economy are clear (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 45, 56). Steinberg’s (2001) consideration of the production of marine space is useful here too, with the dominant discourse proposed of the Goodwin Sands as resource provider (Steinberg, 2001, p. 20). The charts that accompany the application display the Goodwin Sands as a resource and furthermore a resource that requires consideration in relation to other conceived uses of this space. In Figures 3-5 the Goodwin Sands is presented in various forms, through the presences of nature conservation zoning and other maritime users, in which the story of the Goodwin Sands is limited to its resource status.

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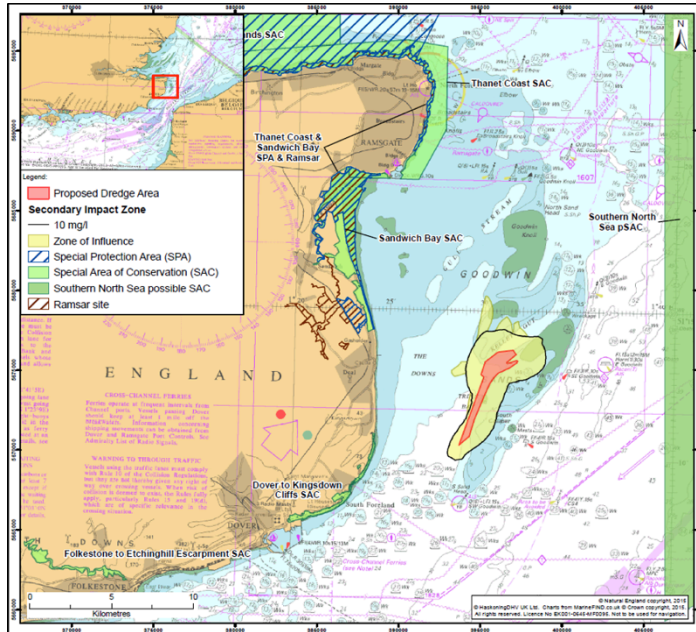


Figure 3 – Goodwin Sands International Nature Conservation Designations (Royal Haskoning, 2016, p. 9).

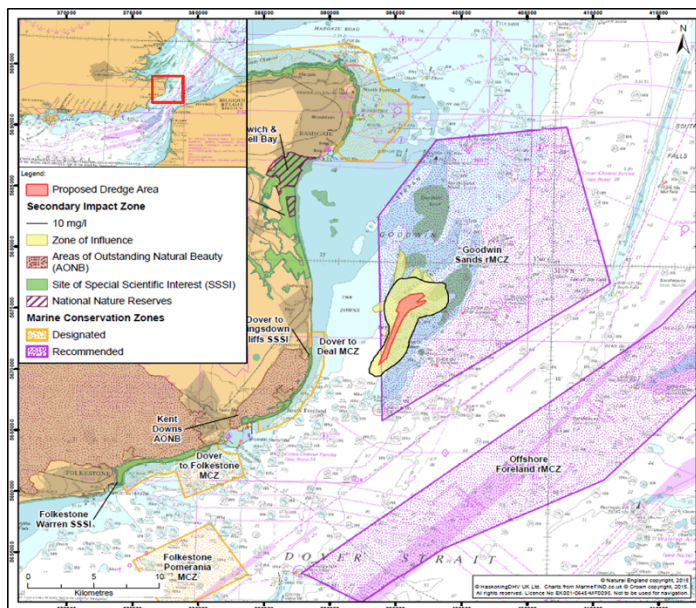


Figure 4 – Goodwin Sands Nationally Protected Sites (Royal Haskoning, 2016, p. 10).

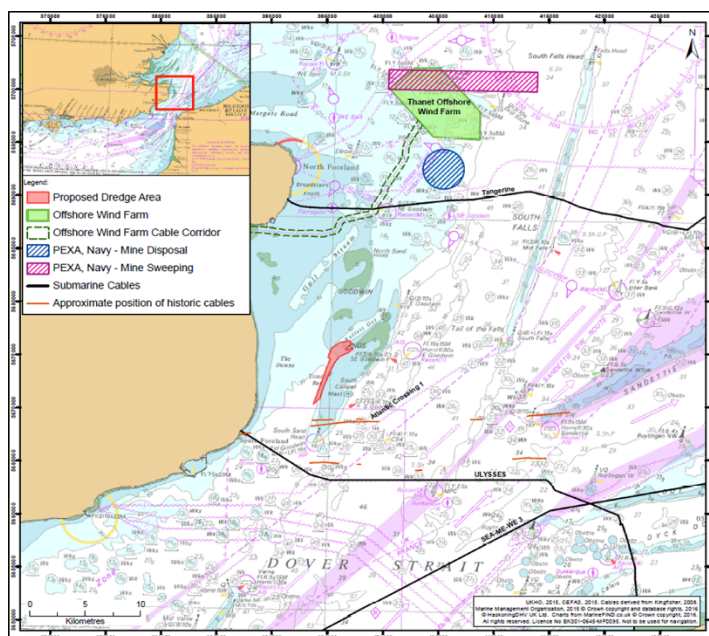


Figure 5 – Goodwin Sands ‘other users of the sea’ (Royal Haskoning, 2016, p. 19).

These representations appear to ideologically mediate the reader towards forming a view of the Goodwin Sands as a desolate, empty place. In other words, they display images that attempt to influence the readers’ understanding of what is happening in this space. Indeed, the ‘important’ areas of the sea are present as *‘not Goodwin Sands’*. Where a recommended marine protection zone (rMCZ) coincides with the proposed dredge area, this is displayed in an objective manner. It is here; but why is it important? These representations show what is physically present and therefore could be seen as an attempt to display perceived space. But this would be a misinterpretation of the application of the Production of Space methodology as perceived space cannot be conceived. It is only there as its material existence and as soon as it is reproduced in image it become conceived.

The representations sterilise the Goodwin Sands of its cultural interest, its myths and fanciful tales. These only appear in the Goodwin Sands story when attention is turned to public reception to the marine licence application. It is here that the story gets interesting and where public voices take over. Through this process a local protest group can be seen as using their stories and representations to ideologically mediate the Goodwin Sands in an attempt to stop the dredge.

I. Object! Save our sands!

In total, 1389 individual public representations, submitted during three consultation periods, were presented in response to the marine licence application. It is noted that individuals often responded to all three consultation opportunities, demonstrating the importance placed by the individuals on expressing their points of view. Two key representations of the Goodwin Sands are discussed below which illustrate what is absent from the marine licence application and consent decision. These are ‘Goodwin Sands as

war grave’ and ‘Goodwin Sands as cultural landmark’. Exploring these thematic representations starts the process of digging deeper into the story of the sands.

The conceptualisation of the Goodwin Sands as a war grave was not stated as a founding principle behind the ‘Goodwin Sands SoS (Save our Sands!)’ protest group, however it became a key part of the groups defence of the sands. Anecdotal evidence of parents and grandparents who died in aircraft over the Goodwin Sands during WW2 led protest group founders to contact local Battle of Britain historians as an attempt to halt the dredge application on the grounds of disturbance to war graves and noncompliance with the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986 (POMRA). Representations of the Goodwin Sands depicting it as a war grave are found in several formats within the public objections submitted as part of the application consultation with one example presented in Figure 6. In another example, reproduced in Figure 7, this conceptualisation of the Goodwin Sands as a burial ground is widened to shipping losses, although this shows only the known locations of sunk vessels, and not the fate of their crew.

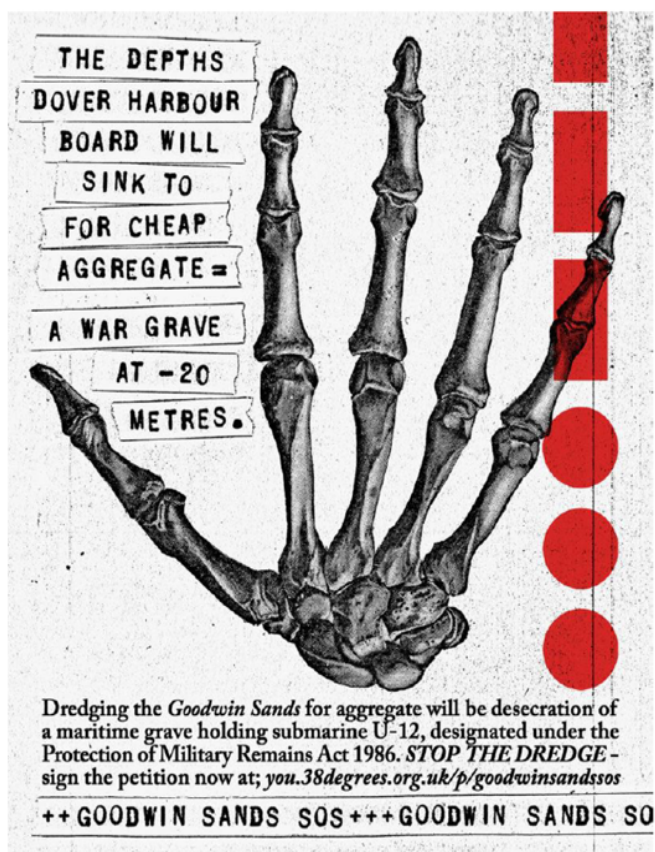
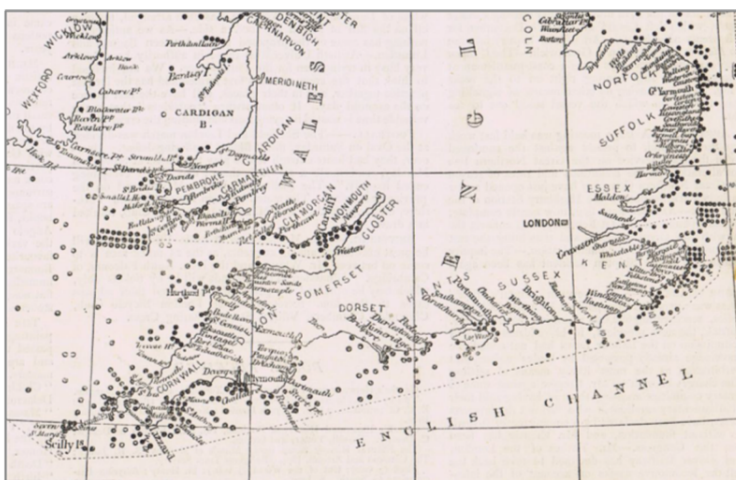


Figure 6 – Representation of Goodwin Sands as War Grave (public representation to marine licence application).



First 6 months 1863



1876-1877

Figure 7 – Nautical Archaeological Society Training Material – Goodwin Sands Known Shipping Losses (public representation to marine licence application).

These representations, while public and/or amateur in origin, display the use of ideological mediation as an attempt to exert power over decision makers. Their content is selective – their use of conceived space apparent in the power relations displayed – and somewhat misleading. One representation submitted during public consultation lists Battle of Britain aircraft and pilot losses. The protest image in Figure 6 relies on this missing pilot list to evidence its assertions but provides no mention of any recovery of wrecked aircraft. The known shipping losses charted in Figure 7 provide no details of the recovery of these wrecks.

The application protest group seemed determined on using any possible avenue to stop the dredge, with campaign group pro forma objection list restated several times. The strength of feeling towards the Goodwin Sands from those interviewed as part of the case study

Collins: Shifting sands, layering meanings – the Goodwin Sands

research was extremely strong, however elucidation of the reasons for this were found to be challenging. When asked what it was about the Goodwin Sands that first motivated protest group to action the interviewee stated simply: “I think it was emotive. It was ‘you can’t’ and it was very difficult to put it into words” (Interviewee DR:PG1). Pre-interview correspondence also echoed this emotive language with the representation stated that: “the Goodwins are to Deal what the White Cliffs are to Dover” (Interviewee DR:PG email 23 May 2018).

Conceiving of the Goodwin Sands as analogous to the White Cliffs of Dover is evidence of representations of the inspirational value attributed to them by Historic England research (Evans & Davison, 2019, p. 72). As shown in Figure 8, along with the application of a different methodology of defining ‘wreck site’ to those seen above, the research presents ecosystem services and values associated with the Goodwin Sands within an historical context.

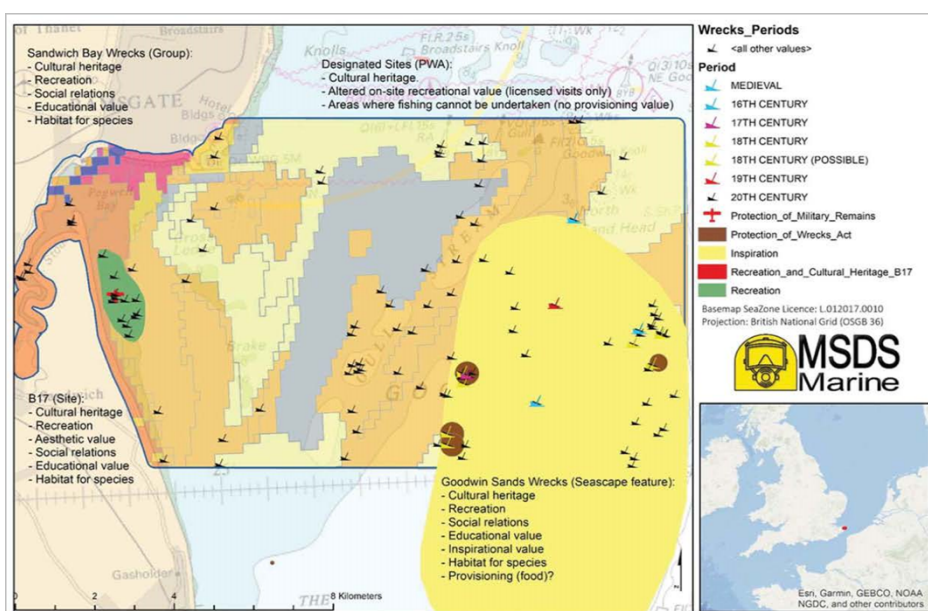


Figure 8 – Ecosystem Services and Values Associated with Wreck Sites in the Goodwin Sands (Evans & Davidson, 2019, p. 72).

Representations of the Goodwin Sands which focus on their inspirational value, and cultural importance, are also found in the Dover District Heritage Report which provides the following description:

The sand banks which are around four miles offshore and nine miles in length have long been a major navigational hazard to shipping in this narrow historically important sea route and the scene of many a shipwreck. As well as presenting a hazard, the Goodwin Sands also provided a relatively sheltered and strategically important anchorage known as The Downs for shipping in times of bad weather or as they waited for the favourable conditions to round the North or South Foreland. (Kent County Council, 2013, p. 6)

Collins: Shifting sands, layering meanings – the Goodwin Sands

Whilst these Local Authority representations present the Goodwin Sands as one of the 'main coastal features' of East Kent, the MMO commissioned 'Seascape Character Assessment for the Southeast Inshore marine plan area' appears to downplay their importance through the representations of the Goodwin Sands within the published report (MMO, 2018b). With a marine character area defined as "an area of marine space [which] has (sic) its own individual character and identity" (2018b, p. 5), the assessment report presents the Goodwin Sands and North Dover Strait marine character area as devoid of features other than bathymetric data. This is presented in Figure 9.

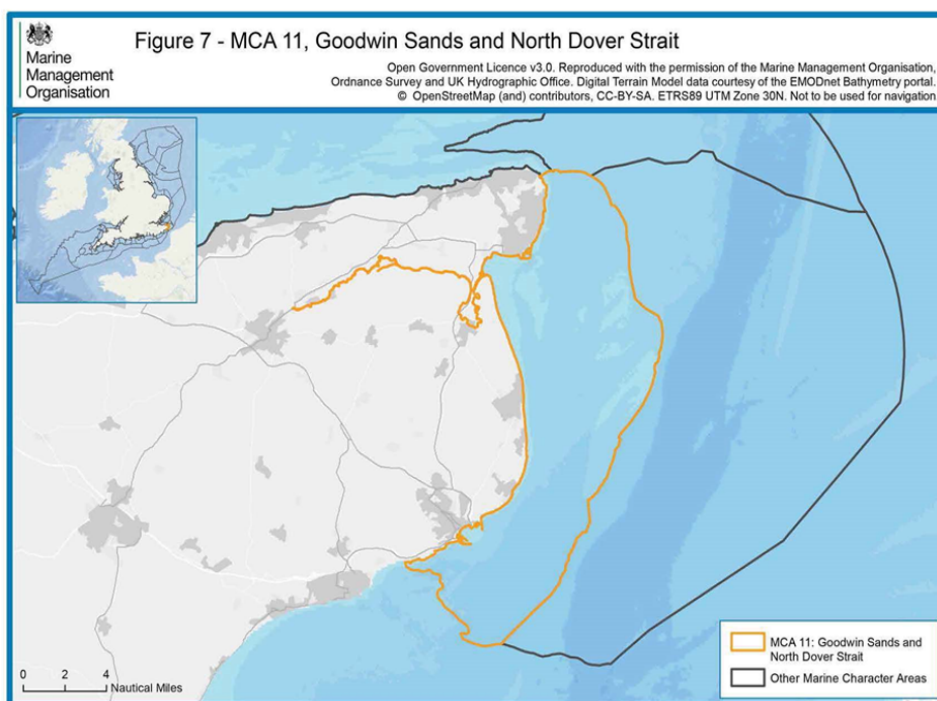


Figure 9 – MMO Representation of Goodwin Sands Marine Character Area, p. An Empty Chart (MMO, 2018b, p. 17).

This representation from the Marine Character Assessment appears contrary to the importance ascribed to the Goodwin Sands through both the public representations and within the District Heritage Study. The Production of Space methodology is helpful here in demonstrating how different conceptualisations of marine space are present within social space. To gain a more 'concrete' understanding of the productive forces present within this social space our story sets sail into the archives, searching for origins and beginnings and finding a rich and vivid tradition of conceptualising the Goodwin Sands as anything but empty.

Productive power in the archives

The archive and research library at Deal Maritime and Local History Museum is physically located five miles from the Goodwin Sands and contains a selection of local history books that provide historical representations of the area. This section presents these archival sources in chronological order to illustrate how stories are reproduced, amended, expanded, or contradicted by later representations. In this way the Production of Space methodology allows for the development – the social production – of the Goodwin Sands to be seen as an evolving process, with each author changing focus and spatial meaning. The importance of acknowledging the power of both conceived space and lived experience within spatial analysis is also seen. As time passes authors can draw on an ever-increasing collection of sources and external research. More is known about oceanographic processes that render earlier accounts of the origins of the Goodwin Sands less credible. Exploring the archives allows the Production of Space thesis to be understood in its simplest terms: the story of the Goodwin Sands, or any social space, changes over time as more is known about it through physical enquiry, conceptual knowledge and experiences of being *there*.

The earliest source text within the Deal Archive provides the most comprehensive account of the Goodwin Sands within the collection. It is also the most critical of the limited source data on which many of the narratives and tales are based. At the outset the 'Memorials of the Goodwin Sands' is stated as providing an accurate representation of their origin and history:

In the following pages the fanciful legends and stories of the origin of the Sands and their connection with the 'Isle of Lomea' (the 'Insula Infera' of the Romans), together with the best known historical facts, bearing upon the whole question, have been carefully brought together. (Gattie, 1904, preface)

This reliance on 'best known historical facts' leads to the 'Memorials' concluding that the Island of Lomea (also expressed as 'Low Mear') existed as a precursor to Goodwin Sands (Gattie, 1904, 8). 'Evidence' of this is presented based on uncited 'early writers' who "distinctly mention three islands close to, or nearly opposite, the Roman Portus Rutupinus: one on the north, called 'Tanatus' (Thanet) or 'Teneth', from the fire beacon on its height; one on the south called 'Ratupiae' or 'Ruochini Insula' (Richborough); and one bearing south-east called 'Infera Insula' (Lomea, or Low Island)" (1904, p. 16, see also Holyoak, 2008, p. 76). The 'Memorials of the Goodwin Sands' includes a representation of an estimation of the East Kent Coast during the Roman Empire through a hand-drawn sketch reproduced in Figure 10.

Later historians reproduced these representations of the Goodwin Sands being the remnants of an island. One refers to "Lyell, the famous geologist [who] found that the Sands rest on blue clay, and are surrounded by deep water, and hence concluded that they are the remains of an island" (Laker, 1921, p. 388). Other early accounts reproduced include that some early historians "allege that the Sands emerged about 1100 AD when the Low Countries were inundated" (Laker, 1921, p. 388).

The most recently published local history text within the collection states that the "earliest mention of Lomea in print appears in 'De Rebus Albionis Britannicus', written by John Twyne (1501-81)" (Holyoak, 2008, p. 76). Twyne is cited as being "the sole authority of that century for the transformation of a fertile island into the treacherous sandbank" (Holyoak,

2008, p. 76). However, Twyne’s reputation is a matter of contention with other historians cautioning against acceptance of his account stating that, “All rests upon John Twyne’s recollection of his own reading of early chroniclers, or *perhaps even upon his imagination*” (Carter, 1953, p. xv, emphasis added).

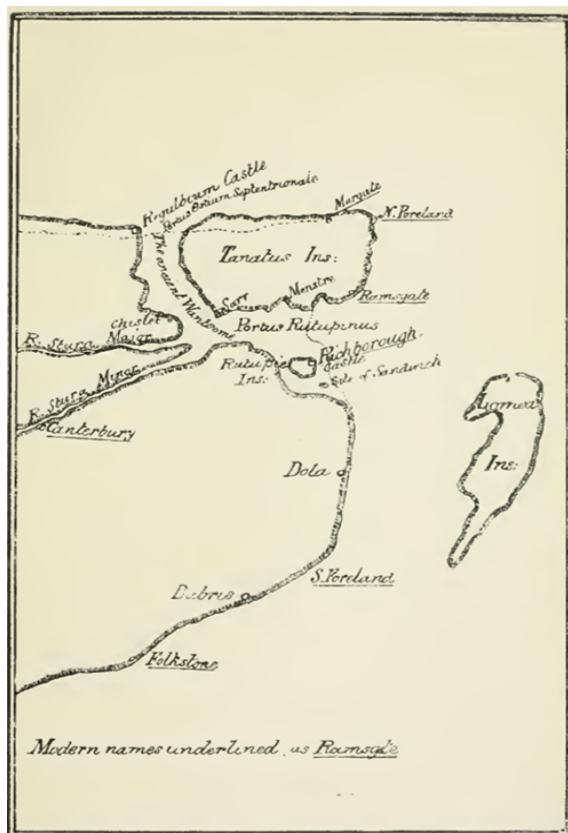


Figure 10 –Roman Kent Coast and Intra Insula (Lomea, or Low Island) (Gattie, 1904, p. 19).

The textual representations within Deal Archives’ collection are fascinating in their treatment of both historical ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’. An example of this is in the representation of the Goodwin Sands as simply “the natural consequence of the peculiar formation of the place, and of the cross tidal currents upon it, just as any other sands may be formed” (Holyoak, 2008, p. 78, see also Gattie, 1894, p. 33). This account is stated as being validated “throughout the 19th century by experienced engineers who separately determined that they are simply a mass of clean sand deposited on a bed of chalk” (Holyoak, 2008, p. 78).

Despite this assertion that the Goodwin Sands are, and always have been, ‘just sand’, local legends linking the Goodwin Sands to Earl Godwin (father of Harold II) in the 11th Century are entertained by this historian. Earl Godwin is “supposed to have anchored his ships in a natural harbour on the Sands although, in reality, he was more likely to have sheltered them in the Downs” (Holyoak, 2008, p. 76). Disassociating Earl Godwin from the origin stories of the Goodwin Sands is an enduring theme throughout the archival material with the fanciful nature of these tales used to discredit them:

One improbable story relates to how Earl Godwin while returning home at the head of his fleet was wrecked and drowned on the sandbank – and the name ‘Goodwin Sands’ perpetuates his memory – but, truth to tell, he suffered a stroke while dining with his son-in-law, Edward the Confessor, at Winchester, Easter 1053. He was buried in the Old Minster – a Benedictine Monastery – but his remains were swallowed up in the building of Winchester Cathedral in 1079. (Holyoak, 2008, p. 76, see also Gattie, 1904, 22)

The ‘fanciful legends’ regarding Earl Godwin find two main expressions. The first connects the Goodwin Sands with Godwin’s Estate “and of their destruction by the sea, as a just judgment upon him for his many crimes and his wicked life” (Gattie, 1904, p. 23). There is little expansion on this within the archive; the ‘many crimes and wicked acts’ appear to be the less important detail in this account. The second finds causal links between the drowning of the Goodwin Sands with a church spire at Tenterden, East Kent. In the Tenterden legend Earl Godwin constructed a steeple at Tenterden church to discharge a vow made to the saints to ensure his safe passage home to Lomea. The legend continues that, “being a careless, vacillating worshipper, with little or no trust in either saints or angels, he soon forgot his vow, now that the danger was past... and wholly neglected to fulfil his promise, when the vengeance of Heaven was inflicted upon him and his sons in the total destruction of his favourite sea-girt domain” (Gattie, 1904, p. 23). An alternative version of this Tenterden legend sees Godwin use money and timber allocated to the dams and seawalls of Lomea for the construction of Tenterden steeple. The inevitable consequence of this reallocation of resources was the inundation of Lomea during the first great storm that followed (Gattie, 1904, p. 23). Regardless of the version both legends can be evidenced as entirely fictitious. The submersion of Lomea “history states, occurred in 1099 [and] there was no steeple at all at Tenterden Church until the middle of the sixteenth century!” (Gattie, 1904, p. 23).

Similar to these representations of the Goodwin Sands produced through the legend of Earl Godwin is the archival account that “declares that the Sands once formed an island belonging to St. Augustine’s Monastery, but the monks neglected to repair the wall that kept back the sea, and so the island was overwhelmed” (Laker, 1921, p. 388). These representations are notable in their use of Christian ideology relating to sin and the necessity of honest worship for either safe navigational passage or protection against the elements. The link between maritime life and Christianity has a long history in England. Evidence of thirteenth century tide tables for high water at London Bridge exist and have been credited to St Alban’s abbey monks (Kirby & Hinkkanen-Lievonon, 2000, p. 16). Christian theology itself has seen the seas as both “the source of life and a terrifying vision of death” (Kirby & Hinkkanen-Lievonon, 2000, p. 41). Sixteenth century cartography continued these terrifying visions through its depiction of marine space filled with imagery dragons, sea monsters and other unholy beasts (Steinberg, 1999a).

During my fieldwork associated with this research, I was told by a local amateur historian and storyteller that the Goodwin Sands was ‘Kent’s Atlantis’. According to legend, island sheep-herders watched as the Great Storm of 1097 came in and rang a warning bell as they tried to save their land. It is said that fishermen would be out in rough nights and still hear the - bells warning them about the flooding of Infra Insula (research interview oral history MR:RT8 (Collins, 2020); Gattie, 1904; Laker, 1921; Holyoak, 2008). Contemporary concerns about sea-level rise make ever-popular Atlantis myths feel worryingly relevant for coastal

residents in low-lying areas². Indeed, an additional area of objection for the Goodwin Sands aggregate licence was the perceived increase in risk of coastal flooding from the removal of the ‘protective’ Goodwin Sands. The links between the existence of the coastal town of Deal and the Goodwin Sands is explored again below. And as these myths and stories evidence, the Goodwin Sands have “always been a favourite topic of speculation” (Laker, 1921, p. 388) and the prevalence of the Earl Godwin legends and the existence of Lomea appear in historical accounts of local cultural identity:

By the early years of the eighteenth century, the local tradition of a drowned island once the property of Earl Godwin had become firmly established. Had you visited a certain ale-house in Broadstairs in 1736, you could have played shove-ha’penny on an oak board which the landlord swore was made from a tree once growing on the island. (Carter, 1953, p. xvi)

For one author, a retired Goodwin Sands lightship watchman, these historical representations appear to correlate with his contemporary experience, to a greater or lesser extent: “for two-and-a-half years I had watched the Goodwins, often musing on their history, and coming to understand the dread they held for all seamen” (Carter, 1953: 3). Poetic representations of the sandbanks are also found within this 1953 text with the Sands stated as resembling a “Lilliputian Sahara, with tiny dunes and miniature cliffs and deep holes with crumbling edges and quicksand bottoms” (Carter, 1953, p.4). However, whilst many histories and contemporary accounts portray the Goodwin Sands with a certain romanticism, the Carter text portrays an alternative representation. Here the productive power of the authors lived experience can be seen:

Before my eyes the whole face of the sand began to change. The gullies, "fox-holes" and swillies were linking up, and the water in them started to flow. The pleasant tinkle was gone, replaced by a more sinister sound the soft roar of the returning flood. The sands were losing their stability; they quaked and shook beneath my hurrying feet, while the low hummocks melted and ran like hot wax. (Carter, 1953, p. 4)

The value of this deep dive into the Goodwin Sands archival representations provides both fascinating and entertaining storytelling and also important insight into the origins of contemporary beliefs, views and values about the sandbank. Deal Maritime and Local History Museum has conducted its own research into the stories and myths associated with the Goodwin Sands using much of the above cited archival text. The resultant unreferenced publication provides a potted history of the Goodwin Sands, in which the caveats included in the Gattie (1904) and Carter (1953) texts are notably absent (Deal Museum, 2016). As a publicly accessible document, available within the local museum located within sight of the Goodwin Sands, the 2016 text risks being used as an authoritative source of information for local residents. This risks the continuation of ‘fanciful legends’ akin to the 1736 landlords’ assertion of possessing wood from a Goodwin Sands tree. Whilst myths and legends serve a purpose, as discussed in relation to religion above, within the marine consenting world these representations can cause undue concern to the impacts of development and require careful stakeholder engagement to diffuse whilst acknowledging their legitimacy within value formation.

² *Shima’s* special issue on Atlantis and related mythologies – 10(2) 2016 - is of note here (see Dawson & Hayward, 2016).

An example of how fact and fiction from historical documents requires careful consideration in relation to its productive power is the inclusion of shipwreck charts as representations of the Goodwin Sands within the marine licence public objections. These find precedence within both archival material and oral representations collected during research interviews. However, where the marine licence objections state the need to protect buried remains, the archival representations present a more nuanced account of the presence of shipwreck remains. Within detailed memoirs found in the local archives, an account of the sinking of the *Violet* in 1857 is given from the perspective of crew on The North Sand Head Lightship:

They thoroughly searched the sands, but because of the blinding snow squalls nothing whatever could be seen. However, they stayed on until daylight, and then made another careful and extensive search. At last they found a mast sticking out of the water. A little later other grim and ugly evidence went wallowing by on the flood-tide, p. a lifebuoy with three battered bodies lashed to it and the painted words 'S.S. Violet... In other words, in the three hours between the lightship firing her signals and the arrival of the tug and lifeboat, the Goodwins had swallowed an entire steamer, with her crew, passengers and cargo'. (Carter, 1953, p. 137)

But shipwrecks also have a positive side. These positives link shipwreck to the development of the coastal town of Deal. In these archival representations, the existence of Deal finds historical links 'the Downs' located between the town and the Goodwin Sands which "provide a reasonably safe anchorage in all weathers" (Arnold, 1995, p. 1). The Goodwin Sands themselves "provide a barrier against vicious easterly winds" (1995, p.1). This natural area of deeper water allowed for "as many as 300 ships [to] be seen at anchor in the Down sheltering from the elements [with] ships of the Royal Navy... never absent from local waters" (Arnold, 1995, p.1). The stories of local boatmen in the 17th and 18th Century operating a 'hovelling' trade in service of ships either at anchor in the Downs or foundered on the Goodwin Sands adds further to this representation (Carter, 1953, p. 102). The Deal, Walmer and Kingsdown hovellers had the dubious "privilege of being first to organize some attempt at snatching lives and ships from the Goodwins" (Carter, 1953, p. 101). In these representations it appears unlikely that there is much left within the Goodwin Sands today which requires protecting as the hovellers have long since removed all material to be sold, traded or otherwise put to use.

Representations of the Goodwin Sands defining it as navigationally dangerous are also found in the historical attempts to construct structures and beacons on the Sands to improve their safety. The first of these attempts was to "construct a lighthouse to warn mariners of the dangers of the Goodwin Sands... made by an Elizabethan entrepreneur, Gawen Smith, around 1580" (Holyoak, 2008, p. 78). Evidence from 1790 "when Trinity House considered the question of erecting a lighthouse on them" is also present (Laker, 1921, 1953). The 'Memorials of the Goodwin Sands' outlines numerous attempts and plans to build a variety of lighthouses and other structures on the Goodwin Sands, dating from 1829 to the early 20th century (Gattie, 1904; see also Laker, 1921). In 1843, a plan for a fortification to be built on Goodwin Sands was also considered (Gattie, 1904, p. 253). An additional 41 proposals for lighthouses made between 1845 and 1958 are evidenced within the archival material with none of them being successfully constructed. These accounts of development plans conceptualise the Goodwin Sands as a 'planning space', the epitome of Lefebvre's conceived space. This finds expression within one historical source in which both perceived space and lived experience are limited: "One thing is quite evident, and that

is, that the majority of the ingenious proposers knew just nothing at all of the real character of the Goodwin Sands, or of their true formation” (Gattie, 1904, p. 254).

Continuing a tradition

The archives place the Goodwin Sands far more centre stage, along with a cast of characters both real and fictional (and some a little of both). The disconnection between the starting point of this Goodwin Sands story – a marine licence application – and these historical representations is striking. But some strands of continuity are starting to appear. Kent’s Atlantis lives on in the minds of those at risk from submersion by rising seas, who fear Deal could suffer the same fate as Lomea. This continuity is an example of the productive power at play by the characters that keep the Goodwin Sands story alive, and who add their own representations to it. Another area of continuity within the social production of the Goodwin Sands is in the archival accounts of the proposed use of the Goodwin Sands as a development space. In more recent history development plans show the same industrialist ambition to use the sandbanks for a worthwhile purpose. They also lead the story back to the present day and the contemporary representations of space found within the marine licence application documents.

Dating from the 1960’s, three ambitious plans to construct an airport on the Goodwin Sands have been made. Whilst none of these have come to pass, what is interesting for this current story is that developers were able to see the Goodwin Sands as a potentially suitable location for such construction. A local newspaper report from December 1966 advises their readers that they have “recently heard that a member of an engineering firm has made a plan suggesting the construction of an airport on the treacherous Goodwin Sands” (*East Kent Mercury*, 1966). Drawing heavily on the history of previous construction plans, the story concludes that, “maybe this latest ‘building’ proposal could be possible, though fantastically expensive, but I doubt whether the inhabitants of Deal would altogether welcome a Goodwin Sands airport” (*East Kent Mercury*, 1966; citing Gattie, 1904). The Goodwin Sands airport plan re-emerged in 2002 as a “serious proposal which would have ‘minimum environmental impact’ plus ‘a high degree of security’ was projected by European Transport Interchange Ltd” (Holyoak, 2008, p. 82). A further incarnation of this plan was submitted to The Airports Commission in July 2013. The Commission’s demise ended progression of this scheme (Beckett Rankine, 2013). The 2013 plans were presented as “the sustainable answer to south-east England’s airport needs” and included conceptual images of the proposed development project reproduced in Figure 11.



Figure 11 – ‘Fly me to the Sands’: Representation of Proposed Goodwin Sands Airport (Beckett Rankine, 2013).

In addition to airport construction, representations of the Goodwin Sands as development site are also found in local newspaper reports from 1972 which outline “a plan to use thousands of tons of sand and silt from the Goodwin Sands for a reclamation scheme in Dover [which] could effect (sic) the coastline between Kingsdown and Sandwich Bay, making important and perhaps dangerous changes to the beach at Deal” (*East Kent Mercury*, 1972, n.p.). The report describes planned dredge activity strikingly similar to the marine licence application. Objections to the 1972 scheme are made by a retired civil engineer who is quoted as stating that, “any change in the shape of the Goodwin Sands would have an effect on the beach – just the same way as the building of Dover Harbour at the beginning of the century did” (*East Kent Mercury*, 1972, n.p.). The article maintains, however, that this view is not universally accepted and includes a statement from the Kent River Authority that concludes that, “it is extremely unlikely the taking of any part of the Goodwin Sand will effect [sic] the coastline opposite”. The 1972 article maintains that, “of course, if the proposal ever comes to fruition then it will provide an interesting spectacle for holiday-makers and residents”. The representation of Goodwin Sands development as a spectacle is likely not shared with contemporary objectors. A follow-up article in the same paper in 1975’ entitled ‘No Objection to Dredging on Goodwins’, states that, “Dover District Council will offer no objections to the dredging ... needed for the building of the new international hoverport at Dover” (*East Kent Mercury*, 1975, n.p.).

So, perhaps the story of the Goodwin Sands is more closely linked to development than contemporary protestors would like to believe? Both archival and more contemporary attempts to use the Goodwin Sands as a space to build certainly appear to conceive the space as somewhere to be tamed and made functional. If space is socially produced, then the more representations made which label the Goodwin Sands as development space, the more it becomes it. This leads to a potential critique of the Production of Space thesis in terms of how space is not just defined, but how it should be used. There is a risk here of a utilitarian calculus leading to spaces being defined by the greatest number of representations rather than through any consideration of ethical use of space. This is revisited in the discussion section of this article.

The ‘taming’ of the Goodwin Sands through development representations does lead to the most entertaining dimension of the Goodwin Sands story, where the sea becomes temporary land, and this intertidal nature – the perceived space of the Goodwins – takes centre stage.

Fly Me to The Sands and Let Me Play (Cricket) Among the Waves

Both archival and contemporary representations of the Goodwin Sands as a recreational space present the importance of this temporary landmass to the local communities of East Kent. The use of the Goodwin Sands for recreation has a long and quintessentially British eccentricity, as Gattie (1904, p.38) contemplates:

Most people will be inclined to think that about the very last place to be selected for the enjoyment of a game of cricket would be the Goodwin Sands. Yet it is a fact that several matches have been played there at different periods, each by a party of genuine enthusiasts, who seemed determined to try their favourite game—evidently for the singularity and the ‘fun of the thing’—on the most extraordinary, and apparently impossible spot they could select.

The first recorded cricket match on Goodwin Sands occurred in 1824 “under the direction of Captain Kennet B. Martin, then Harbour Master at Ramsgate, a gentleman who knew the Goodwin’s perhaps better than most people” (Gattie 1904, p. 39). A second recorded match in 1839/40 nearly ended in disaster due to the “inevitable ‘hamper’, with the eatables and drinkables, which were quite as much relished as the play had been” (Gattie, 1904, p. 39) leading to a delay in getting back on boats. Two matches played in 1844 and 1854 are also described in the archive literature along with tales of “games of cricket and bowls [being] played by daring excursionists” (Laker, 1921, p. 388; Gattie, 1904, p. 41). Images of re-enactments of these matches are also found in the archives including one in July 1973 “between the crews of two Royal Navy Survey Vessels” (Deal Museum Archive Display board) reproduced in Figure 12. It also appears that the fashion for ‘sandbank cricket’ is not limited to the Goodwin Sands. Other sandbanks are available. Bramble Bank in the Solent between the South Coast of England and the Isle of Wight, and the banks of the tidal River Tamar in the Southwest of England have also seen their share of temporary wickets (Hayward, 2017). As such these representations of the Goodwin Sands as a cricket ground are legitimised and given productive power through being part of a conceptual series of intertidal recreation spaces.



Figure 12 – Goodwin Sands cricket match, July 1973 (Deal Archives).

Annual cricket matches on the sandbank were made possible during the 1990s through ‘Goodwin Sands Potholing Club’ as one participant explained:

They used to organise trips out to the Goodwin Sands as a means of raising funds for local youth organisations. And Hoverspeed, who operated out of the Hover port in Dover, were quite keen to get involved for the publicity really and good public relations, so they used to charter, at cost, one of their hovercraft when it wasn’t being used for the international traffic and they’d fill it up with 120 people and out you’d go to the Goodwin Sands. 25 minute trip out to the sands. Obviously, it had to be at low tide when you knew you had a reasonable time there. But the hovercraft would just come straight off the water onto the sand, park up and everybody would get off and do their different things. (interviewee IR: MU4 - Collins, 2020)

Public tours to Goodwin Sands still operate albeit on a smaller scale. The use of Goodwin Sands as a recreational space has suffered decline since the demise of the Hoverport although evidence can be found of individual trips being made by local kayakers (Hastings Canoe Club, 2019) and swimmers (Kent Online, 2019). These small group activities are locally organised and trip reports published online are remarkably similar in their representations of the Goodwin Sands. Organised to raise awareness of the sandbank and supported by Goodwin Sands SoS, the 2019 ‘Big Swim’ organiser expresses a deep connection with the place, stating that “The Goodwins are part of who you are, my fellow humans: Kentish, proud of it and perhaps for the first time, expressing your feelings about the important issue of preserving our environment” (Kent Online, 2019). Absent of these public awareness intentions, the 2019 kayak account focuses on the physical experience of encountering the sandbank: “It was a strange feeling, standing on a beach and looking in one direction at a distant shoreline while in every other direction was open sea (Hastings Canoe Club, 2019).

A final recreational activity which provides representations of the Goodwin Sands is an organised 5km run which an adventure run and ultra-marathon organiser publicised as a once-in-a-lifetime “bucket list” event in 2018 (interviewee NR: RT3 - Collins, 2020). Interviewing the organiser provided additional perspectives and representations of the sandbank unconnected to local experience or cultural identity, with the Goodwin Sands chosen as a run location due to the uniqueness of the “highly PRable” location (interviewee NR: RT3 - Collins, 2020).. The national run organiser was aware of the perceived dangers of the Goodwin Sands but was keen to dismiss these as of no undue threat stating that they are “not there to present undue risk. That’s not the business we’re in... if it were we wouldn’t be in business” (interviewee NR: RT3 - Collins, 2020). The idea behind the event was partly due to the founder’s involvement with the Dutch sport of Woldlopen, or “walking in intertidal mud flats with the tide out and... really engaging with the wildlife and matter of that intertidal environment” (interviewee NR: RT3 - Collins, 2020).

The run event was organised for August 2018 – a period coinciding with the fieldwork for doctoral research that informs this – but was cancelled due to unfavourable weather. Evidence of test runs and the successful completion of the first organised run are found online through the organisation’s blog and local newspaper articles. The themes displayed in swimmer and kayaker comments are reproduced within runners’ accounts:

In no time at all we were back where we started with huge smiles on our faces. This was a very rare opportunity and something I will never forget. Although you want to stop and take pictures and shoot video and simply stop and ‘take it all in’ there is the constant nagging reminder to get back to the drop off point before the tide reclaims the whole island. (Evans, 2018).

The inclusion of a Garmin GPS track of the run route caused amusement for one participant in that it appeared to show “a run done out to sea. It kept suggesting I had just done a fast swim not a run” (Evans, 2018). Whilst the Garmin representation of the Goodwin Sands is explained by the proposed purpose of the tracker as a walking and running app, the appearance of the sandbank as a blank blue space illustrates both the offshore location of the area and the effect this has on representations originating from terrestrial focused perspectives. This is presented along with Goodwin Sands run images in Figure 13. The absence of any identifying markers, including the bathometric data presented within navigational charts and the marine licence application charts, adds to the

sense that this representation of the Goodwin Sands is powerfully presenting it as ‘nothing at all’.

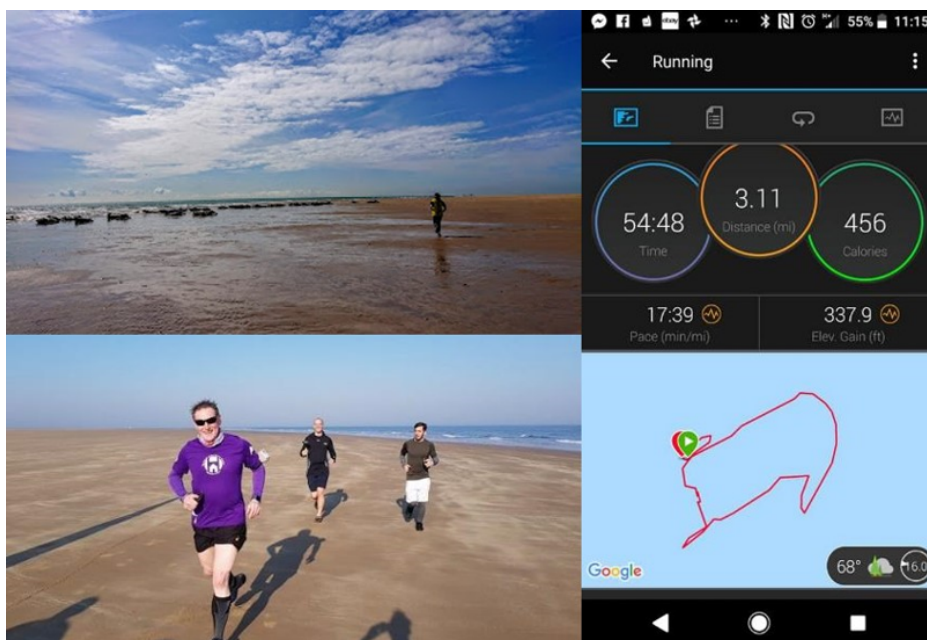


Figure 13 – Running in the sea (top and right: Evans, 2018; bottom left: Isle of Thanet News, 2019).

These recreational user comments complement those found within archival accounts of encounters with ‘the Sands’. The surreal and unique experience of visiting and interacting with the Goodwin Sands appears poetic and profound. It is clear from the contemporary representations included within this wider section that experiencing the Goodwin Sands is crucially important for gaining knowledge of them. To this end, to be able to tell this story of the Goodwin Sands I had to meet them personally. A trip to the sandbank utilising the publicly organised tours helped me to gain perspective on both the physicality of the area and the public experience of entering this space. In so doing I can add my own representation to the story of the Goodwin Sands and participate in the production of their social space.

Destination Goodwin Sands: Meeting the Goodwins ‘in person’

Tide and weather dependant public tours to the Goodwin Sands operate out of Dover Harbour. The short draft catamaran that takes visitors out to the sandbank is replaced by unpowered dinghy for the final approach, shown in Figure 14.

The ‘arrival’ experience adds to the surrealism of the encounter. With minimal safety advice visitors are allowed an hour on the sandbank before they need to return to the catamaran and the temporary land once again becomes sea. The space feels both empty and imbued with meaning. The smell of the sea, the feel of the waves, sea air and slightly yielding wet sand make for a unique experience. The only sounds audible are the waves

breaking on the sands and herring gulls overhead. This is a full sensory lived experience.³ During my visit this multisensory tranquillity was only broken by a Spitfire flying overhead, a coincidental reminder of the objection to disturbance of war graves and wreck. Of course, without the extensive research I had undertaken on the Goodwin Sands before my visit I would likely not have attached significance to this aircraft's appearance. Is my own positionality a problem in terms of my ability to experience the perceived space of the Goodwin Sands without recourse to its representations?



Figure 14 – Transfer to the Goodwin Sands (Collins, 2020).

I was standing in the English Channel, in between the North Sea shipping lane to the East and White Cliffs of Dover to the West. This offered a chance to reflect on the physical location of the Sands and the archival and contemporary representations I had been working with for the months leading up to my visit. This Goodwin Sands trip was organised as part of doctoral fieldwork. The history and controversy of the marine licence application were well known to me. So too were the archival accounts and poetic representations of the spirituality and meaning of the sands. Photographs made were reviewed upon return to land. They show both the *Goodwin Sands* and also *just a sandbank*. Meaning can only be attached to them in virtue of the label attached. I did, however, make an image of the tiny dunes and miniature cliffs of Carter's "Lilliputian Sahara" (1953, p. 615). I could see exactly what he meant by this description.

During my visit it felt important to take a handful of sand home with me. I felt the need to provide evidence of my encounter and an old sandwich bag found in my coat pocket served as an ad-hoc sample container. The sand sample now lives in a Kilner jar on my shelf. It is labelled. It is *just sand* (Figure 15). But to me it is the culmination of years of obsession about this space, and a reminder that as part of my PhD I went to this cool place. During this visit *representational space* was experienced. However, this lived experience was

³ Lefebvre's later *Rhythmanalysis*, which seeks to understand how the rhythms of everyday life effect the lives of inhabitants within spaces, is also relevant to my experience here. Indeed, this later text uses an example of watching the ebb and flow of the tide as an analogy of the natural rhythms of the body and of urban life. (Lefebvre, et al. 2004)

Collins: Shifting sands, layering meanings – the Goodwin Sands

coloured by the representations already encountered. The Goodwin Sands as spatial practice only became evident upon reflection of the data collected from the visit.



Figure 15 - "A Lilliputian Sahara" (Collins, 2020).

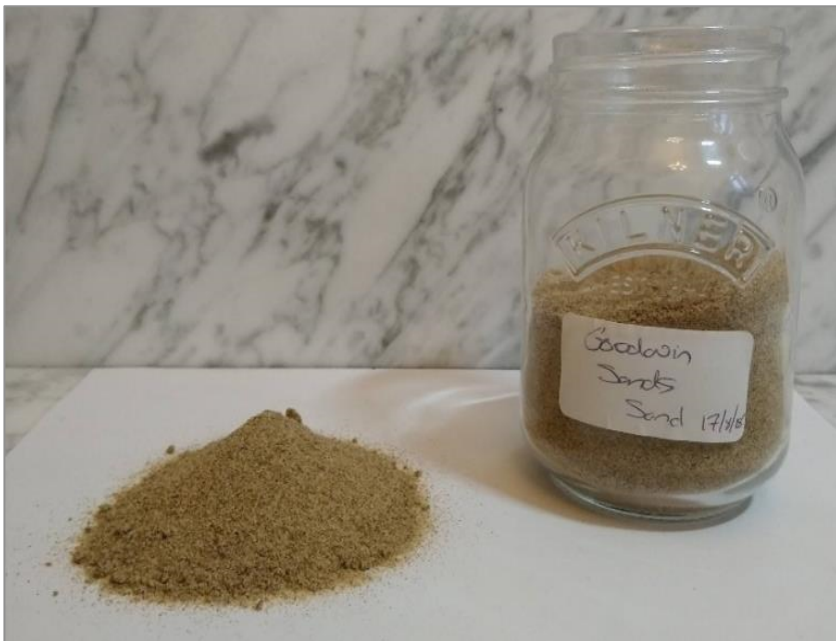


Figure 16- "Just Clean Sand" (Collins, 2020).

Drawing less-than-concrete conclusions

It is clear from the story told above that the ‘concrete’ nature of the Goodwin Sands is more than that presented within the marine licence application and supporting assessment documents that provided our departure point. Selective representations alone cannot express the richness and complexity of the Goodwin Sands as a socially produced space. It also cannot express its contradictions. The linkages and multiple meanings, values and beliefs found within historical and contemporary representations *coproduce* this space, with its physical and lived moments. The ‘unpeopled’ account given within EIA descriptions appears contradictory to the rich and diverse cultural usage of the area both physically and mentally. In this way, the application EIA is evidenced as a very specific and calculated ideological mediation of space necessarily conceived to support development consent.

Of course, a pragmatic argument could be made that if representations require archival research to be uncovered, and hyper-local storytelling to keep alive, they have been given an unjustly large role within the production of the Goodwin Sands. Lefebvre’s methodology is hard to apply. It is hard to take representations as they are: one representation, from one person, at one time, based on their lived experience, physical encountering and conceptual landscape. Some representations appeal to nostalgic sensibilities. Some feel ‘wrong’ due to contemporary value judgements about use of natural resources. This is acknowledged. However, for me, the purpose of using the Production of Space thesis as a methodology is as a challenge to current marine regulatory practices operating in the UK. The use of positivist Environmental Impact Assessment and the need for ‘materiality’ within planning considerations (DCLG, 2021) does have limits. Subjective values and qualitative data are hard to include within a quasi-judicial system where decisions can be legally challenged. How do regulators deal with multiple public objections that don’t fit the definition of a ‘material consideration’?

As the representations within this story make clear, the meaning of the Goodwin Sands depends on public experience of them and the absence of this from application impact assessment denies the public nature of this social space. Where the Goodwin Sands marine licence application documents privilege physical environmental receptors, the myths and stories associated with its historical and contemporary socio-cultural representation gives meaning which is richer than a purely physical geographical account. It is through this process of the sedimentation - the laying down, or layering - of values, meanings and imaginaries onto the sands where the dissolution of natural space into social space is evident.

To bring this story to a close, acknowledgement of the limitations of spatial planning practices from which lived experience is absent needs to be considered. In limiting lived experience, the human connections with space are minimised:

The ‘perceived space’ of everyday social life and commonsensical perception blends popular action and outlook but is often ignored in the professional and theoretical ‘conceived space’ of cartographers, urban planners, or property speculators. Nonetheless, the person who is fully human also dwells in a ‘lived space’ of the imagination and of moments which have been kept alive and accessible by the arts and literature. (Shields, 2001, p, 230)

The importance of acknowledging the power of arts, literature, recreation, and experience, on the forming of spatial attachment and spatial meaning cannot be fully included with current marine planning and licencing practices. Lefebvre speaks of the need to understand the futility of attempts at capturing the ‘concrete’ nature of (social) space. The Goodwin Sands offer an opportunity to understand this all too well. The Sands will shift, their meaning will evolve as more representations are made, and no two experiences of them will ever be the same.

The ‘concrete’ Goodwin Sands remains, for me, wonderfully unobtainable. Unable to be ‘locked up’ as sand is within construction concrete. Perhaps others would like a more definitive answer to what the Goodwin Sands are and what they *should* be used for. I’m sure both developers, objectors and regulators would, but for different reasons and marine policy can be seen as an attempt at answering these deontological questions. Should this marine space be used for development?

Regardless of the answer, the Goodwin Sands will remain as a social space. This is the great opportunity Lefebvre is giving to spatial planning, and our understanding of space, spatial attachments and spatial impacts. Our decisions and representations are *part* of the story of spaces, they change spaces (physically and conceptually), but they are *not definitive*. Learning to recognise the importance of representations made outside of spatial planning practices will certainly help this learning process. Regulatory decisions matter: they are part of the story. But they are not the end to it. New stories will be told, new applications submitted, new representations added, and the constant production of spatial moments will continue ever forward.

I would like to express my thanks to my reviewers for their insightful comments, which have resulted in this final version. Thanks also to my research interviewees and all those involved in the social production of the Goodwin Sands for making it possible to tell this story.

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Collins: Shifting sands, layering meanings – the Goodwin Sands

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