

Let me tell you the mysterious tale of Wiveton bridge

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My grandfather, George Gooch, was born in Wiveton. So was my mother. That is probably why, unlike most children in Norwich, I was brought up with the knowledge that there was something mysterious about Wiveton bridge.

Wiveton used to be located on the western edge of what was, until a few centuries ago, the broad estuary of the River Glaven.

“Clay”, as it was spelt in those days, lay across from it on the eastern bank. John Wright, writing in the *Glaven Historian*, the excellent magazine produced by the Blakeney Area Historical Society, tells us that in the old days, tidal sea water reached inland as far as Glandford Mill.

And there were actually two channels of the Glaven between Clay and Wiveton, with something like an island in the middle.

Right up until the early medieval period, there was no way to get across the estuary, except at low tide, until you got as far upstream as Glandford.

But then bridges were built. The – very old – bridge we now have in Wiveton, which crossed the western branch of the Glaven, was built in the 1300s, replacing one which had been constructed a few decades earlier.

■ St Margaret's Church, Clay from the churchyard at Wiveton. At one time a boat would have been required to get from one to the other across the river Glaven.

Picture: LIBRARY

And there also used to be another, wooden, bridge across the eastern branch from Clay.

Being situated on either side of this estuary meant that Wiveton and Clay were, like Blakeney, rather important harbours, which brought the villages considerable wealth.

But then in the 17th century the embankment which now carries the coast road from Blakeney to Clay was constructed, and the estuary gradually silted up.

There is nothing mysterious about any of this to the historians of the Blakeney area. But there is this one mysterious thing which I came to learn about and

ponder in my childhood: there is a special name for the area under Wiveton bridge – for the space between the bottom of the bridge and the water.

The name might perhaps have to do with the fact that the Glaven has historically marked the boundary between the parishes of Clay and Wiveton. But nobody really seems to know where the name comes from – please let me know if you do!

And, in particular, nobody seems to know why on earth an area under a bridge should have a name at all anyway. Why would it?

But it does. The area under Wiveton bridge is called “Nowhere”.