

EARTHQUAKE 2007

Tea- tonic plate shift

MICHAEL Godred, 68, of Albion Road, was in town having a cup of tea when the earth moved.

His daughter was at home asleep as she works nights. Mr Godred, who is retired, said: "I had gone to town to do my shopping and was having a cup of tea when it happened."

"Mr first thought was that it was an earthquake. I came home to find my chimney had crashed into the back garden."

"The house had shaken badly from the looks of things. One of the kitchen doors had smashed into the sink, and lots of soil had come down the chimney."



Smash: Michael Godred surveys the damage.

FOPJ280407Earthquake-15

Just no way to predict tremor

Report by
Sara Howlett

AN EXPERT has said earthquakes like the one which hit Folkestone are impossible to predict.

Dr Roger Musson from the British Geological Survey in Edinburgh said the tremors - which hit 4.3 on the Richter Scale - could not be foreseen - but it was always going to happen at some point.

He added he thought it was lucky that the quake had not caused total devastation, as tremors in the Dover Straits had done hundreds of years ago.

Dr Musson said the most violent quake was recorded in 1580. A similar-sized quake today would cause devastation for an area 100 miles across.

The geologist said: "It is not something that is totally exceptional. We get an earthquake of this strength in the UK on aver-

age about every five to 10 years.

"But what is less common is that this earthquake has affected the south east of England whereas the north and west of Britain are normally more seismically active."

"We have been really lucky today that this earthquake was of a magnitude of 4.3 occurring where it did on the Dover Straits."

"The fault that produced this earthquake has, in historical terms, produced a magnitude of 6 twice - or at least something very close to a magnitude of 6."

"The damage caused during a 6 is much more considerable. "The fact that a 6 magnitude

earthquake has occurred twice in this location suggests it is not impossible it happens again.

"I am hoping that now we have had an earthquake with a 4 magnitude this has relieved some of the stress from the fault line which means that the risk of a larger earthquake happening here is considerably reduced now."

The expert added: "We cannot predict if an earthquake is about to happen and there is no way of knowing if one is coming or about to happen."

"This stretch of the Dover Straits has produced four significant earthquakes in historical times and means we have always been able to say there is going to be a fifth at some point - but there was no way of telling that it was going to be on Saturday, or this year or even in the next 50 years."

Letters extra

Folkestone →
Earthquake
NOT THE FIRST TIME
NOTHING NEW

A RUMBLE, then suddenly I and my bed were lurching from side to side on the Coastguard Terrace, Sandgate. For a split second I thought that Encombe estate was on the move again. But no. Still shaking I recalled that in 1929 Sandgate had experienced a small tidal wave 10ft to 12ft high which swept up the beach and withdrew as quickly as it came. It was thought to be caused by a deep disturbance in the seabed as happened in 1812 (my Sandgate history, page 39). The sea beneath my window, however, kept its calm.

This also reminded me that on June 18, 1938 the *Folkestone Herald* reported the uncanny sensations of Hythe residents when minor tremors hit the area affecting upper storeys of buildings.

However, the most authoritative explanations and predictions came (Daily Telegraph August 25, 1983) in an address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science given by Dr Muir Wood (later knighted and former Halcrow adviser to Folkestone and Shepway District Council) in collaboration with Charles Melville of Imperial College, London.

Together they were producing a historical survey of British earthquakes claiming that for centuries they were part of British everyday life "but by the 1950s everyone was busy denying their existence."

Diving into old documents Muir Wood noted that Kent lay on the edge of an earthquake zone which runs through Cologne, Germany. Among others, in 1382 Canterbury was hit demolishing the Cathedral bell tower. In 1580 an earthquake around the Strait of Dover killed people as far away as London and Belgium. The next major earthquake, he said, was bound to hit the south east of England and could be a major disaster if its epicentre was anywhere near the liquefied gas tanks on Canvey Island.

Muir Wood added that the fame of a Scottish earthquake at a highland village of Comrie in the 19th century diverted much of the monitoring programme, such as it was, north of the border and 500 kilometres away from the most damaging earthquakes liable to hit England and Wales.

Planners and developers may prefer to ignore such eventualities but Shepway, in particular Folkestone, got off easy this time, thank Heaven.

Linda Rene-Martin, Sandgate

SATURDAY, April 28 is a day I will never forget. It started off as usual. I got up, did my ablutions and was just contemplating whether to shave now or have my breakfast first. The time was 8.17am. I decided to shave first.

I reached for the shaver then heard a huge commotion outside. All the seagulls in Folkestone suddenly took to the air screeching out their alarm call. Seconds later the whole house shook violently from side to side. Just about everything in the room that wasn't already on the floor was thrown down.

This was accompanied by a terrible rumbling sound. It seemed to go on forever but was probably about 10 seconds. I was very scared, more than I had ever been in my entire life.

At the same time the electricity went off, adding to the scare even more. I threw on my dressing gown and rushed downstairs.

On opening the front door my ears were assaulted by a huge cacophony of sound as all the alarms in every shop and building in the town centre went off together, not to mention thousands of car alarms as well.

As I looked up at the building and all the others in the street I was relieved not to see huge cracks in the walls. I also noticed that our chimney stacks appeared to be intact as well. I went back upstairs to my room and started to pick everything up that had fallen over.

After that I tried to phone friends and family to find out how they were but the mobile lines were in meltdown and I was unable to make a call. Luckily, the

landline was still working so I phoned those who had a landline, but anyone who had cordless phones were all unable to be contacted as the phones went off when the electricity did. I got dressed and went down the town to visit friends I couldn't contact.

The town centre appeared remarkably undamaged but I heard later that streets in Radnor Park, Pavilion Road, Blackbull Road and Canterbury Road area had suffered the worst with chimneys coming down and destroying roofs etc.

With only one serious injury reported Folkestone seems to have got off somewhat lightly. The quake was measured as "a mild 4.3" on the scale. If that was a MILD one, I NEVER want to be anywhere near a strong quake.

Stan Cascino, Bouverie Square, Folkestone

IS THIS the only time we talk? As everyone knows here in Folkestone last Saturday we had a mini earthquake. At first nobody was quite sure what was going on and rushed to the streets to speak to neighbours.

As mum and I drove to Cheriton to make sure my Nan and Grandad were okay we saw many people in the streets talking, seeing if each other were okay, or if there was anything they could do to help.

Why does it take an earthquake to get people talking? My Grandad, Edward Wootton, said before the war nobody spoke, similar to today, but as soon as war broke out people were out on the streets checking on neighbours. So why does it take a disaster to get people talking? Is it because we draw comfort from being with others, or is it we are just plain nosy? All I know is, it was nice to see people out talking in all sorts of day and night wear caring for each other.

Natalie-Faye Smith (aged 16), Folkestone

ROB Dickson, 38, of Canterbury Road, works at a local factory. He was asleep when the earthquake struck and his teenage son was the only other person at home. Mr Dickson said: "I was fast asleep. The shaking woke me up and I ran downstairs. "My first thought was to just get out of the house. The whole house was shaking, stuff was coming off the mantelpieces. "I didn't know what was going on. It only lasted a few seconds but it felt like a long time."

Fri 4th
Sat 5th
Sun 6th

Sat 12th
Sat 19th
Fri 25th
Sat 26th
Sun 13th
and 27th

SKIP
HIRE
RECYCLING
SPECIALIST

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THE DAY THE EARTH SHOOK

Fault line under Channel produces the quakes



■ Chief Constable Mike Fuller

Tried and tested plan proved effective in emergency

KENT'S Chief Constable has praised the way the earthquake emergency was handled.

Mike Fuller, who chairs the group that co-ordinates emergency planning in Kent, said the agencies involved gave a rapid and effective response.

Comprehensive and well-tested plans ensured that emergency services and other organisations were ready to swing quickly into action to deal with the aftermath of the tremor, he said.

On Saturday, senior officers from Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, South East Coast Ambulance Service, Kent County Council and the Army established a strategic co-ordination, or Gold, group at the headquarters of Kent Police in Maidstone.

Work together

A similar group was set up in Folkestone, also involving Shepway District Council and power company representatives.

Mr Fuller said: "What happened on Saturday demonstrated how important it is for us all to plan and work together.

"Thanks to our tried, tested and well-exercised plans there was highly effective co-ordination and co-operation between the agencies involved.

"On the whole, I am pleased at how well our plans worked - something borne out by the positive feedback we have already received from the public."

IN JANUARY 2005, after the Boxing Day tsunami in Asia, we reported that experts were warning that Dover and the South East could be affected by an earthquake similar to one that occurred in 1580.

In fact, Saturday's earthquake was the fifth quake produced by a fault line located in the Dover Straits.

The first reported quake, measuring 5.8 on the Richter Scale, was in February 1382.

In 1580, the quake measured between 5.3 and 5.9 and had an

epicentre beneath the Channel. Calais and Boulogne were flooded, many people drowned and dozens of boats were sunk by huge waves.

Sections of wall fell in Dover, including the loss of a piece of the cliff and castle wall.

Great swell

At Sandwich, a gable end fell from the north wing of St Peter's Church, four arches cracked in St Mary's Church and part of a chimney fell down.

A great sea swell arose in the

Channel sinking 25 to 30 British, French and Flemish vessels.

About 12 hours later, it was reported that 30 houses fell down near Dover and a second deluge was reported to have drowned 120 people. Two people were killed in London.

Geologists warned that they could not rule out another 1580-type earthquake in the future, but they said it was impossible to estimate how soon it might occur.

There were subsequent quakes in this area in 1776 and 1950,

which measured about 4 on the Richter Scale - similar to Saturday's earthquake. Some people remember a tremor which hit Dover in 1938.

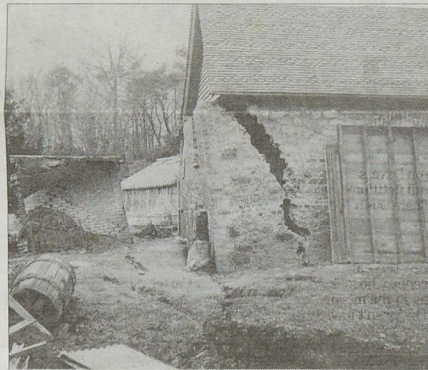
Roger Musson, a seismologist with the British Geological Survey, said: "We know there is a fault line under the Channel and that it produces quakes measuring around 4 or 6.

"My fear is that if a 1580 style earthquake happened again, the damage would be much worse because of the huge growth in the population."

Tsunami hit Channel in Tudor times

Experts fear a repeat of 1580 disaster

When disaster struck in 1893



■ Cracks appear as buildings collapse



■ Onlookers survey the extensive damage

NATURAL forces have hit Sandgate before, one of the worst occasions being 114 years ago, when a huge landslide made hundreds homeless.

A series of shocks resembling an earthquake struck during the evening one Saturday in March 1893.

People rushed from their homes into the streets.



■ Homes collapsed in the aftermath of the disaster



■ Sections of homes slipped down the slope

Two hundred houses were damaged, with 70 being made uninhabitable. The main road was cracked in many places, the pavement torn up and gas and water mains broken.

Chasms of up to 9ft wide appeared at Encombe. A pamphlet was produced to tell visitors about what was known as the Sandgate Sensational Soil Subsidence.

So what did Radio 2 DJ Brian know?

A WOMAN from Ashford could hardly believe her ears as the tremor struck while she was lying in bed on Saturday morning.

As Gill Holland wondered what on earth was happening, the DJ she was listening to on the radio announced that the next record he was going to play was called Earthquake.

Mrs Holland, of The Limes, Kingsnorth, was tuned in to Brian Matthew's Sounds of the Sixties show on Radio 2, on Saturday morning, as she enjoyed a lie-in.

Mrs Holland said: "My husband John was in the shower. I'd listened to the news and was still in bed.

"Then I felt the tremor. "I put my hands down by my side and wondered if it was going to happen again.

"As I felt the tremor the DJ introduced this record called Earthquake.

"It was an amazing coincidence."

According to the show's playlist the record was, indeed, Earthquake, by Bobbi Lynn, recorded in 1968.



■ Earthquake, at the foot of the DJ playlist

Picture: BBC