

## Copt Point



The Gault clay cliffs at Copt Point, Folkestone

The Gault Clay at Folkestone first appears at the top of the sea cliff beneath the East Cliff Pavilion in Wear Bay Road, where it sits conformably on the Folkestone Beds and extends eastwards for around one kilometre, declining gradually to the foreshore in East Wear Bay where it is overlain by the lower Chalk.

The Gault is divided into Upper and Lower formations, equating to the Middle and Upper Albian stages respectively. The Lower Albian is represented by the Folkestone Beds and comprises the uppermost Lower Greensand. The Gault is further subdivided into thirteen beds (Beds I to VII in the Lower Gault and beds VIII to XIII in the Upper).

Gault fossils can be collected in situ (although it is undesirable to dig in the cliffs),

and from fallen blocks of clay at the foot of the sea cliffs or washed out between rocks and boulders on the beach. Occasionally, outcrops of clay offering excellent collecting opportunities are exposed on the foreshore in East Wear Bay after beach sand has been removed following winter storms. Fossils from the Lower Greensand can be collected from the foreshore '*mammilatum*' reef.

Care should always be taken when collecting on or below the sea cliffs and only when tidal conditions permit. The grey, crumbling cliffs can be quite dangerous as cliff falls can occur. When wet the clay is sticky and soft. The regular finds of boots stuck in the mud illustrates the hazards of climbing the cliffs in wet weather.