

Birchington - Prehistoric

Arch. Cant. XXII – 1897

A house recently erected for Mr. W. W. Neame at Birchington between the high road from Margate and the L.C. and D. on the edge of a new thoroughfare to be called the "Beaconsfield Road."

During the excavations for the foundations of the house, (Beaconsfield (no 25 Alpha Road) 2 skeletons at a depth of 10 feet, lying head to head found. Both lay east and west, no relics observed but animal bones, charred matter and oyster shells, and a few yards to the north east of the house when laying a drain a third skeleton was found with a small Roman vase by the skull. – Lay east and west, head to west (Oct 1896).

Arch. Cant. XLUI p.xliii – 1933

An inhumation burial plot was found at Minnis Bay.

Arch. Cant. : LI. p 191. 1938

The Beck Find Minnis Bay

1938 – James Beck, a resident of Birchington and a scholar at King's School, Canterbury, aged 14 years, found a series of holes sunk in the chalk on the shoreline at Minnis Bay and covered at high tide.

Some of the holes were circular, or nearly so, and measured 2'10" to 4'3" in diameter, and 10" to 3'8" in depth. Another was 2'3" square, one oblong 8' x 2'6" x 1' depth.

They contained 1 unbroken millstone-like slab, 38" across by 4½" thick with a central hole 4½" in diameter. Half of the upper stone of a quern 13" in diameter and 32 " thick and fragments of others, one complete New Forest type two handled jug with flowering decoration, a slip on shoulder and bulge, other pots, pot shards, pieces of Samian ware etc.

Found:

- Pieces of wood and horses teeth
- Small pot shards
- Wine jar, 2 handled unbroken, New Forest type
- Half of red ware colour-coated dish
- Half of black ware pot of 4th century type
- Part of upper stone of quern
- Quantity of sticks with straw below
- Curved pieces of wood resembling barrel staves
- Grey Belgic vase
- Oyster shells, food bones, washed flints
- Nodules of iron pyrites

Some of the holes may possibly be the bottoms of wells.

In a further series of holes or rather irregular depressions in the chalk foreshore farther west was found by Beck. These contained bones, wood, and wattle flooring and post holes indicating hut sites and palisading and a hoard of late Bronze Age implements. Also there were bones of deer, ox, right half of human jaw, heating stones, impressions of ferns and other plants.

Beck suggested that this was the site (see 4a) of a bronze age fishing village, built round an open space on the bank of a stream that flowed out at Minnis Bay when the land was at a higher level, but the hoard cannot belong to the long subsequent history of the site.

From the period of the hoard, with its associated fragment of a late bronze age cordoned Bucket Urn, occupation is carried on through the 1st century B.C. with coarse hand-made incipient foot-ring pots, to the 1st century A.D. with Belgic material and on to a 2nd century period with Samian shards – finally closing in the 3rd and 4th centuries with a colour coated dish and hand baked 2 handled jug of New Forest type and a roughly made black-ware jar.

Composition of the hoard was much later than the hoard found in Birchington in 1904 (Ant. Journal Vol II 1924). The site of that hoard was $\frac{3}{4}$ mile farther inland and may have been on the bank of the same stream. Beck found a large number of Bronze Age belts, palstaves, sword, daggers knife blades, spear heads, hammer (socketed), chisel, gauge, bones, bracelet, anklet, belt. Many are now in the Quex Museum and the British Museum

More possible BECK finds - Arch. Cant. LXXI – 1957

Minnis Bay – late Bronze Age pottery found on the eroded foreshore – remains of leather objects and a red deer antler axe mount in parts, which may form part of the habitation complex investigated by Beck in 1938. Also found 1st century pottery, portions of leather sandals, wooden and bone objects and a small La Fere III brooch. On the eroded edge of the cliff early 2nd century pottery.

Roman site at Westgate - Thanet Gazette – 10th January 1967

After more than 30 years of delving into Thanet's history, Father Dunstan Prangnell, of Westgate, has only recently discovered the details of a Roman squared ditch enclosure at Westgate. It was first discovered in 1953 by Professor J. K. Joseph, a professor in aerial photography at Cambridge University, while on an aerial reconnaissance trip. The site was also mentioned briefly in a book by Frank Jenkins about Roman times in Kent.

Now Father Dunstan Prangnell tells me the site appears as a square of about 150 feet, with a small oblong on the outside of one corner. "The ditch is interrupted for a gate on one side, and there are still faint traces of a building in the middle of the square, he said. The plot is between Minster Road, Westgate and Somali's Farm, Park Road, Birchington, and as yet appears to be untouched since the Romans left our shores.

Roman Birchington - from the Victoria County History Volume Three

A cordoned urn of soft grey ware of the middle of the first century A.D. was found with burnt bones in Epple Bay Avenue between the railway and the sea in 1904 (Antiquity Journal iv 158)

In laying down a drain for a house called Beaconsfield, in Beaconsfield Road (renamed Alpha Road by 1900) in 1896 a skeleton lying east and west and accompanied by a small Roman vase near the skull was found at a depth of 2½ ft. Within a yard was the outline of another grave lying north and south. (Arch Cant xxii proc p lxii)

A gold ring inscribed **FIDES CONSTANTI** was ploughed up in Birchington, perhaps about 1860, it was formerly in the possession of Mr. John Powell Powell of

Quex, but is not in Major Powell Cotton's Museum at Quex Park now and its present whereabouts is not known. A similar ring was found at Norwich.

A Romano-British urn containing burnt bones was found at Gore End in 1848 is now in the Mayey Collection in Liverpool Free Public Museum (Arch Journal 1, 283 Eph Ep ix 1330)

A large urn containing burnt human bones and a small 2nd century jar were found at Birchington Bay in 1915 (Ramsgate Museum)

Two Samian bowls, one found near the shoulder of a skeleton, 2 brown vases, 4 black vases, a Samian cup, a red vase, 2 goblets etc were found in 1865-1868 in Hundreds Brickfields. A quantity of Roman pottery is said to be continually turning up here. Roman brass coins etc were picked up on Westgate shore in 1845.

Arch. Cant. XIX – In the K.A.S. Collections at Maidstone

Found in the "Hundred's" Brickfield (west of Margate) 1865 to 1868 and presented to the Society by Lieut. Clayton, R.N.

1 - A small cinerary urn - height 3"

2 - Several vases about 3½ inches high – two found by the hands of a skeleton

3 - 2 goblets – 8" high

4 - Samian bowls and cup – one found on the shoulder of a skeleton

All these are of the Romano-British Period