

QUEX

Its Story
AT Walker

Quex, which has been spelt in many different ways over through the ages, was the seat of an ancient family who bore the name of Quek, centuries ago. It now stands in the parish of Birchington, but until the revision of the boundaries between Birchington, Margate and Acol was partly in Birchington and partly in the 'Ville of Acol'. The boundary ran right through the middle of the house, entering at the front door and exiting through a side window. It was an important estate in Thanet and still has its own private chapel in Birchington Parish Church.

The present mansion dates from the early 1800s, when the original mansion was pulled down and the present one built. This picture shows the mansion as it is now. The dining room on the right was added in 1888 and the Museum, known as the Powell-Cotton Museum, was added at the beginning of the 20th century.

The name Quex is interesting. It was another name for the ancient game of checkers, which was played with marbles or pebbles on a board which was divided into alternate black and white squares like a draughts board. It is derived from the word 'checker', an old French word from which we get the word 'exchequer' and 'cheque'. In the Middle Ages the arithmetic of the King's taxes and accounts was worked out on the exchequer board of black and white squares.

Hence the coat of arms of the Quek family was a white shield marked with black and white spots, known as ermine, with a band of silver and black squares across the centre. This coat of arms of the Quek family can be seen on monuments in the Quex Chapel in Birchington Church, St John's Church, Margate, in Whitstable Church and in Sheppey.

However, the Quek family were not the first owners of the estate. Before the Quek family, we know that the Parker family owned this large estate. We know very little about this family, except that they held land on the Isle of Thanet from the 14th and 15th century. In 1414, we find their residence drawn on the map of Thanet created by Thomas of Elmham for St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury. It is the only house drawn on the whole island, the other buildings all being churches. 'Parker' is shown just outside Birchington church and near to a windmill and a beacon (both now gone). It appears to be very near to where the present house stands. We have records of the Parker family dating back to the early 1400s leaving money in their wills to the church in Birchington and also to St Nicholas Church at Woodchurch.

It would quite probably have been a member of this Parker family who built what we now call the Quex Chapel in All Saints Church, when the new Chancel was erected in c. 1250. They were almost certainly involved in building some part of St Nicholas at Woodchurch as well. This church was almost the same size as All Saints, Birchington.

It is no longer in existence (2013)