

# BIRCHINGTON's Name

notes by Alfred T. Walker, Churchwarden,  
Parish Archivist and Historian c. 1975

In nearly all old documents relating to Birchington, such as the Churchwardens Account Books dating from 1531, the Poor Books dating from about 1600 and documents relating to Birchington as a Limb of the Cinque Port of Dover, Birchington is referred to as "The Ville of Birchington".

Acol is referred to as "The Ville of Acol", and Sarre as the "Ville of Sarre". The Ville, or Vill, or Vil, is an old Anglo French word really meaning village or parish. It is a territorial unit or division under the feudal system consisting of a number of houses or buildings with their adjacent lands having a common organisation.

It really corresponds to Parish. The word Birchington, is Saxon. It is the only parish in Thanet that could be supposed to derive its name from a Saxon family which settled there, but I doubt this. Even so it may be doubted whether there was a family of Birchingas or descendants of Birch.

Barrett in his "A History of the Ville of Birchington" published in 1900 says, "the learned Philpott, who published his "Villara Cantianum" in 1670 supplies us with the simplest and most intelligible solution. He considered the name was originally Bircheton, the enclosure where the Birch tree grows." That the name should have been taken from a tree seems creditable since in the immediate neighbourhood are Woodchurch (the church in the wood), Acoll, (a grove of oak trees) etc. In early times Thanet was much more covered with trees than now.

"tun" or Ton is Old English and meant a village which grew up around a farm or manor. "ington" probably the "tun" of so and so's people. "The Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names" by E K Wall says of Birchington, "Bircheton – Tun among Birches." The name Birchington is spelt in many different ways in old documents.

From the book "The Place names of Kent" by Wallenberg published in 1934 in Upsala the following are quoted,

de Birchilton )  
de Birchenton ) 1240

de Bruchinton )  
Bircheton )  
de Berchington ) 1254

Bercelton 1254 time of Henry III  
Byrchelton 1274

Bircheton )  
de Berchilton ) 1278  
Byrchelton )

Byrchyrto ) 1292

He suggests it is Old English – for birch – plus "hyll or hill" plus tun. Birchington is on rising ground.

The following are some of the different ways the name is spelt in the Churchwardens Account Books dating from 1531, the time of Henry VIII.

Birchyngton, Byrchyngton, Byrchyntone, Byrcheenton, Byrchinton, Birchinyetoone, Birchingetonn, Bircheingtonn, Burcheingtonn.

To sum up, the name Birchington is possibly a Saxon word meaning the village in the birch trees, although very few silver birches grow on our clay and chalk soil.

**ACOL.** 117 C 6

de Hocholte 13<sup>th</sup> C. the Black Book.

De Acholt' 1270 Assize Rolls.

Ocholte, de Okholte 1292 Assize Rolls.

de Acholte 1304 Assize Rolls.

Acholte 1343 Feet of Fines etc. OE ac "oak" + holt "wood".

**Crispe Farm** 117 C 6

The place named after the family of this name which resided in this neighbourhood from the 15<sup>th</sup> c. and lived at what we now call Quex (v Hasted IV 309 etc Arch Cant 12 405-412.)

**Woodchurch Farm** 117 B 7

de Wode 1203 Placitorum abbreviation Richard I – Edward II

de Waude 1240 Assize Rolls.

Wode 1278, 1292 Assize Rolls. 1278, 1286, 1288, 1299 Feet of Fines.

Wod 1275 Rotuli hundredorum temp Hen III et Edw I etc

OE wudu "wood"

## **From The Place Names of Kent' by Judith Glover . Batsford** **1976**

Ac OE oak-tree gara – gore = wedge-shaped piece of land OE – also used to describe a wedge-shaped panel in a skirt

**Hyll** hill OE tun farmstead manor OE

**Acol = Oak** thicket (OE ac holt – Acholt 1270 – Ocholte, Okholte 1292 – Acholte 1343. The name has been abbreviated to its present form perhaps to avoid confusion with ACKHOLT.

**Alland Grange.** Old land (OE eald land – Aldelande 1226 – Ealdelonde, Aldeland c. 1250 – Allonde Grang 1535) A grange was a manor usually with farm buildings belonging to a monastery.

**Birchington** Birch hill farmstead. Farmstead near a hill where birch trees grow (OE bierce hyll tun – Birchilton 1240 – Berchington, Bircheton 1254 – Bercelton 1264 – Birchinton 1270 – Byrchington 1610)

**Brooks End** self explanatory (POE broces ende – Brokesend 1205 – Brockesende 1292 – Brokesende 1327)