

An Early History of the Parish

The Bronze and Iron Ages, and Roman times.

This is a simple introduction for the general reader but there is a brief list of references for those who want to learn more.

The Parish's geology explains much of its history. It lies mostly on Wealden clay, a poor soil, but large trees like oak and beech grow well in it.

Three thousand years ago and for many centuries after, the Parish was thickly forested and fairly impenetrable. Travelling around would have been difficult and there are no rivers to make this easier. Bronze and Iron Age families largely chose to live in more hospitable places, such as the fertile coastal plain in the south of the County. Our Parish had very few people living in it.

But, Bronze Age families did venture through our Parish. Just outside it, at Money Mound in Lower Beeding, just south of Hammerpond Lane, they built a barrow near to a trackway.

Much later, in Roman times, local people turned it into a shrine by burying gifts to their gods. We know this because archaeologists found fragments of sixteen Roman pots and one hundred and fifty six coins, dated between AD 69 and 388. This is the Parish's sole relic of very early times! In contrast, the South Downs has Iron Age remains, including Cissbury and Chanctonbury and the area around Chichester has many Roman villas such as Bignor and Fishbourne, as well as temples and potteries.

The old Roman Stane Street, now the A29, is only some seven miles away from Nuthurst. It is therefore very likely that local people occasionally saw Roman soldiers or foreign merchants and were wary, or saw a chance to improve their lot. For the most part, because the Romans were very tolerant of local peoples who caused no trouble, the Roman occupation between AD 43 and 410 probably did not touch their lives much.

From AD 364 the Sussex coast was raided by the Saxons but again, people living in our Parish amongst the thick woodland, were probably unaware and unaffected by raids. Nearly seventy years after the Romans left, Saxons settled in the coastal, fertile strip but not near Nuthurst.

References

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