

The Lee

Prehistoric and Roman artefacts are found everywhere, even in a backwater like The Lee.

A 21.5 carat gold Bronze Age bracelet (~1000BC) was found at Swan Bottom in a metal-detecting survey by the crossroads near where we start our run. Further along six (probably) Mesolithic (5-10,000BC) middle stone-age flint flakes including a broken blade were discovered. This was before farming began - the time of hunter gatherers.

Grim's Ditch passes through the parish, though south of our route. It is probably an Iron Age territorial boundary that traverses the Chilterns and has been identified through geophysical survey in Woodland's Park. It still survives in Rushmoor Wood, (where it may have been reused as a woodland bank), and between Timberley's Lane and Mercer's Wood.

There is a village enclosure and a moat that survives around Church Farm, which date from the time the farm belonged to Missenden Abbey in the thirteenth and fourteenth century. Also at this point is a "Hollow-way" which could date from this time or could possibly be Celtic (Iron Age, circa 0-500 BC).

The old church was built in the thirteenth century, in the walls are tiles from a lost (?) but probably nearby Roman villa. The new church was built in the nineteenth century and contains a memorial to the Liberty family as well as the thirteenth century bell from the old church, cast on-site by Michael de Wymbis in 1290.



The Neolithic (last part of the Stone Age, 2-5000BC) arrowhead shown here with a coin for scale was found by school children in the school's own garden!

An Iron Age coin from Carthage dated 250 BC was found bearing the head of Persephone queen of the underworld) - which may denote (indirect) trade with Africa. Cornwall was in

Coin similar to this



direct trade contact with the Mediterranean (Phoenicians) nearly 1000 years before this date and Pytheas the Greek had written about his travels to Britian, Scotland, Shetland and possibly as far as Iceland, over 50 years earlier.

Most of the listed buildings in the area date from the seventeenth century. These include Hunts Green Farm, Church Farm, Church Cottage and Bassibones Farmhouse. In later centuries the area supported tile making and other industries. Many chalk and clay pits have been found, at places such as Great Widmoor Wood and Hawthorn Wood.

A labourer digging on Lee Common in 1790 found an 8 -10" Roman statue - a figure of an old man with arms extended and a crown on its head ornamented with pearls. Its vestment is inlaid with purple and it appears to be made from copper coated with a gold wash. Is this another indication of a lost villa?

A well, 365 ft deep (one for each day of the year), was dug to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. An ancient windmill survived until the early twentieth century and the mound is still visible, An unusual monument in the parish is the statue next to Pipers is made of a reused figurehead from a ship known as the Admiral Lord Howe.

On the long run we pass Bray Woods, which has two superimposed moats that are possibly Roman as Roman pottery was found there. However, a field survey and other finds of medieval tile and metalworking slag, plus the foundations of a building, imply the site is mainly medieval.

Long 5.1
 Medium 3.8
 Short 2.9

Neolithic flints

PUB

Iron Age Coin
 ~250BC from
 Carthage!
 Possible Trade?
 Coin had head
 of Perspheron
 (Greek Goddess
 of Wisdom)

Solid gold bracelet
 from late Bronze age
 (~1000 BC) 21.5 carat
 (see photo)

Two Medieval
 moats & Medieval
 Iron workings
 (slag). Also
 Roman pottery
 and possible a
 Roman villa

Hollow-way,
 possibly Celtic
 field boundary,
 probably later

Neolithic arrowhead
 (see photo) 2,500-
 5,000 BC

Rose found Roman locally
 made imitation Samian ware
 pottery here ~ 200AD

365ft Well dug for
 Queen Victoria's
 Diamond Jubilee
 in 1897

Moated area - 11
 -1 4C probably a
 fortified house

Middle - Late
 Bronze age
 rapier / dagger
 ~1000 BC

Roman tiles are used
 in the construction of
 this 13 century
 church - there may
 have been a Roman
 villa nearby, though
 nobody knows where

Village
 enclosure 11-
 14C

Bell cast by
 Michael De
 Wymbis 1290

Possible
 Mesolithic flints
 and blade up to
 10,000 BC,
 Hunter gatherer

Roman statue of old
 man, set with pearls in
 crown, goldwash
 coating, wearing
 purple

Middle - Late
 Bronze age axe
 head ~1200 - 500
 BC