



CANTERBURY

INTRODUCTION

Canterbury is one of the most ancient cities in England and it immerses its visitors in its history with every step they take. One would need to pause by every brick, window and door in the city, as each of these is certain to tell a tale, legend or story.

Wandering around, looking upwards, one can catch a glimpse of its decorations, statues and gargoyles, while beneath one's feet testimonies of its history lie buried, left to us over the course of more than 2000 years. However, it is right before our eyes that its divine architecture collectively forms its spectacular surroundings, reflecting a unique heritage that quite understandably, has become famous worldwide.

Canterbury is a city that can be visited in various ways. The best way is to take a stroll through the city on foot, allowing you to fully appreciate its roads and winding alleys and admire the unique architectural designs of its overlooking buildings. The most romantic way is by boat, which takes you along the river Stour, allowing you to admire the city and its monuments from a different perspective, set in a backdrop of weeping willows and wild flowers.

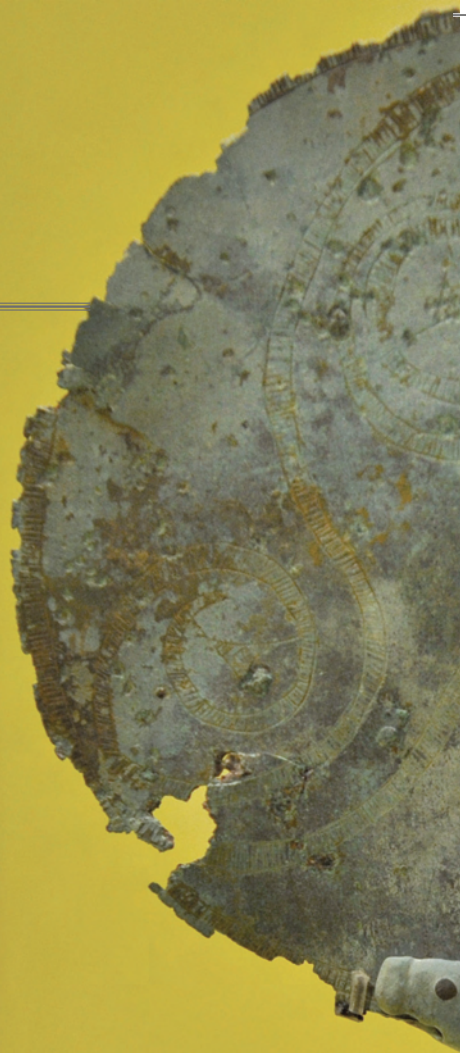
However, it is in the heart of Medieval Canterbury that we find its most important and famous monument: Christ Church Cathedral, extraordinary due to its beauty, its importance, its size and the variety of architectural styles it offers, a site that every year attracts millions of visitors from all over the world.



THE ORIGINS

Canterbury's origins are deeply rooted in the period of the Celtic colonisation of Britannia, during the Iron Age. The ancient inhabitants of modern day Kent were known as the Cantiaci, having derived their name from toponym of the region of Cantium, and were a Belgian tribe from the third wave of Celtic colonies. They settled in a site called Bigbury Hill, which is situated about a mile towards the south-west of the village of Harbledown. At that time it would have been a fortified village with ditches and wooden palisades, and it became the site of Caesar's victory against the autochthonous forces that opposed his second landing in Kent, which took place in 54 B.C.

Excavations carried out by Frank Jerkins, in 1962-63, brought to light very large post holes that have lead archaeologists to conclude that there may have been a palisade and a ditch present here. The site extends itself over 25 hectares and would have probably been used as a defence site for local farmers and their animals, to protect them from threats they faced even before the arrival of the Belgians. It was a hill-top fortress situated in a strategic position, with its northern side defended by a double embankment and a large ditch, and its southern side naturally defended by a steep escarpment.





The Belgians brought new knowledge and technical innovations with them, which included the turning lathe for producing ceramics, the heavy plough and the war chariot.

However, they also took many prisoners and sold them as slaves, a fact that has been testified by a chain that was discovered measuring 18 feet in length, made up of a series of collars.



NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES

Canterbury Archaeological Trust has recently completed an archaeological investigation within the territories of St Edmund's School, in Canterbury. The site is situated on the upper part of St Thomas' Hill, overlooking Canterbury, and on the basin of the River Stour in the south-east. One of the first assessments of the site was conducted in April 2012, and revealed traces of settlement activities dating from the late Bronze Age to the early Iron Age (1100-700 B.C.).

Evidence revealed two ditches full of coal, burnt flint and ceramic fragments, numerous post holes and an extremely rare example of a cavity that would have been used for domestic fires, with its sides and base burnt and surrounded by six post holes. Subsequent archaeological research, which was extended to a larger area, revealed that the first occupation of the site was made up of a territorial layout that was characteristic of the late Bronze Age (110-700 B.C.). The majority of the remaining evidence was dated to the Iron Age (from 700 B.C to 43 A.D).

The first phase of development attributed to the Iron Age included two small structures that incorporated and a natural clay spur inside them. These buildings measured around 4 metres in length and 2 meters in width approximately, and were made up of a number of wooden posts. It is possible that they may have once supported the roof with the remains of what are likely to have been the draining channels. Both of these structures could have been used for minor artisanal activi-



ties, testified by some metallic residue recovered inside one of them, and fragments of loom weights recovered in the other. Deep sub-oval ditches were also discovered, which would have probably been used for the decantation of clay. A second phase saw the enlargement of the settlement area, with the introduction of an enormous ditch bordering from the north-east to the south-west, housing a great sub-circular structure inside it that was probably a round-house with a diameter of around 15 meters, partly surrounded by a drainage channel. This type of structure is typical of the housing style of the mid/end Iron Age period (400 B.C. – 43 A.D.).

A large ceramic vase was discovered near this building, still in its original and unspoil cavity in the ground, which could have been inserted into the earth for ceremonial or spiritual reasons.

Another structure formed by a sunken flooring is surrounded by over 20 post holes and has been identified as a storage construction, situated a considerable distance away from the main settlement. This structure then changed its use, as the larger post holes became used as garbage collectors to hold things like flint-tempered ceramics which, fragmented, was used to strengthen the ceramic.

The assessment of the data collected from the excavation is currently underway, and the final results will enable us to gain a better understanding of the developments of the settlements situated along the valley of the River Stour during this period, which culminated in the construction of Bigbury Hill Fort.



THE ROMAN CONQUEST

During the wars for the conquest of Gaul, Gaius Julius Caesar led two quick incursions in Britain, in 55 and 54 B.C. Caesar himself makes reference to this in his work “Commentaries on the Gallic War”, where he describes the Britons as being covered by a blue dye obtained with woad.

The first expedition saw the troops, having travelled by sea, land by the coast of Kent, mainly so that they could be easily recognised.

The second invasion in 54 B.C. was more successful: Caesar imposed his friend and king on the throne, Mandubracio, ruler of the Celtic tribes of Trinovantes and forced his opponent, Cassivellaunus, into submission, even though his territory was not placed under this rule. Caesar returned to Gaul without any territorial gains in Britainnia, merely settling for having set up a series of clienteles, which led him to bring these lands under the influence of Rome.

Thanks to this, trade and diplomatic relations began to blossom, which would lead the way for the subsequent Roman conquest of Britainnia and to the erection of the province of Britannia in 43 A.D. by Emperor Claudius. The Cantiaci moved their settlement to the banks of the River Stour (the site of modern Canterbury).

The city that they founded here, perhaps using an earlier settlement, is known as *Durwhern*, and according to some is linked to the etymology of “a rapid river”. The Romans renamed the town *Durovernum Cantiacorum* (Durovernum from the Celtic name *Durwhern* and *Cantiacorum* from the Cantiaci, or people of Kent).

It was mentioned for the first time in the *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti*, a collection of routes that crossed all regions of the Roman Empire, from Britainnia to the Byzantine Empire, with a series of paths that indicated the departure and arrival points, following the intermediate stations (*mansiones* and *mutationes*) with the relative distances given in Roman miles, *milia passuum*.



RAVAENNA
MUNIFICENTIA
VIRI PRATI
RIAE ES ROM
CAPRATINA
FUNDAMENTUM
SSINE EC SIO

DUROVERNUM CANTIACORUM

The civil settlement grew rapidly and became one of the obligatory milestones along the route that united Londinium to the coast and some streets date back to the pre-Flavian period. A small fragment of six cubic mosaic tiles made of chalk were discovered in the area and have been dated to the late I – beginning of the II century, while in Butchery Lane a brick town house was recovered, dating to the early II century A.D.

The layout of the streets was irregular and based on two parallel streets, East-West, however the North and South roads were not necessarily always perpendicular. We know of a forum with a colonnade and a theatre, built in the late I century A.D, which used a mound of pebbles, however from the early III century it was replaced by a characteristic, Roman-style brick theatre, with a diameter of about 80 m that could accommodate 3,000 people, which was associated with a large temple complex colonnade in the West.

A second temple may have been identified in Burgate Street.

Large public thermal baths, probably built under the rule of Hadrian and rebuilt in the early IV century, can also be seen in the basement of St. Margaret's Street. A smaller thermal system is situated in St. George's Street and dates to the first half of the III century A.D, which was extensively renovated in around 355-360 A.D.



The city seems to have been devoid of defences until around 270- 290 A.D, when a 2.3 m wide wall was built with an embankment, around an area of 52.6 hectares, marking the same outline that the Medieval walls subsequently followed that are still visible today. The wall was preceded by a deep ditch, measuring around 5.4 m in depth with a width of up to 25 m.

Certain sections of the Roman wall circuit have been preserved at a height of about 2.4 to 3.6 m above the foundations, and at one point near the north gate is embedded in one of the walls belonging to the church of St. Mary Northgate, where it reaches the levels of the upper walkway at a height of 6 m. The flint and mortar construction lacked any intermediate lines of bricks. Furthermore, one of the original internal square towers (4.9 X 5.2 m) has also been identified.

Two of the external towers, approximately circular, have been identified while the remains of the others are probably situated beneath some of the medieval towers. These were probably additions that were carried out at the end of the IV century; however one of the towers could have belonged to the original phase of the fortifications. The main gates, which included the Ridigate in the South-East, had two fornices each of which was 3.35 m wide.

Other renowned Gates include, the Worth Gate (SW), the London Gate (W) and the Queningate, part of which is still visible in the Broad Street parking lot and had a single fornices, similar to the North and South Gates of the Roman settlement of Caerwent , with lateral walls for the containment of the embankment.

Valid reason exists to believe that there were a further three medieval Gates present, the North Gate, the West Gate and the Burgate, which could have been built on the ruins of Roman Gates, making them seven Gates overall.

