

### The Secrets Within

No one can say exactly when people came to live in Lewes, but we know they were here in Roman times. Roman coins have been found in the churchyard of St John sub Castro and in other places in Lewes. The Romans also left written records which help give us information.

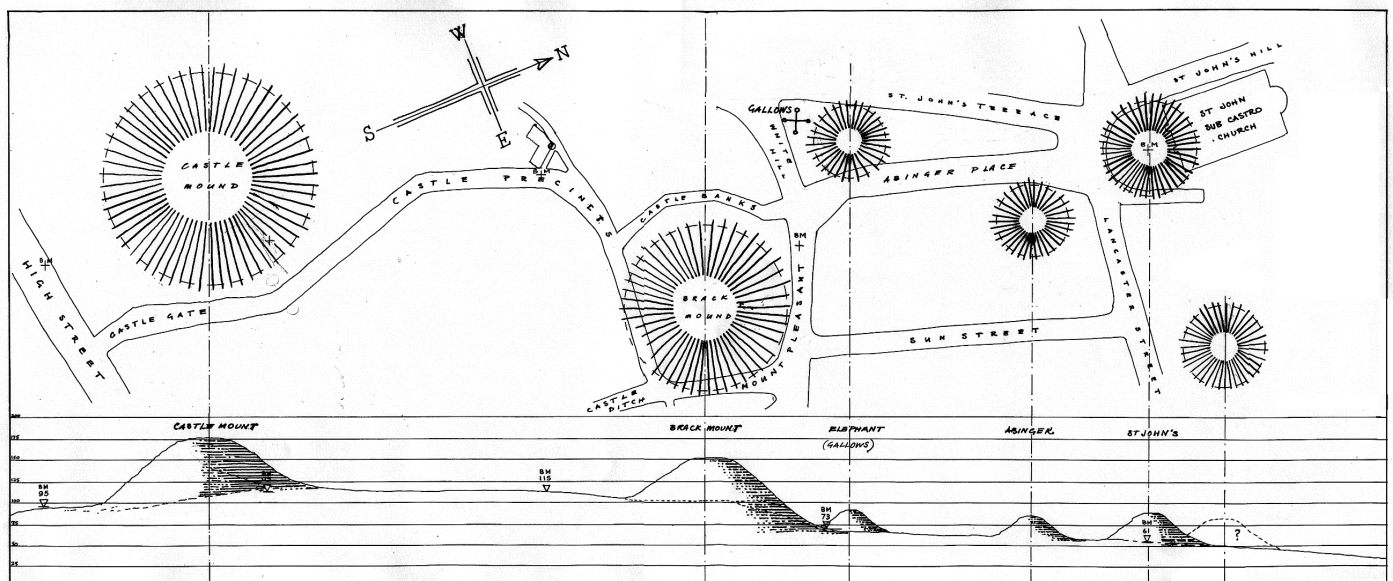


It is more difficult to be certain about the time before the Romans. This period of time, before we have written records, is called **Prehistory**. To try to understand what was happening during these times we have to look for clues.

*Roman coins found in Lewes.*

### What clues do you think we might be able to find?

One way we can look for clues is to look at the landscape to see if there have been any obvious changes made by humans. These could include things like digging ditches or building up earth walls to surround and defend a settlement. In Lewes we can still see two striking man-made mounds- one with the Castle built on top and another, Brack Mount, close to the Castle. We also know, from maps and written accounts from the past 300 years, that there used to be a further four man-made mounds, close to St John sub Castro church. In fact, the present church is built over where one of the mounds stood and there used to be another mound in the south east corner of the churchyard.



This map shows the position of the 6 mounds.

This is a picture of the original church of St John sub Castro. Can you see the mound next to the church? This original church was demolished in 1839 as it was too small for the congregation (the people attending church) at the time. To build the present, larger church workmen demolished the mound and built the new church over where the mound had been.



### Why do you think that people in the past built these mounds?

When the present church was built in 1839 workmen had to dig out and remove the mound to give a flat area for the building. We have an article, from a newspaper at the time, that describes what the workmen found when they were digging into the mound. This gives us interesting information about the people who built the mound and why they built it.

The article says that the workmen:

'...came to large piles of chalk, so arranged as to afford spaces ...for a human skeleton each, which were protected by a wall of chalk and filled up with ditch clay; presently they came to what the workmen termed an 'oven', or a rude construction of a steined vault; and when they reached the centre of the crown of the Mount they exposed a circle of burnt earth, of two rods\* diameter, around the sides of which were a few burnt human bones and a large quantity of boars' and other animal bones also burnt. On the east side an urn of baked clay was found, also a spearhead or iron weapon; showing that the Mount was an ancient British barrow\*, and that long before Christianity was introduced into England, St John's church yard was a scite for Druidical sepulchres'

*(Sussex Agricultural Express 25 May 1839)*

\*A rod was a unit of measurement

\* A barrow is a prehistoric burial mound

**The workmen found 6 things (or types of thing) inside the mound. Can you list them all?**

### The Wild Boar

The wild boar was highly prized in prehistoric society. Many bronze images of wild boars dating from the prehistoric times have been found throughout Europe. Wild boars are fearsome and dangerous and represented strength, fearlessness and courage. Images of

wild boar have been found on the helmets of warriors. Wild boars were also believed to be able to lead people into the world of the spirits. Images and bones of wild boar have often been found in burial mounds.

## **Druids**

Druids were the priests, healers and teachers in prehistoric times. Their religion believed in contact with the spirit world and nature. This religion was widely followed before the wide spread adoption of Christianity from 597 AD. Druidism was revived in the 1700s and to this day Druids visit their sacred site of Stonehenge on the Summer Solstice (the longest day of the year). Interestingly, the Summer Solstice is on June 21<sup>st</sup> and the feast day of St John the Baptist is very close to this on June 24<sup>th</sup>. Do you think that the early Christians chose John the Baptist as the patron saint of their church as this would tie in with the Druids' ceremony also taking place on or near the same date?

