

Prehistory in the Belvedere region

Archaeological investigations have revealed that settlements in the Belvedere region date back to the Palaeolithic period.

There is evidence which suggests settlements in Belvedere during the Palaeolithic (c.500,000 - c.9,000 BC), Mesolithic (c.9,000 - 4,300 BC), and Neolithic (c. 4,300 - 2,000 BC) periods, and in the Bronze (2,000 - 650 BC) and Iron (650 BC - AD43) Age. On the site of the Crossness Sewage Works, fragments of hazel and birch were found which were dated to the Palaeolithic era. Various animal bones, terrestrial and marine molluscs, and artefacts were found in association with the wood fragments.

In addition, there is a lot strong evidence of a settlement in the Mesolithic period. For example, a vast assemblage of Mesolithic struck flint was recovered during the construction of Bronze Way in an area northwest of St. John's Churchyard. Also, at Crossness a Mesolithic bone awl was found in between two peat layers. Moreover, evidence of a flint working site was recorded along the length of Norman Road beneath peat deposits. A total of 147 environmental samples were taken, producing 3,190 pieces of work flints and 51.4kg of burnt flint. The worked flint included 365 blades, 80 cores, 19 core fragments, 15 core rejuvenation flakes and 13 tranchet axe sharpening flakes. A further 31 tools were recovered, including microliths, scraphs, a large awl, and a broken tranchet axe. Radiocarbon dating of the peat that sealed the sand containing this flintwork offers a deposition range of 4,670-4,230 BC. A broken crested flint blade was also recovered in 1997 at Norman Park on Picardy Manorway, which is dated to around Mesolithic-early Neolithic. This is all evidence which suggests a Mesolithic settlement.

Neolithic items have been also discovered in Belvedere. For example, Neolithic pottery has been recorded towards the south of Crabtree Manorway. Other examples of Neolithic pottery have been recovered in the form of a Grimston Lyle-Hill carinated bowl and two other sherds from a separate vessel. A 'dug-out' wooden boat has also been uncovered in the last century. It was discovered during the digging of a ditch in Belvedere and was determined to be Neolithic, as a Neolithic flint axe and scraper were recovered from the boat and another axe or chisel was found in the immediate vicinity. However,

the boat is now thought to be Bronze Age as the axe and scraper have been identified as forgeries.

There have been some finds from the Bronze Age. Two pottery vessels (beakers) which were found to the south of Belvedere are thought to date to the transition between the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age. Also, a possible Bronze Age barrow (burial site) is located close to Belvedere.

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Sources (available at Bexley Local Studies and Archive Centre):

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