

# KAFS Newsletter: No. 18.

The Kent Archaeological Field School:

## Christmas 2018

Have you seen  
the KAFS website?  
It is amazing...



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*Welcome to the Christmas 2018 Newsletter  
from the Kent Archaeological Field School*



Dear Reader, we will be emailing a Newsletter each quarter to keep you up to date with news and views on what is planned at the Kent Archaeological Field School and what is happening on the larger stage of archaeology both in this country and abroad. To become a member or subscribe to the free newsletter go to the home page of [www.kafs.co.uk](http://www.kafs.co.uk) and on the bottom right hand corner click where it says 'Click Here'.

I hope you enjoy!

Paul Wilkinson.

## Breaking News: Christmas!

It was a public holiday celebrated around December 25<sup>th</sup> in the family home. A time for feasting, goodwill, generosity to the poor, the exchange of gifts and the decoration of trees. But it wasn't Christmas. This was Saturnalia, the pagan Roman winter solstice festival. But was Christmas, Western Christianity's most popular festival, derived from the pagan Saturnalia?



The first-century AD poet Gaius Valerius Catullus described Saturnalia as 'the best of times': dress codes were relaxed, small gifts such as dolls, candles and caged birds were exchanged.

Saturnalia saw the inversion of social roles. The wealthy were expected to pay the month's rent for those who couldn't afford it, masters and slaves to swap clothes. Family households threw dice to determine who would become the temporary Saturnalian monarch. The poet Lucian (AD 120-180) has the Roman god Saturn say in his poem, *Saturnalia*:

*'During my week the serious is barred: no business allowed. Drinking and being drunk, noise and games of dice, appointing of kings and feasting of slaves, singing naked, clapping.....an occasional ducking of corked faces in icy water- such are the functions over which I preside'.*

Saturnalia grew in duration and moved to progressively later dates under the Roman period. During the reign of the Emperor Augustus (63 BC-AD 14), it was a two-day affair starting on December 17<sup>th</sup>. By the time Lucian described the festivities, it was a seven-day event. Changes to the Roman calendar moved the climax of Saturnalia to December 25<sup>th</sup>, around the time of the date of the winter solstice.

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**The KAFS year so far and other years...**

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KAFS 'dig' at Star Hill near Bridge- can you name the diggers and the year? First answer on a postcard wins a free course!



This year:

Oplontis, near Pompeii, Italy Excavations

Teston Roman Villa, Kent and Hollingbourne, Kent

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**2018 geophysical surveys and excavations at Teston Roman Villa**

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Excavation by the Kent Archaeological Field School over the 2018 summer holidays has solved an archaeological mystery that had eluded archaeologists for the last 100 years. In 1872 Arthur Fremling found in his hop gardens the remains of a Roman bath house and the find was described as being *'about four English miles from Maidstone, on the left side of the river, are to be seen the remains of a villa.....the situation is pleasant, and as is usual in Roman sites, well chosen, being on a crest of a gently sloping valley looking over the river [Medway]'*.



In October 1991 Canterbury Archaeological Trust were called to a site in Teston, just west of Maidstone to investigate Roman remains uncovered by Southern Water whilst constructing a new sewer. It became apparent that a Roman building had been impacted on and CAT's work uncovered walls that for the most part had been robbed out. Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Maidstone Archaeological Group investigated the site but could not find the 19<sup>th</sup> century discovery of the bath house.

Last year a geophysical survey took place down slope from the CAT discoveries and possible masonry walls identified. Subsequently the Kent Archaeological Field School were invited by the owner to investigate the site and a field walking weekend in March identified an area of disturbed Roman masonry below that of the CAT discovery and above that of the geophysical survey. Hand digging of test pits identified a substantial deposit of Roman building material and on opening up the trench the south wall stretching for 39m was exposed and running east-west, At each end substantial towers or pavilions were also exposed. Rooms with hypocaust heating were exposed to the north and stretching into the adjoining field and towards CATs investigations in 1991.



Marble tesserae from a mosaic pavement were found in the hypocausts along with copious amounts of painted plaster and window glass. The location of the 1872 discovery was identified and is situated in the north-west area of the villa (see above plan). It seems the villa developed over the four centuries of Roman government and although we have identified the main part of the villa there is still areas of the site which may have additional buildings.

Decorated Samian ware sherds date the construction of the towers or pavilions to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD whilst North Thameside ware dated- the main range to late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, whilst coins recovered from the site range from Nerva (96-98AD) to Honorius (393-423AD). Anglo Saxon pottery found adjacent to the main range show occupation in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD

Situated in the upper reaches of the River Medway valley with water connections to Rochester and London in a setting which is Arcadian the villa estate would have been the centre of a burgeoning enterprise with the opportunity to exploit the natural resources of woodland, Kentish rag stone and first class grazing for herds and flocks. It is also within a day's journey by water to London and we know from Pliny and Ausonius the preoccupation of the Roman landed gentry with the Arcadian delights of the countryside.



*"The clear river's tidal flow  
Takes me by boat from home,  
And brings me home again....  
Not far from town I live,  
Yet not hard by....  
I change about.  
And get the best of town  
And country, turn by turn."*

These easy verses of Ausonius, a 4<sup>th</sup> century villa owner near Bordeaux indicate the preoccupation of the Roman landed gentry with the Arcadian delights of the countryside.

But the same mutuality between town and country was at work when the poetic oxymoron of a well-groomed arcadia took the form of a Roman country villa. The ancient ideal of country life as a corrective to the corruption, intrigue, and disease of the town was always a spur to rustication in a *locus amoenus*, a "place of delight". It was no accident that Pliny the Younger cited the closeness of his seaside villa at Laurentinum, seventeen miles from Rome, as one of its chief virtues.

Laurentinum by-the-sea was a weekend place for Pliny, "large enough to afford a convenient, though not sumptuous reception for my friends." It had a breezy atrium, hot tubs, a well-stocked library, figs and mulberries in the garden, terrific views over the water, and a steady supply of fresh seafood. Pliny thought of the view, "not as a real land, but as an exquisite painting". See 'courses' to participate-

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## ‘Victorian Glass’ at Canterbury Cathedral found to be from the 12<sup>th</sup> century....

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Stained glass panels at Canterbury Cathedral, previously thought to be the work of Victorian restorers, have been found to date to the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, making them the earliest known art works depicting pilgrims travelling to Canterbury.

Researchers have just made the exciting discovery at the beginning of a detailed study of the world-renowned Miracle Windows in the Trinity Chapel. An analysis of the panels, currently removed from the window and in the stained glass conservation studio for study, proved that they date back to the 1180s, within 20 years of Thomas Becket's death and 200 years before Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales*.

One of the panels shows pilgrims on foot, pilgrims on horseback and a disabled pilgrim on crutches on the road together. The incredible detail includes the bright green and yellow boots of the pilgrims, which were painted with horizontal stripes and a polka dot decoration. This highly elaborate footwear may have been meant to underline the importance of the pilgrimage.

Researcher Rachel Koopmans from Toronto's York University said: "Our work was prompted by an early photograph of the window which showed these panels decades before they were thought to have been made. Careful analysis has proved that while most of the heads were replaced by a modern restorer, the majority of the glass is original and the panels are genuine medieval compositions. The date of the panels has been fixed by the distinctive aesthetic style of the glass, which is very similar to glass dated to 1180, as well as the date of the completion of the rebuilding of the chapel in which the window is found, 1182-1184." A second medieval panel, also thought to have been a Victorian restoration, depicts pilgrims arriving at Canterbury and queuing up to receive the blood and water relic, a much diluted mixture of Becket's blood that pilgrims drank in the hope of miraculous healing.

Director of Canterbury's Stained Glass Studio Leonie Seliger said: "This discovery is terrifically exciting. We are delighted to be able to have this opportunity for close-up analysis of the panels which has provided us with fresh information such as being able to read the inscriptions which had previously been deemed illegible."

Dr Koopmans is an associate professor of history and is writing a new catalogue of the glass relating to Thomas Becket in the Cathedral. The project is funded by the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral and Dr Koopmans' residence is supported by a

Visiting Fellowship from the British Academy.

Once the panels have been studied and analysed, they will be returned to the window.



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## **Archaeologists detect 20-metre ship using motorised high-resolution ground-penetrating radar**

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Archaeologists have discovered a Viking ship burial in Norway using ground-penetrating radar that suggests the 20-metre keel and many of its timbers remain well preserved just half a metre below the topsoil.



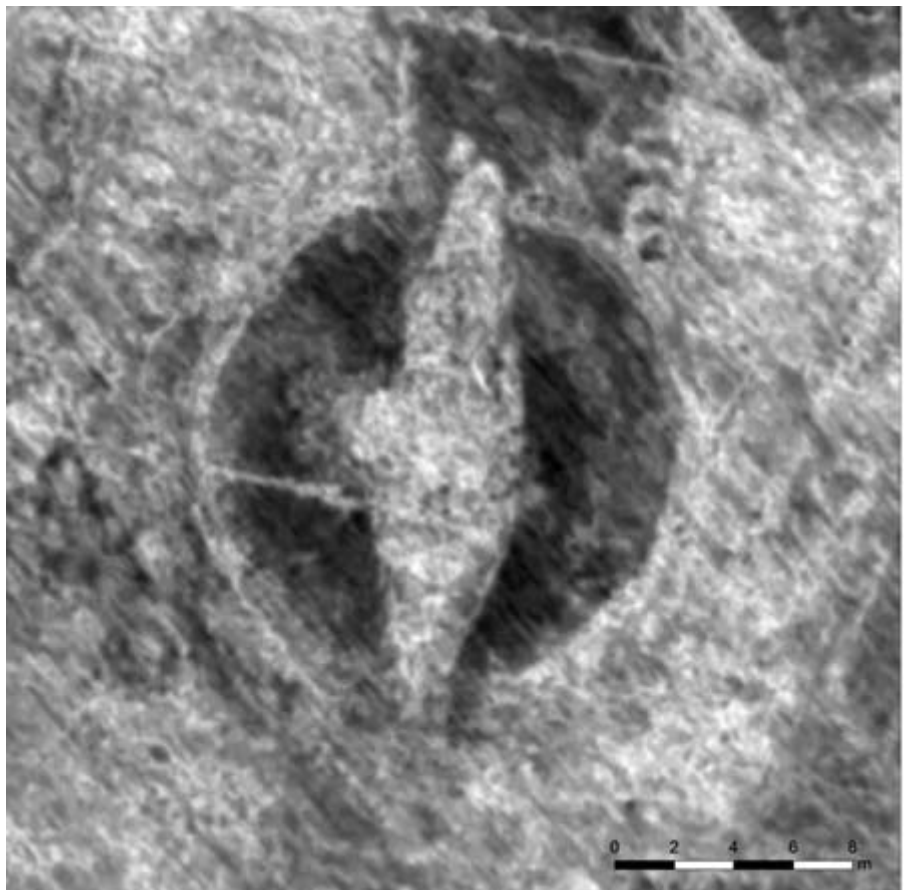


Image generated from a geo-radar showing a Viking ship buried near Halden

The ship lies in farmland in Østfold county in south-east Norway. Just three other intact ship burials have been recorded in the country; the survival of this one is remarkable because the imposing burial mound that once covered it has long since been ploughed out. Another mound, Jelle mound, still rises high in the field, and the research has also traced the outlines of at least eight other previously unknown burial mounds that once surrounded it, and five nearby longhouses.

Project leader Lars Gustavsen, an archaeologist from the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (Niku), said: “The ship burial does not exist in isolation, but forms part of a cemetery which is clearly designed to display power and influence.”

There are no immediate plans for excavation, but further non-invasive research will map the remains and assess their condition.

The find was described as “incredibly exciting” by Knut Paasche, an expert on Viking ships at Niku. The researchers worked with motorised high-resolution ground-penetrating radar developed by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Archaeological Prospection and Virtual Archaeology in Austria.

“This new ship will certainly be of great historical significance as it can be investigated with all modern means of archaeology,” Paasche said.

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**A Greek merchant ship dating back more than 2,400 years has been found lying on its side off the Bulgarian coast.**

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The 23m (75ft) wreck, found in the Black Sea by an Anglo-Bulgarian team, is being hailed as officially the world's oldest known intact shipwreck. The researchers were stunned to find the merchant vessel closely resembled in design a ship that decorated ancient Greek wine vases.

The rudder, rowing benches and even the contents of its hold remain intact. "It's like another world," Helen Farr from the expedition told the BBC.

"It's when the ROV [remote operated vehicle] drops down through the water column and you see this ship appear in the light at the bottom so perfectly preserved it feels like you step back in time."

The reason the trading vessel, dating back to around 400 BC, has remained in such good condition for so long is that the water is anoxic, or free of oxygen. Lying more than 2,000m below the surface, it is also beyond the reach of modern divers.



The vessel was one of many tracking between the Mediterranean and Greek colonies on the Black Sea coast. It was discovered more than 80km off the Bulgarian city of Burgas.



The team used two underwater robotic explorers to map out a 3-D image of the ship and they took a sample to carbon-date its age. The vessel is similar in style to that depicted by the so-called Siren Painter on the Siren Vase (above) in the British Museum. Dating back to around 480 BC, the vase shows Odysseus strapped to the mast as his ship sails past three mythical sea nymphs whose tune was thought to drive sailors to their deaths.

As yet the ship's cargo remains unknown and the team say they need more funding if they are to return to the site. "Normally we find amphorae (wine vases) and can guess where it's come from, but with this it's still in the hold," said Dr Farr.

"As archaeologists we're interested in what it can tell us about technology, trade and movements in the area."

The ship, which is lying on its side with its mast and rudders intact, was dated back to 400 BC -- a time when the Black Sea was a trading hub filled with Greek colonies.

The team said the vessel, previously only seen in an intact state on the side of ancient Greek pottery, was found at a depth of more than 2,000 metres (6,500 feet). The water at that depth is oxygen-free, meaning that organic material can be preserved for thousands of years.

"A ship, surviving intact, from the Classical world, lying in over 2km of water, is something I would never have believed possible," said Professor Jon Adams from the University of Southampton in southern England, the project's main investigator.

"This will change our understanding of shipbuilding and seafaring in the ancient world," he said.

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## Christmas Gifts/Bling!

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Stuck for a Christmas Gift – then try [www.danegeld.co.uk](http://www.danegeld.co.uk) who make accurate historic jewellery and include Celtic to Early Roman to Victorian to Art Deco at affordable prices...



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### **Christmas Gifts/and something for the home-**

Everything from Roman pottery-Terra Sigillata to the Ancient Roman folding stool of Hadrian and all can be found at <https://theancienthome.com/collections/roman-pottery-terra-sigillata>



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## Sportsman of the year: Gaius Appuleius Diocles, a Roman charioteer earned more than Ronaldo

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Cristiano Ronaldo's billing as the world's highest paid sports star has been challenged by a historian who claims a little known Roman charioteer holds that title (Tom Kington of the Times writes). Gaius Appuleius Diocles was such a successful racer at the Circus Maximus in Rome that he earned the modern equivalent of \$15 billion in his career, far more than the footballer Ronaldo could dream of, Peter Struck, a professor of Classics at the University of Pennsylvania, claims.

"Diocles is not well known today, but he out earned all of today's superstars," said Professor Struck, who found a monument to Diocles built by his fellow charioteers that listed his total earnings as 35,863,120 sesterces.

Diocles was from Portugal, like Ronaldo, and arrived in Rome to make his name. "He was probably illiterate and this was his best shot at making a life," Professor Struck said. "To survive you needed physical strength and a mindless courage. Death was common, which is what the crowd lusted after."

Diocles survived 24 years in the arena, was known for fast, final sprints and earned the equivalent of \$625 million a year — six times what Ronaldo was paid last year.

On his monument, erected in 146 AD, his admirers wrote Diocles retired at the age of "42 years, 7 months, and 23 days" as "champion of all charioteers".

His earnings were enough to provide grain for the city of Rome for a year or to pay all Roman soldiers for about two months when the empire was at its height, Professor Struck calculated. He compared that with the US armed forces' wage bill to arrive at the figure of \$15 billion.



"There is no way of converting ancient amounts to modern money unless you calculate how much something cost then to how much it costs now," Mary Beard, professor of history at Cambridge, said. "Struck's method is sensible."

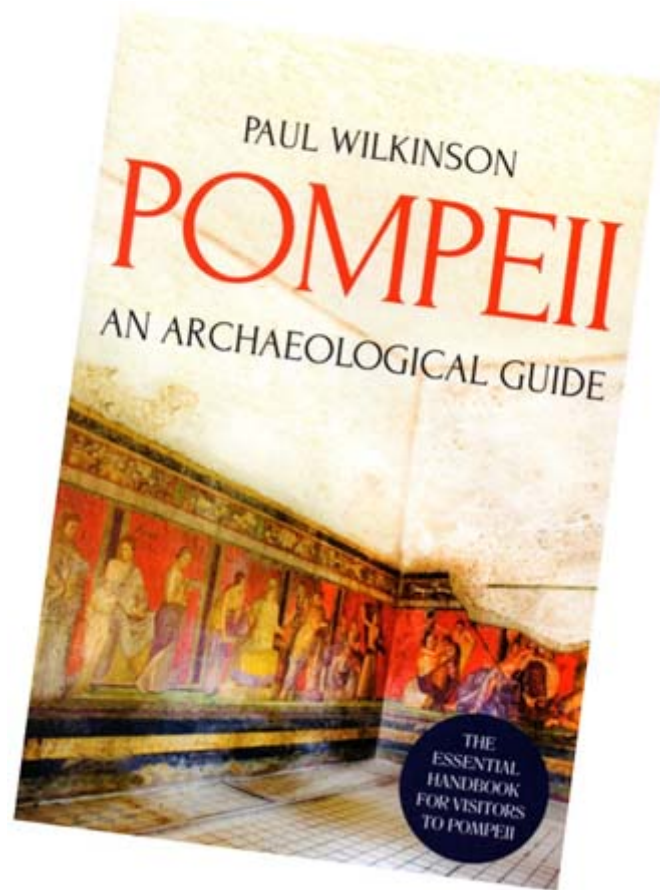
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## **Books for Christmas 1/ Archaeological Guide to Pompeii.**

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Rating: 5 stars





Author Paul Wilkinson and published by Taurus Books

Pompeian pilgrims will be in good hands with Paul Wilkinson, an old Pompeian hand, archæologist, journalist, tour-leader and BBC documentary maker.

The index is serviceable, though somewhat choosy on no obvious principle, especially regarding the names of modern scholars. After a tersely helpful Timeline from antiquity to AD 1997, the Introduction and trio of chapters survey everyday life in Pompeii, plus detailed descriptions of the Amphitheatre Riot of AD 59 and the eruption itself, with full transcriptions of Pliny the Younger's pair of autoptic accounts. These pages display how well Wilkinson knows his Pompeian onions.

This book stands or falls with the archæological sites-guide that makes up its second part. Here, Wilkinson is faultless. His diagrams are clear, the relevant information dispensed without fuss, with due acknowledgement to the many archæologists and epigraphers involved. All this written in clear, jargon-free English, nicely leavened with wit.

The Romans had Pompey the Great. In Wilkinson, we have a Great Pompeian.

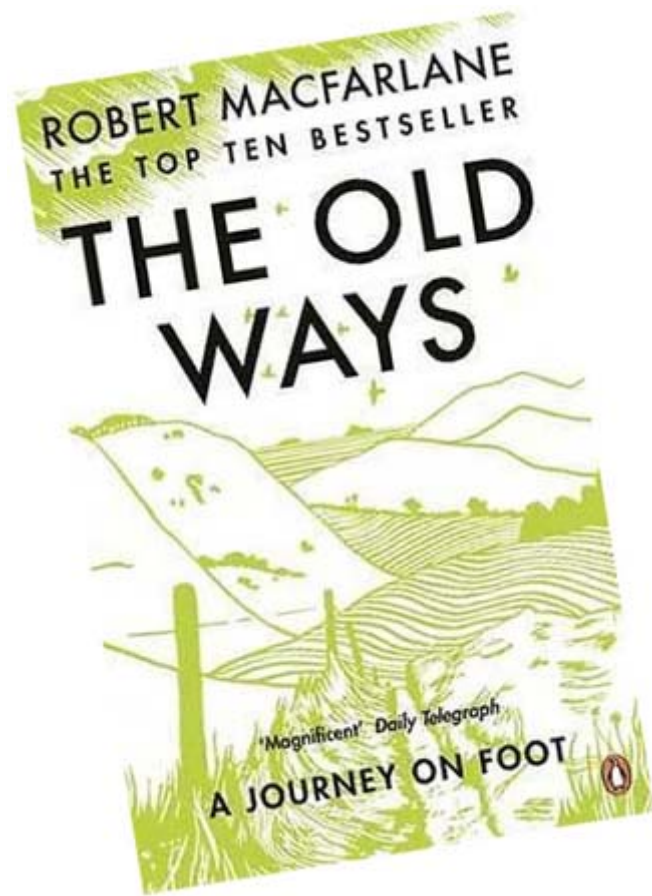
**Professor Barry Baldwin**

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## **Books for Christmas 2/ The Old Ways**

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**Rating: 5 stars**



Author Robert Macfarlane

Finding a bad word to be said about Robert Macfarlane is no easy task. The inside front cover of the paperback lists 15 authors who made *The Old Ways* one of their books of the year last year; the next four pages contain quotations from 35 reviews, all saying, essentially, "Read this book." There comes a point when exhortation to do something proves counterproductive; and, further on from that point, it becomes perverse not to do it.

So I join, eventually, the end of a long line of Macfarlane fans. He is part of what we are being told these days is a new generation of travel writers who create personalised accounts of some form of extreme, or at least interesting, geographical tour. Of course anywhere is interesting if you bring enough attention to it, and this kind of thing has been going on since Marco Polo's stories were written up in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Macfarlane tends to prefer the wilder and woollier environments. His second book, *The Wild Places*, tried to get as close to wilderness as these islands can provide; I have not read his first, *Mountains of the Mind*, because of a review that said he describes whittling his frozen fingers with a penknife while crawling up, or down, some godforsaken peak.

We are spared that kind of scene here, I am pleased to report, and I must also add that "godforsaken" is pretty much the last word Macfarlane would use to describe a mountain. In his chapter on walking in the Himalayas, he quotes a companion on the concept of *darshan*, a Sanskrit word that "suggests a face-to-face encounter



with the sacred on earth; with a physical manifestation of the holy", and we are reminded that the Sherpas who accompanied the first expeditions had no word to describe the summit of a mountain, as that was where the gods lived, so it would be blasphemous even to try to reach one.

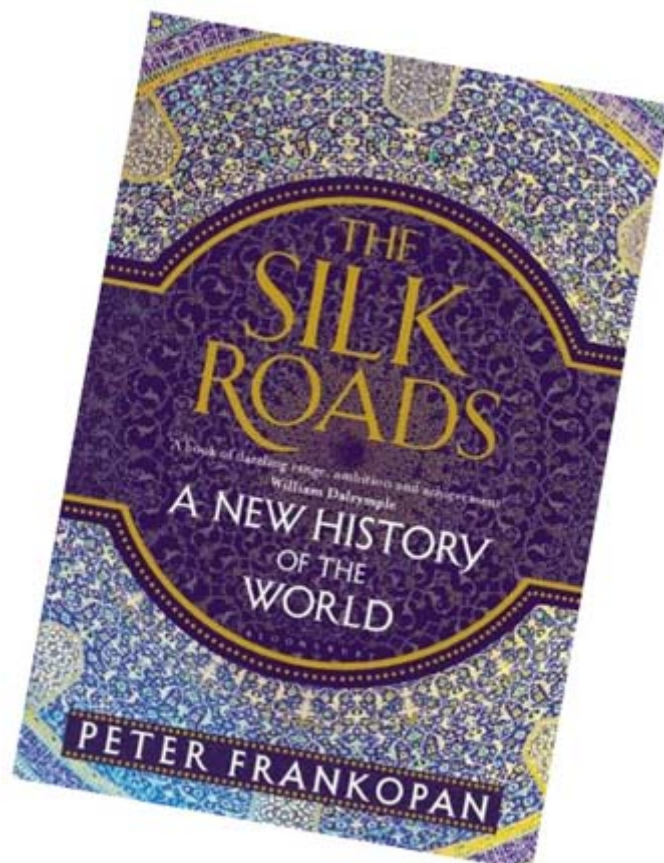
But here, unlike in *Mountains of the Mind*, Macfarlane is more interested in passes and paths than in summits. He has managed, as far as I can see, to avoid repeating himself even as he revisits previous haunts. He describes this as "the third book in a loose trilogy about landscape and the human heart", and that "loose" means it doesn't matter which order you read them in, or if you only read one. This is really a book about walking – though there is a good deal, too, about the paths of the sea. It is illuminating to be told that before the Romans came, there was an extraordinary amount of sea traffic around the British Isles and Europe, which helps account for the remarkable genetic similarity of people from various coastal regions extending from Orkney to Spain. He helps us understand what it is to see the water as criss-crossed by routes as the land, partly by describing what it feels like to sleep in an open boat where the only navigational aid is the Pole Star.

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### Books for Christmas 3/ The Silk Roads: A New History of the World

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Rating: 5 stars



Author: Peter Frankopan

Over my life I have tried to read a number of very thick books that cover the world from the beginning of historical time and have always failed. The books were either too dense or too dry or did not hold my interest. Yet I knew to read such a book was really important. I had too many gaps in my knowledge and like many of us would fill it in with childhood skewed religious classes or flimsy psychological, sociological and feminist understandings. I needed this so desperately and this book was able to deliver a wealth of knowledge, a bit of depth to my understanding of world economics and politics and power dynamics but also, to be honest, despair on the relentless suffering that most of our fellow beings experience for the majority of their lives and in all time periods although the races, classes and ethnicities all take their turn.

What was most appealing about this book to me was that the eye view of whatever is happening in each time period was primarily kept on the area of the world we know as the Silk Roads. The turbulent Middle East and the mysterious lands of Central Asia. Mr. Frankopan was able to give these cultures and places more of a voice in their importance as well as contribution to knowledge and culture that most Eurocentric or Far East centric historical books tend to give. I really appreciated this and helped me understand and integrate gaps in understanding in what I knew from my few readings in European, American and Chinese history.

Frankopan has accomplished quite a feat in being to condense a world history into bite size chunks that layered knowledge onto understanding and at times even illumination as to how we got into the huge mess that is our modern world. His writing was interesting, neutral, at times entertaining and always with his eye on his central thesis of the most strategically/economically/culturally relevant areas for whatever superpowers happened to be flexing their muscles were in the areas of what we know as the Middle East and Central Asia.

**Alice Smith**

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## **Must see exhibitions/1**

### **Scythians: warriors of ancient Siberia**

Ending - 14 January 2018, British Museum, London, Room 30, Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery. £16.50, Members/under 16s free 2,500 years ago groups of formidable warriors roamed the vast open plains of Siberia. Feared, loathed, admired – but over time forgotten... Until now.



This major exhibition explores the story of the Scythians – nomadic tribes and masters of mounted warfare, who flourished between 900 and 200 BC. Their lifestyle and ferocity has echoed through the ages. Other groups from the Huns to the Mongols have followed in the Scythians' footsteps - and they have even influenced the portrayal of the Dothraki in *Game of Thrones*. The Scythians' encounters with the Greeks, Assyrians and Persians were written into history but for centuries all trace of their culture was lost – buried beneath the ice.

Discoveries of ancient tombs have unearthed a wealth of Scythian treasures. Amazingly preserved in the permafrost, clothes and fabrics, food and weapons, spectacular gold jewellery – even mummified warriors and horses – are revealing the truth about these people's lives. These incredible finds tell the story of a rich civilisation, which eventually stretched from its homeland in Siberia as far as the Black Sea and even the edge of China.

Many of the objects in this stunning exhibition are on loan from the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. Scientists and archaeologists are continuing to discover more about these warriors and bring their stories back to life.

Explore their lost world and discover the splendour, the sophistication and the sheer power of the mysterious Scythians.

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## **Must see exhibitions/2**

### **Anglo-Saxon bible returns to England after 1302 years**

British Library: Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms (Now till – 19 February 2019) Mark Brown Arts correspondent of the London Times writes:

The oldest complete Latin bible in existence, which is one of the greatest Anglo-Saxon treasures, is returning to England after 1,302 years.



The Codex *Amiatinus* is a beautiful and gigantic bible produced in Northumbria by monks in 716 which, on its completion, was taken to Italy as a gift for Pope Gregory II.

The British Library announced it had secured its loan from the Laurentian Library in Florence in 2018 for a landmark exhibition on the history, art, literature and culture of Anglo-Saxon England.



Claire Breay, the library's head of medieval manuscripts, said: "It is the earliest surviving complete bible in Latin. It has never been back to Britain in 1,302 years but it is coming back for this exhibition. It is very exciting."

The bible is considered one of the best surviving treasures from Anglo-Saxon England but is not widely known outside academic circles. "I've been to see it once and it is unbelievable," said Breay. "Even though I'd read about it and seen photographs, when you actually see the real thing... it is a wonderful, unbelievably impressive manuscript."



Part of its power is its size. Nearly half a metre high and weighing more than 75 pounds, over a thousand animal skins were needed to make its parchment.

It was one of three commissioned by Ceolfrith, the abbot of Wearmouth - Jarrow monastery, and was a mammoth undertaking, said Breay. Of the others, one is lost and another exists in small fragments at the British Library. Ceolfrith was part of a team of monks who took the bible to Italy, though he never got to see it arrive as he died on the journey, in Burgundy, France. It was kept at the monastery in San Salvatore, Tuscany, before arriving at the Laurentian Library in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, where it has remained one of its greatest treasures. The *Codex Amiatinus* will be displayed alongside the Lindisfarne Gospels and other illuminated manuscripts, including the Benedictional of St Ethelwold, which includes the earliest surviving image of the three wise men wearing crowns. Breay said the autumn exhibition would shine light on the sophistication of Anglo-Saxon culture, a period often dismissed as the Dark Ages.

These Highlights from the British Library's outstanding collection of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts will be presented alongside a large number of exceptional loans.

The *Codex Amiatinus*, one of three giant single-volume Bibles made at the monastery at Wearmouth-Jarrow in the north-east of England in the early eighth century and taken to Italy as a gift for the Pope in 716, will be returning to England for the first time in more than 1300 years, on loan from Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence. It will be displayed with the St Cuthbert Gospel, also made at Wearmouth-Jarrow around the same time, and acquired by the British Library in 2012.

We can also reveal that we will be displaying a number of major objects from the Staffordshire Hoard, found in 2009, including the pectoral cross and the inscribed gilded strip, on loan from Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent City Councils.

Bringing together the four principal manuscripts of Old English poetry for the first time, the British Library's unique manuscript of Beowulf will be displayed alongside the Vercelli Book on loan from the *Biblioteca Capitolare* in Vercelli, the Exeter Book on loan from Exeter Cathedral Library, and the Junius Manuscript on loan from the Bodleian Library.

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## **Background reading to the exhibition: Beowulf in Kent by Dr Paul Wilkinson**

Gary Budden writes:

It's a compelling thought.; the monster Grendel inhabiting the bleak marshlands of the Isle of Harty (part of what we now call Sheppey), just over the water from the town of Faversham, separated from the mainland by The Swale. These islands tend to overfeed the imagination; lost tribes can dwell there, grisly remains, evolutionary dead ends, the sons of Cain.

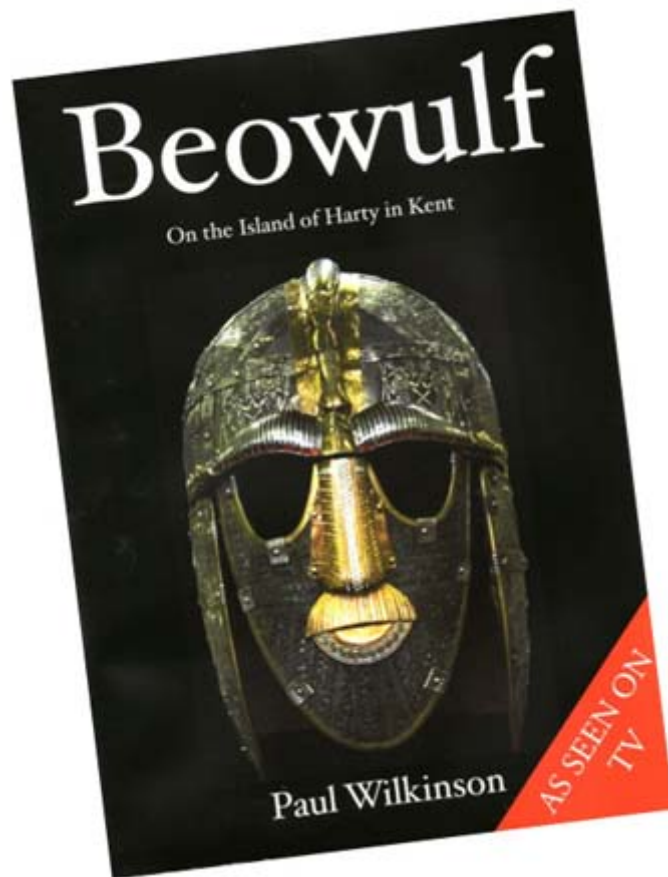
Sheppey, and the other small islands that appear as odd unmarked blanks of green on Google Maps, hold dark histories. Deadmans Island and Burnt Wick Island, so close to home and practically unknown, are borderline inaccessible. They hold the mass graves of Napoleonic French prisoners who died on the prison hulks (you'll know them from *Great Expectations*) and their bones now rise from the silt. Walk the Hollow Shore between Faversham and Whitstable, look out over to the island across the Swale, no one else around and the wind stinging the eyes. It's easy to feel Anglo-Saxon in such a place.

More than anything we want the monsters to be there.

I remember looking at the *Beowulf* manuscript in the British Library for a long time the first time I saw it. It exerted a pull over me that beat any Chinese scroll or Lewis Carroll diary. I read the Heaney translation, discovered American writer John Gardner's monster-perspective novel, *Grendel*, as part of the Fantasy Masterworks series (terrible cover). I even watched the film written by Neil Gaiman and with Ray Winstone as our founding English hero, getting entangled with a version of Grendel's mother who was rather sexier than I'd always imagined.

When I started researching the areas of north east Kent where I grew up, especially the stretch of coast along the Thames estuary, I came across a curious piece of information on the Faversham website:

*Nearly ten years ago Dr Paul Wilkinson, a Swale archaeologist, and Faversham journalist and business woman Griselda Mussett contributed a Faversham Paper which makes a strong, and believable, claim based on topographical and oral and written folk history that the Beowulf legend had its origins among place names that were commonplace and are still to be seen around the Faversham area.*



I tracked down the papers via the Faversham society and duly received them in the post. I felt like I was falling down a rabbit hole of crackpot theories and dubious speculation. If I'm honest, I wasn't much interested in the truth of any of the theories. The story appealed. Ray Winstone's cockney accent suddenly made a sort-of sense. Beowulf as the ex-Londoner moved out to the estuary.

Paul Wilkinson's colour booklet, *Beowulf on the Island of Harty in Kent* proudly proclaims AS SEEN ON TV in its bottom right corner, and features the Sutton Hoo mask as its cover, which already seems to be muddying the issue. Near the beginning, he does concede what we're really dealing with here is mythology, not archaeology or science:

*Mythology, on the other hand, is concerned above all with what happened in the beginning. It's signature is 'Once upon a time' and our English beginning could be a small island called Harty just off, but belonging to, the port of Faversham in Kent.*

In this Kentish interpretation of the tale, Harty becomes Heorot (Hrothgar's hall). Heorot sits at the heart of a large Lathe, or administrative area, the schrawynghop, an area 'inhabited by one or several supernatural malignant beings'.



The theory even goes as to suggest that Beowulf was buried under Nagden mound (a possible artificial hill that was destroyed in 1953 by men contracted to rebuild the sea wall between Faversham and Seasalter, after the great North Sea flood.), though by this point the theory has fallen more into wishful thinking and a lot of 'maybes' rather than anything that could approximate a credible argument. In my fictional landscape, Grendel and his mother fit in well with the bodies of those dead Frenchman, the prisons across the water on Sheppey, the bleak marshes, the boxing hares and the black curlews of my own fictions.

I know these tidal flats and malignant bogs were dry land once, attached to the Doggerland landmass that connected what was to become Britain to the coasts of Germany and Denmark. My mind already is flowing with ideas, stories of the last remaining malignant supernatural beings that inhabited Doggerland making a last stand in the Kentish marshes. Wiped out by Ray Winstone. Grendel having his arm pulled from its socket on the demon marsh in the Thames estuary. A dragon above Faversham.

It's a good idea for a story, right?

Maybe that's enough.

[Beowulf in Kent - YouTube](#)

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*The Kent Archaeological Field School events for 2019 include:*

**We will be back in Oplontis in the first three weeks in June 2018 for another season of excavation** and anyone can join our team. The only criteria is that you are a member of the Kent Archaeological Field School [www.kafs.co.uk](http://www.kafs.co.uk) and that you have some experience or enthusiasm for Roman archaeology, Italian food and Italian sunshine! See also the website for the project at [www.oplontisproject.org](http://www.oplontisproject.org). Please note food, accommodation, insurance, and travel are not included.





Flights to Naples are probably cheapest with EasyJet. To get to Pompeii take a bus from the Naples airport to the railway station and then the local train to Pompeii. Hotels are about 50eu for a room per night.

We are staying at are the Motel Villa dei Misteri and the Hotel degli Amici. [info@villademisteri.it](mailto:info@villademisteri.it) [info@hoteldegliamici.it](mailto:info@hoteldegliamici.it) For camping the site *Camping Zeus* is next to the hotel: [info@campingzeus.it](mailto:info@campingzeus.it) and is about 12eu a night.

Transport to Oplontis from Pompeii is not provided but most of the group use the local train (one stop). Please note it can be hot so bring sun cream and insect repellent! Any queries email me at [info@kafs.co.uk](mailto:info@kafs.co.uk) or in Naples call my mobile on 07885 700 112. We will meet up at 8am every Monday morning of the dig to start the new week. This may be the last year so grasp the opportunity! Places are limited.

**Paul Wilkinson**

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## **Courses at the Kent Archaeological Field School for 2019 will include:**

***Field Walking and Map Analysis Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April*** Field work at its most basic involves walking across the landscape recording features seen on the ground. On this weekend course we are concerned with recognising and recording artefacts found within the plough soil. These include flint tools, Roman building material, pottery, glass and metal artefacts. One of the uses of field walking is to build up a database for large-scale regional archaeological surveys. We will consider the importance of regressive map analysis as part of this procedure. The course will cover:

1. Strategies and procedures,
2. Standard and non-standard line walking, grid walking,
3. Pottery distribution, identifying pottery and building ceramics.

We will be in the field in the afternoons so suitable clothing will be necessary.  
Cost £10 if membership is taken out at the time of booking. For non-members the cost will be £25.

***Wye Roman Villa and Water mill: Good Friday 19<sup>th</sup> April to Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> April***

Archaeological excavation on the site of a recently discovered Roman Villa and water mill at Wye in Kent



On this ten day course we shall look at the ways in which archaeological sites are discovered and excavated and how different types of finds are studied to reveal the lives of former peoples. Subjects discussed will include aerial photography, regressive map analysis, HER data, and artefact identification. This course will be especially useful for those new to archaeology, as well as those considering studying the subject further. After tea break we will participate in an archaeological investigation on a Roman building under expert tuition. Expert diggers are not required to participate in the tool box talks.

Cost for members is £50 for the week or £10 a day if membership is taken out at the time of booking. For non-members the cost will be £75 for the week or £15 a day.



***Excavating at 'Villa B' at Oplontis next to Pompeii in Italy: 20<sup>th</sup> May to 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019***

We will be spending four weeks in association with the University of Texas investigating the Roman Emporium (Villa B) at Oplontis next to Pompeii. The site offers a unique opportunity to dig on iconic World Heritage Site in Italy and is a wonderful once in a lifetime opportunity. NOW FULLY BOOKED

Email Paul Wilkinson at [info@swatachaeology.co.uk](mailto:info@swatachaeology.co.uk) for further details



*Frescoes from Oplontis 'Villa B'*

***The final investigation of a substantial Roman Aisled Building at Faversham in Kent: Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May to Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019.***

Nine days investigating the final area of a substantial Roman building to find out its form and function. This is an important Roman building and part of a larger Roman villa complex which may have its own harbour. One of the research questions we will be tackling is the buildings marine association with the nearby tidal waterway.

Cost for members is £50 for the week or £10 a day if membership is taken out at the time of booking. For non-members the cost will be £75 for the week or £15 a day.



### ***Training Week for Students on a Roman Villa at Faversham in Kent***

It is essential that anyone thinking of digging on an archaeological site is trained in the procedures used in professional archaeology. Dr Paul Wilkinson, author of the best selling "Archaeology" book and Director of the dig, will spend five days explaining to participants the methods used in modern archaeology. A typical training day will be classroom theory in the morning (at the Field School) followed by excavation at the Abbey Fields Roman villa near Faversham.



Topics taught each day are:

**Monday 6<sup>th</sup> May (Bank Holiday):** Why dig?

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May:** Excavation Techniques.

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May:** Site Survey.

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May:** Archaeological Recording.

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May:** Small Finds.

**Saturday and Sunday** (free) digging with the team

A free PDF copy of "Archaeology" 3rd Edition will be given to participants. Cost for the course is £100 if membership is taken out at the time of booking plus a Certificate of Attendance. The day starts at 10am and finishes at 4.00pm. For directions to the Field School see 'Where ' on the [KAFS website](#).

***Archaeological Survey for Students: Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July, Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2019***

An opportunity to participate in excavating and recording Roman features in the landscape.



Cost for members is £10 a day if membership is taken out at the time of booking. For non-members the cost will be £15 a day.



***Excavation of a Roman villa at Teston near Maidstone: Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August to Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2019***

Last year a geophysical survey took place down slope from the CAT discoveries and possible masonry walls identified. Subsequently the Kent Archaeological Field School were invited by the owner to investigate the site and a field walking weekend in March identified an area of disturbed Roman masonry below that of the CAT discovery and above that of the geophysical survey. Hand digging of test pits identified a substantial deposit of Roman building material and on opening up the trench the south wall stretching for 39m was exposed and running east-west, At each end substantial towers or pavilions were also exposed. Rooms with hypocaust

heating were exposed to the north and stretching into the adjoining field and towards CATs investigations in 1991.



Work in 2018 included searching for the masonry bath-house and two geophysical surveys which has identified a major building to the rear of the main villa and this will be the focus of our investigations in August 2019.

Cost for members is £50 for the week or £10 a day if membership is taken out at the time of booking. For non-members the cost will be £75 for the week or £15 a day.



**The Kent Archaeological Field School, School Farm Oast,  
Graveney Road, Faversham, Kent ME13 8UP**

Tel: 01795 532548 Email: [info@kafs.co.uk](mailto:info@kafs.co.uk)

Director Dr Paul Wilkinson MCIfA



## KAFS BOOKING FORM

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You can download the KAFS booking form for all of our forthcoming courses directly from our website, or [by clicking here](#)

## KAFS MEMBERSHIP FORM

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You can download the KAFS membership form directly from our website, or [by clicking here](#)

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Kent Archaeological School School - Director: Dr Paul Wilkinson MIFA  
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