

# *KAFS Newsletter: No.2*



## ***Welcome to the Summer 2025 Newsletter from the Kent Archaeological Field School***

Dear Member, we will be sending this new look Newsletter by email 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. For more details of courses and trips see [www.kafs.co.uk](http://www.kafs.co.uk) I do hope you enjoy the new look newsletter which will keep an eye on the courses available and the greater world of archaeology.



## **Breaking News: Stonehenge in the news (again)**

The word 'solstice' comes from the Latin words for sun (sol) and to stand (sistere). It's the time of year when the position of the rising or setting sun stands still in its movement along the horizon.

Summer solstice occurs on the longest day of the year, usually 21 June, although the sun's position remains in pretty much the same place for a few days either side. For Neolithic people, sunlight would have been crucial - for warmth for them and their animals and for helping their crops to grow

During the summer solstice, the earth's axis is tilted at its closest point from the sun. This means that in the northern hemisphere, the sun is at its highest point in the sky. It's also the longest day of the year - and the shortest night.

It would have been relatively easy for prehistoric people to observe the rising and setting positions of the sun each day, and to mark these orientations from any given spot. beyond what we describe in books (*Susan Greaney- English Heritage*).

**Breaking News/2: Published KAFS (2025) Reports: *Excavation of a Roman Aisled Barn and Bath-house at Faversham in Kent by the Kent Archaeological Field School and excavated from 2012 to 2019.***

From 2012 to 2019 the known cropmark of a possible Roman building in Abbey Fields was investigated by students from the Kent Archaeological Field School directed by Dr Paul Wilkinson. The site is just off Abbey Street, Faversham in Kent at NGR 602217 161730 and to the east of the Roman villa excavated in 1960 by Brian Philp.

The Roman building was initially investigated by over 20 students who attended the KAFS field school training week in August 2012 and each year up to 2019, and for the students it was a unique experience of working on an archaeological evaluation and seeing how an investigation of an important Roman building progressed.

The survival of the Roman building was good with stone walls, *opus signinum* floors, still standing hypocaust *pilae* towers all covered by tons of ceramic roof tiles over the collapsed Kent ragstone walls.

On top of this collapsed strata and to the north-west were cill beam slots for a timber building identified by the pottery as belonging to the early 6th century.



The Roman building is large, 52.4m long and 14.3m wide, built of mortared Kentish ragstone with the collapsed walls indicating a height of about 3m for the outer walls. Levelling courses of Roman tile were also a feature of the walls.



There is an internal bath-house complex at the south-west corner end of the building with heated floors and baths measuring about 13m x 9.5m but it seems the Roman building started life as an aisled hall or barn and was part of the Roman villa estate excavated by Brian Philp in the 1960's.

A later crudely built flint wall was constructed to the north of the Roman building in the shape of a large semi-circular apse with a Roman tiled rectangular feature in the centre of the space which may be the remains of a Christian altar. A pectoral cross pendant (SF.128) was retrieved from context [1734].

Part of the Roman external wall near to the freshwater stream on the north-east had been built on timber piles. At the south-east end of the building a courtyard wall continued on for about 25m to the east without a turn.

Between the two Roman buildings is a still running fresh water spring and stream which leads to the tidal Faversham Creek, itself some metres away.

With so much surviving from the structure of the building it is possible to state that the design was of an arcaded stone building with clerestory lighting, a separate nave with two aisles, all roofed in tile, and of a type recognised by Collingwood and Richmond (*Collingwood & Richmond 1969, 149*).



Location of the Roman villa (west) excavated by Brian Philp in the 1960's and an additional recent KAFS geophysical survey which has identified more of the Roman villa to the north. The location of the Roman aisled barn to the east with clerestory lighting, a separate nave with two aisles, all roofed in tile. The location of the site is at Abbey Farm in Faversham (NGR 602202 161756).

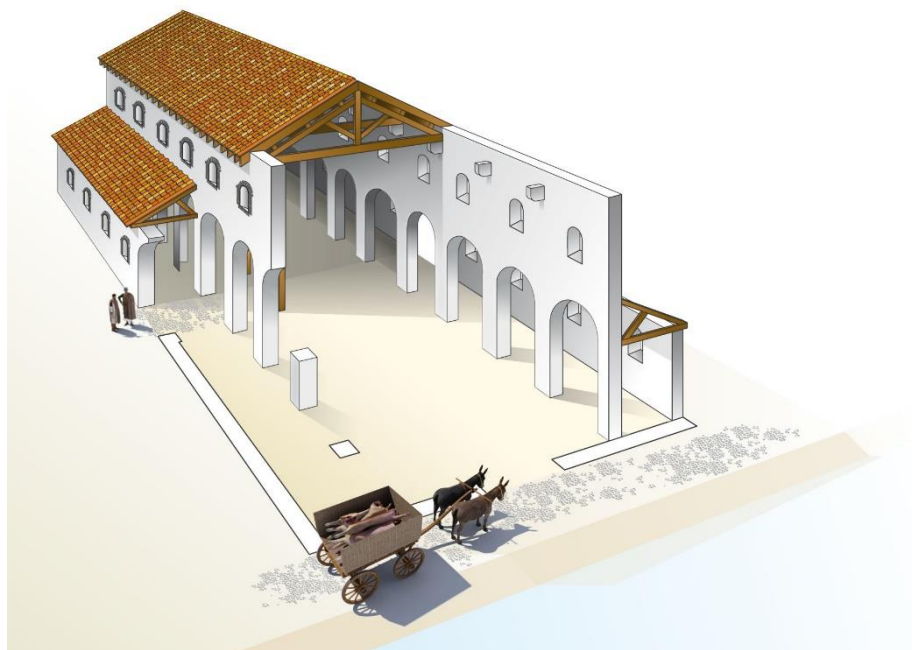
602202.510  
161756.687



Key:  
GPS survey shown in black  
Taped survey shown in blue

602237.828  
161704.771

The Roman building is the largest agricultural building found in Kent at 45m (150ft) long and 15.40m wide which is about 50 Roman feet. Excavation has shown the building was originally built in the early 2nd century AD as an aisled barn with a mortar and chalk floor. Forensic investigation has revealed the remains of the stalls used to contain the Roman estate farm





animals. Very soon after, the building was rebuilt as a huge bath house with hot rooms, steam rooms, and warm rooms used for massage. The decoration has a feel of a municipal baths with none of the luxurious features one would expect of a private enterprise bath house. Given the size of the bath-house it is far too large for a Roman villa estate and must have catered for another set of clientele. It is probably too far from the main Roman road to London (Watling Street) to have been an Imperial posting house with accomodation but it sits astride the port of Faversham and may have catered for the crews of visiting ships. Field walking has indicated there are other Roman buildings alongside the inlet, itself a fresh water river at low tide and future investigation including geophysical survey will be focused on their chronology and function.

The site itself is rich in archaeological remains with the Roman villa discovered in 1960 close by, which itself was built over a Late Iron Age farm. In the medieval period Faversham Abbey was founded on the site



and two magnificent tithe barns still stand between the two Roman buildings.

The work has shown that the survival of the Roman building was amazing with stone walls, opus signinum floors (polished terracotta floors), under floor hypocaust heating, all untouched, and covered by tons of ceramic roof tiles and the collapsed stone walls covering huge amounts of

box flue tiles which were used to direct hot air up the interior walls. Painted plaster from these walls is mostly white but the hot sauna room on the north side of the building had plaster walls decorated in green, red and yellow panels.

Outside the north wall recent work has shown that the tidal waters of the Swale estuary lapped the building and investigation has shown a large tidal inlet existed here in the Roman period, and was deep enough to form a harbour for Roman ships. The Roman building itself has a coin and pottery range from the 1st to the early 5th century and numerous Roman domestic articles were also recovered including silver jewellery, bone hair pins and the remains of exotic glass vessels. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century the Roman building was extended to the east as a half-rounded extension likely a Christian church complete with the tile base of an altar and close by a Roman Christian pectoral cross was found.







Site level survey taking place with KAFS students and SWAT Archaeology at Abbey Barns

Book of the Month is:

Not ‘SPQR’ by Mary Beard but *Pompeii. An Archaeological Guide* by Paul Wilkinson.

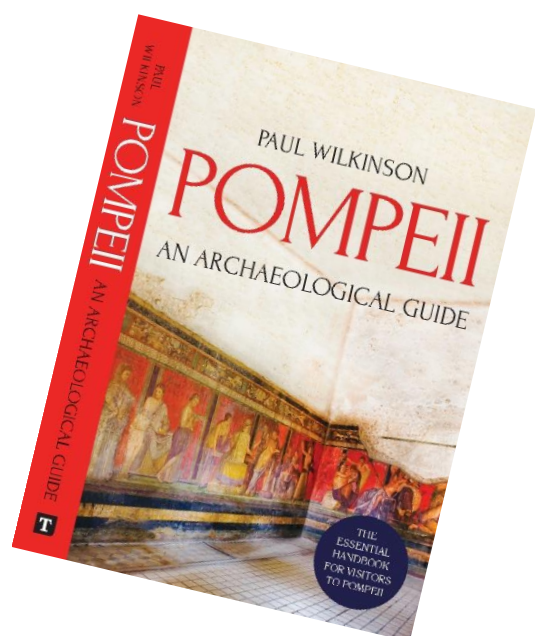
Sales so far are 10,102.024 copies:

Seller - Pompeii: An Archaeological Guide, Paul Wilkinson

10,070,018+ items sold. 1.6% negative feedback. Great seller with very good positive feedback and over 50 ratings.
Over 14 years experience as eBay seller. Located in GB, GB.
Recent Feedback

	1 Week	1 Month	6 Months	12 Months	All Time
Positive	17,730	89,961	528,633	1,093,885	13,273,734
Neutral	411	2,556	11,100	20,110	110,461
Negative	243	1,886	7,729	13,542	91,041

- As described and arrived a day early
- Excellent many thanks
- Brilliant - Thankyou
- Perfect thanks





**Research News:** Aerial survey of Kent. Dr Paul Wilkinson reports on a research project by the Kent Archaeological Field School.

*'If you are studying the development of the landscape in an area, almost any air photograph is likely to contain a useful piece of information'*

(Interpreting the Landscape from the Air, Mick Aston, 2002).

Students of the KAFS have started a two year programme of collating Google Earth aerial photographs from 1940 to 2025 to enable focused information which can then be followed up by ground survey. The fruitfulness of this can be appreciated by the work of the Field School along Watling Street in North Kent where hundreds of important archaeological sites have been identified including twenty-two Roman villa's and their estates (Swale Survey).

The ultimate aim is to publish the results online. Aerial photography is one of the most important remote sensing tools available to archaeologists.



The hexagonal ditched enclosure at Bridge is Roman (see the KAFS report) and the small circular ditched enclosures to the NW are Anglo-Saxon graves. Recent KAFS research have located another hexagonal ditched enclosure to the east.

Another Roman villa and estate (below) just to the north of Borden has been located through field waking with lots of Roman building material and pottery and KAFS will hopefully investigate it later in 2025.



Courses at the Kent Archaeological Field School for 2025 are on hold until more settled times

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