KAFS Newsletter: No.1

Welcome to the Winter 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 I do hope you enjoy the new look newsletter which will keep an eye on the courses available and the greater world of archaeology.

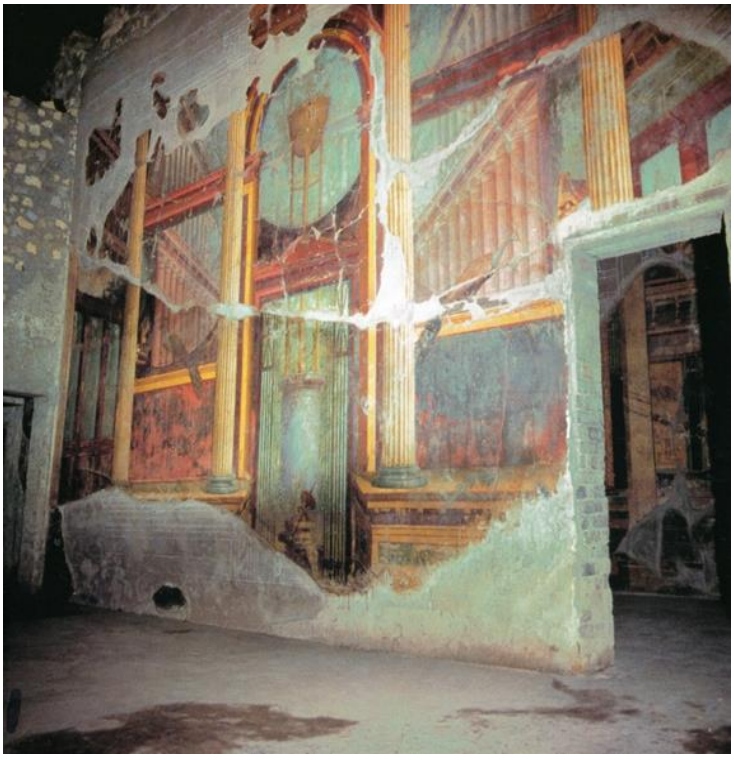
Breaking News: Stonehenge in the news (again)

There are many questions surrounding the ancient stone circle of Stonehenge but might sound help in the search for answers?
Thomas Hardy said it had a strange "musical hum". Tess of the d'Urvbervilles story ends at Stonehenge and features the "sound".
Modern-day druids also say they experience something special when they gather at Stonehenge and play instruments within the stone circle……..

However, Stonehenge is a ruin. Whatever sound it originally had 3,000 years ago has been lost but now, using technology created for video games and architects, Dr Rupert Till of the University of Huddersfield has - with the help of some ancient instruments - created a virtual sound tour of Stonehenge as it would have sounded with all the stones in place.
Arriving at 07:00 on a decidedly chilly January morning, I was sceptical. Dr Till had arrived with a horn, a drum and some sticks to try to show me that, even in its partially deconstructed state, there was still a distinctive echo.
Perhaps it's the mystique of the stones but it's easy to hear something. However, sound is always going to bounce off huge standing stones: how can we say that was in any way meaningful for people 3,000 years ago?

Dr Till says there's a great deal of evidence that ancient people were intrigued and drawn to places that had a distinctive sound and Stonehenge had a "strange acoustic". Even today, the wind or drumming can, he says, help generate a 47hz bass note.
He first got a taste of what the circle might do to sound when he visited a concrete replica of the original intact Stonehenge in Maryhill in the US state of Washington.
He has now developed an app which will help people blot out the sounds - including those made by tourists, and cars on the nearby A303 - and go back to the soundscape of 3,000 years ago.
He's used instruments that were used at the time, such as bone flutes and animal horns, to give people a sense of what music would have sounded like within the reverberation of the intact stone circle and says the site has some of the characteristics you might expect of a rock concert venue.
Dr Till explains that there's strong evidence that people several thousand years ago had an interest in acoustic environments. He's worked on caves in Spain in which instruments have been found deep underground.
The echoes of the tunnels and cave systems may have had a special meaning for people. There are also, what appears to be, human markings on certain "musical" stalactites.

Strike the stalactites in the right way and they give off a deep resonant note and can be played like a huge vertical xylophone.
Stonehenge is a magnet for strange theories but this reflects a wider movement within archaeology to try to recreate the past with the rapidly growing technology of virtual reality (VR). Dr Aaron Watson is a research archaeologist and specialises in visualising the past.
VR, he says, opens up a new way of researching history.
"The material record can't give us all the answers," he explains. "The moment we start creating a virtual reality world it begins to ask questions, especially about people.
What were they wearing, what were their postures, were they highly coloured, tattooed?
As soon as we create the immersive experience it demands those answers.
"It gives a new sensory experience to looking at the past that might take us beyond what we describe in books."



Breaking News/2: Oplontis excavation

The Oplontis Project began in 2006 with the study of the site known as Oplontis situated at Torre Annunziata, Italy. The work is sponsored by the Center for the Study of Ancient Italy at the University of Texas in Austin. Its two directors are John R. Clarke and Michael L. Thomas. In addition the Kent Archaeological Field School, Faversham, Kent UK under its director Dr Paul Wilkinson has been involved in fieldwork at both villa sites since 2008 which is now completed.

The aims of the project are to enable an understanding of the two buildings, one of which is Villa 'A', the other Villa 'B' to be enhanced through a comprehensive study of the buildings, the fabric, the artefacts and human remains, their location, and their function including a 3-d model (above) with interactive database which will enable scholars to write a series of comprehensive volumes which will be published by the Humanities eBook series of the American Council of Learned Societies. The first is scheduled to appear in 2014.

Villa 'A' is now recognised as one of the most sumptuous and extravagant Roman villas overlooking the Bay of Naples. It is thought by many that the villa was the property of Poppaea Sabina the Younger who was born in Pompeii in AD30 and married Nero in AD62. The evidence is somewhat circumstantial and consists of graffiti found on an amphora

which said '*secundo poppaea'* which in translation means 'to the second [slave or freedman] of Poppaea'.

The villa was excavated by an Italian team over twenty years ago, and although it was impossible because of modern development to find the limits of the villa some 99 rooms and spaces were excavated including a sixty metre swimming pool and formal gardens. The villa is probably best known for its wonderful Second Style wall frescoes which can be found in a number of rooms located around the atrium, itself dating back to about 50BC.

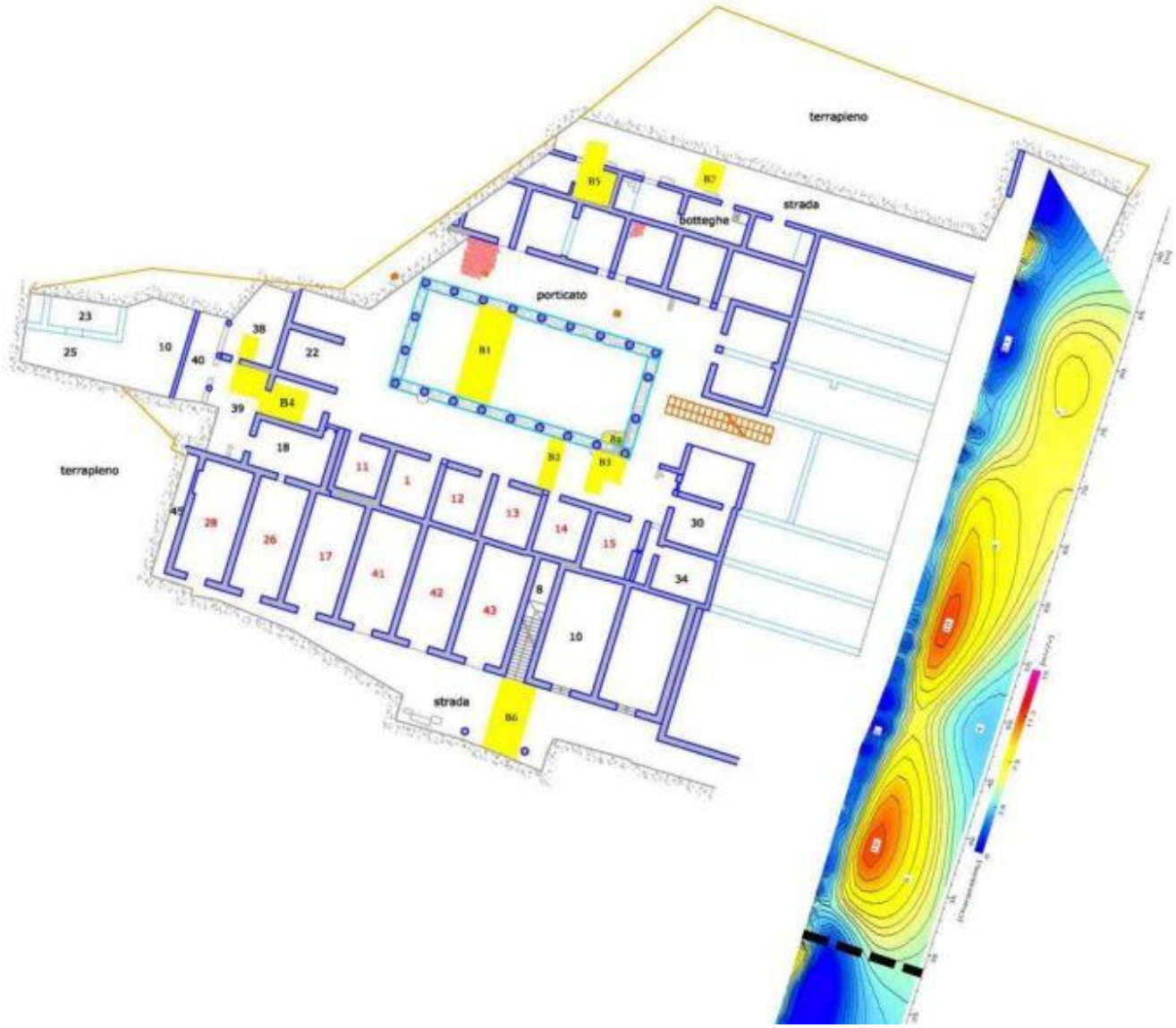
Villa 'B' is located about 300 metres to the east of Villa 'A' and is not a villa. Its likely function was a warehouse where wine would be processed and shipped out in amphorae. Some 400 amphorae still litter the site. Around the warehouse are roads and streets of town houses still waiting to be excavated.

The plan of the warehouse is focused on a central courtyard surrounded by a two-storey peristyle of Nocera tufa columns. The eastern side of the peristyle includes an entrance opening onto an unexcavated road running north south and detected through our coring campaign. Ground floor storage rooms open up into this central space whilst above on the second floor are residential rooms. To the south lies the remains of a colonnade and portico and, set back, a series of large barrel vaulted storage rooms which faced the sea.

In these rooms, just as in the Roman port area of Herculaneum, dozens of skeletons were found of people waiting to be rescued by boat from the eruption of Vesuvius in AD79.

In 2008 I was invited by John Clarke to join the team and started work on site at Villa 'A' helping with a small evaluation trench located in the southern area of the large swimming pool. One of its aims was to attempt to date the adjacent foundation wall of Room 78, the large *diaeta* (private room) to the south-west of the swimming pool. We excavated through demolition layers of Roman material which included fragments of exquisite fresco, painted stucco fragments and, the most wonderful of all, beautiful oil lamps with a variety of designs. To an archaeologist who normally excavates Roman sites in Britain the quality and quantity of finds was staggering. The Fourth Style fresco fragments indicated a *terminus post quem* date of about 45AD for the construction of the *diaeta* (above).

The following year I returned to Oplontis with a small team from the Kent Archaeological Field School (KAFS) and a Landover full of archaeological kit. The drive from Kent, through France, across the Alps and down the spine of Italy was memorable and is something I still look forward to every year. In a way it is a drive through a historic landscape, and gives one a feel of how extremes and opportunities of landscape moulded the lives of past peoples. The 2009 season was busy and eight trenches were excavated at Villa 'A'. In addition Giovanni Di Maio who had already undertaken some work on the geological formations below the villa cored three additional areas to the south of the villa and proved that Villa 'A' was situated on a cliff about 13 metres above the Roman sea level. Our work in 2009 included a test pit dug through the north-west corner of the pool. We found that the pool had originally been larger and had been reduced in width presumably to allow the colonnade of porticos on the west side to be built. In addition we excavated part of a circular fountain in Room 20. It had been revealed by workmen laying cables in 2007 and not recorded.



On investigation we found a partly demolished fountain buried under a metre of demolition debris. The fountain had quite a pronounced tilt to it which might suggest Villa 'A' had been subjected to serious earthquake damage in the years before AD79. All the piping to the fountain had been robbed, and in addition a statue which graced the south edge of the fountain was no longer there, but its concrete 'footprint' was!

Another of our trenches was located in the north-east corner of the north gardens and for once we were digging through layers of pumice deposited by the volcanic eruption of AD79. Underneath we found an open canal 80cm in width and finished in coating of *cocciopesto* (pink waterproof cement), known to archaeologists as *opus signinum.* The canal runs north with a slight curve to the east under the modern car park. The function of the aqueduct fed canal cannot be proved, but it is likely that it was an open water feature, part of an elaborate garden which went out of use in antiquity when it was backfilled with earth and debris.

Another garden we looked at was in Room 32, the peristyle in the servants quarters located to the east of the main atrium. We discovered evidence for an earlier peristyle that matched the footprint of the later build. The trench produced copious amounts of marble mosaic flooring, opus signinum slabs, and the exquisite marble nose from a small statue! The water features investigated in 2009 suggest that the first phase of the villa dated to about 50BC, and was seriously damaged in the earthquakes of AD62 with the water features decommissioned and either demolished or backfilled. In 2010 we excavated nine trenches with a view to unravelling the complexities of the water supply to the villa. In the south-east of the north gardens we excavated a large cistern with a capacity of about two cubic metres of water. It seems the cistern, constructed

of opus signinum, was to prevent flooding in this part of the garden, to hold a water supply for the garden, and for use as a drain to the nearby portico that once lined the eastern side of the north garden and its adjacent room. The finds from the infill of the cistern were dazzling with large fragments of a Doric frieze constructed of super fine stucco, two types of antefixes, and part of a column constructed of wedge-shaped bricks and with stucco flutes. It was decided to excavate in the centre of the 60m swimming pool which required crowbars to remove the large basalt blocks which made up the substructure of the pool. Our daily water consumption went up from two litres a day in the shade to six litres! The reason for digging was that the ground penetrating radar had found a significant anomaly underneath the pool foundations. Unfortunately we did not find any anomaly but we did expose and record the two phases of pool construction, the eruption layers and the palaeosoils.

Our attention then focused on the area immediately south of the pool. Four trenches were dug that exposed a portico at the south end of the pool, part of a wonderful marble floor of *opus sectile*, a room not recorded before with marble steps and a Doric column with stucco fluting still in situ. Found on these steps were copious amounts of pottery and a large piece of marble architrave with part of an acanthus scroll or volute (opening picture).

Our work at Villa A has got additional evidence that after the earthquake of AD62 large areas of the villa were badly damaged. The finding of part of a column drum from the adjacent east wing in the cistern, the lifting of part of the *opus sectile* floor prior to the eruption of AD79, and the remodelling of the swimming pool suggest that major re-building work was being undertaken. The villa also had problems with its water supply which may suggest that the villa was not habitable at the time of the eruption in AD79.

Excavation in Villa B (above)

Initial GPR work had detected a series of anomalies that suggested the presence of earlier structures under the present exposed buildings. In particular the investigation suggested that the complex lay just a few metres from the ancient shoreline. The wider

settlement may have been a small town (Oplontis) or a commercial harbour serving the Pompeian countryside, and will be the first of its kind discovered in the Bay of Naples area.

Work started in 2012 in the courtyard area with the aim of exposing the stratigraphy, and to examine the foundations of the building which may produce evidence of its function and chronology. We expanded the trench to the entire width of the courtyard and soon had to resort to crowbars as the original surface of the courtyard comprised large and occasionally very large basalt boulders with the gaps between boulders infilled with large sherds of amphorae. Some of these still retained residue which were bagged for analysis.

Immediately under the basalt pavement was the first of many pyroclastic flows, the first dating to the Late Bronze Age. As we excavated down we exposed and recorded sequence

The Anglo-American team excavating within the portico

after sequence of eruption strata and palaeosoils dating as far back as 1500-1600BC. Some of these surfaces had carted or sled ruts along with pottery sherds and remains of mud bricks. The lowest strata were littered with Bronze Age artefacts, and suggest there was a high level of Bronze Age activity in the environs of Oplontis B.

Both ends of the trench gave an opportunity to investigate the foundation design of the colonnade which was unusual to say the least. A thick tufa stylobate sits on top of foundation blocks (sterobate) spaced to coincide with the joins between the blocks of the stylobate with the entire assemblage sitting on the same pyroclastic stratum which we found under the basalt paved courtyard. Sherds of Campania A Black Gloss pottery found in the foundation trench date the build of this colonnade to the 2nd century BC.

In 2013 we returned to this area and expanded the trench to expose a complex water system with a settling tank plus two water channels and various drains. Of some importance is the fact that this complex water system cut through two previous floor levels which suggests the function of the building may have changed through time. Underneath this layer we found the original floor surface with numerous Neronian and Flavian coins. Below that a complex of barrel vaulted drains was exposed which will need further investigation. Our final investigation was to examine part of the street north of the main complex. Originally excavated by the Italian team in the 1980's, who discovered a street running east to west lined on both sides with simple town houses on both sides, it is apparent that these houses have ground floor rooms, some with the foundation step of a staircase leading to upstairs rooms, and some of which have a simple shrine dedicated to the household gods. Our investigation showed that some areas of the ground floor still retained debris from the AD79 eruption and had not been excavated. Underneath we found a simple beaten earth floor, the step for a staircase, a toilet and washing area and probably a kitchen area. The road outside the house was also excavated and showed it had two construction phases which may correspond to the two identified phases of the adjacent building, the first probably dating to the 2nd century BC when the building were probably used as workshops with a wide entrance, and the second phase when the entrance was narrowed and the building turned into domestic quarters. Indeed, three houses show walled up entrances, it now became a typical Roman street that included stone benches outside of each entrance See also the website for the project at www.oplontisproject.org.

Dr Paul Wilkinson

Skeleton of Bronze Age woman unearthed at Cottington Road, Thanet in Kent UK development to be ‘archived’ in museum

By Local Democracy Reporter Daniel Esson

The skeleton of a woman in her early 30s who lived during the Bronze Age was unearthed at a building site in Thanet.

The well-preserved human remains were discovered in a burial plot, as well as skeletal fragments belonging to another female, during a dig carried out on a site earmarked for 41 homes in Cliffsend.

An archaeological survey ahead of construction found evidence of “prolonged occupations” ranging from the Bronze Age through to the post-medieval period, a report published this month revealed.

Swale and Thames Archaeological Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) lays out the significance of the discoveries, writing: “The importance of this site within the context of Thanet archaeology {should} not be underestimated.”

The unexpected finds were made by SWAT Archaeology as developer Orbit Homes secured permission to build a 41-home estate north of Cottington Road and east of Lavender Lane in March 2021.

As well as human remains, a myriad of ditches, enclosures and established Roman road were unearthed, as was a possible prehistoric 'monumental' ditch with an intact beaker burial. A beaker burial refers to the custom of burying the dead with a distinctively shaped pot, carried out in Britain from about 2,500BC until 1,800BC.

The near complete early Bronze Age skeleton was found in a 'crouch burial' on the southern part of the site, and the woman was estimated to be between 30 and 35-years-old at the time of her death.

A crouch burial occurs when the dead are interred on their sides, with knees pulled up to their chest, and evidence of this practice is often found in Bronze Age sites.

Excavators also found remains of others – including a skull fragment, thought to be from an adolescent or young adult woman from 500- 400BC.

The pit in which that fragment was found also contained burnt flint, pottery, animal remains and worked flint – meaning rocks which were likely used as tools.

Animal parts were also found, including two dogs in a Roman burial.

A variety of other remains from throughout the ages were uncovered – including from goats, sheep, cattle, a crow, and a cat, which SWAT Archaeology described as deriving from "a mixture of carcass processing, kitchen and table waste."

The remains were removed from the site and studied, and it is expected they will be archived by Kent County Council in a museum.

The development, known as Cottington Gardens, was completed in 2022. Thanet was separated from mainland Kent by the Wantsum Channel from the early Bronze Age until the medieval period.

The district is distinctive for its range and density of surviving archaeological remains. Pegwell Bay, on the southern edge, is thought to be where invading Romans first landed in Britain, and the Christian mission to the British Isles led by St Augustine landed nearby in 597AD.

Dr Paul Wilkinson, who managed the excavation, said such burials are not unusual but “tell a story about the development of Britain from the Bronze Age right up until now. He added: “None of this investigative work would be possible except for the planning condition which ensured the developer paid for excavation and curation costs of any discoveries.”

Brian Nearney, regional managing director at Orbit Homes, said: “We were delighted to complete the delivery of homes at Cottington Gardens in Cliffsend in 2022.

“We enlisted SWAT Archaeology as part of the pre-construction programme we undertake at every site, and we’re delighted to see them unearth such interesting finds from several periods.

“It has been an incredible experience for the Orbit Homes team to watch the archaeologists undertake excavation of the site and now start to learn more about the significance of the artefacts that were discovered.”

Cremation with Bronze Age pottery

Breaking News from the Bay of Naples

Results of the initial investigation of the Roman town under the Bay of Naples when in order to find the results, the researchers had to scuba suit-up, and carry out their research in the underwater archaeological site in Baia.

When excavating, the archaeologists collected 50 samples of marble, all measuring no more than a few centimetres long. The samples were then taken back to the lab for chemical analysis.

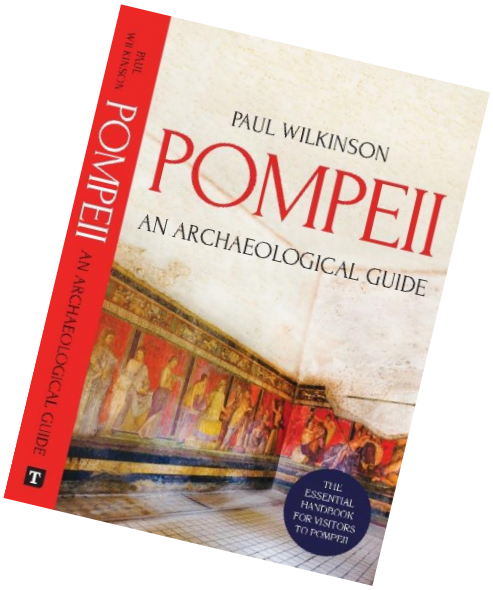
Four different stages of examination were used on the marble. "First, thin layers of the collected marble were observed using a petrographic microscope," said Alvarez de Buergo. "Then, the mineral composition of the marble was studied using X-ray diffraction and the manganese content was determined (with Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry). Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) was then carried out and various isotopes were analysed."

The results showed that the marble came from seven of the most valuable quarries across Italy, Turkey and Greece. Just five of the 50 samples tested could not be identified. White marble was used extensively across the Roman Empire for decoration of buildings and statues. As times progressed, coloured marble was also used - symbolising the country it originated from - for example, purple marble came from Egypt.

Book of the Month is:

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

Sales so far are 10,070.018 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

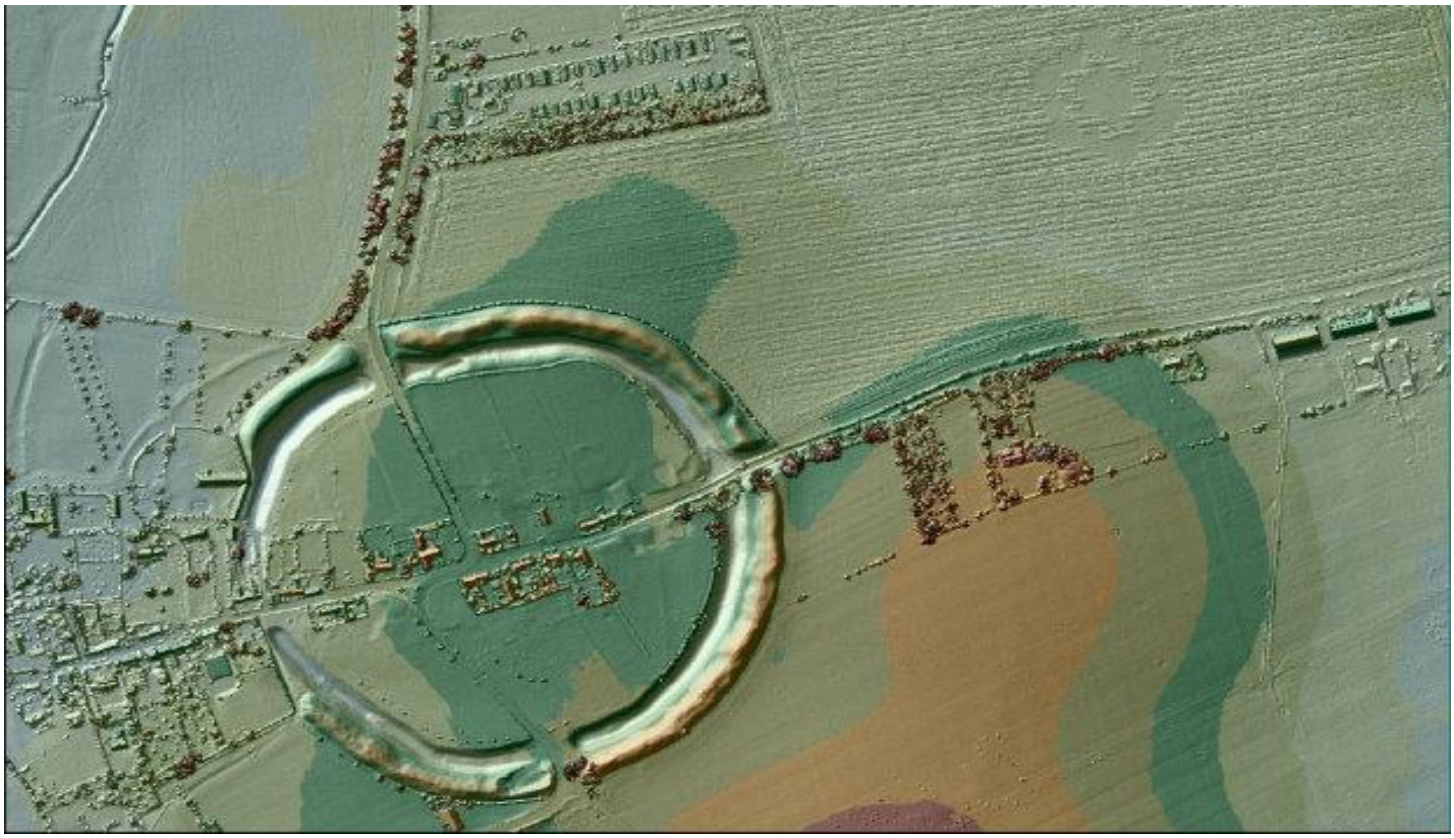
Research News: Aerial survey of Kent. Dr Paul Wilkinson reports on a research project by the Kent Archaeological Field School.

'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 2013 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 22 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.
Other remote sensing devices that will be used are satellite imagery and geophysics. All of this information can be combined and processed through computers, and the methodology is known as Geographic Information Systems (GIS).



A new addition to the survey palette is the recent availability of Lidar images (Light Detection and Ranging) some say invented by the Germans to discover Russian tanks hiding in the forests close to Germany's borders...

Typical image created by Lidar of..... (first right answer of location wins the prize of a free weekend at the Kent Archaeological Field School).
All answers send to info@kafs.co.uk

Lidar image of salt mounds at Graveney (TR 06017 63483) showing the attached parcels of salt marsh. In addition the road to the huge mound–maybe artificial- with its possible defensive ditch which dominates the Graveney Marshes.

Lidar image of Graveney (TR 04630 622888) which shows an enclosure (Roman fort?) with finds of Roman pottery on the ancient shores of the Swale (red arrow).

Lidar image of the Island of Elmley (TQ 9336267264). Note the circular ditched enclosure which could be a Viking overwinter camp and needs to be investigated and causeway across the Swale estuary in Kent with a shipwreck to the east (red arrow). The intertidal area just to the west of the south causeway has produced masses of Roman pottery.

(green arrows)

Lidar image of Blacklands east of Faversham (TR 037586150). The red arrow points to a Roman religious centre overlooking springs with a theatre (red arrow) cut into the hillside and surrounded by 19 Roman buildings- some with full colour pictorial mosaics. Of interest is the parallel relict field boundaries (green arrows) spaced at 10 Roman Actus (355m)

And finally an interesting aerial by Google Earth showing double ring ditches and……

Courses at the Kent Archaeological Field School for 2025 include:

Field Walking and Map Analysis - Saturday 19th April – Sunday 20th April 2025

Field work at its most basic involves walking across the landscape recording features seen on the ground. On this weekend course at the Field School in Faversham 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

£40 if membership is taken out, Non-members £45.

July 19th – July 27th Investigation of a Roman Villa and Watermill

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 nine 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 or on site) followed by excavation on a Roman villa at Hollingbourne and/or Borden in Kent.

Topics taught each day are:

Saturday 19th: Why dig?

Sunday 20th: Excavation Techniques

Monday 21st to Saturday 26th: Excavation

Sunday 27th: Archaeological Recording

A free PDF copy of "Archaeology" 4th Edition will be given to participants. Cost for the course is £100 if membership is taken out at the time of booking. Non-members £175. The day starts at 10am and finishes at 4.30pm. For directions to the Field School and site see 'Where ' on this website. For camping nearby see 'accomodation' in www.kafs.co.uk .

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