

KAFS Newsletter: No.3



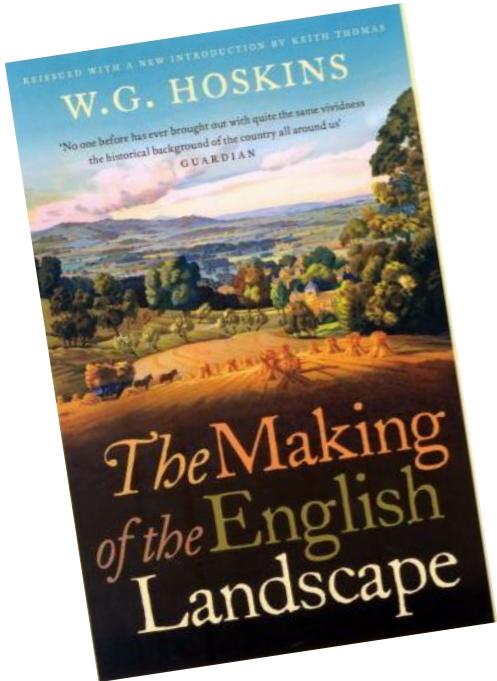
Welcome to the Winter 2025/26 Newsletter from the Kent Archaeological Field School

Dear Member, we will be sending this new look Newsletter by email each year 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 see www.kafs.co.uk I do hope you enjoy the new look newsletter which will keep an eye on the KAFS archaeological reports available and the greater world of archaeology.



Book of the Year: Making of the English Landscape by W G Hoskins

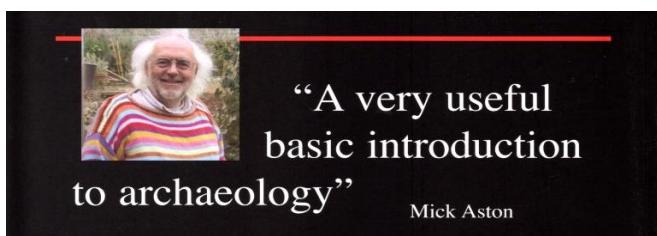
'No one before has ever brought out with quite the same vividness the historical background of the country all around us' say 'The Guardian'- a classic of English landscape history, now reissued in its fiftieth anniversary year.



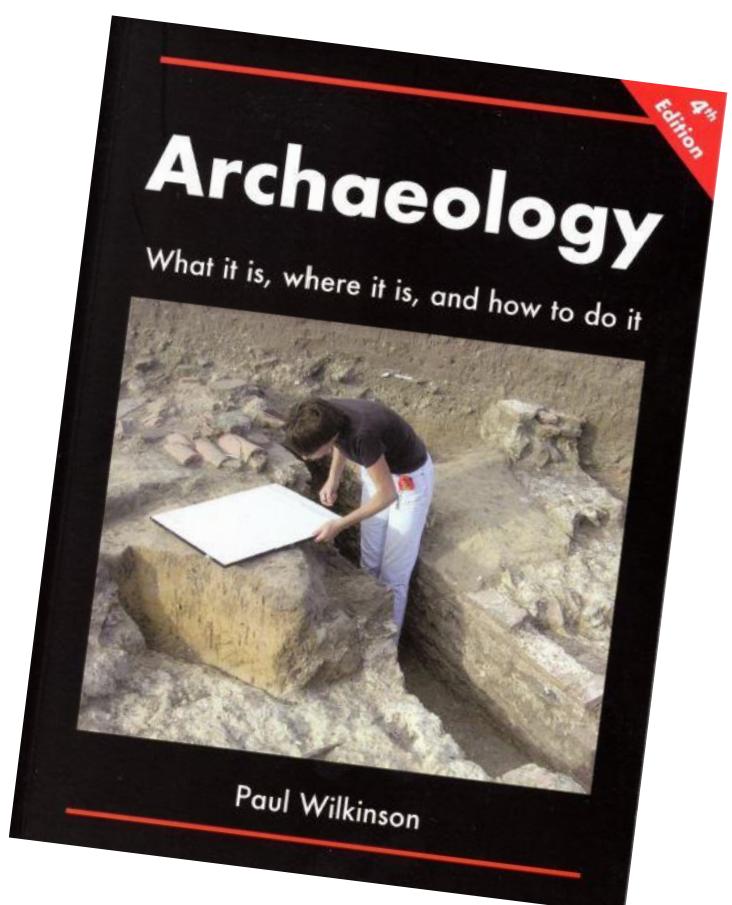
First published in 1955 by Hodder, "The Making of the English Landscape" is a classic of English history. It was the first book to study, literally, the history of the landscape, and also the first to explode the myth that the English landscape was 'formed by enclosures' Instead W. G. Hoskins traces the beauty and oddities of the English landscape further back, from pre-Roman times to the seventeenth century and beyond. Hoskins explains the layers of history in the landscape by taking the reader with him along Devonshire lanes, past lost villages in Lincolnshire, and through the pastures of upland Northamptonshire. W.G. Hoskins was born in Exeter in 1908. He ended his career as Professor of English

Local History at the University of Leicester, head of the first department devoted to the field of study he helped found - local and landscape history. He was also Reader in Economic History at the University of Oxford, a Fellow of the Royal Academy and a CBE. His book THE MAKING OF THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE was made into a BBC series in the 1970s and is widely acknowledged as a classic.

And now for something different! The best-selling Archaeology Book in 2025 now in its 4th Edition with over 73,000 sold



Buy for a friend this Christmas!



Update on the Roman Religious Sanctuary at 'Blacklands' School Farm, Graveney Road, Faversham in Kent (Just behind the SWAT office and KAFS classroom)

In 2007 and 2008 the Kent Archaeological Field School (KAFS) carried out a campaign of investigation by trial trenching and limited open area excavation (below) of an archaeological site to the east of Faversham on land traditionally called 'Blacklands'. The site had been found by field-walking as part of the Swale Archaeological Survey conducted by the writer in 1995-1999 (Wilkinson, P. 2000). The results of the follow on KAFS archaeological investigation were spectacular with two buildings and a Roman rural sanctuary theatre investigated out of a potential of ten buildings which had been mapped by a geophysical survey requested by Peter Kendall and carried out by Andy Payne both of English Heritage in March 1997.



The two Roman buildings excavated were substantial stone-built structures, both with hypocaust heating and one Building 1 embellished with fine pictorial wall plaster and full colour pictorial mosaics (above right).

Building 1 overlooked a large depression excavated out of the chalk hillside which on investigation has been identified as a Roman cockpit theatre of a type usually found on rural sanctuary sites in north-west Europe rather than Britain.



The theatre overlooked large fresh-water springs from which a number of votive offerings have been retrieved; others were retrieved from field-walking on site.

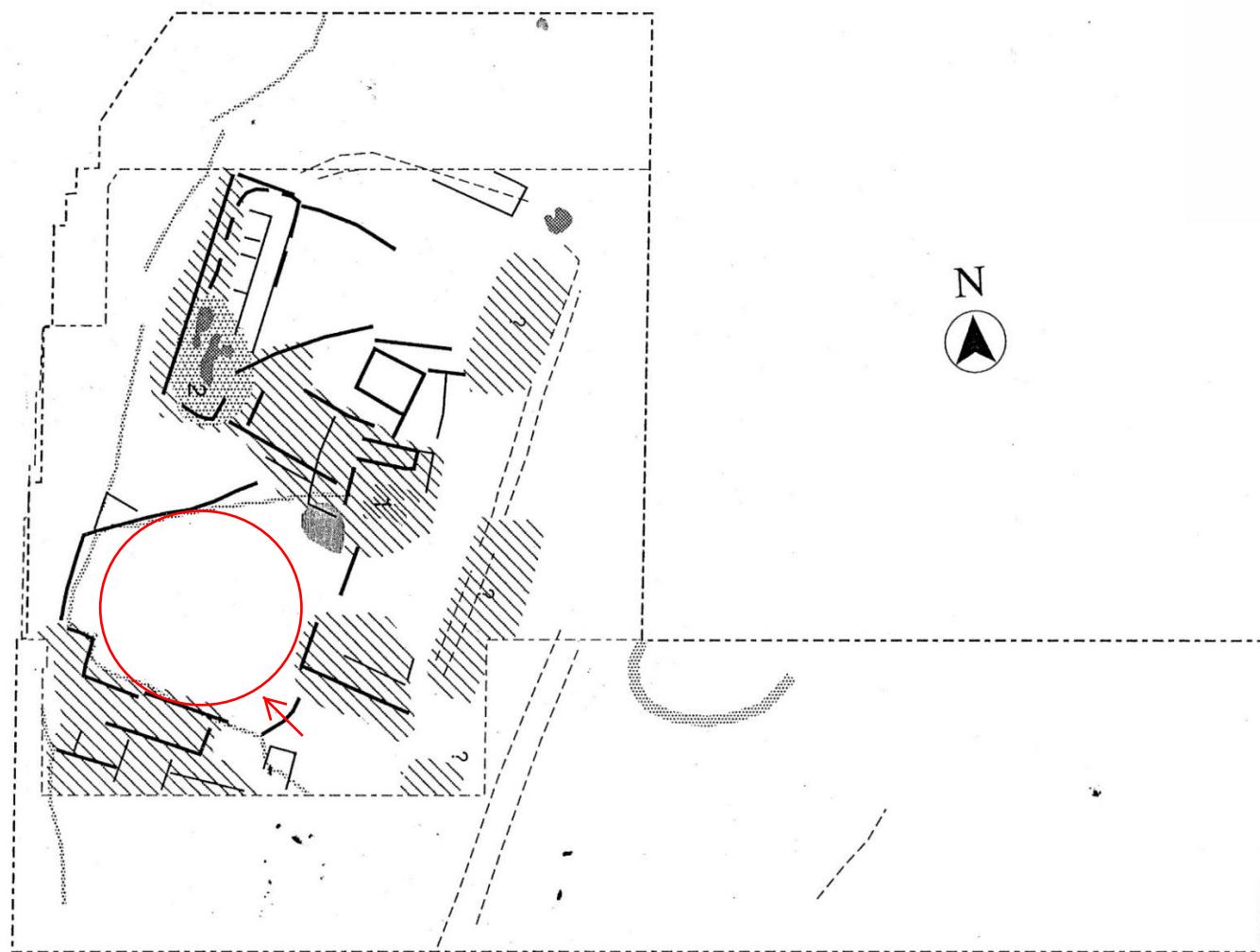
The site also produced evidence of Neolithic use, Bronze and Iron Age occupation. The Roman site seems to have been established in the late 1st century AD and the theatre seems to have gone out of use by the 4th century.

The post-Roman use of the site is of a large timber hall built on top of the mosaic floor of Building 1 and dated by pottery to the late 5th century AD (Important!).

Anglo-Saxon activity from the 7th century is attested by two burials inserted into the fabric of Building 1.

In the 12th and 13th centuries most of the fabric of the Roman buildings was removed, and some of the material used to construct kilns in the field to the north of the Roman site. This site was also unknown until the investigation at Easter 1995 by KAFS.

This Roman pagan religious sanctuary site is recorded in the Anglo-Saxon charters of AD 699 (BCS 99) and AD 815 (BCS 353) and Gordon Ward notes that: "The [Anglo-Saxon] use of the word *ealh* meant a pagan temple or, in more general terms, a sanctuary" (Ward, G. 1934). The site is considered to be of National Importance as it is the only known example in Britain of a Roman Rural Religious Sanctuary with a theatre (red arrow) actually built into the hillside.



The initial archaeological attention was focused on the south field in an attempt to locate the Roman buildings which had obviously been dismantled to provide building material for the medieval kiln makers, and no doubt other masonry buildings in the area. The soil was well drained arable soil, possibly forest at some stage- there are 16th century accounts of

the School Lands providing timber for the new grammar school in Faversham, but now the land is ploughed.

Two 'bald spots' full of Roman building materials were noted almost immediately where modern ploughing had removed the 'crown' of soil in a colluvial action which meant the soil was creeping down the west slope towards the still working springs of Ewell Fleet.

The KAFS team concentrated on these two bald spots and began to find small marble multi-coloured *tesserae*, larger, tile-cut tessellated floor cubes, painted plaster, and large amounts of Roman building ceramics and Roman pottery. A small excavation was conducted and mortared stone walls were exposed, as well as a hypocaust system constructed out of chalk blocks. The hypocaust channels were filled with fragments of multi-coloured pictorial mosaics of the best quality and full colour pictorial painted plaster, some showing exquisite paintings of birds darting through foliage.

In view of the continuous damage to the environs of the site by agricultural operations and the danger of destruction of the archaeological deposits by treasure hunters, it was felt that an archaeological evaluation of the site should be undertaken.

Negotiations with the landowner, Dr Martin Thomas of School Farm were completed satisfactorily, various funding bodies and local institutions were contacted and a major campaign of evaluation was undertaken in August 2007-8. The success of this campaign was due to the generosity and kindness of the landowner, the sponsors, History Today magazine, Friends of the British Museum and the students from the Kent Archaeological Field School.

The main aims of the evaluation programme were to define the central zone of the religious complex, to investigate the nature and building history of the Roman buildings. To seek any traces of a pre-Roman precursor to the Roman shrine and, by careful site recording, to dissect the latest remains and observe any indications of post-Roman modifications or reuse. It was also intended to record the positions three-dimensionally of as many of the finds as possible in order that the distributions could be analysed.

The purpose of the geophysical surveys were to attempt to trace unexcavated archaeological features extending beyond the theatre area and also to look for postulated features related to the temple complex, situated to the east of the theatre such as a *temenos* wall and ditch. In addition the surveys were designed to look further afield for any other indications of buried remains which might add to the understanding of the archaeological context of the site under evaluation. Geophysical surveys were undertaken by Andy Payne of English Heritage, following the establishment of a 10m grid across the field by KAFS and Prof. Bill Martin.

The geophysical survey by English Heritage had stunning results. The theatre is in the area highlighted with a red circle. The stage (on the left) backs on to the springs whilst the seating area (on the right) is cut into the hillside. Surrounding the theatre is a large complex of Roman buildings which include Building 1, possible temples and Building 2.



Excavation of Building 1 in August 2007 (above). The thinness of the topsoil covering can be seen. One of the excavators is kneeling on the southern flint exterior wall whilst a later post hole dated by pottery to the late 5th cent is being excavated. To the right another 5th century post hole is being drawn up. These are three postholes out of eight of a post-Roman timber building constructed on top of the earlier Roman mosaic floored bath-house can be seen. Note the massive wall on the right of the picture which is part of the base of an earlier Roman apsidal room

Reading Beowulf and discussing with the place name expert Margaret Gelling could this be where *Wealhtheow* queen of Heorot crossed a *fagne flor* (tessalated or mosaic floor) to offer Beowulf and companion's refreshment. Margaret Gelling points out that in the name Wealhtheow the Wealh is derived from Welsh which means British and theow an arranged

marriage and in addition the road to Heorot, a *straet* is an Anglo-Saxon loan word from the Roman word *strata* or street.



A series of eight parallel postholes had been cut through the southern flint wall of the bathhouse measuring on average 600mm in diameter with a depth of 640mm. The length of the run of postholes was 16.5m with the east end of the timber building presumably turning north along the edge of the two stone platforms for 6.5m. To the west the postholes continued in a straight line beyond the curve of the Roman apse and possibly into an area of ground as yet unexcavated. The timber building could be longer than the 16.5m exposed.

Two fresh pottery sherds (20g) found in posthole (CRN 023) were dated by Malcolm Lyne to Middle Saxon whilst Nigel Macpherson-Grant suggests late 5th century, and notes as they were fresh they are most likely associated with the post-Roman timber building.

The lip of the Roman theatre with a diameter of 65 metres can be clearly seen in the photograph (above). The photo shows how the *cavea* of the theatre curved round towards the stage. No seats survived but the slope was turfed in the Roman period leading to the still surviving (and recorded) stage and in the trees beyond are the 'sacred' springs.

2.KAFS Student investigations in an amazing site at Bridge astride the Roman road from Richborough and Dover to Canterbury

In 1980 students of the KAFS started a two year programme of collating Google Earth aerial photographs from 1940 to 2025 to enable focused information which then was 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 Archaeological Survey 1996).

The ultimate aim was to publish the results online which has been achieved. 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 (red arrow). Recent KAFS research (2024) has located another hexagonal ditched enclosure to the east.

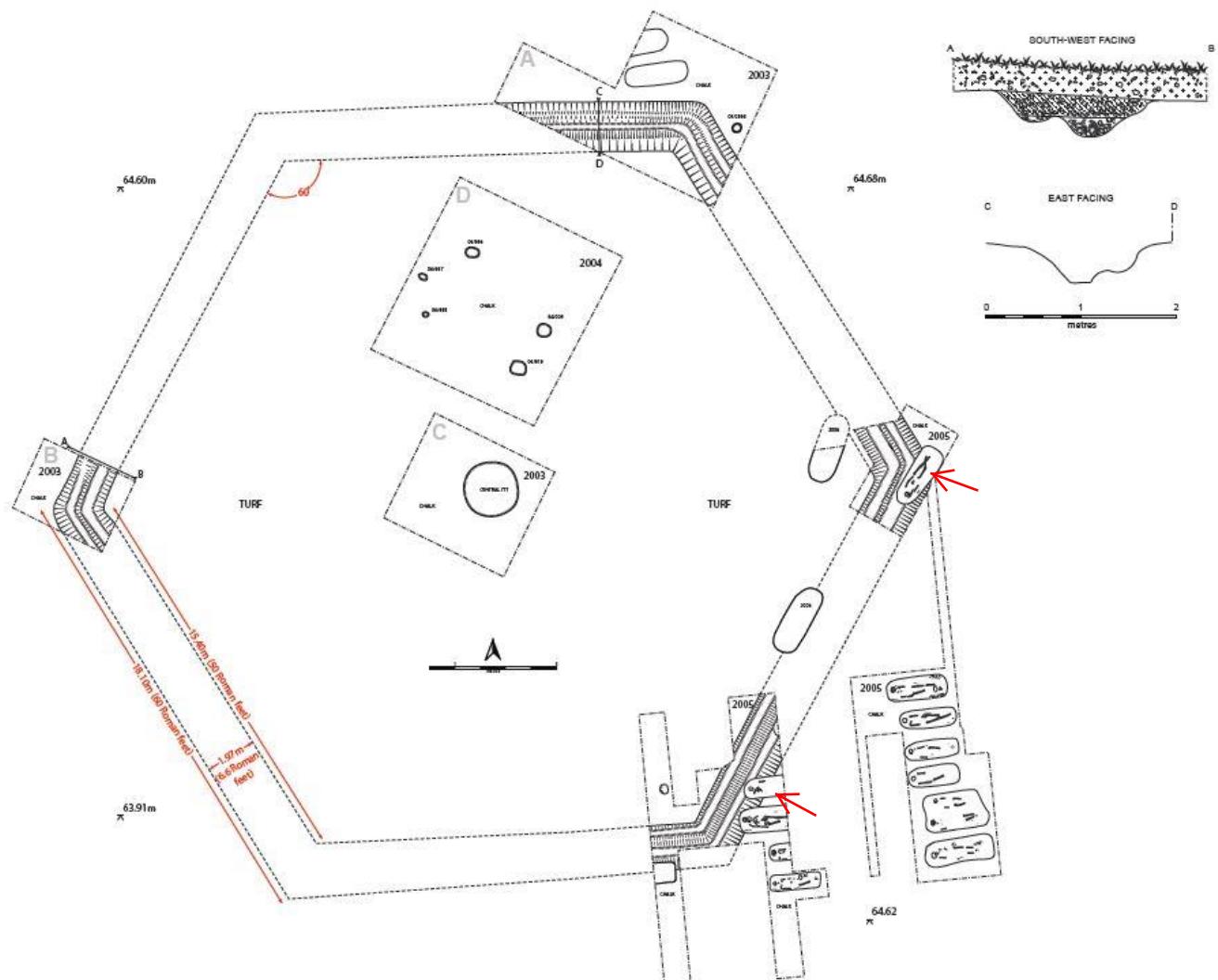


Figure 55. Areas of 2003-2005 Investigation

The excavation areas of the Roman hexagon at Bridge can be seen as can later Anglo-Saxon burials actually cut into the Roman ditch (red arrows). The photograph (below) shows members of KAFS, Ronnie and Catherine excavating one of the Anglo- Saxon burials which

are cut into the Roman ditch of the hexagon. Research by the KAFS prior to field work had found a 19th century map drawn by the Rev. F. T. Vine, Vicar of Patrixbourne and published by him in the 2nd edition of his book, 'Caesar in Kent'. Vine thought the hexagonal feature was a Roman fort, one of two within the grounds of Bourne Park (Vine 1887).





The aerial photographs (above) look towards Canterbury and shows the village of Bridge with the Roman Watling Street running through it (left). The photograph (right) shows the second hexagon (red arrow). The study area (right) by the KAFS in 2005 (black) and 2006 (red) show the area of investigation are to the east of the (first) hexagon. To the north can be seen many more ring ditches of Anglo-Saxon inhumations. An estimate of the number of burials in this part of Star Hill is well over 1000 graves with over 200 graves mapped.

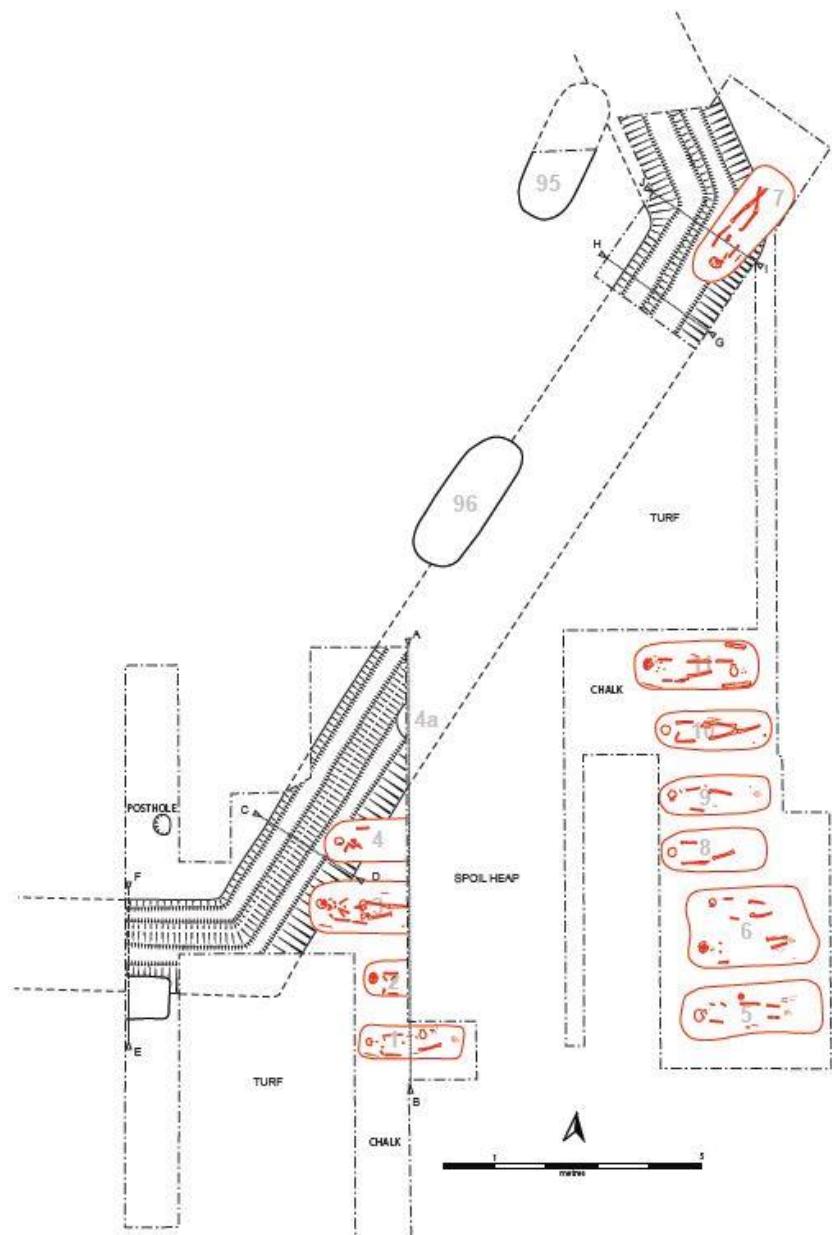


Figure 56. Area of 2005 Investigation

3.KAFS Bronze Age Barrow Report at Hollingbourne in Kent from July to August 2014



Investigation by the Kent Archaeological Field School of the tract of land called the Holmsdale, which runs along the west slope of the North Downs in Kent has discovered and investigated an enclosure with the attributes of a henge.

The enclosure is adjacent to the Greenway, a path thought to date from the Neolithic and close to another prehistoric path, the Pilgrims Way.

The outer rectangular enclosure, dated to the Early Iron Age faces the Greenway path and the site itself is

situated on top of a hill surrounded on three sides by water and on its fourth by the Greenway path. The site was identified by the uneven growth of crops and field walking by the school earlier in the year retrieved prehistoric and Saxon pottery from the area. Additional field-walking to the west of this feature identified the site of three ring barrows and upslope an enclosure and droveway which again had been identified on Google Earth.

From 2011 to 2012 KAFS investigated all three barrows. Barrow 1 had a cobbled entrance on the south side delineated by two post-holes either side of the entrance and two adjacent baby burials. KAFS found no other burials within this ring barrow. The artefacts retrieved from the ditches of Barrows 1-3 have been dated to Late Neolithic – Early Bronze Age.



Plate 1. Google Earth dated April 21st 2007

In following years 2013-14 KAFS investigated the remaining barrows situated to the southwest of Barrow 1 (above). The North Downs ridge to the east of the Medway seems on initial survey results to have a plethora of ring barrows. The Medway valley, between Maidstone and Rochester has the famous megalithic long barrows clustered in two groups on either side of the valley, which have long been known (Holgate 1981). Now, with the recent discovery of a large Neolithic rectangular timber building at White Horse Stone not far from the Lower Kits Coty burial chamber, the identification of a possible new causewayed camp at Burham (Dyson, Shand and Stevens 2000; Oswald et al. 2001), along with the circular enclosure at Holborough, this region stands out as a potentially important ritual Neolithic and Early Bronze Age landscape which is in need of extensive, detailed modern study.



Plate 2. Google Earth view of the study landscape with three ring barrow's (red arrow) and prehistoric enclosure (red circle) and prehistoric drove road (red arrow) from the high land grazing downslope to the fresh water springs just off the picture. Historic OS mapping shows more barrows to the east so the three barrows shown were part of a larger group (OS 1907 mapping).

1. In July 2011 the topsoil and subsoil were removed from Barrow 1 to reveal an area roughly 28m in diameter. Within the site was located a circular feature which is approximately 25m in diameter. Five trenches (T1 – T5) were excavated across the circular feature which was a ditch; this extended the entire perimeter around the excavation area and completed the circle; however, there was only evidence of both the inner and outer edge of a ditch extending approximately 100 percent of the circular feature. Trenches T1-T5 were approximately 2m x 1.5m x 1.2m variable. Section of A1/T1 [016] is 1. 4m x 1m, the section of A1/T2 [014] is 1.9m x 1. 3m, the section of A1/T3 [028] is 1.6m x 1. 1m, section of A1/T4 [023] is 1.9m x 1. 2m and the section of A1/T5 [030] are 1.4m x .80m.

2.Trench A1/T1 [004] consisted of one context (deposits/fills): (004). Contexts were chalk rubble. Trench A2/T1 [007] consisted of four contexts (deposits/fills): (008). with mid brown silty clay, except for (023) which consisted of large lumps of chalk. Context (024) and (025) contained small finds SF/001, SF/002, SF/003, SF/005, SF/006, SF/009, SF/010, SF/011, SF/012, SF/014, SF/015, SF/016, SF/017, SF/018, SF/019, SF/020, SF/021 and SF/022.

Except for SF/019, SF/020 and SF/021 all small finds were microliths, the others: one piece of worked flint and two pot boilers.

3.Trench A1/T3 [009] consisted of three contexts (deposits/fills): (020), (019), (010). Contexts were chalk with light brown silty clay, except for (019) which consisted of large lump chalk. Frequent shells, rare flint and animal bone were found in all contexts except for (019) and (010). No small finds recorded. Trench A1/T3 [026] consisted of four contexts (deposits/fills): (027), (033), (028), (033). Contexts were chalk with light brown silty clay except for (028) which consisted of large lumps of chalk.



Plate 3. Excavating Barrow 2 (Horse burial)

4. Trench A1/T4 [014] Section 6 consisted of six contexts (deposits/fills): (008), (009), 010), (011) (012) and (013). Contexts were chalk with light greyish brown silty clay except for (013) which consisted of large lumps of chalk. Context (008) contained small finds SF/008, microlith, and SF/013 pottery. Context (009) contained small find SF/024, antler. Furthermore, moderate snail shells were found in contexts (012) and (013).

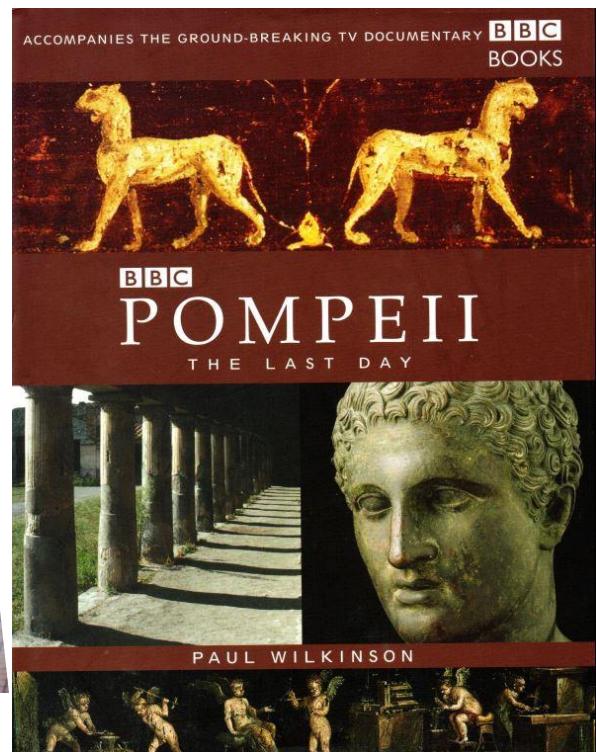
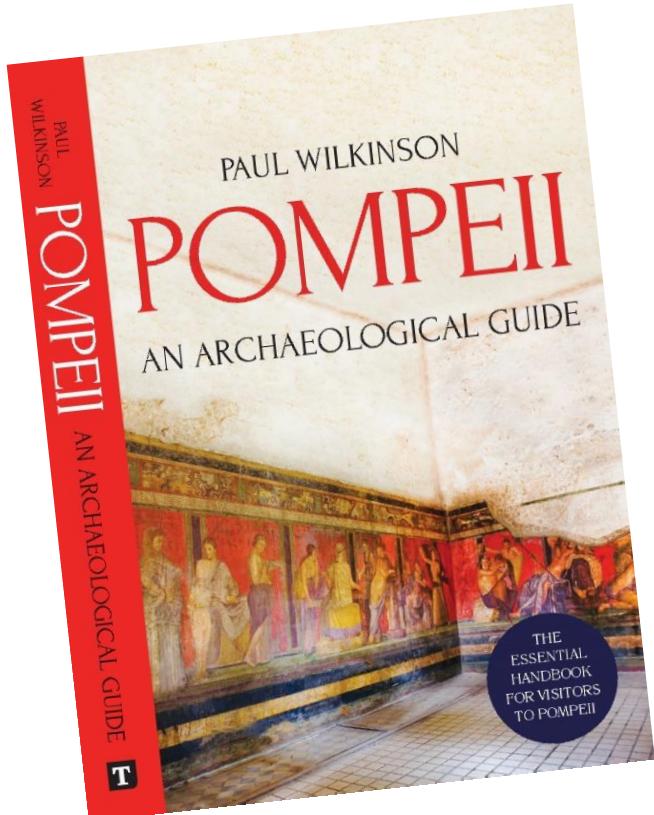
5. Trench A1/T6 [032] Section 8 consisted of five contexts (deposits/fills): (010), (020), (021), (022) and (035). Contexts were chalk with light greyish brown silty clay except for (035) which consisted of large nodules of loose chalk. Moderate shell, flint, animal bones were found in all contexts. Context (022) revealed a human skeleton S/001 in a crouch position on a north, south orientation between 66cm and 80cm below the surface in the north end of the trench. The skeleton appeared to be located within a cut in the chalk and may have been disturbed. The skeleton was left unexcavated and in situ; one bone was removed for dating purposes.



Plate 4. Crouched human burial found in Context 022 (45cm between blue pegs)



*And for 2026 an invite to KAFS to participate in a marine archaeology survey of the Bay of Naples and for me to write more guide books on the Roman World with over 10 million copies sold of **Pompeii. An Archaeological Guide** by Paul Wilkinson.*

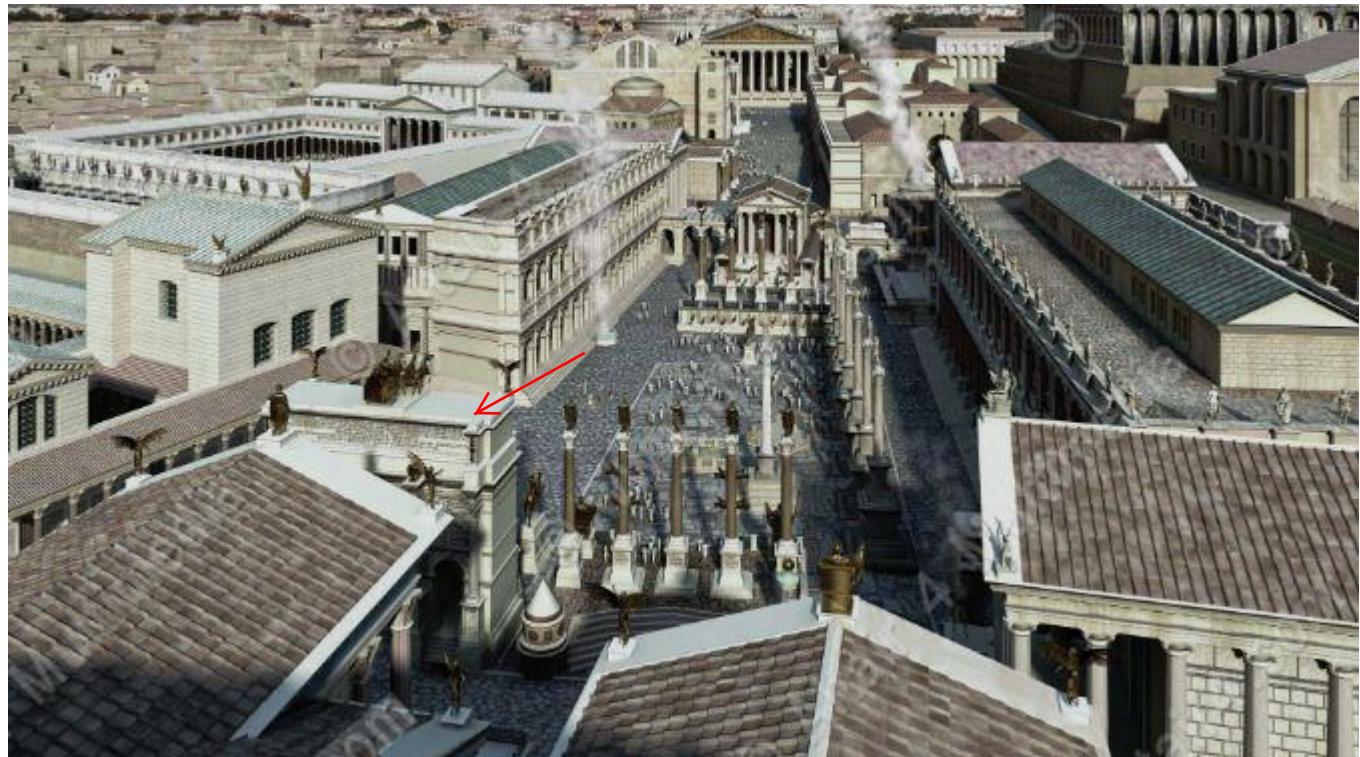


The archaeological poem for Christmas is:

The Ruin is a famous poem written by an unknown author that appears in the Exeter Book, a tenth century collection of Anglo-Saxon poetry that's now housed in the library of Exeter Cathedral. The book itself was damaged by fire, resulting in the poem The Ruin being incomplete let's have a look at one translation that comes from A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse by R. Hamer, London, 1970.

*The city buildings fell apart, the works
Of giants crumble. Tumbled are the towers
Ruined the roofs, and broken the barred gate,
Frost in the plaster, all the ceilings gape,
Torn and collapsed and eaten up by age.
And grit holds in its grip, the hard embrace
Of earth, the dead-departed master-builders,
Until a hundred generations now
Of people have passed by. Often this wall
Stained red and grey with lichen has stood by
Surviving storms while kingdoms rose and fell.
And now the high curved wall itself has fallen
The heart inspired, incited to swift action.
Resolute masons, skilled in rounded building
Wondrously linked the framework with iron bonds.
The public halls were bright, with lofty gables,
Bath-houses many; great the cheerful noise,
And many mead-halls filled with human pleasures.
Till mighty fate brought change upon it all,
Slaughter was widespread, pestilence was rife,
And death took all those valiant men away.
The martial halls became deserted places,
The cities crumbled, its repairers fell,*

*Its armies to the earth. And so these halls
Are empty, and this red curved roof now sheds
Its tiles, decay has brought it to the ground,
Smashed it to piles of rubble, where long since
A host of heroes, glorious, gold-adorned,
Gleaming in splendour, proud and flushed with wine,
Shone in their armour, gazed on gems and treasure,
On silver, riches, wealth and jewelry,
On this bright city with its wide domains.
Stone buildings stood, and the hot streams cast forth
Wide sprays of water, which a wall enclosed
In its bright compass, where convenient
Stood hot baths ready for them at the centre.
Hot streams poured forth over the clear grey stone,
To the round pool and down into the baths.*



Reconstruction of the Roman Forum in Rome with the Arch of Constantine to the left (red arrow)



Courses at the Kent Archaeological Field School for 2025/2026 are on hold until more settled times

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