

FIELDWORK COMMITTEE UPDATE

Introduction

When the first edition of this bulletin was published in September 2019, we had no idea of what lay ahead. We anticipated holding forums twice a year, with the next scheduled for March 2020, but Covid-19 had other ideas. After a year in which most amateur archaeology was put on hold, we decided that it was time to hold a virtual event for representatives of our affiliated groups. Discussions and planning have continued behind the scenes at KAS and the Fieldwork Forum held by Zoom on March 20 was an opportunity to communicate a number of forthcoming volunteering and training opportunities.

Fieldwork Forum 2, Mar 20, 2021, via Zoom

The Forum attracted an audience of about 70. Unfortunately, it is unclear how many groups were represented. This is an issue that we need to address if we use this format again.

Chairman's welcome

Keith Parfitt, Chair of the Fieldwork Committee, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the day's programme

He reminded participants of the purpose of these meeting – to allow local researchers and groups to get together, discuss their activities and kick about current problems. This seemed particularly important at the moment as local groups are in danger of falling apart because they can't get out and do things. Nevertheless, difficulties in field have presented opportunities to get on with backlogs of post-excavation work.

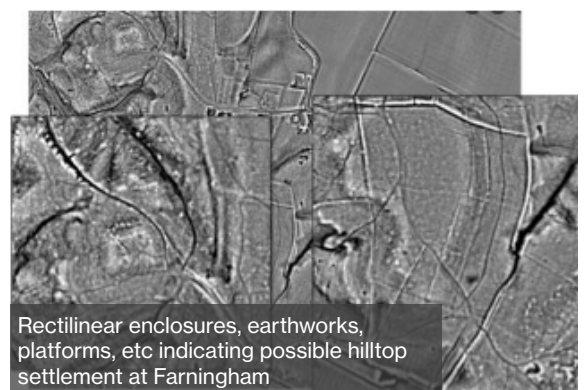
Post-excavation work has continued on the Lees Court excavations of 2018-19. Keith has been writing up the 60 or so prehistoric features in Woods Court Field where patterns are starting to emerge.

Interest in the area began with three Bronze Age hoards found by metal detectorists. These are at the British Museum and were to be worked on by John Smythe, a freelance Bronze Age researcher and a member of KAS who volunteered on the dig, but owing to Covid closing the Museum, this has not yet been possible.

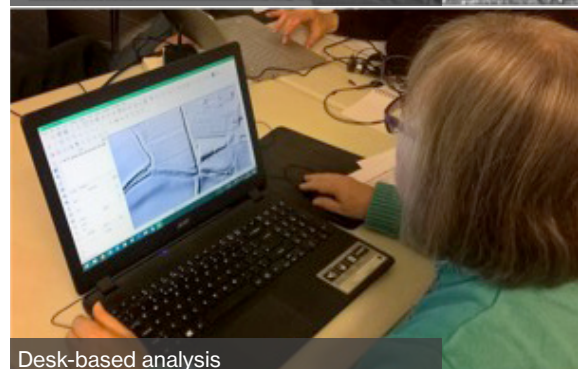
Further fieldwork is planned at Lees Court, possibly later in 2021, more probably in 2022.

In the meantime, professional archaeology has carried on, being classified under the building industry, and has been very busy in Kent.

In particular, Keith highlighted a large CAT dig on Thanet, covering a huge area adjacent to the new East Kent Access road. This has produced a complicated sequence ditched trackways and rectilinear field systems spanning the Iron Age into the Roman period. Although there are no signs of villas, there are occasional timber buildings and discrete cemetery areas.



Rectilinear enclosures, earthworks, platforms, etc indicating possible hilltop settlement at Farningham



Desk-based analysis

Membership Survey and Strategy

Clive Drew, KAS Secretary stood in for Kerry Brown, President elect who was unfortunately unable to attend, to give a brief overview on KAS thinking over last year.

A survey of the KAS membership was undertaken about a year ago with over half the membership participating.

For the last year a Strategy Group has been meeting weekly with a brief of working out what the KAS should be doing and for whom. In particular, as a charity, it is necessary to look at our public benefit, changing emphasis from looking inwardly to outwardly and asking what we should be doing for community groups not just for ourselves.

The next KAS Magazine will carry an article on this subject and – for members of the KAS – there will be an in-depth Teams event with Kerry Brown (in lieu of the AGM, which cannot be held under present circumstances).

Kent LiDAR Portal

Ann Sassin presented on the Kent LiDAR Portal and the exciting citizen science opportunities it presents.

The Community LiDAR Portal provides online mapping tools which allow members of the public to assist in the detection, identification and record creation of LiDAR features of potential archaeological interest. Volunteers can use a range of different LiDAR visualisations, historic maps, aerial photos, modern Ordnance Survey maps and data from the online HER (Historic Environment Record) to get an appreciation of the landscape and identify features. These are then recorded and digitised to create field records for possible monuments.

If this sounds interesting to you, head over to <https://kentlidar.org.uk/> to register.

For more information, tutorials on using the software or to join the Landscape Investigators group who are focusing on research and groundtruthing of the features email Anne, anne.sassin@kentdowns.org.uk

Special Interest Groups

The KAS has recently set up several special interest groups which would welcome interested volunteers.

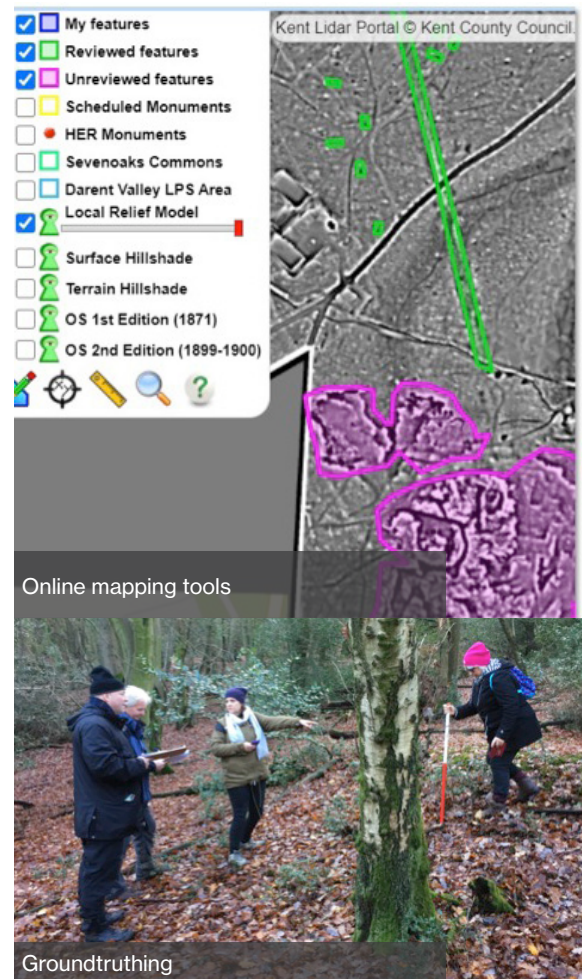
Creating a Pottery Reference Collection

Chris Blair-Myers writes:

It was agreed at Council December 2018 that the Society should start a pottery reference collection. A degree of turbulence in the Society's business following changes in charitable status and the inevitable fallout from Covid 19 restrictions rather delayed the project but we are now starting to make some progress.

The aim is to build both a physical and a virtual collection of pottery that might potentially be found in Kent. This would be a very substantial undertaking, so we will do so in bite sized chunks whilst being mindful that whatever is built must be applicable to all pottery types and periods.

A physical collection presents problems not just with the acquisition of sherds but storage and access to them. Aside from curating sherds already held by the Society we are not at this stage aiming to actively expand the physical collection but rather focus on the virtual collection.



This is still a significant undertaking so the first “chunk” will be pottery from the Roman Period as these are better documented than some other periods. A start has been made with the building of a table of concordance between the surprisingly large array of classification systems and coding used by archaeologists in the UK.

A seemingly simple task but complicated as classifications are not limited to industries and fabrics but also reflect function, form, surface coatings and decoration. There is also a hierarchy that needs to be considered for example a simple “Samian” class might suffice for many users but at the other end of the spectrum we will need to cater for those who are looking for Central Gaulish Samian fabrics from the Lezoux kilns.

Once complete it will form the basis of the online database and the creation of workflow input forms ready for data input. The aim is to build a web page for each type with links to high resolution images of fabrics. Quite what else should be included on the page is still open to debate.

Digital imaging of sherd fresh breaks will be essential, starting with those that have been verified by an appropriate expert. This will require an upgrade to the camera on the Marsham Street trinocular and the setting up of three additional workstation hubs across the county to capture the numerous dispersed collections. Quite where is not settled but possibly Thanet, Dover and the Darent Valley, the choice will depend on which members are prepared to be involved as well as access to sherds.

The physical collection, whilst essential, will very much depend on decisions on the Society’s future home. Neither the KAS library in Maidstone Museum or the current laboratory in Marsham Street are appropriate because of space or access issues. One of many conundrums that have been exercising the minds of the Strategy Group for several months.

Please contact pottery@kentarchaeology.org.uk for more information or to get involved.

Ceramics Research Group

Gerald Cramp is to head a group of volunteers to support the work of the Pottery Reference Collection team.

Gerald is hoping to recruit volunteers from different areas of the county with knowledge of existing collections of material. These might be in local museums, in the archives of local archaeologists, or indeed in personal collections. Once identified, volunteers will need to briefly describe what is in the collections so that material can be selected for inclusion in the reference database.

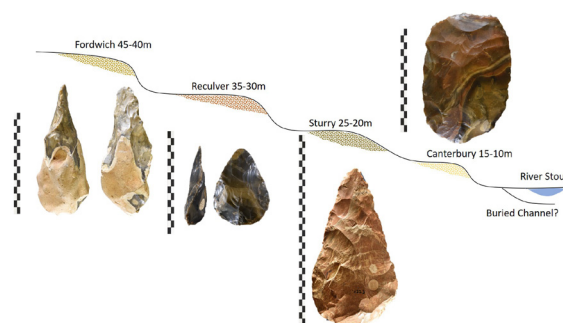
Please contact ceramics@kentarchaeology.org.uk for more information or to get involved.

Lithics Research Group

An overview of the new lithics research group was given by Pete Knowles, outlining the proposed sub-groups of more specialized research: Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and all other periods.

The main research identified so far, will focus on the Paleolithic handaxe technologies from the fluvial archive of the east Kent river Stour, and whether there is evidence for cultural patterning within these assemblages.

Nearly 100 years ago in 1925 a paper was presented to the Prehistoric Society by the geologist, Henry Dewey and an archaeologist from the BM Reginald Smith, they suggest that the flint tools found in the deposits of the Thames represented evidence of different human cultures over many hundreds of thousands of years, they wanted to prove their theory and thought the Stour Valley in Kent would be a good test, but the sequences were too difficult to interpret.



Idealize terrace sequence of the east Kent Stour showing Palaeolithic handaxes attributed to different periods. These handaxes are the Herne Bay Historical Records Societies collection of Dr Tom Armstrong Bowes, in the Seaside Museum – Herne Bay.

In recent decades the idea of handaxe type sequences has been dismissed. But within only the last 5 years work by Mark White and Dave Bridgland and others, has been able to use a scaffold of secure marine isotope dates, this has shown that there is indeed correlation of different handaxe types over time. Figure 1, shows how a recent study of the handaxes in the Seaside Museum – Herne Bay has been able to attribute them to terraces of the Stour. These terrace formations approximate to the glacial and interglacial cycles of the middle Pleistocene, absolute dating of these deposits has so far not been completed and importantly no stratified handaxes have been located in recent years.

The proposal to the fieldwork committee is thus; set up a project with the aim of answering the question proposed by Dewey and Smith by the 100th anniversary of their original proposal. This will involve:

- Find funding and collaborative partners
- Dating of Stour high terrace at Fordwich
- ESR dating
- Attempt to find stratified lithic implements
- Dating of Reculver terraces
- Geo phys with GPR completed 2018
- Core sampling with Durham University planned for October 2021
- OSL dating of deposits required
- Excavation to locate stratified handaxes
- Prospecting
- Test pitting of the Stour high terrace at Hoades Wood – Sturry

Please contact lithics@kentarchaeology.org.uk for more information or to get involved.

Geophysics and Drone Operation: volunteering and training opportunities

Richard Taylor explained that KAS has 3 key pieces of survey equipment available for use by members:

- Magnetometer – geophysics equipment used for locating buried archaeology;
- Leica GNSS – GPS system accurate to 2mm that can be used for georeferencing excavations or surveys
- Drone – provides overhead footage of sites

One of the Society's objectives is to enable affiliated groups to use these pieces of equipment independently.

To enable this, the Society plans to run training days at Lees Court Estate over a series of weekends in August 2021, Covid depending.

These training days will be practical-based and cover:

- Equipment set-up;
- Health & safety guidance;
- Equipment usage;
- What to do with the data afterwards

It is important to note that to use the equipment, participants or groups must be members of the Society to be covered by the insurances in place.

Further details of the equipment available and what it can do will be published in the KAS Magazine's next issue, and details of the forthcoming training days will be posted on the website.

In the meantime, Richard can be contacted at richard.taylor@kentarchaeology.org.uk



Preparing reports for publication: request for help

Drawing work

The Lees Court field team is looking for volunteers with computer drawing experience/ skills (AutoCAD, CorelDRAW, or similar) to assist with preparing publication standard site drawings to illustrate field reports currently being produced. Instruction on archaeological drawing conventions, etc. can be provided as needed; in-depth archaeological knowledge is not required.

Keith Parfitt would be grateful to hear from anyone interested in getting involved with this sort of work: keith.parfitt@kentarchaeology.org.uk

And finally...

Don't forget our series of online events.

At the next event, Andy Margetts will be talking about his research into medieval vaccaries. 'The Wandering Herd' explores ingrained perceptions regarding the nature of pastoralism within South-East England over the longue durée of the medieval period.

These events are all free of charge to livestream and can also be viewed later via the KAS YouTube channel.

Please keep an eye on the calendar and news pages of the KAS website for future events.

<https://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk>