

Kent Archaeological Society set to begin large-scale month long investigation into multi-period ritual landscape

The Kent Archaeological Society (KAS) is set to begin an intense, month long investigation into a prehistoric multi-period ritual landscape on the Lees Court Estate in Kent at the beginning of September.

This follows the recent discovery of a possible mid-Neolithic causewayed enclosure there during a recent evaluation excavation at Stringmans Field on the Estate. This significant feature had previously been identified through aerial images and geophysical survey data. The subsequent excavation revealed a structure around 25 metres in diameter surrounded by a large, deep ditch. Evaluation slots cut into the ditch fill revealed stratified pottery and lithic material, the earliest of which dates from the mid-Neolithic.

The discovery of the feature is the most recent of a number of very exciting finds which have come to light since KAS and the Lees Court Estate began a joint 15-year project in 2017 to archaeologically evaluate the 2,800 ha estate. This included the locating last year of no less than five Bronze Age hoards in close proximity to an unexcavated Bronze Age barrow mound and the mid-Neolithic causewayed enclosure. This is an unheard of amount of such hoards in such a localised area. They were found by the Medway History Finders Detecting Club, with KAS carrying out the rescue excavations and recording of the hoards. They are now being examined by the British Museum, whose Bronze Age Curator Dr Neil Wilkin says:

'It's fascinating that so many large later Bronze Age hoards have been found in close proximity to one another in Lees Court Estate. The hoards are unusual in how they were deposited in the ground and the presence of hundreds of flattish, irregular 'scrap' pieces of bronze. One hoard alone contained 16kg worth of bronze! This type of hoard is very unusual for Kent and raises many questions about their function and role within Bronze Age metalworking and recycling processes. Kent appears to have been a distinctive region with its own traditions of metalworking and hoarding during the last centuries of the Bronze Age (c.1100 - 800 BC).'

All of these finds, in such proximity, point to a multi-period prehistoric landscape atop the North Downs overlooking Faversham Creek. Located in eastern Kent, one interpretation could be that a prehistoric community used the area as a designated space for gathering people, the treatment of the dead or a point where technological and cultural exchange took place between the Continent and the islands of Britain over many thousands of years.

KAS is keen to encourage volunteers to sign up to join the excavations starting in September. Anyone interested, of any level of competence including beginner, should contact [membership@kentarchaeology.org](mailto:membership@kentarchaeology.org)

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