

NOVEMBER MEETING

— First Speaker —

Roman Villa - Copt Point

A Talk by Keith Parfitt

Reported by Terry Sutton

The history, ancient and modern, of the Roman villa site above Copt Point at Folkestone was the subject of a most interesting illustrated talk at our meeting in St Mary's parish centre on November 17th.

Archaeologist Keith Parfitt screened images of work that had been carried out at the site, a part of which is in danger from coastal erosion. He reported that it was expected that archaeological work would start again on the site in 2015.

Mr Parfitt, of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust, reported how Folkestone borough council financed the excavation work in 1920 with the aim of making the site a tourist attraction, but the work ended with the outbreak of war in 1939, when the site was used for defence purposes and became overgrown. In 1957 the local authority covered in the site but fresh investigations began in 1989 and continued in 2010 when finance became available.

He showed on the screen how, over the years, one habitation had been built on a previous one, from Roman times through four stages to the Iron Age with indications of a 50 BC settlement.

The number of broken grinding stones found on the site gave credence to the belief that at one stage Folkestone, using local material, might have been the centre

of that industry for a wide area.

The discovery of remains of Roman pottery, located at a lower level than Roman habitation, encouraged the belief that tribes in East Kent were importing wares from the Continent well before the Roman invasion.

Some began forsaking the drinking of a type of beer for more sophisticated Mediterranean-grown wine transported across Europe and the Channel to Folkestone for onward cartage.

Mr Parfitt suggested that Folkestone, at one early stage, was probably the main port of trade for these islands until the Romans "eclipsed" it by switching trade through the port at Dover. This belief that Folkestone was a main trading port was reinforced by the discovery of an ancient road leading down to the foreshore which he dated at around 100 BC.



Working on the NE Wing, 2010