

JANUARY MEETING

————— First Speaker —————

Lees Court Estate Finds

A talk by Keith Parfitt – Reported by Alan Lee

The assembled members of the Dover Society were given an in-depth insight into recent Bronze Age finds in Kent by Keith Parfitt from the Kent Archaeological Trust.

In 2018 Lees Court Estate, Bradlesmere near Faversham saw several hundred acres of farmland being surveyed by more than 100 people.

This followed on from the discovery, in 2017, of five hoards close together. One hoard alone was found to contain 16kg of bronze,

Wood's Court Field was ordinary looking but led to the discovery of three hoards of Bronze Age materials.

Hoard I was unearthed as a clay pot which contained hundreds of fragments from the Wilburton-Wallington (metalworking) phase of the Bronze Age dated between c. 1140 BC and c. 1020 BC.

This raised the question: Who had placed it there and why?

Hoard II was uncovered some 170 yards away and about 1 foot down yielded many fragments of charcoal and a sizable lump of copper. This was dated a couple of hundred years later around 800 BC to 900 BC.

Hoard III was uncovered just far enough away from hoard II to be classified as a separate find. Broken up Bun Ingot, named because it is rounded one side and flat the other, and pieces of tin, was identified. This is common with the Ewant Park phase of the late Bronze Age c. 800 BC to c. 700 BC.

Bronze, a mix of copper and tin, neither of which is found in the county, has been discovered on 70 to 80 sites in Kent.

The closest large mines of copper are in Llandudno, North Wales, here the Great Orme is the largest pre-historic mine in the world with 5 miles of tunnels.

The closest large tin mines are in Cornwall. Some, like the Levant Mine, reached out for 2.5km under the sea, at a depth of 640m. Wheal Roots Tin Mine Workings are found at The Poldark Mine of today. This is the only complete tin mine in Cornwall open to the general public for underground guided tours.

Keith surmised that as there was a lack of roads these materials would have been carried to Kent by boat. Dover had this capability as shown by the Bronze Age Boat c. 1550 BC.

In September 2019 the archaeologists returned to the site and excavated a trench to link hoards I and II. About halfway they excavated a section 6 feet deep and 20 feet round. This gave up pottery and hundreds of more bronze fragments. A large loom weight with a circular hole was one of the major finds here.

The majority of Kentish Bronze Age settlements lie in the North or the West of the county.

Of the some 6,000 archaeologists in Britain about 1,000 are now working on the route of the proposed HS2.