ONLINE TRAINING RESOURCES

'Brecks from Above': Using Aerial Photographs for Archaeology

By: Norfolk Historic Environment Service

Using Google Earth for Archaeological Air Photo Interpretation

Google Earth provides access to a range of aerial imagery across the world. Consultation of this imagery is now a standard part of most air photo interpretation projects.

Google Earth is free and can be downloaded and installed from https://www.google.co.uk/earth/.

- After opening Google Earth, under the 'View' pull-down menu (along the bar at the top), ensure that 'Toolbar' and 'Sidebar' are both ticked.
- Enter the location you want to look at in the 'Fly To' box towards the top left-hand corner of the screen and click on 'Search' (the magnifying glass).
- On the toolbar (visible along the top), click on the 'Show historical imagery' button. This will bring up a slide bar that allows you to move through images of different dates; what is visible will be dependent on your location and how far you have zoomed in.
- Hovering the cursor over the historical imagery slider will show you the range of imagery available for that location and height. The date of the image will also be shown at the bottom left-hand corner of the screen. However, be wary of the dates assigned to the images, as they are not necessarily correct; for example, photographs clearly taken in the summer months may be shown with a date in January or December.
- The copyright holder will be shown centrally at the bottom of the screen. It is always advisable to credit the source and copyright holder when using photographic images.
- Under the 'File' pull-down menu, select 'Save', then 'Save image'. This allows you to save a jpeg of the image on the screen. This can then be used in other programmes to digitally trace or map the features.
- Google Earth images don't usually need to be rectified. However, depending on what method you are using to map features, you may need to locate and re-scale them in relation a base map.
- As with all aerial photographic survey and interpretation, make a note of the date of any Google Earth layers you have used to map or record archaeological features, and include this in records and reports.

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