

A wintry sunset over the Rother

Welcome to Issue 13 of the Lossenham Project newsletter, keeping you up to date with the latest news and any events you can get involved in.

## An introduction



Whence are they coming, one by one,  
All the slumbering faces?  
Mortals succeeding mortals, there,  
Flourished, and aged, and went – but where?

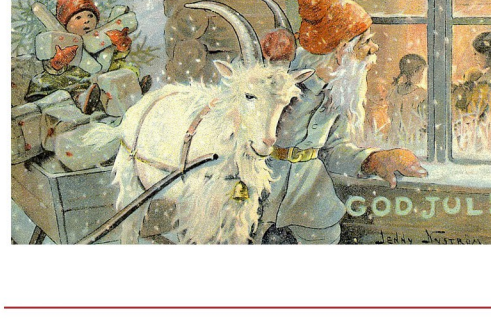
(From Tomten, by Viktor Rydberg,  
in translation by Anna Krook)

If you were to ask any Swedish person what poem they most associate with Christmas, it is a safe bet they would come up with this one. It tells about the Tomte, one of the Little People watching over farms and mills in the Swedish countryside, and pondering, as immortals do, the mystery of mortal people.

The poem was published in 1881 and there is an excellent more or less contemporaneous translation to English, which I have put on the blog (<https://lossenham.org.uk/blog/>) – do read it to get that crisp winter's night feeling. The Tomte is rendered as Robin Goodfellow, a character I thought I had not come across before. On further review, it turns out that Robin is none other than Puck, well known to us from the Midsummer Night's Dream! Well, call me unimaginative but the connection between Midsummer's Puck and the very wintry Tomte had never occurred to me – yet it is obvious they are one and the same. What was that about unexpected connections from last issue's introduction?

With this offering from Swedish – and English – folklore, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a good end to the old year, and look forward to seeing you again in 2022.

Åke Nilson, Chairman, The Janus Foundation  
([chair@janusfoundation.org](mailto:chair@janusfoundation.org))



## Test pitting in November



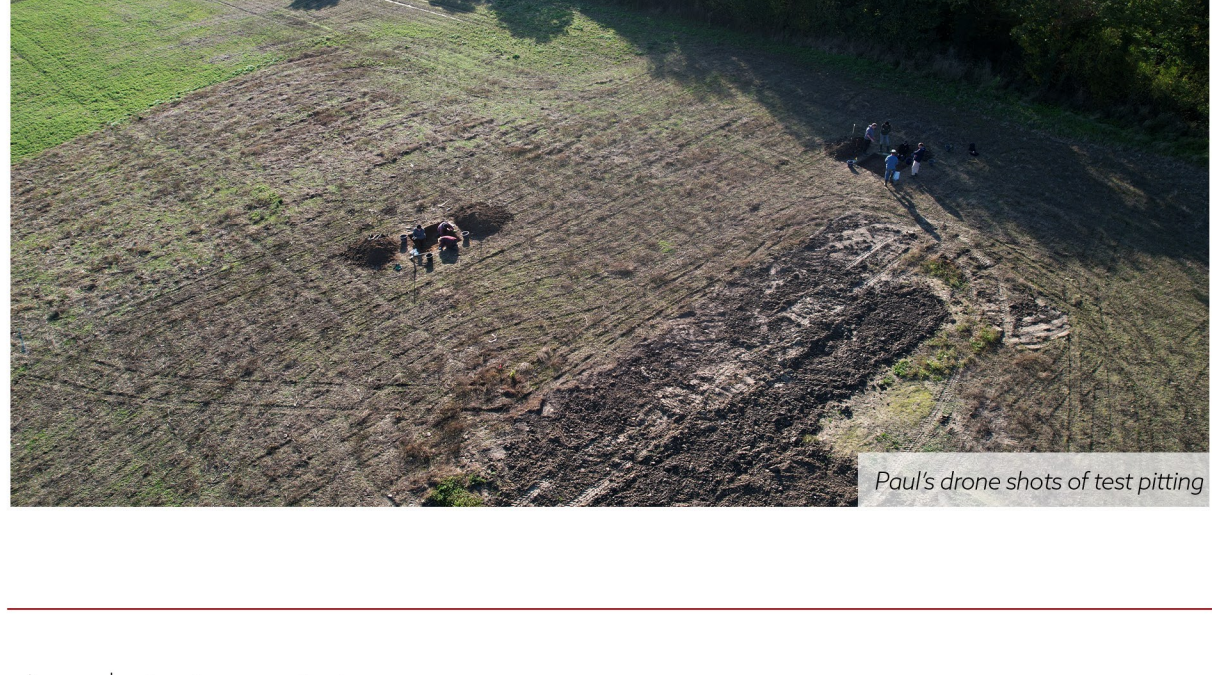
The purpose of the test pits was to continue investigating the geophysical results to better plan our future seasons of excavation. A total of six 2x2 metre exploratory holes were excavated down to the top of the archaeology before being recorded and backfilled. Even with the small holes we were successful in identifying archaeological features in all but one of the test pits.

Three pits were dug over the site of what we think is the church on the south side of the cloister. Each trench came up with archaeology in some form or another, ranging from post holes and possible floor surfaces to intact walls. Our excavation next year in this area will certainly be exciting!

Two pits on the northern range uncovered two potential burials, indicating that the graveyard may have extended around the friary building, not just being confined to the south. Further exploration of the extent of the graveyard will happen over coming years. The test pit closest to the eastern range uncovered more foundations made of chalk and another made of sandstone. Unfortunately the test pit was too small to make any proper judgment of the relationship between the two at this stage.

Thank you to all the volunteers who braved the noticeably colder weather to get the pits excavated and backfilled. As you read this we will have just completed a few more in early December, weather permitting!

Annie Partridge  
Project Archaeology Director



Paul's drone shots of test pitting

## Archiving Maps

The Lossenham Project archives include both digital and physical maps. In this brief summary I will highlight two examples, representing snapshots from the history of the Lossenham marshes.

William Dugdale's The History of Imbanking and Drayning of Divers, Fens and Marshes, both in foreign parts and in this kingdom; and the improvements thereby, 1662 is a recent addition to the Lossenham Project library. It includes a set of maps showing, inter alia, how the wetland was to be recovered by the land owners.



One of the maps is a complete rendering of the drainage of Romney Marsh. Dugdale is poetic in his description of these waterways as an embodiment of a living and breathing landscape aligned to a body of water. The map shows a planned logic to the system of embankments, drainage and innings. At Newenden, the innings of marshland are of significant size and design, though the process was stepwise, with each landowner reclaiming small areas at a time. The irregular pattern of drainage ditches seen in the map is an indication that no single large-scale reclamation was attempted.

A recent enquiry to the archives sought to establish whether there had been a bridge across the Hexden Channel at Lossenham. The Kent Archives hold a copy of The Sales Particulars of Gibbons Marshes or Lossenham Marshes, with a plan from 1851 showing a bridge near Castle Toll. A 1940's aerial photograph from Google maps seems to show a bridge in the same location. Are these the same feature? If anyone has recollection of this bridge (or any other bridges that existed) along the Hexden Channel, and Lossenham Marshes, please do not hesitate to contact the archivist@lossenham.org

This is a short summary of a longer article by Jason Mazzocchi, shortly to be published on the Lossenham Project blog <https://lossenham.org.uk/blog/>

## Lossenham Project Presentation 23 November

Our own Dr Andrew Richardson made a much-appreciated presentation of the Project in St Peter's Church, Newenden. It was a dark November evening but some two dozen villagers and friends ventured out to for an hour of fascinating detail of the progress of the archaeological research to date.

Starting with a view of the lie of the land and some beautiful photography by our Resident Artist, Russell Burden, Andrew went on to show the initial magnetometric and borehole work in the wet spring of 2021. He went on to describe how the boreholes show a much thinner overlay of recent silt than had been expected, before layers carbon-dated as far back as the mesolithic area, just after the last Ice Age can be reached in the Hexden marshlands.

He then explained what had been found from the recent investigation of Castle Toll – an area which has not yet been investigated to any great degree and which retains both mystery and the potential for paradigm-changing discoveries. As the Castle is a Scheduled Monument, permission from Historic England is required before any further investigation can take place, but it is hoped that this can be obtained in time for next year's digging season.

Andrew finally went on to show slides from the Project's flagship excavations at St Mary's Friary, outlining the process and showing how step by step, the evidence from the four trenches opened so far has been pieced together. He also gave us some thoughts on how the dig might progress next year and beyond, before highlighting the convivial fellowship among professionals and volunteer helpers alike.

On that note, and after some interested and knowledgeable questions from the audience, we adjourned to the White Hart for some well-earned sustenance and continued conviviality. A good time was had by all!

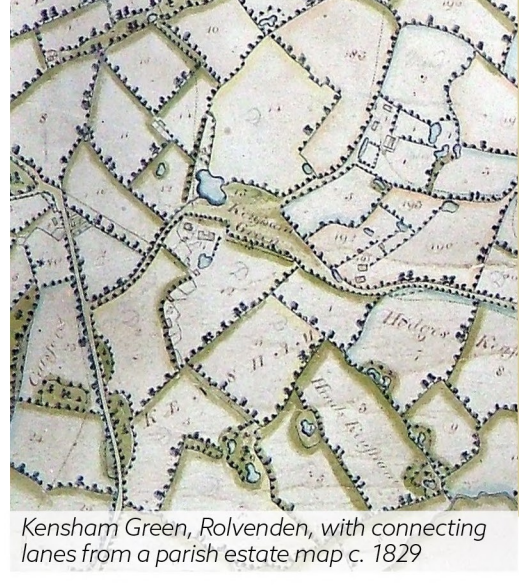
## Routeways of the High Weald: echoes of past landscapes

The High Weald is a landscape of footpaths and winding lanes, many of which are considered to be very ancient. Typically, these lanes are bounded by hedges usually containing many species. Later roads, such as the 'turnpikes' of the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth centuries, often cut across an earlier pattern of route ways. Each has a story to tell and by careful study we may learn about the earlier landscapes within which they were created.

This workshop is an introduction to 'reading' the route ways of the High Weald. How they were created, why many have such an irregular shape – weaving over the landscape in such a strange fashion! There are many clues within the landscape that provide evidence for long, abandoned, and forgotten lanes – once well-trodden ways to now abandoned or lost settlements.

The workshop will be presented by Dr Brendan Chester-Kadwell and will be illustrated by examples taken from the countryside around the Upper Levels of the Rother, the setting for Lossenham itself. All are welcome regardless of their level of prior knowledge of Wealden Routeways.

Dr Brendan Chester-Kadwell



Kensham Green, Rolvenden, with connecting lanes from a parish estate map c. 1829

## Upcoming Events - Dates for the Diary!

**December 2021**  
Thursday 9th to Sunday 12th: field walking plus further metal detecting on arable fields on Lossenham Priory Farm. To sign-up please contact Andrew Richardson [andrew@lossenham.org.uk](mailto:andrew@lossenham.org.uk)

**January 2022**  
Tuesday 18th: Winter Workshops 2 with Brendan Chester-Kadwell (see his article for more information).

**February 2022**  
Further finds work, dates tbc

**March 2022**  
Friday 25th to Sunday 27th: Stripping and excavating a section of the site to allow for the spoil heap. Volunteers needed to help excavate and record any features that come up. Email Annie at [annie@lossenham.org.uk](mailto:annie@lossenham.org.uk) to express an interest.

**April 2022**  
Wednesday 20th to Sunday 24th: The second season of excavation starts! Email Annie at [annie@lossenham.org.uk](mailto:annie@lossenham.org.uk) to express an interest.