Project Newsletter

Issue 3

December 2020

Welcome to the Lossenham Project newsletter. Once a month we will be keeping you up to date with the latest news and any events you can get involved in.

This month we are bringing to you the latest from the ongoing borehole survey, an introduction to landscape history, and the first in a series of articles explaining who the Carmelite Order is and where they came from.

Plus, we have an invite for you to our virtual Christmas get-together giving you a chance to meet the people involved in the project and ask us questions.

From all of us we want to wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Contents

Christmas (virtual) meet up

Join us virtually on15 December at 7pm for a short presentation introducing the project, followed by a question and answer session.

If you would like to join us please e-mail annie.partridge@canterburytrust.co.uk to be added to the attendee list. The link to the event will be e-mailed a couple of days before the 15 December.

Under normal circumstances we would have gathered with mince pies and a mulled drink, but of course that is not possible this year. Do feel free to bring along a festive tipple of your choice and a sweet treat to get in the festive spirit. Why not have a go at the medieval spiced wine on page 8!

The event is expected to be 90 minutes long but feel free to come and go as you please.

Looking for Lossenham

Annie Partridge

As someone who was not born and raised in Kent I must confess I had to indulge in a quick Google to find out where Lossenham was. My colleagues had talked about the place with its Carmelite Friary, Manor House, and Castle, and I assumed it must be a sizeable village—imagine my surprise finding it was...well….not even named on Google Maps!

A quick look at the local landscape (see also Brendan Chester-Kadwell's article on pages 5 and 6) shows tantalising hints of a place that once was—Lossenham Lane, Lossenham Manor, Lossenham Priory Farm—all telling us that not only did Lossenham once exist, but that it must have been quite significant. Åke Neilson's '*Essays on Early Newenden'* tackles the surviving historical evidence but what about the physical remains? What survives beneath the ground? And where?

We've started the process of using geophysical survey techniques (to be covered in the New Year), metal detecting surveys (started in October but on hold until the pandemic abates), and the borehole survey which was completed in late October.

The borehole survey took a total of 10 cores across two points on the levels by the Hexden Channel. Borehole machines can take cores many metres in depth, some even powerful enough to travel through the bedrock. For our purposes we were only interested in the layers of soil that will contain evidence of human occupation, so around 6m in depth in this instance. Anything deeper than that starts to stray into the territory of palaeontologists or geologists!

The cores are labelled and packed up to go back to the office for analysis.

...continued on next page….

Any questions about the project can be directed to Annie Partridge annie.partridge@canterburytrust.co.uk

The cores are stored in plastic tubing until our specialist Simon Pratt is ready to analyse them.

He will cut the core open and measure each layer of soil, making a note of the subtle changes in the texture, colour, inclusions (such as stones or organic matter), and moisture content.

Once he has analysed all of the cores he will then build a 'map' of the different layers across the landscape. Whilst he may not be able to accurately date each layer, he will be able to build up an idea of how the landscape has altered over time.

Why did we do this?

Borehole surveys are a form of environmental survey and not designed to find archaeology (although if you place the borehole machine in the right place you will go through features).

What we have been able to establish is that the landscape around the Hexden Channel is much older than we initially had thought. We had feared that post-medieval agricultural practises might have destroyed a lot of older evidence, but this seems to not be the case. We estimate that around 3-5m of prehistoric peat survives but whether people inhabited the area at that time is impossible to say at this time.

The Lossenham core samples have produced a lot of peats and organic matter, so much so we will be able to get some carbon-14 dates done to accurately date some of the layers. These have gone to the Chrono Centre at Queen's University in Belfast. There is potential to do pollen analysis too, to see what the environmental conditions were like at different points in time.

Finally, of particular interest was the upper 1-2m of redeposited sand and silty clay deposits capping the prehistoric peats. Early suggestions of what caused this include a major episode of marine flooding (date of event TBC).

Despite the analysis of the results being in the early stages we have started to build up a picture of what the landscape around the Hexden Channel looked like over a long period of time. Further environmental analysis will tell us what people were doing, or not doing, in the landscape around Lossenham. Once we have the results from Belfast University, and compared them to the metal detecting survey and the geophysical survey, we can start pin pointing suitable areas to conduct our archaeological excavation(s) for 2021 and beyond.

If you have questions about the borehole survey feel free to ask them at the Virtual Event on 15 December, or e-mail Annie Partridge. If it is a very technical question do e-mail it in advance of the 15th so we can prepare an answer.

The Lossenham Carmelites: where did they come from?

Richard Copsey, O.Carm

It was probably sometime in the year 1243 or just after that a small group of men came straggling down the hill in Newenden. They were clearly monks or friars from their clothes but the habits they wore were somewhat strange, quite unlike the Cistercian monks from Salehurst (later Robertsbridge) or the Franciscan friars from Canterbury. However, most of them were English although from their dark tans, they had spent some years in a warmer climate.

The strangers came from a new community of hermits which had been founded just outside the village of Aylesford in 1242. They came originally from a community of hermits in the Holy Land. In 1187, the Muslims led by their great general Saladin, had defeated the Christian crusaders at the Battle of Hattin and seized control over all the Holy Land. A crusade was launched, led by King Richard of England and King Philip of France and they managed in July 1191 to recapture the port of Acre and a narrow strip of land down the coast to Jaffa. Just south of Acre, there is a range of hills known as Mount Carmel, covered by trees and which offered a safe place for some Christian hermits. These began to settle in the caves a narrow secluded valley on the south side of Mount Carmel where there was a spring of fresh water. The number of hermits grew until around 1212, they sent a delegation down to Acre and obtained a formal rule from the papal legate. They became known as the hermits or brothers of Mount Carmel.

The number of hermits grew steadily and they constructed a chapel for themselves and began to live like a regular religious community. Unfortunately, the political situation worsened and the Muslim attacks on the crusader enclave grew more threatening. Hence, the hermits, most of whom came from Europe, decided to seek safer places to live. A house was founded in Cyprus around 1235 and then a second at |Messina in Sicily in 1238. Then, a larger group arrived in England in 1242, brought back by some English crusaders, and two communities were founded, one at Hulne just outside Alnwick in Northumberland and a second at Aylesford, in Kent.

A year or two later, the hermits from Aylesford received an invitation from Sir Thomas Aucher to make a foundation beside his manor house in Lossenham and hence the sun-tanned strangers who came down the hill in Newenden. At that period, Newenden was not only a country village but also a flourishing port for sea-going ships who came up the River Rother. One can imagine this strange group being questioned by interested bystanders and, hopefully, being entertained with something to drink, before they turned up Lossenham Lane and made their way to their new home.

The *wadi* or valley on Mount Carmel where the first Carmelite hermits lived

Any questions about the project can be directed to Annie Partridge annie.partridge@canterburytrust.co.uk

Lossenham….take a journey to the long-lost past!

Brendan Chester-Kadwell

*'The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there' ** – or so they say! But landscape history is a time machine that can take us back

As a community history volunteer, you could take control of the 'time machine' and visit all the fascinating (and sometimes dangerous, dodgy, and amazing) antics that our forebears indulged themselves in. The study of landscape history is how we, as students of the past, can re-discover the social, cultural and economic realities of our ancestors. All human activities leave a mark on the landscape and discovering what these are, recording them and discerning their meaning is what makes this detective story so satisfying.

The landscape historian uses all kinds of evidence including that gleaned from historic documents, archaeological investigation, satellite imagery, statistical analysis and more. We look to old maps especially to help us, but we need to remember that whilst maps are 'flat' the landscape isn't. We need to get out there and observe the landscape and record the physical evidence for ourselves. Anything, in fact, that human agency has created and modified – from historic buildings to agricultural techniques and other processes that impact on the landscape.

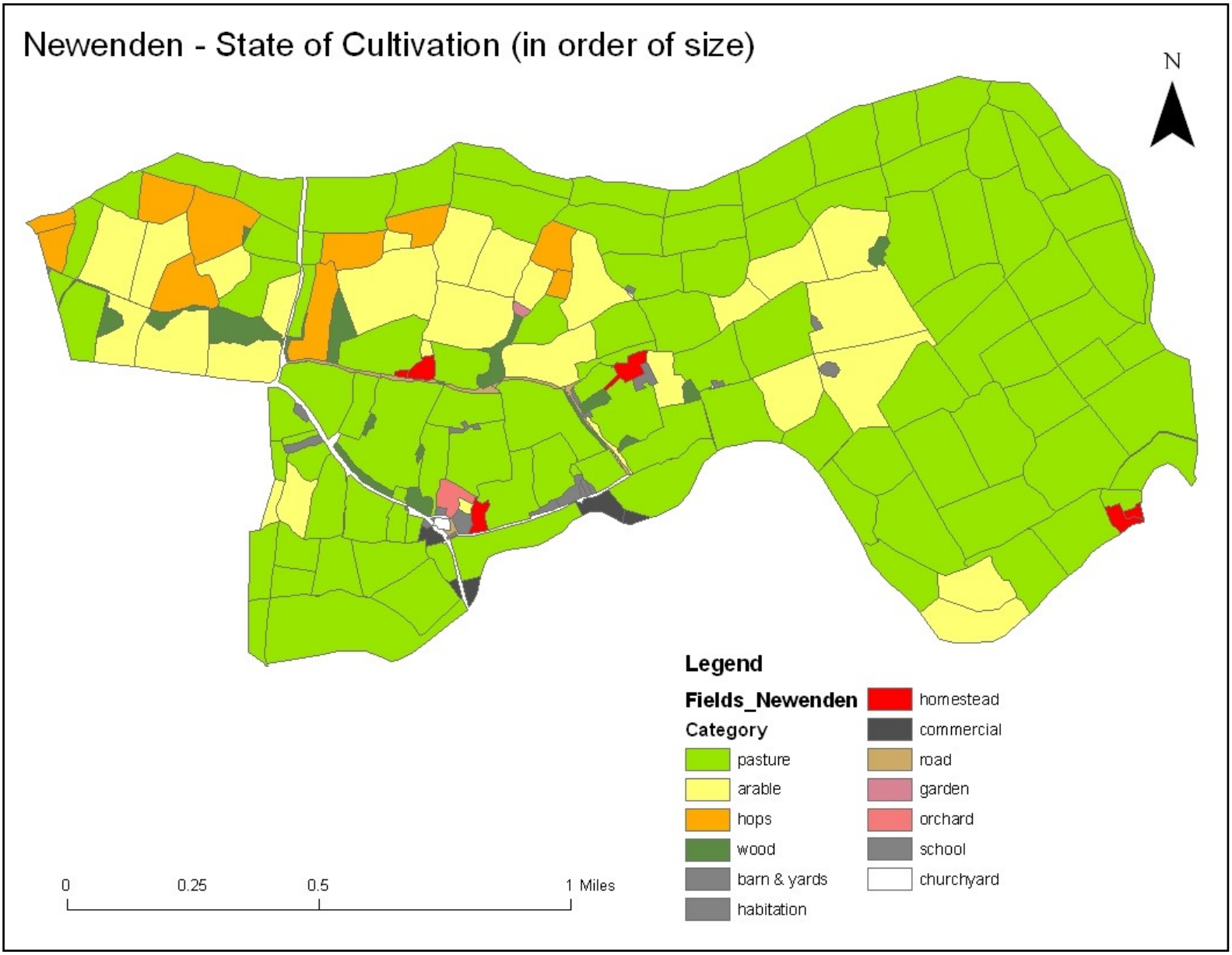
So, if you fancy turning your hand to becoming a landscape detective….well, this is your opportunity – come and join us!

* From L P Hartley (1953), "The Go Between", opening line.

Newenden Parish Church from the North - The church was reduced in size c. 1700 because part had collapsed and the population and wealth of the parish was too reduced to make a rebuilt feasible . Could a study of the landscape help us to understand why?

Any questions about the project can be directed to Annie Partridge annie.partridge@canterburytrust.co.uk

...continued from previous page...



State of Cultivation for Newenden, from the 1839 Tithe Survey. Note that any land needing some form of cultivation is recorded as 'arable' – including orchards.

To sign-up to the History Group e-mail Annie Partridge at annie.partridge@canterburytrust.co.uk.

Introducing Ember Tree

Embertree presents a selection of outcomes from a developing body of work produced during Russell Groves Burden's four year position as artist in residence for The Lossenham Project. The foundation of his creative responses relates to moments of quietude and personal contemplation inspired by the qualities of the Lossenham landscape and its imagined history.

To find out more about Russell and to view his work visit www.embertree.uk

Any questions about the project can be directed to Annie Partridge annie.partridge@canterburytrust.co.uk

Medieval spiced wine

Adding spices to wine has been a centuries old practice and the Romans were especially fond of spiced wine. Up until the Medieval period adding flavour would make bad wine palatable. During the thirteenth century onwards spiced wine grew in popularity in England and became known for its supposed medicinal properties. By the sixteenth century this became known as *hippocras* (named after the Hippocrate Sleeve—a method of filtering liquid through layers of fabric; seen in the picture to the left).

The main spices are cinnamon, ginger, cloves, grains of paradise, and long pepper. Nutmeg, galangal, marjoram, cardamom, black pepper, mace, rosemary, and other ingredients were added according to taste. At the time spices and sugar were so expensive only the wealthy drank it regularly. Different countries in Europe had variations on the recipe, the French added fruits such as apples, oranges, and almonds; the Spanish liked theirs sweeter, eventually creating sangria; and the English added brandy and milk.

Although spiced wine was usually drunk cold, warmed "mulled" wine was also popular in the winter months and for certain medical complaints. Mulling was never just limited to wine, especially in apple producing areas where wassailing with cider or mead continues to be an annual Yuletide event.

By the eighteenth century spiced wine had fallen out of favour with the wealthy, but by the nineteenth century mulled wine came back into fashion as a Christmas drink.

Hippocras (1615 recipe) Recipe and image taken from www.historicalfoodways.com

1 x 750ml-bottle of wine (white or red). *Or you could try cider, mead, or grape, cranberry, or apple juice.*
4 x cinnamon sticks
a thin slice of fresh ginger
3 x whole cloves
2 x peppercorns
$^1/_3$ of a whole nutmeg
a few rosemary leaves
$^3/_4$ cups (6 oz) sugar *(to taste if you've used sweet cider, mead, or juice)*

- Pour the wine into a container with a lid.
- Place the cinnamon, ginger, cloves, peppercorns, nutmeg and rosemary in a mortar and crush them roughly.
- Add the spices to the wine, stir, and cover. Allow it to sit overnight.
- The next day, add the sugar to the mix and stir until all the sugar is dissolved.
- Strain through a few layers of cheesecloth. Discard the spices. May be served warm, cold, or at room temperature.

Remember this is not an exact science, feel free to chop and change the spices as you see fit! Feeling brave? Why not add a dash of brandy or Cointreau to the mix.

Any questions about the project can be directed to Annie Partridge annie.partridge@canterburytrust.co.uk