



Welcome to Issue 9 of the Lossenham Project newsletter, keeping you up to date with the latest news and any events you can get involved in.

An introduction

*'While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.'
(William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey")*

It is remarkable how often visitors and volunteers at Lossenham mention the quiet harmony of the landscape. Whether they have a faith or none, they frequently describe the experience as deeply spiritual in nature. This aspect of the Lossenham Project combines with and influences the others in all sorts of ways. Notably, we are now excavating a mediaeval priory, possibly looking to reinstate its outline and gardens, so that the modern-day visitor can share something of the senses and feelings of the friars calling it home some 750 years ago. This is archaeology hand in hand with spirituality, while the visual and musical arts produced within the project draw their inspiration (now there's a good word) from the landscape and location as much as from the rich imaginings of their creators.

The little parish church of St Peter's is also regularly noted as a place of special peace and restoration. It is well worth a visit on the way to Lossenham. Many places in the pint-sized parish of Newenden are capable of reviving visitors' spirits and wellbeing – do come and join us!

Åke Nilson, Chairman, The Janus Foundation
(chair@janusfoundation.org)



Lindsay trowelling in Trench 2

New archivist role for the Project

Jason Mazzocchi is our recently appointed project archivist for the Lossenham Project and other projects of the Janus Foundation. His duties involve the creation, storage and maintenance of all records for the projects and the Foundation itself. These records include the notes from archaeological work and cultural events, agendas and minutes of meetings, permanent records of archaeological finds, and also artworks and other output from the activities falling within the Foundation's scope. Additionally, the Foundation Trustees will be providing their own regular reports to Jason, which he will collate and distribute to all Trustees.



The archivist also acts as librarian for the rapidly growing book collection, which is intended to be made available to the community, ultimately as a lending library. The library will also host a collection of academic and other articles of relevance, both in digital and physical form, as well as classified research and reference reading lists. Jason will be the point of contact for academic and other enquiries about the projects and their activities.

The library and records office is located at Lossenham Priory Farm and will be open for telephone enquiries (on 01580 493230) and visits on Tuesday and Thursdays between 9.30am and 3pm. Alternatively, e-mail enquiries can be directed to archivist@janusfoundation.org



Upper Pond (Autumn 2020) Russell Burden, Artist in Residence

Enhancing the ecology at Lossenham

The Project provides a fantastic opportunity to enhance the wildlife value of the farmland at Lossenham. However, before making decisions about changes to the ways in which the farms are managed, we must first understand the value of what is already present.

In order to catalogue the local distribution and abundance of species and habitats of value, Kelly Crush, Head Water Bailiff has been working hard with a range of colleagues and specialist surveyors to record and map the species and habitat interests across the two farms. We have taken into account a variety of ecological disciplines – and some exciting discoveries have already been made.



Lower Pond (Autumn 2021)

Once we understand the existing wildlife interests, we will be changing farm management practices with the specific aim of benefitting wildlife and the wider environment. The exact habitats and their locations remain to be agreed, but are likely to include a mosaic of wildflower meadows, new hedgerows, orchards, copses, reedbeds, fen, lakes, ponds and scrapes.

The application of more sustainable farming practices will bring about improved soil conditions and water quality. Productivity will remain a core objective, delivering conventional agricultural crops as well as more traditional products from a mixed farm (reed, hay, fruit, wood products, fodder as well as wildlife). With time we will also explore the potential for organic status.

In summary, these are exciting times in our part of the Rother Valley!

Simon Weymouth, Janus Foundation Trustee



Lower Pond (Summer 2021)

Archaeology at Lossenham: Progress and Future Plans

Since the site of Lossenham Priory was found in late May (see Newsletter 8), our excavations have already located the footings of three separate buildings, along with part of the central cloister.

To the south of the cloister, Trench 1 has revealed the south-eastern corner of the rubble foundations of a substantial building, probably the refectory. Its walls were massive, with wide foundations and projecting buttresses at the corner, which leaves little doubt this was a two-storey structure.

In Trench 2, we have found the sandstone foundations of the priory western range and the western side of the inner cloister. The foundations here seem slighter than those of the building to the south.

To the north-east of the cloister, in Trench 3, we have the corner of another large building on foundations of closely packed chalk rubble. Further work will be needed to establish what this building is. However, it is unlikely to be the priory church, which we hope to find immediately north of the cloister. This will be a key target for future trenches.

Trench 4 has revealed a large, steep-sided feature, probably the end of a ditch. The finds here include a large quantity of building debris and pottery.

Work will continue into the autumn, and next year we plan to open much larger areas, eventually revealing the complete floorplan of the priory. This will provide significant insights into the construction, use and eventual abandonment of Lossenham Priory.

In addition to work on the priory site, we will take the opportunity to survey the rest of the farm by various means. More work is also planned for the Hexden and Rother levels, and we are preparing an application for Scheduled Monument Consent to investigate the enigmatic Castle Toll.

The coming months and years are going to be busy ones at Lossenham. If you are interested, come and join us and let's see what we can discover together!

Andrew Richardson, Project Archaeology Director





Andrew digging in Trench 4

Volunteers' experiences

Maeve Moorcroft

Not living in Kent, I was delighted to be able to join the Lossenham Project remotely via the Medieval Wills group, where I was taught via zoom how to read and transcribe old wills from the region. Such an interesting skill to learn, giving you a real window into the past and I am indebted to Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh for her endless patience in teaching us.

However, it was volunteering on the dig that was my highlight and enabled me to fulfil a long-held dream. I have always had an interest in archaeology and old bones in particular, so to get the chance to learn how to excavate and play a small part in the uncovering of the "lost" Carmelite priory was too good to miss. Although we nearly melted in the June heatwave, Andrew and Annie looked after us all and made sure everyone was okay and kept hydrated.

They took account of people's experience (or lack of!) and physical ability, so if digging in the heat was too much, as it was for me a few days, there was always the cool finds tent to work in. I was very happy, washing what felt like my body weight in broken roof tiles, and a selection of interesting animal bones, some showing signs of butchering. I'm looking forward to the next dig week!

Maeve Moorcroft, volunteer



Fragment of Bovine Radius and Ulna with the top sliced off



Richard Gould

As a complete archeology novice, I was not quite sure what to expect on my first day back in June, but I was soon put at my ease by Annie (our volunteers coordinator), who took me over to the dig and introduced me to Andrew (the project archaeological director) and the other volunteers.



We were all soon working away, with Andrew keeping a close eye on us, offering advice and explaining the wider aims of the dig as we went along. It was fascinating to see the outlines of the Priory gradually beginning to emerge, and when we were sitting up on the grass, by the farmhouse, taking a well earned break, the views across the Valley were quite stunning. It is easy to imagine why that site for the Priory was chosen!

It was good to meet up with everyone again for the second dig in July. We had a couple of days of extreme heat, but made more progress, and were constantly supplied with cold drinks by the team from CAT. I hope to be able to join on the rest of the digs this year (see events diary below).

Richard Gould, volunteer



Upcoming Events - Dates for the Diary!

You do not need to sign up to a full week on the excavation but we do ask for a minimum half-day commitment. Days start at 10am and will finish at 5pm, with breaks. No experience is necessary and all equipment is provided, all you need is weather appropriate clothing and sturdy footwear.

We endeavour to make all our projects as accessible as possible.

If you have particular requirements please let us know in advance so we can make adjustments to accommodate you.

If you are looking to pursue a career in archaeology let us know and we can look at designing a training program to fill in any knowledge gaps.

You can find Annie's Dig diary for this month on the Lossenham Project Website.

Excavation dates

Saturday August 14 to Sunday August 22
(Wednesday August 18 is a rest day)

Monday September 13 to Friday September 24
(Thursday 16 and Tuesday 21 are rest days)

Saturday October 2 to Friday October 8
(Wednesday October 6 is a rest day)

“An Archaeologist and an Archivist were best of friends until they had a terrible fall out.

It's alright now though, they've turned the page and it's all history...”

Albert Sanders-Champney