

HAARG

Hastings Area Archaeological Research Group

Registered Charity No. 294989

SYMPOSIUM – SATURDAY 7th MAY 2022

This year will be the 50th anniversary of HAARG. The group was officially formed on the 2nd May 1972 according to the old committee minutes. The nearest Saturday (30th April) falls on the Bank Holiday weekend so it was decided to hold a celebration event on **Saturday 7th May** at Fairlight Village Hall, The Broadway, Fairlight TN35 4DA. The format is to start the afternoon at 1pm with the 2022 AGM. Then follow with five speakers talking about local projects. There will be a break when afternoon tea will be served. This event is **free to all members who have paid their subscriptions for 2022**. Non-members are welcome as guests for £5 per person. Please book your place ASAP, arrange payment and inform us of any food preferences or dietary needs (eg. Vegan, veggie, gluten free etc.). Email haarg@hotmail.co.uk or leave a message on 01424 812092 with your name and contact details. There is free parking at Fairlight Village Hall and on the surrounding roads. Please be aware of peoples' drives and road bends. The 101 bus from Hastings to Rye stops within a very short walk of the hall.

Programme

1.00pm – Annual General Meeting (non-members are welcome to attend, however are not permitted to vote)

1.30pm - Hastings Augustinian Priory Excavations by David Martin

Hastings Augustinian Priory was built in what is now the town centre of Hastings, at the rear of Cambridge Gardens and Priory Street, and lies under the ESK warehouse and retail outlet (previously a Sainsbury's supermarket).

Founded in the 12th century the Priory was built in a number of phases between the 12-14th century with the Priory declining in the early 15th century before being dissolved in 1536 AD with the English Reformation.

The remains of the Priory buildings were incorporated into the farm buildings of Priory Farm by the late 19th century until the development of Cambridge Gardens when the ruins were covered during the construction of the Cambridge Hall and then in 1937 when the hall was replaced by the Ritz Cinema (later the ABC). The Priory ruins were visible during the groundwork construction period of the cinema and were examined by local archaeologist Mr. John E. Ray. There followed a newspaper article and some of the worked stone from the Priory was lodged with the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery (which is currently on display).

In 1972 the site was purchased by J. Sainsbury Ltd. for redevelopment. During the short period between demolition of the cinema and construction of the new supermarket, emergency excavations were undertaken by HAARG, the group's first major project. Although the archaeological excavations were on a limited scale, the information gained enabled a clear picture of the part of the Priory now underlying ESK to be established.

2.00pm - The Town Deal fund to improve Hastings Castle by Kevin Boorman, Marketing & Major Projects Manager, Hastings Borough Council

Hastings Castle is the town's only direct physical link with the battle that made Hastings arguably the most famous town in the world. The current visitor offer is poor, with difficult access and very dated interpretation.

Pre Covid visitor numbers were around 30 000 per year despite the castle's very obvious presence dominating the town centre and seafront. In contrast, nearby Smugglers Adventure attracted c. 100,000 annual visitors pre Covid.

The Town Deal gives us an opportunity to turn the castle into one of Hastings' 'must see' visitor attractions.

We hope that it will provide a fully accessible experience via a modified West Hill lift and a new bridge from Ladies Parlour. We are hoping to provide a new covered facility in the castle, replacing the current, and

very outdated, 'siege tent' AV experience, Augmented Reality (AR) to interpret the castle ruins, and an off-site visitor centre explaining the impact of the Norman invasion on England.

2.30pm - Hastings Castle, Ladies' Parlour and the adjoining land – Geophysical survey results by Kevin Cornwell

A brief presentation will be given by one of the society's Field Officers of the recent geophysical survey results. These will form an important aid to Hastings Borough Council and its consultants when meeting with Historic England.

3.00pm - Afternoon Tea – sandwiches, cake, tea and coffee etc.

3.30pm - Military aspects of the Hastings Country Park and its surrounds by Stewart Angell

Whilst Hastings Country Park was established back in the early 1970s its military-related history within the landscape and its adjacent surrounds can be traced back from the late 16th century through to the Cold War period. Stewart will present his findings of how the headland has influenced the timing and type of military trait, whether it be communication, surveying, training, observation, detecting, and defensive aspects in the area.

4.00pm - Hastings Country Park Hidden Landscape Project by Lynn Cornwell

Hastings Country Park has long been acknowledged as an area of archaeological importance with part designated as an 'Archaeological Notification Area' which has implications for any development. HAARG has over many years undertaken the role of monitoring any development that disturbs the ground surface.

As part of the construction of a new eco-build visitors centre, HAARG undertook an archaeological assessment of the development area with support from ESCC's Archaeological Team. A magnetometer survey of the area plus adjoining field was conducted. Prehistoric and early Romano-British features were identified. Excavation of trial trenches within the build footprint confirmed the three ditches seen on the survey results, one containing Bronze Age pottery.

With support from the Park Manager, magnetometer surveys of all open areas within the park were conducted. Many Prehistoric, Romano-British, Medieval and recent features have been identified. People have lived, farmed, mined and even buried their dead over millennia in this beautiful coastal landscape.

4.30pm – Questions and close of meeting.

Payment

Please arrange a bank transfer to the society bank account and quote your surname as the reference or forward a cheque made payable to HAARG with your personal details ie. name, address, phone number and email address in case of emergency and Covid-19 tracing. The society bank details are:

Bank: HSBC
Account No.: 42358379
Sort Code: 40-23-18

Kind regards

Kevin and Lynn Cornwell
Touchwood
11 Waites Lane
Fairlight
TN35 4AR
01424 812092
haarg@hotmail.co.uk