

A drone shot down stream of the River Rother

Welcome to Issue 15 of the Lossenham Project newsletter, keeping you up to date with the latest news and any events you can get involved in.

An introduction

At this time of year, you can at last begin to sense the days getting longer - a sign for archaeologists that the digging season is approaching, even if the snowflakes are half inclined to turn to rain. Meanwhile, the Project is busy on many fronts, as you can see from this issue of the newsletter. Also, don't miss the History Group's 15th February online workshop on Bedels' Rolls.

Have you got any subjects you would like covered in coming issues of the newsletter? Please drop us a line.

Finally, full marks to all those January issue readers who knew that Cortez was not the first European to see the Pacific Ocean - it was Vasco Núñez de Balboa, whose statue (in Panama) graced our previous issue.

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

On the wind in February

Snowflakes float still,

Half inclined to turn to rain,

Nipping, dripping, chill.

Then the thaws swell the streams,

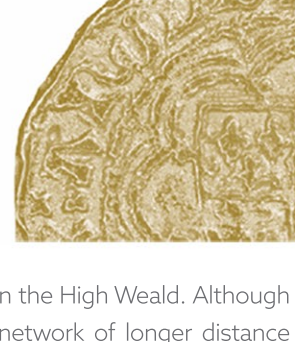
And swollen rivers swell the sea.

If the winter ever ends

How pleasant it will be!

(Christina Rossetti)

Routeways in the High Weald by Brendan Chester-Kadwell



Dr Brendan Chester-Kadwell led a fascinating evening online workshop on routeways in the High Weald. Although he touched on the Roman roads in the area, his primary focus was the medieval network of longer distance routeways and the interconnecting shorter local lanes. Thus, he was looking at the spatial distribution of the 'greens' and the routeways that connected them and how reclamation (assarting) and landholding affected these ways whereby landholders wished to keep people off their land while at the same time ensuring that they could indeed travel as was their right - hence the idea of rights of way across the countryside.

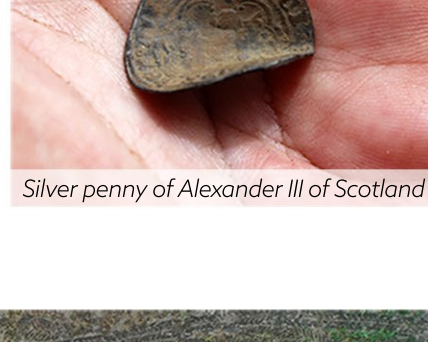
As well as the use of maps and other documentary evidence, his assessment of these ways across the High Weald, and in this case for the parishes of Tenterden, Rolvenden, Benenden, and to a less extent Newenden because of its topography, drew on the fieldwork of a team of volunteers that he led several years ago. A major part of their work involved looking for lost lanes in the countryside, especially evident in woodland, and Brendan feels there is scope to extend this earlier research, perhaps holding a field trip in the summer.

Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh
(Principal Research Fellow)

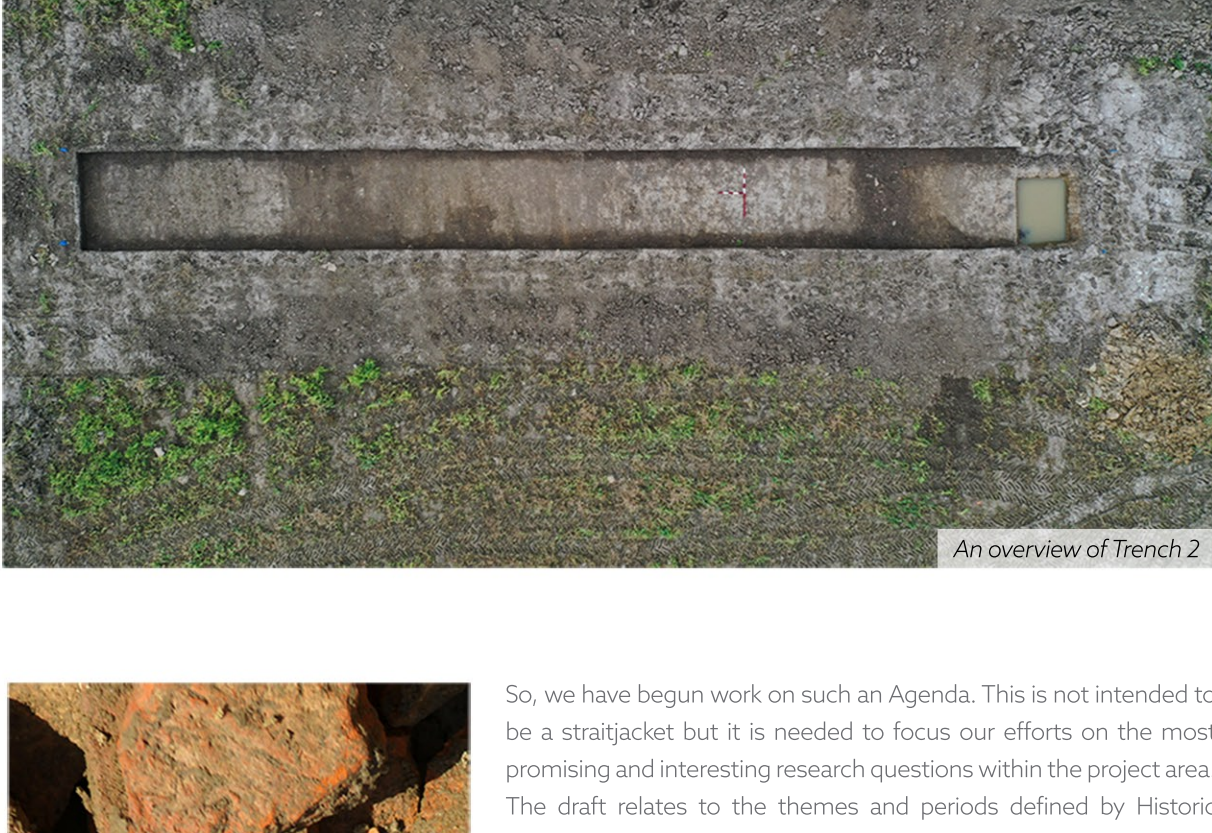
A Project Research Agenda

The historic environment of The Lossenham Project spans the entire post-glacial period since the last Ice Age, some 10,000 years or so. The Project therefore has many questions we can ask and seek to answer. Of course, we will never be able to fully explore every single aspect of the historic environment of Lossenham, much less of the entire Rother system and its surrounding parishes.

Thus, we must focus our efforts. It has now become clear that we need to develop and agree a Research Agenda for the Project.



Silver penny of Alexander III of Scotland



An overview of Trench 2



Fragments of floor tile found

So, we have begun work on such an Agenda. This is not intended to be a straitjacket but it is needed to focus our efforts on the most promising and interesting research questions within the project area. The draft relates to the themes and periods defined by Historic England's South East Research Framework, which will make it easier to fit our work into the bigger picture of the historic environment of the region. Having said that, it is striking how many of the distribution maps of key sites and finds within the SERF resource assessments show little or nothing in the Rother Valley area. This underlines the research value of our Project; all those of us participating are helping to shed more light on an under-studied and poorly understood part of south east England.

Our research agenda remains a work-in-progress. Its creation will be a collaborative process, and indeed I intend that many of you will get a chance to contribute your thoughts. Also, it will never really be finished; it will be a living document that continues to evolve with the project.

This is an abbreviated version of a post by Andrew Richardson. For the full text, see the project blog at <https://lossenham.org.uk/blog/>

New additions to the Project Library

William Boys, Collections for an History of Sandwich in Kent. With Notices of the Other Cinque Ports and Members, and of Richborough (Canterbury 1792)

For those interested in the history of the Cinque Ports, especially Sandwich, Boys' Collections is a treasure trove providing fascinating insights into how these towns were governed in the past. He similarly considers the two Ancient Towns of Rye and Winchelsea and, even closer to Newenden, the town of Tenterden. He includes numerous drawings of the various civic seals for these ports, incidentally offering useful material about medieval ships.

Nevertheless, it is for Sandwich that this book is rightly known, including sources for three of its four medieval hospitals, the Carmelite friary and the sixteenth-century grammar school. Contemporary illustrations of these institutions, the town gates and other views similarly enhance this excellent acquisition for the Lossenham Project library.

The full text is available online at <https://archive.org/details/CollectionsForAnHistoryOfSandwichInKentWithNoticesOfTheOther>

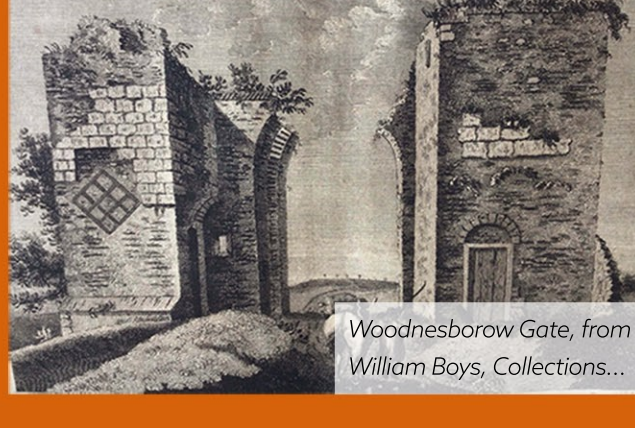
McGlynn, S Blood Cries Afar: The Magna Carta War and the Invasion of England 1215-1217, 2011

Exactly 150 years after the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, another army set sail from the Continent with the intention of imposing foreign rule on England. This time the invasion force was under the command of Louis the Lion, son of the powerful French king Philip Augustus. Taking advantage of the turmoil created in England by the civil war over Magna Carta and by King John's disastrous rule, Prince Louis and his army of French soldiers and mercenaries allied with the barons of the English rebel forces.

Blood Cries Afar tells a dramatic and violent but overlooked story, with a broad appeal to those interested in the history of England and France, the Middle Ages and war.

McGlynn also accounts for the military significance of Willikin of the Weald or William of Cassingham a resistance fighter, with close links to Kensham in Rolvenden.

By Jason Mazzocchi, project archivist.
There is a blog article on the archive main headings at <https://lossenham.org.uk/blog/tag/archives/>



Woodnesborow Gate, from William Boys, Collections...

More Wills!

Due to the generosity of The Janus Foundation, the Lossenham Project group has received digitised copies of a further 2250 wills and 730 inventories made by people before 1600 in seven parishes from Ebony and Stone in Oxney in the east to Hawkhurst in the west with Newenden at the centre. These are from the Canterbury diocesan courts and consequently were made by people, predominantly men, who were further down the social scale compared to PCC will-makers who generally had far greater landholdings and goods.

This means we will be able to explore the assets people such as yeoman farmers and artisans, as well as widows, owned when they made their will or after they died, the inventory appraisers often going from room to room detailing everything to which a monetary value could be given. Thus, it is possible to map out what somebody's house looked like and gain an idea of where people slept, ate, worked and spent their leisure time, as well as which rooms may have been used to entertain visitors and match inventories (and/or wills) to actual houses, thereby getting as close as is possible to becoming a time-traveller

Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh
(Principal Research Fellow)

The Aucher family

The Auchers are said to have come to England at the time of the Conquest, and to take their name from the town of Angers on the Loire. However, there is also a line of thought that says the name is just a variation of Archer. In any event, the name can be found spelled with all kinds of variations, including Anger, Ancher, Alcher and even Albuger.

Sir Thomas Aucher, who would have been born around 1200, held Lossenham Manor and granted land to the Carmelites to build what we now know as St Mary's Friary, and is believed to have been buried there. A son or (more likely) grandson of his, Sir Henry, fought with Edward I against the Scots and was made a Knight Banneret (a superior kind of knight) at the battle of Caerlaverock in 1300.

A little later, the Manor was held by one Isabella Aucher, who was by some distance the wealthiest person in Selbritten Hundred (roughly Newenden, Sandhurst and the eastern part of Hawkhurst), as is indicated by the tax rolls of the time. She, together with Geoffrey de Knelle in Sussex, built Knelle Dam in 1332 to keep the Rother flowing north of the Isle of Oxney.

In 1490, the Manor was held by Anne Aucher, who married Walter Culpeper, and the property passed on to the Culpepers thereafter. However, other scions of the Aucher family continued to make a mark for themselves, notably a number of statesmen called (Sir) Anthony Aucher, of the Otterden branch, who were Commissioners and High Sheriffs of Kent.

The Aucher coat of arms (Ermine, on a chief azure three lions rampant) can be seen on the screen in St Peter's Newenden, together with that of the St Leger family (Azure fretty argent, a chief or), which the Auchers were also entitled to carry as a result of a wise marriage around 1400.

Upcoming Events - Dates for the Diary!

February 2022
Tuesday 15th. Introducing Bedels' Rolls - with Sheila Sweetinburgh (please email annie@lossenham.org.uk to receive a link to join via zoom).

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 to express an interest.

April 2022
Wednesday, 20th to Sunday 24th. The second season of excavation starts! Email Annie at annie@lossenham.org.uk to express an interest.