

Welcome to Issue 17 of the Lossenham Project newsletter, keeping you up to date with the latest news and any events you can get involved in.

An introduction

"There is music in the air, music all around us; the world is full of it, and you simply take as much as you require."

Sir Edward Elgar

Sir Edward's thought is very much reflected in the works of our resident and visiting artists, and we all look forward to a summer of music and performances at Lossenham - more info in coming newsletters.

Are we even allowed to quote Elgar these days? He was surely a representative of the British Empire at its very height, and therefore to be frowned upon. Was he though? Yes, his music is inescapably connected with those early years of the 20th century when a quarter of the globe was pink - but he himself, a Roman Catholic, was a bit of an outsider in high society. Things are never simple.

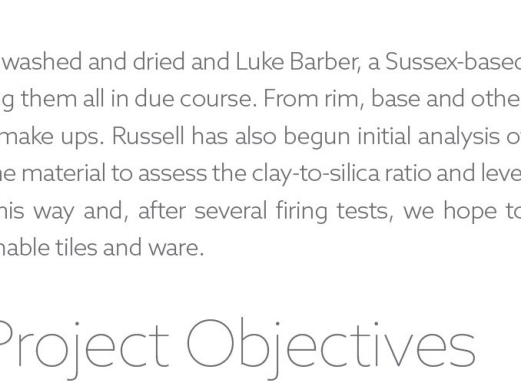
Of course, some works of art have acquired notoriety by association with unacceptable causes or attitudes, which we can all agree makes them best forgotten and left for academic dissection at some future date. But we really must beware the blanket cancelling of Russian composers, just because a much later compatriot of theirs started an indefensible attack on a neighbouring country. Of all nationalities, the Russians seem to have contributed some of the most intense musical comment on war - Tchaikovsky's 1812 is a bit of popular bling (though very clever bling!) - but Shostakovich's 7th symphony is to my mind the definitive statement on the Siege of Leningrad. Are we to ignore all that - at this moment, when Ukrainian cities are subject to the very same treatment?

Drop me a line to let me know what you think, and perhaps we can get a debate going!

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

Medieval Ceramics Project at Lossenham

In conjunction with Isle Heritage, artist in residence Russell Burden will be running an experimental archaeology project at Lossenham with the help of volunteers. The project will explore the making of pots and tiles using knowledge gleaned from ceramic finds on the Carmelite Friary site. We will aim to work, as far as is practical, with locally sourced clay and experiment with some of the making and firing methods that relate to the period. Russell has previously worked as a ceramics technician and tutor and has good knowledge of techniques and natural materials.



What's happened so far?

All the pottery sherds and tile fragments found to date have been washed and dried and Luke Barber, a Sussex-based archaeologist and post-Roman pottery specialist, will be examining them all in due course. From rim, base and other sherds we hope to understand both pot forms and clay body make ups. Russell has also begun initial analysis of Wadhurst clay dug at Lossenham, drying, slaking and factoring the material to assess the clay-to-silica ratio and level of plasticity. Ideally a workable clay body might be developed this way and, after several firing tests, we hope to process enough clay to the quality required to create some reasonable tiles and ware.



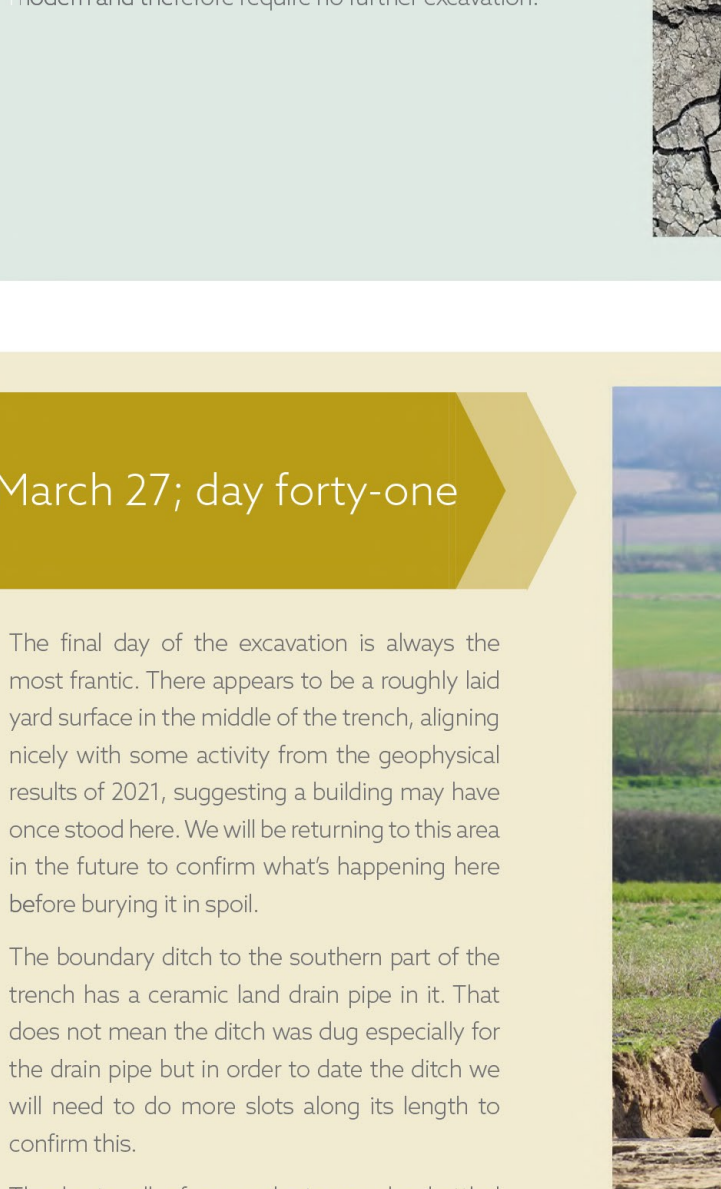
Project Objectives

- 1: Kent and Sussex research
- 2: Develop a workable clay and glaze from local materials
- 3: Build a usable potters wheel
- 4: Make pots and tiles that relate to finds in the Lossenham landscape
- 5: Make a suitable kiln from local materials
- 6: Fire the kiln
- 7: Analyse the results

Anybody wishing to be a part of this adventure should sign up to the Lossenham Project volunteer group (via annie@lossenham.org.uk) and then email Russell to discuss their preferred level of involvement so he can plan the project further. russell@lossenham.org.uk

Annie's Dig Diary

March 23 and 24; days thirty-seven and thirty-eight



Alex stripping and excavating Trench 5

And we are back! We have started our first days of the second season of the Lossenham Project Priory Excavation and the weather was glorious (long may it continue).

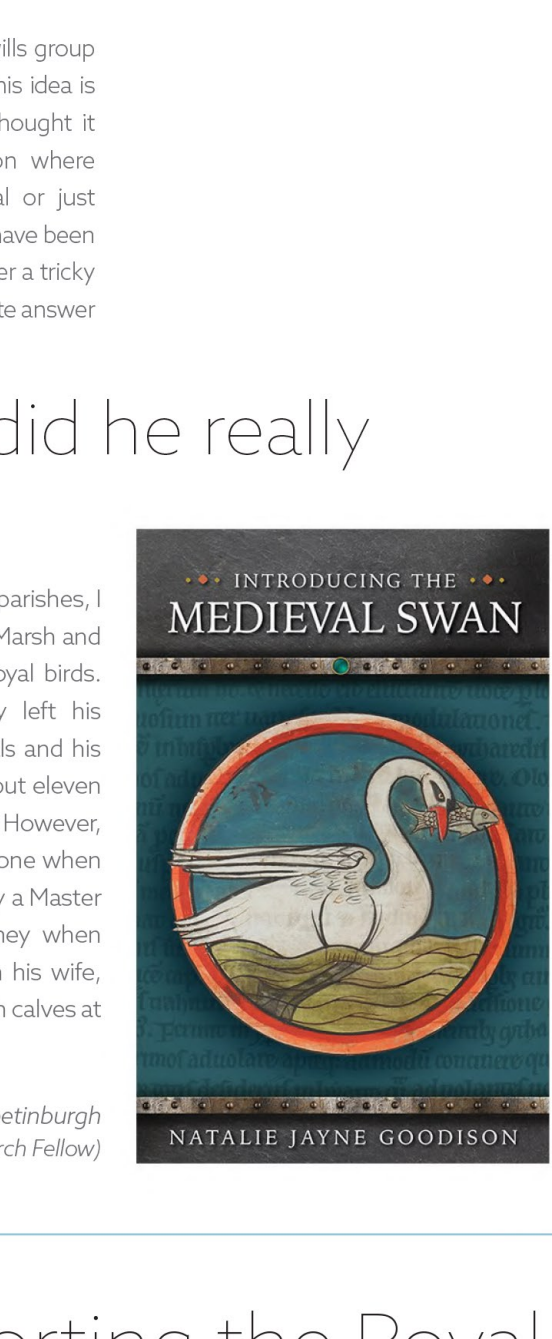
This first week we are stripping and excavating Trench 5 to the west of the Priory building which will become our spoil heap for the main excavation, set to start in April.

The area is being stripped by machine and is already turning up some potential features that our volunteers can get stuck into for the remainder of the week. Despite a small hiccup with the machine (thanks Alex for fixing that!) we were able to successfully strip the entire area ready for the main volunteer force tomorrow.

March 25 and 26; days thirty-nine and forty

We've only been here two days but it is like we have never left! We have been reminded of the unforgiving clay geology and why archaeologists have avoided the Weald....but our volunteers are made of sterner stuff and we won't be defeated by mere sun-baked clay...

Two ditches of undetermined date have been excavated in the southern end - one may even be the boundary wall of the graveyard associated with the Priory - and another running north-south in the centre of the trench has been conclusively written off as modern as there is a plastic water main in the bottom. Whilst that may initially sound disappointing we are happy that some of the features are modern and therefore require no further excavation.



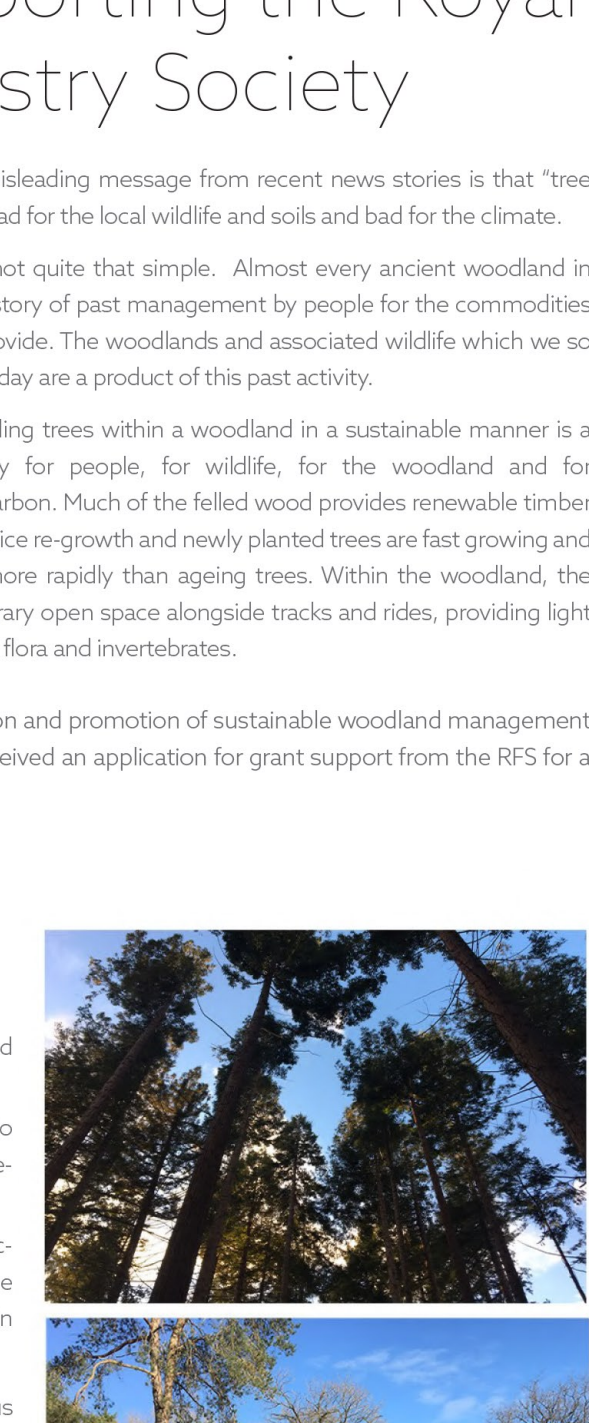
Unforgiving Clay!

March 27; day forty-one

The final day of the excavation is always the most frantic. There appears to be a roughly laid yard surface in the middle of the trench, aligning nicely with some activity from the geophysical results of 2021, suggesting a building may have once stood here. We will be returning to this area in the future to confirm what's happening here before burying it in spoil.

The boundary ditch to the southern part of the trench has a ceramic land drain pipe in it. That does not mean the ditch was dug especially for the drain pipe but in order to date the ditch we will need to do more slots along its length to confirm this.

Thanks to all our volunteers who battled through the tough ground conditions. When we return in April we will be looking at opening the southern range of the Priory buildings - keep tuned for what we find there!



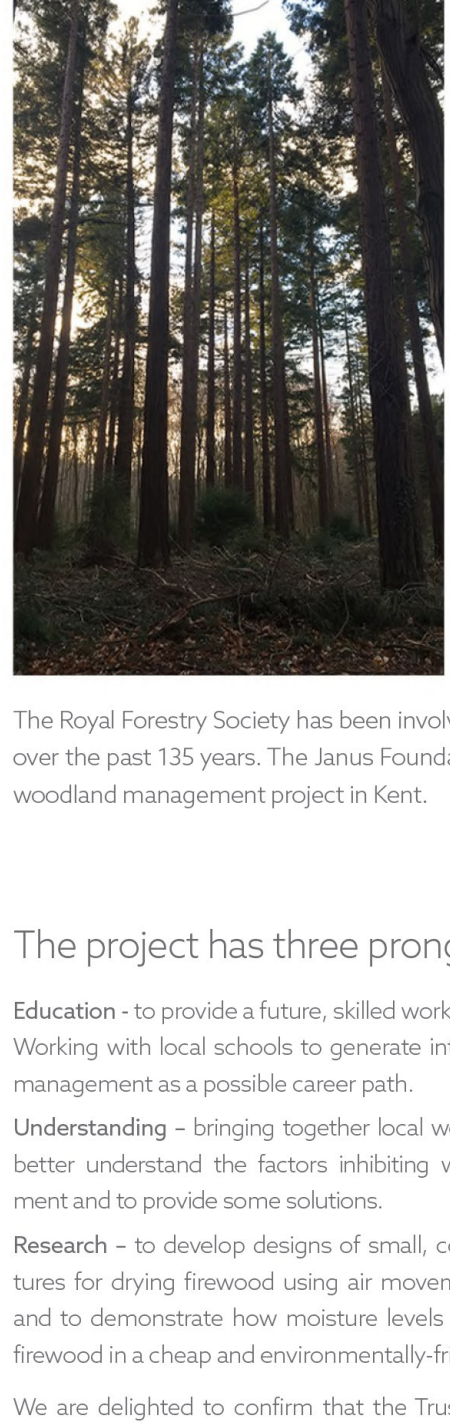
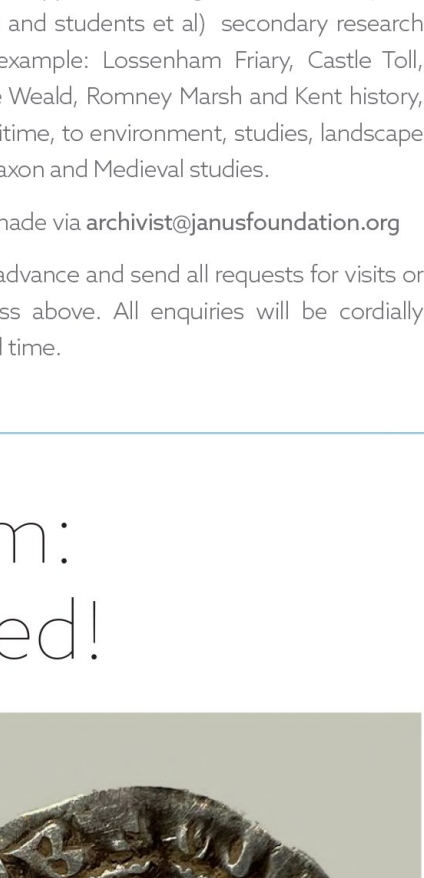
Faol helping the Volunteers excavate

By the time you read this newsletter, the Lossenham Project wills group will have had their inaugural "Tea and Titbits" online meeting. This idea is the brainchild of Rebecca Warren with Sue Mulline meeting. This thought it would be good to have a monthly informal drop-in session where members of the group can come in with exciting, unusual or just downright bizarre material that they have seen in the wills they have been transcribing. It is also an opportunity to get help from others over a tricky bit of handwriting or Latin entry as it offers a (hopefully!) immediate answer to a puzzle.

"Tea and Titbits" or did he really make that bequest?

To give you a couple of examples from one of the second-tier parishes, I thought I would bring you some swans. Those from Romney Marsh and certain other Kent parishes had permission to keep these royal birds. Thus, in 1545, William Garrad of New Romney not only left his slaughterhouse and shop to a breeding pair, but several farm animals and his two swans. Whether they were a breeding pair is not stated, but eleven years later, a local jurat called William Tadlow did have such a pair. However, his hen swan was in the keeping of Peter Maplinden of Maidstone when he made his will, while his cock swan was being looked after by a Master Bason of Lydde. Presumably both were to return to Romney when William died because they became the property of Elizabeth his wife, who also received more usual livestock including four cows with calves at foot. It will be interesting to see what else people uncover!

Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh
(Principal Research Fellow)



Supporting the Royal Forestry Society

The perhaps misleading message from recent news stories is that "tree felling is bad", bad for the local wildlife and soils and bad for the climate.

However, it is not quite that simple. Almost every ancient woodland in Britain has a history of past management by people for the commodities that it could provide. The woodlands and associated wildlife which we so greatly value today are a product of this past activity.

On balance, felling trees within a woodland in a sustainable manner is a positive activity for people, for wildlife, for the woodland and for sequestering carbon. Much of the felled wood provides renewable timber products. Coppice re-growth and newly planted trees are fast growing and store carbon more rapidly than ageing trees. Within the woodland, the result is temporary open space alongside tracks and rides, providing light and warmth for flora and invertebrates.

The Royal Forestry Society has been involved with education and promotion of sustainable woodland management over the past 135 years. The Janus Foundation recently received an application for grant support from the RFS for a woodland management project in Kent.

The project has three prongs:

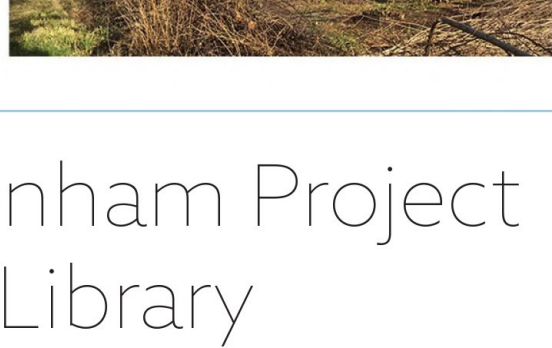
Education - to provide a future, skilled workforce. Working with local schools to generate interest in woodland management as a possible career path.

Understanding - bringing together local woodland owners to better understand the factors inhibiting woodland management and to provide some solutions.

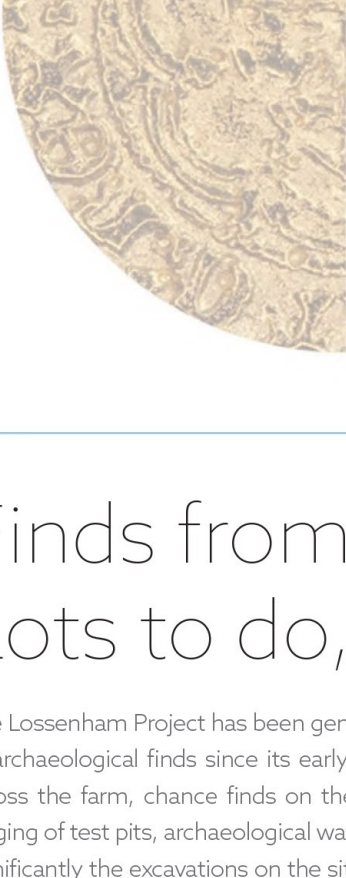
Research - to develop designs of small, cost-effective structures for drying firewood using air movement and sunshine and to demonstrate how moisture levels can be reduced in firewood in a cheap and environmentally-friendly way.

We are delighted to confirm that the Trustees of the Janus Foundation unanimously supported the proposal.

This is a summary of a longer article by Simon Weymouth, which can be found at <https://lossenham.org.uk/blog/2022/03/29/supporting-the-rfs-to-get-woodlands-into-management/>



Lossenham Project Book Library



In the past month, the book library or 'special collection' dedicated to the Lossenham Project has successfully made the move from Lossenham to a new home near Canterbury. Due to the burgeoning size of the collection and demand from users based across Kent the books have been moved to a stylish and contemporary study space.

It is hoped that the Lossenham Project community will take advantage of this move and plan visits for individual study and reference to this specialised history collection. The space has projection and conferencing facilities and is also ideal for small group study. Its appeal is making available to all (from academics to community interest and students et al) secondary research and historical literature on, for example: Lossenham Friary, Castle Hill, Newenden, the Rother Levels, the Weald, Romney Marsh and Kent history, and on a range of topics from maritime, to environment, studies, landscape and natural history, and to Anglo Saxon and Medieval studies.

Requests for book listings can be made via archivist@janusfoundation.org

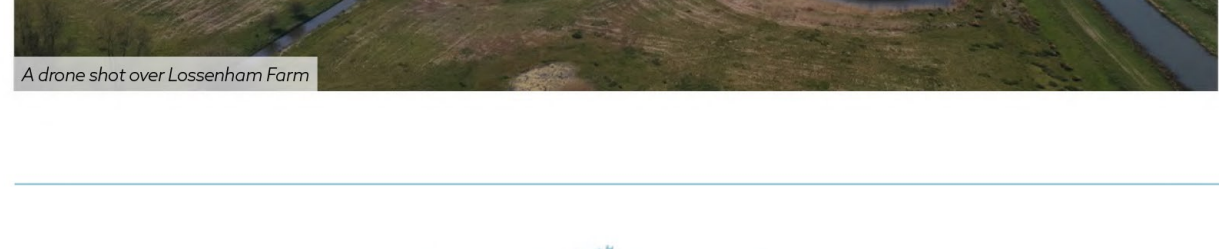
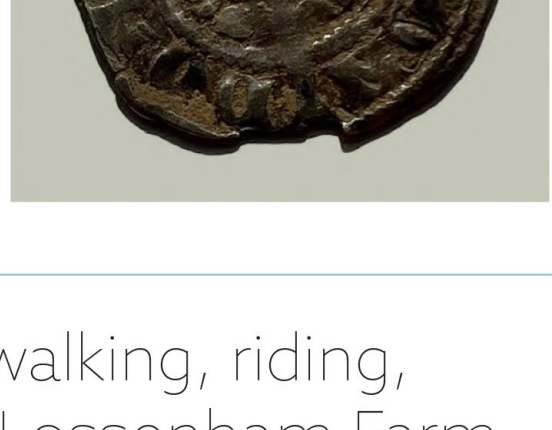
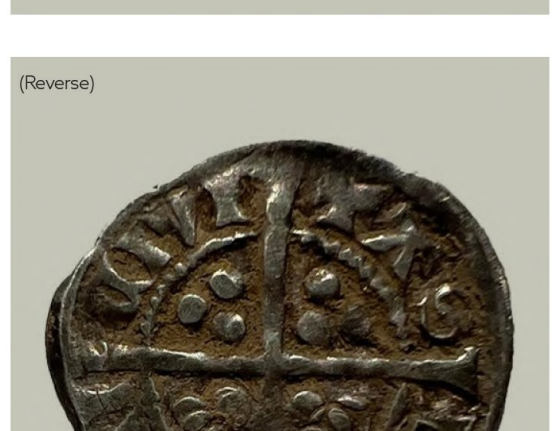
Do plan your visit to the library in advance and send all requests for visits or book access to the email address above. All enquiries will be cordially received and responded to in good time.

Finds from Lossenham: Lots to do, help needed!

The Lossenham Project has been generating an assemblage of archaeological finds since its early days. Metal detecting across the farm, chance finds on the surface of fields, the digging of test pits, archaeological watching briefs, and most significantly the excavations on the site of Lossenham Priory have yielded a wide range of artefacts, including pottery and ceramic building material, animal bone, and small finds including coins. As fieldwork resumed in March, new finds including a silver medieval penny of Edward I, minted in London between AD 1279-1307 (see photos).

The project will continue to generate finds as it progresses, and the eventual finds assemblage will form an important legacy of the Lossenham Project. There is a great deal of work to be done to clean, dry, sort, pack, assess and catalogue these finds. Experienced specialists will be commissioned to analyse finds where required, but volunteer input is essential to get the finds ready for the specialists to work on them. We need a dedicated group of finds volunteers to assist with this process, starting with finds washing but continuing through to sorting and listing the different types of finds recovered. There will be opportunities for volunteers to learn about the finds and to develop their own specialist knowledge about the classes of material that interest them. Members of the project Finds Team will get the chance to work alongside and learn from leading specialists on the different types of finds recovered. If this sounds like the sort of thing you'd like to get involved with, then please contact Annie Partridge saying that you would like to be part of the project Finds Team, and we will get back to you.

Andrew Richardson
Project Archaeology Director



A drone shot over Lossenham Farm

Upcoming Events - Dates for the Diary!

April 2022
Saturday 2nd: Ancestors: An Evening with Alice Roberts at Leas Cliff Hall, Folkestone. 7.30pm. Tickets can be purchased via <https://www.atgtickets.com>

Thursday 7th: Mini conference and book launch of The Romano-British villa and Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Eccles at Aylesford Priory 10am-3pm. Free event, tickets can be reserved via <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk>

Wednesday 20th to Sunday 24th: Excavation at the Priory

May 2022
Monday 9th to Sunday 15th: Excavation site TBC

June 2022
Saturday 4th: Newenden Platinum Jubilee Event, Newenden Cricket Ground. (Volunteers to assist with the stand much appreciated).

Tuesday 7th to Sunday 12th: Excavation site TBC

July 2022
Monday 18th to Sunday 21st: Excavation site TBC

August 2022
Wednesday 10, Thursday 11th, Friday 19th, Sunday 21st, Wednesday 24th, Thursday 25th: Excavation site TBC

Saturday 20th (TBC): Newenden Family Fun Day, Newenden Cricket Ground. (Volunteers to assist the stand much appreciated).