



# Lossenham Project Newsletter

ISSUE 19



*Summer afternoon—summer afternoon;  
to me those have always been the two  
most beautiful words in the English  
language.*

*(Henry James  
An International Episode)*



Winchelsea Church

## Introduction

### We know what he means!

Henry James was born in America but spent the last half of his life in Europe, much of it at Lamb House in Rye (which is now a National Trust property – after James, this literary house was inhabited by E.F. Benson, of Mapp and Lucia fame). When he had just moved to Lamb House, he wrote an essay called “Winchelsea, Rye & Thackeray’s *Denis Duval*”. Thackeray’s work was never finished, but it is set in Winchelsea, where the title character nearly becomes a smuggler.

However, James picks up on the incompleteness of this work and sets it in parallel with the incompleteness of Winchelsea, and perhaps in particular its main church, St. Thomas the Martyr. It is not known for sure whether the church was in fact finished and then partly destroyed by the French, or whether their raids simply put the population off the work required to complete the building.

Parallels could be drawn with modern Newenden, but let’s talk about something more fun: the success of our cricket team! To underline the community aspect of the Lossenham Project, we have asked the Captain of Newenden Sunday 1st XI to contribute short articles on the team’s progress, the first having appeared in Issue 18. Follow Newenden at our Cricket Ground during many pleasant summer afternoons this season...

*Åke Nilson  
Chairman of the Janus Foundation*





# Ancient iron working at Lossenham

Earlier in May we were visited by David Dungworth of Heritage Science Solutions, who led two workshops with Lossenham Project volunteers, to clean, quantify and assess the some 80kg of iron slag that we had excavated from the Test Pits in Field-5 in December 2021. This material was found filling a small ditch or gully, that had been located following a magnetometry survey carried out by HAARG. The processing (washing) was hard going, particularly on the hands, but everyone persevered, and it was predominantly completed on the first day, with 80kg becoming 55kg of material..

We had expected that the slag would turn out to be the 'tapped slag' typical of Roman or medieval iron production in the Weald. This is produced where the smelting involves a tapping procedure, that allows the slag to flow out of the furnace. To everyone's surprise, this was not what had been found at Lossenham. Instead, to David's delight, the 55kg of bloomery iron smelting slag from the site was non-tapped; in other words, it had been allowed to accumulate inside the furnace. This type of bloomery smelting was used during the Iron Age, and the early to mid-Anglo-Saxon period. Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon iron smelting sites are vanishingly rare in the Weald (unlike the much more numerous sites of Roman and medieval to post-medieval industries). Thus, this represents a regionally important discovery.

According to David's assessment report, the size of the assemblage suggests that more than one smelt took place. Furthermore, the well-preserved nature of the slag, with very few fracture surfaces, suggests that the assemblage had been quickly deposited in the feature in which it was found, and that the furnace must be nearby.

Hopefully, with further fieldwork that furnace can be found and excavated, along with dating evidence that will help determine whether this smelting took place in the Iron Age or Anglo-Saxon periods. In either case, this is a very significant and exciting discovery, adding to the picture that the Lossenham Project is building of this ancient landscape and the people who lived and worked in it.



*Andrew Richardson – Paul-Samual Armour  
Directors of Isle Heritage CIC*





# Newenden CC makes the national press

Finally the cricket club have started to receive the kind of coverage our sporting exploits deserve. The Daily Telegraph did a six page feature on the struggles of village cricket and how certain clubs are bucking the trend and thriving. We thought it would just be a little piece tucked away in the main paper, we never expected to get the front cover of the weekend supplement.

On the pitch our season has started well with back to back league wins, which have put us top of the league, a position we intend to retain for the rest of the season. We are also doing well in the Wealden Wallop, T20 league, having secured our place in the semi-finals.

June will be a big month for us, with some key games ahead. Hopefully we can navigate through these successfully.

(Editor's note: the friendly against Kent University 2 XI on 5 June ended with a Newenden win by 7 wickets – the final match report described it as “a great game played between two strong sides and will set us up well for the league game with Smarden on Sunday (12th June)” – come and join us at Newenden Cricket Ground!)

*Phil Morris*  
*League Captain*





Thomas Winterbury was a grandfather and widower of Sandhurst. On 13th of August 1501 he made his will.

# The Will of Thomas Winterbury

In the first place, Thomas requested burial in the churchyard of St Nicholas in Sandhurst, giving ten shillings for his burial expenses and leaving twelve pence to the high altar of the church 'for my tithes forgotten'. This is a standard bequest found in virtually every pre-Reformation will. He also requested a total of twenty shillings to be spent for the benefit of his and his former wife, Johanne's, souls.

Thomas was a rich man, but he was also so concerned about his soul that he chose to use his wealth to ensure the salvation of his soul. His will therefore specified that his property was to be leased out for six years. From the profits arising, ten shillings were to be distributed every year "in diriges and masses to be done in the church of Sandhurst for my soul, my wife's soul and for all Christian souls".

After those six years, Thomas's son (Thomas the younger) was to inherit the properties. Unusually, and touchingly, Thomas the elder was also so concerned for his son, that he specified further sums to be spent upon Thomas the younger's death, and then additionally for "the soul of Thomas Winterbury, me, my wife and all Christian souls for six years after Thomas's death".

Apart from modest sums left to a couple of other beneficiaries, including 3s 4d to the Prior of Lossenham and 13s 4d to his granddaughter Elise, it was clearly the health of his and his family's souls which dominated Thomas the elder's thoughts when he made his will. Let us hope that these final arrangements gave him some measure of confidence as he faced his end.

*(This is a summary of a longer article by Rebecca Warren, which can be found in its entirety on the project blog <https://lossenham.org.uk/blog/>)*



## More Wills Workshops

The Lossenham Project wills group continues to gear up for the Lossenham Priory Study Day but in the meantime the group is also looking out for more volunteers to join the group to transcribe wills so that Sophie can add the information to the group's database. Experienced palaeographers are always welcome but so are people with no experience of reading old handwriting.

At the time of writing, we are just about to have the middle session in the current series of introductory workshops on working with wills. I tried something different this time and our first document was a late 15th-century charter granted to Canterbury because the letter forms are exceedingly clear and there are a good range of abbreviations and contractions within this English document which provide excellent practice for budding researchers.



Canterbury paving charter: CCA-CC/A/A/36 (photo provided by Canterbury Cathedral Dean & Chapter)

Our second document is a great will made by an early 16th-century resident of Rochester because we don't need to work on wills from the parishes of the Rother Levels at this stage. Moreover, it has everything you could ask for in a will – burial in the cathedral church, interesting funeral services, pious bequests, lots of household items and references to rooms. As well as providing excellent practice, it demonstrates very clearly the potential of wills as a rich source of evidence for social history.

Consequently, after these sessions those who want to join the wills group will be paired with an experienced transcriber to have a go themselves. If this sounds something you would like to do, please contact me at [sheila.sweetinburgh@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:sheila.sweetinburgh@canterbury.ac.uk) because there will be future workshops.

*Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh  
Centre for Kent History and Heritage*





# Annie's Dig Diary

## May 9: day forty-seven

On our first day in May we were treated to some very fine weather indeed! Most of our volunteers went with David Dungworth from Heritage Science Solutions to learn about industrial slag, a by-product of metal smelting. We had a large amount of iron slag from a couple of features we excavated from test pits on the farm in December and we had invited David to come and cast an eye. The methods used to extract metal from ore changed over time as technologies developed, and so the by-product can be very diagnostic. In short, our assemblage is incredibly interesting as there are indications it may be quite early; either pre-Roman or Anglo-Saxon. We will be returning to the find spot to investigate further this year.

On the Priory progress was slow but we did finally finish our work in Trench 5. There are more inter-cutting pits, ditches, and gullies, but for now we are finished with this trench. Tomorrow we will be starting to machine off the rest of Trench 1 and we need to use this area for spoil.

In other news one of our early career volunteers has landed a trainee position with an archaeological unit. Whilst we will be sorry to see him go we are delighted that he is moving on to a bright future.



A large piece of iron slag

## May 10: day forty-eight

Today was another incredibly busy day on site as we started stripping the new extension to Trench 1 (henceforth called Area 1) and continued with our work in Trench 4. Area 1 has been extended to the north and west to find the walls of the building making up the southern range, and so far so good we have the rest of the north-south wall and the return to the east-west. There is plenty more work to be done stripping this tomorrow so fingers crossed!

Volunteers in Trench 4



# May 11: day forty-nine

We have finished machine stripping half of the building at the southern range and it is certainly turning out to be quite interesting. We have identified the continuation of the wall trenches heading east, a potential porch area to the south, and features inside the building which may be graves, or may be structural. We will spend the rest of the week trowelling the surface to identify any features.

A piece of tile found in Area 1



Trowelling with a view



# May 12: day fifty

David Dungworth visited us again today and is fairly confident that the slag assemblage is Iron Age, but he can't say for certain. The ore is of good quality and there are multiple firing events so whoever was processing iron here was doing a fair bit of it. We will be returning to the feature in the future to retrieve more evidence.

A few volunteers stayed behind to help continue with the cleaning back of Area 1 which is coming up with more graves. There were a few lovely finds today including a piece of slate decorated with what appears to be a picture of a ship.

Bucketing down



The decorated slate





# May 13-15: day fifty-one to fifty-three

The last few days have been taken up with finishing off our cleaning ready for a site photo and finishing off Trench 4 so we can backfill it. So far it seems that this eastern area was being used for waste disposal, confirming our initial interpretation that the eastern range is the service range with kitchens.

All in all a very successful week with some questions answers and yet more posed!



## Dates for the Diary

**Between July 11-17** Isle Heritage will be working in partnership with the National Trust at the White Cliffs of Dover to excavate the World War 2 cross channel gun emplacement known as 'Jane'. It will be one of the rare times the National Trust open this area up to the public. If you would like more details about visiting please e-mail [annie@lossenham.org.uk](mailto:annie@lossenham.org.uk). Opportunities to sign up to the project will be released by the National Trust in early July.

### July 2022

Monday 11th to Sunday 17th: White Cliffs of Dover (see above)

Monday 18th to Sunday 31st: Excavation (site TBC)

### August 2022

Wednesday 10th, 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)

### September 2022

Saturday 3rd: Lossenham Priory Study Day at Lossenham Farm

Saturday 3rd to Friday 16th: Excavation (site TBC)