



Lossenham Project Newsletter

ISSUE 23



Introduction

*Now, the melancholy god protect thee; and the tailor make thy
doublet of changeable taffeta, for thy mind is a very opal.*

William Shakespeare, Twelfth Night

This is Feste, the Clown, admonishing (in some sense) Duke Orsino for being inconstant. Taffeta is a shimmering fabric and of course, opals change with the light and the angle you look at them.

Opals are wonderful stones, especially black ones, and I never tire of looking at them. Each one has a unique pattern, caused by water inclusions in its internal silica structure. This is why you have to be careful when wearing opal jewelry, if you are lucky enough to have some, because it may be destroyed by frost (or indeed by high temperatures). The flashes of colour in a black opal can be of any of the colours of the rainbow, with reds and yellows being rarer and therefore more valuable. The rarest black opals have a "harlequin" pattern, with reds, blues and greens in rectangular or rhomboid shapes.

And the connection with this month is that the opal is October's birthstone. A good, practically opalescent mixture of articles in this issue – enjoy it as you celebrate the 6,025th anniversary of Creation on the 23rd – at least if you believe Archbishop Ussher.

Åke Nilson

Chairman of the Janus Foundation



Black opal





Jordon Stevens – "Eve"



Jordon Stevens

The Janus Foundation funds the Lossenham Project and has been fortunate also to have funded and worked with a number of up-and-coming artists across the UK, supporting them in their creative endeavours and ensuring that their projects can move forward with confidence and pace. One of these artists is Jordon Stevens, a young writer, actor and director who recently filmed her first short in Sittingbourne, Kent. "Eve" follows a mysterious female protagonist as she navigates the strain of isolation, non-verbal communication, and mental health issues, and discovers the power of hope in a silent, solitary world – a theme that melds well with the Lossenham Project's spiritual well-being aspects.

"Confined to a 16th century cottage, her every moment is punctured by the itching tick of an alarm clock. Days blend into years, routine loses meaning, and time is never on her side. Until one seemingly ordinary day, when Eve's solitude is shattered by a noise next door."

The shoot took place over a 48-hour period, with an 80% female cast and crew working on the piece. Jordon hopes to have the work edited and ready by the end of 2022, to be released in the New Year and enter the Short Film festival circuit in 2023. This will be Jordon's directorial and writing debut in the realm of Short Film. In her own words,

"I have spent much of my career in the arts in front of the camera; now, I am eager to make creative and long-lasting relationships behind it in this new role. Eve began as a love story, a study into how quickly we can bond with a person we've never met. However, as I wrote, it evolved into something deeper, a story of isolation and our overwhelming desire for connection. Can human beings ever exist alone?"

Natasha Cowley
Janus Foundation Trustee



Lossenham Priory Study Day

On Saturday 3 September members of the Lossenham Project team welcomed thirty representatives from heritage and local history groups to Lossenham Farm barn to see the exhibition of sixteen banners highlighting different aspects of the project. These banners arranged around three sides of the barn illustrated a wide range of topics from what types of animal bones have the archaeologists uncovered to what can will bequests tell us about the lives of 'ordinary' women in Tudor times. Those who had created the banners were on hand to answer questions and it was clear throughout the day that this was producing positive discussions, some of which have continued since then.



Additionally, our audience were given four short talks to showcase different aspects of the project. Two of these looked at Lossenham Priory itself: Andrew Richardson on the archaeological discoveries, Brother Richard Copsey on the story from the documentary sources. The other two talks took case studies from different parts of the Rother Levels as first Rebecca Warren examined religious bequests in Sandhurst wills from either side of the Reformation and Sheila Sweetinburgh explored farming practices in the early 14th century and the impact on Ebony of the Great Famine.

To end, this hopefully offers a sense of the day's success: "May I say what an enjoyable day it was. Well run, good location with good facilities, excellent speakers, tasty catering and the opportunity to meet the team and visit the dig site. Well done to everyone involved."

*Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh
Centre for Kent History and Heritage*



Cob Kiln Firing

The second week of September saw the successful finale of our elemental pottery project. Built the month prior in the Lossenham landscape, our cob kiln, modelled on several period kilns from Southern England, saw its first test-firing to around 500°C.

On day two, modifications to the kiln's fire pit and internal chamber were made and the kiln was packed with our pots and tiles to be warmed overnight for an early start the next morning. The third day saw the start of the main firing, at first long and slow, the kiln eventually driven up until the pots were glowing bright orange. We finished late afternoon by sealing up the kiln. On the following day after a slow cooling it was opened in the late afternoon. The results exceeded expectations!



Our lead volunteer, Phillip Warren, was instrumental in his research and throwing of early Rye-type pottery and I added a contemporary element, creating work to explore the development of ceramics in my art residency at Lossenham. We utilised both tempered and untempered Lossenham clay together with a well-tested red earthenware as a control material (visible in image of packed kiln).

The experience taught us a great deal about the local clay, and how our kiln's air flow and heat distribution worked. The project is now being documented with detailed findings for future exploration.

A big thank you to all our volunteers who worked so hard to see the project through to its exciting conclusion!



*Russell Burden
Artist in Residence*





Castle Toll: Introducing Alison Norton

Hi! I am Alison Norton, a medieval history and archaeology Ph.D. candidate at Canterbury Christ Church University. My research focuses on castles and their relationship with the medieval English landscape. Specifically, I address questions related to the siting behaviour of Normans between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Within this aim and timeframe, I attempt to understand why castles were sited within certain landscapes, how they functioned, and how did surrounding communities interact with and perceive these structures?

During my visit to Castle Toll, I became fascinated with its unique position within the landscape, and its seemingly complex historical and archaeological context. From a general survey of its environment, I found its proximity to various manorial centres (including Lossenham itself) intriguing. There is a possibility, based on its physical location to known areas of lordship, that this site served as a precursor to later manorial holdings within the local area. Additional survey and historical research are necessary of course, but I am looking forward to working on this project and lending my expertise to help identify the significance of this site within its local landscape.

Alison Norton
CCCU



Stairway to Devon

Newenden won by 116 runs

When Christian Kutner first told us that he had secured Devon Malcolm's services for the 17 September fixture against Hythe Green, there was an air of scepticism. But sure enough a couple of weeks later the great man came bouncing up the pavilion stairs ready to go.

Having won the toss, Morris and Malcolm opened up (has a nice ring to it don't you think?). Unfortunately the pair fell in consecutive overs and the following two bats did no better. When Bellhouse was caught behind we were in a right pickle at 13-4. We knew we had an ex-international bowler in our ranks, but surely we had to post a vaguely competitive score so he had something to bowl at.

But no panic, Parr strode to the crease to join Browning. They raced to their hundred partnership in no time and took us through to 177 before Newenden eventually finished up on 252 all out at tea.



Phil and Devon



The Kutner family and Devon



Jim Piper and his daughter

Somehow we took to the field, supercharged by Pipers' pastried pork parcels. Malcolm opened up, let a few looseners go, but the batsman made the mistake of having a swing at one and slicing it to the boundary. The next ball went fizzing past his nose with a bit of venom.

Kutner was bowling superbly from the other end and picked up the first wicket when Browning took what must be a contender for catch of the season. Standing at short cover, the batsmen hit a full-blooded drive, Ben leapt to his left and stuck up a mitt and took a stunning one handed catch.

When Bradney replaced Malcolm, he bowled his best spell of the season, picking up an impressive 4-30.

It was an amazing day and a real pleasure to take the field with Devon. An absolute gent, he was charming to everyone. He promised to return next season, bringing his son who bowls 'proper quick stuff'.

We can't wait.

*Phil Morris
League Captain*



The 73rd International Sachsensymposium



Andrew presenting the Lossenham Project

In mid-September, I travelled to Cracow for a five-day conference, attended by nearly a hundred academics and post-graduate students from across northern Europe.

The conference theme was 'Terra fertilis, terra deserta: Exploitation of marginal zones'. I presented a paper entitled 'Mind the Gap: Patterns of exploitation, settlement and abandonment in the southern Weald, from prehistory to the Early Middle Ages.' This provided an overview of the Lossenham Project study area, with a particular focus on the first millennium AD and was very well received.

Marco Bakker, of the Groningen Institute for Archaeology, gave a paper showing (inter alia) evidence of cropmarks indicating intensive peat cutting which closely match cropmarks observed around Lossenham. He is confident that they are also the result of peat cutting. Such intensive peat cutting is not sustainable – it tends to happen for three to four generations and then the fields are worked out due to desiccation and subsidence. The Frisian drainage systems also look very similar to those of the Rother area. It is to be hoped that in the future we can collaborate and exchange data with our Dutch colleagues, as we are working in such similar landscapes.



Katie Haworth, a post-doctoral researcher from Cambridge, was another useful contact from the conference. She is compiling a study of early Anglo-Saxon coin pendants and was interested in the one from Salehurst & Robertsbridge; this was minted between circa 580 and 602 and at present is the earliest evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity within the Lossenham study area.

The city of Cracow itself was a delight; thankfully spared destruction during the Second World War, it boasts many historic buildings, as well as Europe's largest medieval market square. For those who haven't been, I strongly recommend a visit if you ever get the chance.

*Andrew Richardson
Isle Heritage CIC*



Dates for the Diary

October 2022

Monday 17th to Friday 21st, Monday 24th to Friday 28th: Excavation at Lossenham

November 2022

Wednesday 9th to Friday 11th, Tuesday 22nd to Thursday 24th: Excavation at Lossenham

Note: these excavation dates are subject to weather conditions.
(Please make sure to sign-up in good time so we can plan our activities effectively.)

