





Lossenham Project
Newsletter
ISSUE 25

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Introduction

"Victory awaits him who has everything in order – luck, people call it"

Roald Amundsen



On 14th December 1911, Amundsen and his polar team reached the South Pole in good order. They made a number of astronomical observations to confirm that they really had got to 90 degrees South and started their return journey on the 18th. On 17th January, Robert F. Scott found the Norwegian flag and the tent that Amundsen had left – and the rest is history. The story of the race to the Pole remains controversial but it cannot be doubted that Amundsen was better prepared in all respects.

We highlight this drama from 111 years ago as our colleague Maeve has just left for a cruise to Antarctica – where the sunlight this month will be rather better than at wet and murky Lossenham. This issue of the newsletter takes a look at the wider range of activities funded by the Janus Foundation (the principal source of funding for the Lossenham Project), most of which do have either a connection with Lossenham or Kent, or are designed to provide benefits to the local community here, for instance with guest lectures or special performances.

Wishing you a very happy end to the year and a rapid return of the sunlight to our latitude,

Åke Nilson
Chairman of the Janus Foundation

Artist Statement – Louise Pettifer (Louise will be the Visiting Artist at Lossenham for 2023)



My work is inspired by my love and appreciation for the natural world. I am delighted to have been offered the opportunity to work at Lossenham and I'm looking forward to learning about the layers of history, as well as the plant life and biodiversity of this intriguing landscape. I'm excited to see how Lossenham develops the narrative in my work over the next year.

I was formerly artist in residence for the National Trust at Sissinghurst Castle Garden, making work which celebrated the seasons, along with the planting, structure, beauty and history of this fascinating garden.

More recently, I have developed a body of work around the concepts of biodiversity and rewilding. In my work I am alluding to the interconnectedness of the natural world; the system which supports our soil, water, plants, insects, birds, wildlife, and of course, ourselves. I was grateful to receive funding for this project from Arts Council England.

I studied for a BA in Textiles at UCA Farnham, specialising in silk-screen printing, before completing an MA in Drawing at Camberwell, University of the Arts, London. I work in a combination of drawing, painting, printmaking and occasionally gilding. I love to build layers in my work, to describe the complexity and intricate balance I see in the natural world.

More information about my work can be found at: www.louisepettifer.co.uk

Wet Sites

Recent archaeological progress has been hampered by the amount of rainfall. It proved impossible to carry out any systematic field walking or metal detecting at Castle Toll as planned, because of the combination of rain and ground conditions. We will continue to keep an eye on both weather and ground conditions and will schedule the metal detecting as soon as conditions make it feasible. We need both ground that is not so wet we can't move across it (though some moisture makes for better detection depth) and the vegetation reduced to very short grass; you just can't do it effectively once it reaches more than ankle deep. If grazing is possible at the moment, that would be a great benefit.



A very small amount of detecting was undertaken in areas where the vegetation was short enough, but this only recovered a very few modern finds. We suspect that Castle Toll is not going to produce huge volumes of material. That doesn't matter, as long as we can find some things that help answer our questions about the site. I don't think it is going to give up its secrets easily, but we will get them in the end.



We therefore turned our attention to continuing to try to weatherproof the Priory excavation and made some progress on that. The main remaining job is to drain the robbed out foundation trench of the south wall, clear it of sludge, line it with drainex and then fill with shingle. We think that is probably a three-day job, which will require it to largely not rain during those three days. We hope that we can achieve this when we are back on site from 6th to 10th December. But in any case, we will get it done before Christmas by hook or by crook. Once that is infilled, we will cover the entire site in tarpaulins weighted with sandbags. It is our intention through the Winter to take opportunities that the weather provides to get discrete pieces of fieldwork done, with Castle Toll being the priority.

Andrew Richardson
Isle Heritage CIC

Zooarchaeology Updates

Our very own Zooarchaeologist, Maeve Moorcroft, has joined the Sheffield Zooarchaeology Research Group, where she will be supporting Prof. Umberto Albarella while he writes his new book titled "A History of Britain in 50 Animals", a project funded by a Leverhulme Mayor Research fellowship. Maeve's position is funded by the Janus Foundation.

She is also a member of the Zooarchaeology Team in York, where she is finishing the work already started on digitally cataloguing and photographing the unique collection of pathological animal bones that were left by Baker & Brothwell, authors of the important book "Animal Diseases in Archaeology".

The photo shows bones from a horse which was involved in a trotting cart accident, where the shaft of the cart went into its shoulder joint. The shaft was removed but the horse kept getting worse and at Post Mortem they found this huge new bone growth due to the brass tip of the cart shaft being left behind in the joint when they pulled the shaft out!



Dr Maeve Moorcroft MVB MRCVS

Lossenham and the Rother Levels – new online exhibition



For those not at the Lossenham Project Study Day last September, here is your chance to look at the exhibition banners. The banners can be found at www.lossenham.org.uk/banners.html and all those involved hope you enjoy learning about wills: see Sophie Ogilvie, Sue Callow, Sue Muddiman and Sue Hatt. Or perhaps your interest is local families: Keith Bailey, Jane Richardson and Annie Partridge; while the works of Celia Jennings and Rebecca Warren draw on material culture and landscape respectively, zooarchaeology is highlighted by Maeve Moorcroft and Russell Burden offers you aspects of the arts.

Of course, such an exhibition can only give you a taster of the research findings coming from a study of probate records. Moreover, bringing other documents such as charters, leases, rentals, accounts and maps further brings out the potential to try to understand what society was like in late medieval and Tudor times, while archaeology – underground or the built environment – gives a more holistic perspective when added to land/townscape studies. Consequently, the wills group, among its next projects, is hoping to work with Tenterden Museum towards its proposed exhibition in 2024 that will offer ideas about what this Cinque Port town (and its hinterland) was like for people living there in early modern times.

Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh
Centre for Kent History and Heritage

Breathless

Earlier this year, The Janus Foundation (the main funding organisation for the Lossenham Project) offered its support to up-and-coming playwright and Plymouth Laureate of Words 21/22, Laura Horton. Laura was embarking upon her first theatrical run at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, with an extended-monologue piece entitled *Breathless* about the everyday realities of hoarding. Since April 2022, she has worked tirelessly to bring this story to life on stage at both the Theatre Royal Plymouth and the Edinburgh Fringe and has experienced an upwards trajectory that is truly extraordinary.

Since the first two runs of the piece, Laura has been interviewed for numerous radio shows, as well as being interviewed and featured in print publications such as *The Herald* and *Vogue*. Following her run at the Fringe, Laura received a Fringe First Award for the piece, as well as several glowing reviews. As a result of its roaring success in Scotland, Laura was asked to bring *Breathless* to the Soho Theatre in London for a run in early 2023 (Tue 7th – Sat 18th Feb 2023, 3.00pm, 7.00pm), and has short runs planned for Bath and at the Bristol Old Vic as well (dates & times TBC). And lastly (but by no means least!) Laura has secured a coveted spot in Theatre 59e59's line-up of *Brits Off Broadway* showcase and will be bringing *Breathless* to New York City in the Spring of 2023. *Brits Off Broadway* is an annual season showcasing work by UK writers and producers, inviting a handful of exceptional productions from small-mid scale companies representing the breadth of the British independent theater sector to present their work in NYC. The show will run for three weeks, with a week of rehearsal prior. This showcase very rarely features extended monologue-style pieces, opting instead for plays with larger casts, so to be one of seven shows chosen for next year (and for this to be Laura's very first full-length play) is an extraordinary achievement.

Congratulations, Laura!

Natasha Cowley
Trustee, The Janus Foundation



"What happens when the things we covet hide us from ourselves? Opening up to new experiences in her late-thirties, Sophie is exploring parts of herself long repressed. But a secret she's keeping from those she loves, and even from herself, threatens to unravel it all. She must make a choice; but what or who will she decide to give up? Breathless is a funny, honest, and stylish exploration of the knives-edge of hoarding, from joy to addiction and suffocating shame."

Dates for the Diary

December 2022
Tuesday 6th to Friday 9th: 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.)

