




 Lossenham Project
Newsletter
 ISSUE 27



Introduction

"when Lord Carnarvon, unable to stand the suspense any longer, inquired anxiously, 'Can you see anything?' it was all I could do to get out the words, 'Yes, wonderful things.'"

Howard Carter, The Tomb of Tutankhamen

On 16 February 1923, Howard Carter, a 48-year-old more or less self-taught archaeologist and occasional watercolour artist, opened the burial chamber of Pharaoh Tutankhamun (to use the nowadays accepted spelling), changing the world of egyptology, and also that of crosswords, forever.

Carter had found the entrance to the tomb in November 1922, having worked in Egypt from the age of 17, and from 1907, on behalf of Lord Carnarvon, who in 1914 obtained a concession to dig in the Valley of the Kings, on the bank of the Nile opposite ancient Thebes, now Luxor. The First World War stopped activities, but work recommenced in late 1917. The Valley had been known for centuries to contain the graves from the 18th to the 20th Dynasty, that is from the 16th to the 11th century B.C. Most of the graves had been robbed in ancient times, but Tutankhamun's tomb was dug into the floor of the valley, where it had been hidden by debris and fallen rocks.

The tomb ultimately yielded more than 5,000 items, most of which are now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, but some are at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and a few also at the British Museum. Also, some were nicked by Carter and given to his friends! The permanent exhibition of Tutankhamun finds at the BM mostly consists of very fine copies of original items now in Cairo.

When Lord Carnarvon died from blood poisoning in April 1923, rumours of a curse were inevitable. However, other early visitors – including Carter himself – lived on for a good many years. Carnarvon's daughter, Lady Evelyn, who visited the tomb with her father very early on (and was rumoured to have had an affair with Carter), died in 1980.

This season, we shall start excavating Castle Toll. The finds will probably not be quite as spectacular, but we do not know what to expect (although we hope to avoid any curses)!

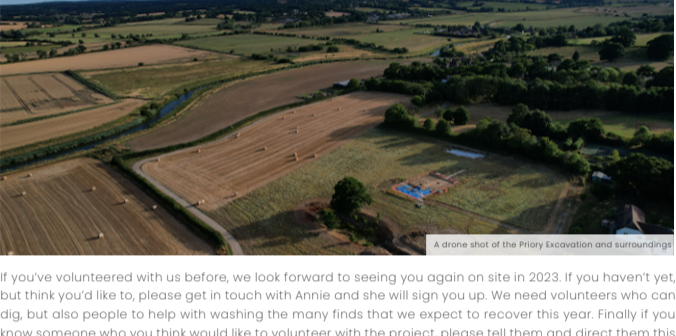
Åke Nilson
 Chairman of the Janus Foundation



Archaeology at Lossenham; the year ahead

By the time you read this, we will have excavated our first test pit within the scheduled monument at Castle Toll; I wonder what we will have found. And, on Thursday 2nd of February, I hope that many of you will have joined us for a lunchtime buffet in the White Hart, as a thank you for everyone's tremendous efforts over the past year. A great deal was achieved in 2022, and that would have been impossible without the hard work and enthusiastic support of our many volunteers. Thank you; we cannot do this without you!

Looking ahead, the archaeological programme for the Lossenham Project promises to be both busy and exciting. This coming year will see us continue to progress the excavation of St Mary's Priory; the entire footprint of the church is now exposed within Area 1, but there is still more to do to complete that part of the excavation. Work on the priory will resume in March. In parallel, we will explore Castle Toll, in an attempt to learn more about this mysterious earthwork. There have been many theories about it over the years. Will any of them prove to be correct?



A drone shot of the Priory Excavation and surroundings

If you've volunteered with us before, we look forward to seeing you again on site in 2023. If you haven't yet, but think you'd like to, please get in touch with Annie and she will sign you up. We need volunteers who can dig, but also people to help with washing the many finds that we expect to recover this year. Finally if you know someone who you think would like to volunteer with the project, please tell them and direct them this way. Many hands make light work! See you on site!



Andrew Richardson
Isle Heritage CIC



Hover on the Rother



At some point this spring, we are hoping to organise a hovercraft outing in the area, to be known as Hover on the Rother. In anticipation, I thought I might write about my connection with commercial hovercraft operations...

In 1965, the Swedish shipping companies Swedish Lloyd and Swedish American Line decided to do something quite outrageous by their standards; they formed a joint venture called Hoverloyd to operate hovercraft across the English Channel. While Swedish Lloyd was mostly a shortsea (i.e. ferry) operator, running the regular service from Gothenburg to Tilbury and also Southampton to Bilbao, SAL was anything but, a long-established liner company operating beautiful white ships across the Atlantic and also on cruises. My father was a young SAL executive seen as just the man for this kind of wild adventure, so he was put in charge of SAL's interest in the business.

Operations started with smaller SR.N6 craft operating from Ramsgate harbour to Calais, and also doing excursions to, for example, Goodwin Sands (at low tide). The Managing Director was Les Colquhoun, a WW2 Spitfire pilot, later test pilot for Vickers.

Meanwhile, British Rail and SNCF started a competing venture called Seaspeed, also running SR.N6's while waiting for delivery of the much bigger SR.N4s. Seaspeed took delivery of its first SR.N4, the *Princess Margaret*, in 1968, and I, on my first visit to England, left the country on a flight by her to Boulogne (having had a previous flight in the navigator's seat of Hoverloyd's SR.N6 *Sure* and hero-worshipped Mr Colquhoun – not the easiest name for a small Swedish boy to learn to pronounce). *Princess Margaret* did have teething troubles, in particular the skirts – a flexible rubber arrangement to keep the air pressure in – and so she was taken out of traffic while Saunders-Roe, the manufacturers, worked out a way of resolving the problems. Hoverloyd meanwhile took delivery of two SR.N4s (*Swift* and *Sure*) in 1969, once the problems were fairly well sorted out. They started operating from a purpose built hoverport in Pegwell Bay (you can still see the remains) to a new facility outside the Port of Calais (it was being built in 1968 – I was not allowed to go around the area as there were still mines left from WW2!).

The SR.N4s were amazing craft. Weighing 190 tonnes, they were powered by four Rolls-Royce Proteus gas turbines, each delivering up to 3,400 horse power, and each driving a steerable, variable pitch propeller, 19 ft in diameter – they were the largest propellers in the world at the time. They could run 254 passengers and 30 cars at 70 knots (80 mph) across the Channel in 35 minutes or less (the record was 22 minutes).

Seaspeed acquired a second SR.N4, *Princess Anne*, in 1970 (she is the only surviving example, now at the Hovercraft museum in Lee-on-Solent), and Hoverloyd got their third craft, *Sir Christopher* in 1972. Over the next couple of years, the SR.N4s were upgraded to take more passengers and cars. Finally, Hoverloyd received the last SR.N4 to be built, *The Prince of Wales*, in 1977. The two Princesses were lengthened in 1978/9 and could then take 418 passengers and 60 cars, with a gross weight of 320 tonnes. I believe I have travelled on all six of them (although perhaps not *Sure* – I'm not, erm, sure).

However, the economics of running gas turbines after the oil crisis of the early 1970's were not happy, and in 1981, it became necessary to merge Hoverloyd and Seaspeed, to form Hoverspeed, which then operated the craft until 2000, when competition from the Channel Tunnel, as well as the difficulty of keeping the old Proteus turbines running (they were originally designed in 1944, for aircraft) made the whole business impossible. Today, the only commercial hovercraft operation is from Portsmouth to the Isle of Wight (where, incidentally, the SR.N4s were kept), with much smaller Griffon diesel-powered craft. Hoverloyd staff kept in touch and held regular reunions in the Thanet area, and Ingrid and I were lucky enough to be invited to the two last ones (the final one in Broadstairs in 2019), where we met many of the key figures, some of whom remembered my father – and also three of Mr Colquhoun's four daughters.

Read *On a Cushion of Air*, by Robin Paine and Roger Syms, two of the captains (2012), and *On Wing and Water*, a biography of Les Colquhoun by Jane Wilson, one of his daughters (2015)

Åke Nilson
 Chairman of the Janus Foundation

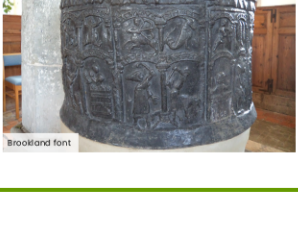


Living, working and dying in 15th – Century Tenterden

In 1451 four men from Tenterden were hanged for treason as followers of Jack Cade the year before. At death, each held variety items, and Thomas Gribell, yeoman, had a farmstead and 100 acres. He grew wheat and oats, and that February he still had stores of both in his barn. Presumably he had intended to feed most of the oats to his livestock having six oxen and a horse, and a small dairy herd of ten cows with offspring, including six calves, because there is no mention of hay on his holding. The balance between oxen and horses suggests that unlike two of his fellow accused, his plough team was exclusively oxen, perhaps a reflection of the heavy Wealden clay on his stalling. John atte Wode and John Frank both had mares as well as cows, meaning the leading of a bull or stallion must have been a common local practice. This may have extended to rams and boars because Gribell had two sows and eight pigs, and perhaps a hundred ewes, although the assessors showed no interest beyond the labelling of them as 'sheep'.

Whether the remainder of the oats was cooked as pottage for the hearth, with added bacon, in one of his two brass pots is conjecture, but the former may also have eaten some wheaten bread, the rest sold to buy such items as his ten pieces of pewter and three pairs of sheets, suggesting in 1449 his had been a comfortable household.

Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh
 Centre for Kent History and Heritage



Dates for the Diary

February 2023
Monday 20th to Thursday 23rd: Excavation at Castle Toll

March 2023
Monday 6th to Wednesday 8th: Excavation of Graves 10 & 11
Tuesday 14th to Thursday 16th: Site TBC
Tuesday 21st to Thursday 23rd: Site TBC

April 2023
Monday 12th to Friday 14th: Site TBC
Monday 17th and Tuesday 18th: Site TBC
Thursday 27th and Friday 28th: Site TBC

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.)

