

Barbican, Lewes Castle



Anne of Cleves House, Lewes

Lewes Properties

Property information for Volunteers

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History of Lewes Castle

Soon after the Norman Conquest of 1066, William de Warenne, a close supporter of William the Conqueror, began building the motte (mound) and bailey castle at Lewes. The first Motte is the mound we now call Brack Mount and is not generally open to the public. We do not know what buildings were on it but assume there was a wooden tower of some kind inside a wooden palisade. The site was chosen because of its commanding views over the River Ouse.

By the end of the century William had built a second, larger motte, what we now call The Keep. Lewes is the only castle in England to have two mottes, one at either end of the Bailey. At the same time as building the Keep William also enclosed the area between the two mounds, the bailey, within a wall made of rough flints. He added a large gateway as the entrance to the Castle and this still straddles Castle Gate. The Castle had a dry moat, part of which is now known as the Gun Garden and is where visitors enter the Castle.

The Keep was soon topped with a Shell Keep, built of flint, which enclosed the area where William and their family had living quarters. We do not know if there were any flint walls on top of Brack Mount, but flint walls were certainly stronger than the wooden palisades, and were less vulnerable to fire.

In the thirteenth century the Castle's defences were strengthened by the addition of angled towers, two of which remain. In the fourteenth century the last major addition to the defences was the Barbican Gate, which is in front of the Norman gateway. To meet changes in weaponry the Barbican has slits suitable for the firing of ordinary bows or crossbows. However, in spite of its defences the Castle has never come under serious attack. The only occasions when it did play a role in significant historical events were the Battle of Lewes in 1264 (when some of the King's soldiers spent the night before the battle there) and the Peasants' Revolt in 1381 (when some local people broke into the Castle, burned papers and drank £100 worth of wine).

The last Earl de Warenne died in 1347 without a male heir and the castle passed, by marriage, to the Earls of Arundel. From that time the castle was untenanted and fell into decay.

William has recently been described as 'the second wealthiest man in Britain ever' which accounts for his ability to afford not only Lewes Castle and other castles elsewhere but also another major building project in Lewes. William and his wife Gundrada also started the building of Lewes Priory. Gundrada died in 1085 and William in 1087 and both were buried in the Chapter House of the Priory. The finding of their burial caskets during the building of Brighton to Lewes railway line in 1845 led directly to the founding of the Sussex Archaeological Society in 1846.

The Society leased the castle from 1850 both as a home for its growing collection of documents and artefacts and as an attraction for visitors. In 1922 Mr Thomas-Stanford (later Sir Charles Thomas-Stanford) bought the castle and presented it to the Society.

The castle, the barbican and the inner gatehouse are Grade 1 listed and the mound is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Lewes Castle is licensed as a venue for civil wedding and civil partnership ceremonies and these take place, in the open, in the Pleasure Garden on top of the Keep and are usually followed by drinks or a reception in the Gun Garden.

Brack Mount

Over the years the Castle was divided into different plots, leased or sold to different people. A number of houses were built within the former bailey and the bowls club was established. Brack Mount House was built on the edge of Brack Mount and in 1937 its owner, the novelist Mrs Henry Dudeney, bought Brack Mount from the Lords of the Castle. She then promptly sold it to the Society. It is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Barbican House – Background Information

The cellars show some evidence of the mediaeval origins of the house; on the higher floors are many of the oak frames showing that under the Georgian exterior lies a much earlier house.

The house was re-planned in the 18th century and a detailed history of the architecture of the house can be found in SAC volume 82.

The Society bought the house in 1907 from Harry Willett for £2,300 and it became the headquarters of the Society and its museum and library in 1908. The house is the only property bought by the Society rather than given by a benefactor.

The museum collections cover earliest pre-history to the mediaeval period. The Museum also houses the Lewes Town Model. This scale model of Lewes in 1870 was built as a community project in the 1980s. It is accompanied by an audiovisual show about the history of the town.

Barbican House is not only a Museum, it also houses the Society's Library, the reserve archaeological collections, the Research Division staff, the Portable Antiquities Officer, Lewes Education staff and the administration staff for the Lewes properties.

The house is Grade II* listed.

The Library

The Library has been important to the Society from its beginnings. Housed in the Barbican by 1853 it had moved to a room in Castle Lodge by 1896. Once the Society lost the lease of Castle Lodge the Library and collections were put into storage above Baxter's Printworks until the Society bought Barbican House in 1908. The Library has occupied the second floor of Barbican House ever since.

As a Members' Library (open to non-members by appointment only) the Library specialises in the history and archaeology of Sussex and related topics. In addition to books, journals, excavation and site reports, and maps are available (visual resources, e.g. engravings, prints and photographs, are looked after by the Museum). In addition Working Papers of past historians and archaeologists have been deposited with the Library. A photocopier is available for Library users.

Anne of Cleves House - Background Information

The manor of Southover was one of nine Sussex parishes granted by Henry VIII to Anne of Cleves as part of her divorce settlement in 1541. There is no evidence that she ever visited the property.

The present house dates from the 15th century, though the cellars date from an earlier, late thirteenth or early fourteenth century building on the same site. It is Walden Hall House, oak framed, walled with flint, chalk, brick and stone (some of which may have come from Lewes Priory) and roofed with tiles and Horsham stone. The manor had belonged to the Priory and then to Thomas Cromwell but after his execution in 1540 the manor reverted to the Crown. After the death of Anne of Cleves in 1557, the property once again reverted to the Crown.

The west wing was added in the Tudor Period and some of the alterations may have been done by John Saxpes whose initials can be seen on the stonework of the porch added in 1599. Although it was originally one dwelling it was later divided into tenements and by the time of the 1861 census the house was occupied by four households comprising 19 people.

The property was put up for sale in 1910 and bought by Frank Verrall, a Southover landowner, who presented it to the Society in 1923.

The bedroom and kitchen are displayed as period rooms and other parts of the house are used for museum displays about social history and the post-medieval story of Lewes. One gallery is devoted to the important Wealden iron industry and houses the collection that used to belong to local ironmaster John Every.

The East Room at Anne of Cleves House is licensed as a venue for civil wedding and civil partnership ceremonies and is also available for parties and other functions. Wedding guests can also use the beautiful garden behind the house.

One room in Anne of Cleves House is rented to the adult training organization ESAMP (the East Sussex Archaeology and Museums Partnership) who also share other facilities in the house.

The Friends of Anne of Cleves

The Friends of Anne of Cleves House is a registered charity and aims to promote the use and enjoyment of Anne of Cleves House by as many of its near neighbours as possible. The Friends have over a hundred members, many of whom are volunteers. The Friends do a great deal for the House. They raise funds that are used to help the house in a range of ways. They have bought chairs for weddings and for the garden, the tent that is used for weddings, flowers for the garden and logs for the fire. Their Chairman, Jane Vokins, has also secured a number of grants, which help with the unending maintenance costs.

The Friends hold an event every month except February. These include concerts, lectures, walks and outings. Every winter a team of volunteers from the Friends helps to carry out a really thorough clean of the house, from top to bottom. Every volunteer has their own particular talent they can use to help things better for the staff working in the house and more enjoyable for the visitors to it. Membership forms can be obtained from the membership secretary Daphne Harvey (01273 471726). Jane Vokins can tell you anything else you might like to know (01273 472527). The Friends are a friendly, informal group united in their aim to keep Anne of Cleves House for future generations.

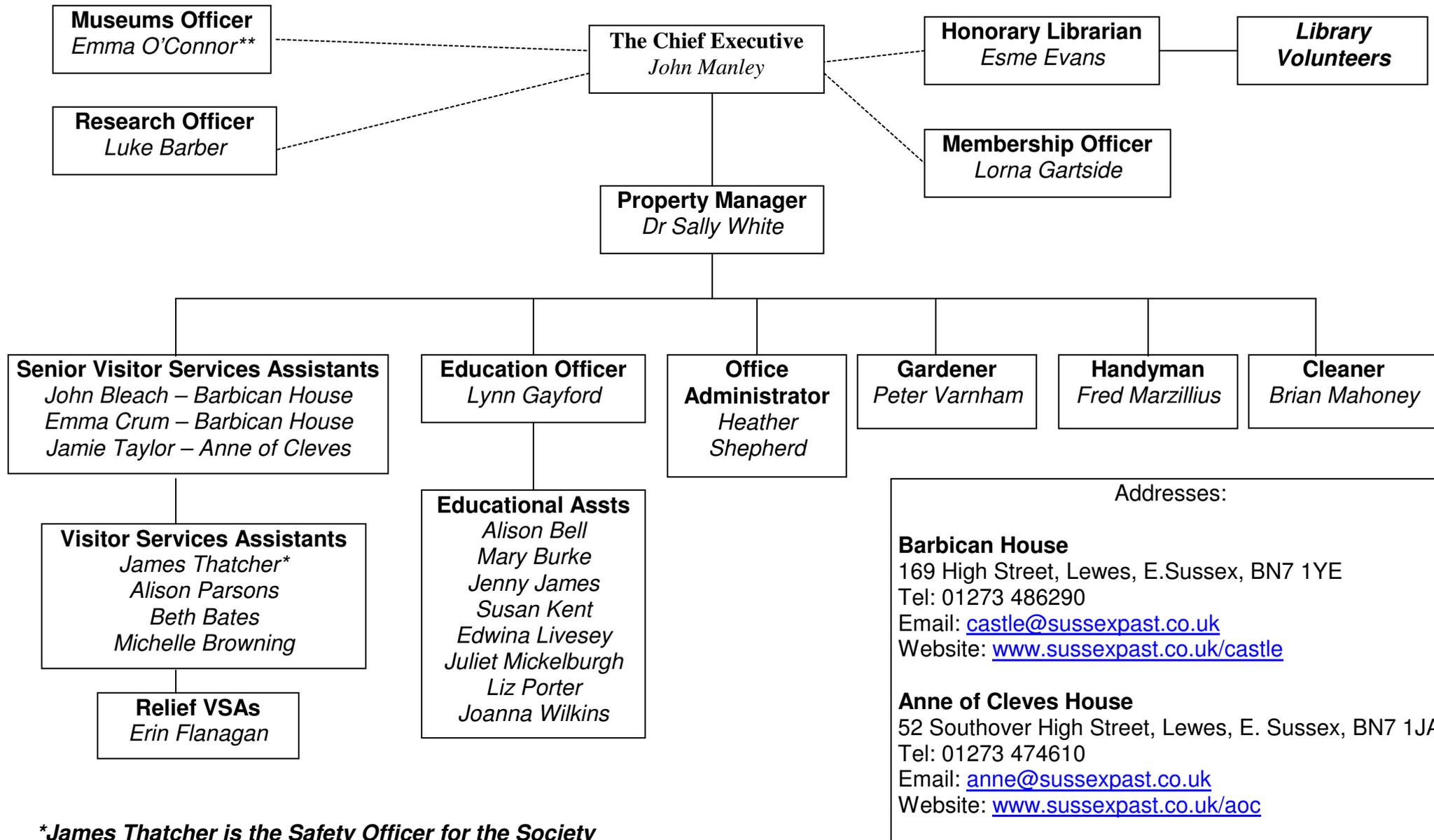
Opportunities for Volunteering at the Lewes Properties

Listed below are some of the areas where volunteers can assist at the Lewes Properties:

- Library – The Library welcomes both volunteers with some experience and / or qualifications who are willing to take charge when necessary on their days in, and those who are willing to provide backup. It is desirable for volunteers to have an interest in archaeology and/or local history, and to be prepared to use a computer if training is given.
Library volunteers do a variety of tasks including indexing Working Papers and other items, receipt of journals, accessioning, cataloguing, labelling, and general care and maintenance of materials, and of course helping members with their enquiries and research.
- Membership - Lorna Gartside, Membership Secretary tel. 01273 405737 welcomes assistance with routine administration and clerical tasks. Help is also required with staffing the Membership tent at special events held at the properties.

- Gardens - assisting Peter Varnham the Gardener with the upkeep of the gardens and grounds.
- Education – assisting Lynn Gayford, Education Officer, with school workshops and summer school activities.
- Visitor Surveys – contact the Property Manager or Penelope Parker, Marketing Officer on 01273 486260
- Museum – volunteers are always welcome to assist the Museums Officer with the day to day running of the museums.
- Special Events – we depend on volunteers for helping with our special events such as Medieval Day at the Castle each May and Tudor Day at Anne of Cleves House each October.
- Finds – assisting Laura Burnett with the processing of finds information for the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Lewes Castle / Barbican House / Anne of Cleves – Staffing Structure



***James Thatcher is the Safety Officer for the Society**

****Emma O'Connor is the Safety Representative for Barbican House and Anne of Cleves House**