

OLIVER GILKES

Nominated by David Rudling and seconded by Mary Rudling.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

I was born in Brighton in 1960 and while living and working in varied places I have retained connections with Sussex throughout and still have family living within the county. I joined the Sussex Archaeological Society in the 1970s and have remained a member ever since, contributing articles to both the Newsletter and the Collections. Over the past decade or so I have watched, concerned, the issues the SAS has to contend with. I now have considerably more time to devote to the responsibilities of being a trustee of such a far-reaching organisation. For me it would be an opportunity to give something back and contribute to its future.

There are few counties which possess such a rich archaeological heritage as Sussex. Not just the sites, Fishbourne, Lewes Castle, Bignor, Michelham, but the people involved too. General Pitt Rivers, Mortimer Wheeler, Leslie Grinsell, the two Curwen's, father and son, Herbert Toms, Barry Cunliffe. All understood that archaeology is in essence a personal and intellectual adventure, that still uniquely among sciences and many arts is and should be open to all to contribute as they will. It is the work of the SAS to maintain and enhance those opportunities.

What of myself? I began my archaeological career at Newhaven in the 1970s as a schoolboy digger, and have participated in several Sussex excavation projects since then. In the 1970s and 80s I was an intern at Brighton Pavilion Museums and Art Galleries in both the Conservation and Archaeology and Local History sections. Later, I was Assistant Curator of Littlehampton Museum, in Arun district, for two years. During my tenure we moved and redisplayed the museum to new premises, undertook the proper cataloguing of its collections and the mustering of a group of dedicated volunteers to undertake emergency work in the District.

Otherwise I have a very wide-ranging experience of archaeology, painting it with a very broad brush, in both its intellectual and geographic reach. I worked for many years in Italy, the Balkans and North Africa for projects involved with excavation, training and cultural heritage management including Unesco World Heritage sites. The experience gained there taught me the need for an international dimension to archaeological issues in the UK. Parochialism simply limits possibilities. Archaeology can encompass excavations, columns, mosaics, vernacular archaeology, social and labour history, it is in reality all one.

My work involved issues of tourism and cultural management, its impact and the opportunities changing from being a 'producer' of archaeology, to a 'consumer' concerned with organising tourism and liaising with national and international organisations. Consequently in 2010 I took a post with the UK's foremost supplier of archaeological holidays, Andante Travels, and became their Senior Archaeologist designing and leading tours.

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What then of the future of the Society? These are uniquely challenging times, but there are also great opportunities, for emphasising the place of Sussex in the UK, for diversifying activities. The society must look to its traditional aims and values but must not flinch from change where it is needed to secure its future. Above all the wishes of the membership must be understood. We need a business and action plan that prepares us for the next decades of the twenty first century. We must communicate and educate. We must inject the magic and broadcast the sheer excitement of what our Society can do.

If elected I would hope to contribute in a proactive and positive fashion to all of these issues.