

# Sussex Archaeology Forum

## Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> July 2025

### In person – ERC, Lewes

### Minutes

**Present:** Luke Barber, Neil Griffin, David Rudling, Matt Pope, Fiona Griffin (ASE) & Sophie Unger

1. Apologies were received from Chris Greatorex, Liz Lane (WAS), Jane Clark (Sussex FLO), James Sainsbury (Worthing Museum), David Milham (CAP), John Mills, Elizabeth Rice, Martin Bell, Nick Truckle (Surrey CC), Stewart Angel (CBAS), Jon Baczkowski (CBAS) Rachael Salter (WSCC), Chloe Hunnisett (WSCC).
2. Minutes from the previous meeting were raised and accepted apart from a typo to be corrected to '**bracteate**'.
3. Events and Fieldwork Round Up (Both previous and existing events).
  - David Rudling representing BHAS:
    - i. John Funnell is very ill and should not be contacted, contact generic email address instead (see website).
    - ii. Lease being discussed with BHCC to store tools and archive for Rocky Clump. Matt Pope raised that museum storage is in crisis and consideration should be given to creating 'storage advocates' to raise awareness of lack of space. Brief discussion around those undertaking fieldwork should have robust archive storage strategy in place at outset. If site is not under threat perhaps don't dig at all. Could consider reburial on site of certain artefacts after quantification and specialist assessment.
  - David Rudling, CBA South East:
    - i. CBA South East – call for articles / short reports with photos for newsletter. Deadline 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025.
    - ii. CBA South East – Conference 2026 'Margary legacy', 50 years after his death. Call for papers. (NG: No further info on website yet).
    - iii. Sussex Archaeology & History study day 11<sup>th</sup> October 'Victorian and Edwardian Sussex' [Sussex School of Archaeology](#).
  - Matt Pope, SAS:
    - i. 25<sup>th</sup> July 2025 Festival of Archaeology (CBA) at Fishbourne Roman Palace with behind the scene tours of collections and archives.
    - ii. Winter Lectures start 1<sup>st</sup> October then bi-weekly thereafter. (NG: No further info on website yet).
    - iii. Sussex Archaeology Conference 8<sup>th</sup> November 2025 'Sūpseaxna: New Research from the Early Medieval Record' [The Sussex Archaeological](#)

[Society Conference - Sūpseaxna: New Research from the Early Medieval Record - Sussex Past.](#)

- iv. Save the date **26<sup>th</sup> March 2026** 'Long Man Lecture' with Raksha Dave. Details TBC.
  - v. Latest SAC expected to be published and circulated by the end of 2025.
  - vi. Digitising back copies of SAC is not currently a priority due to funding constraints and the desire to keep staff employed instead.
- Neil Griffin, ESCC:
    - i. Planning workloads remain high and at times unmanageable. Lots of live fieldwork projects and document review takes up considerable time. 3 week statutory response times have not been met for a long time, probably not since Covid, but the planning authorities are in similar situations and understand the constraints on our time. Occasionally applications get determined without our input, but so far no significant disasters.
    - ii. Additional funding secured for c. 1 day per week assistance from external consultant (Diccon Hart) who has been helping in a similar capacity on and off for 6 or 7 years.
    - iii. No idea what the proposed merger of councils will mean for the role of Archaeological Advisors across the East & West Sussex and Chichester District. More info may be available after September 2025.
    - iv. David Rudling asked whether BHAS should find a way to continue with the role John Funnell undertook with scouring planning applications in the city. I said it's probably not worth the effort as we get consulted on the sites that matter (all major developments and all sites in Archaeological Notification Areas) and it's difficult for us to comment 'uninvited' on sites that do not meet this threshold. However, if members spot any obvious mistakes on the planning portal, or see activities on site that may be breaching planning requirements to let us know [county.archaeology@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:county.archaeology@eastsussex.gov.uk) so that we can assess.
  - Fiona Griffin (ASE)
    - i. Major site at Tangmere: 5 year phased evaluation, now a 14ha strip, map & sample excavation which started in April 2024 and anticipated to run at least another year (autumn 2026?). Iron Age 'proto-urban' site with some Bronze Age activity. Outreach day in May 2025 well attended and a great success with 250+ visitors in school holidays. More outreached planned and will be publicised. [Tangmere | Archaeology South-East - UCL – University College London](#)
    - ii. Ford Airfield – half of the site evaluated and some further investigation of Roman farmstead required. Evidence of Neolithic activity also identified.
    - iii. Alfoldean: UCL undergraduates and Horsham & District Archaeological Society undertook fieldwork investigation in June (see HDAG notes below for additional details).
    - iv. ASE staff representing Festival of Archaeology at Fishbourne and Highdown.

- Sophie Unger (East Sussex HER)
  - i. Commercial searches busy.
  - ii. Currently recruiting for a fixed term intern (new graduate ideally) for data processing of the National Trust *Changing Chalk* and Historic England *Downs from Above* projects. Approximately 500 new features to be added to the HER (interviews now held and intern appointed, starting late Sept/early Oct 2025 on part time basis).
  - iii. NHRE to HER project has commenced. 2-year project part funded by Historic England to transfer a mass of data to the HER either as new records or to enhance existing. Target of 50 records to update per day is a massive challenge.
  
- Martin Bell (details emailed to Luke Barber)
  - i. We have obtained funding from British Academy / Leverhulme small research grants for a 2 year project on early routeways in the Western Rother valley in west Sussex. This involves borehole survey and an excavation relating to the sediment fan derived from Hungers Lane Petworth. The borehole survey was done in June and the excavation is in from 18 to 29<sup>th</sup> August. Early routeways in the western Rother catchment will be mapped as part of the project.
  - ii. The Society of Antiquaries have provided further funding for the next stage of the Bishopstone Anglo-Saxon cemetery publication project. This stage will involve completion of work on the grave goods and geophysical survey by Dr Scott Chaussee of the parts of the top of Rookery Hill which are not built on. The geophysics will be in late summer and autumn this year.
  - iii. Bexhill Museum is developing an archaeological store and research centre in newly available space in the museum basement. This will house the substantial quantity of finds from Oxford Archaeology excavations on the Bexhill- Hastings Link Road and other large scale mostly housing related recent and current excavations in the museum catchment.
  - iv. The Sussex Archaeological Society is holding its annual Conference at Sussex University on Saturday Nov 8<sup>th</sup> at Sussex University on the subject of Early Medieval Sussex (see Matt Pope above).
  
- HDAG – report for SAF circulated to all by Luke Barber on 03/06/2025 and included as an appendix below.
  
- Luke Barber
  - i. 'Ice House' at Bodiam Castle now emptied and a brick floor with drain observed.
  - ii. Busy with commercial finds work (Ringmer Kilns, Hurst Green, Cooden Camp).

**AOB**

**David Rudling:**

- mentioned that basement archive from Brighton Museum is proposed to be moved to storage in Peacehaven. Questions raised in the room about what elements of archive and the correct storage atmosphere being maintained.
- Something about John Bleach, sorry I didn't write anything more than his name!

**Neil Griffin:**

- Human remains being stored in the basement of Lewes Town Hall which isn't appropriate on a number of levels. I was contacted by Lewes Town Council and undertook a basic quantification with LTC staff and Lewes Priory Trust member present. Have created a basic spreadsheet of each box and photographed contents. No more than that. LPT to liaise with Barbican House Museum over what paper records might survive in the Richard Lewis archive. I'm keeping my distance on this as I don't feel it has anything to do with me. No idea why the remains were orphaned from the rest of the Richard Lewis archive after Malcolm Lynne took on the task of publishing the evidence amassed over decades. The poor treatment of these remains is well documented in Malcolm's publication and has resulted in a significant loss of archaeological integrity and ability to study further. Decision to be made by LPT to find a more appropriate store or re-bury. Legal aspect of how the human remains were discovered and disturbed not yet established (was the coroner informed and licence to remove issued etc).

**The next meeting virtual in October time and date TBC with invites circulate to all nearer the time.**

Neil Griffin 27/08/2025

## **Appendix**

### **HDAG Report for Sussex Archaeology Forum, 14 May 2024**

#### **Events Since Last Forum:**

We've held 4 talks (Sally Cottam "Roman Glass"; Gary Webster "Changing Chalk Project"; David Nash "Stonehenge Sarsens"; John Mills "Washed away villages of the Sussex coast") and 2-day schools with Simon Stevens on "Archaeological Techniques"

#### **Forthcoming Events:**

Talks will begin again in September – Judie English to talk on the Curwens, a talk from Jane Wood re PAS, and having met the metal detectorists SE Searchers at a PAS day at Horsham Museum we hope they will come to talk in November about some of their finds.

We also hope to have a summer evening walk with the ranger at Buchan Country Park near Crawley, looking at some of the archaeological feature there, with a view to future survey and monitoring work.

We've also publicised and encouraged members' participation in other local projects such as "Changing Chalk/Downs from Above"

#### **Fieldwork:**

None done since last forum. We have a back log of finds to process from previous years of field walks and digs. Currently seeking quote from ASE for pottery reports on the Alfoldean digs 2022 and 2023 and then hope we can apply for funding for this.

We have made arrangements with the landowners for students from UCL to do 2 weeks digging at Alfoldean 1<sup>st</sup>- 16<sup>th</sup> June. This will involve about a dozen 2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduates, under UCL/ASE supervision (Giles Dawkes), working on the set aside in field C, a bit further north from where HDAG excavated last year. HDAG may have some partial participation in this, but otherwise we will run our own excavation after the students have finished, either at Alfoldean or possibly returning to Woodmancote to further investigate the Roman Road

#### **AOB:**

Founded in 2010, HDAG our total membership averages about 60 but this includes many who rarely participate, if at all. We rely on the good will of a very small core of loyal supporters to keep going. Our costs, especially insurance, have risen considerably over the last year or so. We lack the pool of experience, resources and contacts of some of the more well established groups. Currently we can't even afford to set up a website to replace the free one we lost last year. This and the limitations in what we can offer

members may be a limiting factor in retaining members or recruiting new ones. Any practical advice from others on how to resolve such issues would be very welcome! 😊