

Sussex Archaeology Forum

Meeting 17th March 2026, (Virtual)

Minutes

1. Apologies were received from David Rudling, Jane Clark, Natalie Cohen, Daryl Palmer, Elizabeth Rice, John Baczkowski
2. Minutes from the previous meeting were raised and accepted.
3. Events and Fieldwork Round Up (Both previous and existing events).
 - Matt Pope – **Sussex Archaeological Society** – It would be wonderful to see anyone at The Long Man Lecture at the University of Sussex in just over a week's time. There is an online lecture this evening (17th) and another in a couple of weeks. The autumn conference TBC. See also the events listing for upcoming SAS lectures. Sussex Archaeology Symposium on Saturday 21st March.
 - Matt Pope also currently undertaking work to enhance the approach to the Palaeolithic and Geoarchaeological record. Three palaeolithic sites have gone through planning over the last 2 years. These are really significant sites, and have led to significant discussion over scheduling and protection for such sites. They are currently very difficult to schedule as they don't include structural remains. Development on a number of palaeolithic sites has slipped through across the country. We have relatively good coverage and protection in SE England, but more difficult further west and north. Matt has been working with Chloe and Rachel to provide a new layer on the HER for Palaeolithic sites, to make sure it get through to contractors writing desk-based assessments. Currently trying to organise a rescue excavation for one small but important West-Sussex Site, with the intention to take a case study to Historic England to try and change the system. The main problem lies at the point where district planning authorities report to the County Archaeologist (or equivalent). Encourage everyone (especially local societies) to take local ownership and check that the district has consulted someone on planning enquiries, and the County Archaeologist or Consultants can only respond to sites the districts have passed on to them. This forum is really important to make sure that everything works together. Rachel Salter noted that the threshold for consultation is 0.2ha, and was an arbitrary limit created c.2012 to filter out consultations. Agreed that the ANA system would greatly benefit from revision, but the data and time is lacking for this across the board. Nick Truckle noted that work was done on this for Surrey some time ago, but involved intense work.
 - Nick Truckle, **Surrey Historical Advice Team** – Limited fieldwork due to weather. Attended a Surrey meeting with HE about SE research framework. There is the possibility of putting out a tender to tie together the research aims and implementation plan, and there will be implications for local authorities that have put money into these schemes. Hopeful for movement soon.
 - Daryl Holter **Sussex Police** – Gave presentations to Bexhill Heritage before Christmas, security walk and talks for a number of sites, and presentations on heritage crime for several groups and churches, and liaised with the Environment Agency on heritage crime. Churches are the still main victim of

crime – recently 3 churches were targeted for collection boxes and one for its PA system. Bodiam castle had garden ornaments stolen, and Bexhill Heritage had fencing panels stolen. Please report any crime at the time and still putting messages on Disk messaging system to update members.

- John Lonergan/Elizabeth Rice – **Horsham District Archaeological Group** – Walk and Talk 6th May AGM and Mudlarkers Talk, 2nd September a talk by Geoffrey Mead. On fieldwork, there has been none since the last forum, but Trackham Barrow monitoring ongoing. 20th – 29th May is a dig at Knepp, (awaiting details from Chris Butler). In early June there will be a dig at Alfoldean.
- Neil Griffin, **East Sussex County Council Archaeology Team** – Currently very busy, managing workloads, and mostly keeping up with responses. All planning authorities are preparing their local plans at the moment which is a significant area of work. Archaeological input for the Lewes and Rother plans complete, with Wealden and Eastbourne to do. Many reviews of incoming archaeological reports. The team will, temporarily, no longer be participating in the Countryside Stewardship (SHINE) scheme due to work pressures. From the end of March, the team will not provide advice to South Downs National Park (SDNP) as this is being undertaken by a separate advisor, although it is uncertain whether there will be one advisor for the whole park. As part of this, long running sites in Lewes will no longer be dealt with by East Sussex including Lewes Bus Station, Black Robin Farm in Eastbourne. Old Wenban Smiths Site in Lewes, and the team will lose oversight of these projects. We will be providing internal advice. Fieldwork: Newly recorded medieval cellar in Winchelsea. Roof still intact. Mouslcombe Hub – Air raid shelters – one completely removed before recording against our wishes. Second shelter being recorded currently. Architects plans at The Keep. Some medieval walls on the same site, hoping to explore further in the coming weeks. Also to note that David Hopkins at West Sussex is being made redundant from the end of March. We are generally well supported at East Sussex and hope that it will remain so.
- Sophie Unger, **East Sussex Historic Environment Record** – Conversations ongoing with the SDNP to ensure that the new consultant will be able to use ESHER data adequately. SHINE has been temporarily suspended, with additional time spent on adding further reports to the HER as well as the National Record for the Historic Environment (NRHE) to HER project in partnership with Historic England which is currently ongoing for the next 2 years. The Changing Chalk project (Downs from above) data) is being added to the HER – the contract has been extended with kind funding from Gary Webster, and our intern, Blythe, will be with us until June. In further news, the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road data may soon be available to be added to the HER. In response to a question concerning Heritage Gateway, noted that ESHER moved to a new database developed by Historic England, and are waiting for the developers to provide a link to this. However, the Keep Website does contain our up-to-date information and is publicly accessible.
- Rachel Salter, **West Sussex Historic Environment Record** – Several large projects coming up, including getting Geoarchaeological landscape characterisation areas into the HER. The A27 project is nearing its close, with the final report now written, and will hopefully be added to the HER soon. The Changing Chalk project is continuing, as are reviews of the Service Level

Agreements (SLAs), including with SDNP. As discussed by East Sussex, it remains unclear who will be taking over. While SHINE currently continues, West Sussex may also suspend SHINE, due largely to the post-consultations that come through with the new system with the RPA, for which the HER is not paid.

- David Staveley – Geophysics undertaken in Horstead Keynes, looking at prehistoric sites on the course of the River Ouse. One site turned up a bean-shaped anomaly. Further work in the area around Icklesham, where there are Medieval, Roman and Bloomery sites.
- Anne Locke – **LAG** – There has been a recent outing with Gary Webster from the Changing Chalk project, on Monument Mentoring for a field activity group.
- Elizabeth Lane – On 17th March there is a visit to see Mike Allen and walk around Stonehenge. There will be a return to Burpham in the summer, and finish dig at Sompting West House in July, with features discovered at the end of last summer. Also upcoming is a Sue Harrington Talk on 5th-6th century burials.
- Gemma Ward / Flick Howell – **Brighton YAC** – The club has been invited to join an upcoming dig at Preston Manor. There is nothing planned with BHAS yet (possibly Hail Farm and Portslade in the works). At Sussex Archaeological Symposium next weekend. Also noted that there is an ongoing impact study for all YACs on how they are run and how to get the most out of it.
- **Sussex FLO Report** – Harry Redburn has left PAS for a new Job in November and replaced by Stephanie Bonnici, who was FLO from 2010 – 2016. PAS is developing a new website which should be launched in late Spring / early Summer 2026. Also planning an event at Lewes Castle for the Festival of Archaeology (July 18th – August 2nd), focusing on the Portable Antiquities scheme, responsible metal detecting and the Treasure Act.

There followed a discussion on the future direction of the Sussex Archaeological Forum, following initial discussions at the November meeting:

- The current format of the forum is a meeting 3 times a year. In person meetings, usually at Lewes Castle, are particularly poorly attended, particularly by contractors.
- Forum team will try arrange meetings further ahead of time and produce minutes more quickly.
 - Luke Barber – backed that the forum continues, and offered to advocate for more support from the Sussex Archaeological Society if necessary. Noted that
 - One point of discussion was over the best time of day to hold the forum to allow more people to attend. Ideas that were mooted included during the working day, at the end of the afternoon (c.4.30pm), at its current time of 6.30pm, and later in the evening (7.30pm). Several comments were made, including that during the working day is especially difficult for archaeological fieldwork staff on site, and that early evening may be difficult for those with caring responsibilities.
 - There was concern over the limited attendance by contractors, including those not providing fieldwork roundups, in light of those contractors and groups that do attend. Changes to the Sussex Archaeological Standards, to encourage attendance was mooted, including as a clause within WSIs, as a possible easy method of outreach and engagement. The possibility of contractors using Oasis summaries for roundups was also suggested.

- There was general consensus that the forum was a useful tool for understanding what else is going on in Sussex and as a platform for cross organisation cooperation between societies, contractors, councils, etc. There was a keen interest in it continuing.
- The possibility of an online-only meeting, or hybrid (where the in-person meeting also includes an online option) was also suggested. Online meetings were generally preferred.
- It was also suggested that the timing of the forum could be linked to other events such as the Sussex Archaeological Symposium for maximum attendance, although as these are often on weekends, it may not suit everyone.
- It was also suggested that the forum should understand and define its role (e.g. as a method of outreach/communication in wider arch community). A Mission statement could be written (or something a more relaxed) and could be established to Contractors Societies.

Thanks for all your help and discussion. The next meeting in June/July – the date will be publicised soon. Thank you very much for coming!

Thomas Davies 17/03/2026