Worthing Archaeological Society

Newsletter December 2025 & January 2026

WAS Field Unit

Highdown Big Dig

There will be a Report and, hopefully in 2026, a Conference.

It is hoped to return there in 2027.

Malthouse/Whitehouse

A dig is planned for the last 2 weeks in July 2026, to investigate the walls found at the West side of the site as well as the area under the spoil heap!.

Connie and John will review Whitehouse/Malthouse activities in the December lecture. (Advert at end of Newsletter)

Finds Processing

Our next Finds meetings will be held at the Slindon Shed on Thursdays 4th December and 8th and 22nd January from 9.30 a.m. to about 12.30 p.m. Please remember to bring your own refreshments.

Our Christmas Get-together will be held again this year at the shed on Thursday, 18th December from 9.30 a.m. to about 12.30 p.m. All are welcome on this occasion as there will be no restriction on attendance. This will be a chance to get together for fun quizzes and festive fare so any contributions to both would be much appreciated! Tea and coffee will be provided at this event.

ggmturner@aol.com

Flint Sessions in the Museum.

Will, hopefully, resume in March.

Field Unit Forum

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday January 20th 2026, from 7.30 – 9pm in St Botolph's Church rooms, in Heene. BN11 4LY. On the North side of the Church, entrance from Manor Road.

WAS Social

On Friday 7th November we had our Annual Social with skittles, at the Black Horse, Findon. A goodly crowd enjoyed a generous buffet meal, quizzes from Bob and Alex, and a skittles competition – won by Alex!

Many thanks to Donna for organising us.

Walking into History with Alex Vincent

Winter Archaeology walks for 2025/6:

- Feb 14. Barnham. Church and village. M
- Apr 25. Hurstpierpoint. Church and shrunken Medieval village. M

S = short walk, M = medium walk and L = long walk.

We meet temporarily this year at the Waitrose Car Park in the High Street, Worthing, on Saturday afternoons at 12.45 for 1pm. Route maps on how to get there will be given on the day. A fee of £2 or £3 for petrol money to the drivers from the passengers is recommended. Please wear comfortable clothing and footwear. All are welcome. After the walks, we go to a pub for refreshment.

Any enquires my mobile number is 07753282714 or Email me alexeclipsing@gmail.com



2025 & 2026 Lectures & Day Schools

In the Worthing Library Lecture Theatre, 7.30 to 9pm.

- **Tuesday December 9th**
    - Connie Shirley and John Mills on 'Sompting Malthouse Fields: the Whitehouse'
        - (see poster at end of Newsletter)

- **Tuesday January 13th**
    - Mike Allen on 'The Land-use History of the Southern Chalklands'.

Reports on our October and November Lectures are at the end of the Newsletter

Bursary *– WAS has a Bursary which is set up to help Members attend events which they might find difficult to pay for. Please ask a Committee Member about this if it would help you.*

Theresa has produced our Lecture Programme in full – look for it at Lectures and on our website.



2025 & 2026 Other Societies Events

Brighton & Hove Archaeological Society

- **Friday December 12th**
    - AGM followed by
    - Presidential Lecture by Dr Janet Pennington: 'Travel in the Past: The Problems and Pleasures of the Journey'
        - Travel in the past was not easy, and Sussex was notorious for its bad roads, particularly in the clay regions of the Weald. It was not until the mid-eighteenth century, when Turnpike Acts improved the county's roads, that journeys became less of a problem. This talk, taking in regions around London and further afield, looks at horses, coaches and plenty of Sussex mud. It will make you glad that you have a car or can catch a bus or a train. Even walking could be better than coach travel in the 17th century.
- **Friday January 23rd**
    - ONLINE lecture by Oliver Gilkes
        - Hormuzd Rassam and the eastern question: The adventures of Brighton's most famous unknown archaeologist
        - Venue: Unitarian Church, New Road, Brighton.
        - Details from: http://www.brightonarch.org.uk

Sussex Archaeology and History

- **Saturday 24 January 2026, 10.00am – 3.30pm**
    - Conference on Moated Sites in the South-East
    - Venue: East Horsley Village Hall, Kingston Ave, East Horsley
    - A joint Surrey Archaeological Society & CBA South-East event
        - Overview: Moated sites in South-East England: 21st-century research and insights. The Surrey Archaeological Society Medieval Studies Forum and CBA-SE are pleased to come together for this joint conference which combines new research and insights on moated sites in the south-east of England, while considering themes and approaches which can be applied to older excavations.
        - Two of the 8 papers directly involve Sussex. One, by Diccon Hart, is about Plumpton Place, the other by Nathalie Cohen (NT) is on 'Moated Sites at National Trust Properties in Kent and Sussex'.
            - Tickets now available, £10 for members, £15 for non-members. https://www.surreyarchaeology.org.uk/moated-sites-in-the-south-east-conference

Chichester District Archaeology Society

- **10th December: AGM, St Nicholas Hall, Brooks Lane, Broadbridge, Bosham, PO18 8JT**
- **28th January: James Sainsbury – Highdown Big Dig**



Other Societies / Groups

Friends of the South Downs

Based in Pulborough, the Society has a variety of walks and talks which might well be interesting.
Email: **enquiries@southdownssociety.org.uk**

Chichester District Archaeology Society (CDAS) have made their talks available free on their YouTube channel see: **www.CDAS.info**

Liss Archaeology – East Hampshire Community Archaeology

www.lissarchaeology.uk

Or email **lissarchaeology@gmail.com**

Worthing Heritage Alliance of which WAS is part of this group which has a very useful Calendar of all events in the area of an Historic nature.
www.worthingheritagealliance.org.uk

Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society has a variety of events
see landscape-events@hantsfieldclub.org.uk

young archaeologists' club

Brighton Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC) is open to everyone aged 8-16 years. We get involved in all sorts of activities, including visiting and investigating archaeological sites and historic places, trying out traditional crafts, taking part in excavations, experimental archaeology and lots more. Brighton YAC is based at Brighton Museum , where we have access to the wonderful Elaine Evans Archaeology Gallery. Occasionally our sessions may be held at other venues depending on planned activities. The club usually meets once, a month on the last Saturday, from 10.30 am-12.30 pm.

If you'd like to get involved please get in touch with the team: contact: Odile Rouard

email: **brightonyac@gmail.com**

BUTSER ANCIENT FARM

Butser Ancient Farm has launched ButserPlus: a way to enter the world of ButserAncient Farm online with professional video content. Details here:
www.butserancientfarm.co.uk/butser-plus

Horsham and District Archaeology Group

horshamarch@hotmail.co.uk or 01903 872309

SUSSEX PAST

Sussex Archaeological Society

https://sussexpast.co.uk

WEALDEN BUILDINGS STUDY GROUP

Wealden Buildings Study Group

www.wealdenbuildings.org.uk

BHAS Founded 1906

Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society **http:/www.brightonarch.org.uk**

Back in the Unitarian Church New Road, Brighton- Start time 7-30 pm. The BHAS lectures will be **live** and not on Zoom.

The University of Sussex Archaeological Society

USAS

The Sussex School of Archaeology and History

admin@sussexarchaeology.co.uk

Photo by DAVID ILIFF. License: CC BY-SA 3.0

Hosting a number of events throughout the year

www.sussexarchaeology.org

Email – admin@sussexarchaeology.co.uk

Directors: Dr David Rudling and Sarah Green



Worthing Archaeological Society



Please can you refresh your memories by reviewing this document, which can be found on the Society's website under Documents / Policy / Privacy Notice.

If any of your contact details have changed since you completed your WAS Membership Application Form, please advise the Membership Secretary, Liz Lane.

Many thanks Donna

If you are already on Facebook and would like to join our closed WAS Facebook group, just ask to join on the Worthing Archaeological Society page

Easy Fundraising

If you shop online, do consider using Easyfundraising to make donations to WAS. Retailers give part of every amount spent to WAS, if you nominate us as your charity **https://new.easyfundraising.org.uk**

Photo Archive

WAS is developing an archive of photos, accessible via the website. Past digs are already well covered, but if you have photos you can share, please send them to Theresa and Richard on **theresa_in_brighton@yahoo.co.uk**
If they are not recent ones, could give us names of people and sites included. There are some on our website which we haven't been able to identify – if you know when and where they were taken, please let us know.

WAS Archive

Connie is currently Curator of our Archive. We have a good collection of Sussex Archaeological Collections, starting from

And finally a reminder

Subs for 2026 are due on January 1st - £30 for ordinary members, £10 for full-time students.
Feel free to pay by standing order or BACs (details on request).

Please send to: Liz Lane, Membership Secretary. 5 Smugglers' Walk, Goring-by-Sea, West Sussex. BN12 4DP. Membership forms can also be downloaded from the WAS website: **www.worthingarchaeological.org**

Please note that at the 2024 AGM it was agreed to increase subs to £30 from January 1st 2025. Please update your standing orders / direct debits if you pay that way.

The Worthing Archaeological Society is a registered Charity (291431)
Please note: our email address is: **worthingarchaeological@gmail.com**

Items for next News sheet please to
Liz, as above, or
liz.13lane@gmail.com

WAS Lecture 14 October 2025
Threats to Archaeological Heritage – David Rudling

A chastening lecture! David worked through a very comprehensive list of ways that archaeology can be lost, not all of which can be mitigated. Here is the list:

Natural threats

Coastal erosion – Sussex has 80-100 miles of coast with many archaeological sites near the sea. Example given was Belle Tout where erosion has removed much of an ancient enclosure, but has also exposed a deep shaft.
Flood – Example is Venice, gradually sinking.
Trees – Prime example is Chanctonbury. After the 1987 hurricane, replanting on the circular ridge has invaded the centre of the circle, site of two Roman temples.

Human Threats

Plough damage – eradication of barrows, destruction of Roman mosaics
Fishing and dredging – damaging sunken ship remains and drowned archaeological landscapes.
Road building – prime example the Brighton Bypass, where several important sites were driven through. Also the Whitehawk Camp Neolithic enclosure, first dug in the 1930's and now bisected by a road (asphalt coloured to show the location of a ditch!).
Traffic damage – collision and vibration damage to standing architecture – example of the Lincoln Roman arch.
Restoration and improvement – example of Stonehenge, where relocating the A303 will damage unknown archaeology.
Council planning policies – allowing development on important sites, an example is the Southwick Roman Villa, now covered by a Methodist church.
Major infrastructure projects – a mixed blessing. Examples are HS2 and the Rome Metro, employing large numbers of archaeologists.
Pipelines – large transections of the landscape, that, if employing watching briefs, may produce new archaeological evidence, or may destroy unknown sites.
Tourism – wear and tear through large numbers of visitors.
Unethical detectorists – not reporting finds to the Portable Antiquity Scheme, e.g., The Romano-British temple site at Wanborough in Surrey where between 9,000 and 20,000 finds have been removed and disposed of during the 1980's. Even when discoveries have been reported, legal ambiguity over ownership may make it very expensive or impossible for museums to acquire the artefact, e.g., the Woodingdean Stag in Brighton Museum.
Grave robbing – in some countries there is a flourishing trade in artefacts removed from ancient graves.
Mud-larking – finding artefacts in river shores. They may not be reported.
Criminal damage – vandalism and graffiti, e.g. the Hadrian's Wall sycamore tree.

Building damage

Fire damage – prime example is the 2019 fire at Notre-Dame de Paris; vast expense required to reinstate the building.
Unauthorised demolition – example The Crooked House pub in South Staffordshire
Unsympathetic conversions – e.g., barn conversions, where the original architecture is not recorded and details destroyed or removed.
Lack of/difficulty in maintenance – e.g., the November 2019 collapse of Lewes Castle curtain wall.
Quarrying – near or on sites of archaeologically significant buildings.

Threats to museums

Where much archaeological material is centralised (all eggs in one basket)
Fire – e.g., National Museum of Brazil where 92% of its archive of 20 million items was destroyed.
War, insurrection and revolution – e.g., the curator of Palmira in Syria, Khaled Mohamad al-Asaad, was publicly beheaded by ISIS in 2015 and his body dumped in the destroyed remains of his museum.
Theft – by staff and external criminals. E.g., the British Museum (staff member, sold on eBay), Canterbury Archaeological Trust (Anglo-Saxon glass beads), Pompeii (mosaic panel) and recently Bronze Age gold artefacts from St Fagans National Museum of History.
Restitution policies – where the eventual ownership of the artefacts may be disputed, and their disposition unknown, e.g. Nigerian Benin bronzes.

Archaeologists themselves

By it's nature archaeological excavation is destructive. There are arguments for limiting and not disturbing extant archaeological sites.

Richard Griffiths

November Lecture

Simon Stevens on the Cooden Excavations

This year the Con Ainsworth Memorial Lecture fell on the anniversary of the Armistice of 1918 – the 11th day of the 11th month - and so it was entirely appropriate that Simon Stevens' lecture "Fall in the Ghosts"* should focus on Cooden Camp in Bexhill where the three Southdown Battalions (amongst others) trained before shipping to France to fight in the First World War. As an aside, Con had been born during WW1 and had served in the Royal Artillery during WW2, so I am sure would have appreciated the resonance. Simon had, unsurprisingly, fond memories of working with Con and he mentioned this during his introduction – wheels and circles come to mind.

Cooden Camp was established in 1914 for the three Southdown Battalions who were recruited by Colonel Claude Lowther MP, the owner of Herstmonceux Castle, as part of the Kitchener's Army drive. The three battalions would eventually become the 11th, 12th and 13th Battalions of the Royal Sussex Regiment and go on to fight at the infamous Battle of the Boar's Head at Richebourg-l'Avoué in France on 30 June 1916, suffering some some 1,100 casualties.

The site of the camp was being developed for housing, so Simon's team at Archaeology South-East were asked to excavate it. The dig was challenging due to its waterlogged nature – as well as rainfall (compounded by snow), it suffered from tidal groundwater which could be seen rising in the trenches. A lot of the archaeology was also ephemeral as the site was originally a tented camp and when the huts were built they were pre-fabricated – and then sold off at the end of the war, so very little trace remained. The site has also previously been looted by "Nighthawks" who would have taken many metal artefacts.



November Lecture – Simon Stevens on the Cooden Excavations





A broken knife handle was found with the initials "AI". Work is underway to confirm the identity of the soldier who owned this – possibly the only artefact with a demonstrable personal connection. A large number of worn-out boots were also found, showing the results of long training marches.



The site has particular significance to Simon as his grandfather, Charles Curl, served with the 6th Battalion, East Kent Regiment and was wounded twice and taken prisoner during the war. He is determined to do the dig justice by putting the human stories associated with the site to the fore.

* "Fall In, Ghosts" is the title of Edward Blunden's book of prose about WW1. Blunden served with the 11th Bn, Royal Sussex Regiment – one of the Southdown Battalions.

Robin Courtney Bennett.

Photos by Simon Stevens, Archaeology South-East

The Study Day on Animal Bones in Archaeology at Worthing College, Saturday 15th November

The day, A practical introduction to Animal Bones was led by Sarah Green , Director of Sussex Archaeology and History who has a Masters degree in Osteoarcheology.

She patiently introduced the group, who had varying amounts of 'bone experience', to the methods of identification of animal bones from archaeological sites and how they can help us to understand the economy and way of life of people in the past.





We were given an excellent handout full of well annotated anatomical diagrams which made it easier to follow. We were introduced to the larger mammalian skeletons and the terminology used to identify any skeletal finds, there were plenty of new words to learn even if you have got 'O' level Biology!

The practical sessions handling real bones using the handbook was really helpful although I'm not sure on site, until they were processed, it would be possible without the diagrams. These sessions gave us a chance to closely examine the differences, to have group discussions and ask questions. For me the easiest way to learn.

QGIS Study Day at Worthing College, Saturday 25th October

On Saturday 25th October, we attended Worthing Collage for a day course run by Connie from WAS on the use of QGIS (a graphical information system for mapping and planning)

Prior to the day, Connie provided written instructions and Data files for us to use during the training.

On the day we arrived to find a classroom set up for us to use, Connie had a white board with accompanying slides showing us the menu system within QGIS, so we could follow along as we built up our knowledge of the software.

We had opportunity to ask questions and to try out what we had learnt during the session during the afternoon.

Overall, despite some issues with the Collage Wi-Fi, I found the session a great experience and have learnt enough to start to use the software to enable us to produce basic mapping using the software.

David Chuter

Worthing Archaeological Society

Tuesday 9th December '25

Worthing Library Lecture Theatre

Lecture 7.30pm – 9pm

Connie Shirley and John Mills

Connie Shirley: WAS member, Sompting Excavations site director, Surveyor and Project Manager.
John Mills: President Worthing Archaeological Society.







Sompting Malthouse Fields

WAS have been excavating in Sompting Malthouse Fields since 2017. Finds indicate the main occupation is in the Medieval/Post Medieval period. This talk reviews the excavation findings and how research can shed light on the ownership and use of the site. The question we have been asking is "where's the pub?"

All visitors are welcome, entry £4. Members free



worthingarchaeological.org