



# ROYAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

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## EDITORIAL

Katherine Barclay

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While new discoveries continue to capture headlines, it is the debates and proposals about funding and education, and their outcomes, that shape our disciplines' future. Cross-sector collaboration is growing, between employers, local societies, professional bodies and funders to align incentives for archaeology to remain part of policy frameworks. There is an increased focus on promoting public engagement, widening access, including through outreach programmes and digital resources.

The dismaying loss of archaeology courses at UK universities despite strong student interest and employability in heritage fields contrasts with the growing role of apprenticeships in workforce development. 'Skills England' has been launched, taking over from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. Its mission is to enhance flexibility in skills training, targeting regional needs. It is yet to integrate heritage-specific pathways within its schema.

The Historic Environment Skills and Careers Action Plan for England (HESCAPE), published in September 2024, listed priority areas – from heritage crafts, and 'retrofit training' to post-excavation specialisms – while piloting shared apprenticeships and integrating heritage into mainstream education. The new Technical Excellence Colleges should train 40,000 construction workers, though to meet national 'net-zero' goals, Historic England estimates a need for 100,000 workers annually to 'modernise' older buildings using traditional methods.

Apprenticeships in archaeology are presently running in museums, commercial archaeology units and via colleges, in post-excavation archaeology, industrial conservation, and planning services.

## GRANTS AND AWARDS

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL

### ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS 2025

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The Archaeological Achievement Awards are run by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) with the support of a steering group. They celebrate achievements from across the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The judging criteria consider how archaeology provides value for society and our environment, and how we create a positive impact from the work of archaeologists. They encourage work founded on ethical practice, expertise and restraint, based upon shared standards. Award categories are based on these cross-cutting theme: this year, the mandatory theme is the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion, with a choice of four more: innovation; health and wellbeing; placemaking; and collaboration between academic, public and commercial organisations. Our Institute continues its sponsorship of the Early Career award, which is open to anyone in their first eight years as an archaeologist. The judging panel has representatives from across the archaeological community.

The Award Categories are: Public Dissemination or Presentation; Engagement and Participation; Learning, Training and Skills; Early Career Archaeologist; and Archaeology and Sustainability, with one further award for overall Outstanding Achievement.

This year the awards ceremony will be held at Queen's University Belfast on Friday 28th November 2025. Although nominations closed earlier this month, you can find out more at <https://www.archaeologyuk.org/our-work/archaeology-awards/archaeological-achievement-awards.html>

# COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY FESTIVAL 2025

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The CBA annual Festival of Archaeology was held from 19 July to 3 August with the theme Archaeology and Wellbeing, celebrating the ways that archaeology can make a positive impact on wellness. It incorporated the ‘five ways to wellbeing’ into the events and activities, creating opportunities for people to give, be active, learn, take notice, and connect.

It was again a mix of on-the-ground and online events, with some items available to watch on YouTube. The Institute is still supporting Youth Takeover Day, where My Heritage, the youth-focused photography project, continues. A partnership with Photoworks as part of the CBA’s Reconnecting Archaeology project (funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund), its findings help

the CBA explore how it reimagines for contemporary audiences what archaeology is. The day included the fifth annual Student and Early Careers Conference (organised with the Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists Special Interest Group), an opportunity for presentation experience.

Recordings of some of the presentations can be found on CBA’s YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/playlistlist=PL0jz-2K7enTbR6q9pNcUNTSAPMVKIuog4D>

The dates for the 2026 Festival of Archaeology are 18 July – 2 August and the theme is archaeology and nature.

## ROYAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE RESEARCH GRANTS

The Institute awards the following grants annually:

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|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Tony Clark Fund</b>    | Up to £500 for archaeological work and dating                |
| <b>Bunnell Lewis Fund</b> | Up to £750 towards archaeology of the Roman period in the UK |
| <b>RAI Award</b>          | Up to £5000 towards archaeological work in the UK            |

Please write to the Manager @ RAI c/o Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, London, W1J 0BE for an application form or visit our website, [www.royalarchinst.org](http://www.royalarchinst.org)  
Closing date for applications: 8 December 2025. Awards announced in April 2026.

## CURRENT ARCHAEOLOGY AWARDS 2026

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The 2026 awards will be presented at *Current Archaeology Live! 2026* on 28 February at University College London's Institute of Education. Each award is the Best of the Year for: Research Project, Rescue Project, Book, or Archaeologist.

Voted for entirely by the public – there are no panels of judges – the awards celebrate the projects and publications that made the pages of the eponymous magazine over the past year, and the people judged to have made outstanding contributions to archaeology. The shortlists, and how to vote, will be on their website soon <https://archaeology.co.uk/>

## RAI DISSERTATION PRIZES

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The RAI awards prizes for dissertations on a subject concerned with the archaeology or architectural history of Britain, Ireland and adjacent areas of Europe. In odd-numbered years, the competition is for the best dissertation submitted by a Master's student. In even-numbered years, the Tony Baggs Award is given to the best dissertation submitted by an undergraduate in full-time education. Nominations are made by University and College Departments. The winner will receive £500 and the opportunity for a paper based on the dissertation to be published in the *Archaeological Journal*. The chief criteria considered are (a) quality of work and (b) appropriateness to the interests of the RAI as reflected in the journal. The prize will be presented at the Institute's May meeting.

## RAI CHENEY BURSARIES

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As a result of a bequest left by Frank Cheney, the Institute has a small fund of money to enable students to attend conferences or RAI meetings. An allocation is available annually from which individuals can apply for a maximum sum of £250. Please check with the Manager that money remains in the yearly fund before you apply. Students who wish to apply for a bursary should email to [admin@royalarchinst.org.uk](mailto:admin@royalarchinst.org.uk) or write to the Manager, RAI, c/o Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BE, at least six weeks before the event they wish to attend, stating: the institution in which they study, the event they wish to attend, the sum of money requested, a breakdown of how the money would be spent and a summary (up to 250 words) of why they would like to attend the event and in what way this would be useful to them. Successful applicants may be asked to produce a brief report of the event for the Institute. No bursary was awarded in the last year. <https://www.royalarchinst.org/grants/bursaries>



Roundhouse, yards and oblong structure under excavation at Bemersyde (S. Campbell)

## RAI RESEARCH GRANT REPORT

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The following project was awarded a grant in 2024:

### **Geographies of Power: Environmental and economic analysis of two Roman Iron Age settlements in the shadow of *Trimontium* Roman fort**

*Tanja Romankiewicz*

When the Romans conquered Scotland, the impact must have been dramatic. But how did this play out on a day-to-day basis for local people living in the shadow of a Roman fort? A research project led by Tanja Romankiewicz (University of Edinburgh) has set out to investigate these relationships. Our focus is on two enclosed settlements in the Scottish Borders near the Roman fort at Newstead (*Trimontium*). The Scottish case study forms part of a larger cooperation with Andrew Lawrence (University of Berne, Switzerland), researching the Roman impacts along the northwestern frontier zone.

Excavations at Bemersyde in 2023 and 2024 were undertaken in collaboration with the locally based *Trimontium* Trust, involving students from Edinburgh and Bern, and local volunteers of all ages. Working with the Trust provided a special connection, with people making a living in the same area today and shaping their own terms with the Romans.

In our first year, we unexpectedly encountered a deep stratigraphy of house floors and paved yards despite modern agricultural use. These were enclosed by a large curvilinear defensive system that had repeatedly been remodelled. Using digital documentation and

geoarchaeological sampling, we were able to disentangle that the redeposited rampart material had obscured the complexities of the internal features. This explained why fieldwork in 1990 by the University of Bradford's *Newstead Environs Project* did not reach these deeper layers. The ditch of the rectilinear enclosure produced dumps of charcoal, burnt bone and Iron Age pottery, indicating similar intensive occupation, but no structures were encountered in the excavated area.

Thanks to the second excavation season, we now have a significant macroplant assemblage, including waterlogged wood with toolmarks, and a comprehensive set of geoarchaeological samples. Together with finds of Roman pottery and metalwork as well as Iron Age material, they provides a rare chance to characterise scientifically the changing fortunes of the local peoples, to trace variation in their access to resources, and assess Rome's changing impact on their lives through time – which we are working on. Initial interpretations suggest low-key contacts – nothing so far indicates a catastrophic break or destruction by fire.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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**Please note** that **non-members** are **not covered** by the Royal Archaeological Institute's Public Liability Insurance and they **must arrange their own insurance** to enable them to attend Institute Meetings. *Places are limited, so please book promptly.*

### 2025

**Autumn Meeting** 22 November, at Canterbury to include tours of Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey and St Martin's Church, led by Nathalie Cohen

### Forthcoming in 2026

**Spring Meeting** 16 – 18 May, West Riding II, led by Peter Ginn (details to be confirmed)

**Late Summer Meeting** 7 – 13 September, to Bath and environs, led by Peter Ginn (details to be confirmed)

***More information will be made available on our website as soon as possible.***

Please check our website for news and early details, at [www.royalarchinst.org/events](http://www.royalarchinst.org/events)  
As soon as they are confirmed, full details and booking forms for Meetings will be made available on the Meetings Programme page <http://www.royalarchinst.org/meetings>.  
Places are limited, so please book promptly. If you would like further details of any of these meetings sent to you, please send your e-mail or postal details to the Manager, RAI, c/o Society of Antiquaries of London, Burlington House, London, W1J 0BE or [admin@royalarchinst.org](mailto:admin@royalarchinst.org).

## MEETINGS NOTES

### REPORT OF THE SPRING MEETING at Brighton and Lewes, 16 – 18 May 2025

*N. Cohen, J. Haes, R. Haes, L. O'Brien,  
M. O'Brien, H. Raison, A.C. Scott,  
I. Thompson, M. Webster.*

The Spring Meeting opened with cheese and wine in a unique location, a net loft inside a Victorian brick arch, looking out over the Channel on a warm Friday afternoon. This is part of Brighton's Fishing Museum, which occupies two of the seafront arches west of the pier. As well as boats and memorabilia, the museum ([www.fishingquarter.co.uk](http://www.fishingquarter.co.uk)) has displays on how Brighton's fishing community adapted to the concept of leisure from the eighteenth century onwards. A highlight is an audiovisual show, a seemingly endless series of Edwardian and later postcards (some hand-coloured, invariably painting the pebble beach yellow to look like sand), photographs and videos, of activities on the beach and in the water. Another display is devoted to Brighton Swimming Club, including Victorian posters advertising popular race days. One, dating to the 1860s, offered prizes given by local tradesmen (including a leg of mutton on the far end of a greasy pole) and featured Captain Camp 'the one-legged swimmer', making and eating his breakfast in the water. The day was to finish with a 'Duck Hunt', the ducks to be supplied by a local poulterer; how did that work? We are not told.

We then heard about another aspect of Brighton as seaside resort. Dr Michael Shapland of Archaeology South-East talked about the Brighton Dome project: 'Brighton Dome Theatre – Quaker Cemetery, Great War Hospital and Corn Exchange'

The great circular Dome, dating from 1803–8, was in origin the Stables, with attached Riding House, of the Prince of Wales (later Prince Regent, then King George IV). Since 2017, it has been being renovated. Archaeology and structural maintenance have been to the fore, with historic building recording, and monitoring of the demolition of a twentieth-century addition. The recording peeled back layers relating to several of the many functions the Dome and Riding House have had, since their origins serving the Prince's pleasure palace: Corn Exchange, cavalry barracks, museum, ice-skating rink (fitted out in 1883 with electricity), First World War Military hospital, and famous music venue.



An entrance to the former Stables, now the Dome (J. Haes)

One now-exposed end wall showed the strata of Quakers at the base, with the royal stable and modern fire station above that, capped by a 1950s gable end. The riding house's vast timber vaulting built on a masonry structure which depended on supplies from the Baltic, can be identified from particular carpenters' markings (the Battle of Copenhagen served to secure these supply lines).

The stables had displaced an eighteenth-century Quaker meeting house, and were so unnecessarily grand in scale that the ground work for the riding house cut into their cemetery. Evidence of secondary burial including of a child shows that the builders knew of the cemetery. Excavation revealed 18 burials, with some surprises. Quakers expressed disapproval of the slave trade by boycotting sugar and tobacco, but these remains included tell-tale notches which result from habitual clenching of clay pipes between the teeth, as well as tooth decay. Surviving within later structures, another discovery was of walls belonging to a smaller stable block. It had been built for Mrs Maria Fitzherbert, George's mistress and love match whom he secretly married in the 1790s. Her house and stable abutted the royal stable and had a single window looking into it.

From 1914–18 the Pavilion was used as a military hospital with an inner vault inside a masonry 'shed' leaving a substantial attic space and a gap between the walls. The archaeologists found a cache in the void between the walls including beer bottles, match boxes, bus tickets, newspapers and three letters dating to WWI. It would appear that soldiers had found a way up to a skylight in the attic space looking for some space and privacy and discarded their 'rubbish' into the gap. The first letter was to a soldier in Boulogne, the second was from an officer called Cox to a soldier called Brown at

Roehampton, both hospitals specialising in amputees. It discussed the merits of a heavy duty artificial arm suitable for a labourer, and a lightweight one for clerical work. The third was a poignant message to a lady called May in Bristol. It had been scrunpled but then unfolded and continued, with apologies for 'not being able to see you.' There are plans to follow this up to see who May might have been and whether anything came of it!

The Dome now incorporates an entertainments venue that was used for a UN assembly in the 1950s and for Eurovision competitions, not least when ABBA won in 1974.

Brighton was the party town for the Prince Regent and it still seemed to be going on when we arrived! The several festivals were using as venues buildings we had hoped to visit... access denied. On Saturday morning we met at the church of St Nicholas of Myra which is the original parish church. Although it lost that status in 1873, it is still known as The Mother Church of Brighton. It sits on high ground looking over the then village – a situation which gave it visibility to those at sea as well as residents. For the view over the town, the setting for the rest of the day, it was worth the effort to start from here, though we were unable to enter the building. Its first mention is in 1086 in the Domesday Book, though some architectural features suggest it may have Saxon origins, or was constructed on the site of an earlier place of worship. There are Norman elements, notably the font, with elaborate arcading and cable moulding, carved from Caen stone. Its clock (out of action) was known for showing the tide times – vital information in a fishing village.

In its current form the church dates from the mid fourteenth century. During the time of the Prince Regent the number of houses in the town doubled and eight chapels of ease were built to relieve pressure on St Nicholas.

There were many and various issues over funding to maintain the church fabric and it became very dilapidated. However a fund was started in 1818 in memory of the Duke of Wellington to pay for rebuilding and refurbishment. The work included a new roof, reduction to the size of the chantry, creation of a new organ chamber and removal of all the box pews and galleries. Many of the medieval features were lost during these extensive works, and the overall size of the church was reduced by 30%. Stained glass windows were designed and fitted between 1878 and 1887, including a new east window in the Perpendicular-style.

The graveyard which surrounds the church has many old tombs, the oldest inscription being to Captain Nicholas Tattersell (*d.* 1674) (who had conveyed Charles II to escape to France). From the 1730s therapeutic sea bathing attracted visitors, and several bathing attendants are buried here, including Martha Gunn, one of the most famous ‘dippers’, who was a favourite of Prince George. Sake Dean Mahomet who brought “shampooing” and vapour masseur baths to England, owned the “Mahomed’s Baths”, an early form of spa, on the site now occupied by the Queen’s Hotel, and attended the King. His second book, *Shampooing; or, benefits resulting from the use of the Indian medicated vapour bath*, was dedicated to the King and went to three editions. In 1810 he opened the first Indian restaurant in Britain: the Hindoostane Coffee House.

He died in 1851 aged 101 years, so some of his ideas worked; his grave marker records other family members.

Our leader for the day, Hedley Swain, then took the group downhill pointing out various features typical of the area, such as the use of cast-iron, balconies, bow fronts, and decorative elements, especially pilasters, shells.



The font in St Nicholas' Church

We saw stuccoed façades of Regency-style houses, laid on walls of bungaroosh a method used only locally. Shuttering is filled with a variety of materials, such as old brick/flint and mortar, which makes conservation complicated. We passed the Dome: the exterior decoration of its entrances is remarkable, but were able to see only glimpses of its interior.

By the late eighteenth century Brighton had become a fashionable Spa town with large inns and hotels, a place for the young Royals to escape the confines of Court. In 1787 aged twenty-one, George Prince of Wales rented then bought a modest villa which was to become, when funds allowed, the extraordinary confection that is the Pavilion we see today. Royal Pavilions, small holiday homes, were popular across Europe, but there was nothing to compare with this. It is firmly rooted in the tradition of men projecting their

wealth and eccentricity into building projects, such as Walpole's Strawberry Hill and Walter Scott's Abbotsford.

Henry Holland was commissioned to transform the original house into the Marine Pavilion, a neoclassical villa completed in 1802. When his debt-ridden finances allowed, George incrementally bought up the estate. In 1803 he commissioned architect William Porden to design a stable block and riding house (now the Brighton Dome, see above), to rival those of Europe and eclipse Buckingham Palace's stables in scale. At 80 ft in diameter and 65ft high the domed glass roof of the stables was one of the largest constructions of its type in the world; many thought the structure would collapse. The dimensions of the riding house – 178ft by 58ft, with a 34ft-high unsupported roof – were equally ambitious.

When George became Prince Regent in 1811 he began to develop the site in earnest, commissioning John Nash to turn the villa into a royal palace. The original buildings were not demolished, simply buried under the cast iron frame that Nash superimposed to support the various additions, giving its rather unbalanced architectural appearance. While the interior has a classic European layout with the Banqueting House at one end and the Music room at the other the exterior is a chaotic blend of Mughal and Islamic features. Books on Indian architecture were circulating at the time but there is no documentation to explain the choices behind the domes, minarets and jaliss (pierced marble screens). George visited Sezincote House in 1807 but again there is no proof that he was influenced by its Mughal features. The stables' exterior was inspired by an aquatint of the Jama Masjid of Dehli and has Indian-style windows. The India Gate, designed in Gujarati style by Thomas Tyrwhitt, at the southern entrance to the estate was added in 1921 to

commemorate the military hospitals, including at the Pavilion, established in Brighton for Indian troops during World War I. Although the Pavilion was built in 'Indian Style', a combination of Hindu and Muslim architecture, essentially it is a theatre set to shock, an extension of George's personality.

Whatever the inspirations for its exterior the Pavilion was not designed to last. The iron framework rusts and expands and the bath stone used to clad the building is porous, which can make the structure unstable causing the stonework to fracture as recently happened to one of the domes.

Nash was at the cutting edge of garden design and his vision for the Pavilion gardens was for them to be as naturalistic as possible; creating a relationship between the trees and shrubs and providing vistas of the Pavilion. Very detailed records of the original planting survive which after over a hundred years as a municipal garden, had enabled its return to the regency 'picturesque garden' of Nash's design. A current project to reinterpret the gardens is problematic because of their use as a public space throughout the week, but the garden is kept organic and true to the 1820 planting. The gardens incidentally are home to the most important collection of Elm trees in the UK. At the end of our tour of the outside of the buildings and the gardens, some of us visited the tunnel linking the Palace to the stable complex, which has stairs connecting to George's private apartments. A bricked-off door below ground level hinted at a second tunnel which has not survived. The estate was originally surrounded by a high flint wall which goes against the popular theory that the tunnels were built to prevent the prying eyes of the public; they were more likely built simply to keep George dry on wet days, and certainly provide a means for moving goods or staff discreetly from one building to the other.

It is worth noting that despite his many failings, George IV is the only monarch to influence the architecture of a city most obviously in London. The central dome of the Pavilion remains the emblem of the city of Brighton.

Imagining we are suitably adorned we move from the visually stark tonal shapes of the exterior of the pavilion, bathed as it was in sunlight, to the sumptuousness of colour, texture and unfamiliar objects inside. The Long Gallery is a connecting space: multiple doors anticipate the rooms beyond, and because of the decoration it has a courtyard feel bringing the outside in. There are conversation pieces: exotic items from the Chinese export trade such as 'nodders', faux bamboo, Chinese furniture, and wallpaper with imagined, and often incorrect, Chinese birds and flowers.

Next we entered The Banqueting Room, the most lavish of any we will see. It has magnificence, is certainly theatrical, and reflects what the Prince felt about food and the joy of indulgence. The eye is immediately drawn to The Dragon Chandelier, designed in about 1817 by Robert Jones of Crace and Jones, it is 9m in length and weighs a ton. The dragon looks suspiciously European rather than Chinese, and is hiding the cast iron construction suspended from Nash's tent-shaped roof structure. The question remains as to whether this fantasia was made as a present for the Emperor of China via our Embassy to the Qianlong Court in 1816. In 1850 it was taken to Kensington Palace by Queen Victoria when she sold The Pavilion, but was returned in 1864.

It was made by William Perry, a London company, who also supplied the phoenix and the upturned parasol chandeliers. Should anyone wish to emulate these, ceilings permitting, Crace and Jones still exist in London



Orientalia at the Pavilion (J. Haes)

today. For those who enjoy such matters, a parasol chandelier can be spotted through the open door behind The Royals when they are on Buckingham Palace balcony.

To create the best food for some nine courses, one needs the best chef in Europe and the most modern of kitchens. Carême was, perhaps, the first celebrity chef, and the Prince was so proud of his kitchen that he took guests to admire it and the equipment it contained. On this note, the thoroughly modern Prince also had lighting, heating and sanitation throughout. Noted, the incorrectly assumed to be Chinese palm trees, also adorn the kitchen, and shiny brass pans on loan from Apsley House.

The Gallery beyond the Banqueting Room is visually calmer, described by some as a palette cleanser. It is on the footprint of the original villa the Prince rented. Beyond that is the Saloon, which was the formal reception room

and felt very French. Restored now to close to its former glory, this is a room to impress. Waterloo was over and that made the British Monarchy supreme in Europe. The Prince Regent, effectively the monarch, and given to exaggeration, claimed to have been at Waterloo, which must have been a surprise to Wellington. It is a statement room, underlining his position in Europe. The Prince, now exceedingly corpulent, would have taken the two most important ladies, one on each arm, and squeezed into the Banqueting Room, how they got out again after up to four hours of eating, is best left to the imagination.

The Music Room Gallery had a mixture of uses, including providing space for a group of musicians to entertain whilst feasting was in progress – called Tafelmusik, an idea clearly brought over from Germany. The Prince's London residence, Carlton House had, by this time, been demolished and much of its furnishings were brought to this room, demonstrating the sentimental side of the Prince. This is chinoiserie writ large. It is imitating a Chinese lacquered box. It was too large to be a lacquered room, but the red panels were painted in such a way to give that impression, and in marked contrast to the blue of the carpet. Dancing took place here, were the guests able to move, and that meant the carpet here and elsewhere would have been lifted and the floor chalked. There were originally six ceramic pagodas, and all found homes in other royal palaces; the two seen today were acquired from Kenneth Clark in 1949.

The King's Apartments are subdued compared with much we have seen hitherto, created later, when he was overweight and unfit, perhaps his mood had changed somewhat. The bed is the one he used (and in fact died in, but at Windsor). His ensuite bathroom had a sunken bath. His Library, neutral in design, acted as a State Room at times, and the throne

would be placed here. He enjoyed reading and had a complete set of Jane Austen novels.

On the first floor we saw one guest room, which was comparatively small, and repeated an Eastern theme with walls of Chinese Imperial yellow, possible because of the recently invented pigment, chrome yellow, which had become commercially available. On the walls of the Adelaide Corridor nearby are surviving eighteenth-century hand-painted wallpapers from China, still in their original position.

The Prince became King in 1820 and the Pavilion was finished in 1823; he made two further visits in 1824 and 1827. On his death in 1830, his brother William IV took over and continued with the property. More accommodation, since demolished, was built for William and Queen Adelaide They entertained here but not as lavishly. On his death, it passed to Queen Victoria. who visited from 1837 but it was not to her taste in any respect and, as her family grew, nor was it practical, thus she sold it to Brighton for £50,000. She ordered the building to be stripped of its interior decoration, fittings and furniture for use in other royal palaces. The main ground floor rooms were redecorated but in a less lavish style and it was opened to the public. In 1864 and 1899 many items were returned, including chandeliers, wall paintings and fixtures. Between 1851 and 1920 a variety of events took place here.

In WWI it became a hospital initially for Indian Army soldiers who had served on the Western Front, with over 4000 wounded treated here; there are illustrations of this time with rows of beds in the Music Room. The soldiers received excellent care to promote loyalty to the British Empire. Once Indian troops were withdrawn from fighting in Europe it was converted to a hospital for British soldier amputees, and remained a hospital until 1920. The kitchen was the op-

erating theatre. A programme of restoration then took place funded by a settlement from the government for damage done, boosted when Queen Mary returned more original objects and furniture. After a break in WWII, restoration resumed reflecting an increased interest in The Regency era. Much more attention was then and continues to be paid to any original fragments, prints and other archive material to make restoration as authentic as possible; the most recent being The Saloon which, after years of research and meticulous conservation has, in 2018, been returned to its original design.

This building, a magnificent nonsense, and conservators' nightmare, costs £900,000 per year to maintain, excluding repairs, renovations or upgrades. Royal Pavilion Museums, as their CEO, our guide Hedley can attest, bear this burden; they are currently fundraising to repair and preserve 'at risk' domes.

We were then led past/through what was once the heart of the medieval village, (now famously the Lanes), which retains elements of its earlier layout. The narrow, irregular alleys are typical of early English settlements where streets followed local needs rather than a formal plan. Hedley pointed us to surviving examples of local building styles – knapped flint, timber framing, bungaroosh.

When we reached the seafront promenade, before we dispersed to explore, Hedley outlined the impact on the town of the popularisation of sea-swimming and the beach, with the consequent development of other attractions and places to stay.

The following day we made the short journey to the more tranquil setting of Lewes. Much older than Brighton, today it is the county town of East Sussex. We made our way through the very steep narrow streets to the top of the town, to the remains of a once splendid castle.



The military hospital in the Dome

Lewes is a first generation Norman castle, built by one of William I's trusted lieutenants, William de Warenne, who was granted extensive estates in Sussex. It was to dominate the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon burh, and command the valley of the Sussex Ouse, as its contemporary, Roger de Montgomery's castle, at nearby Arundel, was built to command the valley of the Aron. In Sussex the danger of attack from overseas was met by the creation of feudal castleries, of which Lewes was one. Its tenants' special responsibility was the maintenance of the castle, with a customary payment known as 'heckage', for the duty of maintaining a section of the haga or palisade, which formed the regular part of the defence of an earthen castle.

The first timber castle, of c.1068 contained one motte, 'Brack Mount' at the north-eastern end of a large oval bailey. By 1100, the castle was built of local stone and flint blocks, with an further motte, the Shell Keep, positioned at the south-western end of the bailey. This

is one of only two examples of two mottes known in England, the other being in Lincoln. The bailey, of about 3 acres, was enclosed by a curtain wall with towers and gateway. The Norman gateway, regarded by medieval architects as the weakest part of the fortress, was the first part of the castle to receive stone defences.

Two semi-octagonal towers were added to the shell keep in 1264, the year of the Battle of Lewes, during the Barons revolt. Solders left the castle to engage with Simon de Montfort and although he and the Barons won the battle, resulting in large parts of the town being burnt, they left the castle intact. Early in the fourteenth century, a very well-preserved Barbican was built, in front of the existing Norman gateway. The castle continued to be used by the de Warenne family, until the death of John, the eighth earl of Surrey, in 1347. This the end of the family line, and the depopulation of Sussex in the Black Death of 1348. led to the unusually early end of Lewes as an active castle.

In 1381, during the peasant's revolt a mob broke into the castle, stealing casks of wine and destroying memorial documents recording payments of rent. Stone work and flint had been removed to be used in buildings elsewhere in the town, and the castle remained abandoned and ruinous, until in 1850, it was leased to Sussex Archaeological Society, who have preserved what was left. In 1922 Charles Thomas-Stanford acquired and gifted it to them.

Today, the castle represents a major tourist asset to the town and the county of East Sussex. A brilliant view from the top of the shell keep shows a road way, cut northwards across the Bailey, from the Norman Gatehouse, and flanked by later post medieval buildings. The surviving bailey, to the east, is home to the Lewes Bowls club. At the eastern

end of the Bailey, is the position of Brack Mount, the area covered with trees, thus making it difficult to distinguish the remains of the early medieval earthwork motte. Positioned along and up against the outside of the south-east curtain wall, post-medieval houses have been built, part of the layout of modern day Lewes. Although the castle lies ruinous, it was never destroyed through military conflict, but by neglect and robbing of its stone work.

Next, we meandered through the picturesque streets of Lewes, blessed again by perfect weather, to Anne of Cleves House, stopping at a number of points of interest en route.

If it were not for the information board attached to the high wire fence by the Friends of Lewes it would be easy to miss our first site. Tucked away in the aptly named Pipe Passage is an important piece of both Lewes' industrial history and nineteenth century manufacturing. The remnants of the Pipe Kiln of Lewes are all that remains of a workshop built in the 1830s to manufacture clay pipes. When the workshop was demolished in about 1890, the kiln survived because it is part of the retaining wall for the higher ground to the north. Archaeologist N.E.S. Norris carried out an excavation of the site in 1970, one of the earliest comprehensive studies of a tobacco pipe kiln in the U.K. Unfortunately this small but significant piece of Lewes' industrial history was hidden beneath Spring foliage on our visit.

Back to the High Street and St Michael's Church, the only remaining church within the old town walls. Its very rare circular tower, (of 178 in Britain, all but seven are in East Anglia), and the adjacent West wall are all that remain of the original twelfth-century building. After a period of decline the church was restored in the eighteenth century and the South aisle rebuilt with flint work facing

onto the High Street. There were further developments of the interior in the nineteenth century with the addition of stained glass windows by Henry Holliday. The parish records include the marriage of one of Lewes' famous residents, the revolutionary writer and thinker Thomas Paine. Paine lived opposite the church in Bull House, a substantial timber framed property, from 1768 to 1774 when he worked as an excise clerk in the town. Built in 1583, the house was an addition to the fifteenth-century Bull Inn, its foundations built from remains of the Norman town wall. In the late seventeenth century the house was purchased by the Reverend Thomas Barnard, a Unitarian minister, and permanently divided into two. The front half remained Bull House and the rear portion became Westgate Chapel, a meeting house for Independent Dissenters. Paine had strong links with the ministers, elders and congregation of the Chapel during his time in Lewes where he immersed himself in the life of the town which proved formative in his progression from local reformer to global revolutionary. The house has distinctive carved satyrs above the front door which lead to its brief nickname 'The Monkey House' but there is sadly nothing to explain the reasons for their addition to the property. We moved on to Southover Grange Gardens down Paine's Twitten, one of the many steep flint-wall-lined pedestrian passageways running North to South on either side of the High Street. Retaining their Sussex dialect name and dating from the Anglo Saxon period, Twittens are a distinctive feature of the centre of Lewes.

When the Cluniac Priory of Lewes, 200m to the south of the gardens, was destroyed in 1537–9 the ruins and grounds were given to Thomas Sackville who built the first house on this site. After the original house burned



View east from Lewes castle keep over the Barbican and the Norman gate (M. O'Brien)

down in 1568 Sackville gave the land and some of the Caen stone from the Priory to his steward William Newton who in 1572 built Southover Grange, the house we see today. The Priory appears to have become a general quarry as stones are to be found throughout Lewes. The roof of the house was originally all of Horsham slabs and much still is. Visited by George, Prince of Wales in the 1790s to attend the Lewes races and briefly the home of the diarist John Evelyn from 1630–7 the house was little altered until bought by William Laird Macgregor in the 1870s. It is now owned by East Sussex County Council and houses the Lewes Registry Office. We did not go inside but enjoyed the extensive gardens which are beautifully maintained by the local council. Bisected by an ephemeral chalk stream, the Winterbourne stream, now 'canalised' the overall layout as seen now dates from nineteenth and twentieth-



Gundrada's tomb cover, resited in Trinity Church, Southover. (M. O'Brien)

century reimagining of Elizabethan and Jacobean garden design. With its formal style a mixture of herbaceous borders, immaculate lawns, a variety of mature trees, a rose and knot garden it feels like a natural extension of the house.

When King Henry the Eighth swiped left, the headsman tended to swipe down. Anne of Cleves, queen for only six months, was lucky not only to keep her head but to be compensated with manors and a nice little mansion on what is now Southover High Street, formerly owned by the Priory. To this house, originally a late fifteenth-century hall-house of Wealden type, extended and upgraded over the two following centuries, the Institute now strolled, by lane and by twitten, to tour, to sit in the bee-loud garden, and to fall on

the delicious sandwich lunch organised for us.

From the front one sees a tile-hung jettied storey, the porch dated 1599, the end of the sixteenth-century wing, a waggon entrance, and the lower roof clad in Horsham slabs, with slate above. Inside, fireplaces and carved features testify to its high status. The upper chamber, displayed as a bedroom of Anne's time, is now open to the roof.

By the late nineteenth century the house had declined, with 22 tenants crammed into separate dwelling-spaces. Anne never lived here, but the building's antiquity was acknowledged and, fortunately, it came into the possession of Sussex Archaeological Society in the early twentieth century. They commissioned restoration by Walter Godfrey, put in a staircase to replace the external stair to the rear wing, dressed the hall and parlours with suitable furniture, and opened it to the public.

We walked on to St John the Baptist Church (once the Guest House of Lewes Priory) for an introduction to both the Gundrada Chapel and Lewes Priory, by Arthur Franklin from the Lewes Priory Trust. When the railway came to Lewes in 1845, during excavations for the line which cut through the Priory site, the burial cists of William de Warenne (*d.* 1088) and his wife Gundrada (*d.* 1085) were discovered. A neo-Norman style chapel, adjoining the present vestry and chancel of St Johns was built in 1847 with funds raised from public subscription to house the remains in new chests, the original lead cists with rope mouldings and diagonal ornamentation being placed in two recessed arches in the South Wall. The couple had originally been buried in the Priory but their tombstones disappeared in the years following the dissolution. In 1775, Gundrada's was discovered seven miles away at Isfield Church, inverted over the remains of one Edward Shirley (*d.* 1550), and displayed in St John the

Baptist Church, then moved to the Chapel after its construction in 1847. Made 1142–7 of black Tournai marble (196cm x 61.5cm), the tomb slab bears a striking resemblance to that in Caen of Matilda of Flanders, with two bands of palmetto-like plant motifs linked by carved lions' heads. A partially damaged inscription, the meaning of which is much disputed, runs along all four sides and down the middle of the slab.

On to our penultimate site of the day, the Priory of St Pancras which stands on the low Southover ridge running parallel and south of the higher chalk spur on which the town of Lewes lies. In the eleventh century when the Priory was founded Lewes was a coastal town; its proximity to the tidal Ouse estuary and the Channel adding considerably to its economic development. Once one of the wealthiest monasteries in England, very little of this ecclesiastical power house remains above ground today thanks to its systematic destruction from the reformation onwards. There have been intermittent excavations at the site since 1850 which have confirmed the extent of the monastic precinct but anything beyond the Church and cloistral buildings is uncertain and is not part of the scheduled monument. Now, much of the priory exists only as buried remains in Priory Park, though there are upstanding ruins: sections of the dormer, reredorter, frater and infirmary to the south and east, as well as the Prior's lodging and entrance gates to the west.

A pre-existing Saxon shrine to St Pancreas on the site ensured its unusual dedication when in c.1077 William de Warenne and Gundrada founded the Priory, the first in England to belong to the reformed Benedictine Order of Cluny in France. Despite its wealth and links with the continent the Priory did not play any significant role in National politics, except during the Battle of Lewes in 1264

when it was occupied by Henry III's troops. The architecture followed the Cluniac model with the main buildings including the church built in imported Quarr and Caen limestone. Fragments of its scale and grandeur – the church alone was larger than the present Chichester Cathedral – can be seen in the architectural remnants incorporated into local buildings. The British Museum holds many of these remnants including one of the finest examples of surviving carved masonry, the lion and griffin capital.

The Lewes Priory Trust currently manages the site on behalf of Lewes Town and have undertaken a number of projects including re-creation of a monastic herb garden. The Priory is a member of the European Federation of Cluniac Sites and has been included in a bid by the Federation for UNESCO recognition as a World Heritage Site. If successful this would have tremendous impact for further work on this important but largely forgotten piece of English monastic history.

To the east of the priory is the enigmatic Mount (see below, pp. 22–25). This was our last stop where we thanked our organisers, Meeting Secretary Peter Ginn and Assistant Geoff Morley.

## LECTURES

### ACCESS TO LECTURES ONLINE

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**The Institute's forthcoming lectures may be seen online**, on the Institute's YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@royalarchaeologicalinstitue3335/videos>. If the speaker permits the lecture to be recorded, it will remain available there. For archived lecture videos, see our Recorded lectures page <https://www.royalarchinst.org/events/recorded>

## ROYAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE LECTURE PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS: 2025/6

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Meetings are held from October to May, on the second Wednesday of the month, at 5.00 pm in the Rooms of the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BE. In May, the lecture will be preceded at 4.45 pm by the Institute's Annual General Meeting. Again this year there will be no short presentations by early career archaeologists; instead, the Institute sponsored the early career researchers conference held as part of the CBA Festival of Archaeology.

Tea will be served at 4.30 pm, or before the AGM, at 4.15 pm.

For enquiries, the Institute's mobile number is 07847 600756.

## 2025

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### 8 OCTOBER

#### **Cathcart Castle reconsidered**

*Brian Kerr*

As a fresh-faced graduate I directed the excavation of this towerhouse site in the south side of Glasgow in 1980–81, and it eventually emerged into the light of publication in 2016. I will look at some of the key elements in the site's development, from the construction of the towerhouse in 1450, through a major refurbishment and extension in the seventeenth century, to abandonment and partial demolition in c.1740, and in particular at how the ambitions and careers of two owners, Alan Lord Cathcart and Bryce Semple, shaped its development and use.

### 12 NOVEMBER

#### **Two famous archaeologists excavate a henge in the 1930s: King Arthur's Round Table then, and its interpretation today**

*Professor Richard Bradley*

In 1937 the philosopher Robin Collingwood excavated this monument in Cumbria and identified the postholes of a series of timber buildings. These structures were replaced by a stone circle. He was prevented by illness from continuing the work for a second season. His project was completed by German scholar Gerhard Bersu who concluded that many features identified two years earlier were of geological origin; others were root-holes or animal burrows. Their projects have played a part in the history of field-work, but recently influential researchers have tried to rehabilitate Collingwood's reputation as excavator. Their views were encouraged by his pivotal

role in studies of the Northern Frontier of Roman Britain. In 2023 parts of the monument at King Arthur's Round Table were re-excavated with the aim of settling the dispute. The new work, supported Bersu's interpretation but recognised that Collingwood's approach was not as misguided as his critics had supposed, being directly based on his agenda for historical research. The real problem is that he had been working without sufficient experience on difficult subsoil. The lecture will consider the methods used by both researchers and compare their distinctive approaches to field archaeology.

## 10 DECEMBER

### **Patches of the endless forest: landscape, monuments and remote perception in the early Neolithic of southern England**

*Dr Alastair Oswald*

It has long been recognised that most of southern England was heavily wooded throughout the Neolithic, punctuated by small patches of cleared ground. Our understanding of the extent and composition of early Neolithic woodland has advanced considerably since the nineteenth century, yet we still glibly assert that monuments and territories were intervisible. This long-standing habit has been further cemented in recent years by the ease with which viewsheds can be produced in GIS.

This talk will argue that it is time to treat Neolithic woodland not as a passive, unchanging backdrop to the construction of monuments, but as a crucially important component of people's experience of encountering monuments. Like the landscape's topography, the character and extent of woodland varied across southern England, and came with its own dynamics. The processes that produced clearings were also varied and

differed dramatically in duration: clear-felling with stone axes – the traditional job of every self-respecting Neolithic farmer – was conceivably a very rare event. Seeing monuments from afar was not a given, nor was the act of seeing a simple, unchanging reminder of ancestral power over an expanse of land. There is much more to say.

## 2026

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### 14 JANUARY

### **Life on the lake: The prehistory and history of Skipsea, Holderness**

*Dr Jim Leary and Dr Elaine Jamieson*

The flat landscape of Holderness, East Yorkshire, was once dotted with freshwater lakes and pools. These have been used for thousands of years and constitute a remarkable, largely unexplored archaeological resource.

Archaeologists from the University of York are currently halfway through a six-year project focused on these ancient lakes, especially around Skipsea village. The lakes have continually drawn people over time. Antiquarians and archaeologists have uncovered Mesolithic stone tools, animal remains, and bone harpoons from within them, as well as Neolithic and Bronze Age structures and trackways at their edges. Today, the remains of a large motte-and-bailey castle built by Drogo de la Beuvrière around AD 1071–86 dominates the landscape. Radiocarbon dating suggests that the mound was probably constructed during the Iron Age.

This lecture will present the findings from the recent excavations at Skipsea. These include a previously unknown early medieval settlement featuring the remains of a large timber hall, a well-preserved malthouse, and an intriguing sunken structure. Accumulations of pottery and animal bones along the wetland edge indicate activity from the late prehistoric period.

**11 FEBRUARY****The evidence for early *Homo sapiens* in Britain: historical review and new opportunities***Dr Rob Dinnis*

Recent years have seen landmark progress in our understanding of early *Homo sapiens* Europe, thanks to new archaeological excavations and the application of new analytical methods. The progress of research on British sites, however, continues to lag. This is due to limitations inherent in existing cave collections together with limited options for new fieldwork at known sites. While many of these problems are insurmountable, hope has been offered in recent years by targeted work at a handful of caves, including the newly discovered early *H. sapiens* site of Wogan Cavern (Pembs.). This new work is explained, and some thoughts are offered as to how our knowledge and understanding may develop in the coming years.

**11 MARCH****A small town on Hadrian's Wall? – the extramural settlement and bathhouse at Birdoswald***Dr Tony Wilmott*

In the 1990s, geophysical surveys of the extramural areas of Hadrian's Wall forts demonstrated that they were more extensive than formerly believed, however very little excavation has taken place since that time to investigate their relationship with the forts. Extensive excavation within the fort and cemetery at Birdoswald since 1987 has resulted in the detailed understanding of these areas against which work on the extramural areas could be set. Partnership excavations by Historic England and Newcastle University from 2022 to 2024 to the east, west, and north of the fort have produced important new evidence for the chronology, zoning and function of these settlements. A building previously located by Ian Richmond proved to be part of the fort



Wogan Cavern in 2024 (R. Dinnis)

bathroom, specifically the stoking chamber and flue, the latter extraordinarily well preserved. The discovery of a run of water pipes leading directly into the bathroom shows how the water supply operated with relation to the heating system, and led to the identification of the entry point of an aqueduct from the north.

## **8 APRIL**

### **Maritime Academy, Frindsbury: Early Neanderthal archaeology preserved in a chalk landscape capture point**

*Letty Ingrey*

The earliest appearance of Neanderthals in Europe is associated with fundamental changes in how humans behaved and adapted to their environments. A recently discovered archaeological site, excavated ahead of the construction of a school, provides a key opportunity to understand this critical period.

The lecture will detail the results of excavations undertaken by UCL Archaeology South-East, at Maritime Academy, Frindsbury (Kent) between 2021 and 2023. The site is located within a large solution feature in the Chalk which has functioned as a capture point, trapping sediments and protecting a multi-period Palaeolithic locale from erosion for 330,000 years. Within the feature buried soils and sediments contain stone artefacts which have barely moved since discard. A minimally disturbed site of this age is a significant discovery, dating to a period in Britain central to discussions on early Neanderthal behaviour and changing technologies.

## **13 MAY**

### **The President's lecture**

### **The Lamp of Knowledge: the symbol of the Society of Antiquaries**

*Nathalie Cohen*

This paper presents some results of research on the Society of Antiquaries' lamp, used as the organisation's 'symbol of ticket' since the eighteenth century. It was originally identified as a Roman artefact, subsequently re-dated to the medieval period, and more recently suggested to be a Jewish sabbath lamp. This presentation will discuss other examples identified in collections in the UK and beyond, depictions of lighting during the medieval period and present some initial thoughts on the context of the lamp's discovery and the lived experience of Jewish communities in England.

## BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

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Royal Archaeological Institute members are invited to attend the meetings of the BAA; please see page 26 and <https://thebaa.org/meetings-events/lectures/annual-lecture-series/> for the 2025/6 programme. Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month from October to May, at 5.00 pm in the rooms of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

Non-members are asked to make themselves known to the Hon. Director on arrival and to sign the visitors' book.

## LONDON AND MIDDLESEX ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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### Lecture Programme 2025–6

All lectures take place on the second Tuesday of the month, 6.30–7.30 pm, and booking is thorough the LAMAS website <http://www.lamas.org.uk/>. Many lectures will be hybrid, taking place in-person and as Zoom webinars. Please check the lecture details for the in-person location. See page 27 for the 2025/6 lecture programme.

## MISCELLANY

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**Request:** If members have links to local or learned societies anywhere in the UK, could they please register them with the Manager; local contacts are so helpful in the running of meetings.

### The RAI office

The telephone number for the Manager is 07847 600756, the email is [admin@royalarchinst.org](mailto:admin@royalarchinst.org) and the postal address is RAI, c/o Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, London, W1J 0BE. The RAI has no office in London, but the Manager will usually be available at this address on the second Wednesday of each month from October to May, between 11.00 am and 3.00 pm.

## A NOTE ON PRIORY MOUNT, LEWES

*Isobel Thompson*

The 2025 Spring meeting at Brighton and Lewes ended at the eastern end of Lewes Priory beside a grassy mound, an impressive 13m high. It was Scheduled in the 1930s as 'an earthwork mound which is possibly a motte' to the west of 'a large sunken rectangular area' known as the Dripping Pan. Various theories have been put forward to account for the mound (see Allcroft 1917), all of which assumed that it is medieval. However, review of the Scheduling in 2014 renamed it 'The Calvary (mound)' and designates it as a 'Post-medieval folly or garden feature....recorded in one documentary source as having been erected by one of the Earls of Dorset and formed of earth excavated from the adjacent ground.... The mound is likely to be a post-medieval garden feature associated with the Priory of St Pancras, situated to the south-west. The monument is traditionally thought to have been a Norman motte or a salt working mound. However it lacks an outer ditch usually associated with a motte and is an unlikely location for a salt pan.' So not a Norman motte; but the assumption that it is entirely post-medieval leaves much unsaid, and the 'documentary source' is unreliable (Everson 2005, 38). The new name appears on a map of Lewes dated c.1775 (*ibid.*, fig.6) and derives from an antiquarian notion that the monks built the mound to place a calvary on the summit; an idea long ago dismissed as unlikely (Allcroft 1917, 59). And it is surprisingly large for a 'garden feature'.

What the Scheduling does not mention is that the south-western perimeter of Priory Mount was investigated in the 1920s when it was cut into for the corner of a new bowling green, and there is a small group of finds in

Barbican House Museum which are said to come from this cutting (Marsden 1983; see Everson 2005, fig.5). A few fragments of late medieval window glass are supposed to have come from the 'core' of the mound, which was of chalk and otherwise unmixed with debris. There also appeared to be a second phase of construction, of mixed material added to enlarge the mound (including a scrap of medieval floor tile, perhaps post-demolition debris from the Priory) and to support a spiral path to the top. This path survives, and is unequivocal; it turned the Mount into a post-medieval prospect mound (which is not a folly). The likely explanation of the Dripping Pan is that it was constructed as a bowling green at about the same time; both fashionable features on high-status estates. Everson (2005) provides much interesting information on this context for the Mount and the Dripping Pan, though she also assumes that the Mount, not being medieval, must be later.

But what date was the original mound? Borehole investigation was carried out in 2015 for the Round Mounds Project, but the results are not available. Marsden (1983) concluded that 'although the evidence is far from conclusive', the window glass may imply that the first phase was indeed contemporary with the Priory. There are other possibilities. In 1997 John Bleach set out extracts from local newspaper accounts and other sources describing forgotten antiquarian discoveries across the town. There are, and were, other mounds in Lewes. The Shell Keep and Brack Mount at the Castle are two which survive; and in line with these to the north there were once at least two and up to four more in the vicinity of Abinger Place and the church of St John sub Castro (which has probable late Saxon origins). In 1839 'St John's Mount' (*ibid.*, fig.2) was removed to make way for the present church, and human skeletons and burnt human and animal bone were

discovered within it, as well as some sort of small chamber, an 'urn of baked clay', and an iron spearhead (*ibid.*, 134). It can be inferred, then, that at least one of these mounds was in origin a barrow, although the account is far too ambiguous to date it – especially as it is not unknown for Saxon burials to be added to ancient barrows.

So Lewes Castle's twin mottes, a highly unusual arrangement, may originally have been elements within a row of barrows. They could be Bronze Age or Roman, although Roman barrows are much less common. Bleach cites two comparable rows, The Devil's Jumps (West Sussex, Bronze Age), and Bartlow Hills (Essex, Roman). The Six Hills at Stevenage (Hertfordshire) are probably also Roman, and stand in a row. The Dane John mound in Canterbury, a Roman tumulus repurposed as a Norman motte and a post-medieval prospect mound (Lyle 2002, 65, 140), is possibly the only survivor of several Roman barrows in Canterbury, although these were scattered around the outskirts of the Roman town.

The Lewes Castle guidebook has an artist's impression of Saxon warriors approaching the grass-covered line of mounds, which march down through an open landscape towards the river Ouse. It would be satisfying to be able to interpret the disputed origin of the placename Lewes as 'place of burial mounds' from a plural form of OE *hlaew*. Unfortunately this is ruled out by Richard Coates in an appendix to Bleach's article, although he does suggest that the name might originate in an older language.

And where does Priory Mount fit in? It may be another tumulus of Bronze Age or Roman date, but is isolated from the others and has not previously been considered. Lewes lies where the Ouse cuts through the South Downs, and flooding of lower ground was a problem until the twentieth century (Bleach 1997, 131). A plan of the topography (Holmes 2010, fig.2) shows the High Street and the Saxon layout occupying a spur of higher ground extending east to the river. On the other side a Roman road approached a natural crossing point avoiding extensive marshy ground in the Ouse floodplain; Holmes's plan shows the row of mounds running down to the site of St John sub Castro, which is on a bluff overlooking the crossing point. On the south side of the spur on which the town emerged is the Winterbourne, once a tidal inlet where it met the Ouse (cf. Allcroft 1917, 49–51), and south of this again is a second spur of higher ground on which the Priory was built. Holmes's plan does not show Priory Mount, but it lies near the eastern end of this spur. To the south again was 'wetland'. Priory Mount is in a significant position and was presumably intervisible with the two mounds which were later transformed into the Castle.

Despite the approaching Roman road and scattered finds, no Roman settlement evidence has yet been found in Lewes; this is not surprising, if the mounds were Roman tumuli. Whatever their date, they need to be taken into consideration in any study of the area. Several of them illustrate how such dominant monuments were often reconfigured or enlarged to serve new functions (as Dane John was in Canterbury). At Lewes, two were incorporated within the Norman castle; two lay within an earthwork of possibly Saxon date at St John sub Castro, where manorial courts were later held (Bleach 1997, 133); another was used as the town gallows (*ibid.*, 135); and Priory Mount became an unusually large post-medieval prospect mound. So a variety of uses can be valid, although they will seldom be the complete picture. In 2016 the RAI visited the huge prospect mound at Marlborough College, with a shell grotto at the base and a spiral path to the top; but that mound is Neolithic in origin.

This note was inspired by talking with Arthur Franklin, chairman of Lewes Priory Trust ([www.lewespriory.org.uk](http://www.lewespriory.org.uk)). And as a postscript, there is one more archaeological association (of sorts) at St John sub Castro: Charles Dawson is buried in the churchyard.

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- Allcroft, A. H., 1917, The first castle of William de Warenne. *Archaeol. J.* 74, 36–78
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- Lyle, Marjorie, 2002, *Canterbury: 2000 years of history*. Stroud
- Marsden, F., 1983, Lewes Priory Mount in D. Rudling, The archaeology of Lewes: some recent research. *Sussex Archaeol. Colls* 121, 69–73



Map of extant and other mounds in Lewes

- S - Shell Keep (Castle Mound),
- B - Brack Mount,
- J - St John's Mount,
- P - Priory Mount,
- D - Dripping Pan.

Stippling: previously marshy ground.  
 (After Bleach 1997, fig. 1,  
 Holmes 2010, fig. 2.  
 Drawn by I. Thompson)

## ROYAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

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NEXT ISSUE Copy for the next issue must reach the editor by the end of January 2026 for publication in April 2026.

THIS ISSUE'S COVER PICTURE: The Dome from the Nash Gardens, Brighton (M. O'Brien). Taken during the Institute's 2025 Spring Meeting (see above, pp. 7-17).

# BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

## 2025-6 LECTURE SERIES

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### **1 October 2025**

The Rutland Psalter and the Rise of Gothic Marginalia  
by Elena Lichmanova (Oxford)

### **5 November 2025**

Excavations at Alchester: a Legionary Fortress and Roman to Early Medieval Town  
by Eberhard Sauer

### **3 December 2025**

Charles Hercules Read and the Asante Ewer  
by Lloyd de Beer

### **7 January 2026**

Mapping England and Wales in the Late Middle Ages: roads, transport infrastructure and key destinations  
by David Harrison

### **4 February 2026**

Building for strangers: recent research on England's medieval inns  
by Matthew Cooper

### **4 March 2026**

The transformation of the monastic enclosure at Marmoutier (Tours, France) between the 11th and the early 13th centuries  
by Elisabeth Lorans, Emeritus Professor of Medieval Archaeology, University of Tours (France)

### **1 April 2026**

Dover Castle  
by Jeremy Ashbee

### **6 May 2026**

The Papal Palace in Avignon in the light of regional architecture  
by Alexandra Gajewski

# LONDON AND MIDDLESEX ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## 2025-6 LECTURE SERIES

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### **14 October 2025**

Roman cemetery at Holborn Viaduct: post-excavation updates  
by Alex Blanks, MOLA

### **11 November 2025**

Bermondsey Square: Prehistoric and Roman Settlement, Medieval Abbey and Post-Medieval Mansion  
by Alistair Douglas, Pre Construct Archaeology

### **9 December 2025**

Farms, playhouse and taverns: radical experiments and liberation in Whitechapel  
by Sarah Wolferstan and Steve White, Archaeology South-East

### **13 January 2026**

Digging Up the Future: 23 years of the Central London Young Archaeologists Club  
by Karen Thomas and Annie De Saulles, Central London YAC

### **10 February 2026**

AGM and Presidential Address – Mapping Restoration London  
by Vanessa Harding, Emeritus Professor of London History, Birkbeck, University of London

### **10 March 2026**

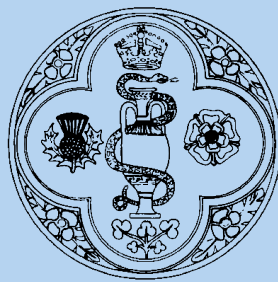
Hostel, House and Chambers: Accommodating the working woman in Victorian and Edwardian London  
by Emily Gee

### **14 April 2026**

National Trust Archaeology in London and Middlesex  
by Nathalie Cohen, National Trust Archaeology in London and Middlesex

### **12 May 2026**

Archaeology at the Palace of Westminster  
by Diane Abrams, Archaeology Lead, Houses of Parliament Restoration and Renewal



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
INSTITUTE

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