

# WAS Newsletter - February 2023

## Upcoming Events



**Saturday 11th February 2023 (New Hall at 11 for 11.15 am)** - “The Lost Towers of Winchelsea”. It will include discussion of the Roundle in Castle Field, the tower in the SW corner of the churchyard and the Greyfriars tower. What were these towers for - were they bell towers (for curfews), watch towers, clock towers, signal towers, navigation markers, remains of mills or places of refuge? How old might they be?

Members may also be interested in a talk at 2pm on 11th February in the Udimore Hall by Kathleen Tyson on “A New Geography of the Norman Conquest”; this is put on by the Friends of St Mary’s Church, Udimore. Kathleen is the author of a new translation of the Carmen Widonis; this was composed in 1067 to celebrate King William’s conquest of England. She discusses the importance of the Brede river basin in both the landings and ensuing battle.

Tickets £10 include tea and scrumptious cakes. Contact Liz Dean 01424 882206 to reserve a ticket.

**On Saturday morning March 18th 2023, WAS will hold a walk starting at 11am from the Beacon in Castle Field.** The walk is entitled 'Iham Bank And River Side'. A year ago, we walked around Castle Field and the Remains of the Mill and St Leonards Church. This time we look at the other half of Iham.

Iham preceded Winchelsea on the Hill of Iham and was a Cinque Port limb of Hastings in its own right. We believe St Leonard’s Church to have been Saxon in origin. Does the landscape of Iham Bank and River Side offer any other clues as to its early history?”

There will then be a break in these events as the 2023 cellar tours are launched in April.

## Cellar Tours

WAS works with FOAM to provide guided cellar tours on each Saturday morning from April to the end of October. These will start on Saturday 1st April. Bookings are already available at <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/foam> - our thanks to FOAM for setting this up.

## Pottery analysis

Phase 3 of the recording and analysis of the 90 crates of pottery sherds from the Blackfriars Barn cellar has been completed. The final phase 4 involves making the material available online.

## Membership

Membership fees were suspended during the COVID lockdown. It is proposed that with effect from 1 April 2023, WAS use a software package such as ‘membermojo’ to handle online applications and renewals, a central member database, group email distribution and membership cards. This will be discussed by the Committee at its next meeting. Offers of help would be much appreciated in setting this up.

## The Future

On Thursday 26th January the National Trust(NT) held in the New Hall an open session to talk about their new plans for approximately 600 acres they own at Wickham Manor Farm. Unfortunately I was unable to attend because of a dose of COVID. Merv and Berni were able to go and speak to many of the National Trust staff who were there.

I understand that the NT want WAS to be involved with the archaeological investigations associated with the change of land management envisaged. As yet I have not seen any documentation as to what the archaeology would involve.

Instead I learn that the Hastings and Area Archaeological Research Group (HAARG) have a licence for 12 months to carry out geophysics surveying at the south end of the town. I do not know how or if this fits into an overall strategy.

My view is that any investigations should be directed by the objectives of the work. As the Chairman's Report said at the last WAS AGM, one broad theme seems to stand out - the Hill of Iham prior to the arrival of New Winchelsea. Thus I would like to see a document which:

- explains the importance of Iham and the need for a programme focused on specific problems,
- identifies the individual projects within the programme,
- discusses ways in which these projects might be carried out.

Only then should details of who does what and when be sorted out.

So here are some pointers:

There are indications that St Leonards Church might be Saxon in origin. If so, it existed in some form at the time of the Norman Conquest. This is over 200 years before Winchelsea moved onto the top of Iham hill.

Various projects of interest are:

- the remains of St Leonards Church.
- the magnetometry data from Castle Field showing the outline of a motte and bailey.
- the existence of dwellings on Iham Bank.
- the site of Iham Harbour and Iham Bridge.

One project might be called "Iham River Side." WAS has already carried out resistivity surveying near St Leonards Well looking for evidence of the second Blackfriars friary. There is much more to be done looking at a potential Sea Wall and how St Leonards Creek has changed its route.

WAS is in the fortunate position that it has funds to assist with the research but is not biased towards any particular type of research; it can look dispassionately at the problems and help work out the best way to find a solution. Our biggest problem is finding whether there are enough individuals who would be interested in becoming involved in any aspect of the work.

Note that the NT recommends that WAS do not buy any equipment as it has recently set up a pool of archaeological survey equipment which might be borrowed for the research.

Please email Andrew at [andrewscottb@aol.com](mailto:andrewscottb@aol.com) or Merv at [mervynhack@sky.com](mailto:mervynhack@sky.com) for more details or if you are interested in joining the Society, helping on the Committee or assisting in the research or cellar tours.