

Shorne Woods Archaeology Group



Annual General Meeting - 11th December 2025

Venue: Rochester and Cobham Golf Club

Pauline Roland – Chairperson
John Townsend – Treasurer
Donald Blackburn – Secretary
John Beaumont – Publicity

Another year to be proud of our contribution in engaging and informing visitors of their local history.

Also, a massive thank you to Andrew for writing /compiling the Shorne Woods Booklet and to KCC and LTC for financially supporting its publication.

SWAG 2025 Activities

Summary of community events attendance figures for 2025 compared with 2024:

Date	Location	Activity	In Diary	Participants	2024
21.02.25	SWCP	Activity day.	Y	146	190
30.05.25	SWCP	Open Day/NNR display	Y	274	548
14.06.25	MPCP	Open Day	N	77	0
17- 20.07.25	SWCP	Festival of Archaeology	Y	65	205
25- 26.07.25	TCP	Fun Day/FoA	Y	307	318
08.08.25	SWCP	Family Fun Day	Y	215	240
02.09.25	SWCP	U3A	N	16	8
20.09.25	SWCP	Bexley YAC's and Cur8	N	19	0
18- 19.10.25	REM	Medway History Showcase.	N	51	88
24.10.25	SWCP	Halloween	Y	292	267

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Dig Team Activities:

January:

Plateau:

The year began with opening test pits alongside the path leading down to the plateau. Several test pits were dug and evidence of a wall(?) uncovered. Due to the dig's location alongside a footpath, the test pits were filled in again at the end of the day and no further work was conducted in this location.



Shorne Village Church:

On a fine winters day at the end of January, members of SWAG walked to Shorne Village where an excellent guided tour of Shorne Church, St Peter & St Paul, was given by Andrew Moffat.



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February:

Trosley CP:

Busy month starting with a visit to Trosley Country Park to find a suitable site for a family dig on the park's open day later in the year. We found (what turned out to be) several WWII hut bases close to one of the major pathways and within easy walking distance to the visitor centre.



First Aid Training:

Volunteers undertook First Aid training, financed by the LTC. It was both serious and fun. Everyone passed the exam at the end, but let's hope that our skills are never put to the test for real.



Gravesend Bowling Green:

A geophysical survey was conducted on the disused bowling green. The weather was foul and the results archaeologically disappointing. Fortunately, a later survey at the top of the hill proved to be more promising.



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Activity Day SWCP:

Shorne Woods Country Park's Activity Day saw 146 visitors take part in activities in the visitor centre's events room. It proved to be an enormous success with children and adults alike.



Plateau:

Work on the Plateau continued, with new walls being uncovered. No change there then 😊



March:

Better weather allowed us to GPS the trenches on the plateau in preparation for report writing and backfilling.



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April:

Plateau:

The plateau was cleaned in preparation for photographing and recording. A task that proved overwhelming for some.



May:

Greenwich Park:

Greenwich Roman Temple dig commenced with lots of interest from the locals. Note: official park volunteer clothing was being worn as required for this event.

Several trenches were opened for what proved to be an interesting and productive dig.



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SWCP's Open Day:

The Open Day was combined with a celebration of the establishment of the new Kent National Nature Reserve. Pauline was invited to the civic reception where she unveiled a commemorative plaque.



SWAG's contribution to the open day was an exhibition showing the work SWAG had undertaken to discover what remains of the park's history and a launch of the new park booklet. The exhibition was well attended with 274 visitors on the day.



June:

Greenwich Park:

The excellent Roman Temple Dig at Greenwich Park continued with Roman dated finds in abundance.

UCL's international students even provided us with a taste of their cultural snack food.



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Manor CP:

Manor Country Park invited SWAG to contribute to their Open Day. A table was setup for the children to design make their own mosaics. It proved to be very popular with the children as 77 took part.



Windmill Hill, Gravesend:

A dig on Windmill Hill, Gravesend was another huge success with Chantry school and the public taking part. Some of the children enjoyed the dig so much that they dragged their parents along on at the weekend and have attended other SWAG events. Despite the overwhelming heat we had 110 visitors.

It was also a success archaeologically, as the foundations of number of buildings shown on old maps and photographs were uncovered.



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July:

Festival of Archaeology:

SWAG had 65 members of the public take part in uncovering a section of the Clayworks NGRW (narrow gauge railway) that we hadn't worked on before. A number of these visitors had been to other events SWAG had put on.



Trosley Country Park's Open Day:

Another SWAG contribution to the Festival of Archaeology. In January we had selected a site that we believed to be suitable for a public dig and so it proved. The remains of three WWII army buildings were uncovered by visiting children and adults during the dig. We had 307 Participants over the two days and some nice finds!



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August:

SWCP's family fun day:

Once again, we used the wooden framed dig pit with finds from some of SWAG's previous digs. These were supplemented with a few toy vehicles, provided by JT, which proved popular with the children that found them. Tile making also returned, and as last year proved extremely popular with children of all ages, as was the cave painting activity! We had 215 visitors on the day.



Lower Rainham Road:

A dig was undertaken at a house in Lower Rainham Road, where the homeowner had reported to KAS suggested that there could be interesting archaeology to be found in their garden.

Unfortunately, we were informed that the archaeology was found at a deeper level than we could hope to uncover in the time available. We did however uncover lots of brick, ceramics, glass etc. from what we believe to be a backfilled garden pond.



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September:

LTC Field Walking:

Field walking of the proposed tunnel feeder route across fields adjacent to Thong Lane. It was windy and cold out in the fields exposed to the north winds. The finds were not life changing, but it was an interesting experience, especially as we all had to dress in PPE for the occasion.



Plateau's Final Day:

The plateau was laid to rest with all due ceremony. It has given us years of continued blood, sweat and tears for very few finds during that time.

Importantly however, it has added to our understanding of the history of the manor area and that of SWCP.



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October:

Brick Kiln?

So, a new chapter opens for SWAG. We started investigating bricks, tile etc. from a suspected brick kiln site on the edge of the park.



Halloween:

Due to poor weather the team couldn't setup the marquee the day before the Halloween family event. JT suggested using lean to next to the compound. It proved to be an excellent idea as we were able to setup and put away on the day with minimal fuss.

Witches bottles and the bone pit made a popular return. The day was a remarkable success with 292 adults and children visiting our offering.



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Whose Hoo project:

An initial two exploration days were undertaken by an enthusiastic bunch across the Cliff Marshes. Exhausting work completed with the usual good humour.



Medway History Showcase (Royal Engineers Museum):

Andrew, JB and JT represented SWAG, telling people about our activities at SWCP, giving out copies of our park's history booklet, and explaining the aims and objectives of the Whose Hoo Project.



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November:

It's a Brick and Tile Kiln:

The dig has already proven to have more datable finds than that of the plateau, and a brick structure has been found.

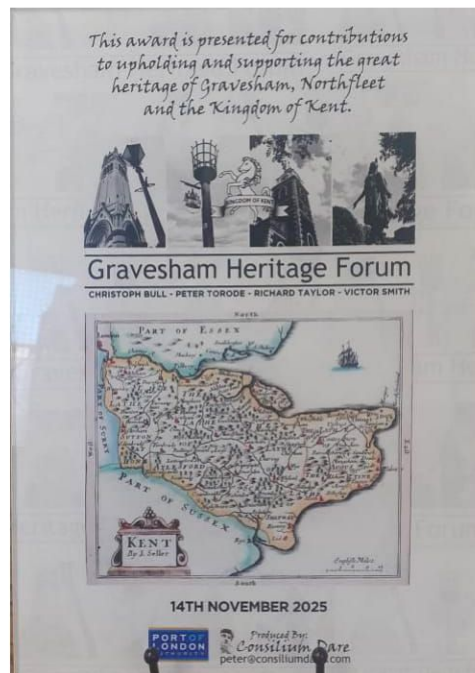
By the end of November, we had revealed 3 walls of the kiln.



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Gravesend Heritage Forum Award:

Pauline and JT accepted an award recognising our efforts in bringing heritage activities to the local community.



December:

Kiln Dig is ongoing.

Flint Friday Activities in 2025

The work on Flint Fridays is focused on the study of old collections of Palaeolithic Material currently curated by SWAG that need to be researched and analysed with the ultimate aim of sharing the outcomes of this work through appropriate publication.

1. Regular Friday Activities at Shore.

Research work has continued throughout the year mainly on the extensive Peter Tester Palaeolithic Collection mainly from North West Kent and the Lower Medway Area that was given to SWAG in 2017 and also on elements from other small collections including material from Gerald Cramp, J. Killick and de B. Crawshaw.

Stan has continued to analyse and record Peter Tester's donated 'Clactonian' Artefacts, which were found in the many river deposit levels at Barnfield Pit, Swanscombe (circa 1947-1955?).

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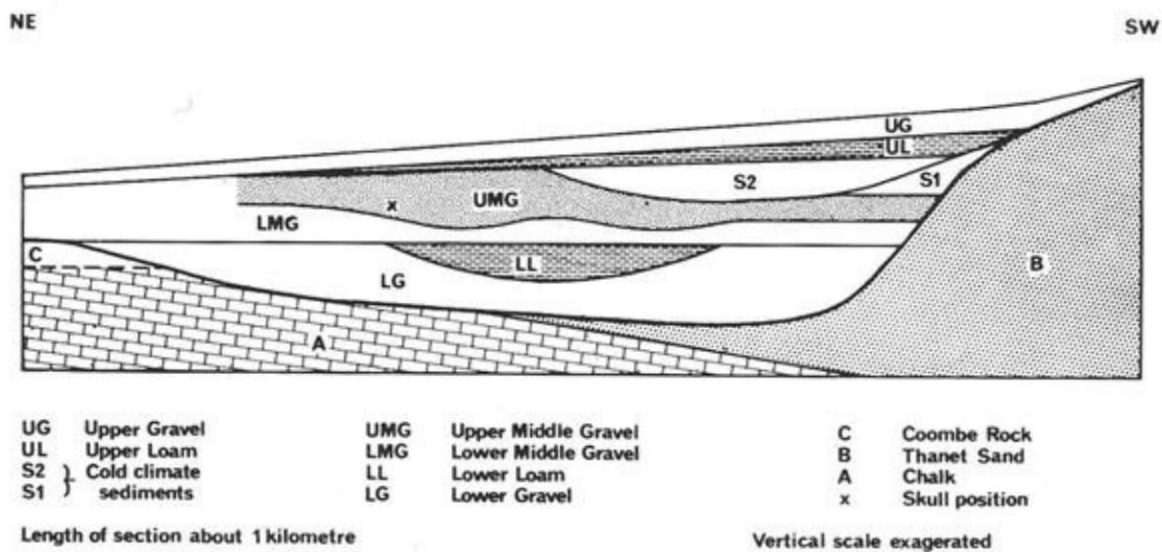


Figure 1 Diagrammatic cross-section through the '100-foot' terrace deposits at Swanscombe.

Note: the river flowed at a level 22 to 33 metres higher than present day and would have been several miles wide.

The lower gravels and lower loam (105 items) were completed earlier, and Stan has now started on artefacts collected from the middle gravels, which are later in age (100+ items). Stan also completed a re-analysis of Peter Tester's artefacts found in the Darent Valley (89 items), in the light of the experience gained with the Swanscombe material. The aim here is to identify any Clactonian link to Eynsford and surrounding area with a 'likely' probability but this is not conclusive so far and really requires independent analysis by knowledgeable people who understand the peculiarities of the 'Clactonian' lithic industry.

Frank has studied and researched material from Rickson's Pit and Cuxton - both key sites in the British Lower Palaeolithic. Peter Tester was the last person to collect from Ricksons Pit at Swanscombe before it was completely removed. His collection from here is part of his retained collection at Shorne. He also led the first Palaeolithic excavations at Cuxton.

Frank has also compared this material to other parts of the Tester collection and Lower Palaeolithic items in other collections that are all now curated by the British Museum.

Publications

- The second paper on the Lower Palaeolithic Material found at Twydall from 1908 to circa 1930. has now been returned to the editors of *Lithics* after further revision by Frank and will be published in *Lithics 42* next year and earlier online.
- Work is now under way on a paper about the Lower Palaeolithic finds made on the first day of digging at Cuxton in October 1962. A Roman site was anticipated but instead fourteen handaxes and a quantity of flakes were found. This part of the Cuxton collection did not go to the British Museum but was retained by Peter Tester and is now at Shorne.

Frank Beresford & Stan Matthews

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Finds Team

The finds team have been kept busy this year with a variety of sites.

The team lost one member, Amanda Hebbert, when she and Bruce moved to Lymington. Before she left, we spent some time with Andrew sorting out the dating and stratigraphy of the Kitchen at Randall Manor where Amanda had been an important member of the excavation team working on the kitchen. Amanda is much missed!

At the beginning of the year, we were processing flints from the KAS dig at Lees Court.

The KAS/SHAL excavation at Lymne produced soil samples which we are floting.

We also processed and catalogued the finds from the Shorne Platform dig near Randall Manor with enthusiastic help from Dylan.

We started floting soil samples from the KCC Shottenden excavation of a Bronze Age Hoard. Unfortunately, the hosepipe ban meant that we had to stop floting and finish with dry sorting the remaining soil samples to extract sizeable CU fragments. Simon did most of the work on this and was a great help.

The Sussex Place excavation and the exploration at Windmill Hill, both for Gravesham Borough Council, produced a variety of finds which we processed and catalogued across the year. One particularly interesting find from Windmill Hill was a broken piece of a flagon/beer pot with incised inscription which gave enough information for John Townsend (J T) to research and discover that this came from the Belle Vue Hotel and Tavern showing that the licensee was Alfred Beard who was there from 1874. Thank you JT!

The finds from the Clayworks railway dig and Mote Park were also processed and catalogued.

We are currently nearing completion of the finds from Trosley 2024 and Trosley Fun Day 2025, the latter being a community Dig.

We were fortunate to be given the opportunity to process, and catalogue finds from Higham Marshes and Foreshore collected by Steve Trim. We enjoyed learning from Steve about the pottery produced by kilns in the marshes dating from the Roman period.

Finally, we welcome to the Finds Team, Susan Atkins, who now lives in Broadstairs and will be working remotely digitising our finds catalogues. Sue has had a lot of experience working on the Uncovering Roman Carlisle.

Anne Cross and Gill Cramp

27/11/2025

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And finally, something for the Steam Train Railway Enthusiasts Specials Subgroup (STRESS):

LNER Thompson Class B1 61306 steam locomotive named *Mayflower*.



LNER Thompson Class B1 No. 61306 *Mayflower* is a 4-6-0 steam locomotive built in 1948 at the North British Locomotive Company to a design by Edward Thompson. It was employed for hauling mixed traffic trains on British Railways' Eastern, North Eastern, and Scottish Regions until it was bought for preservation in 1967, during which it was renumbered and given its current name.

In 2019, *Mayflower* emerged from an extensive overhaul and is certified for running on the British mainline.
Info from Wikipedia.

As can be seen from all the above, what a massive year of work has been undertaken by all SWAG members this year and it's looking like 2026 will be just as busy!

An enormous thank you to everyone for your efforts and dedication.

Don Blackburn -SWAG Secretary

HAPPY CHRISTMAS and may all your 2026 finds be of historical importance.

Note from Andrew:

I just wanted to give a heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in SWAG projects over the past year. You continue to wow and amaze people with your skills, knowledge, good humour and enthusiasm. The list of achievements this year is as stupendous as ever. A very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all!