

# Shooting the stones: recording the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic record of Sussex

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The Palaeolithic record provides an important archive of human behaviour in evolutionary time currently spanning some 3.3 million years. The record for Britain now provides evidence for the last million years of that time span, in a geographical zone that sits always at the limits of the hominin environmental range. The Sussex record for the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic currently spans a period between 60,000 and 40,000 years before present, including a larger number of un-contextualised find spots through to high-resolution signatures of hominin behaviour from fine-grained deposits. The record of the period for Sussex is relatively large, historically important and internationally significant and material is currently curated across several different Sussex museums as well as the British and Pitt Rivers Museums outside of the county.

Our archives for the county have been reviewed and collated on at least three different occasions: first by Derek Roe in the 1960s, then in considerable detail by Andrew Woodcock in the later 1970s and most recently as a desk-based exercise by John Wymer in the mid-1990s. Consequently, it has been over 20 years since these records have been systematically revisited, and over 40 years since the physical collections for the county have been assessed. A case has been building for some time to revisit, document and assess the current extent, status and research value of collections relating to the county's Palaeolithic record with a view to presenting a new gazetteer for Sussex. The key component will be a collection of high-resolution images and, potentially, 3D scan records to allow remote global access to the material via interactive mapping.

### The Barbican House Palaeolithic pilot study

The vast majority of Lower and Middle Palaeolithic Artefacts from Sussex were documented by Andrew Woodcock as being present in Barbican House Museum in Lewes during the 1970s; it therefore represents the core collection of Palaeolithic material for the county. Undertaking the relocation, collection review and



Odd flints Box B; 1983-35-1 Bout coupe hand axe from Billingshurst



Garraway Rice Box 4, A092; flakes

photographic documentation of the Barbican House collection has been the first significant step towards reassessing the county's collection for this period.

To date we have worked on a small subset of the material to assess the time taken in order to calculate the time required for a full collection review and capture. The pilot project has so far captured high-resolution photographs of 26 selected artefacts alongside updated descriptions of the material.

In time, a report on the Palaeolithic record of the collection at Lewes Museum will be presented for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. This will feed

directly into up-to-date records in the HER as well as creating an accurate accessions register as necessary.

**Public benefit: data use and open access**

It is intended that the data gathered in the pilot study will be used for academic research, cultural resource management and education. The public will benefit from the work through updated HER records, 'soft' access to important parts of the Barbican House collections, and a solid academic basis on which to develop new contexts, lectures and projects that provide access for the public to the Palaeolithic record of the county.

**Matt Pope**

Matt is a Palaeolithic archaeologist based at the UCL Institute of Archaeology working in both commercial and UK Resource Centre spheres. His work involves integrating geoarchaeological understanding of sedimentary context with the interpretation of artefact assemblages. This is necessary to arrive at an accurate understanding of early humans in Northern Europe in terms of their technology, ecology and society. His focus of research is split between the half million-year-old open-air site of Boxgrove and the younger, Neanderthal archaeology from La Cotte de St Brelade Jersey. He joined ClfA three years ago, recognising the important role it could play in raising standards and harmonising approaches to this complex part of the archaeological record. He's recently become a specialist assessor for Validation Committee, which helps him to think about his own practice and how it relates to that of peers in the discipline.

**Lisa Fisher**

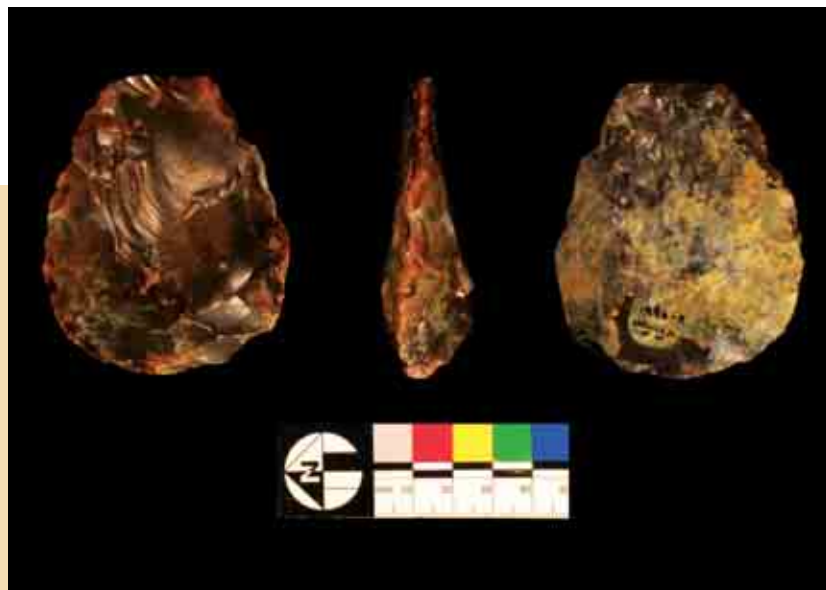
Lisa is proprietor of Archaeology Services Lewes, undertaking various commercial projects including historic building surveys and desk-based assessments.

Having had a passion for archaeology for 20 years, she completed an MA in field archaeology in 2010. She set up the Sussex School of Archaeology in 2013, which she managed for two years before leaving in 2015 to work full-time on her business. She also worked part-time as PA to Professor Peter Drewett before his untimely death in 2013 and was a trustee of the Sussex Archaeological Society from 2013 to 2016.

More recently Lisa has published a paper in *Archaeology of the Ouse Valley, Sussex, to AD 1500*, Archaeopress 2016, with another paper in Oxbow's forthcoming *Archaeology and land-use of South-East England to 1066*.



found in Alfriston, 1912 and 1907



Odd flints box H2 (Box 31); hand axe found in Hassocks, 1973-3