



# Newsletter 64 Autumn 2016

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## Furnaces and Field names

**Geraldine Crawshaw**

2013 My first summer meeting as a new member of WIRG Quite daunting but the group around the table eating sandwiches seemed pretty friendly. I plucked up the courage... "I've been making a list of the field names from the Maresfield tithe map, that could relate to iron works; the location of mine pits..."

They glanced at the old exercise book where I had made the list... Pitt Field, Forge Wood, Minepit Wood, Furnace Bank, Great Hammer Head... Someone said "it might make an interesting article."

But surely here were clues to Wealden landscapes where mining etc. took place but were often no longer visible. This should be valuable in looking at the wider picture of the iron industry. Names such as Minebrook, Furnace Pit, Budletts (where ore was washed) and Cinderbank could all be accurately located on the 19<sup>th</sup> Century tithe maps.

I saw a positive use for these field names (probably only a fraction of those surviving from ironworking times 200-300 years before) I'm looking at 'the sphere of influence' when I became involved in the Roberstbridge Project. Armed with a copy of the 1840 tithe map and apportionments for the parish of Salehurst (in which Robertsbridge lies), I listed then plotted any field name that might be relevant to the industry there.

I included and land labelled "pit" as it could have been a mine pit, a marl pit or a clay pit and quite likely, all three at various times.

Ponds (water logged pits) were also marked as well as field names which must have had an association with iron working, such as; Furnace Field Shaw, Forge Brook, Butletts Plantation, Cinderburys, Pond Bay Shaw, Colliers Field.

On this one parish tithe map alone were 154 possible ironworking related locations, of which 72 field names were included the word pit.

Finding each field number amongst almost 2000 others

took a long time; often using two magnifying glasses on top of one another! But the finished map was good and showed the distances from which ore was transported to the furnace sites, where the ore was washed, where wood was coppiced for charcoal. Just from those field names that had survived a few hundred years.

I then wanted to superimpose the local geology map on to the tithe map, to see how important the outcrop of

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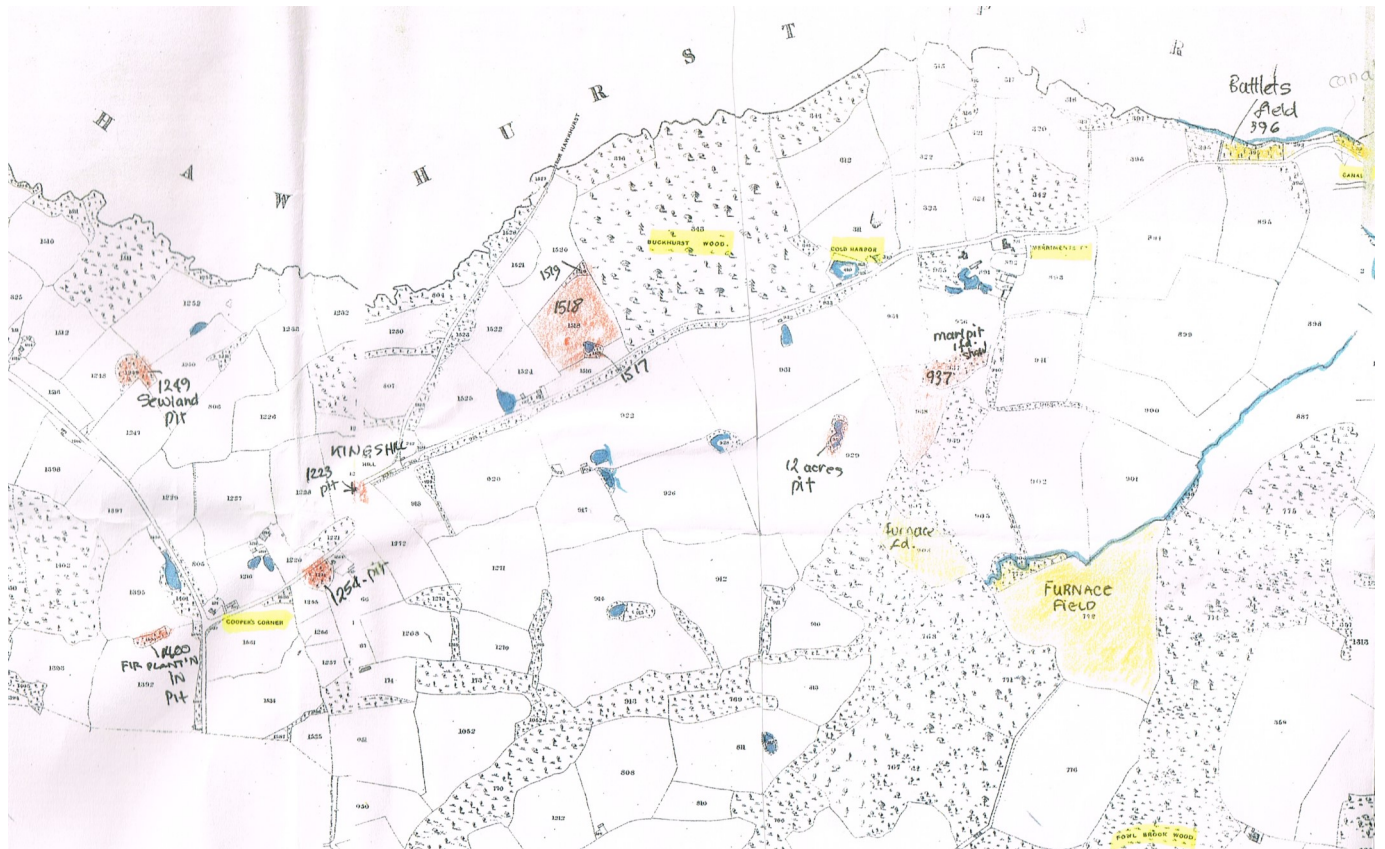
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**A small section of one of Gerry's maps. Please see Robertsbridge Ironworking Landscape Project report on p.7 of this newsletter.**

Wadhurst Clay (the base layers of which produce iron ore) actually was.

David Brown spent many hours digitally redrawing the tithe map, then overlaying the geology for me. On a very large scaled-up copy, I then re-marked all the iron related fields.

The result was brilliant, almost every pit and pond was in the Wadhurst Clay, especially where the clay meets the Ashdown Sands i.e. at the base of the clay

deposit.

I have since produced similar maps for the parishes of Chiddingly and Mountfield but they are yet to receive the geological overlay.

This seems to be a very useful method for determining the influence of iron working on the wider Wealden landscape.

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***And for those who like a nice bit of ordnance...***

We have received this holiday pic from Jeremy Prescott.

It's a mortar that is now located in Corfu.

It bears the mark TW which is interpreted as Thomas Western. The mortar was probably cast at Brede (site now mostly beneath the Powdermill reservoir).

The interpretation board states that it's a 1000 pound mortar with a twenty inch bore and a maximum range of 550 yards. The "pounds" are described as "thin venetian pounds", so 1000 lbs. translates as about 340 kg. We can deduce from this that its projectiles were hollow and presumably filled with black powder.



## Keeping in touch: please help boost WIRG

It would save a good deal of time and effort if communication between WIRG and its members was carried on by email. It would also save a good deal of money now that postage has become relatively more expensive, and much more expensive for any item that's bigger than usual. Please send the treasurer an email saying "notify me of WIRG business by

email". You could add "and send me the Newsletter by email so that I can get it in colour".

The bulletin *Wealden Iron* will continue to be sent by post.

The treasurer, Shiela Broomfield, keeps the definitive list of members. Please contact her: [s.broomfield@clementi.demon.co.uk](mailto:s.broomfield@clementi.demon.co.uk)

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## WIRG sponsored PhD. studentship



**Ethan at work at Chitcombe site near Broad Oak**

The goals of this project are to develop a clear method for the investigation of technological waste on Romano-British iron production sites, and...

- ◆ compare and contrast the results from different sites particularly with respect to scale and organisation
- ◆ develop a holistic approach to understanding the links between technology, human society and the social, economic and political dy-

namics of iron production in the Weald and...

- ◆ compare Wealden sites with Roman iron production sites elsewhere.

The methods I'm using desk based assessments of the sites and geophysical surveys using magnetometry and ground penetrating radar. Once my survey results have been analysed an area will be chosen for excavation. The excavation will involve in depth recording of the stratigraphy of the waste heap, including drawings, photos and weight measurements, with samples being taken from each stratigraphic layer for post excavation analysis.

There are a number of different discussions that could emerge from this project. The first will be the comparison between the excavation results and the Geophysical surveys. This could lead to a clearer understanding of how the waste heap is imaged by the different types of techniques with the potential of being able to link the ground penetrating radar results to specific stratigraphic layers. With more detailed analysis of waste heaps I hope a more accurate understanding of the yield of sites can will emerge. this could help answer questions such as "how much wood was needed?" and "is this an indicator of woodland management systems" and "how many people would have been needed to run a site?" Also is there a difference in the way waste heaps are formed on different sized sites and is there a difference *between* the eastern and central sites of the Weald?

I am hoping that this project will bring new information to light that can be applied to the industry as a whole and open up new avenues for future research in the Weald. I am also hoping that that this project will raise the profile of local archaeology and bring in a new generation of members to the Wealden Iron Research Group that can carry on research into the Weald throughout their academic career or just as a hobby.

*Ethan Greenwood*

**PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE: contact Brian Herbert (brianherbert@btinternet.com)**

	PRICE	
	BY POST (UK)	AT MEETINGS
<i>British Cast-Iron Firebacks of the 16th to Mid 18th Centuries</i> , J. Hodgkinson (2010)	24.99*	<b>24.99*</b>
<i>The Wealden Iron Industry</i> , Jeremy Hodgkinson (2008)	15.99*	<b>15.99*</b>
<i>Excavations of a Late 16th/Early 17th c. Gun-casting Furnace at Maynard's Gate, Crowborough, Sussex, 1975-1976</i> , O. Bedwin.	2.00	<b>1.50</b>
<i>A Middle-Saxon Iron Smelting Furnace Site at Millbrook, Ashdown Forest, Sussex</i> , C. F. Tebbutt.	2.00	<b>1.20</b>
<i>The Fieldwalker's Guide and an Introduction to the Iron Industries of the Weald</i> , B. K. Herbert.	4.00	<b>3.50</b>
<i>Metallurgical Analysis of Ferrous Alloy Produced in a Primitive Furnace.</i> R. C. D. Sampson & B. K. Herbert.	5.00	<b>4.00</b>
<i>The Penhurst to Ashburnham leat: a first foray + map</i> (2007)	2.25	<b>1.50</b>
<i>The Penhurst to Ashburnham leat: a second foray + maps</i> (2007)	2.25	<b>2.00</b>
<i>The Penhurst to Ashburnham leat: the flow rate + graphs + map</i> (2007)	3.25	<b>2.50</b>
<i>Fernhurst Furnace</i> . Chichester District Archaeology No. 2, J. Magilton (ed.).	14.00	<b>12.00</b>
<i>Second series Bulletins: -</i>		
Volumes 1 to 24 (1981 to 2004)	each 2.00	<b>1.50</b>
Volumes 25 to 35 (2005 to 2015)	each 2.50	<b>2.00</b>

**WIRG contacts:****Chairman: Bob Turgoose bobturgoose@yahoo.co.uk****Hon. Secretary: Tim Smith tjsmith560@btinternet.com****Treasurer: Shiela Broomfield s.broomfield@clementi.demon.co.uk****Editor of Wealden Iron: Jeremy Hodgkinson jshodgkinson@hodgers.com****Newsletter Editor: Jonathan Prus jonathan@avens.co.uk****A note about East Lynden Forge**

In his article on this forge in *Wealden Iron*, second series, vo1. 36, part I (2016) Tim Smith deduces from the name Upper Pond Shaw that 'there should also be a lower pond'. That depends on reading it as Upper Pond Shaw, but it can equally be read as Upper Pond Shaw, implying a Lower Pond Shaw that had ceased to exist by 1840 or by then had another, alternative or replacement, name. *If* that is the case, then a lower pond will be sought in vain.

Alternative names are not uncommon. In 1841, for example, the field-names in the Brambletye estate

auction particulars are not all identical with those in the tithe schedule of the same date. Probably the former derived from earlier documents, the latter from what the surveyor was told by the person who escorted him round, either as used by the contemporary farm-workers or even perhaps made up on the spot.

Even when tithe schedule place-names are the earliest forms we have, we must be alert to the possibilities that they may be read in more than one way and that they may not have originated in the distant past.

M. J. Leppard

## ***The new chairman of WIRG: Bob Turgoose***

It was a privilege to be elected chairman at the 2016 AGM. I have been a member of WIRG since 2010 and joined the committee in 2014. I originally joined WIRG because I discovered pieces of what I later learned to be iron slag in my small wood in East Sussex. I wanted to know how this material came to be buried in a Sussex wood until it was brought to the surface by rabbits or badgers. The search for an answer has led to a fascinating trail of work, including surface investigation, excavations, inquiries into previous owners of the land (Robertsbridge Abbey for over 350 years until the dissolution) and analysis of the slag, ore and furnace lining uncovered by digging. In short the investigation encapsulated most of WIRG's activities and drew on the skills and experience of many of its members. (The 2016 Bulletin contains the Interim Report.)

I have been a woodland owner since 2002 but it is only since joining WIRG that I began to understand the inter-relationships between woodlands in the



Weald and the iron industry. WIRG has provided the opportunity to visit many woods not usually accessible to the public and to see how they are managed or these days often unmanaged for lack of a market for their products.

Until retirement some years ago I worked as an economist for PWC and then spent eight years as a member of the Competition Commission. I hope I will be able to bring some different and hopefully useful skills to the committee.

As you are aware WIRG has a wide range of activities which are reported in this and other Newsletters. Volunteers are often required and this Newsletter has some requests for help. In addition the Committee want to take the available opportunities to publicise WIRG's activities as widely as possible to raise awareness throughout the Weald of the past iron industry, especially among landowners both large and small, in the hope that potential new sites will be drawn to our attention, and most importantly that we will gain new members. To these ends WIRG has had stands at three events this year and has been invited to the Wakehurst Wild Wood event in spring 2017. The support of members to staff the WIRG stand at this and other events in 2017 would be much welcomed.

WIRG has transformed our understanding of the iron industry since it was founded in 1968 by Henry Cleere and David Crossley. However, the work of exploration is not yet complete, some locations with promising geology have seemingly remained unexplored, and some sites looked at decades ago may benefit from re-examination and possible re-assessment. In this we need to ensure we are making the best use of techniques such as LIDAR that were not available to WIRG's pioneers. The original aims and objectives of WIRG referred to a ten-year period of research, after 48 years much has been accomplished but there is still much to do.

Bob Turgoose

## ***Some other changes...***

***Christopher Whittick becomes President of WIRG***

***Jeremy Hodkinson becomes editor of the bulletin "Wealden Iron" following...***

***Tim Smith takes on the role of Hon Secretary***

***Jonathan Prus becomes editor of this newsletter.***

***Problems with his health have compelled David Crossley (a founder member of WIRG) to relinquish the editorship of the Bulletin after forty two years. The size and scope of his contributions to our shared areas of interest make the common words of praise and thanks redundant.***

## **Sheffield 'Steel City' visit 7-9 April 2017: a WIRG field trip.**

We intend to make a weekend visit to Sheffield Friday 7 to Sun 9 April 2017 to explore the iron related heritage of South Yorkshire.

Anticipating various arrival times for people on Friday – we will make a short visit to Shepherds Wheel, a water powered grinding mill for the cutlery trade, that afternoon but the main visits will be on Saturday and Sunday. (The actual order in which the planned events happen may change as circumstances change!)

For Saturday morning, I have arranged a guided tour around Wortley Top Forge - an industrial museum set in the oldest surviving water-powered heavy iron *forge* in the world. It was famous for its wrought iron railway axles and boasts two water powered helve hammers, as well as a bar mill, and a wide selection of engines and tools.



**Rockley blast furnace, Barnsley**

Following a two hour visit we will drive to Rockley blast furnace dating from 1698 This survives to full height and was originally charcoal fired but apparently later converted to coke. This was excavated by David Crossley some years ago, and includes a casting pit (now filled in) not for ordnance, but to cast cylinders to crush sugar cane.

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### **Field group activities**

If you want to be kept informed about WIRG field activities please let Tim Smith (WIRG Hon. Secretary) know your email address and that you are interested in field activities. Email him at [tjsmith560@btinternet.com](mailto:tjsmith560@btinternet.com). Unfortunately the post is too expensive to send letters to every member for every activity.

Field activities include searching for new iron working sites, archaeological investigation and landscape searches (see, for example, the Robertsbridge Iron-working Landscape project on p. 7 of this newsletter.)

Alternatively you could flag up your interest with treasurer Shiela Broomfield ([s.broomfield@clementi.demon.co.uk](mailto:s.broomfield@clementi.demon.co.uk)) when you email her to ask for your colour newsletter to come by email.

I still have to decide on the afternoon visit – possibly to Ecclesall Wood which was one of many woodlands providing charcoal to Sheffield and contains a monument to a collier who burnt to death – as well as evidence of charcoal platforms, and, I am told, a reconstruction of a clamp. However, should weather be bad, we may seek an alternative at the Magna Centre, Rotherham – a former steelworks turned into a technology exploration centre which still retains an electric arc furnace made to come to life with a sound and light show.

On Sunday we take a walking tour of Sheffield's industrial past including a visit to the only extant cementation furnace – for making steel from wrought iron bar - surviving in this 'City of Steel'. We then proceed to visit the only remaining crucible furnace at Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet, then Kelham Island museum.

The cost? As before we will minimise these by sharing lifts and using a motorway hotel – Day's Inn Sheffield, Welcome Break Service Station, M1 J30. The hotel room rate is £86-70 for the two nights excluding breakfast at £5-95/p/day. The total charge for the trip will include the room but not breakfast so you will have a choice.

I am still awaiting the cost of tours – there is an entrance fee for Wortley, Kelham and Abbeydale and a charge for guided tours but hotel, tours and mileage should not set us back more than around the £160 that we made for Ironbridge last year.

I have provisionally booked 7 rooms at the hotel, unfortunately only double beds are available but single occupancy is possible.

If you intend to come please contact me on [tjsmith560@btinternet.com](mailto:tjsmith560@btinternet.com) as soon as possible, or by mail to 15 Hazelwood Road, Partridge Green, Horsham, W Sussex RH13 8EX.

*For those who want a preview of the attractions on this trip there is a wealth of information available on the internet.*

## Volunteering at The Keep

Since gaining my history degree I've been volunteering at The Keep for three days a week, and I've catalogued several collections. Cataloguing – well, it can be a long process! You need a slightly different skill-set to what's required for a degree. It's not really about researching, it's more about organisation, sorting the clutch of papers in front of you into meaningful groups, and within those, in chronological order. I list them by date, title and give a short description and reference number. The idea is to make them accessible to the public as soon as we can.

'The most interesting project I've worked on recently is a collection of letters from Stephen Fuller, the Sussex ironmaster. There are 150 in all, spanning about five years. Fuller owned an ironworks in Brightling which made cannon for the British government and his correspondence reveals unexpected details about his personal life and the local area – I'd never worked on anything with such a local focus. The iron furnaces relied on a constant supply of wood and Fuller gets angry with his workers when he thinks they've paid too much for it. He also hates it when he feels another local ironworks is undercutting him.

'I've started looking at the Fuller family account books and those too are full of detail which wouldn't show up in any other source. Here there's information

about his employees and farm tenants, records of contracts to haul the cannon from Sussex to Kent and on to the Arsenal at Woolwich (with the contractors' making their marks instead of signing their names), accounts for hiring Morris dancers at festivals and records of payments to his son's writing master. Women often feature as farm tenants in their own right – renting in their own name – which I thought was interesting as this means they were doing business on their own terms. I've lived in Sussex all my life but I didn't know about any of this stuff!

*Rosemary Lynch*

### Rosemary at work



## ***A good trip. WIRG members visit Ironbridge.***

Earlier this year a group from WIRG visited Ironbridge to look at the way in which the iron industry unfolded there.

Sites visited included the charcoal furnace at Leighton which is conveniently located within an excellent pub (The Kynnersley Arms). Members of the group decided to eat there on the two evenings of the trip. The interpretation of this site is a problem made worse by the nineteenth century water wheel whose orientation confuses matters. But the problem was fun to tackle.

We looked at Abraham Darby the first's innovative coke fired furnace detail. Later the group worked its way down towards the River Severn, following the complex evolution of iron production in the gorge. (The weather was bitterly cold but the physical activity just about compensated for that.)

The working cupola furnace at Blists Hill provided both warmth and interest. A run of liquid iron takes some beating for excitement.

On the last morning the group visited the famous bridge and then the blast furnaces at Bedlam.

We were lucky to be guided through the area local archaeologist (and photographer) Richard Hayman whose doctoral thesis is about the Shropshire wrought iron industry and who used to work for the

Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust. He provided interpretation with more sophistication than that available to most visitors.

Next year's expedition is to the Sheffield area. See page six of this newsletter for the details. Book early to get your place on what promises to be a great trip.

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## ***Robertsbridge Iron-working Landscape project.***

The last Wealden Iron Bulletin contained an interim report on the Scott's Hollow site. This is probably a complex of iron-working sites from the bloomery period. Its relationship with the Robertsbridge Abbey estates has yet to be fully worked out.

Bob Turgoose is going to organise access to some of the places that Gerry Crawshaw has identified as possible/probable ore pits for the bloomeries and for the blast furnaces. There will be a series of forays to compare the map evidence with what's really on the ground.

Members (and friends) are welcome to join these investigative trips. To receive notification please email Bob at [bobturgoose@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bobturgoose@yahoo.co.uk)

## WIRG Summer stands

During the summer, WIRG took the newly created information boards and a display of various iron related artefacts – ore; slag; bloomery iron, a proofing cannon ball, photographs – and even Simon’s model cannon and Victor’s clay base of a reproduction bloomery furnace - to three events covering east, central and the west of the Weald.



Thirsty work, all that talking

Starting in Kent at the Biddenden Tractor Festival 20-21 August, on a very windy and somewhat wet Saturday, we erected the tent Friday afternoon and set out the display Saturday. Such was the wind that the display boards had to be packed away and the tent held down despite additional guy ropes attached. Fortunately, Sunday was sunny and calm, and the full display could be set out. Much interest was shown at this well attended event, and many leaflets and some membership forms taken by visitors.

Two weeks later, on 3-4 September, we were in East Sussex at the Pippingford ‘Into the Trees’ event. On arriving



Setting out our stall at Fernhurst

on a drizzling Friday afternoon to set up the tent we were invited instead to use their marquee, an offer we gladly accepted. While not as busy as Biddenden, and again, with a rather wet Saturday but sunny Sunday, we received much interest, in particular people wishing to attend the next smelt of WIRG’s experimental furnace which is located at Pippingford.

A week later we were in West Sussex at Fernhurst Furnace for 10 & 11 September. Fernhurst hosts an annual Civil War enactment as well as conducted tours of the furnace site. Yet again, Saturday was wet so we had the display inside the tent but Sunday was, thankfully, bright. Much interest was shown, leaflets taken and samples brought in for us to identify. All with the aroma of gunpowder and lamb roasting on a spit – who can beat that!

So far, five new members have joined, three for certain resulting from these events. We are hopeful that others will join having taken leaflets and/or application forms away with them. In addition, the display boards have already been used at several ‘inside’ events with others to come.

My thanks to all those who came to help man the various events.

Tim Smith

***The Iron Industry of the Weald.***

***Henry Cleere and David Crossley.***

***(1985, second edition 1995 edited by Jeremy Hodgkinson)***

***Now available **free** as a pdf file.***

***This important book has been out of print for some years. The WIRG committee has commissioned a professional-quality scan. Very shortly it will be available for download from the WIRG website [wealdeniron.org.uk](http://wealdeniron.org.uk)***

Diary date:

WIRG Summer Meeting and  
AGM: July 15 2017

Details to be confirmed



## ***New President for the Wealden Iron Research Group: Meet Christopher Whittick***

I am surprised, flattered and not a little unnerved that the Wealden Iron Research Group has honoured me by appointing me its president. Although I have been an archivist in East Sussex for 39 years many members will not know me, and even those who do may



**Christopher Whittick with a Chancery writ relating to Mountfield Furnace, 1694 (ESRO AMS 7115)**

be interested to learn something of the slightly unusual route which brought me to the county in which I have spent almost two-thirds of my life.

Born in Wolverhampton in 1952, I had a conventional education, first at a grammar school in Wrexham and then at Birkenhead School in the Wirral. My outlook was influenced by my mother's upbringing, in the 1920s, in the household of Sir Henry Farnham Burke, the Garter King of Arms, who had married her eccentric great-aunt. My bedtime stories were of arms and armour, heraldry, kings and queens and charters, an inheritance against which my father's more conventional and prosaic character and business background stood little chance. At the age of ten or so I well remember sitting down with my mother, a Latin dictionary and the text of the Domesday entry for Chester in a hesitant but fascinating attempt at a translation. My interest in the past was unfocussed, and the proximity of a major Roman fortress, then undergoing 1960s redevelopment, drew me towards archaeology, which by my mid-teens had refined itself into an interest in Egyptology. I was a sixth-form classicist, but my father's astute move in arranging me a placement in a solicitor's office in the summer before I sat Oxford entrance in 1970 provoked a genuine interest in the law, and it was with enthusiasm that I went to Worcester College the following year to read jurisprudence. But old habits died hard, and in my first week at Oxford I joined the University Archaeological Society, and in 1973 gave my presidential lec-

ture on hieroglyphics and the Rossetta Stone. In retrospect, I now realise that neither history, archaeology nor law was my real passion – what really thrilled me, and still does, is the discovery and decipherment of recalcitrant texts.

After flirting with the idea of research into 15th-century lectures on the criminal law, and failing to get a place in the Diplomatic Service, in 1974 I went to Liverpool University to qualify as an archivist. I did pre-course work at Norwich (where I met and married Margaret Rutherford, who died in 1995); we both went to Cardiff in 1975 and to Lewes in 1977.

In those days, an archivist was a person who could read medieval documents, knew about administrative and legal history and was expected to develop a research interest. Already at Cardiff I had taught evening classes in Latin and palaeography, and I have continued teaching, largely to adult groups, ever since. For five years until my office's move began in 2013 I also lectured in palaeography and administrative history on the archive course at UCL. In 1974 Latin O Level was a prerequisite for entry onto the course, but such a stipulation is nowadays impossible, and as a result hardly any archivist trained in the last decade is fluent in medieval palaeography. This I regard with dismay and trepidation – the day is almost upon us when almost nobody employed in a county record office will be able to read even the basics of medieval documents, and of many more written before 1733 when the use of Latin in legal documents was finally abolished.

Very soon after coming to Lewes I joined the Sussex Archaeological Society, and until the appointment of a salaried chief executive in 1990 served as its Honorary General Secretary, a role in which I learnt more about the practicalities of the law than I ever did at Oxford. It was with the SAS that I first met John Farrant and Jeremy Hodgkinson, both members of a working party to revise the Society's aims and organisation. I am no longer involved in the Society's administration, but still sit on the editorial board of *Sussex Archaeological Collections* and serve as one of its vice-presidents. I am also a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Historical Society and an associate of the Artworkers' Guild, have been a trustee of the Sussex Historic Churches Trust since 1998 and became its chairman in 2010.

As well as contributing the occasional article to SAC and the WIRG *Bulletin*, I have contributed several entries to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, including the lives of four medieval bishops of Chichester and a family article on the Websters of

*Christopher Whittick, cont.*

Battle Abbey. My book *Accounts and records of the manor of Mote in Iden, 1442-1551, 1673*, co-authored with Dr Mark Gardiner of Queen's University, Belfast, was published by the Sussex Record Society in 2011. In 2012 I co-edited a volume of essays in honour of the legal historian Paul Brand. My interest is not limited to the medieval period – I have co-authored several books on the East Sussex artist Eric Ravilious, and articles on the models of the pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

My 39 years at East Sussex Record Office have been exceptionally rewarding, and I have been personally involved in the acquisition and listing of many thousands of records. We make new discoveries every day, and it is particularly satisfying to bring them to the attention of the people whose work I know they will assist. But just as William Morris's favourite cathedral was 'the one I happen to be in', an archivist can have no favourite document; after all, from the searcher's point of view, if a scruffy piece of paper bought on eBay for a fiver answers a 30-year quest, to them that document is more important than Magna Carta. It has been a great pleasure to encourage the development of the Friends of the Record Office, whose generosity in funding some spectacular purchases has put me in what is probably a unique position among my archival colleagues anywhere in the country in my ability to buy almost anything that is offered to us. If I had to choose the projects which have given me the most satisfaction it would be the completion of the Manorial Documents Register for Sussex and my catalogue of the Battle Abbey Archive at the Huntington Library in California which I completed, after 24 years' work, in 2015.

On my arrival in Sussex, one of my first pieces of research was into the medieval mill and 16th-century furnace excavated at Trolliloes in Herstmonceux. This was my introduction to the iron industry of the Weald, a subject in which I have maintained a close interest ever since. In the course of that work I met many people who have been my friends ever since and with whom I have often collaborated, chief among them David and Barbara Martin and the late Brian Awty and Pam Combes. Working with David and Barbara has been hugely influential, and as well as developing my interest in the application of archival evidence to standing buildings it has instilled in me a deep love of the Sussex landscape, its towns, villages and people.

The Wealden Iron Research Group must be one of the country's most active, focussed, industrious and purposeful voluntary bodies in the field of historical research, and with a publication record which is second to none. The enthusiasm, commitment and scholarship of its founders have been maintained by

those that have followed them, and the Group shows every sign of having a future ahead of it as illustrious as its past. In accepting the office of president I am acutely aware of the tradition into which I am stepping, the predecessors whose energy and achievements I must seek to emulate and the membership whose interests, expectations and hopes we must aspire to serve.

#### WIRG WINTER MEETING, 2017

2:30pm, Saturday, 28th January, 2017  
Speaker: Jonathan Prus,

"Choosing the right ore: some new insights into the craft skills of bloomery smelters in the Weald."

The presentation will be based on work carried out by Jonathan Prus and Jeff Leigh with colleagues from the University of Brighton. They have examined ore and slag from a number of sites in the Weald and found some unexpected results that seem to show that some, perhaps all, bloomery smelters in the Weald had a surprisingly sophisticated practice.

Nutley Memorial Hall, High St, Nutley, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 3NE.  
Free Entry - Coffee and cake after the meeting £2:50.

#### Autumn Discussion Meeting:

**Some Metallurgy for non-metallurgists**

**Tim Smith will lead this informal session. Ideas in metallurgy that help our understanding of Wealden iron.** Discussion of problems like grains and crystals in metal, annealing, tempering, cold-working, alloys and eutectics.

**Venue: Plough and Horses, Walshes Road, Jarvis Brook Nr. Crowborough, TN6 3RE.**  
**Time and date: 11.00 until 1.00, Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>. Nov.**