WINTER MEETING 2009

ALEX HILDRED
The Ordnance of the Mary Rose

Alex Hildred is the Curator of Ordnance for the Mary Rose Trust and has directed the site monitoring, survey and recovery of the Mary Rose since the lifting of a major portion of the hull in 1982 and has also been heavily involved with the recent excavations resulting in the finding and recovery of the stem (2003-2005). She joined the project in 1979 as a graduate archaeologist experienced mainly in land excavations. She is now writing up the armaments of the ship and this volume is due for publication in 2009. All this is very apparent in her extensive knowledge which she used in her intensive lecture to an enthusiastic audience. She began by telling the historical story of Henry VIII’s flagship from extensive documentary evidence including a fine illustration from the period. The documents included an inventory which has proved so interesting to the interpretation of the excavation.

The number of artefacts is astounding, 20,000 plus, and, of course, it is a continuing research project with the aim that as much as possible is published. There is a splendid website, www.maryrose.org, and I urge you to look at this if at all possible. The scholarship of the talk made it almost impossible to condense into a short article such as this – one thing that I did note was that no cast cannon were mentioned. The analysis has improved considerably the knowledge of casting of bronze cannon and of other types including wrought iron. Alex has also taken part in numerous reconstruction programmes including firing tests which showed how much damage would be caused by a broadside. No firm evidence has been found as to why the Mary Rose sank so spectacularly – one theory being that she was damaged by cannon fire from the lighters deployed ahead of the French fleet. There is no structural evidence for this on the Mary Rose as yet but with so much more in depth investigation continuing who knows? Even now more documentary evidence is coming to light especially important is a previously undiscovered archive located at Hatfield.
House. This is very much an ongoing project and perhaps one of the most important archaeological/historical researches in the twenty-first century.

We then broke for tea although I am sure that Alex could have continued for many hours! We decided that the short time left after would be devoted to questions and these proved many and varied pointing to the great interest of the subject. Even though the talk did not have much relevance to Wealden iron I am sure that we were all left with many more thoughts and questions on the whole world of armaments.

Alex informed us that the Mary Rose and the museum will be closed from the summer of 2009 while a new exhibition space is being constructed so urged a visit sooner rather than later. She announced that a superb exhibition of Mary Rose artefacts will be shown outside Portsmouth for the first time at the Whitgift Conference Centre in Croydon “Hidden Treasures from the Mary Rose”. It runs from 7th April until 7th August 2009 – more information on the Mary Rose website.

Shiela Broomfield

RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

The following have been received from Michael Lep- pard, to whom we are most grateful:

- **Wills** of people known to have had some involvement with the industry (there may of course be relevant clauses in other wills but the effort of looking for them would be disproportio nate to the likely result);

- **Inquests** on deaths at furnaces (e.g. the involuntary amputee mentioned in Newsletter 48 p.13, which would probably throw light on working practices);

- A **prosopography** of ironworkers - that is to say a database of people connected with the iron industry, such as ironmasters, artisans, owners, charcoal burners - however humble; such a list could be derived from parish registers, accounts, deeds, letters etc.

I suspect the first of these may have been partly undertaken already by several researchers engaged in separate projects, and the task would be to invite them to contribute the fruits of their researches.

Of the second, Dr R. F. Hunnisett has already published several volumes of Coroners’ Inquests from which such information could be gleaned.

The third suggestion is one I have been tempted to compile myself. It would be enormously useful in drawing together the people known to have been involved with particular works, or families who were engaged in a particular occupation through the generations, for example.

Ed.

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**WIRG PHOTO ARCHIVE**

David Brown would like members to let him make copies of photos and slides relating to WIRG - people, places, finds, forays, meetings etc. - he is particularly keen to have any pictures of Reg Houghton, whose death was reported in the last issue.

Please contact David if you have any you can loan him (details on back page).

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**FORAY REPORTS**

DECEMBER FORAY 2008

Cullinghurst Wood, Hartfield, East Sussex

This foray follows on from the foray in November 2007 which was filmed for television (see Newsletter 46).

**THE SLAG HEAP**

To the west of the north-south track, a further 0.6m of slag was dug out of the trench to a total depth of about 1.5m, however no pottery was found, and because of the wet, sticky conditions further digging was abandoned; a further 0.6m of slag was probed. The north-south track to the east may well hide the furnace structure. The existence of an area of roasted ore so close by, seems to confirm that this is a bloomery furnace site rather than re-deposited slag to shore-up the trackway.

**THE AREA OF ROASTED ORE**

The original east-west exploratory trench (A) was not re-opened but the short north-south trench (B), 0.6m wide, was re-opened and extended through the boundary bank and up to the ditch beyond, digging down to the subsoil. A lens of rather dark, small pieces of roasted ore was passed through (2), but only amounted to a depth of some 75mm and 0.25m wide, but this may be because it was at the end of a pit. The geology is Ashdown Sand and the soil is sandy. Once again, several pieces of Cyrena limestone were dug.
out; this is a mixture of bivalves in a matrix of siderite iron ore, which, although red, could not be detected on the metal detector. It is assumed that it has not been roasted and the redness is due to weathering. One piece, 150mm long, had much larger shells than had been seen before. The roasted ore area seems to have been dug towards the bottom of the boundary bank.

Three pieces of pottery were found (3), close to the top of the lens of small roasted ore pieces (2), one broken in antiquity the other at about 12:30 that day! Unfortunately, unlike a slag heap, pottery around an area of roasted ore is unlikely to be found where it may conclusively be associated with the roasting, especially in this case, where it is on/in a boundary bank and ditch. The pottery, probably all from the same pot, has been identified by Luke Barber, of Sussex Archaeological Society, as dating from between the late 13th and mid 14th century.

Fig. 2 shows the three pieces of pottery where all the edges broken in antiquity are the same colour as the pot's surface. Note the recently broken part! Fig. 3, shows the recently broken edges, where there is an inner, very coarse, black layer that is not seen on the edges broken in antiquity, inset 2x enlarged and the left-side piece. To give a vertical section through the edge of the area of roasted ore, a further 200mm spit was dug into the subsoil, starting to the south (4) (well away from the small, roasted ore), and continuing north. This section showed that below the bottom of the pit the soil was quite red for about 2 - 5mm down. The metal detector easily responded to a handful of the red soil and so it may confidently be assumed that it contains roasted ore fines that have passed into the sandy sub-soil.

The view onto the east side of the trench and to the south showed three more thin bands of red soil, with a tendency to gently curve upwards to the south. This could suggest different roasting sessions, but only at the edge of the pit. Immediately above the red soil was a yellow soil and quite hard, suggesting a hardening of the soil material due to heating, this could be due to the roasting process. Due to not having time to complete the dig, no evidence could be found about the dimensions of the roasted ore area, but this could be accomplished, on another visit, by taking another east-west cut above the small, roasted ore seen in the north-south section (2).

Brian Herbert

JANUARY FORAY 2009

Water features in Henfield Wood, Scaynes Hill, East Sussex

Sussex University is undertaking a long-term, interdisciplinary study on the River Ouse. A component of this study is a project to investigate headwater flooding and the biological means of alleviating it. Part of this involves identifying earlier water management in the valleys concerned. The purpose of this foray was to identify relict water management features, such as storage ponds, in certain valleys in the upper Ouse basin, and while doing so note any ironworking sites found.

The purpose of this foray was to identify relict water management features, such as storage ponds, in certain valleys in the upper Ouse basin, and while doing so note any ironworking sites found.

Henfield Wood and Costells Wood (see map overleaf) are areas selected for botanical investigation by a team led by Dr Margaret Pilkington, Senior Lecturer Emeritus, University of Sussex. It is not an area
known to have been previously explored by WIRG. The site of Freshfield Forge lies further downstream (TQ 386245).

**Description of Foray** (see map above)

Meeting at Great Walstead School, the party walked along the track, south-east from the school, to where it met the stream which flows east towards the River Ouse. A small tributary flowing down from Henfield Wood joins the stream at TQ 3703 2463 and we explored its valley. Three ponds marked on the modern OS 1:25,000 map were noted. About 300m upstream the tributary divides. No features were recorded along the easterly stream but three small pond bays were noted along the westerly stream, at TQ 3678 2427, TQ 3682 2430 and TQ 3686 2432. In each instance the ponds so formed (which were now all dry) would seem to have taken advantage of a clay layer that the eroding stream bed had exposed and which would have provided a naturally impermeable base for the ponds.

Returning to the original route, we made our way along the side of the main Ouse valley to its confluence with the Nash Gill. Prominent at this point is the sewage pipeline which is carried across the lower reaches of this tributary on a high bridge. This continues east for a further 200m to the Sewage Treatment Works. No pond bays were noted in Nashgill Wood, but there was evidence of quarrying with the remains of excavations at TQ 3686 2433, TQ 3737 2423 and TQ 3738 2414.

**Local Geology**
The area is predominantly Upper Tunbridge Wells Sand although streams on the west side of Costells Wood and the north east corner of Henfield Wood cut down into the Grinstead Clay, with exposures of Cuckfield Stone possible in the latter. Bernard Wors- sam, who was with us on the foray, has has written that, 'It does appear that in the lower part of its out-crop the Cuckfield Stone thickens downwards to cut out most of the lower part of the Grinstead Clay, so that there is only a thin layer of clay between the Cuckfield Stone and the Ardingly Sandstone. I wonder therefore if some of the sandstone quarried in the lower part of the valley of Nashgill Wood might belong to the Ardingly Sandstone (top of the Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand), particularly since on p.42 of the Horsham Memoir [R. W. Gallois and B. C. Wors- sam, *Geology of the Country Around Horsham*, 1993] there is a statement that the Ardingly Sandstone is weakly developed S. and E. of Haywards Heath and the typical sandrock lithologies are thin or absent. So if it is present it would be hard to recognise it, but this would help to explain the absence of any attempt at damming up the valley.'

**JSH**

**A NEW BLOOMERY SITE NEAR IRON PLAT BLAST FURNACE**

David & Sheila Willcocks have reported yet another bloomery site in Buxted, this time near Iron Plat (Queenstock) blast furnace, the latter name being where, according to recent documentary evidence, the first blast furnace was set-up in England in 1490.
NEW MEMBERS

We warmly welcome the following:
Paul Bowen, Oxted
Kent High Weald Project, Goudhurst

WEALDEN IRONWORKING DISCOVERIES AT SMARDEN, KENT

The parish of Smarden in Kent is being investigated by a group of members of the Smarden Local History Society led by Neil Aldridge of Headcorn. Neil has been a member of the Kent Archaeological Society since 1978 with a continuing interest in the early history of the Weald. He has been a member of WIRG for a number of years.

Smarden has a Heritage Centre within a new village hall which is providing a home for a community archive of historic material relating to the parish and access for public access for a variety of research projects.

The number of known iron working sites in the parish has been increased through the collaboration of local landowners working with an active local fieldwork group. There were four main archaeological sites under investigation during 2008 with a peak of activity taking place last autumn after the cereal harvest.

The first site was at Hamden on the eastern edge of Smarden parish where iron slag and probable Iron Age pottery was found during brief fieldwalking during March 2008. The area around a nearby pond had fragments of ‘bog iron’ which may have provided the raw material here for iron smelting. It is hoped to continue a wider investigation later this year.

A previously known site at New House Farm, Mill Lane was investigated in August when a spread of slag and furnace waste was trial excavated in an attempt to find dating evidence although none was found. On farmland at Cousins Farm close to the River Sherway on the edge of the parish bordering Egerton an area of bloomery slag and burnt red soil in an arable field was machine stripped to reveal two bloomeries one of the same type as that excavated in 1994 in Ulcombe. These were recorded and it is hoped to obtain radiocarbon dates for these. The next

Whetstone

A most interesting find by Sheila, was a whetstone just poking out of the slag. It is made of a non-native, fine-grained and dense material, weighing 381g and having a specific gravity of 2.68. Unlike the usual cylindrical, agricultural whetstones, this one is 4-sided and with remarkably flat surfaces, so making it suitable for sharpening knives etc. The left hand end is quite comfortable to hold, and by resting the other end on a support, sharpening could easily be carried out. It is hoped to report a possible date for this type of whetstone later.

Brian Herbert & David Willcocks

SALE OF BOOKS

Books on the iron industry and related subjects, formerly belonging to the late Reg Houghton, will be on sale to members, at reasonable prices, at the AGM in July.

Fieldwalking at Romden
activity is to fieldwalk some of the field this spring before it is returned to grassland. Finally at Romden the extensive Roman iron working site last examined in 1994 was fieldwalked by a team of eight in October who collected over 50 sherds of Roman pottery and other material. In this investigation a quantity of roasted ore was also identified. A site plan has recently been located which provides more detail of the fieldwork undertaken on the site in 1912.

Neil Aldridge

**RECENT PUBLICATIONS**

**Simon Stevens, 2008, ‘Archaeological investigations at the ASDA site, Crawley, West Sussex’, Sussex Archaeological Collections, 146, 107-147.**

The remains of ironworking in urban Crawley provide us with a significant view of how much of the iron in the Weald in the Middle Ages may have been produced. Excavations that have taken place over the past decade or more have slowly revealed the evidence that iron smelting and forging were a major occupation of the townspeople in the 13th to 15th centuries, tantalisingly hinting that similar activity may lie hidden beneath other Wealden towns.

Simon Stevens has already dug two other areas of the town centre, in both of which ironworking debris was unearthed but little in the way of actual working areas. This excavation was, for the most part, no different with a succession of pits filled with slag and associated pottery indicating activity predominantly in the mid-13th to early-16th centuries. Remains of two ironworking hearths were discovered although, due to weather conditions, it was only possible to investigate one. This was not dissimilar in appearance to a smelting furnace found at the Roman site at Broadfield, south of the town, although its precise use is not certain. A calibrated C14 date of 1040-1260AD was obtained from charcoal within it. Slags found on the site encompassed both of the main iron-making processes - smelting and smithing - and in substantial quantities, but their spread suggests that the actual working areas lay beyond the bounds of this excavation.

What were abundant, however, were environmental remains, and a large part of this report is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of faunal and floral finds, and of pottery. From the latter, new groups of ceramic forms and tempers have been identified. It has been possible to learn a considerable amount about the lives of the people who lived in later medieval Crawley from their original domestic plots and the refuse they discarded there. The excavation of a contemporary well, the first opportunity to do this, provided a wide range of different organic and inorganic finds.

The abrupt cessation of both domestic and industrial activity at the beginning of the 16th century suggests a change in the local economy at that time. It is postulated that Crawley may have gone into a decline with the introduction of new ironmaking processes that took production away from the urban setting that had been the basis of Crawley’s prosperity, and moved it to the individual production units of the blast furnace and forge in rural locations.

**JSH**


As with any new book one first flicks through to ‘read’ the pictures as this gives an impression of its range of interest; and there are numerous diagrams, and graphs, indicating a vast scope for the reader; not to mention the many new pictures specially drawn by the late Reg Houghton who, unfortunately, did not live to see his work come to print.

The book is written in chronological order; geology, bloomery furnaces, blast furnaces and forges, with the inevitable problem of describing the iron ore before the smelting processes and leading to words being undefined for the newcomer. Nevertheless, many people read a book twice, whereupon the problem is solved. Further chapters are on iron products, economics, places to visit and a list of blast furnace and finery forge sites.

It is evident that not only has much time been spent on scouring the archives for Wealden Iron, but the results been carefully slotted into the existing evi-

**Anthropomorphic jug from the ASDA site at Crawley**
dence of English (and European) history. This especially applies to the now comprehensive relationship between the many ironmasters over time.

Reconstruction of a Romano-British bloomery (R. Houghton)

Perhaps more technical information could have been added, for example the reverberatory furnace, where the reader might be heard to say ‘so what!’; whilst the calculated volume of bloomery slag on Roman sites is much depleted by its use as a foundation for their roads, where a calculation suggests some 1000-tons/mile.

There are occasional pictures where a simple scale would have speeded up appreciation of an argument, but mostly there are subtle indications within the picture itself, thanks to Reg.

All in all, an excellent up to date account of this local industry, first documented by M. A. Lower in 1849, Mrs M. Delany in 1921, expanded by E. Straker in 1931, and the first excavation reports by Cleere & Crossley in 1985; and now a fourth one may be added, with each having its own place on the bookshelf.

Brian Herbert

A comment about ‘Queen Elizabeth’s Lost Guns’
BBC Timewatch - 21st February 2009

Many members may have watched this programme, but should not be misled into thinking that the premise that its makers put forward, that the Elizabethans had been responsible for the development of co-ordinated cast-iron naval ordnance, was true. Cast-iron ordnance, in which the ability to make guns with uniform bores is implicit, had been produced in the Weald since the 1540s; forty years before the date the programme makers claimed their discoveries proved cast guns were being used for the first time. Ralph Hogge’s ‘complainte’ of 1573 gives ample evidence that such guns were being widely sold and illicitly exported, albeit not used by the Navy. He lists nine gun founders, including himself and two others who were casting in Henry VIII’s reign. That such evidence is available and was ignored by the programme makers to support their claims does a disservice to broadcasting.

JSH

Wealden Iron Bulletin 29

Articles for inclusion in this year’s Bulletin should be submitted to the Editor, David Crossley, by 31 March (see next column for contact details)

The Godfather of WIRG

The late I.D. Margary was a distinguished amateur archaeologist of the old school, and also a generous benefactor to archaeology, that of Sussex in particular. In 1967 when we were fellow members of the Sussex Archaeological Society Council he asked me how my work on the iron industry of the Weald was progressing. I told him that I had recently made contact with David Crossley, who was doing work complementary to my own, and deplored the fact that neither of us lived in the area and had too little time for the fieldwork that was needed to back up our researches. He suggested that we might set up a group working in the area and, when I asked for his advice, proposed that we should issue invitations to a meeting to all and sundry. If my memory serves me correctly, it was he who funded the hire of a room in the Brighton Royal Pavilion that to our great surprise was attended by more than eighty people.

Henry Cleere

A Fireback with a Tale to Tell

The armorial fireback illustrated overleaf dates from the first half of the 18th century and, in the style of the period, the arms are displayed in an elaborate foliate cartouche incorporating a lion’s head. The heraldry has an unusual story to tell, however, for the bearer of the arms had no less than three identities during his lifetime.

The shield bears the arms of two families. In the first and fourth quarters are those of May, a Sussex family of which there were two branches: one
from Pashley in Ticehurst who were associated with iron making there, and the other from Rawmere (later Raughmere), near Chichester, who we are concerned with here. In the second and third quarters are the arms of the Brodnax, or Broadnax, family of Godmersham, Kent. Quartered arms indicate that they are borne by the descendant of a couple where the wife was an heiress. In this instance the couple concerned were William Brodnax and Anne May who were married in London in 1699. Nothing odd about that except that, under the rules of heraldic marshalling, the quartered arms should be arranged with Brodnax in the first and fourth quarters and May in the second and third, not the other way round. The reason for the reversal of the rules lies in the fact that William and Anne’s son, Thomas, who was born in 1701, stood to inherit the fortune of his mother’s cousin, Sir Thomas May, sometime Recorder of Chichester, who died in 1718. A condition of this inheritance was that Thomas Brodnax should change his surname to May, which he duly did by Act of Parliament in 1726. Thus the arms became reversed, with the quarters relating to May, the bearer’s new sur-

name, being placed in the position of prominence. In 1729 he married Jane Monk, whose maternal grandparents were Stephen Stringer and Jane, his wife (née Austen), of Goudhurst.

But the story does not end there. In 1738 Thomas May went once more to Parliament to obtain an Act allowing him to change his name again, this time to Knight. Elizabeth, widow of the splendidly named Bulstrode Peachey Knight, had died childless. Her first husband had been William Woodward, whose grandmother, Mary May, was Thomas Brodnax-May’s aunt. So Thomas had come into his second fortune (or third if you count his inheritance from his parents) - not bad going for someone still in his thirties. This also narrows the date of the fireback to between 1726 and 1738.

Thomas Broadnax-May-Knight died at the (then) ripe old age of eighty, and his estate, which

continued on next page

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Council for Kentish Archaeology
West Kent Conference 2009

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presented by the
West Kent Archaeological Groups
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Saturday 25th April 2009
2.00pm till 5.30pm
at
Sevenoaks Community Centre
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7, Sandy Ridge, Borough Green, Kent, TN15 8HP (s.a.e. please)

This information is correct at the time of publication
continued from previous page

included property in Godmersham and at Chawton, Hampshire, was left to his eldest son, also Thomas. He, in turn, died without descendants in 1794, leaving his estate to his maternal cousin, Edward Austen, who in keeping, it would seem, with family tradition changed his surname to Knight. Edward Austen-Knight, the inheritor of considerable property, found room for his mother and sisters in a small house on his Chawton estate, where the youngest of them, one Jane Austen (see p. 7), occupied herself in writing ‘domestic, interesting and original’ novels.  

JSH

EVENING CLASS - AUTUMN 2009

The Iron Industry of the Weald
Tutor: Jeremy Hodgkinson
University of Sussex, Falmer
Tuesdays 7-9pm; 10 weeks starting September 2009
Details from University of Sussex; 01273 678527

EDITOR'S NOTE

Thank you for your contributions and please keep them coming. Newsletters are published in March and November each year. Items for publication, normally not exceeding 500 words, should be received by February 14 and October 14, respectively, for inclusion in the forthcoming issue. Please send by email preferably, by CD or hard copy; I can work with most PC formats. Monochrome line drawings and photographs are welcome. Please send them separately, not embedded in the text. Digital images need to be at least as big as their expected published size, ideally at 300 dpi or more.

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