

NEWSLETTER No. 12 AUTUMN 1990

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Withyham, Hartfield, Sx.*

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Fellow members,
Usually I end my annual letter with valedictory remarks about committee members who have decided that they must move on to other things, but this year I shall begin by expressing gratitude to Alan Scott for his work for WIRG. His membership of the committee, from which he has stood down this year, dates from the earliest days of the Group and, for many years, he was its Vice-Chairman. He has represented WIRG on the Council for Kentish Archaeology and, over the years, has involved himself in the whole range of the Group's activities.

As many of you will know, WIRG regards it as important that it maintains its links with the county archaeological societies in Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Equally important are its links with the Historical Metallurgy Society. The reasons for these associations are obvious, embracing the geographical and thematic scope of the Group's interests. WIRG also belongs to the Council for British Archaeology and, in this case, the reasons have been largely mercenary, for the Group's fieldwork activities are insured through the CBA. Members of the CBA in other regions have been able to take advantage of a regional structure which has been unavailable in the South East, by which those groups and societies have been able to associate, to exchange views and ideas, and to become better known to each other. Now moves are afoot to set up a regional group in the South East and I believe that WIRG is in an excellent position to benefit from such an arrangement, for (perhaps uniquely) its area of interest extends over a major part of the region. At a recent meeting in London, at which WIRG was represented by Dot Meades and myself, general approval was given to the establishment of a South East Regional Group. A further meeting is to be held on February 2nd at Sussex University, to give the new group a structure and to set it in action. I very much hope that other societies in the region who are members of the CBA will give Group 11, as it will be known, the support and encouragement it will need to be of value to those it will serve.

More than ever the other officers and myself have continued to receive information of great interest from members and from potential members. Please keep in touch with your committee, and my best wishes for 1991.

Yours sincerely,
Jeremy Hodgkinson

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORT

About 50 WIRG members met on Saturday 21st July in the Memorial Hall in the picturesque village of Cowden on the Kent/Sussex border for the 1990 AGM. The day started with a welcoming cup of coffee and biscuits, after which we were treated to an illustrated lecture entitled 'Smaller Houses under the Tudors - The Change from Medieval to Modern Living in the Houses of South-East England'. This was given by Mr. Kenneth Gravett, M.Sc. (Eng), FSA who is, amongst other things, President of the Kent Archaeological Society as well as being an authority on the architecture of timber-framed buildings.

Mr. Gravett talked about many types of houses ranging from the magnificent Penshurst Place to dwellings of a more humble origin, giving numerous examples of the great changes that these have undergone. To complement his authoritative presentation we were shown just a small sample of Mr. Gravett's extensive photographic record of the vernacular domestic architecture of Kent and Sussex. It was interesting to hear about other domestic houses in relation to the more familiar Iron Masters' houses. The development of the medieval house structure to eliminate the worst aspects of living in a large open hall with a central hearth to more comfortable living arrangements with smaller rooms and chimneys has many parallels with housing development even today.

After Mr. Gravett kindly answered any questions the vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. Alan Stevens.

The formal business of the Annual General Meeting then followed and we then had the customary excellent ploughman's lunch provided by Mrs. Hatswell and her helpers.

In the afternoon many members, accompanied by Mr. Gravett, enjoyed a visit to the exterior of Scarlets and fewer braved the great July heat to visit the supposed Roman site at Upper Stonehurst Farm.
S. and C. Broomfield

WINTER MEETING 1991

The Winter Meeting will be held on Saturday 9th February 1991 at the Haven Centre, Crawley Down. The speaker will be Adrian Tribe, talking on Aspects of Conservation of Metals. The talk will be followed by tea and an opportunity to meet fellow WIRG Members. Please see accompanying letter for full details.

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FIELD GROUP PROGRAMME 1990/91

Sunday December 9th

Continuation of an exploration of Crowhurst Park Iron Age and Romano-British Ironworks (started in November).

Saturday January 19th

Survey of Crowborough Warren Furnace.

Sunday February 17th

Trenching to date a bloomery in ForeWood, Crowhurst.

Saturday March 16th

Continuation of trenching of bloomery at Owisbury Farm, Crowborough.

Saturday April 27th

Tracing the course of the Roman road near Cowden.

Details of individual forays can be obtained from Dot Meades, "Brackenside", Normansland, Fairwarp, Uckfield, Sussex.

SUSSEX CANNON IN THE VENDEE, FRANCE

Iron ordnance cast in the Weald has been recovered by French nautical archaeologists, based at St Gilles-Croix-de-Vie, from the wreck of HMS Maldstone (50 guns), which foundered off the Ile de Noirmoutier, south of the Loire estuary. According to an exhibit in the museum in the Chateau in Noirmoutier-en-L'ile, the island's only town, the Maldstone was commissioned in 1744 and came to grief four years later while in pursuit of a French warship. The Hon. Augustus Keppel was in command.

Three iron cannon, bearing the cipher of George II, together with a fourth in which the corrosion is more advanced and any marks are illegible, lie in the castle yard. At least one bears the letter B on one of its trunnions. Two other similar guns, both with the cipher of George II, and one bearing the trunnion mark B, mounted on reconstructed carriages, stand on either side of the entrance to the harbour at St Gilles-Croix-de-Vie, about 25 miles along the coast to the south. Given the evidence of trunnion marks cited by Ruth Brown (see Recent Publications, below) the B stands for Harrison & Co.'s furnace at Brede, in Sussex.
J.S. Hodgkinson

FORTHCOMING LECTURES BY MEMBERS

Friday 22 March - "Wealden Iron", Jeremy Hodgkinson at Haslemere Museum, 7.30 pm.

IRONMASTERS' HOUSES

It has been suggested that a series of articles about the residences and general domestic affairs of ironmasters and ironworkers would be of interest to members. I would be very pleased to receive articles on this subject from members so that a series could be commenced in the next Newsletter, to be published in the Spring of 1991.

S. Swift

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

compiled by J.S. Hodgkinson

Chichester District Archaeological Unit, The Archaeology of Chichester & District 1989 (1990). Photographs, diagrams; 62 pages.

Chichester is the only local authority in Sussex to possess its own archaeological unit, but its annual report for 1989 contains not only the work of the unit but summaries of work by other bodies within the Chichester District.

Of particular interest to WIRG members is the report on the first season's excavations, by the C.D.A.U., at Northpark Furnace, Linchmere. Although ostensibly an exercise in recording, the tantalising pieces of stone and brickwork, peering out from under the soil, would have been hard for any archaeologist to resist, and sufficient of the remains were uncovered to establish the position of the furnace and its gun casting pit.

Timbers formerly acting as a foundation for the bay were revealed after clearance work, together with an unusual system of wheel pits suggesting as many as three phases of construction. The furnace, which was about 5.25m square, survived to a height of about a metre. The hearth had been completely removed suggesting an intended rebuild. The brief report by John Wildman, the Field Officer in charge of the work, concludes with the hope that the eventual consolidation of the site and its opening to the public may be the goal which will encourage further excavation of this site.

In addition, there is a comprehensive documentary history of the ironworks by Carla Barnes, which considerably adds to what has been known hitherto.

Ruth R. Brown, 'Identifying 18th century trunnion marks on British iron guns: a discussion', *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration*, XVIII. 4 (1989), 321-9. Tables.

This useful article discusses previous attempts to identify the founders or furnaces indicated by the letters cast on the trunnions of iron guns, and suggests a system by which they might be identified in future.

The letters usually appear in three arrangements: single letters, pairs of letters, and occasionally three letters, one of which is on one of the trunnions and the remaining two on the other. The evidence for the identifications, which Ms. Brown makes most persuasively, are based on lists of old iron guns re-proved by the Board of Ordnance after 1776 when solid casting had been introduced. The lists form part of the Woolwich Proof Registers in the Royal Armouries Library. The discussion considers the identifications of some nineteen marks and proposes that a system existed in England which was comparable to the Swedish system, whereby a single letter refers to the furnace where the gun was cast, a pair of letters to the ironmaster responsible, and three letters to both. Thus 'B' would denote guns cast at Brede and the famous 'IF' mark (the only one for which there exists corroborating documentary evidence) was the mark of John Fuller. The triple marks, 'ICR' and 'ICD', are identified as being those of John Churchill casting at Robertsbridge and Darwell respectively.

The value in having a reliable system for identifying the marks on the trunnions of pieces of ordnance lies not only in ascribing a provenance to the gun concerned, and in enabling the confident dating of an artefact which is common in situations such as underwater archaeology, but also in the potential the system affords for the identification of hitherto unrecorded marks.

Peter Brandon and Brian Short, *The South East from AD 1000* (Longman 1990); 444 pages; line drawings, maps, photographs; bibliography and index.

This is the 'sequel' to 'The South East to AD 1000' by Drewett, Rudling and Gardiner, and is expectedly less archaeological than the previous volume. The wide span of the book is too great to adequately summarise in these pages, so my remarks will be confined to its treatment of the iron industry. The industry in the Domesday period is dealt with as cursorily as the evidence demands, though a reference to the importance of Lindfield as a centre for iron and cloth in the

thirteenth century is a surprise and one wonders whether Horsham was meant. Also the omission of evidence of distinct ironworking districts in the medieval period, such as at Parrock, in Hartfield, is unexpected.

An important feature of the book is the relationship which it describes between the iron industry and the rest of the economy of the Weald, both in the growing wealth of the South East in the sixteenth century, and in the range of occupations available to its population. Whereas the medieval industry is largely neglected there are useful summaries of the post-medieval industry in both the Tudor-early Stuart period and in the late Stuart-Hanoverian period.