

WEALDEN IRON RESEARCH GROUP

NEWSLETTER No. 13 SPRING 1991

Editor: Mrs. S. Swift, Hamfields, Withyham, Hartfield, Sussex, TN7 4BH

WINTER MEETING 1991

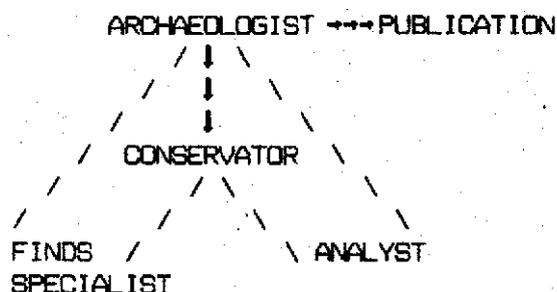
The postponed Winter Meeting was held on Saturday 6th April at the Haven Centre, Crawley Down, Sussex. The talk was given by Adrian Tribe, who is the HBMC-funded conservator for South East England. He works for the Kent "Arts & Libraries" department in the "Heritage Services Group", and his talk was entitled "The Conservation of Metalwork - Maximising Information Retrieval".

All artifacts which were lost or buried in antiquity began to degrade at a fast rate, and assuming that the environmental conditions have been stable, this rate of degradation reduces with the passage of time. Unfortunately, the archaeologist disturbs these conditions during excavation, whereupon finds start to degrade at a fast rate again, so reducing the amount of information that could have been revealed. (This argument does not apply to 100% pure gold; however, most gold contains impurities which degrade.) It is the archaeologist's primary task to reduce the degradation of any find to a minimum, until it can be identified and classified.

The correct method of storing metal finds, both before and after conservation, is in an air-tight plastic container containing silica-gel, a moisture absorbing chemical.

The diagram below shows how the

conservator's work may be seen to coexist within the archaeological team:



and allow a flow of information between all the parties involved.

Adrian Tribe's work, as a conservator, involves working on finds to help their identification for publication; the extra work required for museum displays was not considered. Throughout the talk, slides were shown of the excavated material before identification - usually just a shapeless piece of rust; even silver coins were unidentifiable. It is with this in mind that the following should be read.

As a general rule, finds should be disturbed as little as possible because there is always the possibility that the outer layers of rust or corrosion may be as important as the inside. For example, a metallic find was shown which had originally been inside a textile covering. Although the textile had rotted away, its texture could still be seen within the corroded outer layer: this is called mineral replacement.

Perhaps the most indispensable tool that he uses is the x-ray machine. This a non-destructive method of "seeing" within the mass of any metallic find before the destructive work is started. X-rays can penetrate metal, depending on its thickness and density and on the power of the x-ray beam. The resulting x-ray film is also capable of showing metallic plating and inlays of different metals. Once a special feature has been identified, it is then possible carefully to remove the outer layer of corrosion at the exact point of interest. In this way, important points can be revealed, leaving the remainder of the find intact.

In some instances the x-ray reveals that the find would be destroyed by mechanical cleaning. An example was shown of a rusty mass which, when x-rayed, revealed a mass of hobnails with the leather probably rotted away. If cleaned, the pattern of nails would have been lost.

For the most delicate removal of corrosion from finds, the "air abrasive machine" is employed. This uses compressed air to blow a fine, hard powder (53 micron, aluminium oxide, alumina) from a fine tube onto the find. In this way the powder disturbs the corrosion, which is blown away without damaging the real metal. For larger items a hand scalpel is used for cleaning; but, whatever method is used, a binocular microscope is often necessary to ensure that the correct decisions are made during this potentially damaging process.

Unfortunately this note cannot reproduce the very fine before-and-after photographs that added so much to this fascinating talk.

B. Herbert

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 1991 AGM will be held at Ninfield Memorial Hall, Ninfield, East Sussex on Saturday 20 July. Afternoon visits will include Ashburnham Furnace. Details will be sent to members.

NORTHPARK FURNACE: SU 878283

Excavation work is expected to recommence on this site in July 1991. Any members interested in helping to dig, who would like information to be sent to them nearer the time, please contact Jeremy Hodgkinson: 0342 713544

COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY

WIRG has been a prime mover in the establishment of a Regional Group (Group 11) for the South East. It is hoped that members and groups who have a general interest in archaeology in the region will wish to join the new Group and receive its newsletter, which will inform members and address issues over a wider area than is covered by most local societies. Details of its inaugural meeting on 2 November, at which the speaker will be Professor Barry Cunliffe, will be available soon.

METAL TRADES IN THE WEALD OF KENT

The history of the Wealden Iron Industry seems to be dominated by that of gunfounding although I am sure that this is an anomaly created by a preponderance of documentary evidence related to this subject (or a preference in the interests of researchers?)

Undoubtedly a significant proportion (percentage to be determined - any offers?) of the output of the Wealden furnaces must have been devoted to the

production of more mundane items, such as pots and pans and iron and steel in bar and plate form. Living just over the border in Kent, my research interests cover both the cloth and iron industries of the 16th and 17th centuries. Consequently, I was interested to discover that Biddenden seems to have attracted several wire-drawers and card-makers. Presumably, the former obtained their steel from the Baker furnace at Hammer Mill on the Biddenden/Cranbrook border but why was the trade concentrated here? Was it that the necessary quality of steel was not available from the other iron-working sites at Hawkhurst, Bedgebury or elsewhere?

Not far away in Goudhurst and Horsmonden, there was a substantial edgetool industry throughout the 16th century, producing scythes, sickles and cutlery. There are wills of outlers dating from the end of the 15th century, before we have any evidence of an iron-working site in Horsmonden; or perhaps this is evidence for such a site. Certainly, it is the Brattle family who were carrying out this trade and a century later were the owners of the Serenden furnace in Horsmonden. By then, they and several other families were well established as scythesmiths with markets as far away as East Anglia and the West Country.

So far, I have established the principal families involved and their working sites, and details are being collected of equipment used and operating practices employed. I am hoping in due course to find documentary evidence to establish where the raw materials were purchased and a little more information on the markets served.

I would be most grateful if any WIRG members have any knowledge of these trades elsewhere in the Weald.
A. Singleton

DEDISHAM IRONWORKS

Furnace House is architecturally fascinating. It was built c. 1580 with an addition c. 1700. The house is set on rising ground beside the pond which provided water power for the furnace of the former Dedisham Iron Works. The southern end of the house is stone built with quoins of narrow bricks, the stonework being galetted with pieces of iron slag. Beyond this the house is tilehung on the first floor with brick and stone below. There is a narrow two storey extension on the north side with lean-to roof. Running the whole length of the east of the house is an outshot with a small modern extension projecting to the south east.

The original timber framed building consisted of 3 bays with a smoke bay open from floor to rafter, with smoke from the hearth on the ground filtering out through a hole in the apex of the gable. The house was probably built for the Dedisham Furnace master and probably dates from around 1580.

About 50-60 years later a chimney stack was built to the south of the smoke bay. The roof was raised and rebuilt and ceilings put in just below eaves level, allowing attic space to be used for storage.

The stonebuilt extension to the south was probably built around 1700.
S. Swift

[The description of Furnace House is taken from a very detailed report written by Diana Chatwin in December 1989 for Rudgwick Preservation Society. The full report was given to the Editor by Stanley Smith, a member of WIRG and RPS, and has been précised for reasons of space.]

GLYNDE PLACE - The House of an Ironmaster

Anyone who has followed the public footpath through Hawksden Park near Mayfield to the site of the iron forge, or observed the careful coppicing of the surrounding woodland, albeit for a different purpose than charcoal burning, will be impressed by the way Hawksden is still managed for the Glynde Estate.

The forge at Hawksden was worked by the Morleys from the mid 16th century and by their successors at Glynde until c. 1786. Reference to Estate records in East Sussex Record Office reveals that Hawksden has been a Glynde property since the late 13th century when the Whalleys family were in ownership - 700 years of effective and active management.

According to Sussex Archaeological Society[1], Wm. Morley in 1569 built or restored much of Glynde Place and, although not appreciated as such, the building work (off the Street in Glynde village) is likely to have been financed from the proceeds of the iron trade and therefore the 'Place' must rank as an Ironmaster's house. It is open to the public on a limited number of days during the summer months.

Apart from Hawksden, other works were owned or leased by the Morleys - Sir Wm. Barrantyne's furnace at Horsted Keynes for example - and, in conjunction with their close relatives the Hodgsons, the works at Framfield (Pounsley and possibly Tickerage)[2]. Freshfield forge was also connected with the Morleys and, soon after the reign of Henry VIII, Anthony Morley established an ill-fated enterprise in South Wales.

During the Civil War, Col. Herbert Morley probably supplied ordnance for the Parliamentary cause from

Hawksden, and another staunch Parliamentarian - John Hampden - the opponent of "Ship Money", gave his name to later owners of the Glynde Estate.

John Hampden's daughter, Ruth, married Sir John Trevor, Secretary of State to Charles II, one of the family of Trevor who, by marriage, had inherited the Glynde properties. The name Hampden, after adoption by the 4th Lord Trevor, is used by the current occupant of Glynde Place - Viscount Hampden.

A visitor to the house can enjoy all the features of a stately home - architecture, much of it Tudor, family portraits, furniture and furnishings etc. Two items are particularly remembered by the writer. The first is a portrait of Richard Lennard, 13th Baron Dacre, resembling somewhat the Richard Len(n)ard of the famous Len(n)ard fireback. Brede furnace, however, is not usually included among the Glynde ironworks and a discrepancy of a few years between the date on the fireback and the demise of Baron Dacre seems to disprove the conclusion which might otherwise be drawn from this curious coincidence.

The second is the involvement after 1786 in chalk extraction for various uses including limeburning and the export of clay and chalk for the cement industry, an enterprise presumably intended to supplement the Estate income following the decline of the iron trade. Ashburnham, it will be remembered, followed the same practice. The "extractive" industry at Glynde is recorded at Glynde Place by an artist's impression of the opening in 1885 of the first commercial "Telpher" railway - an event which evoked national interest. In October 1885 local "worthies" and distinguished visitors gathered on the banks of Glynde Reach to

witness the ceremony of starting the first train carrying clay from a nearby pit to the LB&SCR station for onward despatch to a S. Heighton (Newhaven) cement works.

Quarrying chalk and burning lime continued at Glynde until, in the 1970's, the supply of gasworks' coke as fuel ceased to be available with the arrival of North Sea gas. However, traces of the industry which replaced the iron trade in the fortunes of Glynde are still very evident and the impression that the Glynde Estate continues to exert its influence in the village is very evident to the casual visitor.

Refs: 1. SAC vol 20
2. SAC vol 18

Footnote: members interested in discovering more about local people and past events at Glynde are recommended to the publication "Glynde Archivist" published periodically by local resident, Andrew Lusted. T.E. Evans

IRONWORKERS' SHANTY TOWNS

There is evidence to suggest the former existence of shanty town settlements of ironworkers near to some Wealden ironworks in the eighteenth century and perhaps before. At Cowden in Kent the commonland cluster of dwellings known as Roger's Town lies just south of Cowden Furnace. At Northpark Furnace, near Fernhurst in Sussex, an area beside the access from Lower Lodge Farm is known locally to have been such a site. There is a cartographic reference to a cluster of closes and small buildings let to the ironmaster at the Warren Furnace in the 1760s. If anyone has knowledge of, or can cite references to such settlements, please contact Jeremy Hodgkinson, 7 Kiln Road, Crawley Down, Crawley, Sussex, RH10 4JY.

J. Hodgkinson

NEWSLETTER EDITOR REQUIRED

Sue Swift, who has ably edited the Newsletter for the past four years, wishes to relinquish the post. If any member feels that this is just the job for them, the Committee will be pleased to consider their offer. Please contact the Secretary, Sheila Broomfield, 8 Woodview Crescent, Hildenborough, Tonbridge, Kent, if you are interested.

NEWSLETTER COPY

The editor of the newsletter is always pleased to receive items of interest for inclusion in its pages. As a newsletter, it aims more in the direction of ephemera than researched articles. Fruits of research belong more properly in the Bulletin, but 'notes and queries' will always find a home in the Newsletter.

METAL PROBES

4 ft. metal probes (can be shorter if required) with rubber-covered handle 11" across. Available at £10 each from Brian Herbert, 1 Stirling Way, East Grinstead, W. Sussex, (Tel: 0342 327032)

PUBLICATIONS

Back numbers of the WIRG Bulletin and other iron-related publications are available from: Brian Herbert, 1 Stirling Way, East Grinstead, W. Sussex.