

SURREY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
CASTLE ARCH, GUILDFORD
BULLETIN

Number 114

February 1975

Edited by Rosamond Hanworth, Folly Hill, Ewhurst, Surrey

SAS VISITS

April 5th. The Heritage of Surrey in Wood, Brick and Stone.
Introductory talk for the Society's programme of visits for
European Architectural Heritage Year.
Details of this and other meetings are given elsewhere in this **Bulletin**.

EXCAVATION NOTICE

REIGATE TOWN CENTRE

Directors: Roger Ellaby and David Williams

Excavations are being conducted in advance of redevelopment on land to the rear of Northovers, Bell Street, Reigate (TQ 25355015) by the Holmesdale Archaeological Group on behalf of the Reigate Archaeological Co-ordination Committee and with kind permission of Messrs Northover.

Work takes place every Saturday and Sunday from 9.30 a.m. to dusk and has so far revealed foundations of a building associated with pottery dated to the thirteenth century. It is hoped that further work will reveal its dimensions and any structures on the street frontage.

Volunteers are needed and should contact Mrs Margaret Trier (Reigate 46475). Access to the site may be gained by an entrance just north of Northovers.

NOTES AND QUERIES

New members from 1.1.75

Mr J. R. Bond, MA, AMBIM, Dormers, Church Street, Effingham, KT24 5NA.

Mrs M. R. McMath, 35 The Glebe, Ewhurst, Cranleigh GU6 7PY.

Mr V. G. Hudson, 43 Marlins Drive, Burpham, Guildford.

Mr and Mrs Gosden, 62 Oriental Road, Woking.

Mr C. J. Hamm, Crettingham, Clandon Road, West Clandon GU4 7TL.

Froebel Institute College of Education, Grove House, Roehampton Lane, London, SW15 5PT.

Mr A. T. Moreton, 13 New Court, Addlestone, Weybridge KT15 2EB.

Mr A. G. Sheldon, 8 Hanworth Lane, Chertsey KT16 9JX.

Mr K. P. Flude, 8 Blagrove Close, St John's, Woking.

Mined Chalk and Firestone as Ashlar and Freestone in Surrey

The writer has for some years been engaged in tracing the history of firestone mining from the Upper Greensand of east Surrey, especially at Reigate, Gatton, Merstham, Chaldon and Godstone. There are few pre-nineteenth century documentary sources available, and these are well known through **VCH Surrey II**, and L. F. Salzman's work "**Building in England down to 1540**". Trial archaeological excavations in spoil heaps within the mines at Gatton and Chaldon have revealed a depressingly low concentration of useful finds—perhaps a single clay pipe fragment in every five or more cubic metres of spoil.

The most fruitful approach to further elucidation of the early phases of the mines' history is, therefore, likely to be the examination of archaeological evidence from above-ground excavations of building foundations, and of architectural evidence in extant buildings. I am indebted to Dennis Turner, for example, for drawing my attention to the use of firestone in Saxon work in the church at Stoke d'Abernon. This appears to be the earliest authenticated use of Surrey firestone. The earliest documentary evidence (in building accounts and the like) relates to post-conquest buildings in London, and the earliest clear evidence for underground workings appears to be that of John Aubrey, in his accounts of Chaldon and Gatton.

Whereas firestone is known to have been used extensively, and especially for carved interior work in east Surrey and London, it would be interesting to accumulate evidence for its wider distribution south and west of the mining parishes named above. For exterior work it may be suspected that its use was limited in these directions by the areas of distribution of Horsham and Bargate stones, and of the minor building stones obtained from the Lower Greensand and Weald Clay. For carved interior work, however, both Bargate and Horsham stone are unsuitable. It is well known in Guildford for hard chalk to be used for this purpose, as a freestone for carving; and G. C. Williamson has suggested quite convincingly that the "Guildford Caverns" were mines made for the particular hard chalk bands sought for this purpose. The very much less well known chalk at West Humble (TQ 154522) may also have been made for this purpose. It has been suggested that the chalk incorporated in the fabric of Betchworth Castle may have been derived from the West Humble mine. A cursory examination of its lithology and palaeontology supports this view.

Any information which members can provide relating to the use of either chalk or firestone in buildings south and west of the Mole would be most gratefully received. The stones are not difficult to distinguish on close inspection, the firestone containing a slightly gritty sandy element, and very characteristic minute shining specks of white mica.

(Paul Sowan, Croydon Natural History & Scientific Society)

(Members may like to know that the Geological Museum, Exhibition Road, London SW7 2DE will help archaeologists in their identification of building material—Editor.)

Guildford: Stoke, Joseph's Road (SU 995507)

In April 1974, an emergency excavation was carried out by Guildford members of the SAS on the recently vacated ground of Guildford City Football Club, as the site was under threat of imminent redevelopment. Three 2m square trenches were excavated in areas which had shown

archaeological possibilities during a resistivity survey by Tony Clark and augering by members of the Group.

In one, a rammed layer of brick, tile and mortar 0.3m thick was found, resting on sandy silt and containing pieces of nineteenth and twentieth century china. The topsoil in this trench produced a variety of sherds of pottery from Medieval to Modern.

A second trench, 5.6m to the south-east, reached sandy silt at a depth of 0.49m. Pottery ranged from Medieval to Modern, with eighteenth and nineteenth century clay pipes but there were no features.

A third trench, 22.4m to the south-east of the second, reached clay at 0.40m. Finds from the topsoil were limited to nineteenth and twentieth century material.

The sandy silt in trenches 1 and 2 is probably associated with a pond which existed in the area and is still remembered by some of the older residents. The rammed brick and tile in Trench 1 undoubtedly represents consolidation of damp ground, probably at the time of the construction of the football pitch. The very wet condition of the sandy silt and shortage of time available made it impossible to excavate more than 0.14m down into the silt. At this depth in Trench 2, a sherd of unglazed grey pottery was found.
(John Janaway)

Merton: Excavations at Mitcham Grove (TQ 271679)

At the encouragement of Merton Historical Society, and in particular of Mr E. N. Montague, to whom much of the success of the work is due, Surrey Archaeological Society mounted a rescue excavation on the site of a known eighteenth to nineteenth century house, Mitcham Grove, in July last year. The site is scheduled for housing by Merton Borough Council, and the latter kindly allowed access to the site and loaned excavation equipment. Work was directed by the writer with assistance from Miss E. Webb. The main purposes were to give training for inexperienced diggers, to locate a Tudor house which documentary evidence suggested had preceded the known building, and a search for any possible outliers from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery to north, in the event this proved a false hope.

After a geophysical survey of the site carried out by a team from the University of Surrey, most of the work was concentrated on the site of the building.

A sequence of occupation may be as follows: A few fragments of roof tile and part of a fourth century bowl suggested Romano-British occupation nearby, but these finds could not be separated stratigraphically from twelfth and thirteenth century material. The latter seems to date the building and original occupation of a well-constructed house which had solid chalk footings firmly bedded on to the natural gravel. An associated area of cobbling was probably a yard. This building was roofed in tiles which were found scattered across the site. Much of the wall seems to have been robbed out, and it is probable that it was replaced by a new Tudor house on a different alignment with brick walls on solid chalk footings. The Tudor house probably constituted the basis for the eighteenth century house, at least at the front, where there is evidence for a brick outer skin being added in the latter period. Possibly at the same time new brick interior partitions were built and the area around the house gravelled over. The house was demolished c. 1840 (documentary evidence), and the site eventually became a sports ground.

Further work has been carried out recently and it is hoped to arrange a final attempt to settle some of the outstanding problems.

Finds were mostly of pottery and bone rubbish, but included a bone shuttle from a hand weaving loom which has been identified as Iron Age in date, and Delft and stoneware kiln wasters together with Sagger fragments and trivets from Delft manufacturing. The shuttle may well have been a collector's item, and it seems probable that the kiln waste was imported with the topsoil.

(D. G. Bird)

Mitcham: Eagle House

Eagle House, which has been described as probably the finest surviving Queen Anne house of the Dutch style, is an imposing structure standing well back from the London Road north of Upper Green. It is probably the most striking and certainly one of the oldest surviving buildings in Mitcham. It has attracted the attention of many architectural writers and its obvious merit received official recognition when, in 1954, together with its forecourt, railings and gate, it was listed by the Minister of Housing and Local Government as a building of special architectural and historic interest under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1947.

In 1930 the newly created London County Council acquired the property and two years later it was sold to Surrey County Council for £11,000. This latter authority used the house for various purposes until under the London Government Act of 1963 it was transferred to the London Borough of Merton. For a few years Eagle House was used by the Education Department as a school for mentally retarded children, but when they built new premises in 1971 the house was vacated.

The future of Eagle House is now in the balance. Shuttered against vandals, its garden a wilderness, it is slowly decaying as it awaits a decision by the Borough Council. The importance of preserving the property is recognised, and rehabilitation for use as an adult education centre, or as a local history museum has been considered. The cost of restoration, estimated at £179,000 in 1973, is considered by the local authority to be prohibitive. Unless financial aid is forthcoming, the prospects of Eagle House surviving are bleak.

In this context Merton Historical Society have produced a 10-page booklet "Eagle House, Mitcham" compiled by E. N. Montague, the sixth and latest in their series on the old buildings and history of Mitcham. Copies may be obtained at 20p plus 5p postage from Miss A. Honeyman, 32 Bruce Road, Mitcham.

(Editor)

Mickleham: Roman Coin from Beechy Wood (TQ 158527)

A silver siliquae of Honorius (AD 393-423) was found in the summer of 1974 by Mr F. Seall, of 3 Felday Houses, Holmbury St Mary. The coin, located by means of a metal detector, on a footpath to Norbury Park, lay 2in. below the surface on chalk. Mr Seall retains the coin in his possession.

(Deidre Dendry)

Reigate: Plano-Convex Knife from Earlswood (TQ 26854803)

A plano-convex knife of mottled brown flint, measuring 3 7/32in (82mm) long has been presented by Mr Robert Champion to the Reigate Museum of the Holmesdale Natural History Club. Mr Champion found the knife to the south of New Pond Farm, on the south side of a tributary of the River Mole.

(D. J. Turner)

Shere: Holmbury Hill Fort Excavation 1974 (TQ 104430)

The programme of research on the three Surrey hill-forts of Anstiebury, Holmbury and Hascombe was continued with a four-week excavation in July-August at Holmbury. The intention is to establish, if possible, whether this geographically compact group on the Greensand represents a simultaneous reaction to a common threat, by identifying the date of construction and period of occupation.

Excavation was preceded by geophysical sampling of the interior of the hill-fort by Mr A. J. Clark; scanning with the fluxgate gradiometer located nine anomalies, generally in fairly close proximity to the line of the inner rampart, which possibly suggested hearths of the construction phase rather than more permanent occupation.

The defence section was cut south of the supposed entrance and in close proximity to it, in the hope of recovering dating material from the ditch filling; the defences on the other side of the entrance, to the north-east, were much disturbed by quarrying. The oblique line of the entrance, coupled with a fairly heavy growth of trees, imposed certain restrictions on the siting of the trenches: it was possible to cut one (1) at right angles to the line of the outer ditch and the forward slope of the outer bank. Although this distorted the horizontal dimensions of the inner ditch, it gave a useful bonus in the form of a 20 per cent increase in the area, and consequently the volume, of the filling of the inner ditch, and so increased the chances of recovering datable material.

The defences at Holmbury were apparently of one build and their structural features may be summarised as follows: the overall width from the outer lip of the outer ditch (no counterscarp bank was noted) to the heel of the inner bank was 140ft (42.2m), and it is interesting to note that the Anstiebury defences were the same width; the outer ditch was V-shaped, 3.6m wide by 1.5m deep, the outer bank 7.2m wide and 0.6m high, the inner main ditch also V-shaped, 6.1m wide and 2.4m deep, and the main rampart 12.7m wide and standing still to a height of 3.0m. It was clear that the original builders had made use of the undulating ground on the top of Holmbury Hill, siting ditches in hollows and banks on crests, a point noted by the previous excavator, Winbolt (SAC XXXVIII, 1930, 156-70).

The width and low profile of the outer bank are reminiscent of Anstiebury and, once again, the motive appears to have been the same, to lure any attackers across the outer ditch on to an exposed platform where they could be pelted with sling-shot. No structural remains of the revetment survived in situ on the main rampart, with the exception of a fragmentary stone foundation; but a mass of rubble filling in the main ditch seems to have been the result of a major collapse of the rampart front. Before this happened 0.61m of silt and small rubble had accumulated; this need not represent any long period of erosion in a soil so unstable as Greensand. Finds sealed beneath the heavy rubble, consisted of a small group of pottery, a complete upper quern-stone and fragments of the corresponding lower stone, an iron object, possibly a handle from the quern, and a fair number of sling-stones.

Five anomalies were investigated by small test excavations and in each case produced evidence for human occupation, ranging from a pit to well-defined hearths. The latter, however, did not give any impression of permanence and were generally fairly devoid of finds, apart from one or

two sherds. One hearth, clearly defined as a small circular pit filled with reddened stone, was more productive, both of pottery and charcoal.

(F H. Thompson)*

*(Condensed from a fuller report sent in by the excavator).

Woking: Old Woking High Street (TQ 019569)

The site of the Village Stores and Bedford's Garage, on the north side of Old Woking High Street, where nineteenth century property has been demolished prior to redevelopment, fronts on to the old village street about 300 yards from St Peter's Church and the original ford across the Wey, and adjoins the cottages which stand on the supposed site of the Market House built in 1665.

Much of the Bedford's Garage site had been disturbed by petrol tanks, etc., but members of the Mayford HS excavated two trial trenches along the building line under the yard of flagstones east of the Village Stores, in an endeavour to find evidence of medieval buildings or of the Saxon settlement of Woking.

Trench I, at the eastern end of the yard, was asymmetrical, as its measurements were governed by the flagstoned surface, brick foundations of an out-building at the eastern end, and a modern inspection chamber at the western end. It revealed three layers containing nineteenth century material, including a clinker deposit in the centre, and in Layer 3, also in the centre, two sets of postholes:

Set 1, nearest to the road and parallel to it, 3m apart; Eastern posthole—roughly elliptical and approximately 0.5m x 0.5m x 65cm deep, containing part of a rotted post, and filled with dark brown sticky soil with nineteenth century pottery and other scattered rubble. Western posthole—rectangular 40cm x 0.5m x 0.5m deep, containing dark brown sticky soil, a few pieces of rubble and a small piece of carbon.

Set 2, were 20cm further north, and placed at an angle of 45 degrees westwards from the first set, and were also 3m apart. Neither of them were excavated, owing to lack of time, but they were both roughly 0.5m square and appeared to be filled with dark brown sticky soil, mixed with rubble.

Trench 2 was bounded on the west by a 3-course brick wall of the cellar of the Village Stores, and at the eastern end by a modern inspection chamber. It revealed one layer above the natural yellow sand, containing a few isolated pieces of rubble.

It is possible that the postholes held the gateposts of an earlier entrance to the site, before the flagstoned yard was laid and before the present entrance was built. The second set of posts could have been for replacements, and the clinker in Trench I could have been put there to make a firm entrance from the muddy, unpaved street.

A full report has been written and will be lodged in the Guildford Museum. This note is a précis of it.

(Nancy Cox)

HASLEMERE IN TRUST

EXHIBITION OF LOCAL BUILDINGS

March 11th — March 27th

Haslemere Museum, daily 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (not Sunday or Monday). Presented by Haslemere & District Preservation Society, Haslemere Environment Group, Domestic Buildings Research Group, Surrey Archaeological Society as a contribution to European Architectural Heritage Year.

SYMPOSIUM

LOCAL MUSEUMS—AN EXHIBITION AND TALK-IN

All-day event on Saturday 15th February, from 10.30 a.m. Organised by WEA Wallington and Carshalton Branch in conjunction with Beddington Carshalton and Wallington AS and the Carshalton Society. Speakers include Richard Harrison, Director of the Area Museums Service for SE England, and Mike Belcher, Exhibition Officer of the British Museum (Natural History). At the United Reformed Church Hall, Woodcote Road, Wallington (opposite the Town Hall).

Fee 40p. Applications for programmes to Mrs Ann Butler, 23 Heathdene Road, Wallington, Surrey SM6 0TB.

MEETINGS

MARCH

Monday 3rd, 8 p.m.

THE CIVIL WAR IN WEST SURREY. Talk by D. E. Hall to Mayford HS in the Village Hall, Saunders Lane, Mayford, Woking.

Friday 7th, 7.45 p.m.

RECOGNITION OF POTTERY. Talk by Martin Millett to Farnham & District MS in the Council Chamber, Farnham Locality Office, South Street, Farnham.

Wednesday 12th, 5 p.m.

TWO SAXON CEMETERIES AT MUCKING, ESSEX. Talk by W. T. Jones to Royal Archaeological Institute in the Rooms of the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London.

Friday 14th, 7.30 p.m.

ENGLAND IN THE 1650s. Annual Sixth Form and Branch Lecture of the West Surrey Branch, The Historical Association, by Professor Ivan Roots, at the Royal Grammar School, High Street, Guildford.

Tuesday 18th, 8 p.m.

RICHARD III. Talk by Anne E. Smith to Kingston upon Thames AS at the Lecture Hall, Kingston Museum, Fairfield West, Kingston upon Thames.

Wednesday 19th, 8.15 p.m.

OUR DISTRICT IN MAPS. Talk by J. W. Lindus Forge to Walton & Weybridge LHS at Weybridge Public Hall.

Thursday 20th, 8 p.m.

JOHN AUBREY IN SURREY. Talk by John Nevinson to Esher District LHS at King George's Hall, Esher.

Friday 21st, 7.45 p.m.

ALDERSHOT AND THE HUNDRED OF CRONDALL. Talk by The Rev J. W. Branson to Farnham & District MS in the Council Chamber, Farnham Locality Office, South Street, Farnham.

APRIL

Saturday 5th

THE HERITAGE OF SURREY IN WOOD, BRICK AND STONE. Talk by Mr Mervyn Blatch at the Brew House, Guildford at 3 p.m. Organised by SAS Visits Committee.

Tickets 15p, which will include tea and biscuits if ordered before March 28th, from Mrs J. Major, 3 Riversdale Road, Thames Ditton KT7 0QL.

Wednesday 14th, 4.15 p.m.

AGM ROYAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE followed by **THE PRESENT STATE OF ANGLO-SAXON ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES**. Talk by H. M. Taylor in the Rooms of the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London.

Tuesday 15th, 8 p.m.

HADRIAN'S WALL. Talk by Eve Myatt-Price to Kingston upon Thames AS at the Lecture Hall, Kingston Museum, Fairfield West, Kingston upon Thames.

Wednesday 16th, 5 p.m.

RESCUE ARCHAEOLOGY IN KENT, 1974. Talk by B. J. Philp to Royal Archaeological Institute in the Rooms of the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London.

APPOINTMENTS

Are you interested in a job in archaeology using aerial photographs? A vacancy exists in the air photographs unit of the National Monuments Record, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England). Salary Scale at age 21 (inc. London Weighting, etc.) £2049.04 per annum. Telephone Mr J. N. Hampton 01-734 6010 Ext 58 for further information.

The next issue of the **Bulletin** will be in March. Copy is required by the 5th of the month previous to publication. In view of the rising costs of printing and postage, contributors are invited to make their notes as concise as possible. Space means money, and the written word seldom suffers from being pruned.

WE ARE REPRINTING

JOHN AUBREY'S HISTORY OF SURREY

Aubrey's famous and entertaining "Natural History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey" was first published in 5 volumes in 1718/19. We are now publishing an exact facsimile of the 5 volumes, complete with the 12 plates and folding map. A new introduction has been specially written for this new limited edition by Mr John Nevinson, FSA, the President of the Surrey Archaeological Society. Publication March 1975. Price for the 5 volume set £40 after 31st May.

Order a set now at the special £30 price

KOHLER & COOMBES, THE GATEHOUSE, COLDHARBOUR LANE, DORKING, SURREY RH4 3BH. Tel: Dorking (0306) 81532