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Identifications of Places of Origin of French Ironworkers

Brian G. Awty

It appears that the French ironworkers who migrated to the Weald in Tudor times came from the two provinces of Normandy and Picardy, and that among these immigrants those who came from Normandy were roughly four times as numerous as those from Picardy. The fact that the two provinces make up the whole of northern France, from Brittany almost to the Belgium border, may have acted as a deterrent to closer investigation. An additional deterrent is the fact that of the sixty or so who gave a precise place of birth, almost a quarter stated that they were born in Newville or Neville etc. In France as a whole there are over 70 places named Neuville or Néville, of which a dozen are located in Normandy alone.

But from among the other places cited by these immigrants, two can be identified without great difficulty — Gile Founteneyes (126[1]) and Newcastell (44, 121, 170), both stated to be in Normandy. Both are to be found in the east of the Département of the Seine-Maritime, where they can be securely identified as Gaillefontaine and Neufchatel-en-Bray. The Bray is not now noted for ironworking but for its cheeses. Geologically it is a feature termed a 'denuded anticline' — in fact similar to the Weald in its structure, but rather smaller in area. The Bray commences in the hinterland of Dieppe and extends south-eastwards into the Oise Département, terminating a few kilometres south of Beauvais. Neufchâtel lies on the river Béthune, about 35 km. upstream from Dieppe. Gaillefontaine lies near the source of the Béthune, close to the northern edge of the centre of the Bray.

Gaillefontaine is in the canton of Forges-les-Eaux, and proceeding down the Béthune, but still within the canton of Forges, we come to an area where ironworking is known to have been carried on around 1500. To the north of the Béthune lies Beaussault, identifiable with Bewsaut Bewsawe etc. (40, 53, 117, 125, 131, 149, 156, 165), to its south lies Compainville, identifiable with Compenfelde (124, 130). Forges-en-Bray, as it was called before it became noted as a spa, was itself a centre of ironmaking from pre-Roman times until about 1500. To its north-west lies Beaubec, which included both the abbey of that name and Beaubec-la-Ville as it was then called (Bewbecke in English) which furnished workers for parson Levett and Nicholas Eversfield (41, 55).

Crossing into the canton of Neufchâtel, the Béthune passes Saint-Saire and arrives at Neuville Ferrières, about 3 km. from Neufchâtel itself. The sobriquet suggests this village as the place of origin of the most numerous

group of ironworkers to come to the Weald. Confirmation seems to come from the fact that ironworkers also came from neighbouring Bouelles (Bewell, Boell, etc., 42, 118, 136, 138, 204), a smaller village 3 km. to the east, close up under the northern edge of the Bray, and final proof seems to be furnished by the fact that representatives of three families, those of Morrell (42, 150), Russell (37, 294) and Tyler (118, 119), came from each village.

Turning now to Picardy, it appears that the Beauvaisis, which includes the eastern third of the Bray, was the Picard ironworkers' place of origin. The four workers in List B4 (94, 98, 101, 108), who stated that they were 'Beauvaisin' even confused the Chancery clerks into inventing a new place of origin called Bewasyn or Bewesyn. Here, the canton of Auneull was the chief centre of ironworking[2] and four ironworkers gave Auneuil itself (Awnell, Aunell, Hownwell, Owney, 38, 101, 127, 169) as their place of birth. A fifth ironworker, Nicholas Uddys, probably came from Sorcy (Saucye, 96), an iron mining area in the north of the canton. Le Vauroux (Varowe, 158), place of origin of Woden Vassell, lies about 4 km. west of Auneuil. The main town of the area was Beauvais itself, and though metal working was never the predominant trade there, secondary metal industries such as locksmithing and the manufacture of edge tools were carried on around 1600 and earlier. Workers who may have come from Beauvais include Marian Lamberd (108) and possibly Isambert Bilet (94) — this is to prefer the identification of Bewverse (and Bewevers)with the town of Beauvais rather than with the village of Bouvresse in the north of the Beauvaisis, near to Formerie and the Norman border. But about 5 km. south of Formerie lies Canny-sur-Thrain, another border town of the Beauvaisis. The Thrain here follows a course just under the northern escarpment of the Bray and Canny must be the place of origin of Laurence Graunte (Canney, 112), one of Sir William Sidney's workers, who came to England in 1538. This being so, it seems likely that James Cacherie and his son Peter, also workers of Sir William Sidney, but who came to England in 1524, were also from Canny, despite the variant English forms of the name (Canvey, Canwey, 113, 128). Another of Sidney's workers, John Langleys (Langlois in French?) who came to England in 1526, was born at Haucourt (Haucort, 123) inside Normandy, about 6 km. distant, and it may be suspected that Peter Gaege, who came to England in 1528, and gave his place of birth as Canny in Normandy (159), also came from this border town of Canny-sur-Thérain, rather than from Cany-Barville in the Caux, 17 km. east of Fécamp. There seems to be no published evidence of ironworking in Canny, but if the attributions just made are correct, they indicate that ironworking may have been carried on there during the 1520s and 1530s.

Evidence of the migration of workers from the Varenne valley, to the west of the Béthune, is more tenuous than for any of the areas mentioned above, but the Varenne had been an important ironworking area in the middle ages, and the reference to cast metal in moulin de la Fonte just south of Rosay, proves that it was so still. Indeed, it may he thought that John and Remye Harve, who were born at Rosie (167, 168) and came to England in 1526, were in fact from Rosay, rather than from the alternative location, which is La Rosire, north west of Beaubec. Clement Russell and Peter Barton (or Bertram) are both listed twice in the Westminster Denization roll, the two names following each other on each occasion. There can be little doubt that Russell, who came from Bouelles (Boelles or Bowelles in the diocese of Rouen, was one of the Russell family of workers who came from the Bray around 1520, and the double link of Peter Earton with him suggests that he too was one of the Barton family of ironworkers (73, 76) and probably from the Bray. If this is so, the birthplace cited by him and rendered in the roll as Royvele (or Reyvele, 211) might more probably be identified with Roville, between Saint-Saëns and Rosay, than with Royville (near to Bacqueville). Reuville [near Doudeville) or Rouville (near Bolbec).

It remains to consider places of origin peripheral to the ironworking areas of the Bray, cited as places of birth by single ironworkers, and places which may lie elsewhere in Picardy and Normandy. There seems to be, in Picardy, Crofecure and Henno (152, 46). The first is undoubtedly Crèvecoeur, which might be either Crèvecoeur-le-Grand or Crèvecoeur-le-Petit (respectively 23 km. north and 40 km. north-east of Beauvais). A third possibility is the hamlet of Crèvecoeur, about 20 km. south of Beauvais and just beyond the south-east extremity of the Bray, though this can less accurately be described as lying in Picardy. Henno is merely stated to be in France. The identification with the county of Hainault cannot be sustained because Hainault was only later annexed to France. The hamlet of Hénu, about 7 km. north-east of Beauvais, appears to be the most likely identification.

Turning now to Normandy, Catillon (Catilion, 43) on the Andelle, south of Forges, Crosville (Croofelde, 164) on the Scie, south of Dieppe, and Dieppe (Depe, 178) itself, were each the birthplace of one ironworker. Rouen (Rone, 137, 143) appears to have been the birthplace of two workers (though the possibility that the diocese rather than the city is intended should be borne in mind). Other identifications are less certain for one reason or another. Marian Deprey may have been born in La Halotière (Halautier, 49) south of Catillon on the Andelle; Thomas Dewprown may have originated in La Bienfaisance

(Benvisant, 89) near Richemont, 16 km. north east of Neufchâtel, whilst other workers may have been born in Le Caule (Collo, 135)[3] and Beaufresne (Barfronets, 162), which also lie to the north of the Bray. Colyar (180) is possibly a case of an occupation being confounded by the Chancery clerks into a place name.

Four places of birth remain to be established, each the place of origin of a well authenticated ironworker. Elbuseyt (91) seems to be a badly garbled place name, which might possibly be intended for Bézu-St.-Eloi near to Gisors. Harbfilde (129) is difficult to identify in Normandy, and if not in Normandy might be Herbeville in the Département of Yvelines, 35 km. west of Paris. Other places which may be located west of the Seine, but within Normandy are Grisoldes (122) which may be Glisolles, between Evreux and Conches-en-Ouche, and Pesuys (48)[4], which may be Piseux, north west of Verneuil, both in the Euro Département. As these two locations are adjacent to the ironworking areas of the Ouche, these identifications seem justified. Should they be sustained they would point to only a small admixture of workers from the Ouche, among a much larger body of ironworkers coming from the pays de Bray, and in particular from the Seine-Maritime.

Notes and References

1. The numerals cited refer to entries in the author's 'Provisional identifications of ironworkers among French immigrants listed in the Denization rolls of 1541 and 1544' (Bulletin No. 16, 1979).
2. Précis statistique sur le canton d'Auneuil (1831), pp.107-8.
3. I am indebted to M. Michel Coffin of Forges-les-Eaux for this suggestion. Though Meryall cannot be proved to have been an ironworker, entries in the Fletching parish register during the 1550s show that he lived in the Weald.
4. Identifications with Puisenval (20 km. north of Neufchâtel) and with Puiseux- en-Bray seem less satisfactory, in the latter case only because it lies outside Normandy.

ERRATA in the article 'Provisional identifications of ironworkers among French immigrants listed in the Denization rolls of 1541 and 1544' (Bulletin No. 16 1979)

1 Entry 5: for Harby read HARBY.

2 In line 5 of the paragraph following entry 64: for '206 and 219' read '205 and 221'.

3 List B2: this should be headed ‘With my lorde of Norfolk in Sheffeld’.

4 Entries 75 to 78: insert under ‘Years in England’ — 22, 22, 20, 16 respectively.

5 Entry 96: for ‘Frency’ read ‘French’.

6 Entry 125: for ‘Beausolde’ read ‘Beausold’.

An Example of Wealden Ordnance — Jeremy Hodgkinson

It is an indication of the importance of the wealden gunfounding industry that examples of its products can be found far from their places of origin.[1] Such an example (Fig. 1) can be seen in the Museo del Ejrcito in Madrid, Spain.[2]

It is an 8 inch, bronze, land service mortar (the Navy did not use mortars smaller than 10 inch calibre[3]), and was made in 1771 by Edward Raby & Co. at either the Warren Furnace or at Gravetye Furnace, though the latter may have been closed by this date. The date, incidentally, coincides with the death of Edward Raby.[4]

The piece may be described as follows:

Calibre:	22 cm.	(8.7 ins.)
Length of Bore:	51 cm.	(20 ins.)
Weight:	228.8 kg.	(4 cwt. 2 qrs. 0 lbs.)
Overall Length (approx.):	65 cm.	(25.5 ins.)

It is embellished with the Royal Cipher “3 G R” surmounted by the English crown, beneath which is written “RABY & Co FECIT 1771”. Below the vent is marked 4_T2_T0 being the weight. There is also the mark “No.R3” on the left trunnion.

The actual calibre of 8.7 inches may be accounted for by a sizeable split in the top ring, which is not visible on the illustration. The mortar would originally have been mounted on a wooden bed, which would not have been readily portable. It would then have been held at its firing angle by blocks or wedges.

The mortar was transferred to its present site from the Museo de Artilleria and came there from Tetun in Spanish Morocco where it was taken by the Spanish Army during the North African War of 1859-60. A possible explanation is that it came to Morocco via Gibraltar and Spain, after the Peninsula War, where it might have numbered among the siege weapons in Wellington’s army. Even then it would have been forty years old.

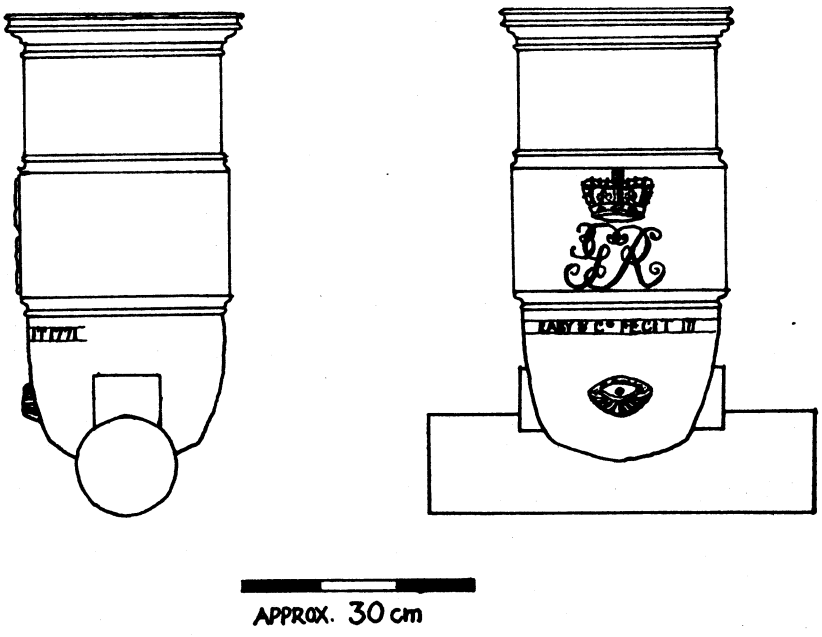

Fig. 1

Notes and References

1. See W.I.R.G. Bulletin 3 (1975) p.45 for an example of Sussex ordnance at Mombasa. For the locations of some other examples see Charles Ffoulkes, The Gunfounders of England, Cambridge (1937) Ch. 11.
2. Catalogo del Museo de Artilleria Madrid. No. 3660 p.138. I am grateful to Colonel 0. A. Guardado and Señor A. Espinoza for their assistance in supplying information about this piece.
3. See R. Wilkinson-Latham, British Artillery on Land and Sea 1790-1820 (1973) Appendix 2 p.86 & Appendix 3 p.87.
4. March 13 1771. See Southwark Cathedral Registers

Wealden Iron in Maresfield (various sources) Joseph Pettitt

I Straker sites

a) in Wealden Iron (1931):		NCR TQ42/
Oldlands Roman Bloomery	near Sinderhatche	476 268
Hendall Blast Furnace	west of stream i.e. in Maresfield	471 260
Boringwheel Mill	serving what furnaces?	456 264
Old Forge (Forge and Furnace)	see below	459 257
Lower Marshalls Forge	see below	452 239
Maresfield Furnace and Forge	see separate article	460 27 c.465 231
b) in Sussex Notes and Queries 6 (1936/7):		
Stumbletts	see also Wealden Iron p.247 pinpointed by V. & B. Herbert	3995 3065

II Other discoveries

a) W.I.R.G.:		
Reedings Farm Bloomery	W.I.R.G. Bulletin 7 (1974),11	469 251
Maresfield Furnace	? true site in Furnace Bank Wood	463 232
Furnace Bank Bloomery	Tap slag not blast-furnace slag	463 233
Town Bottom	Old Pond Bay? With some forge cinder	?469 239
b) Ordnance Survey Archaeology Department:		
Streeters Farm Bloomery	But perhaps Roman Road metalling	468 284
c) Schubert, History of the British Iron and Steel Industry (1957):		
Carr's Wood Bloomery	1st century B.C. (S.E. Winbolt, 1936: record not yet traced)	435 280
d) Documentary Work by J.P.:		
Old Forge	Furnace in 1717: in E.S.R.0. Add. Mss. 683 (1717)	459 257
Lower Marshells Forge	Furnace in 16th century: Hogge's Langley (record by David Crossley). Furnace slag in stream. Tithe and map 1653 give Langley field-names.	452 239
Sweet Minepits	Tithe and Parliamentary Survey, for what smelting site?	469 251
Tinkers' Wood Bloomery	Bloomery slag in stream bank east by bridge Tithe and O.S. map c.1870	434 275
Hammer heads (3)	Tithe 1790 and Map c.1820	458 239 and eastwards

Little Forge Field	Tithe	453 235
Forge Field	Tithe 1790	463 224
Forgers	Old Gage Rentals	Somewhere between Batts Bridge and Piltdown
Forge Field (Allchins)?	Tithe 1790: difficult to place: east of Mark Street, or just east of Tinkers' Wood??	435 273

III Slag metalling on Roman road

I. D. Margary "A New Roman Road to the Coast" in Sussex Archaeological Collections 73 (1932), pp.17-21, ibid. 74 (1933), pp.56-63.

Camp Hill	472 290	Flitterbanks	459 246
Streeter's Farm	466 282	Park Wood (Forge Lane)	455 230
see IIb		do.	454 224
Putland	467 275	Fairhazel Wood	4535 2238
Fairwarp	465 268	do. (in Fletching)	453 220
Old Workhouse Farm	464 263		
?do.	463 262		
?do.	463 261		

The slag in Fairhazel wood is mingled with flints. The latter could have come only from the South Downs or near. Does this mean to say "Slag metalling on Roman Roads indicates Bloomery nearby" is fallacious?

Darwell Furnace, Mountfield[1] TQ 708 207 J. Manwaring Baines

This site, (Fig. 1) which ultimately became Darwell Furnace Farm, was visited by Herbert Blackman on Aug. 28, 1920 and he noted (Notes on Sussex Ironworks, vol. II in the library of the Sussex Archaeological Society): "The bay is practically intact, save for excavation for cinders &c of which hundreds of loads have been carted away; there is an unusual quantity of old bricks and tiles in this refuse. At the SE end of the bay is a large mound of scoria. There are 3 or 4 large pieces of slag lying about, similar to those in the stream at Ashburnham Furnace; the scoria here is of a much lighter character than at Crowhurst and Beauport .... Mr Every obtained a cannon ball of 4-5 lbs weight off the farmer here, picked up from the bay."

Straker recorded (Wealden Iron (1931), p.308): "The bay is wide and high, the bed of the large pond does not appear to have silted to any great depth, and forms a level meadow surrounded by its banks .... There is a large bed of cinder at the south-east end of the bay. I found there a portion of the iron rack of the penstock. Many small cannon balls have been dug up." He notes that the slag consisted mostly of silica.

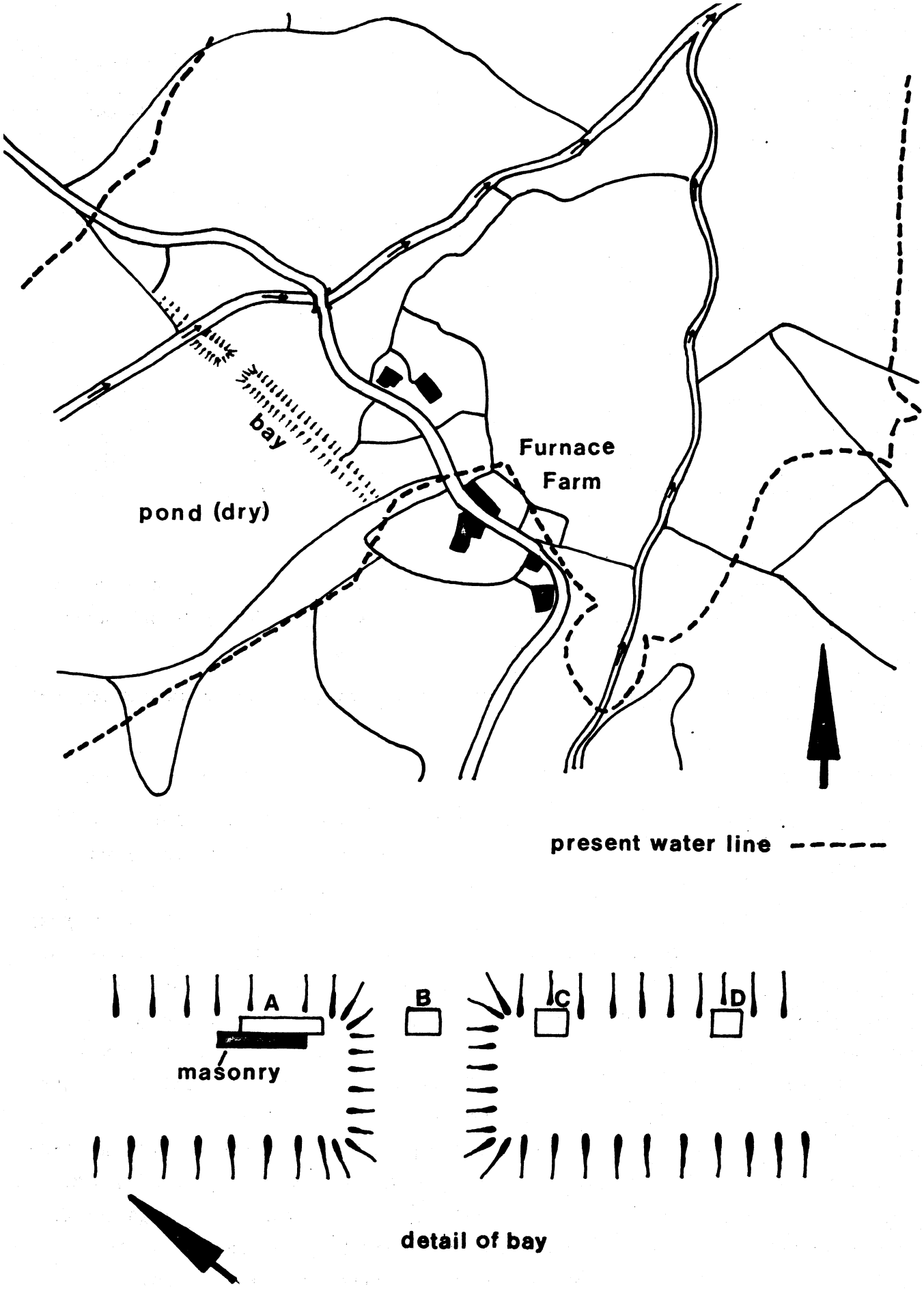

Fig. 1 Sketch plan of Darwell Furnace, 1949, before flooding for the reservoir

I visited the site in March 1936, in company with the late Mr E. W. Amoore when the bay surmounted by a fence was a marked feature across the valley. It had been breeched a little way south of the Darwell stream by a cart track and this showed that it was a long earthwork of clay, filled in on either side with slag. There was no trace of the actual furnace except for a few feet of masonry, slightly at an angle to the stream, and in line with this on the northern side there was another worked stone in the bank. The former furnace pond was still a level meadow and the farm buildings were occupied.

In February 1940, when plans for the new reservoir were being drawn up, I again went out to Darwell on a hurried visit. A large 'bear' was lying half buried by grass across the lane almost opposite the two cottages. The stream had encroached on the bay to the south but there was still some masonry visible. But higher up the hill to the south of the farm was another bay, formerly damming the small brook which ran down through Darwell Wood to join the Darwell Stream lower down. This was a very much smaller pond and evidently secondary to the larger one. An excavation had been made in it to obtain slag for paths etc., and the section exposed showed that the bay consisted mainly of slag covered with clay.

The estimated height in the centre was about 6 feet, the layers being thicker in the centre of the bay and decreasing on either side. Measured vertically downwards

Earth	1 inch
Slag	10-11 inches
Clay	12
Slag	12
Heavy slag	3
Slag & refuse	c.30

It seemed that this might have been the site of the forge. Mr Fuller, in a memorandum of furnaces and forges with their output in 1717, notes Darwell Furnace as 150 tons and Darwell Forge as 30 tons per annum (SAC LXVIII, 52). Straker (loc.cit., p.308) seems to suggest rebuilding or alteration prior to 1694 and this might have included the addition of a forge. I was informed that Darwell Mill, higher up the stream and which I had not time to inspect, was a corn mill. A cannon ball had recently been found near this secondary bay with the marks of the mould very fresh upon it.

In 1949 preparations for the reservoir were well advanced and I returned to Darwell on April 21. The small wood at the north end of the main bay had been cleared prior to flooding but it was possible to see how the bay had been continued on the northern side of the stream. No masonry could be found in the

banks, though worked stones had evidently been washed along about 20 to 30 yards in a bed of the stream. The ground fell markedly to the NE of the bay. A short line of masonry had been disclosed by a fall of earth between the cart track gap and the stream. A trench (Fig. 1) (A) was dug to a depth of 4 feet to ascertain its nature. The outer or western side consisted entirely of furnace earth and slag, but the masonry on the eastern side stopped abruptly before the gap and a small tree stopped further progress.

Across the gap one squared stone was visible on the surface and another trench (C) was dug to seek more but without success. As it seemed possible that the cart track might be on the site of the old spillway, a trench (B) was dug in the centre in line with (A) and (C) but no further masonry was found. Many narrow bricks (4½ by 9 by 2½ ins.), presumably those noted by Blackman, were found both in Pit (C) and Pit (D) closer to the cart track gap towards the surface.

The two lower cottages had already been razed to ground level, but the 'bear' was still in the same position and was later recovered for Hastings Museum.

NOTE

1. In response to a request for information about Darwell Furnace before the site was flooded, Mr J. Manwaring Baines kindly sent these notes and the sketch plan. He also informs us that in addition to the 'bear, an iron sub-plate, measuring 4 feet by 2 feet by 5 inches was recovered from the site and is now in Hastings Museum. See also H. R. Schubert, History of British Iron and Steel Industry (1957), p.203, note 1.

Sources for the History of the Wealden Iron Industry in the Public Record Office.

Part 1: Inquisitions — Sybil M. Jack

Identification of wealden iron sites on the ground has, in recent years, proceeded faster than attempts to document their past history from surviving written sources. In WIRG Bulletin 7, p.6 the editor suggested that a systematic search of Public Record Office classes was a high priority. He noted in particular Ministers Accounts, Rentals and Surveys and Court Rolls. It is undoubtedly true that nothing is more frustrating than the discovery of a site about which nothing is otherwise known, but it is worth considering whether the expenditure of time in the Public Record Office is likely to yield results commensurate with the effort involved.

It must be remembered that the Public records in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are primarily the records of the Crown. Therefore information about the possessions and activities of private individuals can only be expected if those individuals became for some reason involved with the Crown. A number of classes of documents derive from such involvement.

The most regular are the series of Inquisitions which were taken on the death of a tenant-in-chief of the king — or someone suspected of being a tenant-in-chief. These are well known and have good indexes collating the various series. Often, as for Sussex, they appear in print in a calendared form.[1] From such a source we can learn that Robert Baker, when he died on 8 June 1583, held 'Hamsill furnace' and lands in Rotherfield, and that when his son John died on the 20 September 1639 he held both a forge and a furnace called Hamsill. We find that John Barham, gentleman, when he died late in Charles I's reign held the iron mill called Verredge.

On the other hand Inquisitions are not always so explicit. In part this is because they are concerned only with property held in fee simple, fee tail, or in some form of freehold. In law, leasehold property was a chattel, and so was no concern of such an Inquisition. Thus Henry Bowyer's inquisition tells us only of two iron mills and land called Tynsley in Worth and Crawley (1590). The Inquisitions on other known ironmasters such as John Ashburnham, Francis Challoner and Edward Caryll include nothing at all about iron working. The Inquisition of Alexander Collyns, who died in 1551, would similarly tell us nothing if it did not, for other reasons, contain an extract from his will in which he ordered that 'Julian my wife shall have all my lands and tenements called Sokerness in Brightling with the forneys for life' before they descended to Alexander Collen.[2]

If the heir were of age his lands nevertheless technically remained in the hands of escheators until he had gone through the feudal hoops of suing for livery and doing homage. Records of this appear in the escheators' books, which survive in some quantity for this period, although they are by no means complete. Also in the escheators' care were certain escheats which had come to the Crown many years before due to lack of heirs, or because of outlawry, felony, or treason; these thus belonged more or less permanently to the Crown. The escheator also had to deal with current forfeitures of property for any of these causes — unless the criminal was so important that the matter was taken out of his hands. The escheators also tell us about deaths after which there were no Inquisitions, none of the land being held in chief of the king. Thus in Anthony Pelham's account for Sussex in 1552 there is a note about the lands of Thomas May, who held property in Ticehurst, Etchingham and Lamberhurst: manors are mentioned but no iron mills.[3]

If the heir was under age, then for the period of his minority the supervision of his estates lay in the hands of the feodary of the county. The extents taken by the feodaries are sometimes more detailed and nearly always more informative because they explain in comprehensible terms the legal effect of the various deeds involved. Still more important, they show who actually held the property. We can thus learn that when Thomas Smith died in 1642 he left to his son Francis the manor of Ibernow, Kirdford, including a third part of the 'iron works, workmen's houses, ponds, lands, overflowing mill water, bays, penstocks, sluices, coalplaces, mineplaces and all ways and easements now used with the said iron works'. It is also shown that Margaret, the widow of Thomas's father John Smith held this as part of her dower. We can learn that when John Knight died in 1646 he left 'one farm commonly called Scarlets furnace with the appurtenances in Cowden.' Some cases are less helpful. When Sir Edward Moore died in 1624 seised of the manor of Worth and the forest of Worth, held of Henry Lord Burgavenny in free socage, there was no mention of iron mills. This, however, cannot be taken as conclusive evidence that the mill at Worth was down. Nor is there any mention of iron mills in the complicated arrangements which John Middleton made for his family in 1620, or in the extents on Thomas Glydd and Ninian Boord.[4]

The books kept by the feodaries of the lands for which they had to account also cast light on who was actually farming a property. Thus in 1578-9 we see Edward Caryll as keeper of the lands of the late John Caryll, including one third of the manor of Ifield, during the heir's minority. Joan Weston held two parts of top lands of her late husband Bartholomew Weston as her dower and accounted to the feodary for the other third as her son's. Such entries are extremely summary, however, and give no details of the property, so that no light on the ownership of iron mills can be expected.[5]

In short, wills are a more likely source of information about iron works throughout this period, but wills were not the concern of the central government at the period. The church had jurisdiction both over probate and over any disputes, although certain circumstances might enable individuals to bring such cases into the English bill side of Chancery.

Notes

1. Sussex Record Society XIV.
2. Ibid., nos. 158, 205, 224, 70, 37, 38, 74, 79, 152, see also Vol. III.
3. PRO E136/217/1.
4. PRO Wards 5/43.
5. Wards 9/460.

Recent Fieldwork C. F. Tebbutt

Ashdown Forest (pipeline) Bloomery. Interim report. TQ 441 296

At the end of April 1980 the Mid Sussex Water Company's new pipeline from Horsted Keynes to Blackhills, Ashdown Forest, was being watched by my wife and myself. When the initial trench, c.4m. wide and 30cm. deep, was dug on the open heathland east of the A22 road a bloomery site was revealed at TQ 441 296, with the furnace almost at the centre of the trench. As it seemed likely that the secondary deep pipelaying trench would be dug over the site within a few days, a rescue team of WIRG field-group workers was assembled, at little over twelve hours' notice, to excavate and record as much as possible before the destruction of the site. It was fortunately a weekend and the work was mainly completed by the Sunday evening.

It was soon apparent that the bloomery was unlike any other that we had experienced in the Weald. The furnace was of the primitive bowl type, not designed for tapping slag, and none of the tap slag we are used to finding was present. Approximately a dozen small sherds of hand-made pottery were found, again unlike any we had seen. Perhaps the most surprising feature was the use of flint pebbles in the furnace, possibly as flux. A large number of these were found in both the furnace and cinder heap, and even embedded in cinder. All were cracked and splintered by heat.

Fortunately the site survived for long enough in the ensuing week to enable Mr Tony Clark, of the Dept. of the Environment laboratories, to take samples for archaeo-magnetic dating and charcoal for radio-carbon determination. Mr Nicholson of Aston University, Birmingham, also collected samples of furnace materials for research purposes. One can only hope that a firm date will be established for this apparently unique wealden iron working site; a further report will be made in due course.

A Saxon iron working site at Buriton, Hants. SU 738 201

Have we found our first wealden Saxon iron smelting site? Unfortunately we cannot be sure. Mrs E. De Brisay, working in the far SW corner of the Weald at Buriton, Hampshire, has found an undoubted Saxon site just outside the village on market garden land at SU 738 201. From field walking and a small amount of excavation she and her husband have recovered early Saxon grass-tempered pottery, later Saxon blackware with chalk grog, and some Saxo-Norman sherds. Associated with this were many nails and much iron slag and cinder. The latter is being examined by Dr Peter Ovenden but to the eye of the writer

it appears to be an assemblage that could come, not from a bloomery site as we know it, but from a bloomery re-heating hearth. Similar waste resulted when Roger Adams re-heated and forged the raw bloom from his experimental shaft furnace, and in both cases some pieces were magnetic and others resembled tap slag.

As a wealden Saxon bloomery site has never been positively identified one cannot say how the slag would differ from that found on Roman or medieval sites. However, field evidence points to Mrs De Brisay's Saxons forging iron from blooms produced in a smelting furnace somewhere in the vicinity, and not just acting as blacksmiths.

Bloomery Furnaces destroyed at Batsford TQ 628 156

After the excavation and destruction of Batsford Furnace (WIRG Bulletin 15 (1979), 27-31) new evidence for iron working has come to light in the course of earth moving at the far NW end of the new fishing lake. We are told that under eight feet of silt in the bed of the former pen-pond there were found and destroyed five or six bloomery furnaces. Unfortunately the machine driver did not mention this to the manager, Mr Harrison Smith, who has been so helpful in the past, until several weeks had elapsed and all chance of recovering further details had gone. Straker records the finding of bloomery slag in this area by Col. MacLeod in 1930 (Wealden Iron 360).

Coneyhurst Gill Forge, Ewhurst TQ 083 404

This site, not recorded by Straker, is described in WIRG Bulletin 8 (Spring 1975), 12. The reference to a 'new site' and 'the finders' brought a valuable protest letter from Mr E. S. Wood of Guildford. He drew attention to Surrey Archaeological Society Annual Report for 1961 whore there is a reference to the true finder, Mr A. J. Clark, and the excavation he did there. This excavation has not been published, but Mr Clark has now kindly provided for WIRG records a plan of the site made in 1961. and some excellent photographs of the wooden 'trough' found there. This has enabled correct details to be included in the gazetteer for the projected book.

Postern Forge, Tonbridge TQ 606 462

This site, not known to Straker, was located and recorded by Brian Herbert, but little now remains. The pond is dry and the bay, 140 m. long, now forms Postern Lane. A spillway can be recognised at the W. end. The timber-framed 'Postern Forge' house is probably contemporary, and the owner has a cannon ball and forge bottoms found in the vicinity.

Paine's Place "Furnace", Framfield TQ 518 196

This site, not recorded by Straker, was visited by WIRG members in 1973 and recorded as a 'probable' (WIRG Bulletin 7 (Winter 1974), 20). Stemming from the need for a decision whether to include the site in the gazetteer of the projected book, it was revisited by Brian Herbert for a slag detector survey. The conclusion was that the undoubted presence of glassy slag probably originated from road surface material, and did not constitute sufficient evidence for a furnace site.

High Rocks Forge, Frant (Speldhurst) TQ 557 382

Recent careful scrutiny by Brian Herbert of the Sussex County Magazine has revealed articles by Straker written after the publication of Wealden Iron. In one of these entitled 'Lost Mills of Waterdown Forest' (Sussex County Magazine 13 (1939), p.206) appears the following:-

> "Hughes Hale" is doubtless a rendering of Hungershall, near Tunbridge Wells, on a little stream below High Rocks. Here is a small bay and some signs of a furnace having been here at some time, but the flow of water is so small that it never could have been of any consequence.'

This brief mention was pursued on the ground by John Blake, who discovered a forge site on an adequate stream, with a pond (now dry) having a bay 80m. long, 2m. high on the upstream side and 2.25m. on the downstream. There is a fair quantity of forge cinder, and a dry banked spillway stream at the S end. A dry pen-pond with a well-preserved bay was found 120m. upstream.

New light on Mayfield Furnace TQ 593 281

Mayfield Furnace is well known for the guns it produced and for its wealthy owner, Sir Thomas Gresham. Straker devotes two pages to its description (Wealden Iron 292-3) but seems to imply that little now remains. The pond bay,

running alongside the track of the ‘old coach road’ at TQ 593281, has always been plainly visible but not, until recently, the ancillary works.

In 1979 WIRG was informed by the Wealden District Planning Department that an application had been received by the Forestry Commission for tree felling and clearance over the site of the furnace. As a result, the site was visited by two of our local members and restrictions designed to safeguard the earthworks were suggested and agreed. This proved a good example of the successful working of an organisation set up by the Sussex Archaeological Society to deal with this kind of case, and we are appreciative of the care and goodwill of the Wealden District Planning Department.

The site, with the coppice cut and almost completely cleared of undergrowth, can now be seen in its entirety, with most interesting features not previously realised. About 50 m. SE of the main bay is a secondary bay, with a now dry spillway and spillway channel at its SE end and breached by a small deep cut stream at its centre. It even has its own pen pond upstream. High ground would have made it difficult to divert this stream to help fill the main pond, and it joins the main stream some 100 m. below the principal bay.

As a result of the clearance this secondary working area is seen almost certainly to be the site of a separate cannon boring mill. The slope to the N is littered with small pieces of broken cannon mould, and to the S were found several lumps of rusty, magnetic, cinder-like material, almost certainly boring swarf. On the SE side of the stream, just downstream of the bay, a level platform has been cut in the natural bank slope to accommodate some activity. As far as I am aware this is the only wealden cannon casting site where a separate boring mill has been recognised.

A source of ore for Maynards Gate Furnace

Our member Mr R. Lee has discovered an almost certain source of ore for Maynards Gate Furnace. On the top of the hill to the SW (TQ 547 291), on the south side of the public footpath, is a quarry at the side of an open field, now in the course of being filled with rubbish. Opposite the quarry, N of the footpath, an area of the field has a thick scatter of iron ore, mainly ‘box stone’, and cyrena limestone. Some of this ore is roasted.

The footpath to this site starts from the public road just E of the bridge at TQ 542 297, close to the site of Maynards Gate Furnace, and having crossed the tributary stream mounts the hill along a deep and wide hollow way that can be traced as a cart track on the line of the footpath. It reaches the quarry after passing through a hilltop plantation from within which stone has been dug. The footpath continues, but there is no sign of a cart track beyond the quarry.

It seems reasonably certain that not only was ore mined here but was also roasted before being carted to the furnace. So far little evidence has come to light as to whether ore roasting for blast furnaces was done at the source of the ore or at the furnaces themselves.

Scheduling of sites by the Department of the Environment in 1979

No.395 Buxted; Little Forge. Additional area on east of north-east side.
No.471 Worth; Warren Furnace.

Omissions from Index (Bulletin 12).
Bungehurst VII. 21. Old Forge, VI, 26-7.