

MAYNARDS GATE FURNACE

WEALD IRON RESEARCH GROUP

Winter 1973/4 scheme for revising information on water-powered sites included by E. Straker in Wealden Iron (1931).

The following points are designed to produce a rapid survey of these sites, many of which have not been visited in recent years. You will be aware that Straker's site-comments were unsystematic, and, beyond this, modern developments such as tree clearance or planting, bulldozing, or building, have made major changes.

Please ensure an adequate National Grid Reference. ✓

1. Name of site. State if that used by Straker is in any way misleading.

MAYNARDS GATE: ROTHERFIELD FURNACE

2. National Grid Reference (2 letters, 6 figures).

C.T.Q 53952980.

W.I. 17254

3. Access. State problems of terrain or land-use. (If the name of owner and tenant is easily available, this could be useful.)

Possible to walk along N. side of stream.

4. Features on the ground.

Main Dam

Length Total c. 116 yards. — 26 yards on
S. side of forest stream
= 80m

Height (estimate from both upstream and downstream sides if possible.)

Upstream 2'6" — 3'6"

Downstream c. 12 feet

Condition (i.e. gaps, erosion etc; are there any good cross-sections in bulldozed gaps? If so, do these show the construction materials used at different stages?)

Preceded by stream, and another gap on N. side. There is a vertical section showing along the W. side, which exposes a former breach newly filled with a filling containing to the bottom of the bay, and filled with slag and burnt clay furnace lining. There is much slag on top of the bay on the S. side

Pen-ponds - is there any evidence for dams upstream from the main supply pond?

Yes, at T.R. 533 302, c. 300 yards W of "Forest Rise" road bridge. The bay is c 3 feet high on the upstream side and 11/12 feet on the downstream. It is stone revetted on the downstream side and has a stone weir.

Mine pits - are there any close by?

The area below the dam

Clear indications of buildings, wheel-pits, sluices, etc.

Flat area at N. end on the bank of which (towards the stream) can be seen burnt stones & burnt clay.

Surface irregularities

5. Slags and cinders. (Keep samples.)

- Blast furnace slags (glassy). How much?

What is the general colour range? (In particular are there significant quantities light in colour?)

Some
The blast furnace slag is unusual. - dark in colour and not very shiny but porous. Some dull ~~by ~~the~~ ~~not~~ ~~other~~ ~~not~~ ~~dark~~~~.
Some crystalline, & light in weight. Samples taken

- Forge cinders (generally rusty, bubbly, but varying widely in form.)
How much?

Possible forge cinders all down stream as far as the ford, some soft & light weight & very porous

Are there many large cakes ("furnace bottoms") over, say, 18"x 18"?

None seen

- Ore - any scatter?

None seen

- Purple shelly limestone - any?

None seen

Other surface finds (pottery, clay pipes, timbers, etc.) Note these

None seen

6. Are there any buildings, industrial, domestic or agricultural, apparently dating from the likely period of the site? Note briefly.

None seen

7. Has the site been re-used (e.g. corn or fulling mill)?

No.

8. Do you know of any published or unpublished excavation which may have taken place? Note details, in particular of the excavator and location of finds in the case of unpublished work.

"Excavation of a Late-Sixteenth / Early Seventeenth
Century Gun-casting Furnace at Maynards
Gate" Owen Bedwin
Sussex. Arch. Collect. 116 (1978) 163-79

9. Is the site apparently threatened in any way?

no

10. Do you know of any documentation missed by Straker? State details and whereabouts, if known.

11. Other comments.

Straker does not appear to have ~~been~~ gone far enough upstream to find the lung, which he seems to assume is behind the water works. Actually it is well above it and is a prominent landmark.

From the large amount of forge cinders in the stream it would seem likely that there was a forge here as well as a furnace, possibly a medieval forge, or a water powered blooming, as there is also blooming slag in the stream.

N.B. A rescue dig was carried out Oct-Dec 1975 by the Sussex Rescue Unit of the Inst of Arch. under Dr Owen Badger. Furnace foundations, wheel pit and tailrace and a gun casting pit were found. A full report should be available later. D 4.376
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