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Documentary and literary evidence relating to Burwash Forge and Wynhamford Mill, East Sussex

Kate Mees

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article has been adapted from a desk-based assessment, conducted as part of the MA in Landscape Archaeology at the University of Bristol in February 2009. The area of study consisted of a 1km² plot, approximately 1.5km southwest of the village of Burwash. It incorporates the sites of Burwash Forge (TQ 6631 2313), which lies within the parish of Burwash, and Wynhamford Mill (TQ 6560 2235), across the parish border in Brightling. Documentary research has revealed much about the nature of the industrial activities that took place at these sites in the medieval and post-medieval periods, and about the families and individuals who were involved in these enterprises.

Research was carried out at the East Sussex County Record Office (ESRO), Lewes, at Hastings Library and online via the National Archives (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a).

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DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE: BURWASH FORGE

There are no surviving medieval sources that refer unequivocally to Burwash Forge. As Cleere and Crossley (1985: 87) have testified, many aspects of the medieval Wealden iron industry remain ‘tantalizingly obscure’, as documentary sources ‘throw no more than occasional light on the actions or products of the medieval smelter or smith’.

Documents in the Ashburnham Family Archive relating to the ‘Manor of Burghurst, in Burwash’ cite the payment of rental for a forge at Durefoldgate in 1432-3 (ESRO ASH/200a/11-12H6) and a new forge by Burwash Church in 1476-7 (ESRO ASH/200a/16-17E4). However, with their low rental cost, these premises are unlikely to have housed anything more than blacksmiths’ establishments (J. Hodgkinson *pers. comm.*). The first documentary sources to relate unambiguously to Burwash Forge date from the 16th century.

John Collins and Burwash Forge

John Collins, who in the 1520s held part of the Manor of Socknersh (Salzman 1937: 229), took over the tenancy of Burwash Forge at the beginning of the 1520s. A document from 1523-4 lists the payment of £16 from the farm of the iron mill (*molendini ferrarii*), leased by a John Colyn (ESRO ASH/200a/15-16H8). Although a tenant named as David Harvy was said to be

operating a 'late bloomery' at Burwash in 1524-5 (Cleere & Crossley 1985: 107; ESRO ASH/200a/16-17H8), no further information on him has been traced, and it seems his tenure of the forge was short-lived. By 1525, John Collins was operating a blast furnace at Socknersh, near Brightling (3.8km east of Burwash Forge, at TQ 7050 2330). This suggests that Burwash was being used as a finery forge, supplied with pig iron from his Socknersh furnace. Collins was also employing French workers, almost certainly to assist in the operation of his blast furnace. The Lay Subsidy 1524-5 has an entry under Hundred of Hawkesburgh stating, 'Also the said John Collen [Collins] hath in his service VIII Frenchmen' (Awty 1981: 28). Further evidence of the existence of a furnace or forge connected to Colyn comes from an Ashburnham document with an entry dated 16 Henry VIII (1525-6) 'molendium ferreum ibidem die Johe Colyn'. Crucially, the words 'iron mill' and Colyn are in association (Pettitt 1978: 11). Workers and members of the Collins family were also brought in to offer their expertise and empirical knowledge at the Sidney ironworks at Robertsbridge Abbey in the late 1530s (Hodgkinson 2008: 67). As Crossley (1975: 5-6) has noted, 'it was significantly the Collins – Alexander and John, iron masters at Socknersh, who supervised construction at Robertsbridge and Panningridge'. Alexander and John Collins junior, were in charge of building at both sites. Their involvement with the day-to-day running of the forge at Robertsbridge is evident. In 1542-3, the hammerman is identified as Bartholomew Collins, younger son of John Collins senior. For most of the same period, Alexander was founder (Crossley 1975: 51).

Clearly, the Collins family (John senior and his sons) were key figures in the Wealden Iron industry. From the mid-1520s onwards, they divided their time between four main iron producing sites: Socknersh, Robertsbridge, Panningridge and Burwash. This is perhaps a reflection of the accelerated growth that took place in the early- to mid-16th century; as Hodgkinson (2008: 7) reminds us, 'the Weald was the principal iron producing region in Britain' at that time.

A series of documents from 1531 places John Collins senior in Burwash and details his involvement in a dispute over land in the village. In October 1531, John Colyn, his son Alexander (described as a husbandman, not a forge or furnace owner), together with others, including Thomas Assheburnham, entered property 'held' by Thomas Waynmer. He was expelled and his beasts driven away. Wayner claimed that he was falsely imprisoned and taken by force to the house of John Collins in Burwash. In fear of his life, he was forced to pay the sum of 40 shillings, the rent of the said manor (Mundy 1913: 73).

John Collins' will

Evidence provided by the will of John Colyn (Collins) senior, dated 18th November 1541, shows that both Burwash Forge and Socknersh Furnace were in his ownership. He stated,

I will that my said sons John, Alexander and Bartholemew and their assigns shall lovingly and brotherly occupy together my iron forge with all manner of tools and instruments and necessaries thereto belonging in the said Parish of Burwash. Forthwith my furnace with all manner of tools, instruments and necessaries thereto being in the Parish of Brightling (ESRO AMS/5789/21).

A memorial or grave slab in Burwash Church is believed to be the earliest known cast iron example. The largely plain plate bears a small floriated cross, beneath which are the words 'Orate Pannema Jhone Coline' (Pray for the Soul of John Collins). Early writers on the iron industry assumed that the Lombardic style of lettering used, popular in the 13th and 14th centuries, indicated that the slab dated from that period. However, the use of cast iron means that it could not have been made earlier than the late 15th century. It is almost certainly a memorial to the John Collins of Burwash Forge who died in March 1536 (Hodgkinson 2008: 113).

Colyn's will appointed two members of the Crotyn den family, a Thomas Wenell and Richard a Wyke of Burwash as feofees. Richard a Wyke died in 1554 and his will includes the following: 'I bequeth to John a Weke my brother my shoppe with all Implements therto belongyng all yron and cole only excepted both wrought and unwrought' (Garraway Rice & Godfrey 1935: 243). By 1500, the a Wyke family lived at Crowhurst Bridge Farm, Burwash (Barkshire 2000: 12). This may have been the Richard Weekes who was operating Mountfield Forge in 1548 (Cleere & Crossley 1985: 346). However, there is also a mention of the purchase of new hursts for the hammer at Robertsbridge Forge in 1554, including three from Mr. Weekes of Battle at Darvel furnace (Crossley 1975: 114). Although clearly a close associate of John Colyn and also a man with some involvement in the iron industry, it is not possible to identify Richard a Wyke precisely, or to say where the 'shoppe' was located.

The 1574 Lists

A set of documents, known as the '1574 Lists', constitute the most extensive and important record of the extent of the Wealden iron industry for any one period in its history (Cattell 1979: 161). The Admiralty was concerned in bringing attention to the growing extent of the industry, which allegedly threatened supplies of timber for naval shipbuilding and other purposes. It was also claimed that the country's merchant shipping was put at risk by vessels armed with guns produced and sold by Wealden ironworks. The Privy Council ordered, therefore, that a list be drawn up of all the ironworks in the Weald. Burwash was visited three times on 28th February 1574 (Straker 1931: 56), and the owner, John Collins, summoned to appear before the Privy Council. However, although his forge is listed as among 'divers forges and furnaces in Burwash', it seems likely that he was excused, being 'an old man of LXXX yeres and not able to travel' (Teesdale 1986: 17). Unfortunately, the Lists contain no details of the works visited; however, there is no evidence of gun casting at Burwash in any other documentary evidence.

Goring's table, derived from the 1574 Lists and the works of Schubert, Straker and Cattell, details the relations of John Collins who were associated with the iron trade. No partnerships are indicated, but it cites Stephen Collins of Lamberhurst, forge owner and yeoman, and Thomas Collins of Brightling, yeoman and furnace owner (Socknersh), both of whom were his nephews (Goring 1978: 224-225).

The Lists of 1574 reveal a significant growth in the number of ironworks in the Weald. From a modest start at the beginning of the 16th century and the impressive growth to 1548 when there were 50 ironworks (Cleere & Crossley 1985: 123). By 1574, no less than 50 forges and 50 furnaces were recorded (Hodgkinson 2008: 69).

The 1592 sale

Burwash Forge passed briefly into the hands of Robert Cruttenden (Barkshire 2000: 9) and then purchased by Thomas Hepden in 1592. The acquisition by Hepden resulted in a chancery suit being filed at some point between 1558 and 1603; performance asked for ‘an iron forge called Burwash Forge, the inheritance of Henry Colley, and a certain stack of coal lying at the same forge containing the number of 300 loads, being very necessary and beneficial for such person as should occupy the said forge’ (C2/Eliz/C4/47). It seems very likely the Henry Colley was in fact Henry Collyn, son of John Collins junior, and hence the contentious Court of Chancery case. Four years later, in 1596, Henry’s daughter, Constance, was to marry Richard Stollion, son of Thomas Stollyon of Warbleton. Thomas had worked Glaziers Forge and Waldron furnace for Sir John Pelham at the time of the 1574 lists. At that time he also held Warbleton Priory furnace (Cleere & Crossley: 319; 363-4). The marriage settlement (ESRO SRL/7/5) of November 1596 mentions lands in Burwash, ‘conveyed to Henry Collins by his father John, deceased’.

There is no indication of the value of Burwash Forge in 1592, nor any detail of buildings; only coal is mentioned. However, some indication may be given by an inventory of the goods and property belonging to Richard Maynard, an iron master and yeoman farmer of Birchden Forge in the Parish of Rotherfield (TQ 533 353). He died in 1610 and out of his total moveable wealth of £1457, £546-13-00 was tied up in stock and equipment at the forge. Burchall (1983: 24) cites the items, which included:

135 Loafe of coals	£121-00-00
18 ton and a halfe of sowes	£74-00-00
7 yron plates	£2-00-00
gynne and cable to loade timber	£6-00-00

Is it possible that the 300 loads of coal could have been worth in the region of £300?

Both the will of John Collins senior and the sale of 1592 reveal information about some of the more prominent families in Burwash and their involvement in the local iron industry. As the Rev. John Coker Egerton observed, from the year 1558, when the Parish Registers begin, ‘we have a tolerably regular account of the Cruttendens, Collinses, Hepdens and Westons amongst us’ (Egerton 1924: 142). John Collins senior left his furnace and forge to his sons John, Alexander and Bartholemew. His daughter Odyerne was married to John Crotyn den (Cruttenden). The Cruttendens were yeomen farmers at Tottgreene, at the eastern end of Burwash village. A Robert Cruttenden ran the forge in the period up to the sale of 1592. The Hepdens were also wealthy landowners, who bought Mount House on Burwash High Street in 1584. Thomas Hepden’s brother Goddard built the imposing Holmshurst Manor House in 1610.

While John Collins junior operated Burwash Forge, Alexander was recorded in 1548 as starting an ironworking site at Lamberhurst, on the Sussex-Kent border. Thomas Darell complained that ‘Alexander Collyn hath begun to make a hammer for iron making ... and hath cut down the most part of oaks standing and beginnith to cut down the beeches, by mean thereof in short time the same woods if that hammer do there continue will be utterly wasted

and destroyed'. Further, he complains that Collyn 'hath caused a great ditch to be made to turn the water of a common stream or river there which doth divide the King Majesty's shires of Kent and Sussex' (Straker 1931: 269).

From the mid-1540s onwards, there is evidence that a wide cross-section of Sussex landowners were taking advantage of their resources (and those of others), namely ore, timber and water. As Cornwall (1976: 20) has pointed out, most of the families prominent in the Wealden iron trade came from the yeomanry and minor gentry. In this respect, Burwash families followed this pattern, albeit on a fairly small scale.

The state of the industry in the 17th century

The Wealden iron industry remained pre-eminent in the production of bar iron during the 16th century, reaching a peak in the 1590s, when its output was in excess of 9000 tons annually (Hodgkinson 2008: 73). However, furnaces and forges were steadily being established in other parts of England and Wales. By 1610, output from other areas actually exceeded that of the Weald, with a consequent loss of ironworking sites. By 1653, there were 35 furnaces in the Weald, a figure which had fallen to 14 in 1664, although another 12 were still in good repair and capable of operation. Of the forges, 19 went permanently out of use, with 5 idle but in good working order (Hodgkinson 2008: 73). Socknersh Furnace is described as 'continued in repair and partly stored at ye beginning of 1664', while Burwash Forge is listed as amongst those which 'yet continue in hope of encouragement' (cited in Delany 1921: 30).

It is against this background of relative decline and stagnation in the Wealden industry, that a far more detailed description of Burwash Forge can be seen. On 1st November 1661, a deed of feoffment (sale) was made between John Hepden, born in 1636, the only son and heir of Thomas Hepden, who had taken over the forge in 1592, and Jeffrey Glyde of Dallington (ESRO SAS-RF1/1).

The Glyde family (variously spelt Glydd, Gleyd or Glyd) had been involved in the iron industry since the mid-16th century. They formed part of the 'yeomanly gentry', to borrow a later term from Celia Fiennes (Tyacke 2001: 97). Like John Collins and his sons, Thomas Glyde, active from at least the 1560s, was almost a 'professional iron master' (Hodgkinson 2008: 70). In 1568, he leases from Sir Robert Tyrwhitt, Etchingam Park, Darvel Furnace and Etchingam Forge. (Vivian 1953: 191). The lease, for ten years, allowed Glydd to use 'all the woods and underwoods in Sussex to make coal necessary for the iron to be made at the furnace and forge' (DUN14/1 1 Feb 1568). Thomas Glydd and Simon Coleman built and operated Batsford furnace on land leased from Lord Dacre in 1571. Baker's Declaration and the Lists of 1573-4 confirm Glydd's involvement with Darvel and Etchingam. Glydd was also the tenant at Panningridge between 1584 and 1586. By that time, he had considerable interests in the (iron) industry, being involved with Etchingam and Kitchenham forges, and Darvel, Panningridge and Batsford furnaces. These formed a compact group, well supplied with wood from the district at Brightling and Dallington (Cleere and Crossley: 155).

In 1620, a Thomas Glyd was granted land in Brightling, 'in consideration of the long service thereto done to him', by Robert, Earl of Leicester. This was to ensure that, 'the said Thomas Glyd should not be in danger of any forfeiture for digging up or cutting down any of the said

trees' (SAS-RF/1/295). This implies a continuing need for a source of timber with which to fuel a furnace or forge. Jeffrey Glyde was, therefore, a part of a family with long and varied experience in the Wealden iron industry.

In the 1661 sale, Jeffrey Glyde paid the sum of £400 for:

one forge or ironworks called Collins forge, and all the wheelles, beames, tooles and implements lying and being within the said forge and belonging to or used therewith and also the fludgates & penstocks belonging to or used with the said forge (ESRO SAS-RF1/1).

Details are also given of the buildings on the site, including 2 cottages or workmen's houses and one iron house. The site was said to occupy about one and a half acres. Land around the forge was used 'to lay sowes, coales, sinders, iron and other materials and necessaryes and for the use of the said forge' (ESRO SAS-RF1/1).

There is evidence too that the forge area had recently been fenced to divide it from other land still owned by John Hepden. Mention is made of 'dowles and stumps newly set up in several places. It is stated that the newly erected boundaries were made in order to separate the forge site 'from the close or forestall of the said John Hepden belonging to the messuage wherein he was living'. In addition, the sale included 2 acres 'lying between the hedge of the coppice called the Forge Wood and another lode or stream running into the saide pond towards the saide forge' (ESRO SAS-RF1/1).

Jeffrey Glyde was also allowed to dig clay from 'Calbrooke field (where clay used to be digged)' and to 'take earth and loame to make new the walls of the said forge or ironwork and workmen's houses'. Glyde and his workmen living in the cottages were also permitted to keep '2 hogges and 2 young sheates [sheep?] to graze and depasture in the said close or forestall'. However, the animals were to be 'well ringed at all times for the preservation of the corn and grass yearly growing upon the aforesaid lands of John Hepden' (ESRO SAS-RF1/1).

In 1662, a dispute occurred concerning the parcels of land and wood in Burwash called the Pond. Again, the Cruttendens were present – Goddard was described as the 'bedell' (beadle) at a 'court' held on 24th April 1662 and presided over by Joseph Bennett, rector of Brightling Church. A right of way and the 'liberty of overflowing pond of Collins forge' was granted to Thomas Cruttenden and Thomas Watkins, '2 customary tenants of the Manor' (ESRO SAS-RF/13/26).

In November 1664, the forge was leased to Richard Glyde senior of Bletchingly, Surrey, by Jeffrey Glyde and Richard, his son (ESRO SAS-RF1/3).

In June 1669, the forge changed hands again, and the names of the protagonists have a familiar ring. Mr. Thankfull Hepden entered into a tenancy agreement with Jeffrey Glyde for a period of 2 years at an annual rent of £25. Thankfull Hepden was born in Burwash in 1594, son of Goddard Hepden. At the time he leased Burwash Forge, he would have been 75 years old. In 1652, he is recorded as supplying wood for charcoal to Glaziers Forge in Brightling (Goodwin 1959: 100).

Under the terms of the lease of 26th June 1669, Thankfull Hepden was granted rights to

have, occupy and enjoy ALL that forge or ironworks together with the hammers [*sic*], bellows, tongues and all other instruments and utensils of worke and the iron house, cottages, coal places and lands, copyhold and freehold, therefore bought of John Hepden and Thomas Weston senior or one of them in Burwash (ESRO SAS-RF/1/7).

The detailed inventory of equipment and fittings present at the forge is as follows:

Two Turn Soves, Five ringers, 2 pair of Great tonges and two pair of small tonges, one Quas, 3 old Bellow pipes, 2 old iron pins, 2 hammers, one paire of old Chaffry Charnells, 3 Hursts, one Beame and Scales, 2 whole hundredweights, 3 half-hundred weight 6 smale weights containing 45 pounds, 2 cheezells, one carne iron, one hammer, anvil and hurst, 10 plates in the forge belonging to the hammer and Finery which are visible, one Smith's anvil, 2 old coale waines, one pair of Chaffry bellows, one paire of Fynery bellows, one willborrow (ESRO SAS-RF/1/7).

Some five years earlier, Richard Glyd senior had leased 276 acres of land in Brightling to a Richard Chandler, citizen and haberdasher of London, and William Wright, cloth worker of London (ESRO SAS-RF/13/27). It seems that Richard Glyd junior had died, leaving a widow and four young daughters. On 31st August 1664, a settlement was made for them by their grandfather, Richard Glyd senior, and for the seven daughters of William Wright and Anne his wife, daughter of Richard Glyd senior (ESRO SAS-RF/13/28).

In February 1671, when Thankfull Hepden's lease expired, and both Jeffrey and Richard Glyde deceased, the forge passed to Richard Chandler and William Wright (ESRO SAS-RF/1/8). In June 1672, they leased Burwash Forge to Samuel Western for one year (ESRO SAS-RF/1/9).

In October 1672, another 'controversy' over the Burwash Forge site was settled, involving Thankfull Hepden and Thomas Western. It referred to the river, stream and watercourses running from the forge pond to Hepden's land. Western was granted rights to the said water supply and was 'at liberty to dig up weeds', presumably to allow water to flow freely, keeping the pond and streams clear. Hepden, in turn, who was clearly still actively involved in the iron trade, was 'at liberty to bring soves to the forge and have free use of utensils' (ESRO SAS-RF/1/12).

From the mid-16th century, the Wealden iron masters had been essentially local in origin. By the mid-17th century, the concentration on the merchant trade in guns brought the merchants themselves into the business. One of the first of these was Thomas Western. Born in 1624, he was well established as an ironmonger by 1650. Western became one of several Wealden iron founders who prospered as government contractors for ordnance. One of Britain's first armament tycoons, he remains the 189th richest person in Britain since 1066; in today's money he would be worth around £3.6 billion. Although his family was not actually resident in the area, much of its industrial activity was centred there, particularly in the vicinity of Brede and Burwash (Beresford & Rubenstein 2007).

When Samuel Western died on 22nd August 1699, his father Thomas decided to relinquish Burwash Forge. On 22nd November 1700, a deed of covenant was made between Maximilian Western and John Fuller of Waldron (ESRO SAS-RF/1/14).

The Fuller Family

The Fullers had been major landowners in Sussex since the mid-16th century and had amassed a considerable fortune from their involvement in Jamaican sugar plantations, as well as in the iron industry. In 1693, Captain John Fuller built a blast furnace in Heathfield, approximately 8km west of the site. The furnace (TQ 599 187) concentrated on the production of castings for cannons. The purchase of Burwash Forge and its retention throughout the 18th century allowed the Fullers a ready source of bar and wrought iron to complement their business in Heathfield (Crossley & Saville 1991: xvi-xvii).

The deed of covenant of 22nd November 1700 explains that Thomas Western had purchased Collins forge and kept it in trust for his son Samuel (by now deceased). The site had retained its 'forge, two cottages and the pieces of land and other premises in Burwash' (ESRO SAS-RF/1/14).

John Fuller paid £200 for the purchase of the premises. It was further covenanted that Maximilian Western would, within 17 years, 'procure good title to be conveyed to John Fuller'. In the meantime, Fuller could 'hold and enjoy the premises with their rights and privileges without any rent' (ESRO SAS-RF/1/14).

It may be indicative of the decline of the industry that less than 40 years previously, Glyde had paid twice the sum for the forge. On 2nd May 1716, a deed of release is recorded between John Fuller and William Western.

Details of the workings of the forge are mentioned in correspondence between Fuller and his customers. In March 1731, he wrote to Samuel Remnant, regarding an order. 'I have ordered the iron to be made for you at the Forge, which you bespoke, which shall be sent by a Maidstone Hoy when the wayes are a little better' (cited in Crossley & Saville 1991: 45). Fuller was here dealing with one of the largest suppliers of ordnance and a key figure in the industry. Master Smith to the Board of Ordnance, Remnant had his own works at Woolwich, near to the Royal Arsenal (Hodgkinson 2008: 84). Again in June 1732, Fuller informed Samuel Remnant, 'I sell my Barr iron att the Forge for 18 pounds a Ton, ready money as it runs, and this being picked iron and costing me 25 shillings a Ton sending to you, cannot afford it under 19 pounds a ton, which I doubt not will be fit for your service' (Crossley & Saville 1991: 48).

John Fuller died in 1745 and his estate passed to his eldest son, also John. He died in 1755 and left £200 a year in his will to his brother, Rose Fuller, 'until he should take possession of the real estate, for his trouble in managing the furnace, foundry and iron works'. Among the bequests, dated 17th January 1755, was this: 'To and amongst the workmen employed at the testator's furnace, foundry and ironworks £50 to be distributed as his executor should think fit' (ESRO SAS-RF/11/26).

Rose Fuller made the decision to shut down Heathfield Furnace in 1787. It cast its last guns in 1799 and continued to produce iron sows for Burwash Forge and other local forges. But, faced with competition from coal-burning furnaces in the Midlands and North, by the late 18th century, it was no longer economically viable.

Most sources state that Burwash Forge closed in 1803. However, using Land Tax assessment records, P.W. King has put the date of closure somewhat later. From 1789 to 1803, it was operated by John Fuller and Samuel Standen in partnership. In 1804, only 'widow' Standen is mentioned. Between 1806 and 1810, Thomas Standen was the occupant and only then did it close (King 2002: 28).

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE: WYNHAMFORD MILL

As stated in the ESHER entry, the first documentary evidence for a mill at Wynhamford is a 1315 charter, in which it is granted to Robertsbridge Abbey, a Cistercian abbey founded in 1176. It is possible that during the 14th and 15th century, the mill featured as part of a monastic semi-industrial landscape. The presence of a fulling mill is not mentioned until 1471, and as it is known from the Inquisitiones Nonarum that the abbey did not possess any large flocks of sheep in the 14th century, the use of the original mill for corn grinding seems more likely (Pelham 1934).

The Glidd/Glyde Family

In 1610, Richard Glidd (almost certainly a member of the same family that purchased Burwash Forge in the 17th century) revoked the lease of the Manor of Werth in Brightling, granted to him in around 1605 by Robert, Lord Sidney of Penshurst, Viscount Lisle. The Sidney family had substantial iron and steel workings, including those mentioned at Robertsbridge and Panningridge. In June 1617, Glidd purchased the Manor of Werth, which included a dwelling house, barn, stables and 2 watermills called Wynhamford Mills. Richard Glidd paid £1600 for the manor, which comprised some 500 acres (ESRO SAS-RF/13/19). Richard is described as 'citizen and tallow chandler of London' (ESRO SAS-RF/13/18); the sale provides more evidence of lands around the area of the forge being taken up by wealthy landowners and members of the merchant classes.

In November 1649, Glidd leased parts of the farm called Weard (Werth), including 'one messuage, 2 barns, one outhouse called Shephouse or Waynehouse, together with all that messuage, outhouses, buildings and those mills called Wynhamford Mills and all watercourses, bays, lands and meadows containing 10 acres in Brightling and Burwash' (ESRO SAS-RF/13/23).

In 1664, Richard Glyd senior leased some 276 acres in Brightling to Richard Chandler and William Wright, for one year. It is not known whether the leased land included Wynhamford or its 2 watermills. However, Richard Chandler was described as 'citizen and haberdasher of London', while William Wright was referred to as 'a cloth worker of London' (ESRO SAS-RF/13/27). This may be an indication that the fulling mills were still in operation in the 17th century.

In a deed of May 1690, there is a brief description of ‘the messuage called Winhamford, with barns, land and 10 acres in the occupation of Thankful Ticehurst’ (ESRO SAS-RF/13/36), but no mention of any mills.

LITERARY REFERENCES

The Dudwell Valley is portrayed by Rudyard Kipling as a landscape populated by mythical creatures and legendary characters. Kipling, who in the early 20th century lived at Batemans, a few hundred metres northeast of the study area, wrote the description:

Just beyond the west fringe of our land, in a little valley running from Nowhere to Nothing-at-all, stood the long overgrown slag-heap of a most ancient forge, supposed to have been worked by the Phoenicians, Romans, and since then, uninterruptedly till the middle of the eighteenth century. The bracken and rust-patches still hid stray pigs of iron, and if one scratched a few inches through the rabbit-shaven turf, one came on the narrow mule-tracks of peacock-hued furnace-slag laid down in Elizabeth’s day. The ghost of a road climbed out of this dead arena, and crossed our fields, where it was known as ‘The Gunway’, and popularly connected with Armada times. Every foot of that little corner was alive with ghosts and shadows (Kipling 1937: 200-1).

The protagonists of *Puck of Pook’s Hill* are clearly based on the former inhabitants of the area (fig. 12). The Hepdens, who owned the forge in the 17th century, are alluded to with ‘old Hobden, who lived at the Forge cottage’ and ‘burned charcoal hereabouts, just beyond Bog Wood yonder’ (Kipling 1908: 19).

Kipling evokes the auditory experience of the local landscape at the time when the industry was at its peak, also showing how interconnected the ironworks were:

Many a night has Master John Collins’s big trip-hammer shook me in my bed here. *Boom-bitty! Boom-bitty!* If the wind was east, I could hear Master Tom Collins’s forge at Stockens [Socknersh] answering his brother, *Boom-ooop! Boom-ooop!* And midway between, Sir John Pelham’s sledge-hammers at Brightling would strike in... The valley was as full o’ forges and fineries as a May shaw o’ cuckoos. All gone to grass now. (Kipling 1908: 237)

James Hurdis, described as ‘a learned scholar, divine and poet’ (Egerton 1924: 160), was born near Seaford in Sussex, and became Rector of Burwash in 1786. In 1788, he published a lengthy, somewhat romantic lyric poem, *The Village Curate* (cited in Straker 1931: 303). It contains a passage that describes in detail the workings at the low-roofed Burwash Forge in the final phase of its existence, and is the only first-hand description of its interior. The ‘pale and hollow-ey’d smith’ is a figure for whom Hurdis has admiration, and the wrought iron bar he fashions is a metaphor for virtue. Defining the smith’s skills from furnace to anvil, the piece extols the dignity of labour, in a scene from the life of the community. The poem paints a vivid, infernal picture of the noise, heat and intense atmosphere of a working forge in the post-medieval period.

CONCLUSION

From the documentary evidence examined, it is clear that Burwash Forge was a relatively long-lived ironworks. It was certainly in operation by the early 16th century, and continued working at least until 1803, if not later. One or more working mills at the Wynhamford Mill site were also in operation for a long period of time, spanning at least 4 centuries.

It is clear that Burwash Forge was important for the local community, as well as on a regional and national scale, given its connections with the country's wealthiest entrepreneurs of the 17th century. The forge could be viewed as a microcosm of the post-medieval industrial landscape of the Sussex Weald.

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Additional Manuscripts, Catalogue L

AMS/5789/21 Probate of John Colyn the elder of Burwash, mentioning forge in Burwash and furnace in Brightling, and lease of marsh in Herstmonceux and Hailsham, 1541

Archive of the Maryon-Wilson Family of Searles in Fletching

Title deeds - other parishes:

SRL/7/5 Messuage, barn, stable and land (7a), lands (60a) called Caldebrough, lands (20a) called Highe Lands, messuage and land (50a) called Climshurst in Burwash; 1596: Settlement (covenant to levy fine) for £400 (18 Nov 1596)

Archive of the Roberts Family of Boarzell in Ticehurst and Stonehouse in Warbleton and the Dunn Family of Stonehouse

Deeds of various properties in Etchingham, Essex, Battle, Hailsham and Kent 1529-1740:

DUN 14/1 Draft or copy lease for 10 years from 24 Aug 1568 (1 Feb 1568)

Ashburnham Family Archive - Manoral Documents

Manor of Burghurst, in Burwash (Accounts):

ASH/200a/11-12H6 Rental of 2d for a forge newly build at Durefoldgate (1432-3)

ASH/200a/16-17E4 Rental of 2d for a new forge by Burwash Church (1476-7)

ASH/200a/15-16H8 £16 received from the farm of the iron mill leased to John Colyn (1523-4)

ASH/200a/16-17H8 £20 received from the farm of the iron mill leased to David Harvy of Burwash (1524-5)

Deeds and Documents relating to lands formerly belonging to the family of Fuller of Brightling:

Collins Forge in Burwash:

SAS-RF/1/7 Articles of Agreement (26 Jun 1669)

SAS-RF/1/8 Release and quitclaim (26 Feb 1672)

SAS-RF/1/9 Lease for a year (28 Jun 1672)

SAS-RF/1/12 Agreement (25 Oct 1672)

SAS-RF/1/14 Deed of Covenant (22 Nov 1700)

Probates and Wills:

SAS-RF/11/26 Probate of the Will of this date of John Fuller of Rose Hill, esquire (17 Jan 1755)

Miscellaneous:

SAS-RF/13/18 Memo. of Agreement (3 Jun 1617)

SAS-RF/13/23 Lease for a year (1 Nov 1649)

SAS-RF/13/26 Copy of Court Roll of the Manor of the Prebend of Brightling of a Court of Joseph Bennett, clerk, rector of Brightling church (24 Apr 1662)

SAS-RF/13/27 Lease for a year (30 Aug 1664)

SAS-RF/13/28 Release (31 Aug 1664)

Sources Held at the National Archives (Consulted Online)

Records created, acquired, and inherited by Chancery, and also of the Wardrobe, Royal Household, Exchequer and various commissions:

Court of Chancery: Six Clerks Office: Pleadings, Series I, Elizabeth I to Charles I:

C2/Eliz/C4/47 Crottenden etc. v Hepden (between 1588 and 1603)