



South East Woodland Archaeology Forum

No. 1

April 2010

Editorial

There is a need for a newsletter.

I said as much 12 months ago, and now I've finally got round to doing it.

It's needed, as much as anything, so you know what's been happening and what's planned. So for this one, that's all it will contain.

It would, however, be great to hear from you. I could write everything myself and you could get bored quite quickly and, as with many newsletters, never read one again!

Getting in touch does require you switch the computer on, I'm afraid. Because at the moment my main form of communication is by email. david@sewaf.org.uk

And if you haven't looked at the website yet, that's another reason for getting in touch – it's doesn't have much on it because my ideas have started to run out. So what's needed? What should be added or changed?

If you've got any good woodland pictures, I'd like to use them in the newsletter, so email a JPEG with as high a resolution as you took it at.

David Brown



*Front cover: Causeway Wood,
Warbleton, East Sussex.*



Embanked hollow routeway at Coppice Farm, Dallington, East Sussex

Surveys of woods

Surveys completed ...

Battle Great Wood, Battle, East Sussex

Owner: Forestry Commission

In advance of tree thinning, SEWAF was asked by the Forestry Commission to have a quick look to see whether there were any features in the wood which machinery should avoid. A team of three of us (Vivienne Blandford, Jim Wright and David Brown, occasionally helped by Phillipa Whitehill, Gwen Jones and Richard King) worked our way over the wood. We found a virtually intact wood boundary bank and ditch, a very large lynchet and parts of an old routeway which had become disused by about 1840. There were also numerous smaller trackways, charcoal burners' platforms, sandpits and quarries. As the wood was 400 acres it took us about two months to complete, working through rain, snow and mud you wouldn't believe. *Jan-Feb 2009*

Boothland Wood, Uckfield, East Sussex

Owner: Uckfield District Council

This is a small wood south of Uckfield which has an area of minepits, a sunken trackway, a large quarried area and elements of old wood boundary ditch and bank. Coppicing and thinning were taking place and it was important that features weren't damaged, so a meeting was arranged with the warden, Jo Heading, who was made aware of the significance of the features found. *Aug 2009*

Brimstone Wood, near Ashford, Kent

Privately owned.

This is part of the larger Benacre Wood, and comprised sweet chestnut coppice and a conifer plantation. A lynchet and two interesting coppice stools were found. *Sep 2009*

Coppice Farm, Dallington, East Sussex

Privately owned.

The farmer was interested in knowing what archaeological features might be on the farm to assist with his application for Higher Level

Stewardship. A number of charcoal burners' platforms and a sawpit were found, but the most interesting feature was a 100-metre section of old routeway, 20-30m wide, complete with hedges and sunken trackways. On the 1834 tithe map as Lane Shaw, it was shown as an active lane on the 1st edition OS map surveyed in 1815. *Mar 2009*

Couchfield Shaw, Heathfield, East Sussex

Privately owned.

A small area of woodland, once part of a slightly larger wood, the owner has cleared huge amounts of farmyard junk and replanted with species under the guidance of Dave Bonsall of the Woodland Trust. *Feb 2010*

Deans Furzes, Hever, Kent

Privately owned.

This is an isolated small woodland surrounded by mixed farmland. An old woodbank exists running into the middle where it peters out. Its history might shed some clues as to its name and its relative isolation. *Mar 2009*

Farningham Wood, Farningham, Kent

Owned by Sevenoaks District Council and Farningham Parish Council.

Woodland occupying a steeply sided hilltop in a prominent position overlooking the Thames and with views south for many miles. It is criss-crossed with woodbanks and has a number of small quarries. An old trackway, now a bridlepath, goes over its eastern end. Farningham Parish Council had commissioned a LiDAR survey of the wood and SEWAF were asked to help with its interpretation. *Apr 2010*

Grassington Farm, Chailey, East Sussex

Privately owned.

The farmer was interested in seeing if any of his woodland had anything significant. What came to light was a quarry in Stone Rough (a building stone quarry, perhaps?), a pond bay and a remnant of possible ancient woodland which had not yet been identified. *Nov 2009*

Home Farm, High Hurstwood, East Sussex Privately owned

The owner was interested in the history of a large quarry in one of his woods. The quarry floor had a substantial pile of high quality iron ore which was clearly destined for a local furnace. It was possible to date this ore to within 50 years of 1600 by knowing when local furnaces had been in existence. *Aug 2009*

Knowlands Wood, Barcombe Cross, East Sussex Privately owned

This 78-acre coppiced hornbeam wood had a number of interesting features which included no charcoal burning platforms. This suggested that the wood was not converted into charcoal before use and it was possible to define routes out of the wood to Chailey (brickworks) and two other local brickworks. It is known that brick kilns used hornbeam as a fuel before fossil fuels. Also of interest was a flat-bottomed 15m-wide trackway, the reason for the shape of which still has not been clearly identified. *May 2009*

South Bishops Den, Dunkirk, Kent Privately owned

This was one wood which appeared to have been under one ownership for some considerable time. There was no tithe map for the parish, so it was assumed the wood belonged to the church. There were no internal boundaries, one or two charcoal platforms and some small quarries. One substantial hollow trackway existed (marked on the present OS map as a stream!) with a substantial number of 'marker trees' along its length. It is unusual to see such a density of wood ants nests in one wood. *June 2009*

Spear Wood, Slinfold, West Sussex Privately owned

This is part of Roman Wood, one border of which is Stane Street. Spear Wood had a number of slightly enigmatic platforms/quarries above the stream which could have been extracting the Cyrena Limestone indicated on the geological map. However, no fragment was found. Dedisham

iron furnace had existed about 100m distant, and could have utilised the limestone. Further exploration of other parts of Roman Wood could reveal more. *Nov 2009*

Three Springs Wood, Staplecross, East Sussex Privately owned

Part of Lordship Wood, a number of charcoal platforms were found and a sawpit. There were a number of sunken trackways through the main part of the wood running E-W which will need further investigation. Nine mature Scots pine existed in a group to the east of the wood. A spectacularly circular depression close to a stream gave rise to a number of theories, including wartime ordnance. No one was prepared to stand in the bottom of the hole. *Dec 2008*



Scots pines in Three Springs Wood

Currently being surveyed ...

Ashplats Wood, East Grinstead, West Sussex

Owned by East Grinstead War Memorial Trust

We are using this wood to provide more experience for those wishing to improve their woodland archaeology skills. One training session has taken place and it is proving to be a wood with a number of features providing a good basis for discussion (and even argument!). Anyone in SEWAF who would like to be involved in these sessions should let David Brown know.

Dernwood Farm, Waldron, East Sussex Privately owned

The farm has a number of woods, most of which have points of interest. Two previously unknown potential bloomery sites were identified on a preliminary visit, together with a substantial area of minepits. Other features included charcoal

burners platforms, woodbanks, sawpits and a quarry. The owners attended an introductory woodland archaeology course at the Woodland Enterprise Centre at Flimwell and subsequently decided they would like to do an initial survey themselves, which is currently under way.

Flatropers Wood, Peasmarsh, East Sussex Sussex Wildlife Trust

Surrounded by a well-established woodbank and crossed by a significant embanked routeway, this wood is currently being surveyed.

Gillham Wood, Bexhill, East Sussex Sussex Wildlife Trust

Surrounded by housing, this well-used wood has a sunken routeway crossing it, marked by a significant oak. It allegedly had a bomb hit it during the war but there is little evidence for this. Much used by dog walkers and abused as a dump by neighbouring residents.



Butchers broom in Park Wood, Marline Nature Reserve, Hastings

Keepers Cottage Coppice, Maresfield, East Sussex

Privately owned

This is part of Hendall Wood and has been partly surveyed.

Ladys Wood, Cowbeech, East Sussex

Privately owned

This isolated wood contains a number of charcoal burners' platforms and has been part surveyed.

Marline Valley Nature Reserve, Hastings, East Sussex

Sussex Wildlife Trust

Park Wood has been surveyed and has a substantial number of charcoal burners' platforms, three sawpits and some quarries. It is contained within woodbanks, some of which have been covered by arable farming uphill. It is notable for ash stools of some age.

Marline Wood is currently being surveyed and is following a similar pattern to Park Wood.

Four Acre Wood has still to be surveyed.

Mill Wood, Peasmarsh, East Sussex
Privately owned

A number of trackways and woodbanks have been located. The survey is in progress.

New England Wood, Cuckfield, West Sussex

New England Wood Trust

Once part of Cuckfield Park, the wood has a boundary woodbank on three sides, some internal woodbanks and some quarries. The survey has yet to be completed.

Views Wood, Uckfield, East Sussex
Woodland Trust

This wood once formed part of Buxted Park and shows some Victorian influences. It contains a number of charcoal burners' platforms, two sawpits and some old trackways, one of which has a significant beech marker tree. One of the trackways has been causewayed in places and may have formed part of a Victorian perambulation. The survey is ongoing.

Still to be surveyed ...

Selwyns Wood, Cross-in-Hand, East Sussex.
Sussex Wildlife Trust.

Four Acre Wood in the Marline Valley
Nature Reserve.

Old Swan Farm, Lamberhurst, Kent.

Castle Wood, Lamberhurst, Kent

Coalend Wood, Heathfield, East Sussex.

Bore House, Chiddingstone, Kent.

Waste Wood, Hadlow Down, East Sussex

Leechpool Wood, Horsham, West Sussex

What does SEWAF get up to?

During the winter months (roughly October to April) SEWAF is asked to do quick surveys of woods. We don't charge anything for a survey and it comprises a reasonably comprehensive walkover with some archive work to back it up. Whereas we hope not to miss anything on the ground, we don't spend a lot of time in archive depositories. We aim to give the landowner an idea of whether they are likely to have features which are significant and how they might take the research further. Sometimes we do a written report, but often there is no call for one.

We've been asked

- by farmers to look at their wooded areas,
- by woodland owners to see what we can find
- by wildlife trusts to guide their management
- by estate managers
- by the Forestry Commission to prevent damage to features from harvesting operations
- by woodland agents to prepare a report for potential buyers.

Some of the woods are on private land and some are open to the public. We've been asked to look at woodlands in Kent, West and East Sussex. Some are large (the largest was 400 acres) and some are as small as 5 acres.

We've been involved in a large Heritage Lottery-funded project working on the Weald Forest Ridge, an area stretching from Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells to Horsham with Lyn Palmer.

We maintain a website providing information about archaeological and history groups in the south east, courses in woodland archaeology, who to contact in the event of a query, information about woodland archaeology in general. www.sewaf.org.uk

We work closely with the county HERs (Heritage Environment Record) and the county archaeology departments for East and West Sussex and Kent.

We can advise on who to contact for specialist information regarding the history of woodland in the south east.

We run a training programme for would-be surveyors (when we can).

We run a regular course for Plumpton Agricultural College at the Woodland Enterprise Centre at Flimwell: 'An Introduction to Woodland Archaeology'.

We had a stand at the Weald Woodfair at Bentley Wildfowl at Ringmer in Sussex (September 2009) and will also have a stand at the Kent County Show at Maidstone in July 2010.

We give talks to local interest groups about woodland archaeology and the Weald Forest Ridge project.

We provide conducted walks round woods to give people an insight into what archaeology is there pointing out that much woodland archaeology has never been recorded.

Your website

www.sewaf.org.uk

click on it