

Fernhurst Furnace Preservation Group

Issue 4

Newsletter

January 2008

Open Days 2007 was a fantastic success, thanks to so many people visiting us. We counted 935 people through the gate over the two days. Thank you to all who have subscribed to the Friends of the Furnace and especially to those who added donations to their subscriptions this will be an added bonus when Gift Aid is operated. We were delighted to welcome the Gosport living History Society for the first time and I am pleased to say that they have agreed to return this year. Hopefully we have listened to various feedback and acted upon such items as are achievable.

AGM 2008. Our AGM of the Fernhurst Furnace Preservation Group Ltd will be held on **Tuesday May 6th at 7.30pm**. Our guest speaker will be Mark Taylor who is the Senior Archaeologist for West Sussex County Council. Mark's talk will be entitled "Tintern, a Forest of Dean charcoal blast furnace". Mark was the supervisor at the excavations and the conservation at Tintern Furnace immediately before he was appointed to his post in West Sussex which was a few years ago! **Note change of date.**

Project Planning Application: Our application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Project Planning Grant to fund a Conservation Management Plan has just been sent off so we sit back with bated breath for a few months before we hear the result. We have had a huge amount of help from Alison James of CDC Culture and Heritage Department for which we are most grateful.

Outside Activities. The FFPG will be present at the Fernhurst Revels (fete) on May 18th and at the Tilford Rural Life Museum event titled ***Earth, Wind, Fire and Water: Industries in the Elements*** on June 14th and 15th – see press or website for further information. The Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society will be making a short visit to us on May 3rd.

FFPG Treasurer: We are delighted to welcome Sarah Matthews into the fold as Hon Treasurer. Although she is a very busy person in the city for most of the week she has been able to find a few hours during the year to help us.

Open Day 2008: Dates for our Open Days this year are **September 13th and 14th**. The format will be similar to last year but with added attractions. Many of these are still at the embryo stage but there will be a full run-down in our August Newsletter. Apart from raising awareness, another purpose of Open Day is to raise funds. As part of the Project Planning Grant, if we are successful, we have to contribute 10% of the total cost which could be as much as £2,000 for the FFPG to find. Last year our, donation based, fundraising was not very successful so I fear that we will have to make a small car park charge which could be about £5 per car!

Conservation Management Plan (CMP). In order to gather support for our application for funding for the Conservation Management Plan I asked Mark Taylor, Senior Archaeologist with West Sussex County Council if he could write a few words. I think it will be of interest to many the words which Mark wrote:-

.....Much useful work has been achieved to date with the forming of the Fernhurst Furnace Preservation Group Limited and the CMP is a logical development.

Preparing the way for the CMP, some solid foundations have already been laid with the rectified photographic survey undertaken by Guy Beresford in the early 1990s before shoring works were put in place. There was at least one preliminary condition assessment of the condition of the pondbay and this will contribute to the useful background material to be included in the CMP and prove a yardstick against which to compare the condition of the structure since then. There is a lively interpretation painting of what the site may have looked like in its heyday by artist Mike Codd (which has been incorporated in a number of publications) and the furnace is the subject of a monograph in its own right by archaeologist John Magilton. It is therefore most definitely 'on the map' in a number of ways.

The furnace site sits in the West Weald landscape of the Sussex Downs AONB, and is certainly one of the best preserved charcoal blast furnaces in the Weald, if not the best, and it has the advantage of being accessible via a public right of way although only to the able-bodied at the moment. Now that it is scheduled as an ancient monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 it can honestly say that it is officially recognised by English Heritage as an archaeological site of national importance.

On the face it the scope and potential of the site is enormous and the Heritage Open Day events that have been held in the last few years illustrate its public appeal. There is clearly scope for community involvement and partnership action with adjacent landowners and in the management and conservation of the wider setting of the furnace scope for nature conservation enhancement through a Habitat Action Plan. There will be a number of challenges in implementing the conservation and repair of the upstanding structures of the pondbay and furnace site but the CMP is certainly the best way to anticipate them and come up with a solution. I wish the project every success and I would be happy to offer whatever help and advice I can.

Mark Taylor,
Senior Archaeologist, West Sussex County Council.

Web Site: Visit our web site either by Googleing Fernhurst Furnace or going to the excellent Fernhurst Society site www.Fernhurstsociety.org.uk and follow the link.

Anyone able to help on Open Day or with the general works for our Furnace Project please call Robin or Carla on **01428 654088**