

THE BOURNE SOCIETY

— 14 years of archaeological excavation

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ALTHOUGH AVOWEDLY a local history society, the Bourne Society early made an excursion into archaeology when in 1958 the Sanderstead Archaeological Group, under Roger Little, began their remarkable series of excavations (see Fig. 2). Near Sanderstead Pond they unearthed a wide range of artifacts from Mesolithic flints and Roman pottery to a Saxon belt-end and 17th century Staffordshire ware. In Kings Wood, a Romano-British farmstead and eight burial urns were excavated, and a dene hole investigated; another Romano-British site was uncovered at Atwood School¹.

In 1966 Mary Saaler, beginning with documentary inferences and some human bones found in a trial trench dug by Brian Philp, and using resistivity survey and aerial photography, was able to locate the lost medieval village of Watendone.² Skeletons

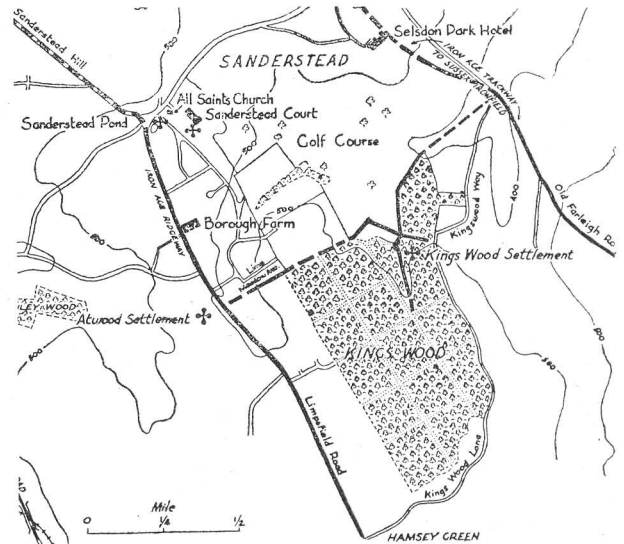


Fig. 2. Map showing the location of the excavations carried out by the Sanderstead Archaeological Group 1958-60.

from a Christian cemetery led to the discovery of the chapel, its identity established by a piece of medieval glass and some 12th-13th century sherds, and a quern of volcanic stone seemed to confirm that we had, indeed, found the "wheat down" of Domesday Watendone.

In January 1967, the Bourne Society made its most important find. Two rails of the Croydon, Merstham and Godstone Railway were discovered *in situ* by Mr. W. G. Tharby at Quarry Dean Farm, Merstham (TQ 2992 5937)³ and a span of the Surrey Iron Railway, the world's first public railway, was cleared, measured, drawn and photographed for the first time.

In more recent years Lesley Ketteringham has led the Bourne Society excavations at Netherne for four

1. *Local History Records* 2
2. *Op cit* 6
3. *Op cit* 7

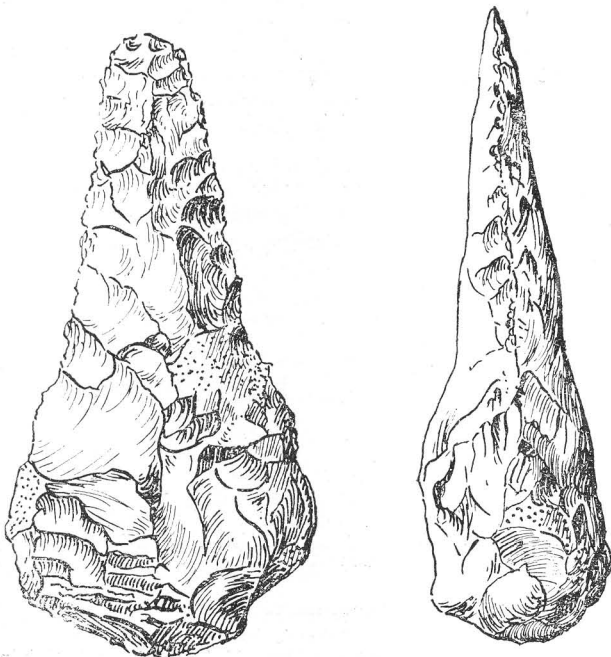


Fig. 1. Acheulian handaxe found in Chaldon.



Fig. 3. The manor house at Nethorne with the hall with its superimposed hearths in the centre. Beyond it is the solar and to the left the kitchen block.

seasons⁴. The site is on land (TQ 293559) which has not apparently been cultivated or built over since the buildings were abandoned about the mid-14th century or earlier. A fairly complete layout of the extensive remains of an early medieval manor house has been recovered. The hall and solar measure 66ft by 32ft. externally, the solar being 18ft. wide with two narrow doorways opposite each other in the long walls at the north end. The walls of the solar are 35in. wide and are constructed of Merstham stone blocks with clay, chalk lumps and flint filling.

The local heavy clay mixed with crumbled chalk served as a binding material. The roof was tiled. The walls of the hall were apparently built of timber-framed wattle-and-daub on flint foundations, and the roof seems to have been of thatch. Inside the hall a diamond-shaped central stone hearth, 4½ft.

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square, lies slightly over a smaller square hearth. The remains of a flagged passage run along the inside of the wall at one end. A separate flint kitchen, 21ft. by 22ft., contains an open hearth and a fireplace. Between the kitchen and the hall is a chalk floor, probably covered by an extension of the tiled kitchen roof.

The foundations of an earlier building were then discovered, running crosswise beneath the solar, showing the first house was a compact stone-built block 30ft. by 19ft. with well-built Merstham stone walls, probably of early 13th century construction. A fuller report, including significant later finds will shortly appear. In the meanwhile, the air photograph (Fig. 3) gives a good impression of the manor's layout and the site, now grassed over, apart from its emergent walls, preserves its atmosphere of medieval peace amongst the encircling trees.

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EVER SINCE the Caterham Centenarian Train steamed into Caterham Station on 6th August 1956, to the strains of a march specially composed by our Vice-President, the Bourne Society has had an attractive leaning towards the unconventional. Its objects are "to extend the knowledge of local history by encouraging the investigation of Caterham, Warlingham, Coulsdon, Purley and associated districts," aims unexceptionable and politic enough; yet, right

from the beginning, members investigated Customs' boundary posts and historic ponds, organised a photographic survey, and a Good Old Days Competition for old folk's reminiscences.

Since it began publication in 1961, the Bourne Society's annual *Local History Records* has cast its net wide for both contributors and readers. Volume I had "Living Memories" from almost every parish in our area and can