

Ewhurst History Society Journal



Welcome to the Autumn issue of our journal.

Carolyn Bruford brought an old 'Bruford Brewery' stoneware bottle to our January social and has written about her husband's, Bill's, unexpected connection with the Cranleigh brewery. Also, in January I gave a talk for the Friends of Ewhurst Church, 'Hatched, Matched and Despatched', which led to a meeting with David Banting the son of John and Christine Banting who married in Ewhurst Church; and the background story to a fascinating gold cross from Ethiopia. In May, Gareth Hayton organised a visit to Ewhurst Brickworks for the Surrey Industrial History Group and asked us if we would like to go along as well. We visited the old part of the site, now derelict, but Gareth has written a history of the whole site, including the modern Weinberger plant which is still in use. Finally, Chris Gibson has written about the recent Duke of Edinburgh Award dig at Sayers Croft run by volunteers from Surrey Archaeological Society and History Society member Sue Willis.

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GEORGE BRUFORD AND THE BRUFORD BREWERY

By Carolyn Bruford

Bill and I lived in Ewhurst, then Cranleigh, for over 40 years before we discovered any family connection with George Bruford, founder of the Bruford Breweries, Cranleigh. Robin Fawkner-Corbett gave me some biographical notes and other articles on George that came from the Cranleigh History Society and eventually I found a connection.

Bill's father, John, was brought up at Nerrols Farm, Cheddon Fitzpaine near Taunton. There had been at least four generations of Brufords who leased the farm, three of them called Robert Bruford. During this time there was a small local brewery on the farm. The middle Robert had a brother George who doesn't appear on any of the family trees that we have, no one in the family has ever mentioned him and we hadn't heard of him until we received the biographical notes which reveal that nothing is known about him until his 1863 marriage in London at the age of 27. Presumably he left the farm and went to London sometime before then. Perhaps he fell out with his brother Robert? There's no communication between the two sides of the family that I can find and from then on, the families seem to be quite separate which is why we don't know of them. As it turns out, George Bruford is Bill's great grandfather's brother.

From London, George relocated to Cranleigh and in 1867 he rented Holdhurst Farm which he ran as a farm with 12 men, 8 women and 4 boys listed as employees in the 1871 census. In about 1874, he set up a small brewery at the farm called "Holdhurst Brewery, Cranleigh, Surrey, George Bruford, Brewer". In 1877 he transferred his brewery business to the newly built Cranleigh Steam Brewery in Cranleigh High Street. The adjacent brewery tap was the Three Horseshoes beer house. In the 1881 census he was living at 2 Wakehurst, The Common, Cranleigh, two doors up from our present house, Bucklers, with his second wife and four children, except that the children were actually boarding with a governess at Baynards Hotel down the road. He was then employing six men and one boy at the farm, possibly still Holdhurst Farm, and five men in the brewery. Besides beer, the brewery made mineral waters, lemonade, ginger beer, stout, and pale ale. The brewery stables were behind the Art Centre near the site of the present house Old Court according to Joy Horn in her article titled The Vanished Bruford's Brewery in the Cranleigh Magazine in 2019.

Unfortunately, George didn't last long there. Later, in the 1880s, he had trouble in his career. Barry Shacklock, who wrote the biographical notes I'm basing this on, and who is related to George, said "my grandmother told me of business problems and that her father, George, had extended his career too far but she didn't say whether it was financial or lack of ability on his part. In 1888 the brewery became a limited company and George then sold his interest in the company in about 1891, and moved away to Hastings where he ran a small hotel or boarding house. That is the end of our connection with Bruford Brewery.



Above: An early photograph of Bruford's Brewery. The Three Horseshoes is to the right.

Below: A postcard dating for 1913 shows that Frank Osbourn Ltd, Motor and General engineers have taken over part of the premises, and the two buildings to either side of the entrance have new windows. When the brewery finally closed, the brewery tower was demolished and the garage expanded to become the Cranleigh Motor Co. This in turn was demolished for the present Little Manor Garage. The sign for the Three Horseshoes is prominent, although the public house is set back and so not visible from this angle.



With thanks to Michael Miller for these two pictures.

There is a feature article in the Surrey Bottle Collectors Club News, 2006, describing the steam brewery and the process used. After George's departure it continued to trade in his name until 1912 when the brewery was acquired by Savill's Brewery of Shalford. In 1901 Bruford's had bought William Smith's Bramley Brewery with its eight tied public houses but by the time of the Savill's takeover the company only owned five pubs, including the Three Horseshoes and the White Hart in Cranleigh, and Bruford's Brewery was in decline.

The author of the Surrey Bottle Collector's Club News, describes the Bruford Brewery bottles, along with Hodgsons Kingston Brewery bottles, as Surrey's best. The stoneware bottles contained ginger beer and the clear bottles mineral waters. The ginger beer bottles were once seen regularly at bottle fairs but are now quite difficult to obtain. They came from two potteries, Fulham Pottery and Doulton at Lambeth Pottery.

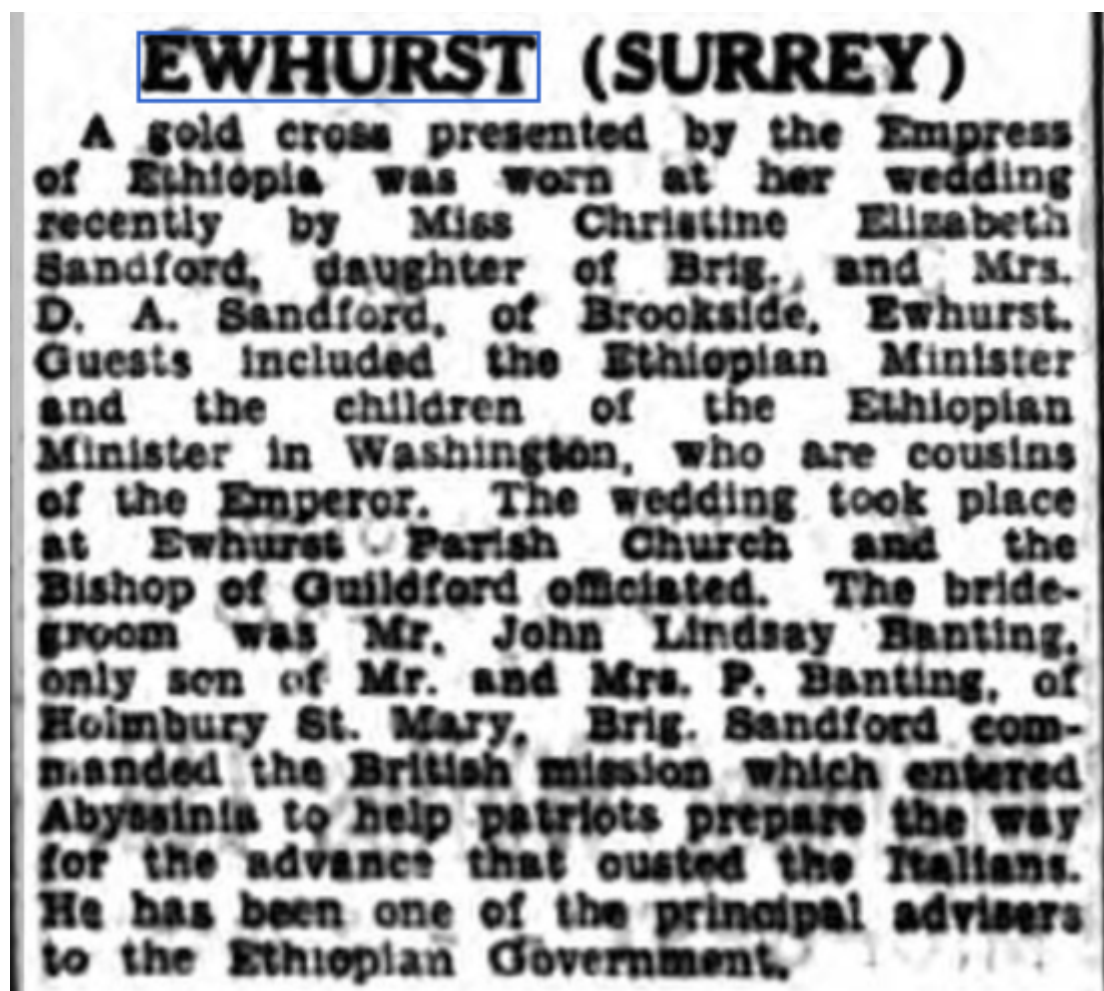
There are some fascinating photos of the brewery, The Three Horseshoes, the brewery stables and Brewery Cottage, the same building we all go into to pay for our petrol!



A GOLD CROSS FROM ETHIOPIA, IN EWHURST CHURCH?

By Janet Balchin with special thanks to David Banting.

In January I gave a talk for the Friends of Ewhurst Church on the subject of *"Hatched, Matched and Despatched - Stories from the Ewhurst Parish Registers"*. While doing my background research I came across a newspaper article mentioning a wedding in Ewhurst church where the bride wore a gold cross that had been given to her by the Empress of Ethiopia. The groom was John Banting and the bride was Christine Sandford. From previous research for my book *Ewhurst 1910 - 1960* I knew that her father, Daniel Sandford, had played an important role in the liberation of Ethiopia in 1940/41.



Nigel recalled that there is a BBC correspondent called Daniel Sandford and we wondered if he was related. When we discovered that he had spent time in Ethiopia as a child we knew that he must be connected and we were able to contact him. He then put us in touch with David Banting, the son of Christine and John.

David was able to send some wedding photos showing Christine wearing the cross, and then came to my talk and bought the cross with him to show people. Since then, he has returned to Ewhurst with his wife, Catherine and we were able to show them around Ewhurst.



Above left: John and Christine at their wedding at Ewhurst Church. Above right: The gold cross.



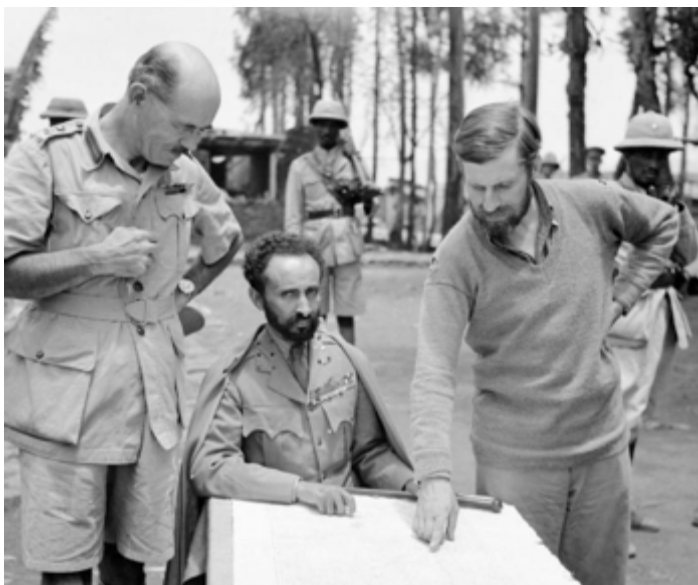
Above left: With Christine's parents, Dan and Chris on the right, and John's father, Percy and aunt, Madge (his mother was unwell and unable to attend). Above right: with the best man and Christine's three sisters.

Daniel Sandford had served in the First World War and one of his junior officers was Maurice Lush, who introduced him to his sister, Christine, known as Chris. After the war Dan and Chris married and went to Ethiopia, where they had a farm, and Dan became an advisor to the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie.

When the Italians invaded in 1935, the Sandford family had to flee the country and returned to England, finding a house, Brookside, in the Ockley Road, conveniently close to the Lush family who were living at Westlands. Dan got a job as the Appeals Organiser for the new Guildford Cathedral, which was then under construction, and was able to keep in touch with Haile Selassie, who had taken up residence-in-exile in Bath.

In August 1939 Dan was asked to take charge of the Ethiopian Section of Middle East

Intelligence. Although by then in his late 50s Sandford returned to Ethiopia under cover and, by liaising with the local resistance, was responsible for 'Mission 101' to prepare the way for an allied-backed Ethiopian revolt. By January 1941 he had guaranteed support for the invasion. Major Orde Wingate was brought in to lead an Ethiopian and Sudanese unit called 'Gideon Force' and on 5 May Haile Selassie made a triumphant entry into Addis Ababa.



Left: Daniel, far left, with Haile Selassie, centre and Orde Wingate, in Ethiopia in 1941.

The brothers-in-law were both involved in the negotiations that followed. Maurice Lush, who had worked for the British Legation in Sudan in the inter-war years, was appointed deputy to Sir Philip Mitchell of the Occupied Enemy

Territory Administration. Dan, acting as an advisor to Haile Selassie, did not see eye-to-eye with his brother-in-law over the negotiations, as Ethiopia was an ally, not an occupied territory, but the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement was finally agreed in January 1942.

After the Liberation, Daniel stayed on in Ethiopia and was joined in 1942 by Chris. However, they kept the house in Ewhurst as a UK base for the family. Haile Selassie gave them a plot of land near where they established a farm, Mulu, growing coffee and prune trees. Chris, a qualified teacher, set up the Sandford School in Addis Ababa. The school still exists and is considered to be one of the best International Schools in Ethiopia.

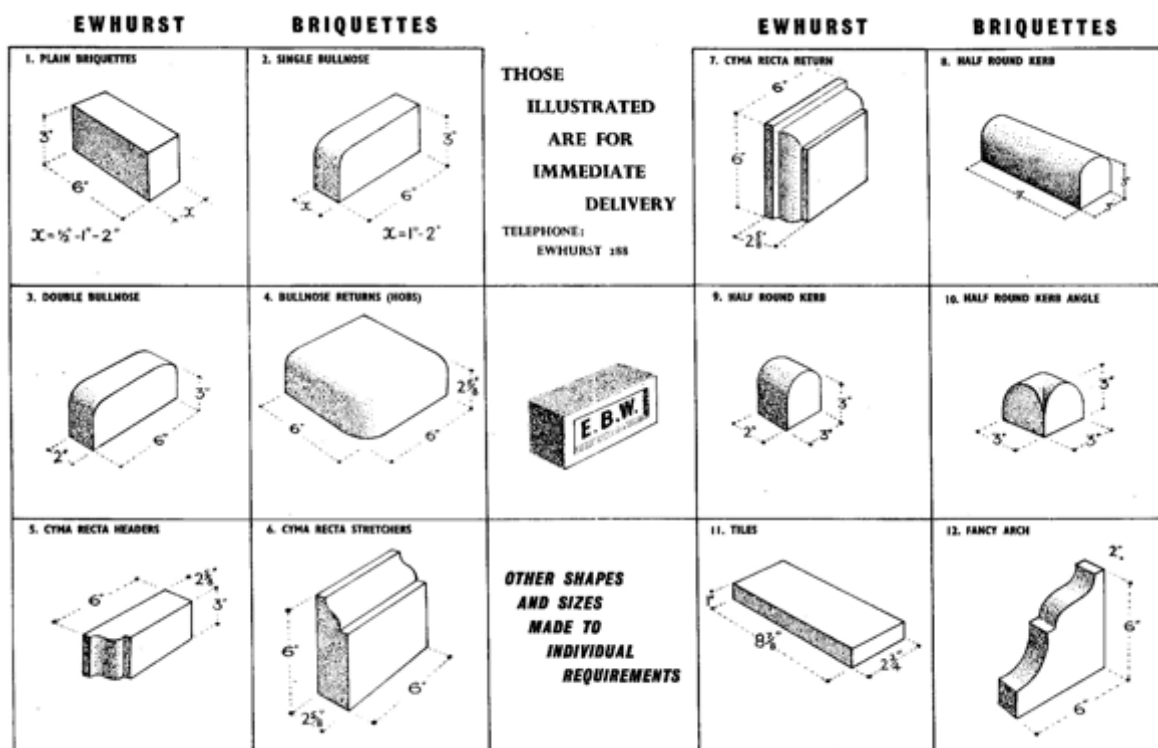
Their eldest daughter Christine grew up in Ethiopia where she was home schooled and loved her outdoor lifestyle. When the family arrived in England in 1936 Christine got a place at Wycombe Abbey and then trained as a doctor, qualifying just before her wedding in 1947. She had met John Banting, whose family lived at Moxley in Holmbury St Mary, at a tennis party. The Banting family took an active part in life in Holmbury St Mary and the Horticultural Society have a Banting Bowl (although sadly now in storage as the society has folded). John went to Rugby School and on to Cambridge, but joined the Royal Engineers in 1940. After their wedding the couple settled in Rugby where John got a job as an electrical engineer at British Thompson-Houston, and Christine became the first female doctor at St Cross Hospital. One of Christine's younger sisters also married in Ewhurst church, in 1949.

EWHURST BRICKWORKS

By Gareth Hayton

There has been a long history of brick making in the Weald, including two works both now known as Ewhurst Brickworks.

Looking at the smaller and now partially derelict more northern site first, brick making started here in 1934 under the name A. Hone and Sons, the bricks being embossed EBW in the frog (as the indentation in the top of a brick is known). Initially clamp firing was practiced with the bricks to be fired forming the kiln structure themselves, external heat being applied to ignite the fuel incorporated within the bricks and the firing process then taking about three weeks. The clamp would then be dismantled and the fired bricks sorted according to the intensity of the burn they had been subjected to.

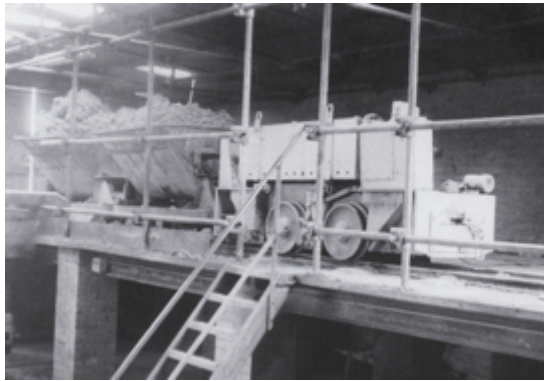


Above: a page from a brochure for A Hone & Sons, Ewhurst.

The site was further developed with the first of ultimately seven intermittent downdraft kilns being built in 1945, by 1959 this had increased to four, with a fifth added by 1965 and the last two came in the final phase between 1965 and closure in 1972. The kilns were initially fired by coal, later by oil, and connected to a central chimney, with waste heat being ducted to drying areas. A two-foot gauge tramway was used, with the clay being dug from a relatively small pit to the south of the works.

The business closed in 1972, and the site gradually became derelict. The western part was sold off and for many years was used as a storage yard for accident-damaged cars and it is still in

motor trade use today. In 2003 a survey was carried out and 33 standing structures identified, some presumably on the now-separated western part. In 2004 some of the disused ancillary buildings partially collapsed, and steps were taken to remove their roofs for safety reasons. Soon afterwards, graffiti artists found the remaining exposed walls irresistible. Now only the more robustly constructed and iron bound kilns and chimney still stand intact.



Above left: The Battery electric locomotive 6693 from Wingrove and Rogers (P. Philipson)

Above right: The Rouston and Hornsby diesel engine. (P. Philipson)



Above Left: the kiln and chimney.

Left and above right: The kiln and chimney in May 2026



Above and below: Members of Surrey Industrial history Group on a visit to the site in May 2026, organised by Ewhurst History Society member, Gareth Hayton.



The still derelict eastern part of the site, where the kilns and chimney are, currently has a planning application pending for thirteen new houses, while the clay pit is now a fishing lake.

Turning to the second site, also now known as Ewhurst Brickworks, this lies to the south and is a very much larger operation on a site of over 300 acres. Brick making has been taking place here for over a hundred years. Originally, the works was known as Smokejacks Brickworks, presumably named after the adjoining farm. Subsequently, this became The Ockley Brick Company, which produced the well-known extruded Double Diamond bricks, to be found in many local buildings. The works were a major local employer, with the apparently Hoffman type kilns being loaded and unloaded by hand. This was a labour-intensive and arduous task which was performed by the workers who declined the supplied heavy gloves, since they were on piece work rates and the gloves slowed them down. Instead, the men wore rubber flaps made from old inner tubes over their fingers and thumbs to protect them from the abrasive and hot bricks, the unloading particularly being carried out in extreme heat.

Around the millennium, the site was extensively modernised, one of the existing linear kiln buildings was demolished and a large blister hangar type building was erected to house the main factory processes, this being some 17,000 square metres in area. The manufacturing processes are now almost entirely automated, with a continuous-firing tunnel kiln and a limestone scrubber on the chimney to remove pollutants.

Initially The Ockley Brick Company Ltd., subsequent owners have included the Blue Circle Group, Chelwood Brick, and The Brick Business. The world's largest brick making business, Wienerberger, brought the site in 2004 and also owns the smaller adjoining brickworks described above. Wienerberger chose to rename the larger site 'Ewhurst Brickworks', and around 36 million wire-cut bricks a year can now be produced here, using advanced automation.

Planning permission exists for further expansion, specifically for a second tunnel kiln within the main building; for an entirely new tile-making factory; and for the extraction of a further ten million tonnes of clay by 2073. Currently, the building of a solar farm on the site to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels is under consideration by Surrey County Council, this being on agricultural land within the site, although that land too will be quarried in due course.

Also, on the Wienerberger site is the fairly recently acquired 'Keymer Tiles', a business with a very long history, and previously based in East Sussex as its name suggests. Keymer produces a range of handmade roofing tiles and fittings utilising the same Wealden clay as the bricks, and again in a range of colours and finishes.

Although technically quarrying, the manufacturing process differs from stone quarrying, starting with the extraction of the clay by tracked crawlers towing graders and currently excavating to a depth some twenty metres below ground level. This process is carried out by an outside contractor, and it should take about six weeks to obtain a year's supply of clay; but recent wet winters have greatly extended the time taken.

The clay is deposited in a storage area where the variations in the material become apparent, as a 'layer cake' is formed. After weathering for about six months, the clay is pulled off the stack with a downward motion by articulated fore loaders, this initially mixing the layers.



*Right: The layer cake. (Photo
Hugh Anscombe)*

The clay is then tipped into hoppers and thence to an incorporating mill where it is further mixed and ground down to a uniform consistency, leaving the mill on a conveyor belt in coarse pieces of approximately matchbox size.

The clay passes through various processes within the factory and emerges from an extruding ram a little larger than two finished bricks in section, prior to being cut into two by a wire. Rather than having a recessed frog, Wienerberger has developed a brick with three large oval holes right through it. This has been extensively tested and provides sufficient compressive strength, while using less clay, being lighter in weight and providing improved insulation properties. Robots stack the bricks on to cars, flat trolleys running on railway track, which after a period of drying will then pass through the tunnel kiln at around 1,200°C. The initially oversized bricks shrink to the correct size during the drying and firing processes.

A variety of colours and textures can be produced to meet differing architectural requirements, some of these being achieved by additives, others by varying the firing process. Engineering bricks are also produced for heavyweight structures and underground use, as are all the special bricks needed to line openings and create special features on buildings. Once cooled, the bricks are stacked and wrapped in a way that negates the need for a pallet, and removed to the yard ready for collection by lorries. The lorries follow a one-way transport plan around local roads since the lanes around the site are narrow.

The Smokejacks pit has given up many fossils over the years, the gradual nature of the extraction facilitating the exposure of these. Most famously back in 1983 an amateur fossil hunter had permission to look for fossils and cracked open a small boulder. Inside was an extraordinarily large, fossilised claw, which his son-in-law subsequently took to the Natural History Museum. The Museum staff had never seen a claw on that scale and a process of excavation and ten years of conservation began on what turned out to be probably the most

complete dinosaur fossil ever found in the UK. It was of a previously unknown genus, and proved to be the key to smaller parts of fossils found around the world that could not previously be categorised. *Baryonyx Walkeri*, a fish-eating dinosaur dating from around 125 million years ago, was justly named after the finder, the late William Walker.



Right: How Baryonyx may have looked.

The two Ewhurst works very well illustrate developments in the brick making process. The smaller works practiced atmospheric drying and clamp firing in its early days, where the bricks were air dried and then fired without a kiln. Seven individual intermittent kilns were subsequently built, making more uniform bricks and allowing a certain degree of heat recovery possible to dry and pre-heat further firings.

The Ockley Brick Company was apparently using the more sophisticated Hoffman kiln in the 1960s, whereby sequential firings take place in adjoining chambers in a large linear building, this greatly increasing the potential for heat recovery and the efficiency of the overall process.

Some of these buildings remain on the site, but production now takes place in the factory built around the time of the Millenium. This utilises a modern system where the still damp bricks are loaded on to 'cars' remaining on them while passing through the drying, preheating and continuous firing process in a tunnel kiln, saving a great deal of manual labour.



Ewhurst Brickworks, formerly Smokejacks Brickworks, circa 2024

Ewhurst Brickworks has an annual open day in September each year as part of Heritage Open Days, when guided tours are available. Visitors can also watch demonstrations, enjoy refreshments, and hand-make a Keymer tile if they wish. This year's date is 12 September 2026 and booking is essential -

<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/submission-event/keymer-handmade-clay-roof-tiles-wienerberger-factory-tour.html>

ARCHAEOLOGY AT SAYERS CROFT- AUGUST 2026

By Chris Gibson

Students came from across the country to pursue their aim for a Duke of Edinburgh gold award at Sayers Croft this August. For a week they attended an archaeology course run by Chris Gibson for Surrey Archaeological Society to qualify for the 'Residential' part award. The course has been run very successfully over the past 4 years with a number of History Society members helping out too. This year Sue Willis was helping. There are 20-30 students – most having just finished their A levels – and we select a couple of areas for them to excavate over the week. An important Roman road runs through Sayers Croft and we aim to select sites where the students are likely to find a section of road.

This year for the first time we also introduced making and firing Bronze Age pots as an additional activity.

It's a magical feeling as you trowel away the earth that has sheltered the road for 2,000 years and see the stones from the road appear. It's an even greater joy to find that the road is still in good condition as the Romans were hardly likely to have patched a road up nicely just before they had to retreat to Rome in 410 AD.



This year's students struck lucky as both sections of road they excavated were great examples of good quality roads. They were either side of the Roman bridge that would have crossed Coneyhurst Gill; one at the foot of the hill leading up to the bridge from the south (*photo 1, below left*) and the other barely 10 m away from what would have been the north side of the bridge (photo 2, below right). The former was so good that you could happily drive on it today with no potholes!! The latter was on a slope approaching the bridge with only 10 metres to go, so the wagon drivers would have to hope that their oxen or horses would hold back the weight of their load and avoid careering into the Gill below. Approaches to Roman bridges were normally fairly flat but, in the case of the Coneyhurst Gill crossing, both approaches were sloping so there must have been a few accidents over the years it was in use. You can still experience the slopes by walking in the Sayers Croft Reserve around the bridge crossing and let your imagination take you back to Roman times!

