

NOTES ON DUNSFOLD AREA

Geology

The area lies on the Wealden Clay series, dating from the Cretaceous period. Within the Wealden Clay there are many beds of sandstone and limestone, which form the higher land. It is likely, however, that the site of Dunsfold Church is an artificial mound (possibly a pre-Christian burial mound). The centre of Dunsfold village itself lies on river terrace gravel. The area is drained by a tributary of the River Arun, which flows south to the English Channel.

Dunsfold

The name of the village almost certainly relates to it having been a clearing in the great Wealden forest (the Church Guide Book refers to an earlier name of 'Dundesfolde', i.e. the 'fold' (enclosure, farm) of Dun-nod (Dun the Brave))

The village was not mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086) and, indeed, there were no settlements in this area of the Wealden forest at that time. Dunsfold probably grew up in connection with the discovery and exploitation of iron reserves. The first mention of the village name came at the end of the 12th century. By the 16th century there were three iron works in Dunsfold. The oldest local manor is 'Burningfold' to the south of the village, which in the 16th century was the home of Richard Marche, the owner of an iron furnace; the name of the house shows the importance of charcoal burning to the industry.

In the medieval period the Dunsfold area was an important industrial centre. Besides the iron works, there was glass-making at a number of sites (including one in Sydney Wood). The local timber was not only used for charcoal (for the iron and glass furnaces) but was also cut to be sent down-river to Littlehampton, for use in the ship-building industry. Clearly, some timber also returned from the coast, since an old cottage in Dunsfold ('Yonder Lye' on the Green) has beams taken from the timbers of a ship.

The early importance of the village is reflected in the large number of cottages dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, both in the village centre and in the surrounding area (for example, 'Burningfold' and 'Field Place' are 16th century, and 'High Loxley Farm' is 17th century). The 'Old Rectory' near the church is even older, being 15th century timber-framed. The village today focuses on a village green, but is more linear than nucleated in form.

Church of St. Mary and All Saints

The church stands about half a mile from the centre of the village, in what is almost a separate hamlet. It dates almost entirely from the period 1270-1290, although it is likely that an earlier church existed on the site, which itself may have been pre-Christian in origin. The church is unusual in that it has been virtually unaltered over the centuries, and therefore it is of great historic interest.

The walls were once covered with paintings; there are framed copies of some which were found in the 19th century. The walls were whitewashed by order of King Edward VI in the 16th century. There are also a few fragments of ancient glass in the window in the south wall.