

ANCIENT IFIELD



So what was Hyde Hill pond for? The obvious answer, given the industry of the Crawley area over the course of 2,000 years, would be that it was an early water powered iron site, perhaps from the 14th or 15th century when water powered forges started to appear in The Weald. It is, after all, surrounded by features connected to the iron industry, as we have already seen, but it has never been documented as such (the vast majority of iron sites from this period were documented while they were in use by way of production and sales records) and, more pertinently, there is zero evidence on the ground. Point your eyes downwards at the c16 & c17 sites at Bewbush, Ifield & Worth or the Roman era site at Broadfield, and the streams and nearby ground are littered with evidence by way of slag, but the Hyde Hill site has none that is apparent. While this doesn't discount Hyde Hill as an iron site; after all the evidence could be buried and not visible, particularly if the brook now follows a different path, it makes it unlikely.

So was the site used to power a mill of some kind? An entry in the Nona Returna, a Domesday style document produced in 1341, mentions a mill in Ifield; *belonging to the rector, there is the tithe of flax and hemp, valued at 8s., the tithe of a mill at 6s. 8d., the tithe of lambs and wool this year at 10s.* It is possible that this mill was at Hyde Hill (and equally as possible that it wasn't!). With the mill being mentioned in the company of textiles, could it have been a Fulling Mill? This site still has a lot of secrets to be revealed!



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