

**ROYAL
GUNPOWDER
MILLS
WALTHAM ABBEY**

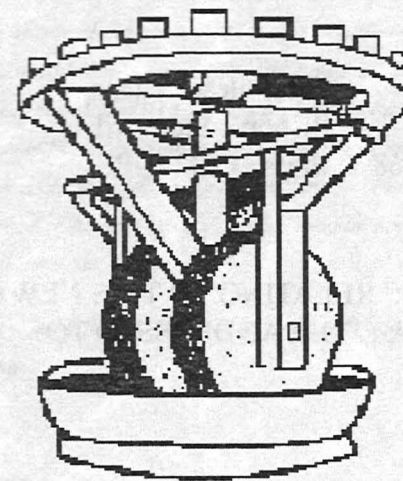
‘TOUCHPAPER’©

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Touchpaper

The Newsletter of the
ROYAL GUNPOWDER MILLS WALTHAM ABBEY
FRIENDS ASSOCIATION



**DECEMBER
2005**

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PLEASE NOTE: Deadline date for submissions to
the next issue is 15th February 2006



Editorial



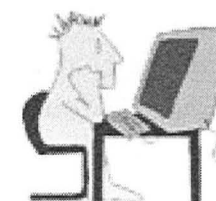
Another busy year is almost over and the good news is that visitor numbers are gradually increasing year on year. There have been a number of excellent special event weekends which helps bring in many more visitors to the Mills. An event programme is already being planned for 2006 and we will give full details in the next issue.

You can keep up to date with progress through the Mills web site which also has a special Friends page. (www.royalgunpowdermills.com)

Accompanying this issue is a new draft constitution for the Association. This is rather more comprehensive than our current one as it needs to be acceptable to the Charity Commissioners if we are to be registered as a charitable association. The benefits to us will be that we will be able to claim an extra 28% of your subscriptions from the Inland Revenue; a significant addition to our funds. We had hoped to have this in place in time for your annual renewal, due in January and we had intended to send Gift Aid certificates with renewal forms. Because the new constitution will have to be authorised by the membership at a General Meeting this will not take place until some time next year; probably at the AGM in May, although it may be necessary to call a Special General Meeting before then.

I hope you all have a very happy Christmas and look forward to a rewarding and prosperous New Year.

Norman Paul
Touchpaper Editor



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

This past year has been a successful one with visitor numbers up on last year. Long may the increase continue.

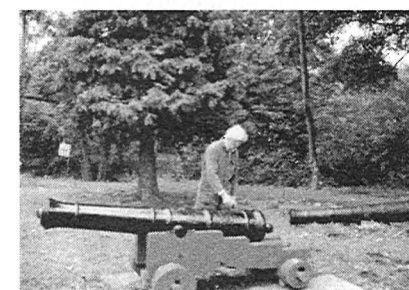
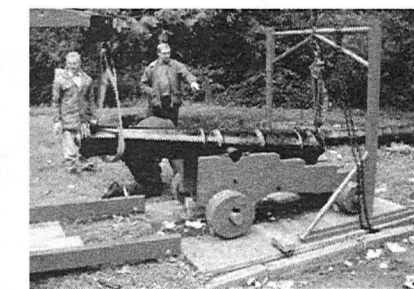
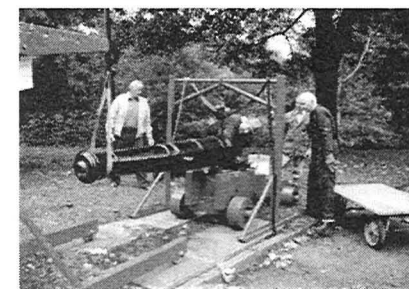
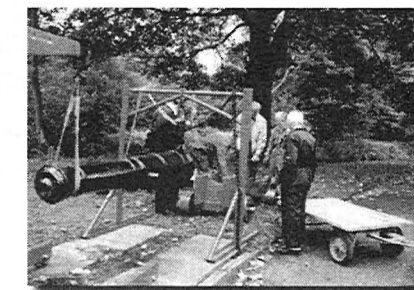
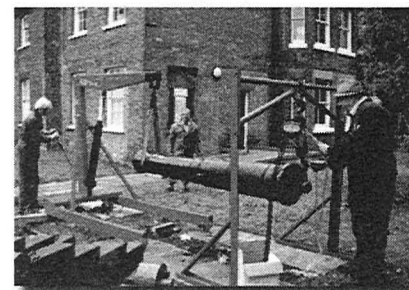
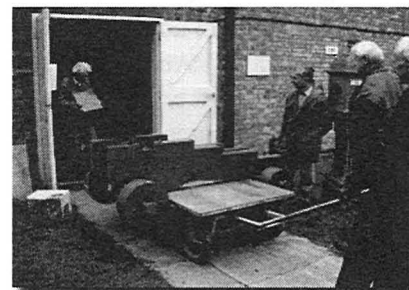
Volunteers have been doing some refurbishment of the L149 Annex which is now let for storage, The income is of course a help to the Company. In case you didn't know, Ken Bascombe and Randall Wyatt used to work in L140 and the tower contained the Rotter Impact Testing Machine. It needed a major clean up as it has been home to a large flock of pigeons for some time; there being no door and broken windows. It took a lot of persuading for them to move out and the floor was inches deep in droppings. No doubt we could have extracted significant quantities of saltpetre!

The large cannon carriage constructed by Gerry Miller and others is now in position outside Walton House. The cannon barrel was lifted onto it with the aid of some recently obtained heavy lifting gear (purchased primarily for the railway). This was all much easier than mounting the smaller and lighter proof cannon some time ago. Muscle power was all that was available then. Our thoughts are now turning towards making a further carriage for the other large cannon (only turning towards - we haven't quite got there yet!)

In addition to the annual end of season Volunteer Party in October a welcome innovation was a Fireworks Party for volunteers on November 5th, organised by the Company, with everyone contributing a large firework (and some of them were very large!). The display was excellent and lasted just over an hour.

The Committee wish all our readers a very happy Christmas and New Year. We look forward to seeing you at the Mills in 2006, particularly in 'volunteering mode'.

John Wright



A Background to Historical Re-Enacting at the Gunpowder Mills.

This season we have had many successful re-enactment event weekends, and no doubt volunteers and Friends have got used to seeing people in costumes wandering about the place. But who are they? Why do they do it? And aren't they hot in all those clothes??

Historical re-enactment is a hobby, which attracts a large amount of people to it, was estimated last year that there are over 20,000 re-enactors in the UK alone. There are groups, which portray every conceivable historical period, from the Greek Hoplites to the Vietnam War. Some groups are enormous and some are very small. There is a strong bias towards the military aspect, but many groups concentrate on living history. Group members are often extremely knowledgeable about their chosen period and about history in general. Many people find that the bug bites and they end up re-enacting more than one historical period.

Re-enactors come from all walks of life and are doing the hobby for all sorts of reasons. What they do have in common is an interest in history and in having a good time. Taking part in a battle is often exhilarating, but it is the social side of the hobby that draws many people in. Whole families can take part (even tiny babies can be dressed up in appropriate clothing) and the opportunities to make friends and enjoy yourself are endless. Re-enactors will travel all over the country and often abroad, seeing a variety of interesting places from the inside. And once the public have gone home, there is often the pleasure of having a castle or historic place all to yourself.

So what goes on in all those tents? Living history is the presentation of a historical period by means of a craft or activity, such as woodworking or cooking, by people in appropriate costume using accurate tools and methods, so that the public can see how things were once done. At most events this is carried out on a living history campsite, using canvas tents to house the re-enactors and their equipment. We have had a variety of interesting presentations on site this season, and this activity is always popular with visitors who enjoy talking with the re-enactors and finding out about history.



However, battle displays are primarily what attract visitors and encourage them in. We are fortunate in having an excellent site for this in Queen Meads and it is large enough for big displays but small enough so that there is always a good view for visitors. The responses from the public have been very encouraging and they have enjoyed seeing the battle scenarios, even if the noise it generates is annoying for our neighbours.



Needless to say, safety is always high on the list of priorities and the public are never put in any danger. Although there is no denying that any activity involving hand-to-hand combat and gunpowder has an element of risk, all re-enactors are fully trained before they are allowed on the field and anyone firing a musket or rifle or working on a cannon must by law hold a shotgun certificate and a black powder licence. Most groups run regular drill sessions, often as part of their displays, so soldiers can practice their moves. Qualified first aiders are on hand, and in hot weather water-carriers prevent the troops dehydrating. Accidents do happen, but sensible precautions ensure they are rare.

So how does it all happen? Events are organised in great detail with sponsors, usually a long time in advance. Sponsors are the people who pay for the costs associated with the event, and are owners of historical sites (such as English Heritage), other venue owners, local councils, schools, private individuals etc. The sponsor and the re-enacting group sign a contract and a fee is paid to the group or regiment to cover expenses such as explosives and the transporting and upkeep of equipment. Black powder for firearms is a major cost for many groups and a big cannon will use up a substantial amount over a weekend. The more musketeers or riflemen you have, the more powder you need. If horses are involved in a presentation, the cost goes up considerably, because trained mounts have to be hired from specialist stables. This season we have managed to keep costs relatively low by negotiating with the different groups, most of who appeared on substantially reduced fees in order to help the site.

It's important to emphasise that the individual re-enactors don't receive a fee! Rather, they put quite a bit of their own money into the presentations they give,



buying all their own clothing and equipment and paying to travel to the events, often from a long way away. There is a whole mini-industry serving the re-enactment community; many items are hand-made and consequently expensive. A pottery tankard costs around £10; a shirt costs £25; a good pair of authentic style leather shoes can set you back £100 or more; a reproduction English Civil War matchlock or Brown Bess musket costs in the region of £400 (plus the cost of the appropriate licences). And the cost and upkeep of a fully functioning WWII jeep or armoured vehicle is considerable. Multiplied by

the amount of re-enactors at any one event, that represents a substantial personal investment, which is often not appreciated.

When you're putting on a show for a whole weekend, you need somewhere to stay. Some re-enactors do camp out on the living history site on Queen Meads; most, however, stay in modern tents or caravans out of sight of the public. There is a small amount of space for this on the eastern side of the site, on the far side of Middle Canal. It is hard work being in character and going on the battlefield, and this give re-enactors space to relax away from the public eye. Passengers on the Land Train get cheery waves as they go through the campsite!

At present, staff are finalising the events programme for next year. We hope that it will be as exciting as this year and bring in an even bigger amount of visitors. There is a lot of hard work and dedication, which goes on behind the scenes to bring these events to life. And no, surprisingly we aren't all that hot in the clothing ñ it's surprising how you get used to it!

Elaine M English

Friend, site volunteer, member of Sir Marauder Rawdon's Regiment (English Civil War Society) and the Essex Militia.

P.S. Never too young (or old) to join.
We like to catch them young!



THE ROYAL ARSENAL RAILWAY THE EARLY DAYS

Construction of the first 'iron railway' was approved by the Board in May 1824, to be built at a cost of £459, this ran through the principal storehouses down to the shot-piles. The expression 'iron railway' was rather a euphemism considering that it is believed the track was nothing more than a kind of tramway, probably cast iron rails fastened to baulks of timber, over which trucks mounted on metal wheels could be pushed by hand or drawn by horses. Encouraged by the success of his first venture, Lieut-Colonel Jones, the C.R.E. Woolwich District, submitted an additional estimate for extending the line to the guns.

In March 1825, the Board approved the manufacture of 'eight carts for the iron railway' to be built by the Royal Carriage Department. By October 1825 the railway as then planned was practically complete. No further additions were made till 1841 when in September of that year it was agreed that tracks should be laid down in the Eastern tower of the Grand Storehouse and in the enclosure to the staircase at a cost of £40. Even this Arsenal railway built for a common purpose, caused jealousy between the Departments, which in 1850 still owned their own lines. Each considered no purpose but its own and refused to co-operate in the slightest degree, it is even recorded that on occasions one department would work through the night, moving a adjacent departments track section and relaying their own.

It will be appreciated that this so called Arsenal 'railway' completed in about 1855 was no railway in the modern sense. The word denoted nothing more than a net-work of iron rails laid down between the wharf, the saw-mill and the main storehouses, over which timber and other materials in specially adapted trucks could be moved with less effort than formerly by men and horses on a cobbled road. It was a self-contained system for departmental internal use only, was not an integrated system and steam played no part in its performance, yet it did mark a definite stage in the mechanics of haulage; the evolution of which was to culminate in the Royal Arsenal Railway.

It was the opening of the London - Dartford mainline in 1849, that eventually determined the War Department to lay out a proper Arsenal Railway which, linked to the country's mainline systems and would ensure the rapid transit of war time stores.

During the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s the embryo of narrow gauge railways had developed in England by heavy engineering companies, one of the main innovators was the Chief Engineer J.M.Ramsbottom of the Crewe works at the London & North Western Railway and who was far sighted enough to see the benefits of small railways for materials handling in a manufacturing environment. His choice of an 18" gauge at Crewe in 1862 was found to allow tight radius bends most suitable for use within workshops and foundries and at the same time allow sufficient tonnages to be transported within the confines of an engineering works.

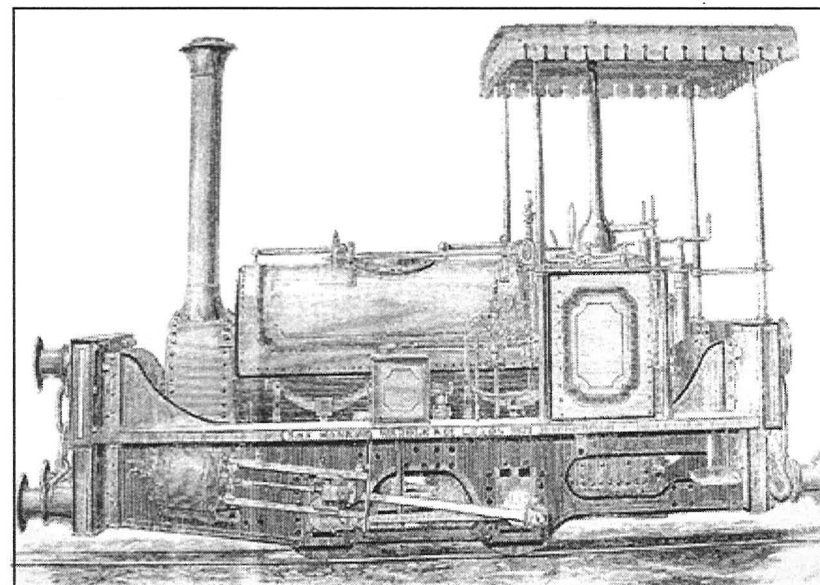
Back in Woolwich it was not till 1866 that orders were given to construct a proper 18-inch narrow gauge railway within the Arsenal. This decision was given on the grounds that at the Crewe Works their 'miniature' set-up had proved its practical worth, that more extensive measures were unnecessary, and that the confined space in the machine shops and narrow alley-ways of the Arsenal allowed for no other alternative. The success of the Crewe system led the military authorities to adopt 18in gauge as standard for internal works systems, that of Chatham Dockyard is probably best known, others included systems at Deptford Meat Market, The Royal Gunpowder Mills, Waltham Abbey, and the original Lodge Hill & Upnor Railway.

The work on the new narrow-gauge railway proceeded and on 10th January 1873 the first section was opened. It extended from the West Wharf to the rear of the Shell Foundry. This first 'permanent way' was built of cast iron plates with counter-sunk grooves cast in the top face in which the wheel flanges would locate, the face between the 'rails' had a cast 'chequer plate finish' to prevent the slip of the feet of whatever form of motive power was employed, horse or manpower. The Royal Laboratory Foundry undertook manufacture of the plates, each section being 4 feet long and weighing about 3 cwt. The plates were laid in a bed of concrete and keyed together to retain alignment without the use of sleepers, so that being flush with the ground, they formed an ideal workshop floor without the trip hazards that would exist with conventional rail track and provided excellent road crossing surfaces. The design also included turn-out sections and circular turntables supported on a row of steel balls. This same design system was also extensively used at Chatham Royal Dockyard, where sections can still be seen today. Originally, there were no mechanically operated points, the engines and wagons being switched by wedging or other manual means. As the mileage of the track increased, more orthodox methods of construction were introduced with 35lb. flat bottom rail and sleepers, fish-plates and conventional mechanical switching appliances appeared.

The formation of the proper railway, the Royal Arsenal Railway, subsequently referred to as the R.A.R., was designed and constructed by men of the Corps of Royal Engineers under the supervision of Major P. H. Scratchley, R.E., Inspector of Works (1870-1877); and the first steam locomotive from the Manning Wardle, Boyne Works in Leeds arrived the first steam locomotive at the Arsenal arrived in 1871. This was the first of a total of 82 narrow gauge locomotives of both steam and internal combustion, that were to see service on the tracks of the Royal Arsenal up until 1955.

This **Manning Wardle** O-4-OST Works. No. 353 of 1871, later named **LORD RAGLAN** was a 'special' constructed to a specification laid down by the Arsenal and attracted much attention from the engineering press of the time. It had inclined cylinders 6in. diameter with 8in. stroke, wheels 1ft. 8in. diameter set at a wheelbase of 3ft. 3in. suitable for running on the Woolwich minimum radius of 25 feet.

The design was the world's first series-produced sub-metre gauge class locomotive, combining full-length outside frames with a proper locomotive boiler. To enable the engine to haul wagons of both gauges, a double buffer beam was fitted with the standard gauge drawhook mounted off center to coincide with the centre line of the standard gauge track. The fitting of an ornate canopy and water feed pump (to back-up the injector) were characteristic of the company's products. Records indicate that **LORD RAGLAN** was scrapped at the Arsenal around 1916 after 40 years of service.



The next two Manning Wardles arrived in 1873, **VICTORIA** Wks. No.477 and **ALBERT EDWARD** Wks. No.482, these incorporated modifications, a dropped foot plates, a full width iron and single wooden buffers, bevel geared handbrakes. In all a further ten locomotives by Manning Wardle, to similar specification were supplied to the Arsenal up until 1889. Finally in 1889 **ARQUEBUS** Wks. No.1130 was the last of the thirteen, Manning's Engine Book records that **ARQUEBUS** was a "special" although generally similar to No.612 of 1876, variations included a special canopy with weather screens back and front, Beck's patent whistle fitted on top of the canopy, a brass chimney cap, no handrail on the saddle tank and a spark arrester in the smoke box.

By 1898 the Woolwich system comprised 30 miles of pure narrow gauge track and 25 miles of mixed gauge, by 1918 the total track mileage had reached 120 miles, of which 100 miles was narrow or mixed gauge line by sharing one rail in common. Thus one of the world's unique railway systems came into being.

The narrow-gauge railway had proved so successful that by 1900 it covered a large area of the Arsenal and formed a valuable link between office and shop, storehouse and magazine. It had also become the general goods and passenger service, with the tracks extending out onto the Iron Pier, Coaling Pier, 'T' Pier and as far East as the Crossness Explosives Pier. Some idea as to the complexity of the factory at this time can best be gathered from a brief description of the many departments that operated within the site. The Arsenal was divided into (1) the Ordnance Factories (2) the Inspection Department (3) the Naval Ordnance Department (4) the Army Ordnance Department (5) the Research Department (6) the Proof and Experimental department (7) the Chemical Inspection department. The Ordnance factories were again divided into the Gun Factory, the Carriage Department, Laboratory (for shells, fuses and bombs), the Filling Factories, Small Arms Ammunition factory, the Mechanical Engineering and Building Departments.

From 1873 to 1900 inclusive, each department in the Royal Arsenal, following the tradition of the 'iron tramway', acquired and maintained its own locomotives and rolling stock, and administered its own traffic. The muddles that transpired can be imagined. Such a practice was the natural outcome of that spirit of independence so long fostered by the various departments; it was an attitude of mind, which took a long time to die. In the latter years it became evident that the Royal Arsenal Railway would have to abandon that system if efficiency were to be secured, and adopt some form of centralized control.

The Royal Engineers, who till 1890 had been responsible only for the permanent way, began to organize the departmental sections into a traffic-operating department. As an outcome, in January 1891, Lieutenant E. P. C. (Percy) Girouard, R.E. was appointed 'Traffic Manager', and charged with the duty of running the R.A.R. as a cohesive unit. He took over some 36 narrow-gauge locomotives and 1,000 carriages, vans and trucks, mostly in poor condition from the several departments. Lieutenant Girouard proved a highly capable organizer and his division of the R.A.R. into a number of traffic sections gave universal satisfaction.

At the outbreak of the 1914-18 war every possible locomotive was required to be in service, and within a few weeks only one of the twenty four then on the books remained in for repair and only one was stopped daily for boiler wash-out purposes. Following the completion of the one under repair, twenty-three engines out of twenty-four were in daily service for a continuous period of about six months.

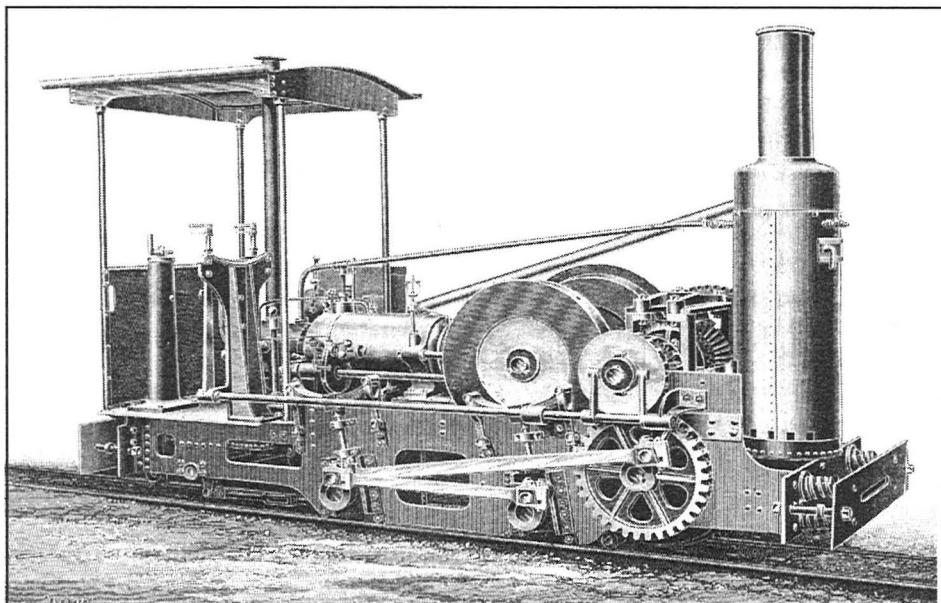
Twenty-five years after the advent of steam traction at Woolwich, the World's First commercially built oil driven railway locomotive, the Hornsby Akroyd LACHESIS, built by Richard Hornsby & Sons Ltd. of Spittlegate Ironworks, Grantham in 1896 as their No.1705, arrived at the Royal Arsenal Railway. The engine Hornsby used was based on the design of Herbert Akroyd Stuart and was of low-compression, paraffin fuelled and was called the 'hot-bulb' type, as it required the aid of a blow lamp for starting.

The paragraph below is reproduced from The Engineer of 4th December 1896:-

"The oil locomotive is one which has been constructed for use on the narrow gauge railway of Woolwich Arsenal, where an engine was required that would not give off any sparks or fire while running and it is expected that similar engines will be used in many places where coal is dear, or in countries where water is scarce. The engraving represents a locomotive with a 12 brake horsepower engine on an under frame supported on driving wheels having a wheelbase of 3ft. 6in. and a gauge of 18in. One man only is required to drive it, there being no firing or water level attention required. The general arrangement of the engine is clearly shown, the locomotive being started and stopped by means of a powerful clutch gearing which is indicated, reverse motion gearing being provided."

The background to the Hornsby-Akroyd locomotives can be summarised briefly. Herbert Akroyd Stuart was born in Halifax on 28th January 1864, the son of Charles Stuart. The family moved to Bletchley, Buckinghamshire, and Charles founded his experimental Bletchley Iron & Tinplate Works at Fenny Stratford. After completing his education, Herbert joined his father and commenced the development of an Oil Engine, it is claimed that his vision of this engine came from seeing the intense energy created when some oil splashed onto a hot metal plate. This became known as the Akroyd Engine and up to a dozen stationary engines were built at the Fenny Stratford works. On 26th June 1891 Richard Hornsby & Sons Ltd., of Spittlegate Ironworks, Grantham, acquired world rights to the design and developed it to become commercially successful.

Hornsby Akroyd No.1705 – LACHESIS was delivered to the Superintendent Building Works, Woolwich, built to their track gauge of 18in., with a single cylinder of 11in. dia. x 15in. stroke, was four wheeled coupled, 20in. diameter wheels at a 3ft. 6in. wheelbase. The wheels were inside the frame, with coupling and connecting rods outside. The 9 hp. 'hot-bulb' Oil Engine had the cylinder mounted over the trailing coupled axle and drove through a train of gears, including a reverse gear. Drive was then transmitted from the jackshaft in front of the loco via a long connecting rod to the rear-coupled axle. On the front of the loco was what looked like a large vertical boiler with a short chimney. This was in fact a combined cooler for the circulating water and a silencer for the exhaust and maybe also acted as a simple spark arrestor. The water circulated in a coil within the chamber and exhaust gases drew cool air up the chamber, like the blast pipe on a steam loco. The drawing shows two pipes running to the chimney, the smaller diameter pipe carried water, whilst the larger took the exhaust gases.



The simple controls and column brake were contained under a basic canopy that provided minimal shelter and also supported the air intake pipe from above the canopy. It has been suggested that Hornsby built LACHESIS on frames and axles supplied from Manning Wardle, as Hornsby did not have the relevant locomotive building history at that date (ARQUEBUS No.1130 of 1889 had the same profile tapered frames). Hornsby had advertised this loco as being able to haul 70 tons on the level at 3mph. It is recorded that when in operation this single cylinder loco with pronounced exhaust note could be heard a mile away. She is known to have operated at Woolwich till about 1915, but like so many items of unique rail history LACHESIS did not survive and was scrapped at Darlington in 1923.

© Robin J. Parkinson WARGM Railway

ADVANCE NOTICE

A special **Steam Fair** weekend event is being organised (with Robin's invaluable help, guidance and contacts) in the early part of next year's programme.

Full details will be given in the March 2006 Touchpaper

SITE NEWS

After a very successful year plans are nearing completion for a full programme of events for the 2006 season. This has yet to be finalised but three major events to note are:

6-7th May VE Day celebrations - including the 'Grace' Sptfire.

20-21st June Steam Fair

24-25th July Military Vehicles Show.

In addition, the ever popular re-enactment groups will be again be visiting during the season.

The full programme will be given in our next issue and you can always sneak a preview on the Company website later this month:

www.royalgunpowdermills.com

New season runs from Saturday 29th April to Sunday 1st October
(N.B. Also open Wednesdays during the School Summer Holidays)

STAFF NEWS

As you may know, Sue, who mans the reception office has been unwell and had an operation earlier this year. She is recovering and hopes to return in the near future.



Many of you who visit the Site will recognise Michelle Moore working as a volunteer, including driving the Landtrain tractor. Michelle is also currently helping out part time in the office on marketing and PR.

A new recruit to the Company is Lynn Duke who took up the post of Team Administrator in November. She has already had a 'baptism by fire' in helping out with recent school visits! Lynn previously worked at the Theobalds Park Conference Centre.



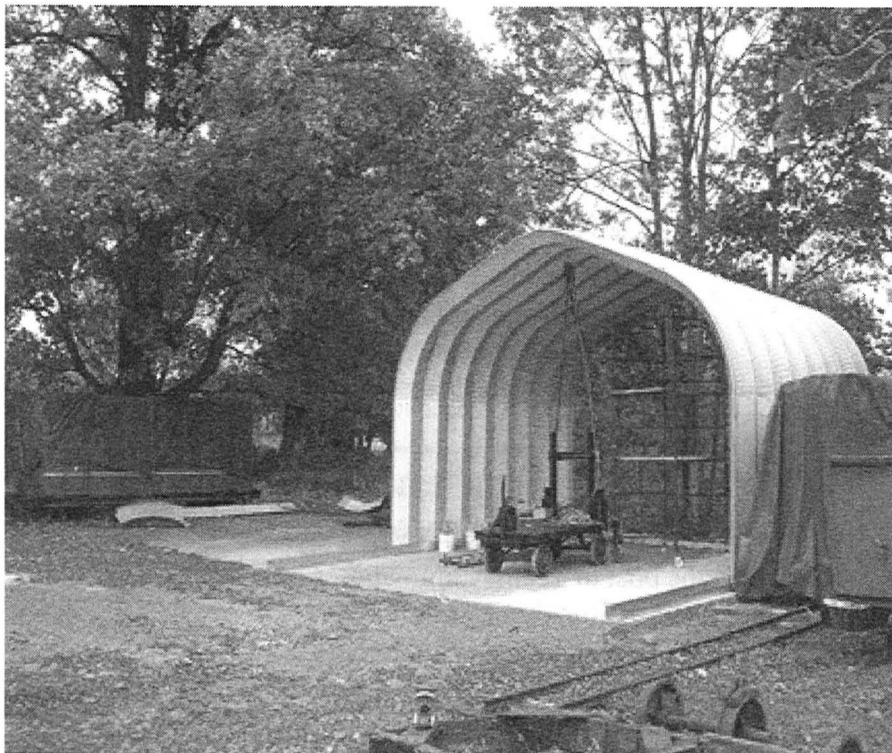
RAILWAY NEWSLETTER

The main effort this year has been aimed at building a Carriage Shed and Engine Shed for the 18 inch gauge rolling stock that can be seen near the Friends Room/Volunteer Base.

The first job was to clear the concrete slab on which the carriages stood. This was only achieved, thanks to a very substantial donation by Colin Butler, one of our key volunteers, that allowed the hire of a crane to move the carriages and a number of other artefacts off the slab.

Stage two required Bob Bray (Bob the builder) to bring his mini digger in and make a trench for electrical conduit from the Volunteer Base to the slab. The slab has now been extended to make space for the two sheds.

Erection of the sheds proved more arduous than expected but one has now been erected and erection of the second is in progress.



On the 2'- 6" railway there has been little progress. We ran out of rail at the start of the year and although Robin Parkinson has been able to find some more for us there is a transportation problem preventing the rail being moved from Crossness to the Gunpowder Mills.

In the mean time things have not been totally dead. Barry Passey Jnr has built us a model Anti Aircraft Gun which has been mounted on an old Bishopton wagon, for the amusement of the Land Train passengers.

We have also started preparations to extend our sidings area in the hope that we will be getting some more rolling stock. To this end Lawrence Burnett has arranged with B&Q to supply us with broken paving stones and bricks for the hard core base of new track. Thank you very much B&Q.

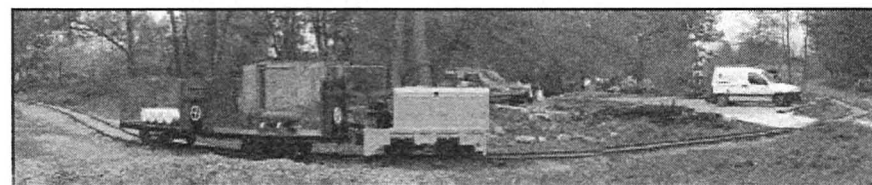
"Hang on a second" I hear you say, "You just said you had run out of rail so how can you lay sidings?" Well, we still have a number of lengths of 25lb/yard rail which came from Bishopton, along with points and rolling Stock. This rail is too rusty to be used as main line rail but is perfectly adequate for sidings use.

Now the public season is over we will be ripping out the curve from 83B onto the main line, installing a set of points and re-aligning the curve from the points to the main line. Preparations for this are going well.

83B (our Engine Shed and Workshop) has undergone a transformation over the last few months with the installation of a water tank, sink, hot water supply, hand drier and fridge; to name just a few of the improvements. Sleeping quarters and a kitchen are to follow.

This brings things up to date for now but, don't forget, if you are visiting the Mills at any time, come up and see us. You will be very welcome as we are always pleased to show visitors around and explain what we are trying to do.

John Wilson



TOUCH BYTES

As a friend of Richard Penfold I had the good fortune to be invited to the Gunpowder Mills Volunteer Summer party. It was a lovely evening and I was made to feel very welcome and really enjoyed meeting some great people. Thanks to all those involved in the organisation of a very successful evening. I have had some experience of voluntary work and fund raising and do not think I have ever come across a more enthusiastic and dedicated group of people. Their achievements are something to be proud of.

Lin Hazell (*Lin has now joined the Friends. Ed*)

A Question of Identity... A recent edition of the Epping Forest Guardian (15th September) carried a notice of the death of a John Silberrad, in his late seventies. He is described as having been a barrister and lived his whole life in Loughton. Could this gentleman I wonder be a relative of the Oswald Silberrad who developed the manufacturing process for Tetryl (see article on Tetryl June 2004 Touchpaper) before leaving government service to establish a chemical consultancy in Buckhurst Hill? Oswald did not die until 10960 and would have been alive for a significant part of John's lifetime. Can anyone throw any light on this?

Dave Hartley

Last of the Summer Wine ... Still going strong; the monthly gathering attracted 11 members at the end of October. The next meeting is on Dec. 3rd at the Crown for a Christmas Lunch.

There may be some who will gather on the 30th December but the 28th January is likely to be the first serious meeting after the Christmas Lunch.

Bryan Howard

Sad to report the death of **Gladys Witham** who died after a severe stroke mid November. Up until then she was coping well after the loss of her husband Arthur in February.

We have also heard that **Sheila Senior** died suddenly, at home on the 3rd November.

DON'T FORGET
DEADLINE for the March 2006 ISSUE:
15th February 2006

MISCELLANY

CHRISTMAS BRAIN TEASER

The following clues are made up from the first letters of the opening lines of Christmas carols and other festive songs. Just to make it a little trickier the letters have been jumbled up. In order to confuse things further the cryptic clues may, or may not help (probably not!)

By way of example: NS (no singing please) = Silent Night

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. AMIA | (no comments please) |
| 2. BMW IT | (chance would be a fine thing) |
| 3. TO A WOK | (if you're into Chinese) |
| 4. I DO CAW | (everybody does, some of the time) |
| 5. HIT AT | (go on, have a shot at this one) |
| 6. SW WTBFN | (on guard) |
| 7. COAFY | (Christmas church service) |
| 8. U MCC IT | (hardly the time for cricket) |
| 9. K GLOW | (gave someone a warm feeling) |

Think carefully when choosing a Christmas present for your mother!

Four brothers left home for college; they became very successful doctors and lawyers and prospered.

Some years later, they chatted after having dinner together. They discussed the gifts they were giving to their elderly mother for Christmas

The first said, "I've had a big house built for Mama."

The second said, "I'm building a half a million pound private theatre into the house.

The third said, "I'm getting my Mercedes dealer deliver an SL600 to her."

The fourth said, "You know how Ma loved reading the Bible and you know she can't read anymore because she can't see very well. I met this vicar who told me about a parrot that can recite the entire bible. It took twenty monks 12 years to teach him. I had to pledge to contribute £100,000 a year for twenty years to the church, but it was worth it. Ma just has to name the chapter and verse and the parrot will recite it."

The other brothers were impressed.

After the holidays their mother sent out her Thank You notes. She wrote:

"Frank, the house you built is so huge I live in only one room, but I have to clean the whole house. Thanks anyway."

"George, I am too old to travel. I stay home, I have my groceries delivered, so I never use the Mercedes. The thought was good. Thanks."

"Michael, you gave me an expensive theatre with Dolby sound, it could hold 50 people, but all of my friends are dead, I've lost my hearing and I'm nearly blind. I'll never use it. Thank you for the gesture just the same."

"Dearest Melvin, you were the only son to have the good sense to give a little thought to your Christmas gift. The chicken was delicious. Thank you."