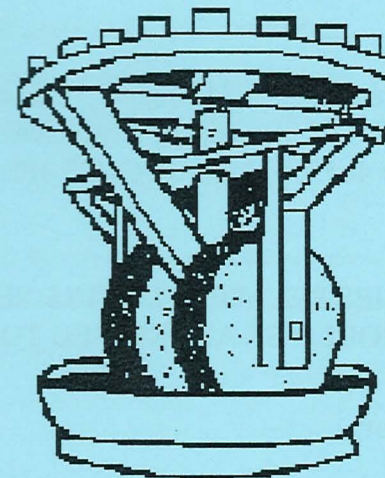


Touchpaper

The Newsletter of the
**WALTHAM ABBEY ROYAL GUNPOWDER MILLS
FRIENDS ASSOCIATION**

[a registered charity No. 1115237]



**SEPTEMBER
2006**

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



Editorial

This time of year used to be called the 'silly season' by newspapers since nothing important seemed to happen so they made up silly stories. Nowadays they seem to do it all year round! I thought, when starting to put this issue together that we were in the same position with lack of copy but after prompting a few people I ended up with more than usual but have managed to fit it all in.

You will see from page 3 that we have now been granted charity status and members will find a Gift Aid Declaration with this issue together with a stamped address envelope for return. This is important as we can claim all donations as Gift Aid and receive an extra 28% from the Inland Revenue. The rules also allow annual subscriptions as donations and this will give a significant boost to our funds. Please don't delay and get it in the post as soon as you can.

One small change this time is the cover. The previous mottled paper doesn't take printing very well so we have changed to a plain paper style - but it's still a Light Blue Touchpaper!

Norman Paul

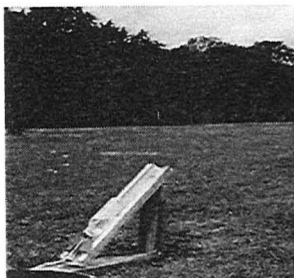
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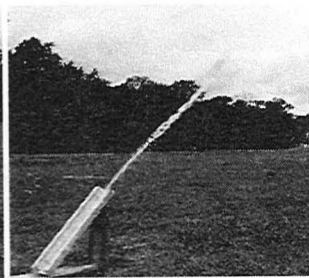
CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

The increased number of event weekends this season has resulted in more visitors coming to the site. Battle re-enactments have been particularly popular and have required a lot of commitment from the re-enactors, especially in hot humid weather. At the Civil War weekend some re-enactors had to withdraw from the battle suffering from heat exhaustion.

An innovation throughout the school summer holidays has been the opening of the site to visitors on Wednesdays with an emphasis on children's activities. This has proved to be very popular with at least one Wednesday having more visitors than some of the event weekend days. This has meant more work for volunteers and staff, particularly for rocket firings, a very popular activity for children. Land train operation has also been required all day. In consequence other volunteer activities have had to be restricted.

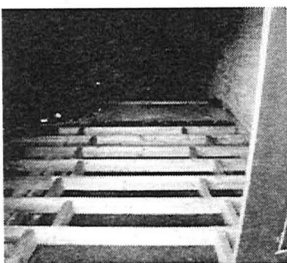


Water Rocket firing



Painting & Silk Screen printing

The major project that we have started is the construction of a full size replica incorporating mill to be erected in one of the bays of L157. A start has been made on re-flooring the bay but most work will be done during the closed season.



Stringent conditions have been laid down but the plans have now been approved. Brick piers have been built and work on re-flooring, led by Dave Sims, is proceeding well.



Part of the site, which includes the Power House and Lodge, is being sold off to provide much needed additional funding for further development of the remainder as a visitor attraction. This is, understandably, regretted by many of the volunteers and is going to mean a lot of extra work moving the contents of the Lodge and the Power House elsewhere on site. So, guess what, more volunteers will be needed to assist in the move!

John Wright

CHARITY STATUS and GIFT AID

As of July 12th 2006 the Friends Association became a registered charity and our charity registration number is 1115237.

This has taken longer to achieve than expected as we had to rewrite our constitution and then have it accepted by the membership at the AGM.

A major benefit of this that we can claim from the Inland Revenue a part of the income tax that you pay in the form of Gift Aid, currently amounting to 28p for every £ donation. The rules also state that annual subscriptions qualify under the ruling as 'donations' and this will give a significant boost to our income.

In order for this to happen you must first sign a 'Gift Aid Declaration' and, of course, you must be paying Income and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equivalent to the tax that we will reclaim from your donation/subscription.

A Gift Aid Declaration form is enclosed with this issue which we would ask you to complete and return in the s.a.e. envelope provided.

For Family memberships only one of you needs to sign.

The wording of the Declaration is open ended so that you will only need to sign once. All future donations/subscriptions are thereby covered until such time as you may revoke the Declaration in writing to the Treasurer.

Norman Paul
Treasurer

Extract from the Archive No.3

One of the ongoing and important tasks for the Archive is the identification, cataloguing and entry into the Waltham Abbey Images (WAI) database - by Bryan Howard, Sheilagh Owens and Barry Zussman respectively – of unidentified loose photographs.



photo from the Waltham Abbey Image Collection

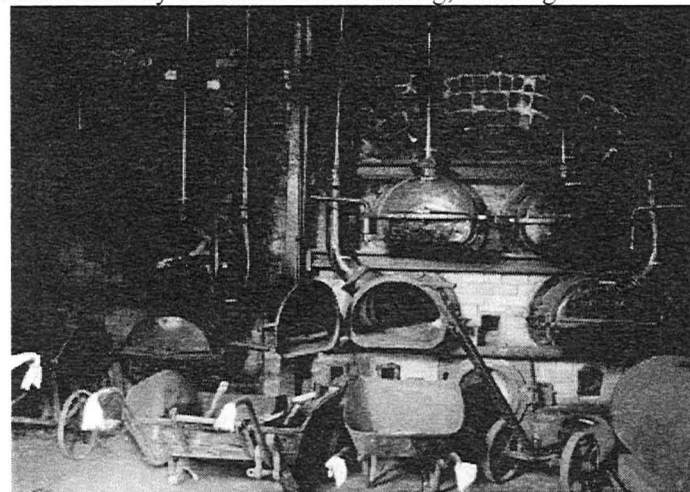
The structure in one of these as shown was identified as the drop tower situated near the burning ground on the South Site. It was employed to test the durability of explosives and their packs when subject to air drops to Special Forces.

Les Tucker

Come September and the children are back in school. In my day we all had to write an essay on our vacation activities so I commend to you this contribution by Nila Monckton and Daphne Clements. Ed.

WHAT WE DID ON OUR HOLIDAYS

We went on a visit to the **Biggar Gas Works**. Richard (Nila's brother) had found out about this before we went on our trip to the borders. Biggar is on the way, if you take the scenic route. We had no idea how town gas was made, so this was all new to us and must say we found it fascinating, a little gem.



Biggar Gas Light Company began supplying gas on 14 October 1839. Demand for gas had expanded steadily by 1858 when a larger gas holder had to be installed. In 1879 a still larger holder was built and the original one scrapped. The 1858 and 1879 holders do still exist, although they were rebuilt and enlarged in later years. In 1914 a new retort house was built, the old one became a coal store, and new purification equipment was installed. Since then there have been few changes and the site remains today, substantially as it was in 1914. Gas was last manufactured in Biggar on 4 January 1973.

The manufacture of coal gas, (town gas), was by heating coal in closed containers, known as retorts. In the early days these were made of cast iron, but this was superseded first by fireclay and then by silica. There are nine of these retorts at Biggar. When gas making ceased at Biggar there were only a few other works in Britain. As the use of natural gas spread, the end was in sight for a process that had been in use for over 160 years. It seemed appropriate that a small works should be preserved as a museum. Biggar was chosen because of its convenient location.

When we got to our B&B in Moffat we did some synchronised leaflet picking up when we saw the title “**The Devil’s Porridge**”. Of course, we had to go. We were expecting something on the lines of the Abbey, so was mystified when we found ourselves in a housing estate and parking outside a church. The church housed an exhibition about the largest factory in the world at the time of the First World War. If it weren’t for a local schoolmaster who knew about **HM Factory Gretna**, and realised that few others in the locality did, the exhibition would not be there at all.



The Gretna Factory was designed and built by K B Quinan in 1915 to produce cordite. It was the largest in the Commonwealth, measuring 9 miles long by 2 miles at its widest point. Before the site was developed there was only the blacksmithy at Gretna and a farmhouse at Easttriggs. Two brick built townships were erected to accommodate the huge numbers of workers some of whom came from as far afield as Canada and Australia.

Alcohol and the 10,000 – 15,000 navvies building the factory became such a problem that the pubs in Carlisle, Gretna and Annan were taken into state ownership where they remained until 1972. I am not sure how this would have solved the problem other than controlling the opening hours perhaps?

Gretna had an extensive railway system within the factory including 40.5 miles of standard gauge track, 36.5 miles of sidings and 49 miles of 2 foot gauge. The rolling stock comprised 34 standard gauge locomotives, 87 passenger coaches and a fleet of over 600 goods wagons.

After the First World War there was discussion of the relative merits of closing Gretna or Waltham Abbey – Gretna lost. The factory closed, the machinery was sold in 1922 and the housing auctioned in 1924. However, the MOD did retain the site for an ammunition dump, which it remains today.

Richard was ‘Disgusted of Dalbog’ as he felt the exhibition concentrated on the women’s involvement, hardly mentioning the men that worked there at all. Fair comment. It did seem to be biased in their favour, making much of the fact that their work during the First World War helped to get women the vote. Richard felt Political Correctness was at work here, and it took our combined efforts and some time to get him to shut up on the subject.

Wayne Cocroft writes about the Gretna factory in his book “Dangerous Energy”. We also purchased two books by Gordon L Routledge, “Gretna’s Secret War” and “Miracles and Munitions” which were very informative. “Disgusted of Dalbog” did concede they were less female orientated!

Also see: previously published in an article by Les Tucker, Touchpaper December 2003.

The next day we went to see the Lead Mining Museum at Wanlockhead, and finished off with a visit to Summerlea Industrial Museum on the, not so scenic, route home.

Wanlockhead Mining Museum

Wanlockhead Village is the highest in Scotland apparently. It didn’t seem all that high to us but then the Scots tend not to build villages on their mountains.

Lochnell Mine was opened in 1710 and worked for 150 years. The entrance lies about 11 yards north of the Wanlock Burn and about 50 yards from the Museum. In the early days of lead mining tunnels were dug out by hand using basic equipment such as picks and chisels. Gunpowder was also used to blow out parts of the rock. The ore and rubble was collected into sleds, which were pushed outside by boys in their early teens. From the age of 8 boys would be employed washing the lead. They had to stand in the burn, barefoot, in all weathers for the entire day.

Two miners cottages have been preserved with authentic interiors representing the 18th and 19th century. The earliest one was very basic with a fire in the middle of the floor, a table with square wooden plates and a bed made from a pile of straw on the floor. However, the 1890s cottage looked surprisingly comfortable with a range to cook on, a cupboard bed, chairs and even wallpaper on the wall. An attic had been added to provide a sleeping area for children.

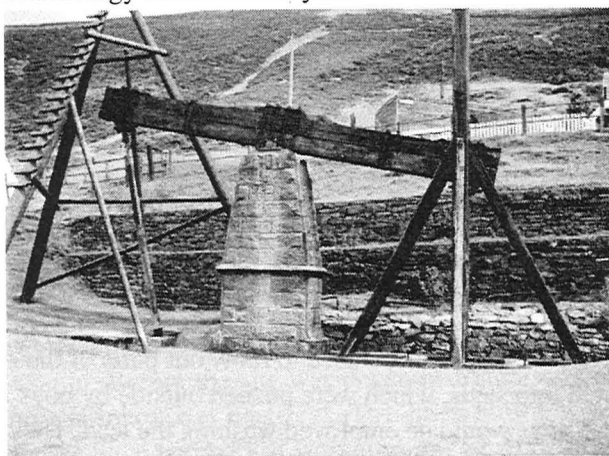
The Duke of Buccleuch, the local landowner, allowed the villagers to use a small area of land to graze cattle and sheep and to grow vegetables. Cast-iron water fountains were erected in the village bringing a clean supply of spring water from the hillsides.

Both these factors contributed to an improvement in the general health of the villagers.

The Miners' Subscription Library is the second oldest in Europe, established in 1756 by 32 men from the village. Each member paid a small annual subscription, which helped to increase the stock of books. The price of books was very high so the stock increased very slowly. The Duke of Buccleuch donated a number of books from his personal library. The library was the first to admit a woman to the membership, in 1784 it is recorded that there were 32 males members and 1 female.

The library was extensively restored in 1996. It contains 2,553 volumes, the majority of which are on religion, philosophy and travel. The oldest book in the library was published in 1616. Nowadays, thanks to a grant, the library has humidity control. A couple of figures act out the procedure for borrowing a book that is a bit surreal.

There is a beam engine on the site but was rather disappointing as it is small and made of wood. We were expecting one of the magnificent machines as seen in the Berlin Museum of Technology earlier in the year.



The beam engine is a water bucket-pumping engine and is thought to have been built in the mid 19th century. We have a booklet on the subject if anyone wants to know how it worked.

Wanlockhead also has a small Museum that we found very interesting as it explained the process of mining the lead. Also there is a wonderful collection of minerals on display containing specimens found locally. 7 of the approximately 700 known minerals were first found here.

All in all well worth a visit if only to see the sheep running all over the village, in and out of gardens, as if they owned the place.

Summerlee Iron Works has been transformed into a visitor attraction by North Lanarkshire Council and entry is free. The Iron Works closed down in 1926 and was dismantled in 1938. After the war the site was used as a crane factory until the 1980s. Part of the site was then developed with housing and the rest was designated the Summerlee Heritage Park. In 1985-1988 the site was excavated by a Community Programme team as part of the museum development and consolidated 2000-2001. Various engines, the Vulcan Iron Boat, railway locomotives and pieces of old machinery are scattered about. A mine had been created for children to visit but, as we managed to arrive after the last mine tour, we are unable to comment on it.

In the sawmill there was a lot of machinery including bandsaws, circular saws, planers, sanders and lathes, of varying sizes complete with information but unfortunately arriving late in the day we were unable to find anyone to demonstrate.

The whole site is closing in the autumn of 2006 for "a major Heritage Lottery Fund redevelopment" and will be reopening in spring 2008. For a small fee we enjoyed a ride on the electric tramway to the tram depot and back. At the far end of the park there are a row miner's cottages with interiors set up as they would have been in 1940-50. We all fondly recognised household equipment, furniture and toys from our youth.



It was an interesting site to visit and will be better when the improvements are finished in 18 months. We had a few problems finding Summerlee as the brown road signs stopped abruptly on a roundabout half a mile from our destination. There was the usual blame thrown at the navigator by the driver and the reply "well you didn't turn when I told you". *(Yes, you have guessed correctly, neither was me. I have learnt to keep my head down. Daphne)*

Altogether a very enjoyable and informative couple of days.

Nila and Daphne

GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS

Thursday 11th May 2006 was an important landmark to me. It was 5.30 pm and I was in the company of 20 volunteers in the lecture theatre all eager to grasp the essential of 'Health & Safety Awareness'. The lecture was given by an Enfield Council Safety Advice Officer. The emphasis was on the investment in a non-hazardous life-style - to become more alert to potential dangers and how to deal with specific tasks on a practical level.

I must admit that I am not always as cautious as I should be in D.I.Y. and I am fairly certain that the men there must also have learnt a lesson or two about awareness and how to cope with potentially dangerous happenings.

Many examples of 'bad habits' were given that we tend to do again and again and get away with - until! It was emphasised how voluntary organisations and charity workers are under the same rules and procedures as those in paid employment, which boils down to - **Don't take risks with your own life and health and those around you.** You may get away with falling off the insecure ladder but what about the person you landed on?

Minnie Fenton

NEW STAFF MEMBER

Sheila Stevens joined the Company a couple of months ago and is currently working in the reception office as well as weekend duty, especially at busy weekends,

She previously worked for 'Unison' in central London but decided to opt for a less stressful life at the Mills (*little did she know!*)

Her interests are foreign travel, vintage bubble cars (Isetta) and wildlife.



A WIND-UP AND GOTCHA

A long while ago when we still had an 'all-gun' Navy, their Lordships in their wisdom decided to appoint my best 'oppo' from the Royal Marines Command Brigade to the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, to instruct the members of many foreign navies, as well as our own, in the delights of amphibious warfare, commando weapons and tactics. In those days the great big grey floating targets could shoot their big rifles some twenty miles or so. Boot necks in the Brigade were, very wisely, only trusted to shoot at the enemy to a maximum of one mile or so. So, to enable the RMs to maximise the range we used such weapons as the Vickers '303' medium machine gun and 3 inch mortars.

One day the Jenny Wren who detailed to my oppo orders from the college Admiral, ordered him to the Royal Military College on Salisbury Plain and arrange a RMs Commando firepower demonstration for the 'Carnival Queens' (trainees from foreign navies) attending the RNC. As my oppo was the captain of the team he was there a day earlier to arrange his "Assault Engineers" (blind and deaf Boot necks who were trusted with high explosives) to help in the demo which concluded with 3 inch mortar firepower. At my oppo's behest, to enliven things for the 'Grand Finale' of the fire power demo, the Assault Engineers had dug in a huge quantity of 45 gallon oil drums full of diesel, petrol and high explosives at the 3 inch mortars appointed maximum range.

There was a huge unexpected crowd of very senior officers from the newly established NATO. After the RMs had fired and moved, the demo announcer (my oppo) advised that the final round fired would be a 'first ever', a thermo nuclear mortar bomb. There was a frenzy of excitement in the crowd from those who actually believed him. Two marines carried a metal box to one of the mortar tubes and removed a bomb painted silver and white that was actually an inert sand filled round. They carefully slid it down the tube, released it and dived for a slit trench. After the correct time of flight, the Assault Engineers triggered the results of their day's work. The must have used the entire training allowance of high explosive as there was a blinding flash followed by a huge and vast explosion that shook the ground for miles. A perfect 'Mushroom Cloud' formed several hundred feet in the air over the watching crowd. It even surprised the AEs and they knew what was supposed to happen! Half the Military College war course stood stunned in utter shock; the other half were trying to get into the few slit trenches around to avoid the 45 gallon oil drums falling out of the sky. All the demo Boot necks were falling apart with laughter at the sight of dozens of panicking officers when suddenly there was a polite touch on my oppo's elbow. It was the RNC's 'Flags' who, in the nicest possible way, informed him that his presence was requested, in formal attire, at 0900 outside the Admiral's office the following day, for unknown to him, the RNC Admiral had been present at the fireworks.

So, at the time and place he was wheeled in front of a thunderous looking Admiral who looked at him very hard before speaking. He then said "Due to your perverted sense of humour a very senior officer in the newly formed West German Navy and a WWII decorated hero, who is a guest of our government and of their Lordships and an old adversary of mine, was made to defecate, in fear, into his trousers. Now, as to your future in the Royal Marines I am immediately forwarding my recommendations to your General Officers. For the time being, don't do it again. Dismissed!"

Very shortly afterwards my oppo was promoted to Major and sent on a staff course.

Sheilagh Owens

ORAL HISTORY

Much of the oral history, a project conceived and run by Ron Treadgold, has been transcribed from the tapes and we reproduce here an interview with Sis Ward who worked at the Mills in the 1940s.

We hope to publish further transcriptions in future issues. Please note that the project is on-going and Ron would be grateful for any contributions.

Ron: I'm here with Mrs. Sis Ward, who started work at the powder mills in the early forties. She now lives at Hoddesdon and she will continue the story in her own words.

My first job after leaving school was working for Brentons at High Beach in service. Worked for Lord Ashton at Brentwood. My last job before starting at the Powder Mills was at High Beach.

I joined RGPF in 1940 processing cordite and then transferred over to the South Side packing cordite.

Packing cordite, what did that involve?

Walking round and taking a handful of cordite out of each box and blending. There was about fourteen boxes round on a stand and we all walked round taking a handful out of each and putting it into a box at the end, weighing it on the scales, and screwing it down and thrown out about seven high, about seventy pounds of the cordite in each box.

And did you have to lift all this stuff, seventy pounds seems quite a weight.

We all took it in turns. There were two of us on the scales, one man and a woman, a woman that was strong enough to do all this work. I was one of those

Did you suffer from headaches and things?

Oh yes, terrible headaches. Really terrible.

Was any sympathy shown?

Oh yes, they had a proper hospital there that you could go and rest in for a while if you got too bad, but you really did get very bad headaches.

What sort of hours did you do?

6 till 2 in the morning and 2 till 10 at night, and 10 till 6 in the morning.

So you did shift work?

Yes, three shifts.

The same duties in each shift?

Yes, blending, yes that was our job, and unloading the trays off the trolleys. Because there again, they had to be stacked up very high, you carried three trays at a time, and you got lots of splinters in your hands.

Did you get around the factory, did you see much what was going on?

No, we just worked in number 5 blending house. We just saw the stoves where the cordite was baked. Never went in those. See the barges that come up the water like, with it all on.

Towed by horses, the barges?

No, the men punted them along. They were punted along to the stages, and then put on to the trucks and brought to the blending houses.

They would be the old bell topped barges?

That's right, yes.

Where would that be near?

We could see the Sewardstone Road and also see the Royal Gunpowder Mill.

Wasn't that called the ICI section once? Why was that?

I don't know. Well there was an ICI section there because my sister worked there. I don't know what the difference in the job was, They used to come round making sure there was no air bubbles in the cordite. See that it was all first class stuff you know.

There were other industries connected, like Nobels, that was in the Abbey itself.

The foreman was Charlie Bailey and Len Heath and they used to come round and see that everything was in order. We used to rush and get our work done, and when we come back from our tea break we always had a sleep on the trays, which was much against the regulations. Most people did. We always kept a lookout on the outside in a cubbyhole where we used to change our shoes. This particular night the lookout went to sleep and the safety building officer came round and found us all asleep on the trays, which was a crime in those days. Any rate it ended up in a court martial, cause it was treated on an Army basis. Our poor charge hand, Ernie Noursley, of course it meant trouble for him if we let him down, so we all stuck together and told him we weren't asleep, we were just looking at the trays. Of course, the poor Danger Building man got in severe trouble over it for false accusations, which was terrible of us really, but we didn't think so at the time because we wanted to stand by our charge hand.

What happened during an air raid?

We used to have to down tools and go into the dugout. A real siren warning there was inside there. We all used to rush into to take off our clean shoes and get into our dirty shoes, we wasn't allowed outside in the same shoes as we worked in and rush to the shelters as luck would have it nothing really happened.

Could I just, on the subject of clean shoes on a dirty surface. I worked in the lab, my name is Ron Treadgold, I worked in the lab during this period, and I remember one occasion that one of our chaps, who was a little bit out of touch with the regulations, went into a CE building, which is full of dust, and was seen coming down the long walk still wearing danger building shoes, which have felt bottoms, impregnated with CE, and leaving great white footprints all the way down the long walk. This incident was hurriedly covered up by our own foreman, and nothing more was said about it.

Did you have any actual bombs dropped?

No. We had some incendiary bombs which burnt some of the guncotton that was at the gate edge, but there was no real bombs inside. I was up at High Beach at this particular time and all these incendiary bombs were all the way down to Waltham Abbey, and it was just like fairyland. All burning on the ground, everywhere, people's houses and in their rooms. It was really a bad night. This was the time some of them landed in the Factory, but there was no explosions through it, so we were lucky really. I worked at the Factory for three years, and from there I was transferred to a tracer bullet factory in Hayes in Middlesex.

We used to have to walk about half a mile to the canteen, we had about twenty minutes to eat our meal. It was right down near the gate, and there was the canteen, the hospital, the rest room, the machine room where you had all your clothes made to fit, which is a joke. We used to wear mob caps and these great big thick woollen dresses, navy blue. We wasn't allowed any grips in our hair, any pins of any sort. All we was allowed to wear was our wedding ring. No smoking was allowed inside, not even in the canteen. If you was ever taken ill in the blending house, you was never allowed to walk up to the rest room or hospital on your own, there was always three of you had to go up, so two could come back. You was never allowed to walk in the grounds on your own.

That was so you didn't wander off into any contraband areas?

Yes, or have any affairs with men, which was a joke really, because most of them was getting on in years. Those that weren't called up were men that had a disability that they couldn't go in the Army. It was very good food in the canteen, the only thing is once somebody had a fruit pie and when they opened it up there was a mouse in it. Quite a few mouse dirts and things like that found their way into the food. On the whole it was OK. I never used to eat in the canteen to tell you the truth. I used to take sandwiches and just have a cup of tea. I had about half an hour for lunch, not long, it used to take you twenty minutes to walk from number 5 right through to the gate you know. That wasn't included in the break. You had to walk along all the railway tracks, which was all laid down for the trolleys.

Ron: Sometimes that was the only dry bit of ground as it used to get flooded. When I left Waltham Abbey as an Assistant I recall that my wages were about three pound a week, and working in the laboratory we might be a bit higher paid than you.

I can't remember what my wages were, we certainly didn't get as much as you. Must have been about two fifty I should think. That was for shift work, a forty hour week. You was very restricted to your own buildings, you weren't allowed to go into any other buildings.

Ron: Did you have any problems with the men? Did they resent you?

No. We made our own fun, there was always the charge hand and two other men in the building, there was always some funny little things going on.

Ron: Get any passes?

No. The majority of girls had got their boyfriends in the forces and you wasn't allowed to walk with men. When you went up to get your meal the charge hand walked in front with his three men behind him, and then there was the women and the lady overseer walked behind you. All in file. You didn't have a chance to have an affair with anybody. It was very restricted.

Ron: Did night work present any difficulties?

No. Only tiredness.

Ron: Did you do week about with the shifts?

Oh yes, you did from six in the morning till two o'clock one week, two to ten the next week, and then ten o'clock at night till six in the morning. It was very wearing. You just went on and on like that, never really got in a routine. And the smell from the cordite really affected you internally as well, very smelly.

Ron: Can you describe in a little more detail the actual work you did.

The cordite was baked in the ovens, the stoves, then it was brought along the river to a landing stage and put on trucks, then the trucks brought the cordite to the buildings. There we unloaded it and we stacked it to quite a height. Then it was taken off these trays and put into seventy pound boxes. Then on trestles there was seven boxes down one side and seven boxes down the other, then we all six of us walked round in a circle, all night long, one behind the other, blending cordite. Then packing it into the top box, they called that blending it, and then it was screwed down. It was very monotonous. Sometimes you loaded the empty trays on to the trucks when we finished with the cordite. The trucks were pushed by two men. Sometimes there were two or three at a time, but there was always two pushing. Nothing mechanical near the cordite.

When we was really down at our lowest on night shift, the man off the scales used to come up with a little song, there was six of us walking round, all young girls, he used to come up to us and say:-

"If any young lady here wants a baby, give us a cock of the north, (?) Whoo hoo."

It wasn't all bad in there, we did have some fun. It was a very cloistered society, very shut in. Only saw danger building men or military that came round. The ICI girls used to come round and take a test of the cordite.

Two girls from Finsbury Park that used to come all the way down for work, they were really funny because they were proper cockneys, and they used to keep us in fits of laughter. Cause their language left a lot to be desired. Being a country girl it was all new, but it was really laughable. There were the twins and another one that came from Theydon Bois, that was the six of us, and then there was the overseer.

I was transferred with one of the girls, but a lot of them went to His Masters Voice factory in Hayes, I don't know what they did there. We used to sing to try and break the monotony, but you weren't supposed to make any noise whatsoever.

We are sorry to hear that Sis Ward passed away about a month ago.

European Route of Industrial Heritage

"ERIH is a project aimed at the promotion of industrial heritage and culture through the network of existing sites, with appropriate interpretation, information and signposting to enhance their tourism potential".

On the 11th July the Mills hosted a meeting of around 40 people representing 25 "Key Sites" in the East of England Regional Route including the Royal Gunpowder Mills which, as a large site of major importance, is designated as an 'Anchor Point'.

The meeting was arranged by David Buckley (ERIH UK Co-ordinator), Sally Carpenter (Director: ClientAct PR), Paul Gilman (ERIH Partner, Essex CC) and David Morgans (ERIH East of England Co-ordinator, Essex CC).

The programme commenced with an introduction to ERIH by Paul Gilman followed by the film and a slideshow history of the Mills. This was followed by a description of the East of England Regional Route by David Morgans.

After lunch in the cafe a number of workshops and an open forum were held.

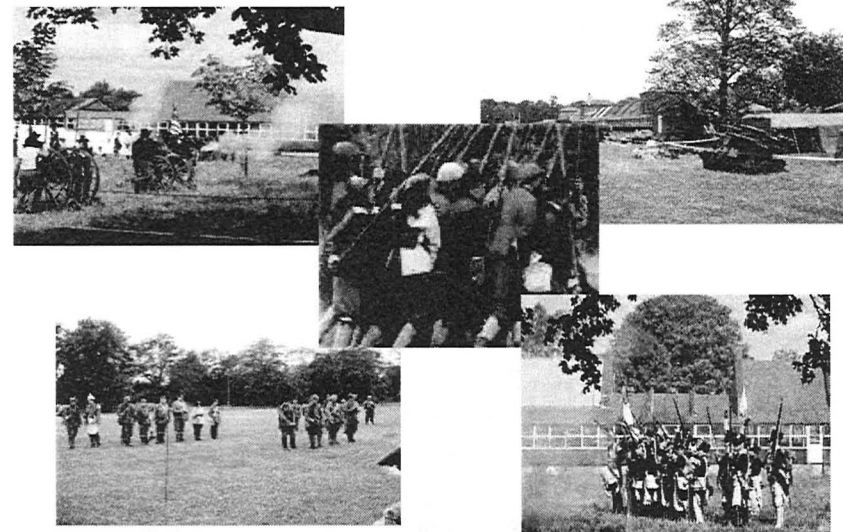


The closing address by Paul Gilman was followed by a land train tour and the meeting finished with afternoon tea after which attendees were free to visit the exhibition, grounds and shop.

This meeting certainly put the Mills firmly 'on the map' and we expect to hear more about this project in the future.

EVENT PROGRAMME

The last 3 months have seen an increased number of special event weekends, from enactments by; the Essex Militia, English civil War, American Civil and the Napoleonic Association, to other special events such as; the Military Vehicles Show, Regia Anglorum, WW1 and the Victorian Experience.



The remaining programme for the year, during September, will be:

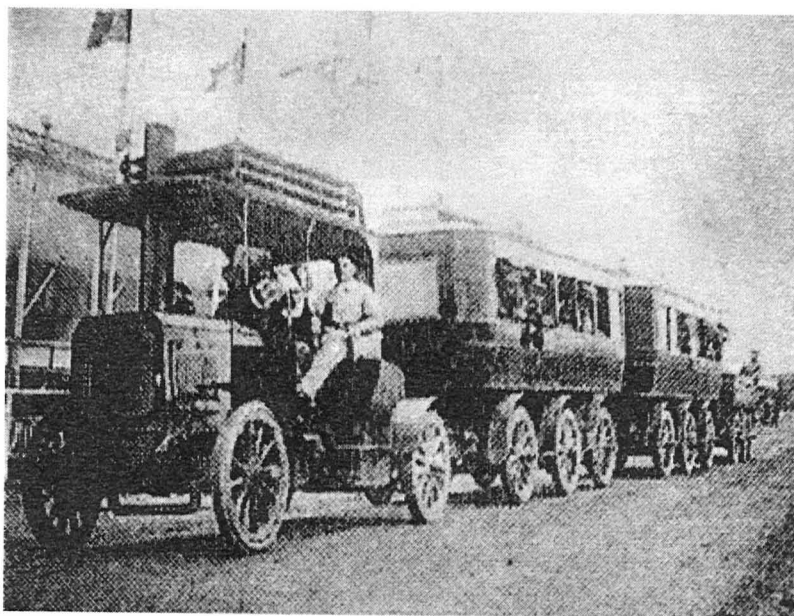
The Home Front	2-3
Essex Militia	9-10
'The World Aflame' (Jacobites, Yankees & France The Wars of King George)	16-17
Guy Fawkes Experience	23-24

Season Closes on October 1st.

TOUCH

Another Road Train

One hundred years ago the first national Grand Prix motor race was run on a 65 mile circuit of public roads outside Le Mans in France. It cost its organisers, the Automobile Club de France, and promoters a fortune, with ornate wooden grandstands, temporary bridges, control by uniformed soldiers and police, press facilities etc. The promoters were aware of the critical role which the Press would have in cementing the success of the event and their hospitality included a road train shown in the photograph - does the funnel indicate a steam powered tow vehicle ? - to convey them around the course, so the Mills land train is following long established practice.



Just a little snippet that caught my eye. Les Tucker

An Omission - With apologies to Derek Needham.

In the last issue I published a photograph of the Combustion Group taken in 1953 but omitted to attribute it Derek who, in fact, is the unnamed person in the back row. This was passed to me at the Reunion in May but by the time I came to publish it I had forgotten who gave it to me and didn't recognise Derek in the photograph. I can only plead advancing senility. Ed.

BYTES

As usual the June 06 Touchpaper was a good read. I was delighted to see a mention of ISRG on page 18 as that section is rarely mentioned (naturally as it was small and top secret).

the name Roy atkins seemed familiar. Have I remembered the name correctly and I wonder if he was the young man who joined around the same time as I did in 1948/ He went off to do his National Service and we had a good laugh when he called in to visit the group whilst on leave as, on his arrival at his barracks what was there on the wall but a picture of me! The young man who had the photograph wasn't an admirer of mine I hasten to add, but of my dancing partner friend - hence the picture of us together in grass skirts. We had some good fun at ISRG.

Nancy Harris

From 1945, when the site became a research and development establishment many scientists and engineers were recruited from all over the country and, because housing was in short supply in the area, an estate of some 100 houses were built on the Monkwood Estate at the end of Monkwood Avenue. This influx of well educated people had a profound effect on the town - not least in the agitation for better educational facilities. From the early days they formed a very active residents association and had many a battle with the Ministry over the accommodation. I have come across some of the early newsletters they published and they do make very interesting reading. Members set up various special interest groups ranging from classes in Art, Woodwork, Handicrafts, Photography, Music and Gardening. There are also records of tenancy changes and births.

From the latter I have noted the following for 1956 and give my congratulations for their 'Golden' birthdays;

Martin Colley	July 10th	Philp Ayerst	July 12th
Anita Mansell	July 31st	Ian Hicks	Sept 2nd

Bryan Howard

DON'T FORGET
DEADLINE FOR DECEMBER ISSUE
IS 15th NOVEMBER

RSAF APPRENTICES ASSOCIATION

The association is still going strong even though there is very little of the former RSAF site left. The clock tower is still there and members of the association look after the maintenance and winding of the clock. There is a small set of exhibition panels but the association does not have a real base although it is possible that many of their artefacts could be displayed at the Mills if and when a suitable building can be passed as fit for public entry.

All apprentices at the Mills transferred to the RSAF for at least one year as part of their training and the Apprentices Association are keen to contact them and ask for our help. Below is a list of names and dates. Can anyone help us in tracking down these people? Please contact the editor with any information. Details of the association can be found on:

<http://www.rsaf-aa.co.uk/rsaf.htm>

Mick Budd	1958-59	Bob Collins	1965-66
Dave Dobbs	1958-59	Alan Wilbourne	1965-66
Dave Giddings	1959-60	Dave Davies	1967-68
Trevor Pearmain	1959-60	Mike Gilkes	1967-71
P Osborne	1960	Steve Hutchings	1967-68
Mike Parratt	1960-61	Dave Herriott	1968-69
Derek Stringer	1960-65	Donald Bayford	1969-73
Eric Tyler	1960-61	G Silver	1969-70
Derek Brewer	1961-62	Dave Ward	1969-70
J Macdonald	1961-62	Mike Warner	1969-73
J Spellane	1961-62	Dave Church	1970-74
M Andrews	1962-63	Barry Hickman	1970-71
Peter Chapman	1962-63	Chris Savill	1970-71
Barry Coupland	1962-63	Mike Wildsmith	1970-71
Ken Emberson	1962-63	T S Lawes	1974-75
Mick Haslam	1962-63	S Parker	1974-75
Terry Lacey	1962-63	A P Smith	1974-75
Sid Collier	1963-68	Paul Crane	1975-79
Peter Manning	1963-64	Nigel C Smith	1975-76
Dave Hilton	1964-68	David J Taylor	1975-76
J R Hyde	1964-68		

ADVERTISEMENTS



Gunpowder, Explosives and the State

A Technological History

Brenda J. Buchanan

\$99.95/£55.00

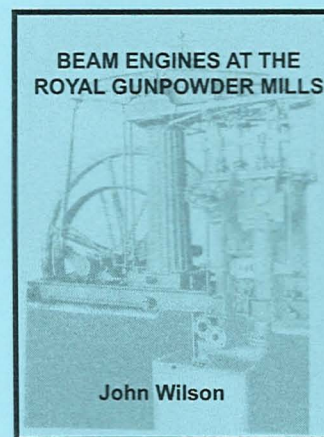
Gunpowder studies are still in their infancy despite the long-standing civil and military importance of this explosive since its discovery in China in the mid-ninth century AD. In this second volume by contributors who meet regularly at symposia of the International Committee for the History of Technology (ICOHTEC), the research is again rooted in the investigation of the technology of explosives manufacture, but the fact that the chapters range in scope from the Old World to the New, from sources of raw materials in south-east Asia to the complications of manufacture in the West, shows that the story is more than the simple one of how an intriguing product was made.

This volume is the first to develop the implications of the subject, not just in the sense of relating it to changing military technologies, but in that of seeing the securing of gunpowder supplies as fundamental to the power of the state and imperial pretensions. The search for saltpetre, for example, an essential ingredient of gunpowder, became a powerful engine of sea-going European trade from the early seventeenth century. Smaller states like Venice were unable to form these distant connections, and so to sustain a gunpowder army. Stronger states like France and Britain were able to do so, and became even more powerful as the demand for improved explosives fostered national strengths - leading to a development of the sciences, especially chemistry, in the former case, and of manufacturing techniques in the latter.

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BEAM ENGINES AT THE ROYAL GUNPOWDER MILLS

Author: JOHN WILSON



This is the third in the series of booklets published by the Friends Association and is researched and written by one of our members.

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