

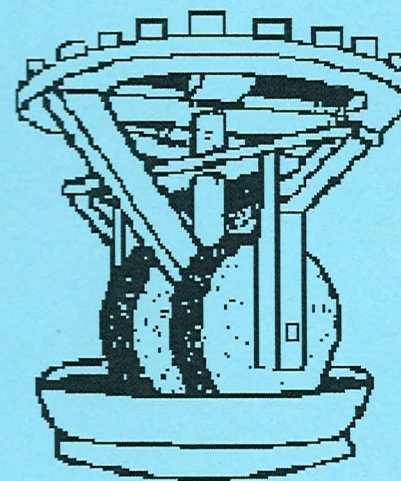
**ROYAL
GUNPOWDER
MILLS
WALTHAM ABBEY**

‘TOUCHPAPER’©

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Touchpaper

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



**JUNE
2007**

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PLEASE NOTE: Deadline date for submissions to
the next issue is 15th Aug 2007



Editorial

A good start to the new season with some excellent weekend events. Although the really good weather in April seems to have deserted us at least no events have suffered from really bad weather (so far) and visitor numbers have been good with many more events to come.

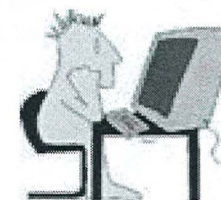
Once again the AGM and Reunion were held on site and although numbers were a little down on last year still well attended.

Many members attended the Gunpowder & Explosives History Group Spring Meeting on site. Full reports on all these events follow in this issue.

Still no takers for the job of editor but be warned; a new editor will be needed by the end of this year.

I have included a Puzzle Page in this issue by popular demand - well one reader anyway (Hope you enjoy them Brenda!)

Norman Paul



CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

The new season has started well with the Medeival Society and their trebuchet trying to knock down a wall with cabbages and almost succeeding! This was followed by the VE Day Anniversary weekend with Carolyn Grace and her Spitfire doing aerobatics, a sight well worth seeing. As I write this preparations are underway for our Steam Fair weekend which we hope will be as successful as last year (and attract better weather!)

The Friends have mounted three new exhibitions this year. On the landing outside the lecture theatre is an exhibition of artefacts found on site, ranging from a piece of elephant hide to the last wind-up telephone (used in the police lodge). The second exhibition is Richard Penfold's long desired art gallery on the wall next to the lecture theatre. The pictures include some by Richard and some by Freda Titford and are all connected to the site.

The third exhibition is not yet complete but will feature a lot more rocket motors in L157 annex; some from Westcott via Summerfield and some from Bristol.

We were also pleased to receive two gunpowder testing machines from the Health & Safety Laboratory (previously the Safety in Mines Establishment) at Buxton. One uses a prototype naval mortar from the Crimean period weighing 5 tons which was a little beyond our capabilities to lift! Very helpful assistance came from Naivette of Nazeing who have provided heavy lifting assistance to the site in the past.

The AGM and Reunion on 11th May were well attended by members who enjoyed meeting old colleagues and seeing the new exhibitions. If you haven't visited the site recently please do come. There is lots to see.

John Wright

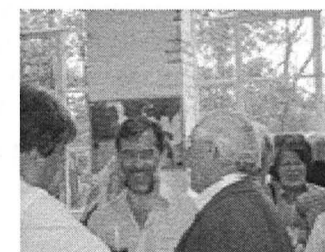
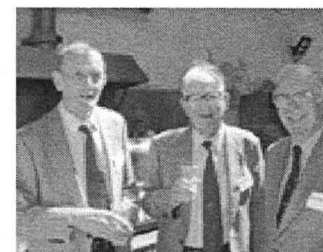
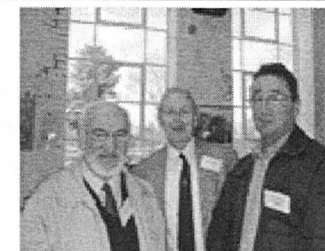
2007 AGM & REUNION

Friday 11th May at the Royal Gunpowder Mills

At the AGM the existing Officers and Committee Members were re-elected. The Treasurer reported that membership remains stable and that, despite heavy expenditure on projects last year, the finances are in a healthy state and no increase in subscriptions are envisaged.

Another successful Reunion followed the AGM with over 71 attendees

R E U N I O N P H O T O G A L L E R Y



Feuermelder Zwei

Last year I wrote a short article published in Touchpaper June 2006 reporting my search for the Siemens fire pillars in Berlin. We found the three similar to ours which had been spotted by Wayne Cocroft and a fourth near Schloss Bellvue.

In May this year Daphne and I returned to Berlin to visit her cousin Graham again and I wanted to check for another pillar outside Ka De We, the Berlin equivalent to Harrods, which had been reported by Graham's sister.

We easily found that pillar on the night we arrived; it was the same as the one reported by Wayne outside Spandau Arsenal. It had a small panel with the Siemens name on, also paper stickers and graffiti!

On Friday we went to Potsdam and visited the palaces and the old city, both well worth a visit. Saturday we went to the Berlin Zoo to see the baby polar bear, Knut, he is very popular and has his own Friday night television spot. After the Zoo we went to the Brandenburg Gate and then the new main railway station. Public transport in Berlin is really impressive, buses and trains are frequent and on time. A three-day travel pass makes the system easy to use and allows unlimited travel on the S-Bahn, elevated urban railway, U-Bahn, underground, and buses and trams.

On Sunday we took the U-Bahn to Alt Tegel, near the airport, to visit the fire brigade museum. Unfortunately due to engineering works on the U-Bahn the last part of the journey had to be by bus!

The museum is above the fire station and outside is a Siemens fire pillar. This one had enamel plaques similar to ours. The plaque on the front had the word 'HAUSGLOCKE', it had at one time been used as a doorbell for the fire station. Now, as the others we saw, it had a notice that it was out of order. Inside the museum was a very extensive collection of old and modern equipment including another three pillars similar to ours and one older Siemens pillar said to date to 1866. This was near a control panel similar to ours but they did not have a working system. Unfortunately the curator was not in that day but I will be trying to contact him by e-mail. Maybe one day I will have answers to some of our questions about the Siemens systems. Meanwhile I shall continue to claim that we have at the mills the only working telegraphic fire alarm system.

Brian Clements

GUNPOWDER & EXPLOSIVES HISTORY GROUP SPRING MEETING

As advertised in the last issue this took place at the Mills on 12th May and was well attended by members of the Group and a large number of Friends (including an overseas member, Roy Macleod from Australia who is currently teaching at Oxford).

The morning session was devoted to Charcoal and the speakers gave some excellent and informative talks on this material. Being derived from a natural product (wood) it is the most variable ingredient and probably the most important, giving gunpowder many of its unique properties. Historically, the wood from various species of trees have been used with willow, alder and alder buckthorn being generally preferred.

Methods of production, from the traditional charcoal burner's methods to the more modern cylinder charcoal were presented.

Prior to the afternoon session there was a walking tour of certain aspects of the site led by Wayne Cocroft of English Heritage.



The afternoon session included a fascinating talk on the mining and purification of saltpetre in India and a description of the sources of sulphur from Sicily.

A very enjoyable and informative day.

Norman Paul

Walter George Savill
17th June 1922 - 20th March 2007



I was saddened today to receive a letter from Michael and Marian Savill, telling me of the death of Michael's father, George.

In the decades up to the closure, few characters could have been better known throughout the Establishment than George Savill. His duties; first in the Stores and especially later as Water Warden, made him many friends on both North and South Sites. He was a born naturalist, taking a keen interest in the rich variety of bird, animal and fish life in the Establishment. He loved his work, arduous though it was at times, especially when the Lea was in flood.

Up until 1982, my family lived in Sandhurst Flats (converted from the Women's Hospital) opposite George and his family who lived in the other flats (converted from the Men's Hospital) and we got to know them well.

George served in the army in WW2 and was so badly wounded that he was left by the medical orderlies in a tent with those already dead and those thought to have no hope of survival. After the team had treated all those considered treatable they were surprised to find him still alive and returned him for attention. A somewhat misplaced eye was the only eventual outward legacy of his severe injuries.

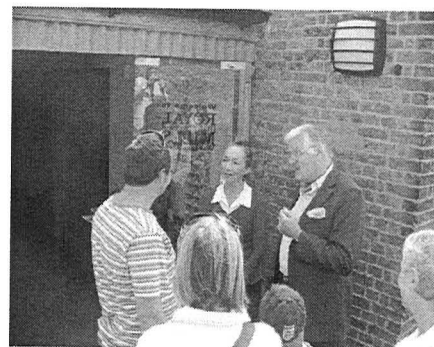
George suffered a heart attack while feeding his chickens. As Michael said in his letter, "...if he could have chosen a way to go, then that would have been it - doing what he loved."

Jim Hawkins

OPENING WEEKEND

28th - 29th April

On the first day visitors were met at the entrance by Carolyn Grace, paying her first 'ground' visit to the site. She'd only seen it from the air before!



Carolyn later signed books and photos of the Grace Spitfire.

This was an event weekend and we were pleased to see the return of the **Mediaeval Siege Society** re-enactment group.



VE DAY WEEKEND

5th, 6th & 7th May



This popular event took place over the May Bank Holiday weekend and although the weather was blustery it was well attended. A welcome group of visitors from the USA and Canada were all WWII veterans who were joined by veterans from the Waltham Abbey and Loughton Royal British Legions.

This was part of their European tour and a special mini battle was put on for them by the re-enactors as they were unable to stay for the main battle sequence in the late afternoon.



One of our members, Dave Hartley, inspecting a German anti-aircraft gun.

On the Bank Holiday Monday only, there was an aerial display by Carolyn Grace in the Grace Spitfire. There was a delay in the programme because of high winds at Duxford delaying clearance for her take-off. With just a few minutes to go for her slot she was given clearance and gave a thrilling display - certainly the highlight of the weekend.



STEAM FAIR

18th - 19th MAY

Another very popular event organised by Robin and Christine Parkinson.



There were numerous displays of static engines, model railways and stalls.

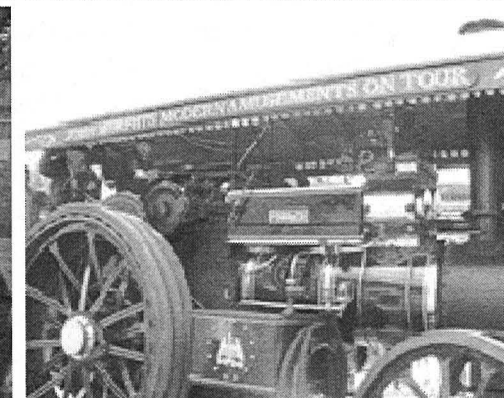
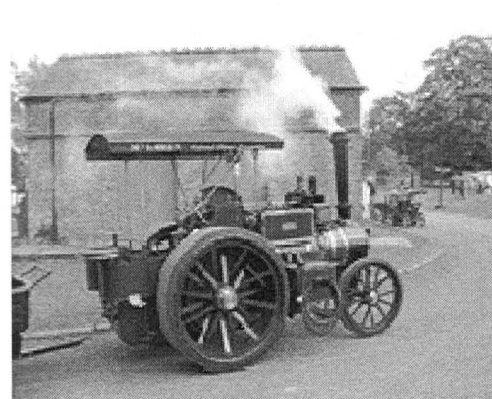
A children's fairground was an added attraction.

There were two steam organs providing music throughout the weekend which gave a real fairground atmosphere.



A party from Hoerstel in Germany came with local councillors as part of the Waltham Abbey town twinning programme. Luckily one of their members spoke good English and acted as interpreter.

THE GRAND PARADE



The ' Boy ' at the Mills

Well into the 1950s a feature of the British factory and office was the ubiquitous ' boy ', renowned for boisterousness and mischief. Nevertheless the educational system of the time had by hook or by crook instilled in most of them a grasp of the three R's and from such humble beginnings they progressed into decent employment and in some cases to astonishingly high levels.

What visions of incidents are conjured up by the cryptic Section 30 Rule from the Rules of the Royal Gunpowder Factory 1934:

"If a ladder is employed, it is to be held by another man ;
boys are not to hold ladders."

The Mills were a continuing employer of boys and the following outlines the experience of two of them.

1. A ' Land fit for Heroes ' ?

Friend Terry Griffiths' father obtained employment at the Mills as a boy. In 1916 in WW1 he enlisted in the Rifle Brigade. He was wounded and discharged from service, receiving the Silver War Badge awarded to men of that status. Having survived the War he returned assuming that with his previous employment , age and service a grateful nation would automatically reinstate him. The Mills authorities however did not see things that way and Terry's father found himself in receipt of the document bearing the stamp illustrated. His experience after that affords a glimpse into what could be a hard life in the 1920s.

The family lived at 44 Florence Road, Edmonton. As his father was unable to work, Terry's father, who was the eldest of nine children, became the sole earner. He must have had a streak of entrepreneurship as he determined to work for himself. This came in the guise of hiring a horse and cart from a neighbour and going into the ice cream business. This involved driving to West Green Road, Tottenham to collect ice then back to Edmonton to make the ice cream and selling it from the cart. This activity went quite well for a time and then the chill winds of competition blew in the form of Messrs. Walls who eventually put him out of business.

The family were now reduced to the rigours of the 1920s social welfare system. The ruling determinant for receiving help seemed to be that you had to reach complete destitution, including selling the only table in the house !

O. F. Form 55.

ROYAL ORDNANCE FACTORIES.

Royal Gunpowder Factory. (DEPT.)

12 JUL 1918 191

M. E. Griffiths

No. *1513*

Trade *Boy*

You are hereby informed that your services
will not be required in this Department
after *29 JUN 1918*
on account of **CESSATION OF
TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT**

If during your service you have met with an
injury which has resulted in impairment, a form of
claim for compensation will be supplied to you on
application.

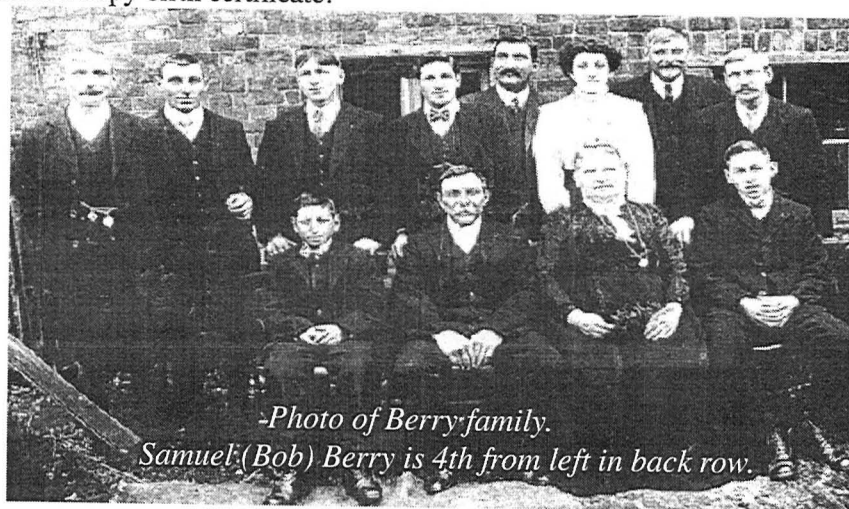
For *Superintendent.*

*It was cheaper to employ 'boys' and many
were discharged on attaining their majority*

2. 'Bob' Berry

In the Victorian and Edwardian eras in a town such as Waltham Abbey dominated by one industry or factory it was not uncommon for sons to follow fathers into the same factory and this gave rise to several 'dynasties'.

Economic pressures meant that there was pressure for sons to start employment after leaving school at 15. There was an onus on employers to make an age check on young persons and this could be done by a formal requisition on the Registrar of Births and Deaths and an official form was provided for this purpose (see picture). The Berry family were an example of continuing employment at the Royal Gunpowder Factory. James Berry was a labourer there and at the age of 14 in 1901 his son Samuel Robert applied for employment as a boy. The copies show the Factory's Requisition for a birth certificate with Factory stamp bottom left and Samuel's copy birth certificate.



-Photo of Berry family.
Samuel (Bob) Berry is 4th from left in back row.

The photograph appears in a book written by Samuel's daughter Enid, now Enid Clay, born in 1920 at 15 Woollard Street, entitled ' I can Remember ' with recollections of life in the Waltham Abbey area from the late 1920s onwards. It provides a vivid picture of social conditions from that time.

Samuel, later known locally as ‘ Old Bob ‘, spent his working life at the Factory, achieving the position of foreman. He retired in 1955 aged 68 and awarded the Imperial Service Medal.

Les Tucker

The experience of boys at the Mills could provide a treasure trove of incidents etc. Please send any memories which could be published in Touchpaper to the Editor

Robert Berry - Birth Certificate & Requisition Form

[illegible]

CERTIFIED COPY of an ENTRY of BIRTH
(Form for the purpose of the Factory and Workshop Act, 1871.)

Superintendent Registrar's District of EDMONTON									
Registrar's Sub-District of Waltham Abbey In the County of Essex									
No.	Name and Surname	Year of Birth	Sex	Place of Birth	Parents' Names and Surnames	Parents' Names and Surnames	Parents' Names and Surnames	Parents' Names and Surnames	Parents' Names and Surnames
13	Elizabeth July 1887	James	Female	Waltham Abbey	James Emily	James Emily	James Emily	James Emily	James Emily
	Robert	May	Male	Waltham Abbey	James Emily	James Emily	James Emily	James Emily	James Emily

I hereby certify that the above is a true Copy of an Entry of Birth in a Registrar's Book in my custody.

Witness my hand this 5 day of September 1887

M. E. Eason
Superintendent Registrar.

(This Copy must be signed by the Registrar, and when the Registrar is present by the Registrar.)

TOUCH

ISRG - some additions and corrections

Re Sheilagh Owens' photos in the March issue. I can add two more names to the lower photo. Back row 4 and 5 from the left are Wally Linsel (watch-maker) and George Doe (ex RA Gunner) who acted as a storeman. Both of them transferred to WA. As Fred Stalton is in civvies in the lower photo I guess it was taken shortly before ISRB closed down in 1946. Nancy Harris hopes to come to the AGM and will bring some photos of ISRG staff taken in 1949-50.

[She did indeed show her pictures of those early days at the Reunion]

I think Les Tucker jumped to some wrong conclusions when reading Hornet Flight and did not filter the very little fact from a huge dollop of fiction. The Special Operations Executive (SOE) was not formed until July 19, 1940 and took some time to get going. The first operation was on 15 March 1941 so the date does not fit. ISRB worked for SOE not MI6. There was no great friendship between the two organisations, MI6 regarded SOE as a bunch of upstart amateurs who sometimes hindered their own work. MI6 are most unlikely to have recommended anybody to go to Welwyn for technical support.

There was little resistance to the Germans in Denmark in 1940 but a lot of Quislings. What little resistance there was quickly crushed. It was rebuilt but was not really active until shortly before liberation. (There is a good Resistance museum in Copenhagen, I visited it last August). SOE's WT sets worked between 3.5 and 16Mcps so would not receive radar signals. The S phone was not developed until 1943/4, it worked at 465Mcps AM for RT so it would not get radar signals either.

SOE's camouflage section was not at The Fryth but at Station XII, Aston House, Stevenage, one of the other units in the area. I recall Jim Bell saying that they were so good at their job that you could smell their camel dung tyre bursters before you entered the studio. There were never any exploding turnips at Waltham Abbey!

I can recommend Les to read M R D Foot's "SOE in France", its 100% fact.

Roy Atkins

BYTES

The Reunion was a most enjoyable occasion and I feel constrained to relate one instance - and a memory it evoked.

It was good to see Eric Baker. Our mutual greetings brought a smile to my lips. He's well over 80, I believe, but just the same as ever. I remarked on how well he looked (it wasn't just a platitude, he really did look well!). His reply was a classic deflator. "Oh," he said. "Appearances can be deceptive....", uttered in a descending vocal cadence! Things don't change, I thought!

It reminded me of when, in the 1970s, Eric was in overall charge of the double-base processing/manufacturing/pressing facilities on South Site. One of the female Industrials became pregnant and the cuckolded husband demanded to know where 'impregnation' took place. You can imagine the potential embarrassment for the Management to say nothing of the potential H & S issues, even in those days! In the end, circumstantial evidence pointed to the event having taken place in the processing area (behind an incorporator) - and just out of working hours. Happily, the voracity of the latter point wasn't put to the test as the miscreant was finally persuaded to confess! The joys of 'real' management, eh, wot!?

Jim Burgess

Anna - a new staff member to replace Sheila (who has left but still comes back as a volunteer).



Anna previously worked as a sales and information officer at the Victoria & Albert Museum but on moving to Harlow found the travelling too much.

Loves the site. "A great, friendly and welcoming place. I feel very much at home here."

DON'T FORGET
DEADLINE FOR THE September 2007 ISSUE:
15th August 2007

ISRG – an early letter

In his editorial for the March 2007 Touchpaper the Editor drew attention to the amount of interest and information on ISRG which had recently arisen. Previous comment and information on ISRG had been virtually non-existent, however a rare exception was a letter written by Nancy Harris giving the flavour of the early days of ISRG at the Mills which appeared on P.11 of the June 2000 Touchpaper and the time seems opportune to re-publish it, to remind those who have previously read it and for later Friends.

Les Tucker

Hello, from a new Friend

Memories were stirred for me last year when I watched a TV programme 'One Foot in the Past' that featured the gunpowder mills and again on reading an article in the Times. The article gave a contact address and here I am.

My mother worked at the Mills throughout WW2 and made many lasting friendships. Her name was Alice Ensom but she couldn't stand the name Alice so when she started she wouldn't tell her colleagues her name so they nicknamed her 'Lou'. My father called her Sherry as her maiden name was Sherrif, so we always knew which circle her friends came from. Only her mother called her Alice, other relations and family friends called her Sherry and her work friends called her Lou.

After completing a commercial course at Tottenham Tech. I joined the establishment in 1948, working in the office of the Inter Services Research Group (ISRG). The clerk there was a very dear old lady known to many in Waltham Abbey: Miss Ada Spanswick, who lived in Woollard Street, we had such happy times. Colin Meek was in overall charge, Charles Erwood ran the physics lab, Mr. Owens the chemistry lab, Mr. Landsell ran the machine shop and drawing office. Later we were joined by Captain James Bell and Geoffrey Owen.

Memories were stirred again watching another 'One Foot in the Past' in April when they featured the airship hangers at Cardington. A group of us from ISRG went there to do a test drop for the scatter range of leaflets – we all set off up one of the metal ladders to reach the walkways high up in the hanger, but I'm not very good on heights and halfway up could go no further. That was tough on those below me as they had to go back down and then back up again. In those days women didn't work in the hangers and Colin Meek had to stand guard outside the Gents for me. The 'Big Chiefs' from the services used to visit for regular reports on the various projects being handled for them and there was great hilarity when I made a typing error and referred to 'field tests for the wench' instead of 'winch'. Very embarrassing for a 17 year old girl working amongst so many men.

Yes, we certainly enjoyed working at ISRG. The setting of the offices was a delight with pheasants strutting around and lots of birds and wild flowers and we were such a friendly team. I have a number of photographs taken both on and off site and if I have the good fortune to attend a Friends meeting the photographs will come along with me.

Nancy Harris (nee Ensom) (currently living in Nottingham)

If anyone has recollections and/or photographs of the early days at ISRG or later please continue to send them in – Ed.

TIME MARCHES ON

From a date, yet to be announced, the whole of Britain (except for the Isle of Man) will convert to metric time. From that date there will be 10 new seconds to the new minute, 10 new minutes to the new hour, 10 new hours to the day and so on, as shown in the following table:

<u>OLD TIME</u>		<u>NEW TIME</u>
1 second	-	1 milliday
1 minute	-	1 centiday
1 hour	-	1 deciday (or millimonth)
1 day	-	1 new day
1 week	-	1 decaday
1 month	-	1 hectoday
1 year	-	1 kiloday

The fortnight will be withdrawn but dirty weekends remain unchanged. Obviously, due to the fact that one new hour represents only 5/12 of an old hour, employees might be expected to work longer hours, viz. three 1/3rd decadays or millimonths per day. However, as this is inconvenient for administration and salary purposes, it is intended that the lunch break will be shortened by 2/3rds of a new hour, thus making a total working time of four new hours per new day.

No compensatory uplift to salaries will be made, except in the case of leap kiloday where an adjustment will be built in at the end of the hectoday every 1.46 decamonths. Overtime will be calculated on the basis of time worked in excess of 5/6th of a decaday, provided prior approval has been granted by local management.

A further bulletin will be issued closer to 'DECADAY' but if these arrangements present difficulties or if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact your admin. officer or line manager.

Holiday periods will be affected only so far as the change to metric time is concerned and no one shall be worse off than previously. Thus, if an employee was entitled to 22 days old time he will now be entitled to 220 decadays or one hectoday plus 20 decadays for every hectoday over and above 20 kilodays service since the 10th decaday of the third hectoday of 1066. The Christmas Break will, accordingly be reduced to 5 decadays but 10 demidecadays will be added to the Easter Break which will be moved after 27 hectodays to the late summer holiday to take advantage of the longer daylight summer decadays. As a consequence the late summer holiday is cancelled. The term "a month of Sundays" is not to be used in official correspondence. The correct term is "a hectoday of decadays." These new terms are considered simple enough to be understood by a child of ten. In the event of any confusion arising and you have to approach your line manager for elucidation, sufficient notice should be allowed for him to contact a child of ten.

PUZZLE PAGE

CONNECTIONS

You are facing three Gunpowder workers, one Welsh, one Scottish and one English, who sitting in a row eating their lunch with the oldest on your left and the youngest on your right. Each works solely on one of the gunpowder ingredients.

The Charcoal maker eats cheese
and the Welshman eats Ham.

The oldest worker has black hands
and the Scotsman is the youngest.

The worker with white hands sits in the middle
with the youngest worker on his left.

Can you work which nationality worked on which ingredient, what each of them had for lunch and the order in which they were sitting, left to right from your view.

HEADS (I win), TAILS (you lose)

Each of the words below has lost the First 2 and the Last 2 letters.
For each word these are the SAME 2 LETTERS and in the SAME ORDER.

Can you complete the words?
e.g. -- CI -- DECIDE

-- AHOR -- -- BL -- -- ALG -- -- PTU -- -- QUI --
-- GIB -- -- STOR -- -- GLIC -- -- RISCO -- -- AS --

ANSWERS IN THE NEXT ISSUE

ADVERTISEMENTS

RAeS LECTURE

**** Thursday 06 September 2007 at RAeS, London **** "Europe's Weather Satellites" by Dr Lars Prahm, Director General, EUMETSAT. RAeS Space Group evening lecture. Refreshments 17:30, start 18:00.

About two thirds of the data used by the UK Met Office in its weather forecasting comes from satellites - the global coverage of satellite data underpins the gradual improvements in forecasting achieved in the past 30 years. Initially dependent on American satellites, Europe has for more than 20 years operated geostationary satellites covering the Eastern Atlantic and Western Indian Ocean regions - the Meteosat series (since 2002 in its enhanced second generation form). In October 2006, this fleet was augmented with Europe's first low orbiting weather satellite, the EUMETSAT Polar System (EPS), which is now in operation.

See full details at the RAeS Space Group web site www.raes.org.uk/space/ and click on "Future events".

All RAeS Space Group evening events are: public open lectures - all visitors welcome - no admission fee - no tickets required. (Prior RSVP by email or phone of intended attendance appreciated).

WANTED

NEW EDITOR FOR TOUCHPAPER

By the end of this year the Friends will be needing a new Editor for these quarterly newsletters. The current editor has been producing Touchpaper for 15 years and feels that the time has come retire.

This is not too onerous a position only requiring about one weeks work every four months.

This is an exciting challenge allowing you full rein over your creative abilities with the possibility of designing a new format for this long standing publication. The present incumbent will give every assistance on the change over.

Please apply to John Wright (Chairman) whose contact details can be found on the inside front cover.