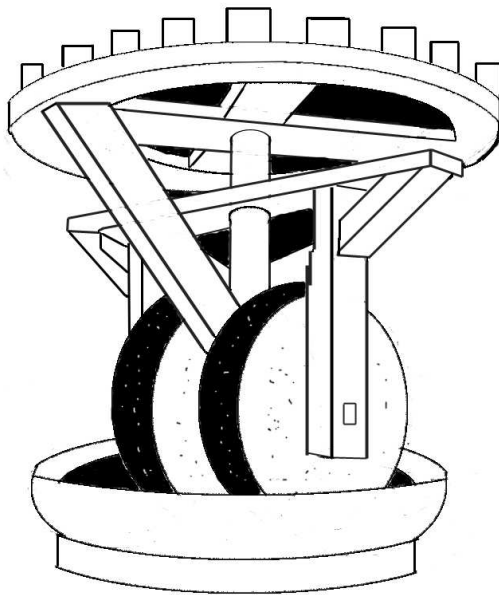


# Touchpaper



The Newsletter of the Royal Gunpowder  
Mills Friends Association

October 2010

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## Guidelines for submission of copy

Please submit text in as plain a way as possible. Use bold or italics where necessary but please avoid underlines or other formatting as this has to be removed prior to layout. Copy can be submitted as a word document, plain text file or in the body of an email. Please don't submit text as a PDF as this has to be re-typed!

Images can be submitted either as a jpeg, tiff or bitmap. You can also submit images as a pdf. Please make your images as large as possible (or as large as your internet connection can stand!). If you scan your own images, please use a high resolution (at least 600 dpi). You can sacrifice colour for quality as we only print black and white so use greyscale for scanning if possible. If you need help, please get in touch.

Finally, please be sensitive to copyright rules.

# Editor's news

## Welcome (at last!) to the Autumn issue of Touchpaper.

I shall start with an apology for the lateness of publication but beg your indulgence due to pressure of work.

I was honoured to be asked to take over from Malcolm Bergh as Editor of Touchpaper and hope to both continue the traditions of the publication and to bring something new to the party.

My first challenge is to encourage new contributors. I have a stable of regulars that I know I can rely upon to deliver something to interest you but it would be lovely to hear from some new people. If you would like to contribute an article, photographs or a book review (more of that on page 4) then please contact me preferably by email but also by post to the addresses shown on page 16.

Your writing does not have to be of a technical nature and if you would prefer to speak on the telephone and have someone put together an article based on your memories or anecdotes, please get in touch.

I'll refrain from wishing you a merry Christmas as you WILL get another edition before the holidays!

*Michelle Moore*

# Chairman's Chat...

## Welcome to the Summer issue

Welcome to the summer issue of Touchpaper.

This summer has seen an unusually long dry spell up until early August. Although this has perhaps encouraged visitors to some extent when it wasn't too hot, grass at the Mills, particularly on Queen's Mead, has grown very little and has looked parched. However the deer seem to have coped well with the conditions. Now that significant rain has fallen the grass is starting to grow again and look much greener. The dryness has again revealed the outline of a building at the southern end of Queen's Mead which does not appear on any of the maps of North Site which I have seen. I raised a query about the origin of the building in Touchpaper several years ago but no one was able to provide an answer. Any ideas now from Friends?

This summer has been different from previous years in that the

site has been open every day during the school summer holidays. On weekdays there have been fun events for children such as Crazy Science talks and demonstrations and making and firing of water-powered rocket cars. These have been greatly enjoyed by visitors.

The refurbishment of the 18 gauge rail cordite truck is now complete. We have been able to source some suitable fabric for the sides and covering for the floor.

**John Wright**

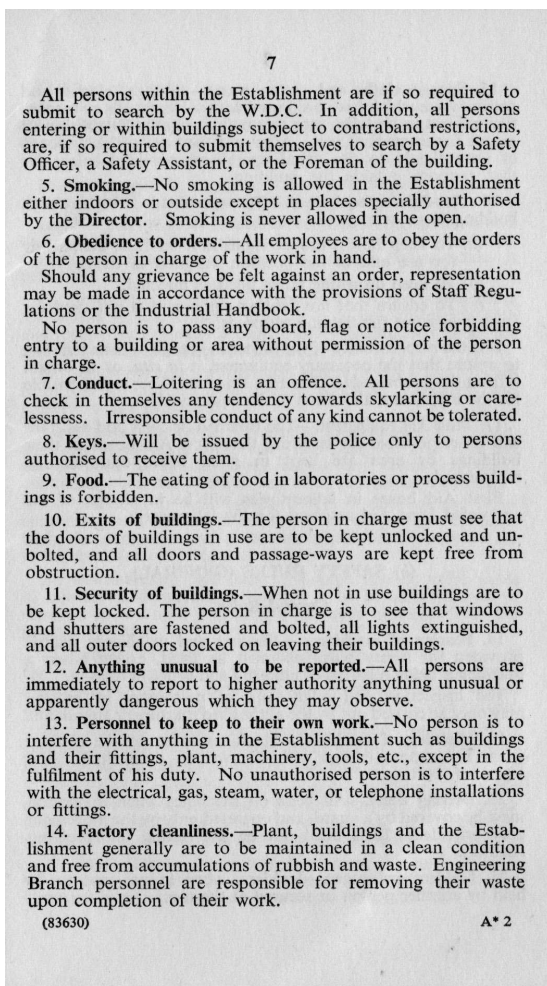
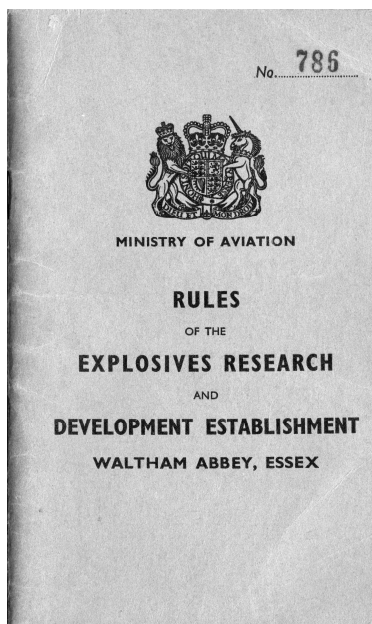
# Letters to Touchpaper

Inspired or irritated? Social or technical memories?  
Whatever it is, we want to hear about it, so write or email—  
our address is inside the back cover.

Malcolm,

Wondered if anyone would  
be interested in seeing this  
again. Loved the rule about  
skylarking. Didn't work very  
well did it?

Grant Privett

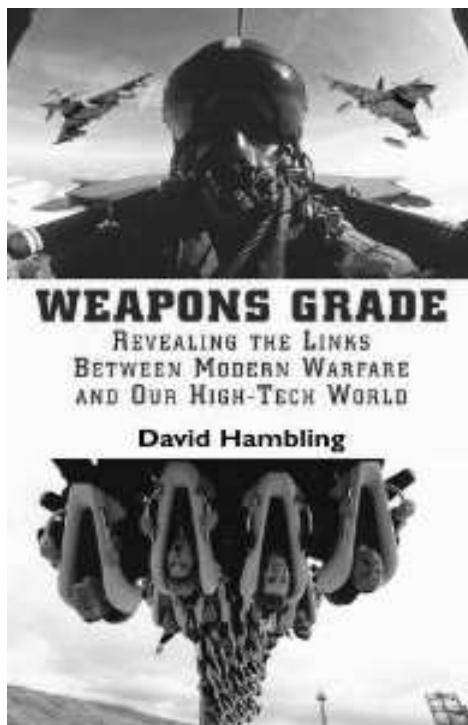


# The Book Review

**NEW!**

Exhaustingly extensive and well-researched, this study of developments in contemporary weapons technology evinces a gee-whiz love of military widgets. It also contains

journalist Hambling's desire to explore the murkily overlapping scientific, military and corporate worlds. The result is a book that is for short stretches a breezy guide to everything from vortex cannons to tasers, and everyone from Tesla to Turing.



**Weapons Grade**, first published in 2005, is out of print but many copies are available ether from Amazon or Waterstone's online for around £2 plus p&p.

Hambling describes complex procedures and devices in a lucid, uncondescending way, and a reader seeking a quick description of, say, how a rocket plane works or what an E-bomb is, need look no further. But the scale and scope of the book indicate an ambition to be something other than a supplementary reference to the novels of Tom Clancy and the press briefings of Donald Rumsfeld.

Hambling's underlying thesis is that advances in military technology eventually benefit civilian life (e.g., the Internet), and that the domestic technologies and business opportunities of the future, like nanotechnology, are already to be found in today's military hardware.

While gently and inconclusively touched on, the moral implications of this are never really explored in any depth, and the military-industrial complex is seen mostly as an ethically neutral dispenser of fascinatingly nasty devices.

**The Canal Miscellany in the Touchpaper of June 2010 prompted some enquiries, which are answered below.**

### **Quotation - Addition**

The quotation in the end line read more like something by Spike Milligan than W H Auden. It should have read ' Where is Telford whose bridged canals are still a Shropshire glory '

### **Thomas Telford**

This painting of Telford clearly shows Pontcysyllte in the background, demonstrating how large it loomed in his career.



*Thomas Telford PICE, FRS,  
FRSE (1757-1834)  
(Institution of Civil Engineers)*

### **The Victorians and Iron**

The Victorian infatuation with iron was mentioned. The following description of an iron works is from Bleak House by Charles Dickens, the master of graphic description.

*A great perplexity of iron lying about, in every stage, and in a vast variety of shapes; in bars, in wedges, in sheets, in tanks, in boilers, in axles, in wheels, in cogs,*

*in cranks, in rails, twisted and wrenched into eccentric and perverse forms, as separate parts of machinery, mountains of it broken-up and rusty in its age; distant furnaces of it glowing and bubbling in its youth, bright fireworks of it showering about under the blows of the steam hammer; red-hot iron, white-hot iron, cold-black iron, an iron taste, an iron smell, and a Babel of iron sounds.*

### **Longdon on Tern Aqueduct**



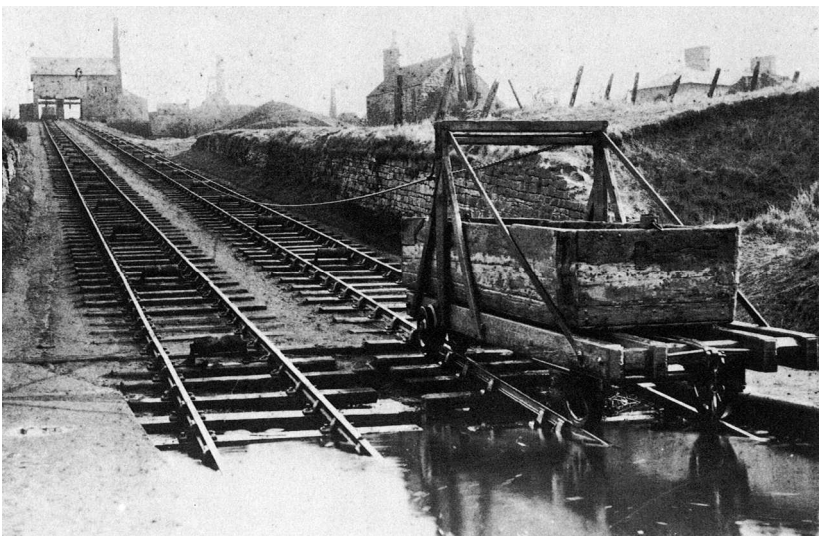
On Page 6, last issue, it was suggested that Telford used his Longdon on Tern cast iron aqueduct as a test bed for Pontcysyllte. This image shows the Longdon trough in water in 1963 with towpath running alongside. Later it was drained and used as a farm track.

## Tub Boats and Inclined Planes



The system of Tub Boats and Inclined Planes on canals was devised to overcome the hilly terrain of the East Shropshire coalfield where canal locks would have been impracticable.

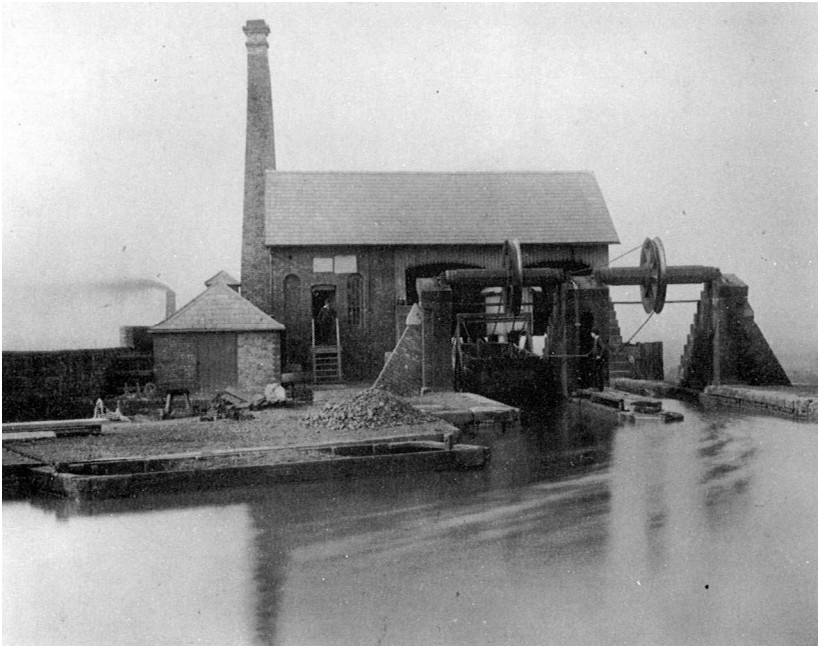
As shown in the image, the Boats were basically floating boxes normally pulled in strings by a horse.





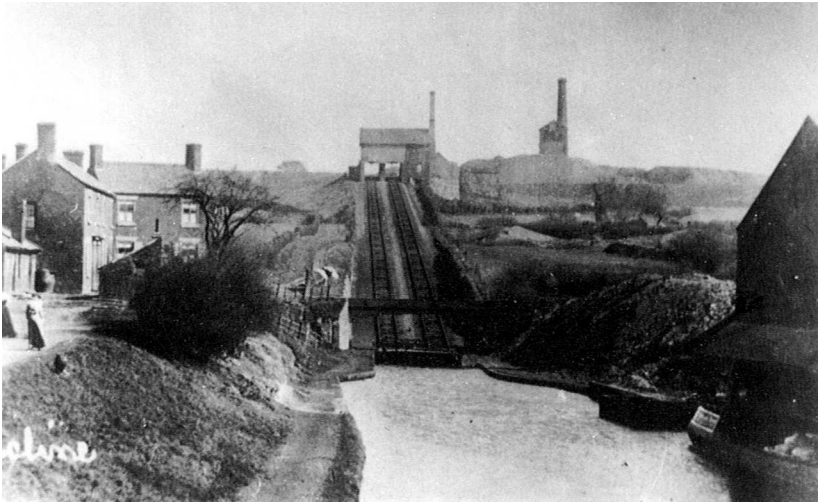
Tubs carried from 3 tons up to around 8 tons, the larger possibly moving singly.

On arrival at a plane they were floated on to a cradle running on railway lines. Ideally loaded Boats descended pulling up the empty ones. However it was often necessary to employ a stationary steam engine housed in a winding house at the summit to pull the tubs over the reverse slope at the top. This of course added materially to the cost of operation – a critical aspect where transport costs were a critical part of mineral pricing.



It all looks very simple now but technology has to be viewed in the context of the time. Industrial archaeologists of the future will smile at how long it took for us to dream up the simplistic idea of putting our ships cargoes in big steel boxes.

At that time – around the 1790's, canals were still revolutionary and the whole East Shropshire concept



was bold and innovative. Canal and inclined plane building was tricky and fraught with potential difficulties – from the type of strata, landslips etc. at a time when construction equipment consisted only of horse and cart and navvies with spade and barrow. Also considerable financial risk was involved – unexpected difficulties could cause steep escalation in costs.

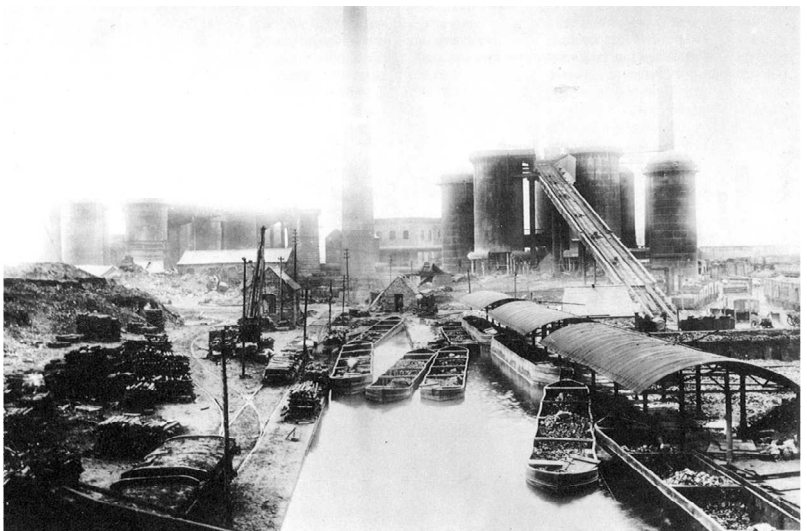
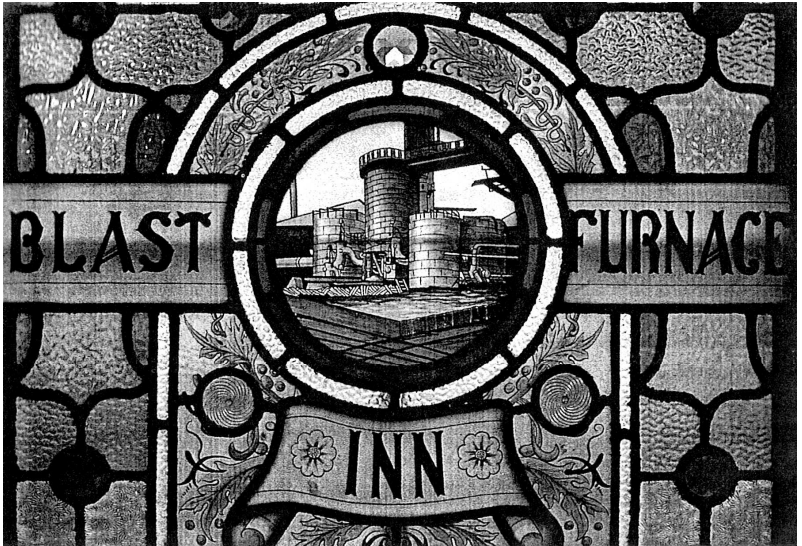
To the lasting credit of its originators the East Shropshire system worked well and materially aided the success of the coalfield and iron works over a considerable period.

The images show the Trench inclined plane on the Shrewsbury Canal (Touchpaper article P.9 ). The slope of the plane can be seen – it was estimated that a plane was the equivalent of about 27 locks. This was the last to work in Britain, lasting until 1921.

The chimney to the right of the winding house gives an idea of the rural / industrial landscape of Shropshire in the 19th. century. The end wall on the right of the canal basin at the foot of the incline would be of the warehouse for goods being transhipped on to the narrow boats shown moored on the right.

## Pigs

The article mentioned the possibility that some Shropshire pub signs depicting a sow and pigs in fact referred to the product of a long gone local blast furnace. The proprietors of a pub in Newcastle under Lyme who commissioned this stained glass panel were in no doubt as to where most of their thirsty custom came from.



# Obituaries

## **George McFarlane**

**28 July 1944—30 June 2010**

George sadly died of a stroke at the end of June this year. He had been suffering from bowel cancer that he thought had been successfully treated but it returned and spread.

I first met George in November 1972 when he arrived at the ERDE Social Club one evening. We struck up a conversation over a couple of pints and he became my best friend. I learnt that George had come to us from ROF Bishopton to take a position in the Stores Ordering Office. He was returning to Scotland the next week to marry Elsa who returned to Waltham Abbey with him to work in personnel.

George became a stalwart of the establishment and the Social Club over the years. He lived in the Abbey and his house in Monkwood Avenue was the venue for many social gatherings.

He was a very special man, in as much as he was kind, generous, always smartly dressed with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes and extremely popular with all, particularly those who were friends of his of which there were many.

He and Elsa returned to Scotland in 1989 when he took a job with the Contracts Branch of the MOD at Wellesley House in Glasgow and Elsa with RO Bishopton. He kept in touch with a lot of his friends and met with them whenever he could.

George told me he had bowel cancer, which came as a complete shock to me, but he accepted the disease stoically. He never seemed to let it dominate his life and he fought against it well. The cancer went into remission only to return and spread into secondary cancer of the peritoneum. He spoke about accepting experimental treatment if all conventional treatment failed for the possible benefits to other sufferers but the progress of his illness meant that was not to be.. That was the type of man that George was.

I, as well as a host of others, miss him terribly but he continues to live on in the minds of many.

## **Ike Eickhoff**

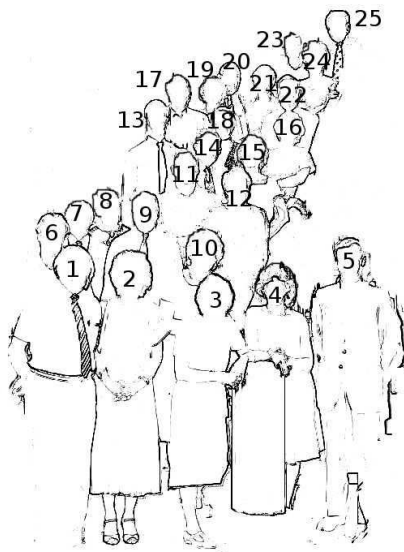


# Twenty One Years Retired!

by Brian Howard (number 25)

On the 12th and 13th June 1989 the first of two R.O. retirement courses was held in Theobalds House hosted by Dave Tisley and Elsa McFarlane. Sadly, a number of the retirees have not managed to survive the 21 years since South Site closed. We learned all about keeping fit, how to manage our money and a whole new world of charities that would find work for us to do without being paid (we're still hard at it!). How many can you recognise? One or two have died but most have survived; it's the thought of extracting money from the government and Royal Ordnance Pensions that keeps them going!

- 1 Don't know, building works?
- 2 Don't know, wife of 1?
- 3 Wynn Yendel
- 4 Elsa McFarlane
- 5 Dave Tisley
- 6 Dougie Barnard
- 7 Sid Hewertson
- 8 Dot Revell
- 9 ?
- 10 ?
- 11 ?
- 12 ?
- 13 Chris Evans
- 14 Ron Darby
- 15 Mrs Darby
- 16 ?
- 17 Janet Evans
- 18 Margaret Brown (nee Smith)
- 19 ?
- 20 Bert Daniel
- 21 Mrs Daniel
- 22 Bob Brown
- 23 ?
- 24 ?
- 25 Bryan Howard





# Annual list of members 2010

**Welcome to those new members appearing on the list for the first time!**

John Alexander	Grahame Browne	Robert Cook	Dave Gibbs
Sue Alexander	Frances Burgess	RoseAnna Cook	Alexander Golding
Andrew Allen	Jim Burgess	Sheila Cooke	Gabriella Golding
Margaret Allen	Paul Burnham	Madeline Cox*	Mark Golding
Maureen Allen*	David Callaghan	Alan Crocker*	Peter Golding
Robert Almond	Pauline Callaghan	Glenys Crocker*	Robert Golding
Ed Andrews	Celia Campbell	Doris Davies	Roy Goodey
Millie Andrews	Ron Campbell	David Debenham	John Gooding
Rosie Andrews	Joe Chance	Alan Dentry	Celia Gould
Toby Andrews	Mary Chaplin	Marjorie Dentry	Audrey Greenfield
Norman Arnott*	Andrew Chapman*	Les Dingle	Bob Greenfield
Dennis Ashby	Elizabeth Chapman*	Anne Easdown	Terry Griffiths
Dave Ashen	Helen Chapman*	George Easdown	Hazel Guth
Roy Atkins	John Chapman*	Janis East	Jason Guth
Stephen Atkins	Jean Church	Ray East	Nancy Harris
Sue Atkins	Win Clark	Daphne Edwards	Peter Hart
Ron Ayerst	Enid Clay	Harry Edwards	David Hartley
Derek Back	Andy Clayton	Molly Edwards	Jim Hawkins
Pauline Back	Gillian Clayton	Sarah Edwards	Lin Hazell
Mike Bagley	Brian Clements	Jo Eickhoff	Mike Healey
Alan Bailey	Daphne Clements	Peter Eickhoff	Alan Heath
Eric Baker	Catherine Clifford	Joyce Elliott*	James Helyer
David Ball*	Grace Clifford	Norman Elliott	Kim Henshaw
Beryl Barratt	Raymond Clifford	David Endicott	Christine Hewkin
Tony Barratt	Valerie A Clifford	Elaine English	David Hewkin
Les Bates	Barbara Coe	Chris Evans	Maurice Hicks
Barbara Bell*	Bill Coe	Davina Evans	Mary Holland
Steve Bell*	Eamon Colclough	Janet Evans	Janice Holt
Alan Benton	David Cole	John L Evans	Ron Holt
Marie Benton	Edna Cole	Mike Evans	Peter Honey
Malcolm Bergh	Geoff Colley	Minnie Fenton	Susan Honey
Janet Bignell	Pamela Colley	Ronald Fletcher	Geoff Hooper
Victor Bignell	Paul Collins	David Flood	Bryan Howard
MC Black	Brian Conroy	Ivy Foulsham	Bernard Howes
Derek Brewer	Edna Conroy	Terry Foulsham	Liz Howes
Richard Brewer	Christopher Cook	Bernard Garaty	Matthew Howes
Gordon Bromberger	Jennifer Cook	Caroline Garaty	Diane Howse
Bob Brown	John Cook	Nicholas Garaty	Chris Humphrey
Margaret Brown	Kathleen Cook	Rachael Garaty	Elaine Humphrey

Bob Hunter  
 Stephen Hutchings\*  
 Martin Ives  
 Jamie Jackson\*  
 Lewis Jackson\*  
 Peter Johnson  
 Wayne Johnson  
 Alice Keil\*  
 David Keil\*  
 Jacalyn Keil\*  
 Stewart Keil\*  
 Gill Kemp  
 Eric Kendrew  
 Frances Kendrew  
 Paul Kennett\*  
 Sheila Kilbey  
 Tony Kinloch  
 James Knapman Orr\*  
 Margaret Lee  
 Suzanne Leeson  
 Tom Lewis  
 Pat Livermore  
 Roy Livermore  
 Jeanne Long  
 Ronald Long  
 Pauline Love  
 Roy C Love  
 Janet Lowe  
 Mike Lowe  
 Andrea Maddison\*  
 Ciara Maddison\*  
 Siobhan Maddison\*  
 Tony Maddison  
 David Manners  
 George Manning\*  
 Janis Manning\*  
 Anita Mansell  
 Denis Mansell  
 Jean Mansell  
 Roy Martin  
 Sue Martin  
 John McDougall  
 Elsa McFarlane  
 Gary McKinney\*  
 Gordon McKinnon  
 Malcolm McLaren  
 Ann Miller  
 Gerald Miller

Christopher Monckton\*  
 Nila Monckton  
 Michelle Moore  
 Alison Moorwood\*  
 Daniel Moorwood\*  
 Michael Moorwood\*  
 Robin Moorwood\*  
 Brian Moretti\*  
 Cathy Morton Lloyd  
 Alex Mosedale\*  
 Deborah Mosedale\*  
 Joanna Mosedale\*  
 Dave Mullenger  
 Ann Newman  
 Fiona Newman  
 Ken Newman  
 Robert Newman  
 Joe Nunn\*  
 Ted O'Day  
 Alexander Orr\*  
 Charlotte Orr\*  
 Siobhan Orr\*  
 Suzanne Orr\*  
 Sheilagh Owens  
 John Pankhurst  
 Joy Pankhurst  
 Daphne Parcell\*  
 David Parcell\*  
 Jack Patient  
 Ann Pearson  
 John Pearson  
 Richard Penfold  
 Frank Phillips  
 Kathleen Phillips  
 Cyril Povey  
 Jean Povey  
 Bob Powling  
 Grant Privett\*  
 Rachel Privett\*  
 Phil Pye\*  
 Donald Ransom  
 Joan Ransom  
 Glennis Rathie  
 Alan Read\*  
 Anne Reardon\*  
 Neil Reardon\*  
 Ryan Reardon\*

Robert Richards  
 Christine Riordan  
 Eileen Riordan  
 John Rowley  
 Alistair Rumble  
 John Rumble  
 Sue Rumble  
 Michael Sales  
 Dave Salter  
 Mary Salton  
 Douglas Scott  
 Susan Scott  
 Eileen Scrivener  
 John Scrivener  
 Lewis Sell  
 Michael Seymour  
 Richard Shephard  
 Alan Short  
 James Short  
 Marjorie Short  
 Andrew Simmons  
 Eileen Simmons  
 Gerard Simmons  
 Lorna Simmons  
 Brenda Sims  
 Dave Sims  
 Philip Smart  
 Patricia Steed  
 Anne Steel\*  
 David Steel  
 Ray Stelzner  
 Terry Stemman  
 Roy Stenson  
 Peter Stone  
 Len Stuart  
 Dorothy Sumter  
 John Sylvester  
 Susan M Sylvester  
 Richard Thomas  
 Margaret Tinkler  
 Freda Titford  
 Ron Treadgold  
 Bernard Tucker\*  
 Elizabeth Tucker\*  
 Les Tucker  
 John Vernon  
 John Ward  
 Jean Welby

Margaret Welby  
 Paul Wernick  
 George West  
 Ian Weston  
 Ewart C White  
 Tony Whittaker  
 David J Wilcox\*  
 Enid Williams  
 John Wilson  
 Ann Wright  
 John C Wright  
 Greta Wright  
 June Wright  
 Michael Wright

The asterisk denotes  
 those whom have not  
 yet renewed their  
 membership. Please  
 could you contact  
 Daphne Clements.



# Officers of the Friends Association

## Chairman

John Wright  
1 Albury Ride  
Cheshunt  
Herts EN8 8XE  
Tel 01992 624210

## Secretary

Richard Penfold  
10 Thaxted Way  
Waltham Abbey  
Essex EN9 1LQ  
Tel 01992 712623

## Treasurer

Daphne Clements  
56 Park Road  
Enfield  
Middx EN3 6SR  
Tel 01992 717816

**All enquiries relating to this newsletter should be addressed to**

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Deadline date for submissions to the next issue is 30th November 2010.