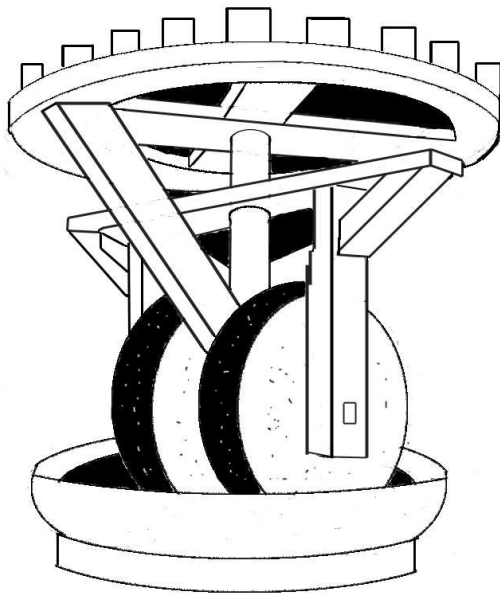


Touchpaper



The Newsletter of the Royal Gunpowder
Mills Friends Association

April 2011

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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

Hello all

At the last committee meeting our esteemed Secretary, Richard Penfold, announced that it was his intention to step down from the role at the next Annual General Meeting. Richard has been in the role since inception of the group in 1998 and has the appreciation of all the committee members for always undertaking his duties in a comsumately professional manner.

Therefore, the position will be vacant and elections will be held at the next AGM.

We hope that you will all be able to attend the Friends Social Gathering and, of course, the annual VE weekend event. Hopefully the weather will be better this year as the highlight of the weekend activities will be the Spitfire display on the Monday. Lynne Lennard has also arranged for the worlds only MKII B Hawker Hurricane bomber (1942) to perform an aerobatic display on the Sunday so it will be a double treat for all the plane fanatics, of which Lynne is one!

This event in particular is always a triumph of organisation and of pulling together by the staff, volunteers and friends so if anyone feels they can contribute some time to help out I am sure Liz Went will be pleased to hear from you.

Michelle Moore

Chairman's Chat...

Welcome to the Spring issue.

As you know , major changes are afoot at the Mills. Some of these have needed to go through Epping Forest District District Council planning which has resulted in significant delays and modifications for some of the things we wanted to do. Progress has therefore been limited so far. The improvements to the cafe will not be finished by our normal opening weekend so the company has decided to delay the opening until 28th May the Whitsun Bank Holiday weekend. The only exception to this will be the VE Day weekend which will go ahead as planned on 30th April - 2nd May. The cafe will not be open but catering will be available as last year.

As a result of the late opening the Friends Social Gathering will now be on Friday 27th May, the day before full opening. The 'new' cafe will be open as will all the new and modified exhibits. This will be a trial run for the next day.

The gunpowder boat which was in

L168 (the large exhibits building) has been moved to a new 'boat tent' next to L153. We had restored one end of it and left the other end as it was, but further deterioration of the latter has occurred needing restoration there as well. This will be a more complex job and take longer to do.

The Foden lorry used for transport of casting liquid has been moved from L168 to 'Sydney Opera House' otherwise known as the tin shed at the end of the concrete slab. The shed itself will need extending to provide adequate shelter for the lorry.

In the last issue were photos of the first 18 inch gauge rail truck before and after restoration. The second rail truck for carrying gunpowder, cordites and propellant ingredients is now well on the way to completion.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible during the summer and hope that you will enjoy the changes to the site.

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.

As a keen 'walker' of Lee Valley Parks, Epping Forest, I have noticed a few confusions' on LVP's information boards.

The information board at Fishers Green states:-

'The channel confluence splits between the Cornmill stream to the east and the Horsemill stream to the west' (Flood Relief Channel, this is also the Gunpowder Park's boundary lines.)

This means that the Old River Lee (Lea) ends at this point and the Cornmill Stream miraculously starts!

Another map shows the Old River Lee (Lea) going into the Royal Gunpowder Factory at 'Newton's Pool' and continuing through the RGPF to exit at 'Bridge 8' (Dragonfly Sanctuary) What happened between Fishers Green, 'Newton's Pool' to the 'Red House'!!!

Maps old and new don't help. Many maps show 'drain pipe'

The clue must be 'Stoney Bridge' in Veresmead. This Bridge was built in 1370 over the Cornmill Stream. The monks therefore, built a weir at map reference 377/8 018/9 known as the 'Red House' or 'waterfall' to locals, walkers. This is where Cornmill Stream starts. This weir diverting the water from the Old River Lee (Lea) to supply the Abbey Fish Ponds and also flowing under 'Stoney Bridge'.

So the Old River Lee (Lea) flows from Fishers Green 3770 0260 past 'Newton's Pool' to the 'Red House' or 'waterfall' 377/8 018/9. Here at the weir the Old River Lee (Lea) continues its natural route past 'Bridge 8' between RGPF and 'Dragonfly Sanctuary' flowing under Highbridge Street at Barge Yard.

'Newton's Pool' to 'Bridge 8' is a man made leat!

What do other locals, walkers think?

Thanks. Ray Stelzner

Fisher Green access bridge TQ 3770 0265

Fishers Green sluice TQ 3770 0260

The book review



The booklets can be purchased either from the Mills shop or :

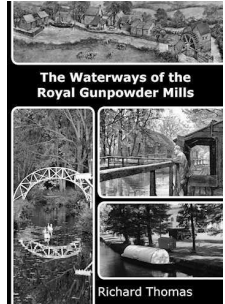
By telephone 01992 707370
By email info@royalgunpowdermills.com
By post Royal Gunpowder Mills
Beaulieu Drive, Waltham Abbey
Essex, EN9 1JY

Cheques payable to
Royal Gunpowder Mills Co. Ltd.

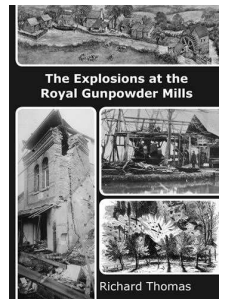
Friend writes first two Mills Booklets

A booklet series covering various aspects of Mills history is being introduced. The first two to be published have been written by Friend and Archive volunteer Richard Thomas, the well known waterways historian and lecturer. Reflecting Richard's particular interests, the titles are :

The Waterways of the
Royal
Gunpowder Mills
£3.99



The Explosions at the
Royal
Gunpowder Mills
£4.99



P&P £1.99

These booklets provide a valuable insight into these two aspects of the Mills varied and until now secret history. The launch of the Waterways booklet coincided with the award to the Mills of the Red Wheel by the Transport Trust in recognition of the Mills unique position as ' the most complex and intensive use of waterways ever seen in a single British location '

WASC 2211

A E Wood (1884 – 1917)

Mills Worker and Runner Extraordinaire

The Mills Archive has a record of one Mills worker, Frederick Wright, who emigrated to America and achieved fame as adviser on the processing plant and procedures in the Confederate central powder works built in Augusta Georgia during the American Civil War. Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Martin Hale of Cambridge the Archive has a fully documented record of the remarkable life of another Mills employee who emigrated to America and achieved fame in very different circumstances – A.E., Arthur Edwin ‘Slacker ‘ Wood of Ferns Hollow, Upshire – great uncle of Mr. Hale.

How did the nickname ‘Slacker ‘ arise ? No one in the family knows with certainty. The nearest they can get is that wood was used to light domestic fires and a grade of coal used in domestic fires was nutty slack.

Edwin showed a remarkable aptitude for distance running. In the finest traditions of British amateurism he adopted homespun training methods. One of those concerned racing pigeons. As part of his training regime after work at the Mills he would run cross country to his home in Upshire. As a spur to effort he arranged the release at a later time of a racing pigeon estimated to arrive at Upshire at a time he could just beat if he applied maximum effort. This story sounds fanciful but is verified by independent accounts from co - workers at the Mills.

Such was Edwin’s ability that he began to make his mark at national level. To the extent that at some point he attracted the attention of local backers – the Tuck family of Upshire. The Tucks had a prosperous pottery business in Woodgreen Road Upshire supplying pots to the local Lea Valley horticultural industry, later purchasing as their residence Upshire Hall. It is not known exactly what decided the Tucks to take an interest in Edwin’s running career but it is conjectured that he might have come to their attention originally because his route to Upshire from the Mills would have taken him over land to the rear of the potteries.



WAI 594 / 2 Mr. Tuck is believed to be the gentleman on the right. One or both of the other two gentlemen are believed to be members of the Tuck family.

At that time competitive cross country running was extremely popular and in 1892 the Essex Cross-Country Association was formed, with Essex Beagles figuring prominently. National competitions were organised, divided into areas and wealthy supporters donated many cups and trophies. Edwin's racing pigeon exploits paid off, as can be seen from the many cups and other trophies he acquired.

Edwin's abilities with the Essex Beagles carried him to a brilliant run of success from around 1903. He won the North of Thames race twice, the Southern Counties twice and the English 10 mile amateur championship. An international championship was introduced in 1903 and he was a member of the England team. England won in 1908, 1909 and 1910. Edwin was a team member in 1908 and won the individual winner's title in 1909 and 1910.

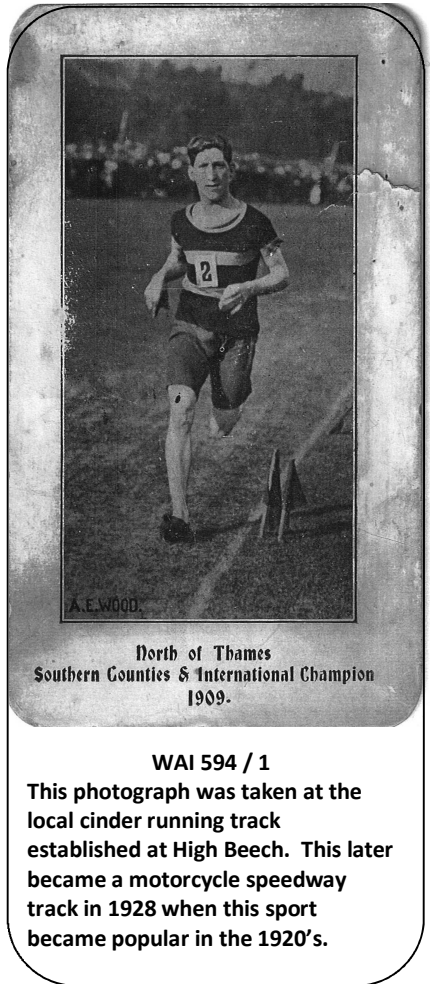
Athletics was a popular spectator sport in America, the prizes on offer inducing athletes to take up professional status and possibly in 1911 Edwin decided to do the same with a view to competing in America.

His arrival on the American scene attracted a significant amount of attention, particularly when it was realised that he posed a significant threat to the dominance of American runners – particularly two – Billy

Queal, regarded as America's top distance runner and Alfred Shrubbs, holder of world records.

One of the high points was reached on 5th. May 1912 in a 15 mile track race at Celtic Park New York. Enthusiasts appetites had been whetted by a race a week before when in a closely fought one hour race Queal beat Edwin by one yard. In the 15 mile race, in spite of never having run this distance before, Edwin triumphed. Setting a scorching pace (some competitors fell behind the front three by as much as two miles) he set a new record, trumpeted by the New York Times on 6th. May 1912. Not content with that he also set new world records to be taken as future ' best past performance ' times at the twelve, thirteen and fourteen mile marks. Queal came second and Shrubbs third.

Celtic Park was an athletics complex completed on Long Island in 1901 by the Greater New York Irish Athletic Association, later Club. It attracted many athletes of international calibre and their competitive events such as the 15 mile race were popular spectator attractions. However as well as athletics darker forces were attracted to the centre, amongst these Clan-na-Gael, the Irish Republican organisation, prominent in supporting the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin. The Park provoked further controversy over its opposition to New York laws banning the serving of alcohol on Sundays. Alcohol became a further bone of contention with the coming of Prohibition in 1920. The Park was viewed by the authorities as a significant centre for the sale of illegal alcohol and its reputation was sullied. Combined with this was the gradual encroachment of residential areas and the building of superior competitive centres in other areas of New York. Finally the Park after thirty years of activity was demolished in



1931 to make way for an apartment block, which stands today with the name Celtic Park.

Perhaps Edwin thought he should reap the benefits of his gains when he could. It appears that by 1916 he had acquired Canadian citizenship and either bought or was a partner in a farm in Ontario. 1916 is significant as in that year his life, as for so many others, took a very different turn.

On 17th. March 1916 he enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force – in the 123rd. Battalion of the Canadian Pioneers, destined for France. Canadian forces were heavily engaged in the Ypres Salient – one of the many unbelievable strategic mistakes made by the British High Command who early in the War instead of moving to a defensible line close to the town of Ypres, as advised by a far seeing General who was sacked for his pains, elected to try and occupy the low lying marshy land around Ypres in a pointed salient projecting out into the German area, thereby creating a situation in which the Germans could observe the British positions from three sides including surrounding higher areas and call down artillery fire at will.

Three major battles took place at Ypres, the second two with the object of dislodging the enemy from their commanding positions, which they not surprisingly had built into strong points which they considered impregnable. One of these was the fortified ridge and village of Paschendaele and on July 31 1917 the Third Battle of Ypres, commonly known as Paschendaele, commenced. To mount an attack such as this involved the movement of huge numbers of men and their supporting ammunition, food etc. to the front line and it was the job of the Pioneers to construct mule tracks and rudimentary roads from the staging points at Ypres. Unfortunately there was a period of almost continuous rain in the autumn of 1917. Also, the High Command had chosen to ignore warnings that the land over which the attack was to take place was criss crossed by a rigourously controlled network of drainage ditches, which had been totally destroyed by shell fire, both factors creating a sea of liquid mud.

Nevertheless on July 31 the attack went ahead and finally after a titanic 12 week struggle on November 6 1917 the Canadian Corps captured Paschendaele, by then a massive heap of rubble. In theory the town of Ypres should have been a haven away from the front line. However it was within range of German long range artillery and the situation got so bad that the entire civilian population had to be evacuated with the military left to find billets amongst the rubble as best they could.

On October 21 1917 Edwin's platoon fell victim to a German shell whilst marching through Ypres. He was wounded and died in hospital. Most of the military cemeteries are outside of Ypres but the hospital casualties were buried in two town cemeteries. Edwin's grave is in the Reservoir Cemetery.



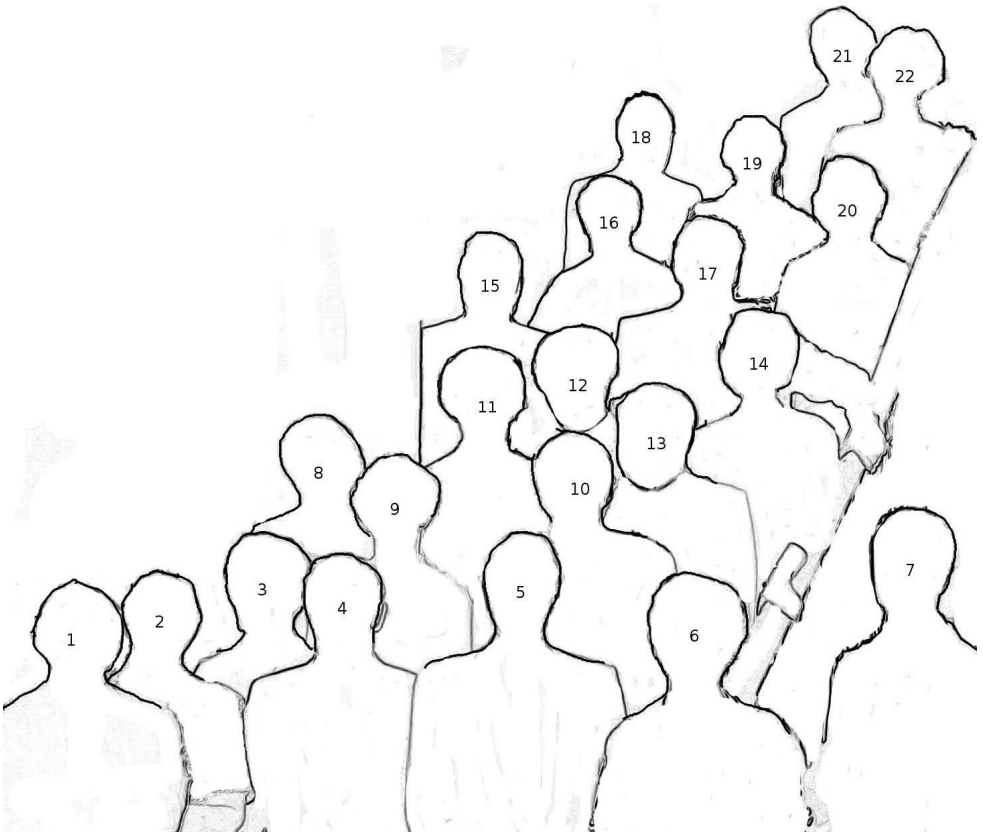
P.S. It has just been learned that the Town Council is considering placing a blue plaque on Edwin's home in Uphshire.

Les Tucker

The second retirement course photo has been kindly loaned by Alan Short. There is a bonus with this one in that they've signed their names on the back so we can confirm who they are. How many can you recognise?

Bryan Howard

- | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Alfie Bird | Engineering | 13. Bill Simth | P1 |
| 2. Doreen Bird | Admin | 14. Sheila Cooke | |
| 3. Marjorie Salter | ? | 15. Ernie Cooke | P2 |
| 4. J H Salter | ? | 16. Ron Fletcher | QA |
| 5. Bert George | Engineering | 17. Cecil Cullingford | Glassblower |
| 6. Mary George | | 18. Alan Short | Instrumentation |
| 7. Chris Evans | Course organiser | 19. Marjorie Short | |
| 8. Iris Mezen | P1 | 20. ? | |
| 9. Audrey Anderson | P1 | 21. David Swadling | Admin |
| 10. Kim Henshaw | P2 | 22. Marjorie Swadling | |
| 11. Rae Channon | Typing Pool | 23. Olive Biggs | |
| 12. ? | | | |





Update from the Chief Executive, Andrew Coates

The story of The Royal Gunpowder Mills is absolutely remarkable and you, some of the people who help hold it together, are as passionate about the place as any I have met.

I keep telling myself that this site is amazing and feel extremely privileged to be a small part of the story, but then I have to keep asking why has it consistently struggled to achieve its potential?

What is the answer?

One of my first lessons as a leisure attraction manager was that the definition of a successful visitor attraction is one that is 'Somewhere worth leaving home for'. Successful visitor attractions are those that offer a memorable experience to the consumer. In the highly competitive experience economy, visitor attractions must constantly reinvent themselves to encourage repeat visits and survive. To be successful visitor attractions of whatever size must sell expectations, experiences and memories to individual consumers.

I truly believe that we can meet this challenge; we are worth leaving home for. But to get there we have to embrace change by addressing our own version of -

Product

'The historic and continuing promotion and presentation of the Royal Gunpowder Mills has failed to attract sufficient numbers to the site. It has not developed momentum from several years of events even in the absence of successful exemplars offering a similar proposition.' (Consultants' Report)

This wording is harsh but unfortunately true. The situation means we must adopt a new approach. The Board has agreed with my proposals that this should balance the emphasis on the Gunpowder Mills story with that of entertainment and education going beyond the current narrow focus.

Placement

Our Mission: 'To preserve, reveal, and build on the history and heritage assets of the Royal Gunpowder Mills to provide a sustainable visitor destination that informs, entertains, and inspires future generations'.

Promotion

Achieving a family audience is the best means of achieving the annual attendance figures required to sustain the site and fulfil our heritage responsibilities. This requires us to develop an attractively branded destination offering a range of activities with very evident family appeal.

To succeed in a competitive market, we must differentiate ourselves from other local, regional and national attractions. The themes to be developed therefore will be built from what is already truly distinctive – our history and heritage. This will involve the

Gunpowder Mills, but in future within a wider offering of greater audience appeal. We will attract new audiences by shaping expectations of family fun, educational benefit, a wide variety of activities, and a unique dramatic narrative.

Our proposal is to rename the site “The Secret Island”, Royal Gunpowder Mills. This is an exciting and enticing destination brand, giving scope for the development of a family of related attractions across the site. It also affords the opportunity to use and celebrate the Gunpowder Mills stories within a wider context.

Why “The secret island”

- It is true – we are an island site and we have long had secrets.
- It is enticing – children love secrets, mysteries and surprises.
- It dramatically reflects the scale of the site.
- It is flexible – a wide range of attractions can support the message.
- It reinforces and celebrates the history of the Gunpowder Mills.
- It is newsworthy and will force reassessment.

How will this manifest itself?

Our adopted strategy moving forward is designed around the principle of creating a sustainable platform from which the attraction can confidently evolve and grow in the future.

Immediate Changes

Change to the visitor flow – Access to site will be via the boardwalk, accessed from the car park through a themed checkpoint and ticketing kiosk. The sense of arrival along the boardwalk will be heightened with the introduction of relocated artefacts and new interpretation.

The current entrance building (H7) becomes surplus to requirements for the attraction and our aim is to generate useful revenues by letting the building.

The current ‘Gunpowder’ island will thus become the introduction to the site. The graphic panels from the now surplus H7 building are being relocated into the entrance of the main exhibition building. Visitors will then be encouraged to watch the film – as a pre-show to this, the landing area will incorporate more of the graphics from H7. After the film show, visitors can, as now, visit the exhibition and armoury. When leaving the main exhibition, visitors will be encouraged to enter the Mixing House which is to host a new exhibition which David Kenyon has developed; it explores some of the more explosive moments of this site’s history, and will also incorporate some artefacts collected from around the site.

The Saltpetre House also has a new role, acting as an introduction to the wider site, utilising the remaining graphics from H7.

L168 is ultimately to become the ‘Science Centre’. In 2011 we are undertaking phase 1 which involves:

- Relocating the gunpowder barge to sit undercover in a specialist ‘tent’ we have bought; I hope this can become an active restoration project, which should be of

great interest to our visitors.

- Relocating the canal bridge to a position over the boardwalk so that It becomes part of the entrance experience.
- Relocating the railway equipment to a site of permanent display near the railway hub of operation.
- Relocating the Foden (Nitro Glycerine) truck for display on the 'Gunpowder' island. During the winter (closed) months, the truck will be either moved undercover or protected by an all-weather cover.
- Relocating the existing Friends rocket exhibition from L 157 and enhancing it with bespoke audio visual displays, graphics and new interpretation.

In addition the successful elements of the 'Wacky Workshop' and 'Wonderstruck' will be consolidated to form an interactive and fun-learning experience within the building. This will then double as a new education resource for our schools programme which is being given a new focus towards science.

L176, the café, will be fully refurbished to incorporate a new kitchen and servery area within a specially designed lean-to structure now under construction. The main space will become a very flexible 'orangery' type structure, a cafe during the main season and a functions / events space at other times. L165, the mineral jelly store, will be refurbished to become the new gift shop / kiosk.

As you will have seen, work is underway. It is testament to the spirit of this place to see our staff, Friends and volunteers working so hard together to launch us on a new path which I believe can work to give the Royal Gunpowder Mills a bright future.

Thank you

Andrew Coates

Obituary

Death of Reg Deadman

Many of you who lived on the Monkswood Estate will remember Reg Deadman who lived near the Gladeway. Jean Church reported his sudden death when we met at the January LSW meeting.

Although Reg didn't work in Waltham Abbey, being employed at RSAF, he was in the Powdermill Badminton Club, a leader of the Scouts and a stalwart of the Abbey church. Reg even helped to restore the gunpowder boat in L168 until ill health curtailed his retirement activities.

Our sympathy goes to Reg's son who is now the sole occupier of No. 88 Monkswood since his mother died some years ago and his sister married and moved away.

Bryan Howard

With great regret we have just heard that Dr John Gooding passed away (21st March). We hope to put an obituary in the next issue of Touchpaper

2011 Membership Subscriptions

Have you renewed your membership yet? There is no increase from last year:

Individual	£8.00	(£7.00 if Touchpaper is sent by email)
Family	£12.00	(£10.00 if Touchpaper is sent by email)

Please complete the enclosed form and send it, together with a cheque for the amount due, to me - John Cook, 63 Lakenheath, Southgate, LONDON N14 4RR.

Cheques should be made payable to - WARGM Friends Association

Please let me know if you change your postal address, email address or telephone number. You can contact me at the address above or by email – rgm.fa@virginmedia.com

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Deadline date for submissions to the next issue is 28th May 2011.