

Summer 2014

TOUCHPAPER

The Newsletter of the Royal Gunpowder Mills Friends Association

The Green Hut

Mick Crossley's War - Part 2

Railway Disasters

Julie's Nature Column

The artistic talents of Freda & Ron

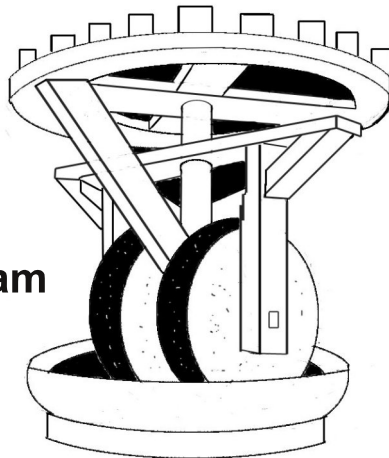
2014 AGM and Social

Letters

Quizes

Obituaries:

**Les Dingle
Christine Needham
Nancy Harris**



Summer 2014

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Deadline for the next issue is 15th August 2014

Chairman's Chat

Welcome to the summer edition of Touchpaper.

I hope we will see lots of you during the season together with your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and any friends they may have.

The railway group have been making good progress with extending the track to the north and south. The terrain has been a little difficult in places and it has been claimed that Stanley met Livingstone somewhere up in the northern section. We are all looking forward to the start of passenger carrying on the track. (Hope we don't have to keep looking forward for too long!).

The saga of the Green Hut continues. We are now waiting for the heavy gang (Navette from Nazeing) to find time to move the Gunpowder Boat into the Hut. I think that when we eventually get all this finished we shall have to have a special opening ceremony before it all falls down.

Inputs of articles to the editor are approximately keeping up with publication in Touchpaper but new items, particularly non-technical ones, are always welcome.

May good weather be with us through the open season and enjoy the summer wherever you are.

With best wishes.

John Wright

Editorial

This issue is a little later than intended for two reasons. First I was short of material and then we became rather busy with visitors and family meetings. Meanwhile I had asked for more articles with the result that I now have more than I can fit into this issue. I am not complaining but apologies to those who will have to wait to see their work in a future issue.

Following some comments that Touchpaper was a bit too technical we have the first article on nature matters, hopefully this can be a regular feature.

Pictures on the back cover show the powder boat in the boat tent and the green hut which we are restoring. Note the straps are to hold the tent down, not to keep the boat in place! Hopefully in the next issue we will be able to report that the boat has been moved into the green hut.

John Wilson has been spending a lot of his own money as well as funding from the company to extend his 7 1/4" track and provide new rolling stock to give rides. Come and have a ride and give a donation to help support this valuable addition to the site.

I hope you will all be able to enjoy a summer break, if you get bored with sitting on a beach come and join us at the Mills.

Brian
Clements

The Green Hut

In his Chairman's letter in the Spring 2014 Touchpaper John Wright describes the work going on to transform L185 'The Green Hut' into a storage building for the powder boat.

In the late 1990's Jim Jeacocke wrote a letter to Norman Paul with some memories of the Green Hut as follows. This is a good example of Jim's inimitable style of blending serious matters with the light hearted – reflective of the general spirit of the Research Centre or just the Lab ?

'The RDX Lab

When the decision was taken to build the RDX pilot plant on the South Site (this was in 1938 Ed.) a new laboratory facility was needed so a small hut was built adjacent to the Main Lab specifically for that purpose.

This was necessary since one of the specification tests (carbon content) was so sensitive to contamination that a relatively clean atmosphere was required (even blowing into the reaction flask was enough to give erroneous results). Many rumours circulated about this new material, in particular that it turned one green. At least a change from the bright yellow from Tetryl that I was at the time! But eventually the lab was up and running.

Then, disaster. 'Our lab' was to be taken over by a lot from Woolwich who had been bombed out. We didn't think much of that and, for a time, there was a certain animosity between us. Ernie Bowell was one of the first 'evacuees'. The others that I remember were: Wood, Clarke, Kemp, Quick, Townley (on whom I played the TNT coated bluebottle trick) and, in particular, G.J.Bennington Davies.

We soon began to fraternise, especially when we discovered that they had an alternative use for the extraction bath, which was to keep a

continuous supply (source unknown) of hot coffee available.

If you read this Ernie, greetings from the past.'

Later, in 1944, Ernie had a very lucky escape when a V2 rocket landed on the RDX area on the South Site. By this time Ernie was working in a laboratory occupying what had previously been a water tower.

Ed.(Norman).

In early 2000 Bill Love wrote to Norman as follows:

'History of the Green Hut

This wooden building is sited next to the Robertson Laboratory on the Long Walk.

It was purchased in the fall of 1939 from Messrs. Thorn of Bexleyheath, delivered to Swansea and erected in the NW corner of the university campus. I do not know exactly when it was relocated to Waltham Abbey.

The double doors led into two rooms. The left hand was a laboratory with benches accommodating heating baths for the Abel Heat Test. The right hand room was for preparation of samples for testing and preparation of special test papers for surveillance testing of boxed explosive stores.

Its last scientific use was when it housed Dr. Uri's research team. When they moved to more prestigious accommodation in L157, with removal of most of the laboratory benches, it was later used for First Aid practice and lunch time table tennis.'

Can anyone write on Dr. Uri's background and work ? Ed. (Norman)

Yet another piece of hidden history

Present day visitors probably walk past the green hut without giving it a second glance. Who could imagine that in its day it was a link to world cataclysm 1939 – 1945.

RDX was one of the 'just in time' defence technology developments

of the rearmament programme of the late 1930's. After initial development at Woolwich the decision was taken to build a pilot plant on the South Site to test the new process and iron out any problems to demonstrate the feasibility of building a full industrial scale production plant. However world events were moving fast towards war and as soon as the plant was completed at the end of 1938 it was inundated with orders from the Services for experimental and training purposes etc. When war was declared in 1939 the South Site plant found itself in the position of sole RDX supplier to the Forces and this situation continued for the first three years of WW2.

Rising to this challenge from a plant which was intended only to produce on a pilot scale was one of many great but unsung chemical technology achievements of WW2.

As it was not castable RDX was added to molten TNT to form a pourable mix for shell and bomb filling, with desensitising wax. This composition, termed Composition or Comp. B, formed one of the most important British bomb and shell fillings of WW2 and beyond. With aluminium powder added it formed Torpex, designed for torpedoes and later the filling for the Bouncing Bomb.

Another great unsung achievement of the South Site plant was to figure in the vital Tizard scientific mission to the US in the dark days of 1940. Although later writing on the mission has concentrated on the radar cavity magnetron the mission covered the whole spectrum of defence products and the success of the South Site RDX pilot plant in demonstrating the operational feasibility of employing the Woolwich process led to the building in the US by the chemical combine F.I. du Pont de Nemours, originally the premier American producer of black powder, of a plant employing this process, later to supply a proportion of the RAF's bomb requirements.

Also, although based on a process alternative to Woolwich which had become available, the successful operation of the South Site plant was undoubtedly a strong influence in the decision reached after Tizard to build an RDX plant in Canada.

If the powder boat is stored in the green hut, it would then be representative of two major elements in the factory's history – an extensive and now almost unique internal waterways transport system and the development of an explosive which formed the mainstay of the British Forces in a world war and beyond – not bad for a simple wooden hut (think Bletchley wooden huts) and surely worthy of a special display board. What would Mr. Thorn of Bexleyheath make of it all ?

Les Tucker

Mills Books

A further two books are now available.

Centenary Memorial of the Royal Gunpowder Factory
Waltham Abbey 1887 W.Winters 178 pp £8.99

The Rise and Progress of the British Explosives Industry
1909 E.A. Brayley Hodgetts 436 39 pp £15.99

23rd Jun 1314 First War of Scottish Independence: The
Battle of Bannockburn (south of Stirling) begins.

1st May 1328 Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton - the
Kingdom of England recognises the Kingdom of Scotland as an
independent state.

Words with two meanings - for example food and insect larva - grub

- 1 Garden plot, piece of furniture
- 2 Golf shot, house approach
- 3 Abrasive tool, folder
- 4 Monetary unit, enclosure
- 5 Cricket item, nocturnal flier
- 6 Missile, salad plant
- 7 Pillow, cold chisel
- 8 Yacht, sherry glass
- 9 Hammer, winter sport equipment
- 10 Card suit, garden implement
- 11 train of railway trucks, Garden implement
- 12 Outer garment, coastline feature
- 13 Igniter, wedding
- 14 House decorator, rope for securing a boat
- 15 Fearsome reptile, file of children
- 16 A binding strip, group of musicians
- 17 Web footed amphibian, ornamental lace on a uniform
- 18 Military dismissal (under a cloud), Bank clerk
- 19 Got up, a flower
- 20 Common equipment in sports, dance

1st May 1707 The Act of Union joins the Kingdom of England and Kingdom of Scotland to form the Kingdom of Great Britain.

Mick Crossley's War - Part 2

June 1944 - After D Day - A Forgotten Disaster

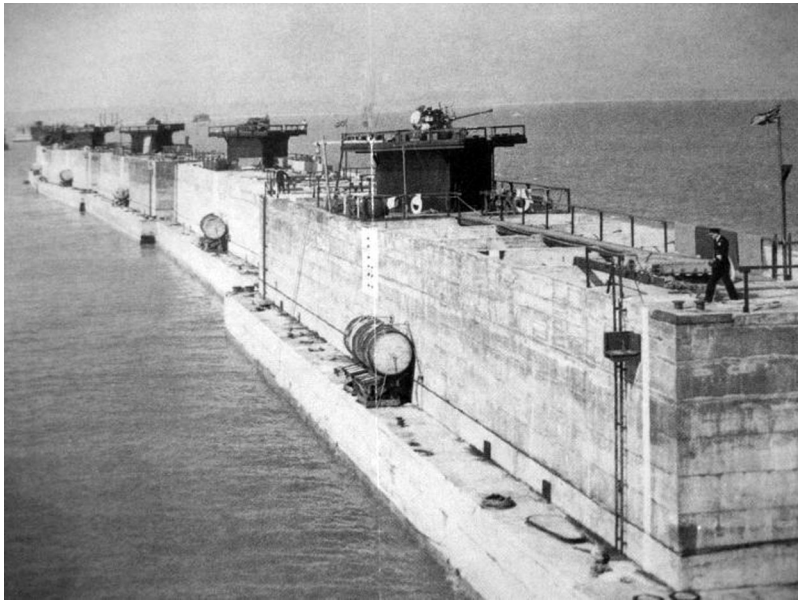
"Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force. You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, towards which we have striven these many months... Your task will not be an easy one... I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory. Good Luck".

General Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander.

The crucial thing about a landing on beaches, apart from getting on them at all, is to be able to build up your forces and supplies at a rate sufficient to prevent the enemy from mounting a counter attack and driving you back into the sea.

The problem with the Normandy landings was that there was no opportunity initially to capture a port to channel the huge continuing amounts of supplies consumed by a modern army. Trying to land stores directly on to the beaches from ships was out of the question. Normandy beaches have a very high tidal range and landing would only have been possible in windows either side of the high tides.

In Britain they came up with an imaginative solution. An artificial port would be prefabricated in the form of caissons, named Phoenix, giant 1500-6000 ton hollow concrete blocks, the largest the height of a five storey building and measuring 60 by 17 metres and towed across the Channel. to two sites at the beaches – at Arromanches opposite the Gold beaches in the British / Canadian sector and opposite the Omaha beaches in the US sector. Each caisson was divided into 16 compartments and had a central gun tower housing the familiar 47mm Bofors anti aircraft gun. On arrival offshore they would be flooded by opening seacocks, allowing them to sink to the sea bed, joined to create a breakwater / port at which vessels could unload and from them steel decking would be put on pontoons to create a floating road for lorries to drive down a ramp on to the shore.



Construction of the caissons involved 40,000 workers. The concept was called the Mulberry Harbour, each comprising 73 caissons. The venture was therefore reliant on the outcome of D Day rather than participating on the actual day.

The 'crew' of a caisson comprised two Navy ratings who would liaise with the towing tug by signalling lamp and assist with the positioning at Arromanches and two Royal Engineer sappers who would operate a generator powering pumps to pump out water to float the caisson and flood it at the other side to settle on the sea bed.

At some point 416 Battery learned that their future lay with Mulberry. This was to be the port they had to defend. The battery was divided into two detachments, each to man the gun position on top of a caisson and travelling across the Channel on the caisson.

Mick Crossley's detachment was 'posted' to Caisson A54, one of the 6000 ton group.

Although obviously strategically supporting the plan, technically the

Navy looked askance. Trial tows were volunteers only, a sure sign in the Services of concern.

The following account shows that the concern percolated down to the ordinary sailors.

Ordinary Seaman Kenneth Bungard:

"We arrived at what seemed like a huge office block without windows, sixty feet high. We were told to clamber up on top, not knowing at the time that this lump of concrete was actually floating and when we got to the top we found that it was just a huge hollow concrete box. Next to it was a tug. We thought the tug was tied to it but, in fact, it was tied to the tug and the tug towed us away. There we were on top of this thing. There was nothing we could do. We just had to sit there while we were towed along at four knots, which isn't very fast, and as the dawn began to break we found ourselves in a bay by Dungeness where we promptly went down inside this concrete box, opened the sluices and sunk it into the sand and wondered what the hell we were doing – 'cos nobody tells you anything. We soon realised why they asked for volunteers because these things had never been taken across an ocean. I thought it was like trying to drag a brick across the Thames."

This begins to show the flavour of what 416 Battery faced. Before their journey they encamped at Littlestone-on-Sea and spent a week at a time on the caissons, moored ¼ mile offshore, to familiarise them.

They were taken out to the caisson in fishing boats and then had to transfer to a small ledge and climb up a 30ft. iron runged ladder on a side wall. All equipment had to be hauled up by rope. The climb revealed in one or two gunners a paralysing fear of heights and they had to be more or less hauled up with safety ropes. For shelter there was a small room at one end.

Finally Mick Crossley's detachment, waiting on A54 off Selsey Bill heard the news of the success of the 6th. of June landings and their towing tug prepared the tow, involving two steel hawsers. The two nations with the greatest experience at that time of deep sea towing of large vessels and structures were the Dutch and Americans and A54's

tug was from the US Navy.

The hawsers were duly attached, the pumps started, A54 floated and the 416 Battery detachments set out to support the great enterprise, one of the strangest journeys ever undertaken by the Royal Artillery. Such was the interest in their mission in the Battery that the complement on A54 included two who should have followed with Battery HQ staff but had gained permission to travel across on the caisson – an orderly and orderly room clerk.

Progress was extremely slow and after the initial novelty wore off it was apparent that the journey was going to be uncomfortable at best. The weather was steadily deteriorating and on the first night some found the concrete hut impossible to sleep in and spent the night huddled in blankets around the gun tower. The next morning brought the first premonition of trouble. One of the steel hawsers snapped. The tug then had to tow at an off straight angle in increasingly rougher seas from around midway on the journey. Its crew had an unenviable task. The tug began to roll heavily and sea conditions were such that the gunners occasionally lost sight of her. In the meantime ominously because of the angled tow A54 began to ship water and the pumps were barely able to contain it. The journey of the other detachment was trouble free and their caisson moved ahead out of sight.

A54 began to develop a pronounced list and by the end of the day the decision was taken to send out SOS messages with the only equipment available, the signalling lamps.

After another fraught night the by now increasingly exhausted occupiers of A54 were greeted by what they thought would be their salvation – a Royal Navy frigate which in some miraculous way would winch them to safety and warmth. But they had little concept of the difficulties posed by the heavy seas. The frigate was rolling dangerously and six attempts over the day to get a rocket fired line aboard A54 failed. Night was approaching and eventually after exchanging signals with the tug the frigate sailed away.

By this time A54 was listing badly and the water level barely contained. The next day dawned and Normandy was sighted. However

the tug signalled that they were now a danger to the operation at Arromanches, connection to the other caissons was out of the question and the tug was ordered to take the tow to an area away from the rapidly growing harbour. Night fell and an air of foreboding permeated. It was apparent that there was a strong possibility that A54 was going to founder. The tug's position was also unenviable, attached to an out of control 6000 ton block of concrete which would undoubtedly take them down with it.

Nobody slept. The water level could be seen to be rising steadily and by 3 am the decision was reached that to stay on board any longer was untenable. The gunners were totally untrained for such an eventually and were faced with having to scramble in pitch black darkness and rain 30 feet down a vertical ladder to a narrow ledge and then leap into heavy seas.

All were wearing life jackets but this in itself in such conditions is no guarantee of survival. About half of the detachment disappeared in the grey waters of the Channel, including the two Royal Engineers, one of the Navy ratings and the two from the orderly room who had begged to go along.

Caisson A54 went down at 3-30 am., one of the only two caissons which did not survive the Channel journey. The crew of the American tug had severed the remaining connecting hawser shortly before the sinking.

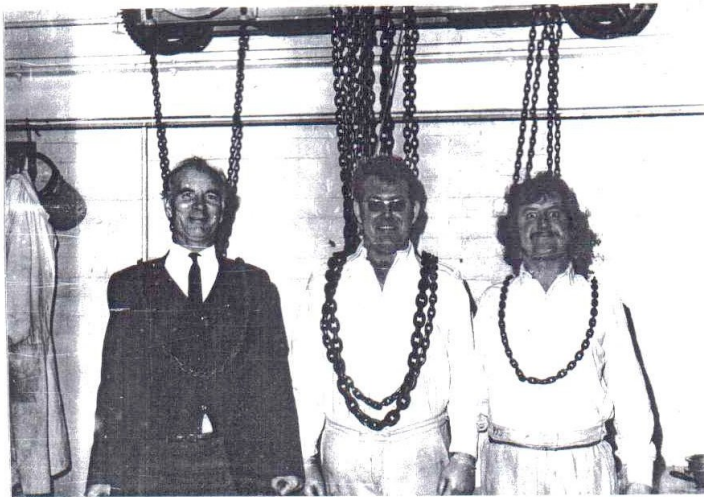
Mick Crossley survived after spending some hours in the water, which must have been an eerie experience in the darkness. When he had surfaced after jumping in a large wooden beam had miraculously appeared which he was able to cling to. Very luckily after dawn broke, at about 6 am. the survivors were spotted by a requisitioned fishing trawler which had been laying smoke screens off the beaches and was returning to England.

Mick and two others were landed at Weymouth and sent to a holding camp at Aldershot. Whilst there they made contact with the HQ elements of 416 Battery and were able to join them for their journey to Arromanches from Tilbury on a LST.

Seven days after leaving Selsey Bill Mick finally reached Normandy and went through the rest of the war in Northwest Europe with 416 Battery which had regrouped with replacements for those lost.

Having had a quiet time at Waltham Abbey as one of the many moves the Battery had made in the UK, Mick had therefore become one of the many who experienced traumatic events associated with the main D Day enterprise but which passed largely unrecorded in the larger scale of things.

Les Tucker



The safety rules clearly stated that 'horseplay' was strictly forbidden, however sometimes there were minor 'incidents'.

Vic Clifford we can recognise but who were the other two? This picture was included in Ron Treadgold's retirement folder.

Bryan Howard

Railway Disasters

What a couple of awful Bank Holiday weekends it has been for the railway, which ended with both locos and one passenger wagon out of commission and a number of disappointed customers for our 7¼" gauge railway.

Things started going wrong on the Saturday before Easter, I was running a training day to familiarise some new volunteers on the procedures for driving the 0-6-0 diesel, Sir William Congreve. All had gone well until the last run of the day, which would have seen Sir William safely put abed, when as we approached the sidings for the engine shed, disaster, Sir William stopped. No bangs, no cloud of smoke, just silence. I lifted poor Sir William's body from his now still chassis, Ha, Ha, the circuit breaker had tripped. No problem; I reset the breaker and waved the driver forward, Oh no, the loco spun its wheels like a demented demon and died again.

By now it was past my home time so we pushed loco and carriages into the engine shed and went home planning to look at the loco the following Wednesday.

No good, I couldn't wait till Wednesday, so Monday found me back at the Mills taking Sir William apart and to cut a long story a bit shorter, I found the Controller that feeds the power to the three motors had blown all three FETs (FETs are a type of heavy duty transistor that control the motors). So I parcelled up the controller and sent it to the manufacturer for repair.

What to do now, Good Friday fast approaching and no trains to run! No, wait, the tram loco to the rescue.

I had never used the tram Loco in anger before, but had experiments earlier in the year to test the hauling capacity by placing four sweaty railwaymen on a wagon and pulling them up and down the track,

showed it was a capable little engine, but little did I know, there was a problem lurking in the loco and it was about to cause a disaster.

Good Friday came and the tram happily pulled wagons of visitors up and down the track. Saturday wasn't as busy but we gave a fair number of rides. Sunday was my day of rest, so back on Monday to give more rides and disaster, the third or fourth run of the day and the tram died too.

The problem was soon found to be the drive gear on one motor, which had come loose and was spinning freely, leaving the second motor to do all the work, so it promptly burnt out. Result more disappointed customers.

But wait I hear you cry, what about the passenger wagon, well the wagon we were using, which is fitted with air brakes, chose this moment to burst an airline, so we could not release the brakes.

The result of all these disasters is, that we could not give rides on VE weekend, but there is light at the end of the tunnel. Some months back I decided to invest in a spare controller so that in the event of such a problem as we had with Sir William, we could make a speedy repair, unfortunately, speed controllers are not an off the shelf item and the controller didn't arrive in time to save the VE weekend, but I have now received and fitted it to Sir William and after testing, hope to be up and running for Saturday 17th May.

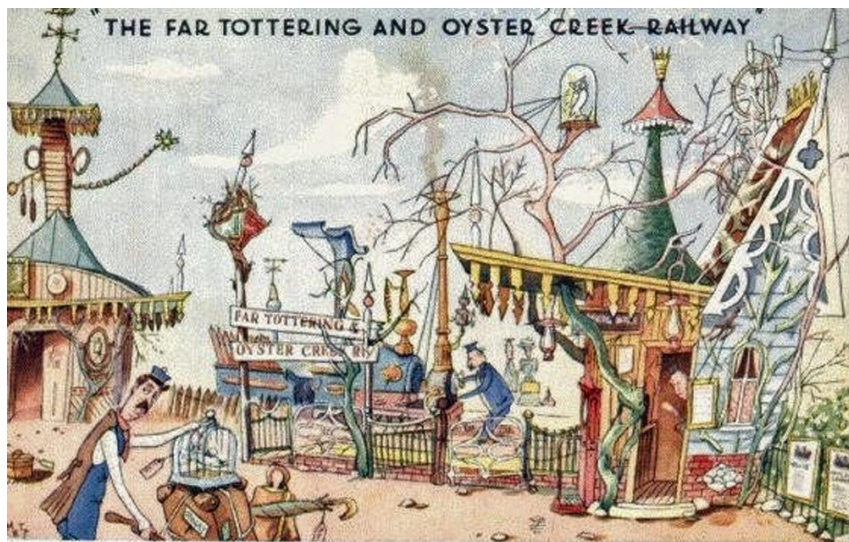
The Tram loco was purchased second hand and the motors are obsolete, but Sir William's motors are similar in size, so two new motors and new gears are on order from the company that made Sir William and as soon as they arrive I will modify the motor mounts to take the new motors.

The passenger wagon is also under repair and I hope to have that back in service for the 17th too.



One happy note, Mark, a new volunteer to the railway, is, like myself, a fan of Rowland Emmet and his 1951 Festival of Britain, ‘Far Tottering and Oyster Creek’ railway and as a result, Mark is in the process of building an Emmet style loco body, which will fit on Sir William’s chassis and make a far more impressive sight than poor Sir Williams miniscule form. Watch this space for more developments.

John Wilson



Julie's Nature Column

The months of May and June at RGM are great ones for spotting wildlife activity. Birds are nesting all over the site with quite a variety of suitable nesting places. Robins decided to nest in a small alcove in S34 at Newton's Pool. Great Tits are nesting in a disused water pump at Hoppit Road and inside a road cone at the Railway. Blue Tits are nesting in a hole in a brick wall along the canal and, finally, our resident Swans have made their nest and are hopefully sitting on eggs.

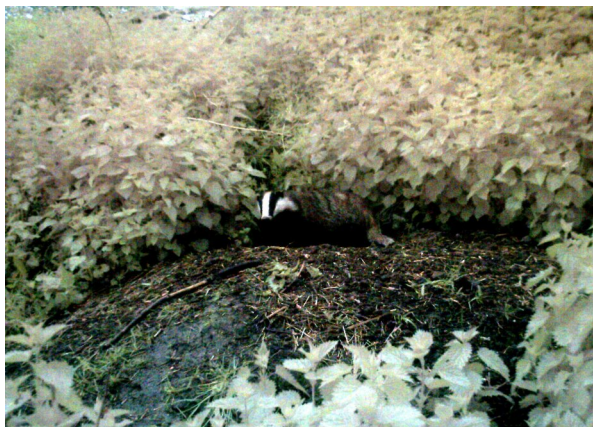
This year we managed to make and put up about 30 nest boxes around the site. Most are situated so that they can be seen from walking along many sections of the road. A group from Voluntary Action Epping Forest very kindly constructed most of them and erected them in the trees.

Badger activity can be seen all over the site, if you know what signs to look for. Their Spring cubs will be allowed out to play now so expect a lot of rough and tumble to occur outside the sett each evening. I know of a least 6 setts on site but I believe that they are seasonal, not all in use at the same time.

The first Dragonflies can now be seen at New Hill along with many Damselflies, including red ones. Some years ago many Dragonflies disappeared from the adjacent Dragonfly Sanctuary to come to New Hill. The lake there is the perfect habitat for laying their eggs and they constantly patrol and do aerial battle to maintain their territory.

Julie Matthews

The Mills Nature Conservationist



Photos by Julie



The artistic talents of Freda & Ron



I was saddened to learn of Freda Titford's death in the last edition of 'Touchpaper'. Whilst working at the Lee Valley Park Countryside/Information Centre in the Abbey Gardens from 1989 to 2001, I got to know Freda and her partner, Ron Treadgold (who also died in 2013) and saw at first hand their artistic talents. They both led day courses, Freda in watercolour painting and Ron in calligraphy, although Freda was also a talented calligrapher. She was elected a Fellow of the Society of Scribes &

Illuminators in 1976 and was able to combine her love of flowers, painting and calligraphy in a book published in 1982, 'Here's Flowers for You.' She undertook a number of commissions from greeting cards to book illustrations, including flower paintings for an anthology by Robin Lane Fox 'Vita Sackville West – The Illustrated Garden Book.'

Ron would drive Freda to the Centre in his Morris Minor and she would arrive with flowers, leaves and seeds freshly picked from the garden. Her drawing/painting demonstrations were always an inspiration to her students and along with her step by step guides; her individual help and personal encouragement, in a short time everyone had created their own piece of work. Very often the students did not think much of the standard of what they had produced, but however small; Freda showed them that framing the picture with a mount always made their work stand out. Everyone was always surprised that creating white flowers involved leaving the bright white paper unpainted for the petals, and with what seemed like only a few brush strokes, Freda would create a very realistic result by just painting in the shadows, leaves, stamens etc. The testimony to both her painting and teaching skills were that her classes were always over subscribed.

It was also a privilege to be involved in the private view and opening of the exhibition at Epping Forest District Council Museum in Sun Street in 1996, when Freda's fifty watercolour paintings (framed by Ron) of the Royal Gunpowder Factory went on show (never knowing that I would later go onto work on this north site when it opened as a visitor attraction in 2001). Ron felt that the various aspects of the diverse and interesting historic site should be recorded before further deterioration took place (and indeed some of what she painted no longer exists). Freda was given permission by the Ministry of Defence to visit the various areas of the site and she enjoyed capturing its distinctive features – buildings, boats, bridges, canals etc - as well as the flora and fauna. (Some of her watercolours can now be viewed on the 'History' section of the RGM website).

Ron was also involved (between 1993 & 1999) in an oral history project with freelance artist Simon Honey, who had been commissioned by Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, to record memories of staff and Friends associated with both the north and south sites. If it was the only way to contact them he would speak to them by phone from his garden shed!

It was a real pleasure to have known Freda and Ron for so many years and they both were so supportive in the jobs that I did – with often Ron turning up with a helpful map or piece of information or supplying home made wooden bladed pens and exemplars for his courses. He was always cheerful and had a twinkle in his eye even when he cycled round the RGM site when he wasn't supposed to!

A few years ago, Freda was very sad that she had to give up painting when her eyesight deteriorated, as it had been her passion for so long (her interest had been first sparked in 1942 when she attended, local artist, Walter E Spradbery's, evening class) and she was always enthusiastic to teach others, so that they could get out of it as much enjoyment as she did.

Cathy Morton Lloyd

Flower Quiz

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | She couldn't afford a carriage | _____ |
| 2 | Moggy breath freshener | _____ |
| 3 | Will I be remembered | _____ |
| 4 | Bill sounds like a nice fellow | _____ |
| 5 | She was left out at the dance | _____ |
| 6 | It's perfect to feed baby Pooh bear | _____ |
| 7 | Sounds like the first lady minister | _____ |
| 8 | There's never enough in the day | _____ |
| 9 | Dye for hands or hair | _____ |
| 10 | Von Trapp family flower | _____ |
| 11 | The pilgrims sailed on it | _____ |
| 12 | Needs no gilding | _____ |
| 13 | Winter avalanche | _____ |
| 14 | Bovine error | _____ |
| 15 | Reynard's mittens | _____ |
| 16 | Wed a valuable metal | _____ |
| 17 | Shepherd watched these by night | _____ |
| 18 | She ascended very properly | _____ |

30th May 1914 RMS Aquitania makes her maiden voyage.

6th Jun 1944 D-Day for the Normandy landings: 155,000 Allied troops land on the beaches of Normandy in France, beginning Operation Overlord and the Invasion of Normandy.

13th Jun 1944 World War II: Germany launches a V1 Flying Bomb attack on England. Only four of the eleven bombs actually hit their targets.

Trouble in Hughes Town - Another 2014 Anniversary

Other nations soon began to covet the fruits of Britain's Industrial Revolution and industrial espionage became common.

In parallel many attempts were made to lure British engineers and workers to establish works abroad. The Government attempted to curb this by legislation, but it proved almost impossible.

By the mid 19th. century transfer of technology to Western and Eastern Europe and Scandinavia was common. Beyond this much of Russia's economic and industrial development was based on British technology.

On occasion entire towns were based on an imported industry.

2014 is the bicentenary of the birth of John Hughes, who has more relevance to current events than one might think.

Hughes story is not quite rags to riches. The riches were certainly true, but not the rags. He was born in Merthyr Tydfil, the son of the head engineer at the Cyfarthfa Ironworks. John had inherited his father's engineering ability and his career blossomed in iron founding. He patented several developments in armour plating which was just coming in as a cladding for wooden warships and by the age of 36 owned his own iron foundry.

He moved to London and became a director of the Millwall Iron Works Company, which established a reputation for armour plating.

The reputation of the company was such that they received an order from the Imperial Russian Government to supply the entire plating requirements of the new naval fortress at Kronstadt. The size of the order was such that the decision was reached to establish a manufacturing facility in Russia. In 1855 Hughes moved to Russia,

accompanied by his wife and eight children. They were not alone. They sailed with eight ships taking the equipment for an entire iron works together with 100 skilled workers. The land chosen was in eastern Ukraine, part of czarist Russia, and there they established eight blast furnaces, together with coal mines, iron ore mines and brickworks together with housing.

Hughes provided a hospital, a church, a fire brigade and importantly a tea room.

The town was called Hughesovka.

Remarkably Hughes achieved all this whilst remaining semi-literate. He was unable to write and could only read capital letters.

Hughesovka flourished, later managed by Hughes four sons and by 1913 it produced 74% of all Russian iron.

After takeover by the Bolsheviks the expatriates left and in 1924 Hughesovka was renamed Stalino.

History moved on and in 1961 Stalino was renamed Donetsk.

The Ukraine was planning to issue a commemorative stamp marking Hughes bicentenary. Doubtless they are now fully preoccupied with other matters.

One wonders what John Hughes would have made of the present troubles of Donetsk.

Les Tucker



- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Sheila Cook | 21 Jock McDougal | 31 Dave Sims |
| 2 John Wright | 22 Les Tucker | 32 Richard Penfold |
| 3 Dave Hewkin | 23 Geoff Hooper | 33 Bryan Howard |
| 4 Brian Clements | 24 Malcolm Bergh | 34 Len Stuart |
| 5 Minnie Fenton | 25 Pam Colley | 35 Derek Back |
| 6 Brian Smith | 26 Gordon Bromberger | 36 Pauline Back |
| 7 Jean Church | 27 Barbara Coe | |
| 8 Dave Manners | 28 Geoff Colley | |
| 9 Michael Seymour | 29 Harry Edwards | |
| 10 Beatrice Hide | 30 David Cole | |
| 11 Bob Richards | | |
| 12 Daphne Clements | | |
| 13 Peter Hart | | |
| 14 Ann Wright | | |
| 15 John Rowley | | |
| 16 John Cook | | |
| 17 Andrew Cole | | |
| 18 Dianne Howse | | |
| 19 John Vernon | | |
| 20 Dave Debenham | | |

2014 AGM and Social

May 9th was a breezy, sunny day and a good number attended the AGM. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and all officers and committee members re-elected without any other nominations or objections, so no surprises there.

A good selection of food was available including sandwiches, finger food, cakes and fruit.

A group photo was taken by Ian MacFarlane which has been numbered and a list of those present appears on the previous page.

After lunch a group went with Len Stuart to look at some of our artefacts in store, several items were identified by members. Another group walked to the Green Hut to inspect progress. Others went on the landtrain tour with commentary by Dave Manners.

Unfortunately Mike Bagley, Les Bates, MC Black, Margaret Lee and Suzanne Learson were unable to attend on the day although they had booked. Hopefully they will make it next year.

From The British Newspapers

Commenting on a complaint from a Mr. Arthur Purdy about a large gas bill, a spokesman for North West Gas said: 'We agree it was rather high for this time of year. It's possible Mr. Purdy has been charged for the gas used up during the explosion that destroyed his house.'
(The Daily Telegraph)

Irish police are being handicapped in a search for a stolen van, because they cannot issue a description. It's a Special Branch vehicle and they don't want the public to know what it looks like.
(The Guardian)

Letters to Touchpaper

I joined P1 in 1962 working with Albert Lodge. Albert died in approx 1967 so I was resident fitter.

Through the years I was joined by Fred Saunders and later Brian Rider.

The Foreman was Len (I can't recall his surname). I worked in all P.1 buildings, but mainly 718 the press house, setting the cutting machines under Bob Greenfield.

John Ward - Fitter 1962 - 1988

You said you wanted good news. I'm not sure if this qualifies, but I finally got my Private Pilot's Licence. I've probably taken 10 times the average hours that a Battle of Britain pilot had, but I got there eventually!

Peter Stone

A respectful gesture for those who deserve

A plaque near the waterwheel where visitors can stay for a while, ponder over loved ones who lost their lives through explosions at the Mills, or serving their beloved homeland overseas in past wartime action. I implore the committee and company to respond to this request in respect and pay honour to all who deserve this that we never forget their patriotism.

Minnie Fenton

Quiz Answers

Words

1	Bed	11	Rake
2	Drive	12	Cape
3	File	13	Match
4	Pound	14	Painter
5	Bat	15	Crocodile
6	Rocket	16	Band
7	Bolster	17	Frog
8	Schooner	18	Cashier
9	Sledge	19	Rose
10	Spades	20	Ball

Flowers

1	Daisy	10	Eidelweiss
2	Catmint	11	Mayflower
3	Forget-me-not	12	Lily
4	Sweet William	13	Snowdrop
5	Wallflower	14	Cowslip
6	Red Hot Poker	15	Foxglove
7	Honeysuckle	16	Marigold
8	Aster	17	Phlox
9	Thyme	18	Primrose

Obituaries

LESLIE DINGLE 1931-2013

Les Dingle died on New Year's Eve 2013. For many years he worked in ERDE, mostly in the Chemical Engineering Section.

Les was a Cornishman, who married Pat, his childhood sweetheart, and they gave their children, Mark and Lorna, suitable Cornish names.

Les was afflicted with MS. Pat had a weak heart, and underwent a risky operation, planning to be well enough to look after him, but sadly died during the operation. Les tackled his MS with determination, sticking to a strict diet, and regularly undergoing hyperbaric oxygen treatment. He lived to be 82.

Les worked on the manufacture of high explosives, including RDX, but later worked with the Materials group. He is named on two patents, along with Alec Pryde and Greville Bagg. One patent is for processing aligned film by extruding onto a cylindrical surface.

Les was a sportsman. He persuaded me to join tennis and badminton clubs, (not because I was any good, but they needed my subscription), and told me off for playing on a grass court before 11am, when the dew was still on.

Les finally moved to Chinnor in Oxfordshire. He became treasurer of the local Methodist Church and started a debating group influential on local civic affairs.

A quiet man, but one who influenced many of us.

John Vernon

Sudden Death of Christine Needham

We learned of Christine's death in May from Geoff Hooper who, in turn, heard it from Doris Davis (Still living in Chorley). Bad news obviously travels far as well as fast.

Christine was one of the supporters of the Powdermill Club who didn't work on the site. Eventually she met and married Derek Needham. They were ideally suited and enjoyed a good social life together until Derek died in October 2006.

Christine will be fondly remembered as a member of a dining club that meets on Thursdays at the Sibthorpe Arms in Welham Green near to Phyl Pye's home.

A Photograph was taken on December 11th 2008 by Dave Hewkin when Chris Hewkin cooked a pre-Christmas meal. Ron Treadgold and Freda are no longer with us but Phyl Pye is and so the Thursday dining club will be reduced to four: Phyl, Dave and Chris Hewkin and yours truly.

Bryan Howard

Nancy Harris

I have received a card from a firm of undertakers which says that "Nancy Harris died peacefully at home".

Nancy joined ISRG on the same day as myself, 28 August 1948, as a shorthand typist. I believe it was her first job after training at the Tottenham Polytechnic. She was a very lively and flashy 15 year old young lady the likes of which I had never known before. When I returned from National Service in September 1950 she had left ERDE, presumably for a better paid job. Nancy came to a couple of Friends AGMs about 2008/9 where she was still just as bubbly as she was in her teens.

Roy Atkins



Powder Boat in Tent



Green Hut, Main Lab in Background