

Summer 2016

TOUCHPAPER

The Newsletter of the Royal Gunpowder Mills Friends Association

INDUSTRIAL PRESERVATION Contd.

2016 AGM and Reunion

The Survivors!

A Money Puzzle

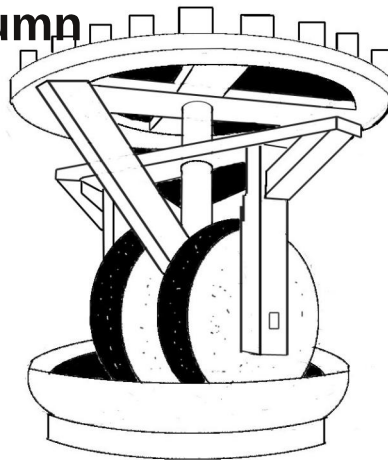
Ship Ahoy!

PGL Update

Wren Humour - Getting Old

Julie's Nature Column

Obituary:
Denis Ashby



Summer 2016

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Deadline for the next issue is 26th August 2016

Chairman's Chat

We are moving some things around on site so a visit to the Green Hut will be even more worthwhile. We are getting the 1906 fire alarm system working again. It is now based in the Green Hut and visitors may be able to operate it. For its age it has been very effective and could signal back to base where the fire was located. Brian Clements is the expert on this. Do come and see it. On a temporary or more permanent basis we will be moving one or two other items up to the Hut or its surroundings.

We have started making new carriages for the cannons near Walton House. The meranti wood we are using is readily sawn and chiselled so we hope they will be finished fairly soon.

Last summer we fired rockets on Wednesday afternoons and we hope to do the same this summer. Any other ideas for other new or improved exhibits would be very welcome.

As you may gather elsewhere in this Touchpaper there is a lot of uncertainty until we know what PGL are going to propose next. We must keep working on new ideas and ways of getting more visitors to the Mills.

Enjoy the summer, come to see the Mills and encourage others to come as well.

John Wright

Editorial

This issue has been slightly delayed as we were awaiting the results of the full EFDC council meeting to discuss and decide upon the PGL planning application.

Just before the meeting an article about the Mills and PGL plans appeared in The Times and the BBC did a piece on the local television news, all good publicity.

A majority of the council rejected the planning application as submitted. PGL may amend their application and try again. A report of the current situation by Len Stuart appears on page 18.

Len has asked for comments to be sent to his email address, for those without email you can send letters to Len or myself at the addresses inside the cover of this issue. However you communicate please do let us have your views, hopefully we can then publish a selection of comments in the next issue. Many people, both Friends and other volunteers and local people have put a lot of effort into ensuring that PGL did not take over the whole of the visitor attraction unobstructed.

Our thanks to all of you that lodged objections or comments with EFDC.

The second part of Les Tucker's Industrial Preservation article shows that some things can be sympathetically saved, we shall have to wait to see the future of the Mills.

Brian Clements

INDUSTRIAL PRESERVATION Contd.

CREATIVE RE-USE, COMMUNITY HERITAGE THE FAIRFIELD STORY

In the interim whilst the result of the PGL planning application was awaited, in the Spring issue of Touchpaper the opportunity was taken to explore the wider context of the industrial preservation scene in which the result of the PGL application might be judged. This theme is continued in examining a recent major example of Creative re-use.

At a Conference in Manchester in December 2015 – Reviving Places by Reusing Industrial Heritage, five awards were announced, ranging from craft studios to offices, apartments and a combined heritage centre and business units.

The latter - the FAIRFIELD DRAWING OFFICE, was most impressive. This was the conversion of the 1890 Head Office and Drawing Office of the Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Company of Govan, Glasgow into startup business workspaces with a centre for community activities and heritage interpretation incorporated in the scheme.

In the late Victorian and Edwardian era Britannia really did rule the waves, not only in terms of the worldwide presence of the Royal Navy policing the seas but the preponderance of the British merchant navy as the premier world marine carrier. This in its turn had resulted in a peak of demand for vessels from the British shipbuilding industry, both from the Admiralty and private ship owners.

The west of Scotland heavy engineering industry, centred on Glasgow, was called The Workshop of the World, with its products sold worldwide. One of the key elements in this industrial might was the Clyde shipbuilding industry. There were other important British shipbuilding centres – Merseyside, Tyneside, Belfast, Barrow, the Thames, but none quite matched the Clyde in geographical extent and the scope of the vessels produced – from the smallest steam launch to dredgers, warships, oil and ore tankers, tramp steamers, ferries, cable ships, ocean liners and so on.



**Fairfield workers leaving the main gate
Head Office / Drawing Office on left**

The Fairfield company, founded in 1834, was the largest and most prestigious on the Upper Clyde and was the life blood of the Govan community who provided most of the labour force from ordinary workers to a host of skilled trades - riveters, welders, carpenters, fitters, the specialists who created what were regarded as the finest ships engines in the world, boiler makers, electricians, plumbers and so on, many first serving apprenticeships.

Reflecting the prosperity, in 1889 the Board had decided to build what was the finest head office / ship and engine design office in the industry.



Fairfield drawing office 1909

However even then the seeds of Britain's industrial decline were being sown as it paid the price for being the first in the Industrial Revolution – unwillingness to adopt new ideas, bad labour relations, inability to accept productivity improvement measures, non acceptance of modern scientific method. Finally, post WW2 overwhelmed by builders who viewed ships as prefabricated commodities Fairfield was placed into receivership, followed by a long list of takeovers and amalgamations in a desperate attempt to regain competitiveness.

In 1967 the 'Fairfield Experiment' was initiated, involving new approaches to industrial relations and the introduction of modern management and production methods.

Such was the interest generated by the fate of Fairfield's as a symbol of the woes of industrial decline that no less a personage than Sean Connery directed a documentary for Scottish Television – Bowler and Bunnet, on the firm's history and the Experiment. Bunnet was Glaswegian for the flat caps universally worn by the workers and Bowler referred to the bowler hats worn by management, reputedly to protect them from objects 'accidentally' dropped on them from above .

High hopes were not fulfilled and the once proud yard struggled through various amalgamations - in 1968 Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, 1972 Govan Shipbuilders, 1977 British Shipbuilders, 1988 sale to Norwegian Kvaerner Group and currently finding some kind of stability as part of BAE Systems Maritime-Naval Ships, working on contracts for the Royal Navy.

Not surprisingly the decline of the company was accompanied by the decline of Govan as a community, with high levels of deprivation and it could well have been written off. However the tide of sentiment in favour of Industrial Re-use had been turning and a charitable social enterprise organisation – Govan Workspace, had been created with the object of re-using old industrial units in Govan to house 21st. Century enterprises, not only to achieve rental income but as vehicles of social regeneration. The Fairfield offices had been vacated by BAE CAD Design in 2001 and after lying empty were taken over, in 2011, by Govan Workspace.



Awaiting restoration



Main entrance

Govan Workspace's avowed intention was to create not only workspaces within the building but to create a heritage centre dedicated to the community which in spite of all the troubles had produced ships of the highest quality which had dominated the seas for many years. Their success has been marked by the AIA award.



**Fairfield Boardroom, preserved in heritage centre
One time nerve centre of world shipbuilding**



The Hall

For the future – the Govan Workspace Annual Review 2014 states

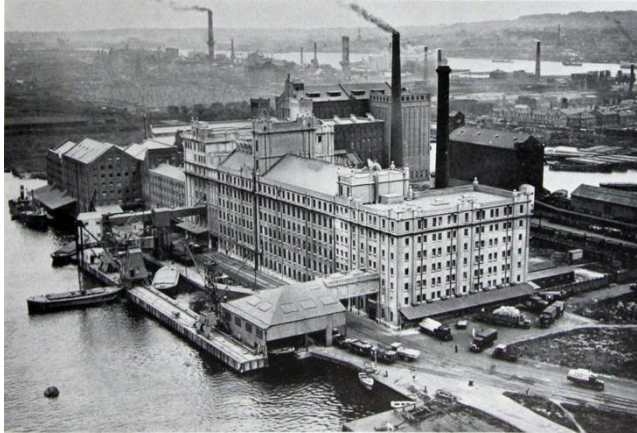
‘For Govan Workspace the completion of Fairfield does not mark the end of the project but the start of a long-lasting and sustainable community endeavour to create employment and to encourage local people in activities related to their heritage’.

The AIA awards covered a wide range of situations. Not all can be expected to attract national attention, such as the earlier Bankside power station project, but monolithic successes such as this play a valuable role in reinforcing at a national level the message of industrial preservation as a fundamental element of the country’s heritage.

In this respect the recent announcement is very encouraging that, as part of the £3bn Silvertown regeneration project, an initial grant has been made from the Government Capital Grant Fund for preliminary work on restoration of the massive Millennium Mills in the Royal Victoria Docks site, originally built by Vernon & Sons in 1905 to produce flour from grain directly shipped to the Mills wharves for the London and Southern England markets and rebuilt in the 1930’s.



Millennium Mills awaiting restoration



Grain discharge wharf at Millenium Mills

In parallel, the owners of the Camden Town music venue the Roundhouse are about to submit a planning application for a 2500 seat auditorium to be constructed around an imposing Grade II listed grain silo adjacent to the flour mill.



Artists impression of what the Roundhouse project will look like

From the late 1950's there was a very real danger that the evidence of the industrially / technologically based element of the nation's past would be progressively thrown away. Fortunately the rise of the industrial preservation movement has brought about a substantial change in attitude. However, constant vigilance is still required.

Les Tucker

The Oval gasholder

Historic England has recently reinforced the importance of gasholders as important expressions of the history of the technology vital to Victorian domestic life and the safety of the streets, not forgetting the by products which provided the building blocks of the Chemical Revolution, by awarding the gasholder overlooking the Oval cricket ground a Grade II listing.



Additionally of course there is a unique connection with sporting history.

When Gasholder No.1 was built at the Oval in 1847 it was the largest gasholder in the world, embodying the latest technology. It was rebuilt in 1877-79 and almost immediately became associated with the nation's sporting history when the first Test match was played at the Oval in 1880.

The decision to list the gasholder was stated as based on the grounds of historical, technical and architectural interest and its importance in the landscape.

The Heritage Minister said - 'A lot of cricket fans will recognise this structure which provides an iconic backdrop to a world famous cricket ground.'

Les Tucker

2016 AGM and Reunion

It was good to see everyone who made it to our annual event on 13th May 2016.

Sadly several of our "usual" members were unable to attend this year but we hope to see them next year. We were very pleased to see friends who had not been able to come for some years. Retirement is a wonderful thing!

At this time we do not know quite when or where the 2017 event will take place. We will keep you informed via Touchpaper.

Daphne Clements

Members who were present at the AGM and/or Reunion

John Wright
Len Stuart
John Cook
Dave Sims
Richard Penfold
Bryan Howard
John Wilson
Sheilagh Owens
Dave Manners
Daphne Clements
Derek Back
Pauline Back
Dave Hewkin
Michael Seymour
Suzanne Leeson
Tony Maddison
Richard Hooker
Geoff Colley
Pam Colley
Barbara Colley
Martin Ives
Geoff Hooper
Ron McEvoy
Brian Smith
David Cole
Gordon Mackinnon
David Steel
Anne Steel
Diane Howse
John Vernon
John Alexander
Sue Alexander



Photo: Ian MacFarlane

The Survivors!

We were born before television, before penicillin, polio shots, frozen food, photocopiers, plastic, contact lenses, videos, frisbees, credit cards, split atoms, laser beams and ball point pens, dishwashers, conditioners, drip dry clothes ... and before men walked on the moon. We got married first and then lived together (how quaint!) We thought 'Fast Food' was what you ate during Lent and a 'Big Mac' was an outsize raincoat. We existed before house husband, computer dating, dual careers and when a 'meaningful relationship' meant getting along with cousins and 'sheltered accommodation' was where you waited for the bus (remember buses?)

We were before day care centres, group homes and disposable nappies. We never heard of FM radio, tape decks, electric typewriters, artificial hearts, word processors, yoghurt and young men wearing earrings. For us 'time-sharing' meant togetherness, a 'chip' was a piece of wood or potato, 'hardware' meant nuts and bolts and 'software' wasn't a word.

Before 1940 'Made in Japan' meant junk, the term 'making out' referred to how well you did in your exams. A 'Stud' was something that fastened a collar to a shirt and 'going all the way' meant staying on the bus to the depot. In our day cigarette smoking was fashionable, grass was mown, coke was kept in the coal house, a joint was a piece of meat you had on Sundays and pot was something you cooked in. Rock music was a grandmother's lullaby, a gay person was the life and soul of the party while aids just meant beauty treatment or help for someone in trouble.

We, who were born before 1940, must be a hardy bunch when you think of the ways in which the world has changed and the adjustments we have had to make. No wonder we are sometimes confused and there is a generation gap - BUT WE HAVE SURVIVED!

Now a simple test for all readers who remember pounds shillings and pence: you younger persons can have a go as well but you will be at a disadvantage.

Bryan Howard

A Money Puzzle

		£	s	d	Why?
1	A stone				
2	An old bicycle				
3	Man's name				
4	Singing voice				
5	kind of pet pig				
6	Leather worker				
7	Part of a monkey's leg				
8	Sun, Moon, Pluto				
9	Royal headdress				
10	50% of panties				
11	Hit repeatedly				
12	Unwell sea creature				
	Total	32	17	8 1/2	

Ship Ahoy!

26 types of ship with a clue to their identity. first letter given, number in brackets is number of letters. Eg C(8)=Corvette.

A(8,7)	Pride of the navy
B(6)	Old sailing ship (for dogs?)
C(6)	Sailing ship (sounds as if it can be eaten)
D(7)	Fishing boat
E(1,4)	Launch
F(7)	Sailing warship
G(5,7)	Food ship
H(3)	Sailing workhorse
I(7,8)	Safety and rescue
J(4)	Oriental ship
K(5)	Type of canoe
L(5)	Luxury ship
M(7)	Heavy gunship
N(6,4)	Transporter
O(3,6)	Vital supplier
P(4)	Oriental sailing ship
Q(1,4)	WWI deception ship
R(2,2)	Passenger and vehicle ship
S(8)	Two masted sailing ship
T(7)	Fishing vessel
U(1,4)	German warship
V(6,8)	Raider
W(6)	Inland cargo carrier
X(5)	Xebec
Y(4)	Two masted sailing ship
Z(4)	Warrior or Scottish fishing boat

Bryan Howard

PGL Update

Following a split vote at the Council planning meeting in April, the application was referred to a full Council meeting of 58 members on Monday evening the 6th June. This has now taken place and a video of the entire meeting lasting over two hours can be viewed on the Epping Forest District Council web site. The plan was rejected by 26 votes to 18 with 2 abstentions and 12 non attending. The main reason given was the proposal for the almost complete demolition of the eastern flank cordite factory of 6 buildings, which although not listed, is a heritage asset in a conservation area. A second reason, although not a planning issue, was the failure to ensure the continuation of the Visitor Attraction. However, this is referred to in the Local Plan for the Mills site as being a requirement for prospective developers. It now remains to be seen how PGL will react. They can appeal, negotiate an alternative plan, or walk away. Councillors have indicated that if PGL appeal they will demand a public enquiry due to the importance of the site nationally. A further complication is that the Council have failed to agree a new Local Plan as required by Government, who can therefore step in at any time in the event of a dispute and take a decision without reference to the local authority.

During the final week before the Council meeting an article and picture was published in the business section of the Times. This led to a BBC TV local news team visiting the site for a two hour shoot and ending up staying all day. At the same time PGL

made an offer to the Operating Company to share the site which put severe restrictions on what could be done in the way of events and education. This was then put to Councillors as a last minute amendment which caused confusion as to its exact meaning and whether it was legally binding. The planning officer appeared equally confused. Below is just one clause which was highlighted at the meeting:-

“5. The preparation of a strategy to be agreed between the Trust and the attraction operator for the rationalisation and provision of those facilities that would need to be relocated, pending proposals for the introduction of a new sustainable visitor attraction.”

This shared use agreement has a five year clause which coincides with the expiry of the 25 year contract between the Foundation and the National Heritage Memorial Fund who provided the original lottery grant to open the site to the public. The whole southern part of the site outside the Scheduled Ancient Monument in the north could then be handed over to PGL should they eventually obtain planning permission.

Two days before the meeting Councillors were invited by PGL to visit the site for a conducted tour by a Council Officer and an agent for PGL. During such tours staff and volunteers are forbidden to approach or talk to Councillors.

The six official reasons for the Council's refusal have now been made available to Cheffins, the PGL agent, and we await the next move from PGL. Four of the reasons relate to the demolition of the majority of the cordite factory. One shows concern

about the continuation of the Visitor Attraction and one the amount of new build on a Green Belt site.

The Way Forward

The way forward was discussed at the meeting and should form part of the Councillors' response to the plans. The problem now for all parties is to come up with a plan that satisfies the restrictions suggested by Councillors, whether we work with PGL or another partner. PGL could use the existing cordite buildings and extend behind them. Even a two storey building behind these buildings would have a much lower visual impact on our part of the site. Think of the glass box extension to the power house that Hills Partnership built – very visible from the dragon fly meadows, but hardly to be seen from the Mills. Lottery funding would not be available for such a project as the Foundation are already going for a maximum grant of £5 million for restoration of the existing listed buildings to be handed over to PGL. Also it would go against the Green Belt restrictions on new build suggested by Councillors.

Operating Company thinking is that a nationwide advertising campaign could find a new commercial partner. This was tried in the early days of the Trust – think of that square book with the metallic embossed cover – no response. And it cost the then CEO his job. Over the intervening years there has been little success in finding occupants for the eastern flank or New Hill – remediation costs alone have seen to that. PGL therefore remain the only potential partner with the resources to take on a site

such as this, but can we convince them to take a reduced part?

Can the Friends Association play any part in solving this problem? The Council planners appear to have taken no notice of our alternative plan submitted to them along with our objections. This led to us circulating the plan to all 58 members of the full Council prior to their meeting on the 6th June where it was discussed. Some Councillors have requested our full objection document and some have been in touch both on site and by e-mail. They have suggested meetings between PGL and both the Operating Company and Friends as a future Visitor Attraction is a planning responsibility for all partners in the site. They could make this a requirement of a future PGL plan.

Comments to len.stuart@iee.org

Len Stuart

Wren Humour - Getting Old

A little old couple walked slowly into a McDonalds one cold winter evening. They looked out of place amongst the young families and young couples eating there that night. Some of the customers looked admiringly at them. You could tell what the admirers were thinking. "Look, there is a couple who have been through a lot together, probably for 60 years or more!"

The little old man walked up to the cash register, placed his order with no hesitation and then paid for their meal. The couple took a table near the back wall and started taking food off the tray. There was one hamburger, one order of French fries and one drink.

The little old man unwrapped the plain hamburger and carefully cut it in half. He placed one half in front of his wife. Then he carefully counted out the French fries, divided them in two piles and neatly placed one pile in front of his wife. He took a sip of the drink, and then his wife took a sip as the man began to eat his few bites. Again, you could tell what people around the old couple were thinking. "That poor old couple." As the man began to eat his French fries, one young man stood up and came over to the old couple's table. He politely offered to buy another meal.

The old man replied that they were just fine. They were used to sharing everything. Then the crowd noticed that the little old lady hadn't eaten a thing. She just sat there watching her husband eat and occasionally sipped some of the drink. Again, the young man came over and begged them to let him buy them something to eat.

This time, the lady explained that no, they were used to sharing. As the little old man finished eating and was wiping his face neatly with a napkin, the young man could stand it no longer and asked again. After being politely refused again, he finally asked the little old lady, "Ma'am, why aren't you eating. You said that you share everything. What is it that you are waiting for?"

She answered, "The teeth."

Ship Ahoy! Answers

Aircraft Carrier
Barque
Corvette
Drifter
E-Boat
Frigate
Grain Carrier
Hoy
Inshore Lifeboat
Junk
Kayak
Liner
Monitor
Narrow Boat
Oil Tanker
Proa
Q-Ship
Ro, Ro (Roll on, Roll off)
Schooner
Trawler
U-Boat
Viking Longboat
Wherry
Xebec
Yacht
Zulu (Warrior or Scottish fishing boat)

Obituary

Dennis Ashby 22/11/29 - 15/3/16



Dennis was born on the 22nd November 1929 at 39 Oxford Road, Ponders End, where he lived with his parents Harry and Maud and his two sisters, Doris (who survives him) and Joan.

On October 12th 1940, when he was 10 years old, he and his family were in their Anderson shelter in the garden, during an air raid. A bomb completely destroyed No 39.

In later years, Dennis could be persuaded to show the photograph taken of the scene the following morning. He moved with his parents to Nottingham for a year before coming back to rented accommodation in Enfield in 1941. After the war, they moved into the rebuilt house next door to his birthplace. Dennis lived at No 37 Oxford Road for the rest of his long life.

Dennis started work at the Co-op factory in Lincoln Road, building wings for the wooden Mosquito bomber. When the factory returned to making furniture, he left and in 1947 became an apprentice with GPO Telephones.

The only interruption to his employment with them was his National Service in the Royal Signals between 1948 and 1950. He was posted to Berlin during the Airlift. He often talked affectionately of his time there.

He returned to the GPO, through several changes of company name until he retired from British Telecom in 1993.

For a number of years, he was employed on behalf of BT at the Royal Gunpowder Mills in Waltham Abbey. In the days when it was a research establishment, he worked there installing telephones and communications equipment. After the site closed in 1991, and following his own retirement he continued to visit the Mills as a member of the Friends, helping to conserve the history of the site.

For many years he was dedicated to fishing. He spent many happy hours with a rod in his hands and travelled quite widely to visit different canals, rivers and lakes around the country, often with small groups of friends. He would frequently walk the 5 miles to the fishing club at Rammey Marsh for a few pints and a chat and then walk home again.

Dennis was a collector. He visited markets, junk shops, antique shops, postcard fairs and auctions. He rarely came home empty handed but never with rubbish. His collection of horse brasses contained nothing that was not genuine. He collected vintage postcards of the Lee and Stort Navigations. He collected old books, sometimes in very poor condition, and would have them restored to their former glory. He only read factual books, never fiction. And with all his collections, his knowledge grew. But he would never force facts upon you. You had to ask and in his quiet way he would answer.

He was a founder member of the Herts Heavy Horse Association in 1993 and always wore their badge in his lapel. He attended all their meetings and events and earlier this year he was made a life member of the Association. The award gave him a great deal of pleasure. He had a large collection of postcards of heavy horses and decorated wagons and floats.

I first met Dennis a year later, in early 1994, when we used some of his extensive waterways postcard collection to illustrate the Guide to the Lee & Stort Navigations, published later that year. We became friends and we began to catalogue that postcard collection. This was

the start of our regular monthly meetings. It was well over two years before we completed the task. The collection continued to grow, latterly with the aid of Ebay. He joined us on a narrowboat holiday in October '96 to the Rochdale Canal. That holiday was the first of the 10 years of canal boating we did together. One of his pleasures was to get off the boat and walk the towing path.

As he walked, his eyes were never still, he would bring back little items that he had spotted. Sometimes useful, like a little penknife or a coin, sometimes of no use at all but always of interest. The pockets of his venerable Barbour jacket contained a treasure trove. He always carried seeds and acorns and he would occasionally stop and push one into the ground. A number of the trees that grow along the Lee Navigation certainly owe their genesis to Dennis.

He seemed only to notice the positives in people or events, and shrugged off things that would bring many down, even when his own capabilities declined.

Richard Thomas

Julie's Nature Column

At last some much needed warm sunshine has arrived after a bit of a stutter. The warmth seems to produce plenty of insect activity just at the right time when the birds need to feed their chicks.

This makes it a bit difficult for me to get photos because they never stay in one spot long enough or maybe I'm just too slow. I was quick enough to get this Black cap recently though.



There has been a fox that keeps making an appearance when the land train or army truck drives past. It's usually in the same area so it's quite possible that there are cubs. I seem to be the only person that keeps missing it's appearances, maybe it's camera shy, but I did eventually spot this fox.



The deer at this time of year seem mostly relaxed, enjoying the new fresh grass, spending a lot of time on the Mead and at the stage where their antlers are starting to regrow. I witnessed some behaviour that I've not seen before, when being dominant over food usually a wave of antlers does the trick, but as they haven't got any at the moment I saw biting take place as a show of dominance.



For the past few weeks there has been a lot of sightings of Red Legged Partridges. Seems that every corner on the road has a pair of them and they take great delight in being road runners to keep you from driving past.



I am hoping that our resident swans will breed this year, the nest building started and the female seemed to enjoy sleeping on the nest, but no eggs as yet. Fingers crossed for some cygnets this year as I'm getting withdrawal symptoms. I can only hope.

Julie Matthews

Nature Conservationist - Royal Gunpowder Mills



**Fire alarm control panel
in Green Hut and RSAF
alarm pillar near
Armoury (the Library
building)**