

Summer 2020

TOUCHPAPER

The Newsletter of the Royal Gunpowder Mills Friends Association
Registered Charity No. 1115237

The Waterways of the Royal Gunpowder Mills

Quiz – What do you know about Scotland?

An Evacuee Remembers

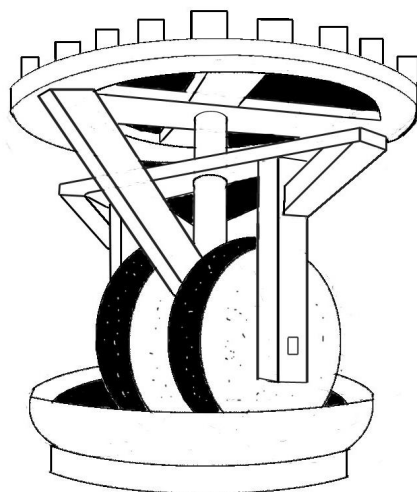
Briggens Hall and S.O.E

A New River Walk

Key Events over the Past 20 Years Part 1 2002 - 2010

Letters

Julie's Nature Column



Summer 2020

Officers of the Friends Association

Chairman

Dave Sims
8 Norman Close
Waltham Abbey
Essex
EN9 1PY

Treasurer

Ron McEvoy
6 Lea View
Waltham Abbey
Essex
EN9 1BJ

ronaldmcevoy@btinternet.com

Secretary

Len Stuart
13 Romeland
Waltham Abbey
Essex
EN9 1QZ

Membership

Friends Association
Royal Gunpowder Mills
Beaulieu Drive
Waltham Abbey EN9 1JY

**All enquiries relating to this newsletter and articles
should be addressed to:**

Brian Clements
56 Park Road
Enfield
EN3 6SR

wargmfa@btinternet.com

Deadline for the next issue is 28th August 2020

Chairman's Chat

Well there we were ready for another season and Vroom, everything closed by Government order and us oldies self-isolating. It is unclear when the Mills will be able to reopen, but it looks as though the summer season will pass with the Mills still closed to visitors. This obviously has implications for the finances of the Mills and the Trustees have been very busy trying to work out a plan as to how to cope particularly as the goalposts keep changing. It is hoped that an announcement can be made when the situation clarifies and that a carefully planned return of some volunteers will be possible.

Obviously your committee have not met and the AGM and Reunion have had to be cancelled. Most of you who normally attend will have missed the chat and the food but at least you will have avoided the Chairman droning on about not much. Because of the situation the Charity Commission have allowed us to cancel the formal AGM and the committee members have agreed to carry on for another year.

The only good news is that the sun has shone more than I can ever remember but of course we cannot go anywhere yet and the local hostelrys are still closed.

I have to report some sad news, Pauline, the wife of one of our committee members Derek Back has sadly died, we all pass on our best wishes at this time.

Let us hope that by the autumn thing will look brighter even though the pessimists say things will never be the same.

Good luck, stay safe.

Dave Sims

Editorial

Although our printers (Images of Chase Side Enfield) are unable to open their shop they are accepting jobs electronically and delivering so we have been able to produce this issue.

The Mills site has been closed so any mail including renewal payments and reunion bookings have not been retrievable until just before we went to print, apologies to those of you who have sent cheques. No renewal requests are included this time; the membership and any refunds for the cancelled reunion will be dealt with when possible. If you have any queries please contact our treasurer.

Thanks to our contributors. Some of you must have time to spare now; I know it can be difficult to post items but please could those who have email ability send a short note of how you are coping with lockdown and especially how you are occupying your time.

In past times Norman Paul had problems persuading people to contribute. Once in desperation he sent out a 'Roundtuit', made like a beer mat, hoping it would produce results from those who had promised something at some unspecified time in the future. I'm not sure if it worked but I live in hope, sorry you'll have to manage without the beer mat.

We are sorry to have to announce the recent death of Pauline Back; her husband, Derek often manned the rocket exhibition when the site was open. They were seen at reunions and 'Last of the Summer Wine' meetings in the Crown in Romeland. Our sympathies and best wishes go to Derek and their family.

We have heard that Jessie Rainbird, widow of Bob, has died recently.

Hopefully obituaries will be available for the next issue.

Brian Clements

The Waterways of the Royal Gunpowder Mills

Though legend has it that Alfred the Great had channels dug to thwart the Danes in 895 and millstreams at Waltham Abbey are recorded in the Domesday Book in 1085 the earliest surviving map of the area is held in the archives of the Marquess of Salisbury at Hatfield House. This map shows the waterways at Waltham Abbey in 1590. A Fulling Mill is marked where Powder Mills are shown on Powder Mill River on the 1767 map. It was on this site that the present Gunpowder Mills started. In the early 17th century this Fulling Mill was converted to an oil mill. Then a deed of 1669 tells us that the “Oyle Mill... now lately converted into two powder mills...for the grindinge, boylinge, corninge and drying of powder”. In 1735 Mr J. Farmer produced a detailed view of the Powder Mills and in 1770, Peter Muilman wrote of “several curious gunpowder mills, on a new design, worked by water (the old ones having been worked by horses)”. The Mills were described in 1735 as “The largest and compleatest works in Great Britain”.

Yet at the heart of this was a profoundly simple element — water. The Mills were reliant on the most complex and intensive use of waterways ever seen at a single British location. The system of canals, locks and aqueducts permitted not only an efficient internal conveyor system for raw materials and finished product — and a link to the ports, via the River Lea — but also segmented the site into separate zones to minimise casualties in the event of the inevitable unexpected detonation, exclusively utilising wooden barges to maximise levels of safety in the explosive atmosphere.

When canals were first built in England the use of puddling clay to line and waterproof the channel was almost universal. A cross-section of a typical canal showed a flat bottom which sloped up at either side to the banks.

When the canals in the Mills were dredged during the decontamination process in the early 1990s, it was revealed that the early channels, at least, were built with timber reinforced vertical sides.



Photo Richard Thomas

There were only two canals initially and both were in place by 1806. They gave access from the Millhead Stream, and thus the mills lining that waterway, to corning mills both built close to the River Lea. The Lea was six feet lower than the Millhead, which provided the head necessary to drive the waterwheels. Thus, some of the canals within the site were dual purpose; using the water flow to drive the machinery and the surface to move the purpose built boats which carried the gunpowder ingredients and compounds as they proceeded along the manufacturing flow line.

The third channel, built in 1806, was the Powdermill Stream which provided a connection between the Millhead Stream and the relatively new Lee Navigation. This had been built in 1770 and gave a wide modern pound-locked channel directly to the Thames, without the shallows, bends, mills, weirs and flashlocks of the old Barge River. The Navigation was 2 foot 6 inches lower than the Millhead so it was necessary to build Edmonsey Lock to overcome the difference.

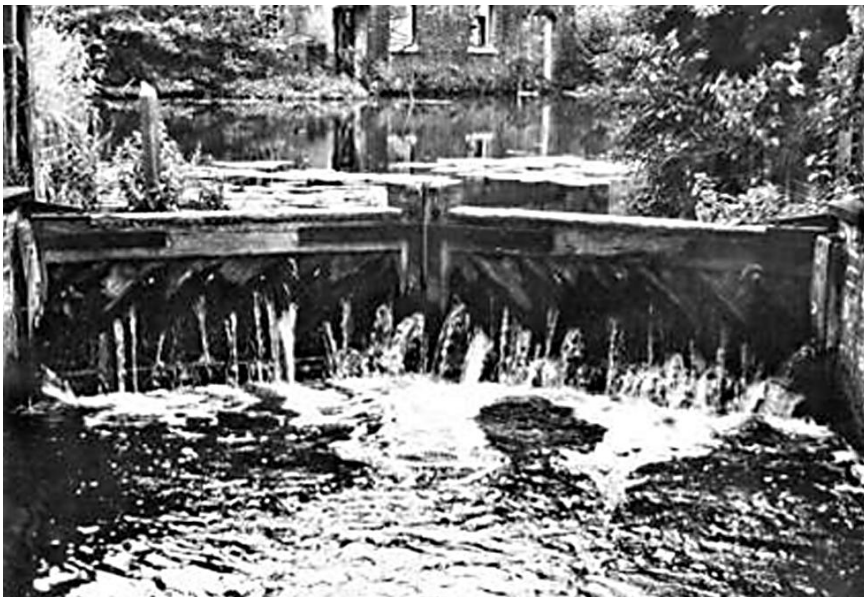
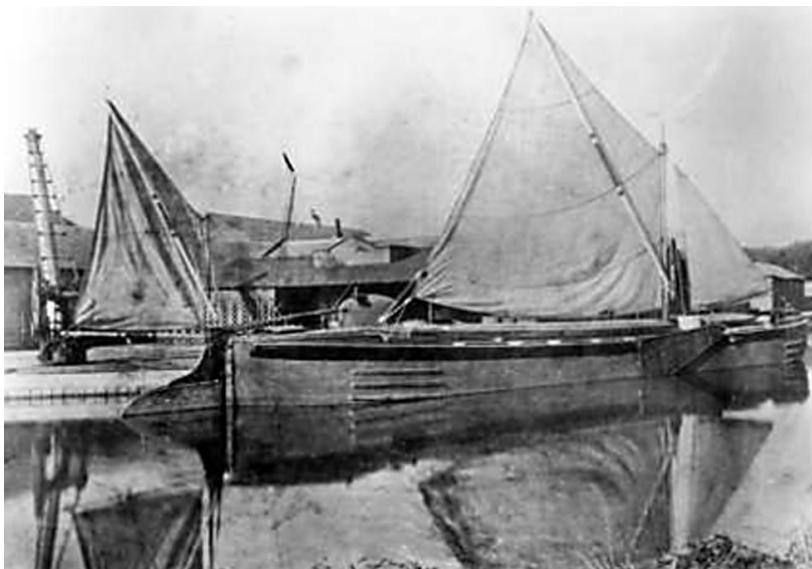


Photo Christine Richardson

There was now a direct waterway connection between the Grand Magazine holding the finished gunpowder and the magazines at Purfleet, without passing through the Mills. By 1806 there were already at least five barges carrying gunpowder between Waltham and Purfleet. One of the gunpowder sailing barges, *Lady of the Lea* built in 1933, still survives.



Lower Island was established, with its supporting waterways, to the south of Highbridge Street soon after 1806. By 1827, there were a number of small waterways serving the lower part of the Mills just to the north. A survey in 1814 included the information that there were “five barges, nine powder boats, two ballast barges and six punts

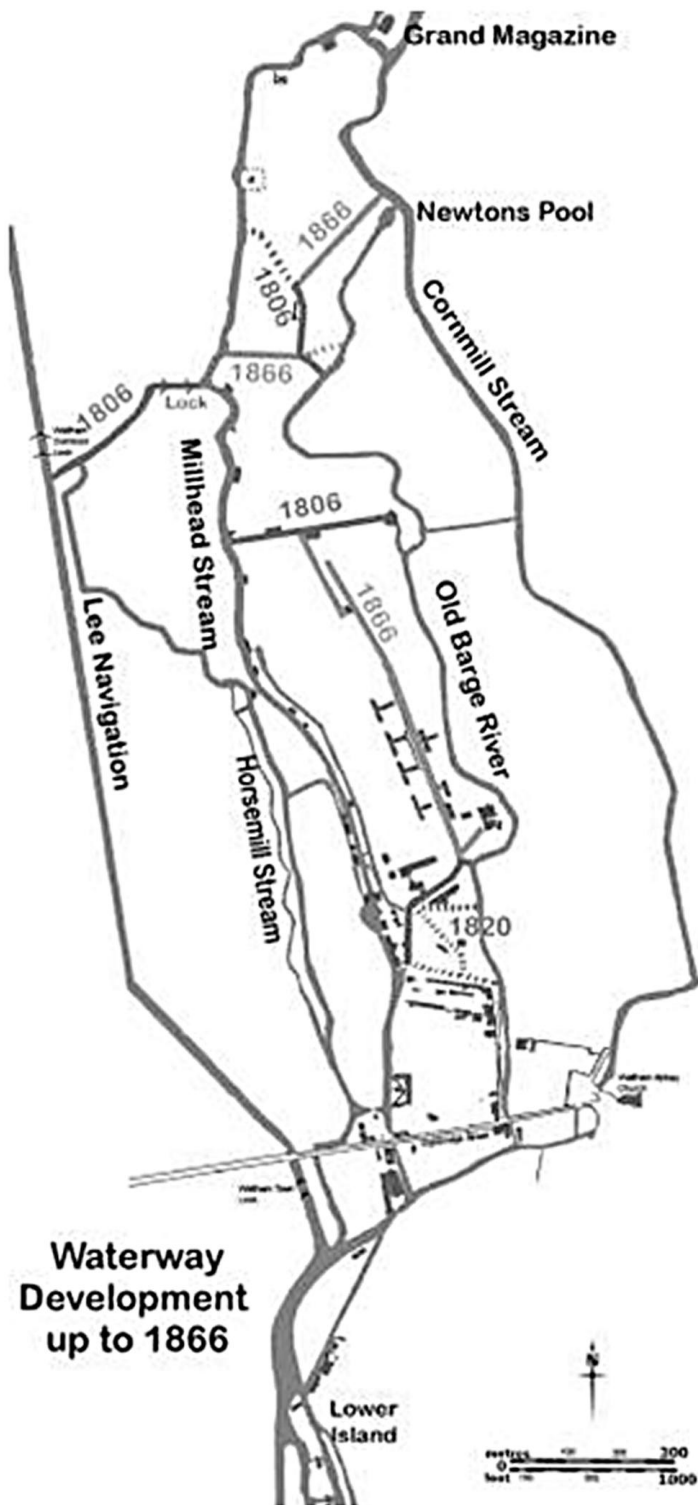
The coming of steam power signalled the end of the Mills’ dependence on water power with, in 1857, the building of the new Group A Mills with their associated boiler house and beam engine on a site to the south of Queens Mead, together with the provision of a number of carriage only channels.

These waterways were designed not to provide flowing water power to millwheels but solely to transport materials to and from the incorporating mills, although the northern part of the Queen Meads channel did act as a tail stream for the blank cutting house situated on a side cut from one of the original pre-1806 canals.

The Waterway Development map shows the three dates on which surveys were taken, 1806, 1820 and 1866. The application of a date to a waterway indicates only that it was in existence by that date; it is not the date the waterway was built.

Waterways within the Mills which later became extinct are shown as dotted lines.

The next surge of canal building came in 1878-9. The waterways were needed for access to the new nitro-glycerine, guncotton and cordite processing buildings. This expansion provided two cast iron aqueducts where the canals crossed the River Lea and a lock which connected the upper and lower levels of the canal system, as well as over a thousand yards of waterway. The aqueducts were probably floated into position on barges on the Lea, as they are both made of two side plates, each a solid casting, bolted to the base plates on site. One survives in very good condition and can be seen just south of the Burning Ground.





Aqueduct near the Burning Ground (Richard Thomas)

The 1878 lock was built to link the existing channel serving the Blank Cutting House (this building has been restored) and the canal connecting with the Incorporating Mills on Queen Meads. Although the lock appears to protrude above the surrounding landscape, it must be remembered that decontamination removed about two feet of topsoil. The original water level can be easily judged by the white lime staining on the abutments.



View of the 1878-9 lock chamber (Richard Thomas)

The paddle and sluice gear are of particular interest. The culverts are quite small and circular in section. The sluice gates are made of cast iron and are similarly circular in shape. The paddle gear is operated by a worm drive. These features would combine to make it impossible to fill the lock quickly. There would have been virtually no turbulence to throw the powder boats about, thus minimising the risk of banging the boat against the lock-side with possible catastrophic results. It also seems that the men who built the lock did not assume that the Mills' boatmen knew about lock operation; carved into the granite coping stones by the paddle gear at the top and bottom of the lock are the words "IN" and "OUT".

The footbridges over the canals were built to allow passage of the semi-cylindrical boats that carried the raw materials around the site. If a boat was passing through a bridge, men were forbidden to cross for fear that grit falling from their boots might contaminate the cargo.

In 1888, the acquisition of Quinton Hill Farm allowed the Royal Gunpowder Mills nearly to double in size. Nitro-glycerine, guncotton and cordite were all manufactured on this new South Site. There was an extensive waterway system accessing the cordite drying stoves. A lock was built at the southern end of Lower Island to allow waterway connection without using the Lee Navigation which would have attracted a toll. In 1896, the last of the four locks of the Royal Gunpowder Mills complex of waterways was built connecting the Millhead Stream to its tailstream level, six feet below. This enabled a more direct route from the South Site and Lower Island to the Grand Magazine on the North Site. By 1897, the increase in demand for cordite instigated the building of even more cordite drying stoves and the First World War created still further demand. The resultant extension of the waterways brought the canal system to its maximum extent of nearly 10 miles. The third cast-iron aqueduct was installed in 1904. This one was of a different design, supported on two girders and built in sections. The remains of the brackets which carried the towpath can still be seen. The bottom plate has fractured and fallen away, possibly as a result of two nearby explosions in 1940.

The canals were used up to the time of the Second World War, though with decreasing frequency. The last waterway to be built at the Royal Gunpowder Mills came about as a direct result of the massive nitro-glycerine explosion in 1940. The Court of Enquiry into the explosion recommended: "Transport. Quick boat transit can be facilitated by... connecting the high level canals between No 4 Mixing House and No 6 Mixing House..." The new canal was estimated to cost £2000. The relatively high price was no doubt due to the fact that the two houses were separated by the Old River Lea and an aqueduct would be required. Nonetheless, this structure was obviously a product of the austerity years. It consisted simply of concrete pipes laid side by side in the bed of the river with a concrete channel built over the top. No cast iron and royal insignia for this one, just the date cast in the concrete!

Since the Royal Gunpowder Mills closed in 1945 no use has been made of the canal system. Many of the waterways at the north end drained or choked with weed. Even where they remained, they became part of a secret nature reserve. This was rudely disturbed when the site was decontaminated in the early 1990s but it has not taken long for nature to reassert itself. The South Site has disappeared, partly under a housing estate, partly under Sainsbury's Distribution Depot and partly under the re-landscaping of Gunpowder Park, managed by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority. Parts of Lower Island are under the M25 and the Lee Flood Relief Channel. The surviving waterways and the ruins and restored buildings on their banks bear witness to a sometimes explosive but always fascinating past.



The march of progress... the Lower Island Lock. disappears under the embankment for the M25

Richard Thomas

An abridged version by Chris Bushill originally published in "Meridian Cuttings" from Richard Thomas' booklet.

Quiz – What do you know about Scotland?

1. Which is Scotland's "Granite City"
2. Name the most westerly point of the British mainland
3. What is an Arbroath Smokie
4. Where is Neptune's Staircase
5. Where are the "Dandy" and "Beano" comics printed
6. Name the Roman wall near Falkirk (North of Hadrian's wall)
7. When should Haggis, Tatties and Neep be eaten in January, and what are they
8. Where is Granton Harbour
9. Which WW II hero was born in Moffatt
10. What are the ingredients of Scotch Woodcock
11. Where is the Burrell Centre
12. What is a Howff
13. Which English town is named after a Scottish canal engineer
14. Which malt whisky comes from the Isle of Skye
15. Where is Glasgow's main water supply
16. What is the name of the last paddle steamer that still visits the Clyde
17. What is known locally as the "Clockwork Orange" because of its colour
18. Which scientist who worked on North site gained a PhD from St Andrews University
19. Launched in 1934 which shipyard built the Queen Mary
20. Who designed the Willow Tea Rooms in Glasgow (among other things)
21. Which Scottish railway station is named after a work by a Scottish author

Bryan Howard

An Evacuee Remembers

June 2020 marks the 80th anniversary of the movement of schools from East Coast towns into the heart of the country away from what was a potential German invasion zone and a likely bombing target area.

In retrospect we evacuees were excitedly looking forward to a holiday from school even though the teachers were coming with us. We couldn't be away for long as we only had a few clothes to carry, a packet of sandwiches and a gas mask; little did we know that the 'holiday' would last about 3 ½ years!

We were assembled at Lowestoft railway station and left for either the Nottinghamcoalfield villages or in my case the Peak District of Derbyshire, Glossop.

I recall very little of the journey but on emerging from, what must have been the Woodhead Tunnel, saw a land of hills with fields marked with stone walls. Later we discovered that there was no beach and no sea!

The reception at Glossop was well organised and I recall having my first ride in a car! Having been deposited at my billet there was a problem for my foster parents, and for me, to understand each other's accents!

I must have been a problem child as I stayed at no less than four places in Glossop although most of the time was with the Websters, who had no children of their own. Their son was born after I left for Worksop, having passed the 11+; the Lowestoft Grammar school was at Worksop where I spent one year before returning to Lowestoft for Christmas 1944, just in time to experience V1 doodle-bugs and learning to dive under the dining room table when the motor cut out (what a stupid thing to do!).



**Above Alma, Sheila & Ian Webster, Bryan & Chris Brooks.
Right Bryan & Ian Webster**



Return to Glossop

Apart from a brief visit to Glossop when I was stationed at RAF Padgate (Warrington) doing National Service, I didn't return until 2008. By that time the Websters had died and their son, Ian, had retired! We met again each year at the group visit by the Lowestoft evacuees until Ian died in 2017 leaving his widow Sheila to greet us on our return.

One essential part of the visit to Glossop each year is for the group mini-bus to drop me in Chinley, only about 7 miles away, to visit Tony and Beryl Barratt; I'm pleased to report that they're doing well enjoying their retirement.

Bryan Howard

Briggens Hall and S.O.E

There has been a Hall on the Briggens estate from the early 1600's with Sir Thomas Foster living there until his death in 1616. The hall lies close to the River Stort on the Hertfordshire side of the river and about a mile from Roydon. The estate passed to Robert Chester (1675-1732) who commissioned one Charles Bridgeman to rebuild the house and gardens around 1720.

With the death of Robert Chester in 1728, the House passed to Blackmore and Phelps 1740 until 1907. The house and grounds then passed to Lord Hunsdon.



Briggens House

By the start of W.W.2 the house was owned by 4th Baron Aldenham Walter Gibbs.

In 1941 the War Office requisitioned the property for the S.O.E. - Station XIV (Polish Section) who took over the house as the main forgery operation to support their agents in the field. But the War Office did allow the family to remain in residence, which was unusual.

S.T.S. 38 Polish Training Section, known as the Cichociemni (Silent and Unseen) was selected from the Polish Home Army, that had escaped to Britain during the German invasion of Poland and was also based at the Hall, training in Combat, Sabotage and Subversion, and it was S.O.E's job to supply the agents with forged identities, ration books, clothing and weaponry.

The Commanding Officer was Captain Morton Grainger Bisset, a highly trained and Specialist printer, to organise and supply all the documents that an agent would require when parachuting into enemy territory. Violette Szabo and F.F.E. Yeo-Thomas known as (White Rabbit) were amongst the many that passed through Station XIV.

By war's end Briggs had produced 275,000 forged documents all of which were of such high quality that the Germans couldn't tell good from bad and 43 million zloty (the Polish Currency).

After the War things returned to normal, but in 1979 the Briggs was turned into a Hotel and the grounds into a Golf Course. In 2010 the Hotel closed but the Golf Course continued until 23rd August 2019 when that had to close too. Now the Hall and land are locked off and there is no entry, either from the A414 or from the Roydon end, but I did note that the grounds are mowed, so someone is looking after the park, though the two Gatehouses on the Roydon end are in very poor condition.

John Wilson

PS

I came across the history of Briggs while trying to find out who built the Tower House, which stands in the parkland and can just be seen from the Essex side of the River Stort when standing in Hunsdon Mead, but can't find any reference to it. When you zoom in on it, you can see that it is reasonably well maintained.

JW

A New River Walk

Richard Thomas's Article about the history of the New River spurred me to take a walk along part of the River from Rye Common pump house, past Amwell Marsh Pump House, finishing at Amwell Island, a very pleasant walk.

Although the the river was completed in 1613, it wasn't until the 1840's that the pumping stations were constructed to improve the flow of water.

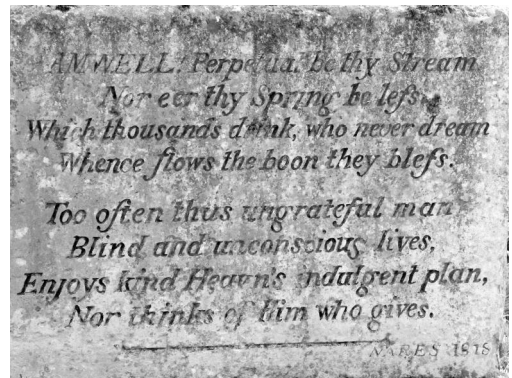
I started the walk at Rye Common which is just south of St Margarets, which is effectively part of Stanstead Abbots Village today.



As you can see from the photo, the pump house is still in use to pump water to London, though sadly it's electric pumps, not beam engines that do the work. As you can see from the photo, the water is pumped above and into the river, unlike Amwell Marsh Pump's which pump the water below the river level. There is an underwater weir up river from each pump discharge point so that the water always flows south to London.

Past Amwell Marsh Pump, there is a footpath that takes you over the Hertford East railway line to the River Lea and the old gravel pits, now a nature reserve.

Finally we get to the Island, which has two stones, one a memorial to Sir Hugh Myddelton, (that I presume is in Latin), the second a poem is in English. You will need some binoculars as you can't get onto the Island.



On the opposite side of the road and to the east of the New River, is Emma's well, a spring that is reputed to have been used to feed water to the river, though it is significantly lower than the river. Sadly the spring has been dry for many years, though I have seen it with flowing water, but that was long ago. There is also, behind the fence and to the right of the steps that take you

down to the spring, a stone with a poem to Emma, badly worn and hard to read. One other point of note is the huge conifer that is growing on the island is very impressive.

Up on a hill, behind the Island is an old church, which is well worth a visit too.

John Wison

Letters

Roy Carter

In these dark times it is gratifying to learn of good news, and this is excellent news indeed. It brings us a small ray of sunshine in these foreboding times. I learned from Roy and Barbara Carter's solicitor that they have won a long and hard fought battle, for damages, with MOD. MOD has conceded the negligence case against it for Roy's workplace exposure to asbestos and his subsequent death from asbestos related mesothelioma.

Congratulations are due for all of our colleagues who gave evidence to help win his case. You know who you are. I am sure we will all be delighted, for Barbara and her family, that they will have their lives made easier now.



Many still miss Roy. He was taken before his time. He was a larger than life character, technically accomplished and a warm and personable human being. He is remembered for his fiendish sense of humour, his pranks, his elephantine memory and his ability to recall an almost endless stream of entertaining, if scurrilous, anecdotes.

What was Barbara going to do with her hand?

Martin Gough

Key Events over the Past 20 Years Part 1

2002 - 2010

The Friends Association has now been running for over twenty years, so it seems fitting, during this period of enforced idleness thanks to coronavirus, to look back and take stock on what has happened over that period. This article gives a few snippets from previous editions of Touchpaper. It is impossible to cover everything in one issue, but it is hoped that some of the pictures and words may stir memories and hopefully some feedback.

Spring 2002

Royal Society of Chemistry presented plaque to the RoyalGunpowder Mills for important chemical breakthroughs. Trevor Knapp received the award from Dr David Giachardi of the RSC.



Spring 2002

A new fireworks display was opened in the old Chemical and Glassware Store. At the opening of the exhibition the building was renamed as the 'Spinks Gallery' to acknowledge the work done by Don Spinks in setting up the Company.



June 2003

Work started on the renovation of the Fire Alarm system. A couple of alarms had been saved during the Royal Ordnance closure of the South Site in 1989.



March 2004

The melting snow and rain in early February caused water levels to rise in the Flood Relief Channel along the western boundary. Water overflowed the bank and flooded a substantial part of the site



Queens Mead looking North (L157 on the left) Feb. 2004

June 2004

‘FRIEND’S EXHIBITION’ Working parties had been busy setting up an exhibition in the Annex of L157 showing various aspects and equipment of chemical laboratories and a display on rocketry.



September 2004

Ian MacFarlane joined the staff. Regular attendees at the annual Reunion will know Ian as the man behind the camera for the group photographs. He maintains the Company IT system and does a host of other things.



March 2005

Liz Went joined the staff of the Company as Volunteer Manager thanks to Heritage Lottery funding. Liz started on 1st February and set up a database of existing volunteers. She hoped to build up the volunteer base with new people.



June 2005

‘CARNEGIE’ and ‘WOOLWICH’ on display in front of the Volunteer Base. Carnegie was purchased in 1966 by the Bicton Railway and subsequently sold to the Royal Gunpowder Mills in 2000.



June 2005

Highly successful 60th Anniversary of VE Day celebration stages on 7th and 8th May. Highlight was a Spitfire aerobatic display by the only surviving airworthy two seater spitfire trainer flown by Carolyn Grace.



December 2005

Lynn Duke joined the staff as Team Administrator in November. Lynn previously worked at the Theobalds Park Conference Centre. She ran the finances until 2019.



June 2006

Reunion 12th May 2006 was the first one to be held on the site. The mobile bar was much appreciated. Numbers were up on the previous years with over 80 bookings.



March 2007

Restoration of Powder Barge nearing completion. At the time it was located in L168; it is now in the green Hut.



March 2007

Flooring of one of the working bays in L157 was completed and lighting installed. Work commenced on the construction of the full size model of an Incorporating Mill.



September 2007

In 1940 George Sylvester received the Empire Gallantry medal and subsequently the George Cross for bravery following a serious explosion at the Mills. His son John presented the medals to the Company on 18th August.



March 2008

John Wright receives two “ballistic pendulum” machines from Dr Roland Wharton of the Health and Safety Executive.



September 2008

The family of Norman Paul, Founder of the Friends Association, honoured his memory with the purchase of an Armillary Sphere. On his birthday, 30th July, members of his family gathered for a ceremony and Group photograph.



June 2009

The 2009 season started with visitors able to have a look at the work carried out by the railway group on the WARGM light railway restoration project on 22nd & 23rd April.



June 2009

Dave Sims gave a lecture at the UK Space Conference conference at Charterhouse School on 4th April. An exhibition stand was manned by Len Stuart. Both the talk and the stand were well received by the delegates.



September 2009

Hill Partnership Ltd began renovation work on the Power House in January 2008 when the first picture was taken. The second picture is August 2009 when work had been completed.



December 2009

Len Stuart received a Highly Commended Certificate for Outstanding Customer Service at the first Essex Tourism Awards presentation dinner at the Cliffs Pavilion at Southend-on-Sea on 10th September.



December 2009

A Red Wheel was awarded to WARGM by the Transport Trust. The Plaque reads “Extensive canal and rail system dating from 1735, serving Britain’s major explosives works. Home to three of UK’s 26 cast iron aqueducts”. The actor Timothy West unveiled the plaque.



December 2010

Powder Wagon restoration. A “quick push” by Volunteers and it literally fell to pieces. It was, however, successfully restored to its former glory.



Geoff Hooper

Quiz Answers

1. Aberdeen
2. Ardnamurchan Point
3. A Haddock
4. Fort William; entrance to the Caledonian Canal
5. Dundee
6. Antonine Wall
7. Januray 25th celebrating Burn's birthday. Haggis is sheep's stomach filled with offal, oatmeal, suet and seasoning; tatties are potatoes, and Neep is swede
8. Granton Harbour is in Edinburgh
9. "Stuffy" Dowding, head of RAF fighter command
10. Scrambled egg on toast decorated with anchovies
11. Burrell Centre is outside Glasgow (well outside to avoid atmospheric pollution)
12. A Howff is a meeting place, it can also mean a final meeting place – a cemetery
13. Telford
14. Tallisker
15. Loch Katrine
16. The Waverly
17. Glasgow's underground railway
18. Tony Davis
19. John Brown
20. Charles Rennie Mackintosh
21. Edinburgh's Waverly station

Julie's Nature Column

It's been a strange time lately for everyone with the lockdown and restrictions, but while the country almost came to a standstill wild life everywhere carried on. Nesting, breeding, feeding, hunting, playing...if anything the animals have benefited from people not being around.

Foxes at the Mills have been venturing out a lot more during the day, Herons and Kingfishers are not being disturbed so much in the waterways and the deer seem to be more relaxed. The lack of people and work activities has made the Mills a lot quieter you would think, but due to the quietness the birds actually sound a lot louder and the singing has felt non-stop on some days.

Our resident swans have nested again this year and we have seven fluffy cygnets which are growing very fast. Here's a photo of them feeling very sleepy, except for one...there's always one!



I've seen a few geese this year and was wondering if it's because it's been quiet that they're visiting as we don't get many geese. We've had Egyptian geese visit quite a few times and also a pair of Greylag geese.

In my last blog I mentioned the Red Kites nest building and that the storm had damaged the nest. It looked like the nest was being rebuilt and then a second storm came along. This time they abandoned the nest and I have no idea where they have moved to. I still see them in the sky occasionally though.



The honey bees have swarmed again, gathered on a wooden post surrounding the queen bee while the workers scout for a new home. I know of two honey bee nests on site, maybe there will be a third.

Fox cubs were spotted on site so I decided to set up a remote camera in the hope of getting some photos. Both parent foxes have seemed very busy back and forth hunting for food for their cubs, one snatched a young crow right in front of us and raced off with

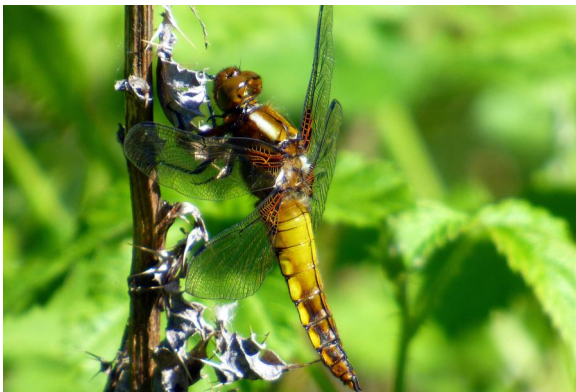


the adult crow giving chase. It seems very cruel sometimes, but all animals are trying to survive which causes all species to have casualties. Here's a photo of one of the fox cubs standing on a tree log.

Our nest boxes are all full of Blue tit chicks. Some are just about to fledge, they keep popping their heads out and the parents stay outside with the food as if to encourage them to come out. This Blue tit photo was taken a bit earlier in the year.



Dragonflies are starting to emerge along with Damselflies and Demoiselles. They are mostly along the waterways all jostling for the best position on a reed or favourite twig.



The one in this photo is a female Broad bodied chaser I think!

I hope to bring you some more stories in the future with some interesting photos. I'll do my best to be in the right place at the right time.

Julie Matthews

Mills Nature Conservationist