

Autumn 2020

TOUCHPAPER

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

A Second TE Lawrence Connection - Pole Hill

Jim Burgess Chapter 28: 'Livermore's Loo'

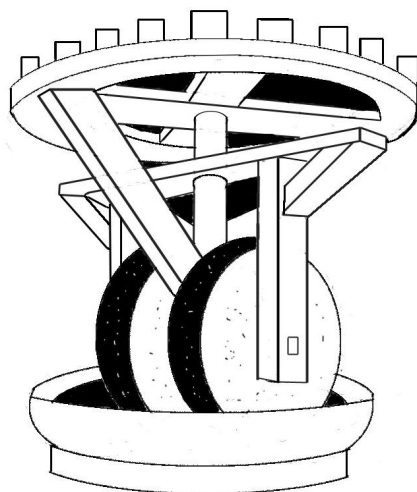
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Autumn 2020

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Deadline for the next issue is 20th November 2020

Chairman's Chat

The Mills have now been closed for 6 months and many of you will have been wondering about what is going on and the plans for the future. You may be aware that some of the staff are missing and others only appear occasionally. This is because of the dire financial situation that was facing the Mills with no visitor income and a reduced grant from the Foundation.

To fill you in, Stella Morris the Chief Officer left us in June and a number of the staff who came off furlough regrettably had to be made redundant. The remaining staff are on much reduced hours and because of Covid 19 working mainly from home. All we have left are Helen Hamlyn, Liz Went, Lorraine Matthews and Ian Macfarlane who is retiring by November and Julie Matthews. These staff members are being assisted by the Trustees to try to keep the ship afloat.

More recently the Chair of the Trustees, Jenny Freeman, has resigned over a disagreement of policy with the Foundation. We must thank her for her years of service both as a Board member and as the Chair of the Trustees.

Geoff Hooper and Grahame Brown have both returned to strengthen the Board and together with Fiona Baxter and Douglas Kent will attempt to steer the ship. I have volunteered to become Chairman of the Board at least for the foreseeable future.

The Committee of the friends have not had any meetings so far this year mainly because most of us are classed as vulnerable. However, we should have a meeting shortly to discuss our way forward. A few volunteers have been able to return to the Mills to do specific jobs but a return to normal times seems a long way off.

The next task for the Board is to write a plan for 2021. As you can imagine there are numerous uncertainties but at this point it is planned to reopen at Easter which is very early next year being at the beginning of April. We have no further information about the plan to lease some of our buildings to PGL but they are most unlikely to impact our plans for 2021.

What we need now are your views on what we could do to make the Mills more attractive to visitors and ways of maximising our income for both next year and the future.

Lastly we had to move the nitro-glycerine lorry this week as a film crew are coming on site. Did you know that in the side panels there are a full set of tools and a red flag! It's only been there about 20 years and I didn't know.

Keep safe

Dave Sims

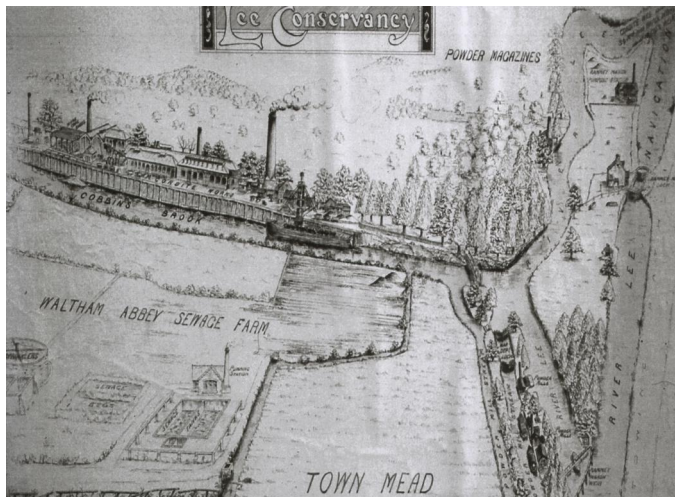
A Second TE Lawrence Connection - Pole Hill

An article in the December 2009 Touchpaper explored the connection between the product of the Guncotton Factory section of the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Factory South Site, now Gunpowder Park, and T E Lawrence, of Arabia.

(The Waltham Abbey Mills retained the word Gunpowder in its title – Royal Gunpowder Factory, after the move from gunpowder to chemical explosives and this was continued in the naming of South Site as Gunpowder Park. That Site in fact produced only chemical explosive, not gunpowder).

Thanks to information and advice from Maggie Radcliffe, local historian and lecturer, it has now been possible to write this follow up article on the connection between Lawrence and a local landmark.

Although there is now no trace of the South Site factory in what are now the grassy mounds of Gunpowder Park, images remain in the Mills Image Archive:



**Artist's
impression of
Royal Gunpowder
Factory South Site
including
Guncotton Factory**



**Royal Gunpowder Factory South Site including
Guncotton Factory**



Interior of Guncotton Pulping and Moulding Room

The area has a second Lawrence connection, at Pole Hill on the Epping Forest escarpment on the outskirts of North Chingford, a short driving distance from the Guncotton site.

Pole Hill is in a commanding position on Epping Forest land with a fine view of London and is distinguished by the Meridian line which passes through it. This is marked by a commemorative plaque on an obelisk which under the auspices of the Astronomer Royal Rev. John Pond was erected at Pole Hill in 1824 on the Greenwich Meridian to mark the line of true north from the transit telescope at the Royal Observatory at Greenwich (in 1850 the Greenwich Meridian was amended resulting in a new line of zero longitude 19 feet east of the obelisk).



The 1824 Obelisk at Pole Hill

After the turmoil of WW1, Lawrence resumed contact with boyhood friend Vyvyan Richards. Richards had built a wooden home on Pole Hill. Bancrofts School where Richards had taken up a teaching post was nearby. Lawrence visited several times and the two planned to set up a printing press there modeled on mediaeval practice to produce rare books.

In 1919 Lawrence started to purchase land on Pole hill and by 1923 had 18 acres.

In 1921 Richards' home burnt down. A replacement was built by boys of Bancrofts School, called the 'Cloister'.

But the dream faded. In 1922 Richards moved to South Wales and Lawrence moved on to other things, in 1923 seeking anonymity by joining the RAF as an ordinary aircraftman, under the name John Hume Ross.

By 1930 Lawrence had decided to sell the land but he still had an interest in the well being of the area and rejected an offer of £7000 from developers in favour of a much lower £4000 from the Conservator of Epping Forest who could keep the land clear.

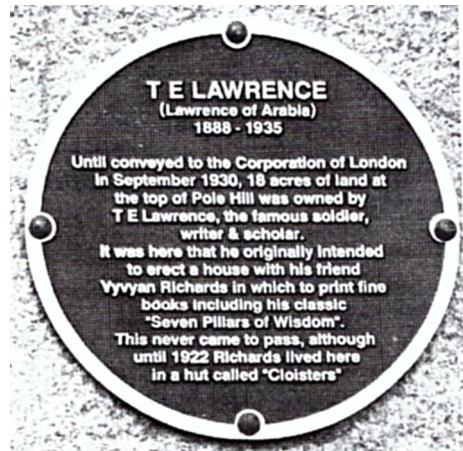
With the possibility of vandalism the Cloister was moved to the yard at the offices of the Conservator at The Warren outside of Loughton, where it became a store. It survives today, used by a charity.



The Cloister at the Warren

Around 2007 Maggie Radcliffe, made the proposal that Lawrence's association with Pole Hill should be marked and this could take the form of a plaque at a suitable spot.

Maggie pushed forward the campaign in support of the idea, later in conjunction with Guy Osbourne, Conservation Officer for Waltham Forest Council, who undertook the sometimes tortuous negotiations with the City Corporation Committee responsible. This ultimately resulted in successful installation in 2008 of a Lawrence plaque on the obelisk above the existing 1824 plaque.



The Lawrence Plaque

Maggie and Guy on the 29th April 2008 at the Plaque unveiling at the Obelisk

Militarily Lawrence was one of the most charismatic and successful British leaders to emerge from WW1 and can still capture the public imagination.

The proximity of the locations and existence of artefacts within the area creates for Waltham Abbey a creditable heritage asset, albeit somewhat diffuse, reflecting the manufacture at the RGPF of an important material in Lawrence's WW1 campaign in the Hejaz and his post war endeavours to bring structure to his life.

Finally, in political terms his writing arguably showed him to have been an element in forming the strategies which indirectly led to the situation in the Middle East today.

Les Tucker



"I've crunched the numbers in your retirement account. It's time to figure out who will be wearing the mask and who will be driving the getaway car."



Jim Burgess Chapter 28: 'Livermore's Loo'

Some process buildings in ERDE were located way 'off the beaten track'. One example was a Nineteenth Century cordite/gun cotton building designed originally for drying the cordite. Adjacent to it was a second building, part of which was used as a magazine and the remainder as a store room. The buildings were situated in a wooded area about half-a-mile from 'civilisation'.

In the early 1970s, the buildings were brought back into service. What was to become a self-contained explosive processing facility consisted of a series of bays separated by double brick walls. In one of the bays was installed a pair of vacuum mixers, in an adjacent one, a control panel and in the third a day-to-day storage facility. There was a small bay right at the front of the building which was equipped with an old Butler- type sink and a cold water tap fed from the mains supply. A veranda ran along the side of the building giving separate access to each of the bays.

There were no female staff working in the building so if anyone wanted a 'pee' a tree could always be found near to the building behind which the 'business' could be done. For anything more 'substantial', it was necessary to take a half-a- mile hike to 'civilisation'.

As the building was brought more and more into use, the absence of somewhere to defecate became increasingly irksome. The first attempt to solve the requirement involved the procurement of an Elsan chemical toilet which was found lurking at the back of an old storage building by the ever-helpful Engineering Department.

This item was carted back to the process building to be 'cleaned up'. At a respectable distance from the building the Elsan was mounted on two pieces of 2"x2" wooden strips held in place courtesy of Gravity and some chemical toilet solution was obtained from the stores. One of the lads, who fancied himself as a carpenter, knocked

together a rough hut to house the Elsan. The hut was fitted with a door (and a bolt) and a hole was cut in the boards at the back so as to provide ventilation. Attached to the boards on the right-hand side within the hut was affixed a piece of bent wire designed to hold the toilet paper.

It has to be said that this new facility wasn't in great demand but it finally met its 'Waterloo' a few weeks later.

We had just joining us an elderly Industrial whom I shall call Alf'. Alf was one of the 'Old School'. He'd worked on the Site for forty years man and boy, as had his father before him. He was devoted to the Establishment and was proud to have been associated with it and with its previous incarnation as The Royal Gunpowder Mills.

One day, he had occasion to make use of the new loo as a matter of urgency. Such was his haste that he'd scarcely managed to seat himself on the Elsan before one side had slipped off the 2"x2". The resulting instability caused the whole Elsan to tip over with Alf on it. The hut was flimsy, and was brought down as well, exposing poor Alf to the elements and to view, déshabillé, with his legs in the air.

Poor old Alf was cleaned up, dusted down and helped to his feet. After a few kind words of apology and sympathy, delivered, I'm pleased to report with no hint of levity, he was sat down and provided with a decent cup of tea and allowed to recover in peace. Alf's ruffled feathers and bruised dignity were gradually restored to normal as his sense of humour took over - good fellow that he was.

Clearly, a more satisfactory solution had to be found.

It was usual for the foul effluent from buildings located without access to main drainage to be fed into a septic tank which would be pumped out as and when necessary.

I'd detailed my 2IC at the time, Roy, to look into the possibility of having something of the kind built. Members of our Engineering Department, usually so helpful, were adamant that nothing of the sort could be done. A range of excuses were presented. The cost in manpower and materials involved in the building of a septic tank headed the list but, in addition, that part of the Establishment was very low-lying and close to the water-table. Concern was expressed that it would become a serious issue if the contents of the septic tank should escape. I was less than convinced that this was a very likely contingency but I didn't feel in a strong enough position to argue, especially as my relationship with the Engineers was excellent and I didn't want to jeopardise their good will upon which I depended in all sorts of ways.

As is so often the case, a solution presented itself 'out of the blue'.

Roy was perambulating along the A10 in Enfield when his attention was drawn to the passing of a lorry carrying two very large flasks. Apart from a neck at the top, each was spherical.

Subsequent enquiries revealed that these 'bodies' were a new form of septic tank and were called Klargesters and that they were made of a glass fibre reinforced plastic (resin). Further enquiries ascertained that a small-sized Klargestester adequate for the process building wouldn't be excessively expensive especially when compared with the estimate given by the Engineers for building a brick-lined septic tank.

Roy prepared an excellent case for providing a 'proper' lavatory and for procuring a Klargestester pointing out that only the hole in the ground needed for the Klargestester and its fitting would be down to the Engineers. I endorsed Roy's suggestion and passed it to the Chief Engineer via the Superintendent. One could almost hear the tooth-sucking emanating from the Engineering Department. It was learned that the Engineers found themselves on the horns of a dilemma. In their estimate for building a brick septic tank the Engineers had quoted a very high price - it was suspected that they didn't want the job.

The Klargestester was, by comparison, very cheap indeed. In his submission, Roy had not shirked from referring to the Engineers' original estimate in order to strengthen our own case. In the immortal words of Hamlet, the Engineers had been hoist on their own petard.

The Klargestester was duly purchased and delivered to the required spot. A hole was dug for it after which it was manoeuvred into position and covered with spoil.

However, 'the troubles' were not yet over ...

A basic piece of plumbing was required to connect the Klargestester to the lavatory, a simple job one might have thought. In fact, the manufacturers had thoughtfully supplied a set of 'Janet and John' instructions! The Engineers undertook to carry out this task

The 'problem' didn't manifest itself immediately but a few weeks after its installation one of the lads had just used the toilet when he was heard to let out a loud yell. The expostulation had followed a deep-throated gurgling sound through the WC accompanied by a noisome emission of gas. The system had been sealed with no provision for a vent to release excess pressure.....!

Jim Burgess

Key Events over the Past 20 Years

Part Two 2011 - 2019

Winter 2011

A Stentor motor arrived at the site. This liquid fuelled rocket engine was designed to power the BlueSteel cruise missile. It is now on show at the entrance to the Rocket Vault



Autumn 2012

John Wilson's 7 ¼ inch railway having an early test run.



Winter 2012

A new building appeared at the 2'-6" railway, where a carriage shed (83A) was being completed. 83B remained the main workshop, with 83A being a storage area and occasional workshop.



Winter 2012

Lynne Leonard passed away on 15th September 2012. She had been a tower of strength in setting up and running the Royal Gunpowder Mills.



Winter 2013

The waterwheel was relocated and now working by solar power, with a plaque in memory of Norman Paul



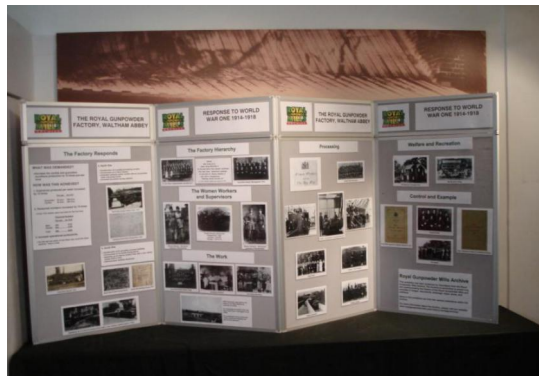
Autumn 2014

The NG Wash Tub, Powder Boat and Cordite Drying Truck now reside in the refurbished Green Hut. The right hand picture shows the state of the Boat in 2004 before restoration



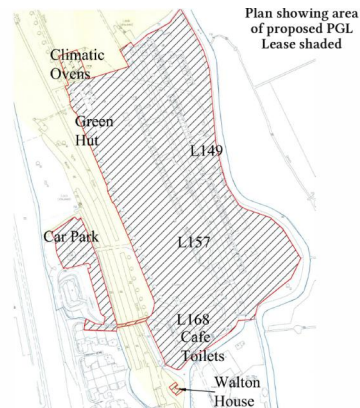
Autumn 2014

To mark the Centenary of the outbreak of World War One an Archive based board display was compiled and sited near the entrance to the cinema, opposite the stairs.



Winter 2014

“At a packed, and at times stormy, meeting at the Mills on 7th November 2014, the charitable Foundation responsible for the conservation of the Mills site, unveiled plans to lease Queens Mead and its surrounding buildings to children’s adventure holiday provider, PGL”.



Autumn 2015

On 21st March Dave Sims and John Wright manned a stand at the Droitwich Air and Space show held in their library. They took several exhibits from the Waltham Abbey Rocket Vault which was well received by show visitors.



Autumn 2017

A plaque was mounted on the water wheel in recognition of all the work that Peter Hart had put into its construction.



Spring 2018

Winter snow enveloped the site, including the Bangs Galore & Gunpowder Creek Railway.



Autumn 2018

A new Portacabin arrived at the 2' 6" railway. It is located just south of building 83B.



Autumn 2018

Dave Sims and Brian Clements started work on the restoration of railway carriages. These are to be used as “waiting rooms” for passengers for the railways during inclement weather.



Winter 2018

Grahame Browne presides over the unveiling of a nameplate for the 2' 6" locomotive in memory of John H Bowles, who had been Chairman of the Operating Company and a staunch supporter of both the 7¼" and 2' 6" gauge railways. John's widow Rachel unveiled the nameplate



Summer 2019

The condition of the roofs of the three incorporating mills on the Queens Mead had deteriorated markedly. Re-roofing was put in hand (see the right hand photo taken in 2020)



Winter 2019

Bryan Howard gave congratulations to fellow retirees Bob Brown, Chris Evans, and Kim Henshaw who all retired on St Andrew's day 30th November 1989. Only 30 years ago!



Geoff Hooper

Letters

New River

John Wilson's piece about the New River was of particular interest because my home overlooks Chadwell - the original source.

Dr. Michael Essex-Lopresti's book "Exploring the New River" provides a translation of the memorial to Myddleton and I have copied the translation:

Sacred to the memory of Sir Hugh Myddleton, Baronet, whose successful care assisted by the patronage of the King, conveyed this stream to London. An immortal work: Since men cannot more nearly imitate the Deity, than in bestowing Health.

From the spring of Chadwell, two miles west and from this source of Amwell the aqueduct meanders for the space of 40 miles, conveying health, pleasure and convenience to the Metropolis of Great Britain.

This humble tribute to the genius, talents and elevation of mind which conceived and executed this important aqueduct is dedicated to Robert Myle, Architect, Engineer, &c, AD MDCCC.

John's photograph shows only the first paragraph, so I deduce that the remainder is on sides that are NOT visible.

Strangely, the Roman Date is 1800.

I hope that readers of Touchpaper will find this of interest

MC Black

Aqueduct

I've just read the waterways article in Summer 2020 touchpaper and I have a titbit to offer. Les Cole (Safety Officer late 1970's) told me about this time that in the late 1940s a decision had been made to drain the upper level canals and the easiest way of doing this was to blow a hole in the side of one of the cast iron(?) aqueducts. He was given the task and he achieved this by detonating a charge of Tetryl in contact with the dry side of one of the plates.

I don't know if this can be verified by anyone in our august membership. What do you think?

Tony Whittaker

Response:

No, I had not heard of this. I worked with Tony in the mid-1970's before he went off to Northern Ireland. Between us we blew quite a few things up, but not one of them and I do not recollect Les Cole doing this. But I may well be wrong. I think that Richard Thomas would be the best person to ask whether any of the remaining aqueducts have been 'mistreated' in this way.

Geoff Hooper

It is certainly a very good reason for the big hole in the northernmost aqueduct. It makes a lot of sense. My only query is that it is the base plate, not one of the sides, which has gone. There is no written evidence that the collapse was caused by the proximity of the 1940 explosions. Hopefully someone will come forward who can comment on Tony Whittaker's suggestion. Is Les Cole still around?

Richard Thomas

Gasholders

Industry to Art

As each gas holder demolition comes up the battle between preservationists and demolishers continues.



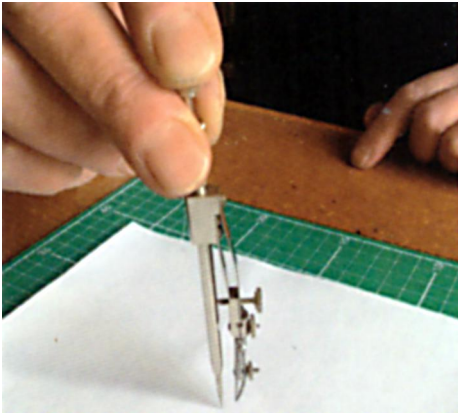
East Greenwich Gasholder no.1

East Greenwich has now been dismantled but before it went ceramicist Raewyn Harrison, one of whose specialities is a range of porcelain pots with transfer images of Thames waterfront industrial artefacts, captured the tracery of the guide frame steelwork at Greenwich.

Tool for the job

In the heyday of gas, with many gasholders appearing in site drawings it was quite a challenge to draw the small arcs needed without ink leakage, same applied to other items such as roundabouts, internal wire strands of underwater cables etc.

A drawing instrument was developed with a sliding pen which enabled lifting or lowering with the point remaining in position. – the ‘drop’ compass.



Drop Compass with sliding pen

Reflecting a resemblance to a ballet dancer standing on tiptoe, the drop compass was also known in ballet conscious Russia as the Balerinka – Little Ballerina.

Les Tucker

Waltham Abbey Histories, Quotations and Microcosm

Quotations

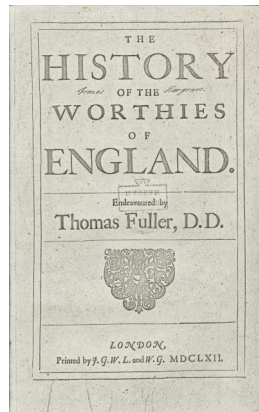
Confusion occasionally occurs with quotations relating to early gunpowder production in the Waltham Abbey area.

For the record, detail of those particularly concerned is:

1. Firstly Thomas Fuller:



**Thomas Fuller
1608 – 1661**



Title cover

Book - The History of the Worthies of England

After education at Cambridge Thomas Fuller gained a high reputation as a churchman, preacher, orator and historian. He published a series of books, mainly with a religious background. They were however not dry as dust history, - filled with anecdotes, epigrams etc. and they enjoyed good sales. In fact he was regarded as the first English author who could live on the proceeds of his books. His clerical and writing career flourished and he came to the attention of the King – to the extent that he was appointed Chaplain to the Royalist Army.

After the Civil War he did not suffer any reprisals and was given a life curacy of the parish of Waltham Abbey by his patron the Earl of Carlisle.

He had been gathering material for a book entitled *The History of the Worthies of England* – the first attempt at what ultimately became the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Unfortunately Fuller died before it could be published and it was published posthumously by his son, also a religious divine, in 1662 the year after his death.

The book also gave an account of counties, divided into sections and in the entry for Essex under Manufactures Fuller described Gunpowder, including the following :

Why though in this rather than in other counties. Because more made by Mills of late erected on the river Ley, betwixt Waltham and London, than in all England besides

[This would have been after the end of the Surrey gunpowder mills monopoly in 1641].

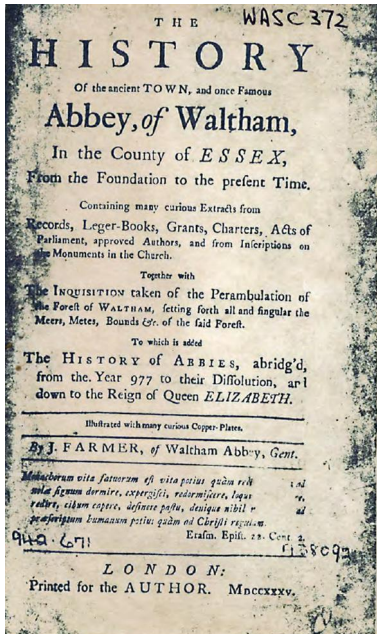
It is questionable whether the making of Gunpowder be more profitable or more dangerous: the Mills in my Parish having been blown up five times within seven years, but blessed be God! without the loss of any one man's life

Fuller was not afraid to criticize where he thought it was warranted. Was he having a sly dig at mill owners putting profit before safety?

This latter quotation has been cited as evidence of the manufacture of gunpowder at Waltham Abbey at that time, but this is erroneous as Fuller died in 1661, whereas production of gunpowder at the Waltham Abbey converted 'oyle mill' did not commence until 1665 and it can be assumed therefore that Fuller was referring to the Sewardstone mills.

2. The second quotation concerns the author John Farmer.

There is little information on Farmer, apart from the fact that in the frontispiece to his book he describes himself as Gent. of Waltham Abbey.



Georgian historians did not flinch from lengthy titles and the full title of the book in question was:

‘The History of the ancient Town, and once Famous abbey of Waltham, in the county of Essex, from the Foundation to the present Time. Containing many curious Extracts from Records, Leger-Books, Grants, Charters, Acts of Parliament, approved Authors and from Inscriptions on the Monuments in the Church. Together with the Inquisition taken of the Perambulation of the Forest of Waltham setting forth all and singular the Meers, Metes, Bounds etc. of the said Forest’.

To which is added The History of Abbies, abridg'd, from the year 977 to their Dissolution, and down to the Reign of Queen Elizabeth.
Illustrated with many curious Copper-Plates

As was customary with works of this nature, finance was by subscription and the list of subscribers numbers just over 250. Farmer or his patron must have had good contacts – quite a few dignitaries are in the list.

Dedication;

The book is dedicated to Charles Wake Jones – Lord of the Manor.

[The Wake family has long resided in Northamptonshire, including the estate of Courteenhall which was inherited in 1672. The Waltham Abbey connection arises from acquiring several manors through marriage, including Waltham and Nazeing]

Acknowledgments :

The first to be acknowledged is John Walton. Fulsome tribute is paid to Walton's support, particularly to his influence in securing access to important State papers.

"Among these generous Patrons and Promotors of my Labour, I pay my First Complements to John Walton, Esq; to whom I am oblig'd, for a long and beautiful Series of Favours on this and many other Accounts"

'Curious copper plates'

Included in the plates is the well known engraving of Walton's powder mills and it is dedicated to Walton.

It is possible that it was commissioned by Walton as a promotional exercise for the Mills (and himself) and the opportunity was taken to include a copy in the book.

Quotation

The following is part of the description of Waltham Abbey:

"Near the Town, on one of these Rivers, are various Gunpowder-Mills, which supply the Nation with great Quantities of gunpowder, being esteemed the largest and compleatest Works in Great Britain, and are now the property of Mr. John Walton, a Gentleman of known Honour and Integrity"

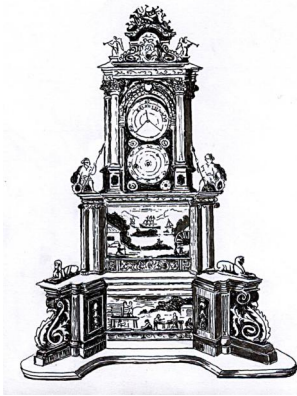
This quotation has been erroneously attributed to Fuller.

Apart from the normal need for accuracy, it has acquired extra importance as it is being cited to support the contention that the Mills are an important example of an early proto industrial factory organization some 25 years or more before the generally accepted time of around 1760 as the dawn of the factory / centralized manufacturing system and therefore the Industrial Revolution.

Henry Bridges and his amazing musical clock Microcosm – The cosmos in a cabinet.

John Farmer was clearly impressed with Henry Bridges and his Microcosm, devoting seven pages of his book to a description of the Microcosm, with poems, songs and so on dedicated to Bridges.

Bridges was a carpenter of Waltham Abbey and spent nine years from 1725 making an amazing ‘musical clock’, called a Microcosm – 12 ft. high and 6ft. across the base.



The Microcosm

This was no ordinary clock. It had animated scenes, two astronomical clocks showing two different systems, a planetarium, and played music. Its pedestal was a working carpenter’s yard. It depicted the Newtonian universe and reputedly was checked by Sir Isaac himself.

First verse of a song :

To Mr. Bridges on his Microcosm

*Behold! a Work, by Art most free
Where Gods in Concert all agree
To grace a noble Act.
Where Eyes are ravish'd, Musik sounds
Pleasure throughout the whole abounds,
In this great Work exact.*

In an age when interest in the natural world and the universe was burgeoning, Bridges clearly intended to expand beyond the world of carpentry and became quite famous, touring extensively in Great Britain, North America and Europe with his Microcosm as a kind of scientific exhibition providing lighter entertainment as well.

Les Tucker

Obituaries



Ann Kathleen Wright

30/6/1939 – 9/7/2020

Ann was a long standing member of the Friends, attending the AGM/Reunion, with John, whenever possible.

She was always very smartly dressed and had a keen sense of humour.

Ann started her working life as a nurse.

She was a great friend who was always ready to lend a sympathetic ear and offering support.

Ann and John moved to their retirement home in Chipping Norton in 2019.

She will be sadly missed by the family of whom she was so proud and all her many friends.

We are sad to announce that Geoff Colley died on 5th September. We hope to have an obituary in the next issue.

Julie's Nature Column

It's been a busy few months for the wildlife at the Mills. Foxes looking for food non-stop to feed their cubs, nesting birds flying constantly to and from their nests to feed their chicks, Herons and Kingfishers fishing our waterways and our lovely deer will have had their fawns a couple of months ago. I've seen a pair of Kestrels flying over the Mead area regularly and I'm sure that leaving the grass and nettles to grow longer than usual has been an advantage for them as voles are more likely to be in longer vegetation. One Kestrel seems to have a favourite tree to perch on; this tree is also a favourite perch for a young Buzzard. They don't seem to mind sharing it. In these photos you can see the Kestrel on the tree and then the Buzzard flying by.



I have seen less of the foxes since lockdown ended. Obviously more people and traffic has made them hide away more whereas before they were openly walking around the site during the day and using the areas where people normally would be. Here is one of the fox cubs walking past Walton House while I was standing in the doorway. It soon scooted off once it realised I was there.



Bats seem to have moved into the roof of our volunteer base. This is probably temporary, just using it for an overnight roost during the summer months. We have had a Bat expert check it out and he has yet to determine what species it is as there only seemed to be one left using the roost. The plan is for our expert to come back in April and monitor for a return of the bats. Once we know what species they are and whether it's a maternity roost or not, we can then

decide with expert guidance how to use the room alongside them without disturbing them.

The deer have been keeping out of the way, most likely enjoying the peace and quiet, but every now and again they pop up, have a good look at us and then move on. They should be losing the velvet on their antlers now, so rubbing on the trees helps them greatly to remove it. They all look to be in good health, lovely shiny summer coats and big round bellies where they've been fattening up on the grass. The males will soon start to develop lots of muscle especially in the neck area in preparation for the rut in the coming months.



I'm glad to say that a pair of Hobbies has been back this year. I would expect that they have bred, but I haven't been near the nesting site. They are very agile birds able to do acrobatic turns in the air. They are able to catch other birds on the wing and also dragonflies. Our other resident birds the Barn Owls sadly didn't produce any young this year.



It seems that Barn Owls in general weren't very successful in raising young, perhaps due to the weather earlier in the year which could have made their food source less abundant.

Here's a photo of one coming out of the nest box, not my best photo as I wasn't quick enough, but nice to see that they still roost in the box.

Hopefully next year will be a better year for them.

I shall be looking for more wildlife opportunities to share with you in the coming months and hope to get some good photos.

Julie Matthews

Mills Nature Conservationist