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## **GUNPOWDER & EXPLOSIVES HISTORY GROUP**

### **NEWSLETTER 1, New Series, November 2000**

At our autumn meeting at the Institute of Historical Research in London on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2000, the Gunpowder Mills Study Group was re-formed as the **Gunpowder and Explosives History Group**. Although we have amended our title we have retained our logo, thus showing both change and continuity.

The Group first met in 1985, with Alan Crocker, Glenys Crocker, and Phil Philo as its Convenors. Phil's museum duties took him to the north-east, but Alan and Glenys continued to organize the Group and its activities, assuming the roles of chairman, secretary, treasurer, and editor of and chief contributor to the Newsletter. It was, as one member has written, a "very personal involvement" and our thanks go to them for this intense commitment. But other original members have also remained with us, as was shown by a group photograph circulated at our meeting. Taken in October 1986, after a visit to the Hounslow and Bedfont Powder Mills organized by Phil Philo, it shows fourteen members, seven of whom were present at our October 2000 meeting, fifteen years after the Group was set up.

It will be recalled that in **Newsletter 26** (August 2000), Alan and Glenys had written that the pressure of work was such that the Group must be handed over entirely to others, or wound up altogether. They thought the latter was an acceptable solution because interest in the subject had now been successfully promoted; outlets for publications could be found in national and other journals; and developments at Waltham Abbey would offer a new point of contact for people seeking information. At the meeting Alan read or summarized about twenty letters from members, some offering help, but most regretting the likely end of the Group and expressing their gratitude for the sustained hard work put into it. The last to be received was my letter of 11<sup>th</sup> October, and as I was present at the meeting Alan invited me to speak to it.

I explained that, pricked by conscience and a few phone calls, I had come to think that we should try to keep the Group going because it provides the only forum readily available to us for the discussion of gunpowder history, and the exploration of relevant sites. Organizations such as the Newcomen Society and the Association for Industrial Archaeology may publish our work, but they have to cater for a wide range of interests of which ours is one amongst many. I therefore proposed that we should try to move into a new phase in our history. We should adapt our name in order to indicate our widening interests, and establish a small committee of essential officers, whose changing membership and sharing of responsibility would call on the talents of as many members as possible, and help ensure the continuity of the Group. The warmth with which this proposal was received was a measure of the support that was felt for the idea of keeping the Group in being, if a way could be found.

A minimum of three officers would be needed – and as we had already had firm and specific offers from Wayne Cocroft and Kenneth Major, we agreed to invite them to become Newsletter Editor and Treasurer respectively. My willingness to Chair the re-formed Group was approved unanimously. The suggestion that in order to maintain our viability we should have annual reports and elections, with the Chairman serving for periods of three years, was also agreed.