

GUNPOWDER & EXPLOSIVES HISTORY GROUP

NEWSLETTER 14, second series, February 2008

Report by the Chairman on the Annual General Meeting, 3 November 2007

Our AGM was attended by Angus Buchanan, Brenda Buchanan, Wayne Cocroft, Alan Crocker, Glenys Crocker, Bill Curtis, Peter Filby, Helen Major, Ken Major, Gerry Moss, Les Tucker, and Malcolm Tucker. Apologies for absence were received from Will Adye-White, Roger Emmerson, Ron Grosvenor, Peter Jenkins, David Wood, Elizabeth Wood. Added together, this constitutes about a third of our membership.

Our main subject of discussion was the future of the Group, as the Chairman Brenda Buchanan, Newsletter Editor Wayne Cocroft, and Treasurer Ken Major, all felt that after seven years of service it was time to step down. The notices sent out well in advance to all our members had made the situation clear, but no volunteers had come forward. A few years ago this would have meant the end of the Group despite the continuing interest of many members. But the recent growth of electronic mail, webpages, and the internet, has given us the chance of a new lease of life, with the prospect of transforming ourselves from a paper-GEHGroup into an e-GEHGroup. As several of our members have had a long connection with the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills as trustees and 'Friends', and as we have held successful meetings there over the last seven years, it seemed a natural next step for us to consult the staff about a possible link between their website and our aspirations to go 'on line'.

I am happy to report that the discussions conducted on our behalf by Wayne Cocroft with the WARGM IT Co-ordinator Ian Macfarlane have gone very well. Ian has set up a Gunpowder and Explosives History Group message board for us, with a Private Forum and a Public Forum. To gain access, Group members will need to register a Username and a Password. The web address is : <http://www.royalgunpowdermills.com/phpbb/>

The first use to which our message board is put will be a notice posted by Wayne giving full information about a visit to the Leigh Gunpowder Works in Kent on Saturday 10th May. We are very pleased to have been invited to the site, on private property, by the Leigh Historical Society who have received an HLF grant to assist excavations.

When I look back to Newsletter 1, November 2000, the first of the second series, I find I referred to the Group re-organizing itself at that point, with a new title chosen to reflect the widening interests of Group members into all aspects of explosives. We have since then extended our visits to include such features as magazines; we have held day-long meetings on single themes such as the raw materials of gunpowder; and we have established links with bodies like the Royal Society of Chemistry History Group. In other words, we adapted to remain alive, and that is just what we are now doing for a second time. As a result of the decision taken at our AGM, the GEHG as formally set up is now in 'abeyance', and we are re-creating ourselves as an e-Group.

This Newsletter will go by e-mail to those members for whom we have this address, and by post to others, but this will be our last postal communication. Please let us have your response: Brenda ssxjb@bath.ac.uk ; Wayne wayne.cocroft@english-heritage.org.uk

I send my thanks and good wishes to all – officers, members, colleagues in other societies and on-site hosts, especially those at WARGM .

Brenda J Buchanan

John Upton

Members who have been in the Group since it started in 1985 will be sad to hear that one of our original members, John Upton, of Battle in Sussex, died in December after a long illness. John and his wife Kathy edited early issues of the Gunpowder Mills Study Group newsletter and attended many meetings.

John was active in the Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society as secretary and then as publications editor and official photographer. He took many of the photographs in the book he co-authored with Brian Austen and Don Cox, *Sussex Industrial Archaeology: A Field Guide*, published for SIAS by Phillimore in 1985.

Alan and I remember John and Kathy's hospitality when I was compiling the *Gunpowder Mills Gazetteer* and they showed us around the Battle and Sedlescombe sites. Our sympathy and good wishes to Kathy and their son Peter.

Glenys Crocker February 2007