

WAC 152/02

9 March, 1964

Dear Dr. Paige,

Manuscript book by John Ticking (?)
ca. 1798 describing gunpowder mills
at Faversham, Kent.

I wonder if you can tell us where this manuscript book is? We were asked if we knew by a private enquirer and should be glad to find out about it for our own interest as well as his.

Before coming to us he tells us that he had approached "the London Library of I.C.I." They suggested that he wrote to you but he has not done so. All we have done is to ask a couple of persons who might have known about it privately and we have asked the Kent County Record Office at Maidstone. They do not know of it but think many of the Curtis and Harvey records among which this might have been were transferred to I.C.I. So it was inevitable that you should be caught up in the matter!

The only evidence we have for the existence of the book is in Hodgetts' "Rise and Progress of the British Explosives Industry" (1909). There is a reference to it in the text on page 29 and several illustrations from it are reproduced. (You probably have Hodgetts but for your convenience I enclose a photocopy of p. 29 and of one of the illustrations.) Our copy of Hodgetts is incomplete but I think that he does not anywhere else make clear where the book was.

I hope that this matter will not put you to too much trouble. On my part it is a pleasure to have to write to you since it recalls the visit which Mr. McLaren and I enjoyed with you a couple of years back.

Yours sincerely,

(J.R. Seymour)
Librarian,
for Director,
Explosives Research and
Development Establishment

Dr. M.F.C. Paige,
Librarian,
Nobel Division,
Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd.,
Stevenston,
Ayrshire.

WAA 105/02

E 14
March, 1964

Dear Mr. Bryant,

Thank you for your letter of the 2nd and for the trouble you have taken in enquiring for the John Ticking manuscript at Maidstone.

At the time I wrote to you first I did not know what steps the enquirer had taken to find it himself and I wrote to you in the hope that you could put your finger on it without trouble and so avoid asking around. However, I did write asking him what he had done and he says that the only place he has tried is "the London Library of I.C.I." It seems that this enquiry was left somewhat inconclusively and that in view of your information about the Curtis's and Harvey archives it would be worth clearing it up with them.

Thank you for your offer to take the matter further through the County Archives people. However, before troubling you and them again I will check the P.R.O. and get the I.C.I. question settled. I will let you know how I get on with these and if unsuccessful would be most grateful for any additional assistance.

Incidentally, the enquirer who started all this is a Mr. C.P. Davies of 7, Narrabeen Road, Cheriton, Nr. Folkestone. He is quite unknown to me outside this enquiry and when I first wrote to you I did not feel I could disclose his name and address. However, it is clear that he has a considerable knowledge and interest in gunpowder matters and mills in the south of England and you might like to get in touch with him some time. Would you mind if I gave him your name and address for the same purpose?

I understand that Dr. Johnson has recently sent you a copy of the history by Mr. Simmons.

Yours sincerely,

(J.R. Seymour)
Librarian,
for Director,
Explosives Research and
Development Establishment

C.S. Bryant, Esq.,
22, Oaks Road,
Tenterden,
Kent.

E 62

WAC 105/02

4th March, 1964

Dear Mr. Davies,

Thank you for your letter of the 23rd February and for letting me know the scope of your enquiries for the manuscript by John Ticking. I am sorry to say that my own first enquiries for it have been unfruitful but I have others in hand and will let you know how they fare.

I agree that it is a pity that Hodgetts does not make the ownership or location clear but wonder if it is true that he does not give a clue. On p. 29 he says "now owned by Messrs. Curtis's and Harvey." ~~The phrase is ambiguously placed and I do not know who Curtis and Harvey were (or are). Do you?~~

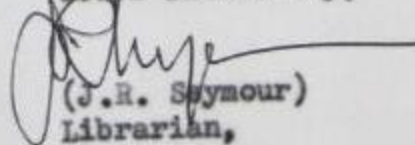
(I do now!) JRS

The major part of your letter comprises points you wish to put to the author of the "Short History of ... Waltham Abbey." He, Mr. W.H. Simmons, is not in government service, but we have forwarded a complete copy of your letter to him at his last known private address.

I can help a little on two of the minor points you raise:-

- (i) No old mills are preserved at Waltham Abbey. The last were finally demolished in 1956. The original painting "The last pair of Mills" is here at E.R.D.E.
- (ii) Before making a visit to the Public Record Office to see any particular document or group of documents I would advise a preliminary letter stating the date of the intended visit and what it is wanted to inspect. Certainly many of the "Supply 5" documents are kept in a remote store and can not be seen on the day of asking, and The Drayson "Treatise ..." should still be in P.R.O. custody but may well be in remote store as indicated above. At E.R.D.E. we have a complete photocopy of this work. We are of course anxious not to lose it but would be prepared to lend it to you if you wish. The copying is not entirely satisfactory but you might find it more convenient having at home.

Yours faithfully,



(J.R. Seymour)
Librarian,
for Director,
Explosives Research and
Development Establishment

C.P. Davies, Esq.,
7, Narrabeen Road,
Heriton,
Wolkestone, Kent.

From: Dr. C.H. Johnson, C.B.E., Director,

EXPLOSIVES RESEARCH AND
DEVELOPMENT ESTABLISHMENT,

WALTHAM ABBEY,

ESSEX.

Ref: WAA/105/02(CHJ/176)

27th November, 1963.

C.S. Livingston, Esq.,
A.D.O.F.(X)(D).,
War Office,
Room 3,
Leysdown Road,
Nottingham, S.E.9.

Dear Livingston,

The letter from H.M. Factory Inspectorate (copy enclosed) reminded me that I had forgotten to write to you on a subject I mentioned when we last met, namely, my request that copies of Simmons's History of the former R.G.P.F. should be sent to certain individuals in Australia.

First of all, however, I would appreciate your suggestion on how to deal with the letter from Mr. Boyes. Could a copy be supplied to him by your organisation? Alternatively, have you any objection to our loaning him a copy from the E.R.D.E. Library for a limited period? I imagine you would consider the latter our business entirely, but I refer to it in case it would not be proper for you to donate one.

In regard to Australia, I know that the following would be very pleased to receive a copy, and as I gathered from you that there would be no difficulty about this may I ask that my name should be associated with the gift?

(1) Mr. J. Knight,
Controller of Explosives and Supply Department,
Munitions and Aircraft Production,
Department of Supply,
339, Swanston Street,
Melbourne, C.1,
Victoria.

(2) Dr. F.A. Fox,
Chief Superintendent,
Defence Standards Laboratories,
P.O. Box 50,
Ascot Vale, W.2.,
Victoria.

(3) Mr. E.E. Backhouse,
Manager,
Explosives Factory,
Maribyrnong,
Victoria.

Yours sincerely,

C. H. JOHNSON

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EXPLOSIVES RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ESTABLISHMENT.
8 FEB 1961

ROYAL ORDNANCE FACTORY

War Office
BRIDGWATER, Somerset
Telephone: Bridgwater 2891, ext.

E.14 E13 E3

7th February, 1961.

address any reply to
SUPERINTENDENT

note:
reference:

Dr. C. H. Johnson, C.B.E.,
Chief Superintendent,
E.R.D.E.,
Waltham Abbey,
Essex.

RY,

ET.

etary:
CKER,
Avenue,
Abbey

enue,

Dear Dr. Johnson,

You may possibly have heard that a long time ago I was asked to write a history of the R.G.P.F. We had most of the archives here for a year or two and compiled a catalogue of them. They were then transferred to the Public Records Office and kept in the Museum at Woolwich.

I have recently been able to get down to the job again after a long interval and six months or so ago the War Office Archives Department arranged for me to see some of the papers at the P.R.O. I now understand from the Woolwich Museum that they have been transferred elsewhere, probably to Waltham, and, knowing your interest in the history of the Factory, this seems likely to me.

If it is so, could you possibly arrange for me to borrow the three or four volumes I want to study more thoroughly for a week or two?

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

W. H. Simmons
W. H. Simmons.

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please accept my

Yours sincerely,

H. Suckling
Deputy Chairman

The Explosives Research and Development Establishment was formed in 1948 when it assumed responsibility for certain R.&D. work formerly carried out by the Explosives Branch of the Armament Research Department, Woolwich, the Royal Gunpowder Factory, Waltham Abbey, and the Royal Naval Cordite Factory, Holton Heath. It occupies the site of the old Royal Gunpowder Factory where explosives have been manufactured since at least 1560, and very probably much earlier. The mills were purchased for the Crown by the Board of Ordnance in 1787.

The Establishment is responsible for research and development work on propellants, high explosives, initiating substances, and related materials; the major effort being on propellants for rocket propulsion for both guided and unguided weapons. Research is carried out on the improvement of existing explosives, on combustion and detonation phenomena, and on the sensitivity and safe handling of explosive substances; the Establishment is concerned also with research technology and allied chemical engineering in co-operation with the Director of Ordnance Factories (Explosives). There is also a materials group which studies problems on the use of non-metallic materials in connection with explosives, ammunition and land armaments generally.

The Establishment keeps closely in touch with any industrial firms holding Ministry contracts in its field and with its customers. These are usually other sections of the Ministry, particularly those responsible for the design of weapon systems, gun and small arms ammunition, rockets and guided weapons.