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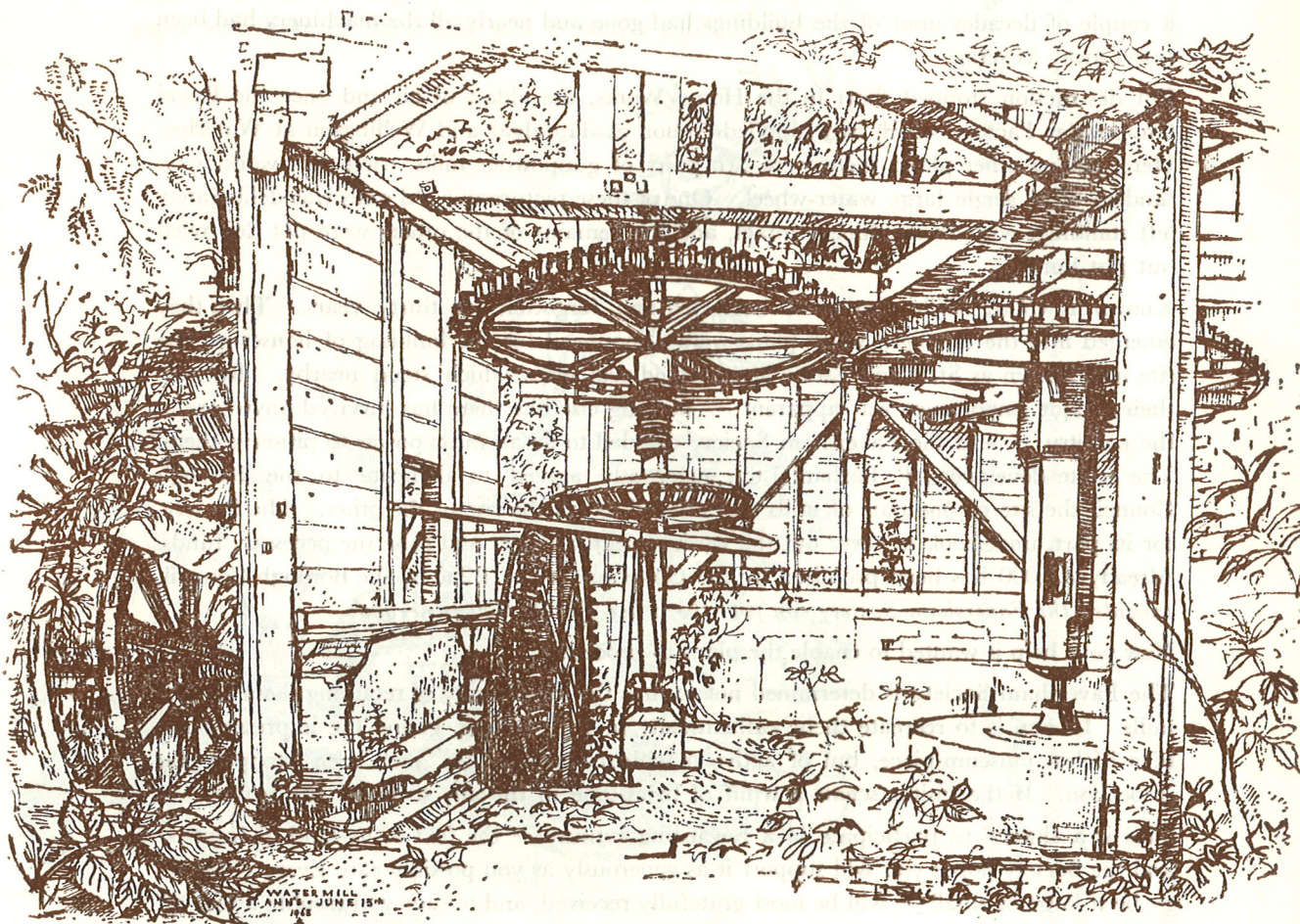
On Her Majesty's Service

WASC 406



THE

Chart Gunpowder Mills ~ St. Ann's



WATER MILL
ST. ANN'S - JUNE 15th
1948

TOWN AND PORT OF
FAVERSHAM * KENT

These mills are unique . . . you can help save them

BETWEEN Rochester and Canterbury lies Faversham, one of the finest towns in Kent. For more than 300 years it was a major centre of the gunpowder industry. Then, in 1934, owing to their vulnerability in the event of war, the factories were closed. Within a couple of decades most of the buildings had gone and nearly all the machinery had been taken away as scrap.

But destruction stopped short in the Home Works, the oldest of all and once the Royal Gunpowder Factory which had supplied Nelson at Trafalgar and Wellington at Waterloo. Here, among other plant, there were two pairs of gunpowder mills, each pair working in tandem off a single large water-wheel. One of these picturesque old mills was deliberately left standing, with its machinery intact, and the remains of the others were not destroyed but just buried.

Known as *Chart Mills*, they stood neglected and forgotten for thirty years. Then they emerged into the limelight when plans were announced for the building of houses on the site now known as St. Ann's Estate after a medieval cross which stood nearby. By now their unique importance was apparent — nothing else like them has survived anywhere in the country — and the Faversham Society decided to do all in its power to preserve them. The estate developers, F. Parham Ltd., generously agreed to dedicate to the Borough Council the site of one pair of mills and offered to sell the site of the other. The Society, for its part, undertook to carry out the work of reinstatement and raise the necessary funds. Already £1,000 has been promised by the Government and £250 by the Borough Council, *provided the Faversham Society can find the other £2,500 that is needed.*

Now *your* help is wanted to enable the plans to proceed.

The Faversham Society is determined not to miss the opportunity of retaining these historic mills. Its aim is to recreate them authentically in their setting, giving the impression not of a lifeless museum-piece, but of active machinery which has just been stopped for inspection. If the visitor scents a whiff of brimstone in the air, so much the better.

This is a chance to participate in a rewarding venture — the first of its kind in Kent — and the Society hopes you will support it as generously as you possibly can. Every donation — be it large or small — will be most gratefully received, and to save you trouble a tear-off donation slip is included in this leaflet. Please send your contribution *now*, and let us know the name and address of any of your friends who might be able to help.

FRONT COVER: ONE OF THE MILLS AS IT WAS IN JUNE 1963.

The Riverside Walk

Many of the older black powder factories enjoyed particularly fortunate circumstances. It was no mere coincidence. Natural screening was needed for the factories to be a reliable water-supply for driving the mills. Often, too, the water was conveyed by water — horses' hooves and cartwheels might have caused sparks. So a wooded, well-watered valley, as at St. Ann's, was

It is a delightful area, only half-a-mile from the town centre, and the Society will retain as many trees as possible and to create a riverside walk for the public. The Chart Mills stand alongside this walk, and with their bridge, good water will make an interesting and attractive place of pilgrimage.



THE RIVERSIDE WALK AND RESTORED MILLS AS THEY WILL BE

From of (address)
To THE HON. TREASURER, FAVERSHAM SOCIETY (CHART MILLS FUND), c/o NATIONAL PROVINCIAL BANK LTD., MARKET STREET, FAVERSHAM, KENT.

I/We wish to contribute towards the cost of restoring Chart Mills, and have pleasure in enclosing a donation of £ s. d.

I/We would/would not wish to be present at the ceremony when the Mills are re-opened to the public.

Signed

Date

If you know of anyone who would be interested to receive a copy of this leaflet, please give details of their name(s) and address(es):
.....
.....

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FRONT COVER: ONE OF THE MILLS AS IT WAS IN JUNE 1963.

The Riverside Walk

Many of the older black powder factories enjoyed particularly beautiful settings. This was no mere coincidence. Natural screening was needed for the buildings, and there had to be a reliable water-supply for driving the mills. Often, too, within the works the powder was conveyed by water — horses' hooves and cartwheels might have caused dangerous sparks. So a wooded, well-watered valley, as at St. Ann's, was often chosen for a site.

It is a delightful area, only half-a-mile from the town centre, and the developers plan to retain as many trees as possible and to create a riverside walk for all the town to enjoy. Chart Mills stand alongside this walk, and with their bridge, grand wheels and tumbling water will make an interesting and attractive place of pilgrimage.



THE RIVERSIDE WALK AND RESTORED MILLS AS THEY WILL BE.

- c 1560. By Elizabeth I's reign gunpowder is already being made in Faversham.
- c 1760. Works are nationalised, to become the Royal Powder Mills. Chart Mills take their present form.
- 1798. Sketches of machinery made by John Ticking, master worker at the Royal Powder Mills (Home Works).
- c 1815. Chart Mills rebuilt, using some earlier components.
- 1825. Home Works sold to Messrs. John Hall & Son, who were later absorbed by Messrs. Curtis & Harvey, who in turn were merged with I.C.I.
- 1934. I.C.I. concentrate manufacture of explosives in Ayrshire, and their Faversham works closes.
- 1967. In Elizabeth II's reign plans for restoration of Chart Mills made.

Powder from Chart was used in the Napoleonic and Crimean Wars, as well as in many earlier campaigns.

Guy Fawkes may well have intended using Faversham gunpowder.

Fifty years ago there were no fewer than 26 mills in the Home Works alone.

Some were powered by water, some by the tide, and some by steam.

There were 6 mills in Ospringe,
6 in St. Ann's (Chart Mills),
6 in Tanners Street (King's Mills),
8 on Stonebridge Pond.
ONLY ONE GROUP REMAINS IN 1967.

Chart Mills at Work

Most of the standing mill dates from the Napoleonic period, though some components are even older and go back to about 1760, when the works became Royal property. These are the only mills of their type and date known to survive — some similar mills at Waltham Abbey were unfortunately destroyed within living memory despite efforts made to preserve them. Chart Mills were 'incorporating' mills, used to mix the three ingredients of gunpowder (saltpetre, sulphur and charcoal) under pressure with water added. Attached to the vertical shaft seen on the right of the drawing on the cover were two 'edge-runner' stones, with their axes horizontal, which rolled around a tray in which the charge of gunpowder was placed.

Mr. W. Bunting, of Davington, remembers how such mills were used just before the 1914-1918 war :

Two millmen worked a 36-hour shift. Starting at 6 a.m. they loaded green charge into a pan to be ground into fine powder. This milling took one to two hours according to the quality of powder required. A water-wheel, built between two mills, drove them both. Thus, at Chart Mills, two wheels worked four mills. Two other mills were driven by steam. So the millmen had six pans of milled powder to empty and renew with green charge every hour or so throughout the shift. They slept when they could, and food was brought to the watch-house for them by members of their families.

Special clothing was worn tied with tapes, and soft hand-sewn powder shoes replaced ordinary footwear every time they entered the mill to use the wooden scuppets to scoop up the gunpowder.

Every day a cart drawn by a beautiful Suffolk Punch (one of the many at the Works) collected the finished product and took it to nearby Bysing Wood, where much of it was prepared for transportation by barge from Oare Creek.

For this 36-hour shift, the millman earned the sum of five shillings !



HOW IT STARTED IN FAVERSHAM MIXING GUNPOWDER BY HAND.

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