

WASC 508

Report of Committee
of Enquiry into
Future of Grafton
and Waltham Abbey
Factories

22 MAY. 1920

BY APPOINTMENT TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING

FIL

WASC 508

COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY
INTO THE FUTURE OF HIS MAJESTY'S FACTORIES



AT

GRETNA

AND

WALTHAM ABBEY.

APPOINTED BY

THE

MINISTER OF MUNITIONS.

JUNE, 1919.

Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty.



LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

To be purchased through any Bookseller or directly from
H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE at the following addresses:
IMPERIAL HOUSE, KINGSWAY, LONDON, W.C. 2, and 28, ABINGDON STREET, LONDON, S.W. 1;
37, PETER STREET, MANCHESTER; 1, ST. ANDREW'S CRESCENT, CARDIFF;
23, FORTH STREET, EDINBURGH;
or from E. PONSONBY, LTD., 116, GRAFTON STREET, DUBLIN.

1920.

[Cmd. 667]

Price 1d. Net.

FUTURE OF GREтна AND WALTHAM ABBEY.

CONSTITUTION OF COMMITTEE.

The Ministry of Munitions appointed a Committee in February, 1919, to consider the future of Gretna and Waltham Abbey, constituted as follows :—

Sir EDWARD E. PEARSON, J.P., <i>Chairman.</i>	} <i>Ministry of Munitions.</i>
Brigadier-General W. ALEXANDER, D.S.O., C.M.G., C.B.	
Sir PHILIP HENRIQUES, K.B.E.	
Sir WILLIAM PEARCE, M.P.	
Mr. E. H. MARKER, <i>Board of Trade.</i>	
Colonel COBB, O.B.E., <i>Lands Directorate (representing Sir Howard Frank).</i>	
Dr. H. E. WATTS, <i>Secretary.</i>	

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS.

The Committee (with the exception of one member) reached the following conclusions in June, 1919 :—

(1) There was no valid reason why *both* Gretna and Waltham Abbey should be kept as Explosives Factories.

(2) Waltham Abbey alone had not the capacity to deal with the possible war requirements, and the Committee felt strongly, in view of the demands during the late war, that it was wiser to over-estimate than to under-estimate when considering the question of Cordite Factories. They also felt that the National Factories should, as far as possible, be self-contained.

(3) Gretna, being a modern and up-to-date factory, should, therefore, be kept in preference to the older factory, viz., Waltham Abbey.

(4) Gretna, in the opinion of the Committee, was in a position to manufacture cordite cheaper than it could be made at Waltham Abbey. It also had its own Oleum Plant—Glycerine Distillery—Ether Plant and Solvent Recovery Plant.

(5) The Committee recommended that the Presses for Rifle Cordite now at Waltham Abbey should be transferred to Gretna, where they could be readily installed. The cost of this transfer should not be heavy, and it was very desirable to concentrate at one factory.

(6) The Committee also recommended that the Plant at Waltham Abbey for Black Powder, and Picric Powder, should be transferred to either Gretna or some other Government Factory, so that Waltham Abbey could be entirely shut down as an explosives manufacturing centre.

(7) The Committee recommended if possible that a part of Gretna Ether Plant should be used for other purposes than the Factory requirements ; e.g., the conversion of Alcohol to Ether and the treatment of the Ether Alcohol recovered.

In the opinion of the Committee it was well worth while the Government considering, in view of the many industries in the country requiring solvents, the production of a supply of cheap duty-free alcohol and ether, which would give a great incentive to all industries of this nature. Being centralised it could be worked economically, and, furthermore, would be under close Government control.

The Committee were advised that Methyl-alcohol of a high grade suitable for the dye industry could be manufactured with slight modifications to the existing plant. It was recommended, therefore, that a small grant should be at once made for the necessary alteration, so that experiments on a commercial scale could be undertaken immediately with the large stock of Methyl Alcohol in this country to Government account.

The above recommendations, if carried out, would not compete with any existing trade, but would be of the greatest assistance in helping existing industries.

(8) The Committee recommended that certain of the Government lands outside the Gretna Factory fences, which could not be utilised conveniently for industrial purposes;

should be handed over for small holdings. It was desirable, however, that a small area of land suitable for buildings in proximity to the townships should be retained for possible future extensions.

(9) The Committee considered that the Gretna and Eastriggs Townships, which at present are Government Townships, and are controlled by the factory, should, at an early date, be completely severed from the factory, and be run by some local authority. The schools, for instance, should be handed over to the Scottish Education Authority on some agreed terms. The cost of the Townships would, in these circumstances, cease to be a direct charge against the cost of production.

(10) Except as a Government Cordite Factory the Committee saw no useful purpose to which Gretna could be put, and, considering that it was a modern up-to-date Cordite Factory, which has cost a large sum to erect and is in excellent state of maintenance, it would be criminal to scrap it.

The Committee considered, however, that every encouragement should be given to induce industries to start up in the neighbourhood. This could be done by the Government offering cheap power and water, and also facilities over the factory railways. These facilities would not, in the opinion of the Committee, in any way be detrimental to the factory work; in fact, the reverse should be the case as they should help the factory overhead costs.

(11) As some of the warehouses and stores at Gretna would not be required to the full capacity, it would be possible for certain Government stocks to be stored here, and, in view of the railway facilities and means of handling the stores, the costs should be moderate.

(12) *Waltham Abbey*.—The Committee very much regretted that they had to recommend that this factory should be shut down as an Explosives Factory. They especially regretted having to make this recommendation in view of the great service the factory had been to the Nation in the past. On the other hand, having regard to the possible future requirements, and also to the fact that Gretna was a more suitable and economic factory, they could not do otherwise. They recommended that, as far as possible, the workmen who had served for a long time at Waltham Abbey should, if they desired, be transferred to Gretna at the expense of the Government, and that the Government should be prepared to buy, at a fair valuation, the houses that the Waltham-Abbey men who leave the district may own.

Generally they saw no useful purpose to which the factory could be put. Its general lay-out is inconvenient, the land at the northern end, cut up as it is by waterways, is of little or no value either as factory sites or for agricultural purposes. The land at the southern end should have some value, and it was suggested that part of it, or some of the buildings, might be of use to Enfield Small Arms Factory for storage purposes.

MINORITY REPORT.

In a Minority Report, Sir William Pearce regretted his inability to sign the main Report, because in his opinion recent circumstances had made obsolete the terms of reference upon which it was based.

In his view, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's forecast of military expenditure in the near future left no possible place for a permanent factory like Gretna with its huge lay-out. As a result of the war, the Admiralty now possessed their own factory, sufficient for all Naval requirements. A large stock of Cordite also remained, and there was a large over-production in the United Kingdom of both Oleum and Glycerine. If, therefore, any Government factory would be required by the War Office, it was certainly only a case for a small output—Waltham Abbey rather than Gretna.

The main Report ignored the enormous capital cost of Gretna, approaching £150 for every ton of Cordite yet produced. He submitted, however, it was wiser to cut this loss once and for all than to continue a huge factory in a locality with inherent disadvantages, which factory only a world-war called into existence, and only the probability of a future world-war could justify its retention.

185. 1917. REPORT.....HEALTH OF MUNITION WORKERS COMMITTEE...
INDUSTRIAL EFFICIENCY AND FATIGUE. Incl. an enquiry into health of woman munition
workers by to female doctors. 121pp. plus graphs, orig.blue wraps. ex.cond. **£58.00**
186. 1917. AN ACT TO EXTEND AND AMEND MUNITIONS OF WAR ACT. Concerns pay and
wages. 6pp. good. **£5.00**
187. 1917. INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED. RESTRICTIONS UPON THE SALE OF SHOT GUN
AMMUNITION. 4pp. **£8.00**
188. 1920. FUTURE OF HIS MAJESTIES FACTORIES AT GREтна AND WALTHAM
ABBEY. Keep Gretna, close Waltham. 3pp. blue penciled on, fr; gen.good. **£12.00**

IRELAND

189. 1894. REPORTS ON THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER. Ass. Commissioners McCrea,
O'Brien, Richards, Wilson, together with index. Every county in immense detail. Vol.1. 129pp;
Vol.2, 131pp; Vol.3. 76pp. Vol.4. 142pp. Index 61pp. orig.blue wraps. All ex. set of 5 vols. **£115.00**
190. 1894.RECIEPTS AND PAYMENTS TO COUNTY OFFICERS AND COURTS. 3pp. **£6.00**
191. 1916. REPORT ON RECRUITING IN IRELAND. Numbers and locations. 4pp. stained. **£8.00**
192. 1918.APPLICATION....for £50,000 for Intermediate Education in Ireland. 4pp. ex. **£6.00**
193. 1920. POWERS EXERCISEDOVER IRISH RAILWAYS. 21pp. ex.cond. **£18.00**
194. 1920. RETURN SHOWING THE NUMBER OF SERIOUS OUTRAGES REPORTED IN JULY,
AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 1920. 3pp. fr.vedges. **£18.00**

BRITISH: GENERAL

195. 1855. REPORT PUBLIC HEALTH BILL & NUISANCES REMOVAL AMENDMENT BILL.
MINUTES OF EVIDENCE, APPENDIX, INDEX. The "Great Stink" and its consequences. **£52.00**
196. 1893. RETURN..... NAMES, PROFESSIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF ALL JUSTICES OF
THE PEACE.....IN ENGLAND AND WALES. Court by court. 64pp. ex.cond. **£32.00**
197. 1893. REPORT.....ON PUBLIC PETITION. From Pwllheli with forged signatures. 1pp. **£5.00**
198. 1894. ACCOUNT.....RECIEPTS & EXPENDITURES COMPANIES. Winding-up act PLUS
Bankruptcy Proceedings & High courts of Justice. 6pp. **£6.00**
199. 1894. POSTMASTER GENERAL AND AGREEMENTS WITH ...NATIONAL TELEPHONE
COMPANYSIGNED IN 1892. Area by area incl. Ireland. 75pp. ex.cond. **£22.00**
200. 1894. CIRCULARTO THE RAILWAY COMPANIES OF THE UK..... 100's tiny local
companies written to throughout UK incl. Ireland. 40pp. sl.used. wraps. **£42.00**
201. 1895. REPORT.....ON THE SALIBURY PLAIN DISTRICT OF WILTSHIRE. Agricultural
depression described in Detail. 64pp. original. Blue wraps. **£38.00**
202. 1898. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERSOF CONVICT PRISONS WITH
APPENDICES. 490pp. sl.frayed & dogeared orig.blue wr. gen. ex.cond. **£42.00**
203. 1902. REPORT.....ON DISPOSITION OF HIS MAJESTY'S OSBORNE ESTATE IN THE
ISLE OF WIGHT. Change it to a Naval College! 1pp. sl.used & st.edges. **£18.00**

204. 1904. PAPERS.....PROPOSED ADOPTIONS OF A METRIC SYSTEM OF WEIGHTS
MEASURES FOR USE WITHIN THE EMPIRE. Proposed by the Premiers of Dominions &
Colonies. 37pp. Frayed & dusty cvrs. gen.ex.cond. **£38.00**
205. 1908. REPORT.....HOME WORK. Minutes of Evidence & appendix. Conditions of
workers, payment conditions. 216pp. orig.blue wraps. **£22.00**
206. 1910. MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.....ON PETROLEUM SPIRIT. Vol.1. only. 10 days on uses,
dangers and regulation. 187pp. orig.blue wraps. ex.cond. **£18.00**
207. 1911 ...NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS, Eng & Wales. 4pp. A5. **£4.00**
208. 1913. EVIDENCE.....ON MOTOR TRAFFIC. Vol.1. 17/12/1912 to 3/4/1913. Tramways, cars,
omnibus, London Traffic and its problems. 480pp. v.frayed orig. blue wraps. else ex.cond. **£68.00**
209. 1913. EVIDENCE & APPENDICES.....COMMITTEE ON CELLULOID. Inflammable and
explosive qualities, dangers, safe manufacture, film etc. 377pp. frayed orig.blue wraps. ex. **£38.00**
210. 1913. MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.....ON PETROLEUM SPIRIT AND APPENDICES. 31pp.
2 plates showing proposed petrol tanker. Ex.cond. **£18.00**
211. 1913. FINAL REPORT.....ON PETROLEUM SPIRIT. 8pp. ex.cond. **£10.00**
212. 1914. BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES. Annual Report for 1913. 58p. fr.wraps.
A5. Good. **£10.00**
213. 1917. REGULATIONS.....GRANTS TO SCOTCH SCHOOL, BOARDS.....MEDICAL
TREATMENT OF NECESSITIOUS SCHOOL CHILDREN. 1pp. **£4.00**
214. 1919. EVIDENCE.....PROTECTION OF WILD BIRDS WITH APPENDICES. England,
Scotland, Ireland; Ortolans, bird's egg collecting, taxidermy. etc. 193pp. gen.ex.cond. **£28.00**
215. INTERIM REPORTS ON THE ANCIENT MONUMENTS. Town by town, village hamlet and
site. 100's listed. All A4 in ex.cond.
a) 1912. South Buckinghamshire. 44pp. **£28.00**
b) 1913. North Buckinghamshire. 40pp. **£28.00**
c) 1920. North West Essex. 66pp. **£32.00**
216. 1919. REPORT.....THE CROSSLEY AND PORTER ORPHAN HOME AND SCHOOL
AT HALIFAX.....Yorkshire founding. 9pp. **£8.00**
- SCHEDULES OF MANUSCRIPTS.** All 16x24c. Containing many actual transcripts with naval
and shipping references.
217. 1900. MANUSCRIPTS OF THE CORPORATION OF BEVERLEY. Charter, accounts etc. 227pp.
v.frayed & worn wraps. **£10.00**
218. 1902/08. MANUSCRIPTS OF THE MARQUESS OF ORMONDE. Kept in Kilkenny Castle. NEW
SERIES. All in frayed or no wraps.
a) Vol.1. 1902; 360pp. 1572-1659. b) Vol.2. 1903; 428pp. 1641-1653.
c) Vol.3. 1904; 1660-1673. 480pp. d) Vol.5. 1908;1679-1680, 669pp. **All at £12.00 each.**
219. 1902. MANUSCRIPTS IN THE WELSH LANGUAGE. Vol.2. Part only. In Jesus College Oxford
and in Cardiff, Havod, Wrexham etc. etc. etc. 417pp. v.frayed & worn wraps. **£8.00**
220. 1906. MANUSCRIPTS OF THE EARL OF VERULAM. Preserved at Gorhambury. 311pp. Dull &
rbd wraps.else good. **£10.00**