

On Her Majesty's Service

WASC 1814

WASC 1814



Axe threat to RARDE

A WHITEHALL report on the future of the Ministry of Defence establishment at Waltham Abbey has recommended closure, employees were told on Monday.

The announcement came just two days after celebrations were held at the 195 acre site in Powdermill Lane to mark 200 years service to the Crown.

Speaking to Gazette reporter Alan Davis, a spokesman from the Ministry cited "economic factors" as the reason

for the prospective relocation of the 70 scientists involved to a larger site in Kent.

The site on which RARDE (Royal Armament Research

and Development Establishment) stands, first saw the manufacture of gunpowder in the 17th century, and as a Royal powder mill sold ex-

plosives to both North and South during the American Civil War.

If the report's recommendations are adopted, the main site will close by April 1990, with the Sewardstone Road site owned by Royal Ordnance being vacated by mid-89.

The plans come as part of a rationalisation programme by the Government to set up just one research establishment for each of the armed services.

But they leave a question mark over the future of some 50 support staff including technicians and industrials who comprise half the workforce.

Unions involved have been invited to consider the proposals and make representations before a final recommendation is made to the Secretary of State for Defence, George Younger.

On Tuesday, the Ministry's spokesman dismissed all talk of redundancies as premature.

"No decision has actually been taken," he said.

But if the proposals are adopted it will mean the end of a long-standing relationship between Waltham Abbey and the defence industry and Crown. In the days prior to the first major re-organisation in 1945 the Royal Gunpowder Factory was the town's biggest employer.

And as a research establishment, work continued to focus on new explosives, and better production methods, together with chemical research into propellents for missiles and weapons.

A final decision on the future of RARDE Waltham Abbey is not expected until mid-November.

Open day for the 200th anniversary

TWO hundred years of continuous contribution to the Crown is being celebrated at the Royal Armament Research and Development Establishment in Waltham Abbey.

The bicentenary celebrations got underway on Saturday with an open day for employees, their families and invited guests.

The establishment is not normally open to the general public because of the nature of the work, and this was the first open day for selected people since 1968.

There was an extensive turnout at the weekend, with a great deal of interest being shown in the various demonstrations and exhibits at the site in Powdermill Lane, and a spokesman said afterwards that it had been a "very successful day."

The varied programme included a band concert, a display of smoke and flares, a police dog display, a demonstration of an FH70 gun by

the 27th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, and underwater explosions at Newton's Pool.

In the evening there was a fireworks display and a barbecue. It is intended to make the open day display more accessible locally by staging it as an exhibition in the Epping Forest District Museum in Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, starting in December.

*Chestnut
Waltham
Mercury
18 Sept 87*

It went like a bomb

THERE was a rare chance to see inside Waltham Abbey's royal arms research establishment when it began its bicentenary celebrations at the weekend.

Employees, their families and guests were able to explore laboratories and other parts of the site.

Next month marks 200 years of nationalised explosives operations on the site which started life as John Walton's gunpowder mill.

*Chestnut
Waltham
Telegraph
17.9.1987*