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# PUBLICATIONS - 'RECENT'

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# The Forester

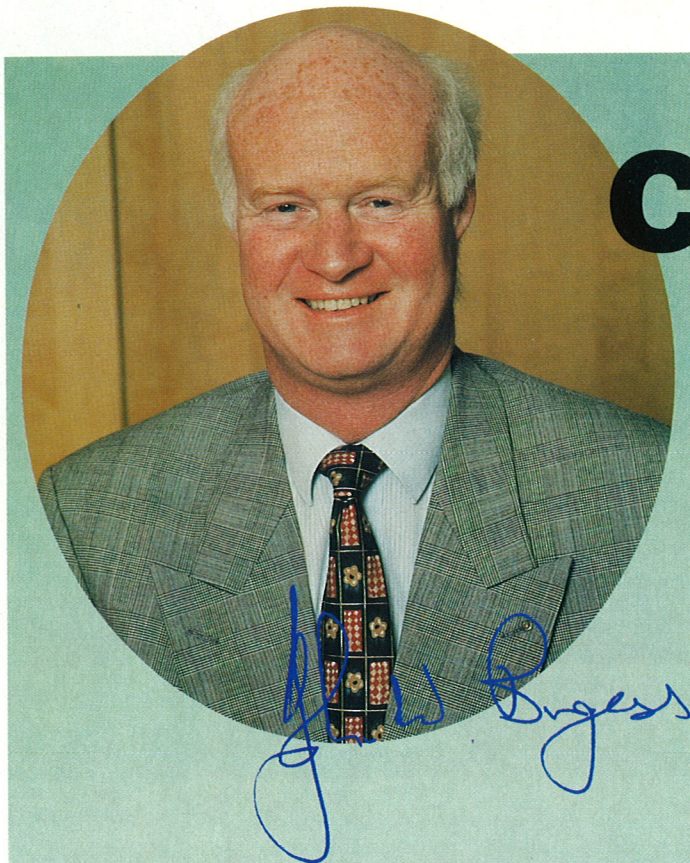


December 1996  
Issue 12

## Inside this issue...

- Your Views on Policing
- Keeping Warm
- North Weald Airfield





## inside your Forester ...

- Quality Services
- Senior Management Review
- Keeping Warm
- Gunpowder Mills
- Recycling

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# COMMENT

**W**elcome to this edition of *The Forester*, the first since the Council carried out an extensive review of its senior management. The new structure, explained in more detail inside the magazine, will create a more streamlined and corporate organisation which will be more responsive to the needs of our residents. Under the new arrangements you should find it easier to identify who is responsible for each of the major services we provide. The reorganisation is now entering a second phase which will continue until April 1997. Although this will be a period of change within the Council, the public should not be affected and there will be a positive outcome in the form of improved communication and service delivery.

The role of local authorities is increasingly becoming one of enabling and working in partnership with other organisations. The articles in this edition about Safer Communities and the Tree Warden Scheme demonstrate this trend and the value of this approach.

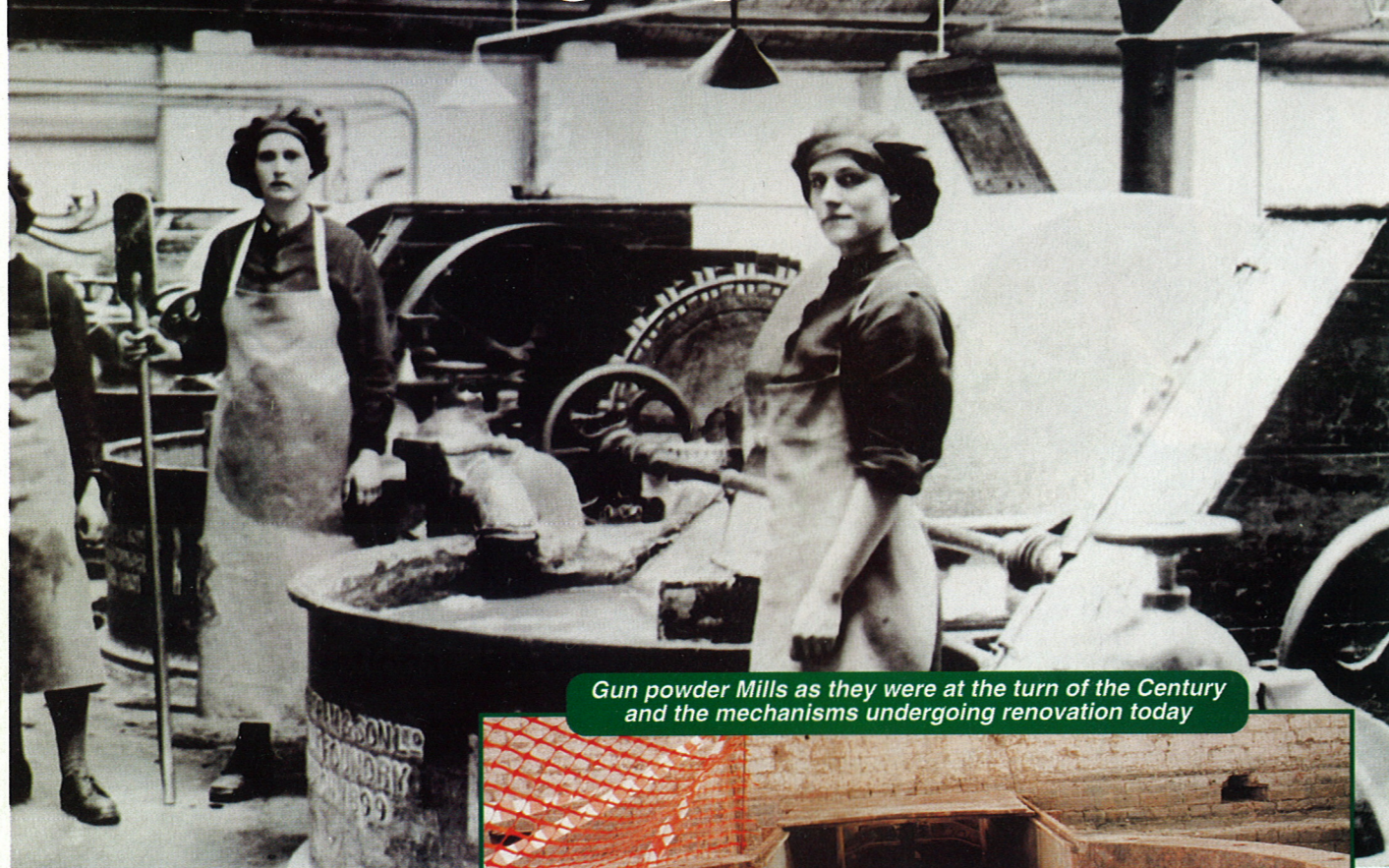
Here at Epping Forest we have a reputation for resisting inappropriate development and defending our Green Belt land. We are also very ready to recognise beneficial development opportunities within the District. Two such opportunities are featured within this issue of *The Forester* - the former Royal Ordnance site and the former Ongar Comprehensive School site. The Council is proceeding carefully with regard to these sites and we will continue to keep residents informed.

Finally, I would like to wish all our readers a joyful Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

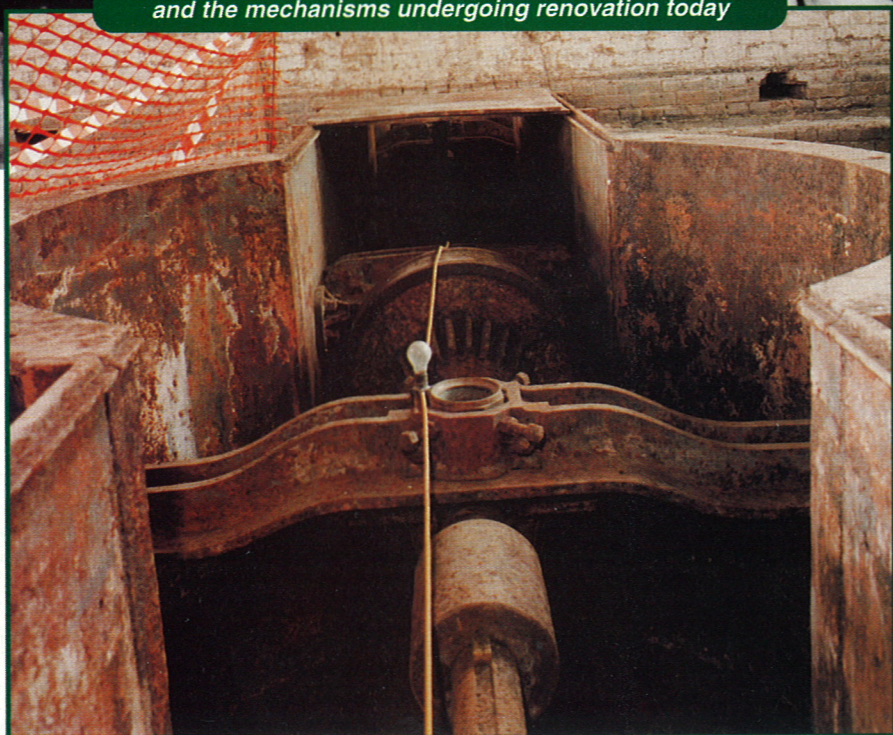
*John Burgess*  
Chief Executive

**The  
Forester**

# FUTURE SECURED for gunpowder mills...



Gun powder Mills as they were at the turn of the Century and the mechanisms undergoing renovation today



One of the most important heritage sites in England, the Royal Gunpowder Mills in Waltham Abbey is to be developed as a centre for leisure, tourism, housing and employment following the announcement on 31 October that it will receive a grant of £6.5 million from the National Lottery and £5.5 million from the Ministry of Defence.

The MoD has already spent several million pounds on decontamination of the site and is committed to further work before the site is eventually opened to the public.

News of the huge cash boost came at a special launch on 31 October hosted by the Heritage Lottery Board in London and a press conference for local journalists at the site in Waltham Abbey.

As well as helping to secure the economic future of the site, the money will also help to preserve one of the most important wildlife habitats in the country.

The first gunpowder mill was built in Waltham Abbey in 1561 although it is thought the Abbey monks provided gunpowder for the battle of Crecy in 1346. In 1787 the site was "Nationalised". It is rumoured that gunpowder from the mills was used in Guy Fawkes' failed plot to blow up the

Houses of Parliament. As technology developed the site became more secret, culminating in the development of the explosives for the Dambuster bombs in World War II and the propellants of the Blue Streak rockets for Britain's space programme in the 1960's.

Much of the area is covered in woodland and a network of canals and rivers once used to transport explosives. It is a haven for plants and wildlife with some 34 hectares designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.



Barge Quay and Water Mill



## Development Trust

In common with the former Royal Ordnance site on the Southern side of Waltham Abbey, the Gunpowder Mills gradually came to the end of its working life in the early 1990's. Because of the secret nature of the work, the site has remained hidden from view to the general public with its history and wildlife remaining undisturbed. A group of organisations including Epping Forest District Council, under the umbrella of the Waltham Abbey Gunpowder Mills Trust Steering Committee, was formed to oversee the establishment of a development trust to take on the site from the MoD. The partners also include

Waltham Abbey Town Council, Lea Valley Regional Park, Essex County Council and other organisations.

It will be several years before the site can be opened. However, with the help of the Lottery and MoD grants, the Trust hopes to develop the site as an industrial monument with an interpretation centre, exhibitions, visitor amenities and walks around the site, opening it up to the public for the first time in over three hundred years. Some of the money will go on restoring the many old buildings, 21 of which are listed including a grade I and seven grade II structures.

## ...while future takes shape for former Royal Ordnance site

The former Royal Ordnance site at Sewardstone Road, Waltham Abbey has been the subject of much controversy since it became vacant in the late 1980's. Lying on the southern fringe of Waltham Abbey in the Green Belt and partly in the Lee Valley Regional

Park, plans to redeploy the site for new uses have given rise to a great deal of concern amongst local residents. The main sources of concern include the contamination of the land by former uses and problems relating to access from the M25.

Given these circumstances, there might have been a temptation to simply

make the site secure and put up "Keep Out" signs. The District Council, however, believed that the site was too valuable as an area of open space to be made inaccessible and redundant. Discussions began with the owners and prospective developers of the site to see how the land could be used to benefit the local community. These discussions, lasting more than five years, have been enormously complicated and have involved numerous organisations and regulatory bodies.

Finally, a decision was taken by the Council's Development Committee in October 1996, to approve in principle a scheme for the development of the site.



Rocket Engine Test Bed Gunpowder Mills site

## Proposals

The proposals agreed involve about one quarter of the site being redeveloped for employment and housing with the remainder being transferred to the Lee Valley Park Authority or used as a pay and play golf course. Business development would take place adjacent to the M25 and residential development will include affordable housing. A new access road through the site from Junction 26 of the M25 to Highbridge Street, has already been agreed in principle, able to act as a Waltham Abbey southern bypass. The scheme is designed to enhance and open up the parts of the site which are in the Lee Valley Regional Park, and Green Belt, and provide employment and housing. Of course, none of this development can go ahead until the problem of contamination is resolved so procedures to make the site safe from contamination were also agreed.

## Decontamination

Over many decades of use for manufacture and research, the soils, drains and ditches had become contaminated with explosives and other

materials, including some asbestos. The land must therefore undergo a process of decontamination before any development can take place. All contaminated soil is to be moved from the redeveloped parts of the site and replaced by clean soil. Contaminated material will be diluted and placed in an underground sealed pit. Elsewhere on the site, where there is to be no development, contaminants will be left where they are, but will be covered by uncontaminated material including clean topsoil. No contaminated material is to be brought on to the site from elsewhere.

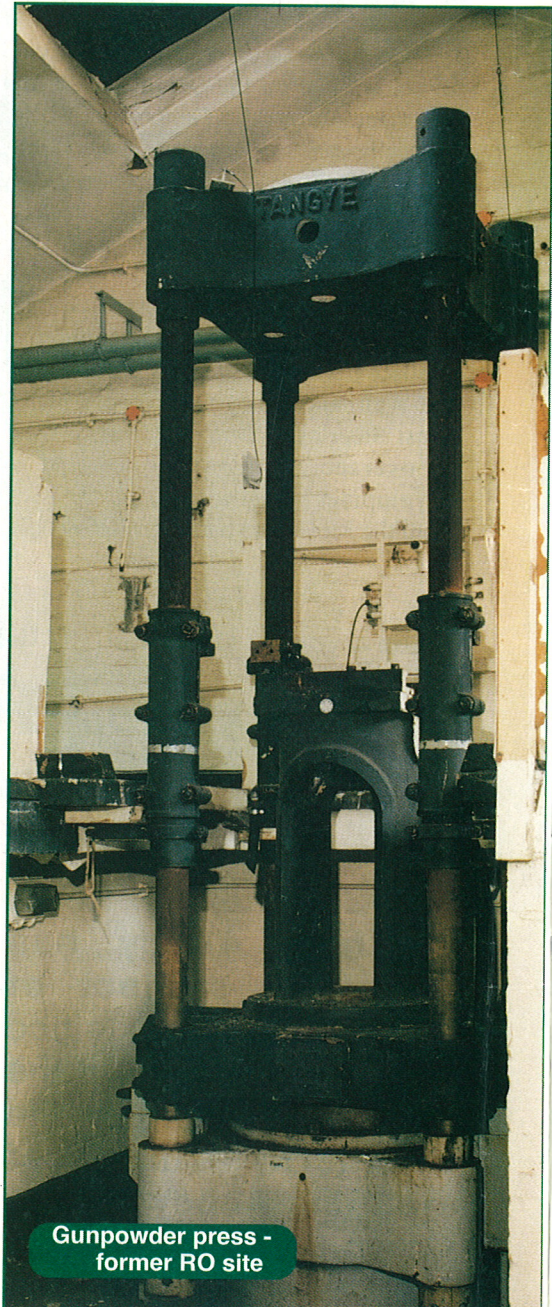
The Council has sought expert advice to ensure that these measures for decontamination would be adequate to ensure the safety of the site. The independent experts consulted have advised the Council that they are satisfied in principle that there is no reason to resist the decontamination proposals. The Council has also sought further assurances about some technical issues from the Environment Agency and Essex County Council, which have the statutory responsibilities for waste management and disposal. The Environment Agency would have to be satisfied that the site

will be safely managed in the future by means of a waste management licence before they would give the go ahead for any works to proceed

## A Positive Future

At this stage, approval is in principle only. There is still some way to go before planning permission can be given for detailed plans. The Council's planning and environmental officers still have much to do, but prospects for the site are very positive. Although the redevelopment will have a considerable impact on the local area, particularly during construction, the end result should bring benefits in the form of facilities for local residents and businesses.

If you have any questions or would like any further information please contact John Preston in Planning Services on 01992 564111.



Gunpowder press - former RO site