

WASC 2196

Report

- Powder Boats
Questionnaire
for National

Small Boat
Register

on Boat

RCHME 279

Powder boats

The boats used in the Mills varied in size but kept to two basic patterns. The first was pointed or ship-ended at both ends and the other swim or square-ended at both ends so that they did not need to be turned but could be towed or poled from either end by men. There is no evidence that horses were ever used; possibly the thought of a horse bolting with a boat containing sometimes sensitive cargo was not considered good H & S practice!

Both types were carvel-built in timber and most had barrel shaped roofs although some of the swim-ended craft were just hulls. All the craft used within the mills were built using phosphor bronze nails and fittings. The hull and the cabin framing were made of sturdy timbers but the roof cladding was of canvas covered light planking. The canvas was to prevent contamination of the cargo from foreign bodies and the light planking allowed explosive force to dissipate in the event of an accident. There is, however, no record of one of these boats exploding at Waltham Abbey.

Following historical practice, the term "powder boat" is used for the smaller "on-site" craft. "Powder barge" applies to the larger sailing craft used for longer distance transport.

The table below shows the so-far discovered details of the powder boats at Waltham Abbey. The records are held at the National Archives at Kew.

Date	Boat	Notes
24.5.1812		Order for covered boats to be used for Corning House.
25.3.1814		Five Barges, nine Powder Boats, two Ballast Barges, six Punts worth £1140 10s 7¼d shown on abstract of works.
1827		Establishment: 3 boatmen, powder punts. 2 bargemen transporting gunpowder, stores, etc
30.9.1858	Covered Boats	Annual List of Ordnance Boats 30.9.1858
		30' 2" x 5' 10" x 2' 6"
		27' 4" x 5' 10" x 2' 8"
		29' 3" x 8' x 2' 1"
		24' 8" x 5' 9" x 2' 2"
		25' x 5' 9" x 2' 2"
		30' 3" x 6' x 3' 1"
		25' 6" x 8' x 2' 1"
		25' 11" x 5' 10" x 2' 3"
		30' 5" x 5' 11" x 2' 1"
		30' 2" x 5' 11" x 2' 1"
		29' 5" x 7' 10" x 2' 1"
		28' 8" x 7' 4" x 3' 2"
	Open Boats	16' 7" x 3' 11" x 1' 5"
		15' 7" x 5' 9" x 1' 5"
		18' 7" x 4' 2" x 1' 7"
		26' 8" x 7' 7" x 1' 10"
		28' 8" x 8' 9" x 2' 6"
		18' 5" x 6' 4" x 2' 3"
		18' 10" x 5' 6" x 1' 11"

		28' 8" x 8' 2" x 2' 6"
		28' 8" x 8' 2" x 2' 6"
		20' x 7' 2" x 2' 5"
1869		There were 15 covered boats varying in size between 21' and 30' in length and 5' 11" and 8' 6" in width for carrying coals, wood, stores as well as acting as ferryboats. (Powderbarge WD)

RICHARD THOMAS

National Small Boat Register

Please include the following boat in the register:

Current boat name * RCHME 279	Boat type * Eg Dinghy etc POWDER BOAT	Boat class Eg Firefly etc NA	Sail no NA
Length * (feet or metres) 33 FT		Beam * (feet or metres) 8 FT	
Construction Eg carvel, clinker, moulded CARVEL	Material Eg canvas, grp, wood WOOD	Hull Eg monohull, catamaran MONOHULL	Deck Eg open, half decked, cockpit CENTRAL CABIN
Stern Eg flat, double-ended DOUBLE ENDED	Leeward Eg centreboard, daggerboard NIL	Masts Eg number & material NONE	Rig Eg Bermudian sloop NONE
Propulsion * Eg oar, sail, motor etc MAN HAU L	Original engine details NA	Designer NOT KNOWN	Design date PROGRESSIVE FROM EARLY 19c TO EARLY 20c
Date of build * 1920's RESTORED 1963 AND PART 2007	Builder NK	Place of build NK	
Present Location * ROYAL GUNPOWDER MILLS WALTHAM ABBEY	Present owner * † ROYAL GUNPOWDER MILLS WALTHAM ABBEY	Present condition PART RESTORED	Present use DISPLAY
Notable dates – dates of significant or visible changes eg 1970 Renamed Ada; 1975 Re-rigged as sloop RESTORED 1963 AND PART 2007			
Brief history * - details which would have an impact on a possible 'Heritage Merit' score eg notable owners, significant races etc To carry Gunpowder and other explosive material within Royal Gunpowder Mills Waltham Abbey			
Picture and copyright – Please supply a picture in hard copy or electronic form and indicate any copyright restrictions eg May not be used on the web. It should be a good general shot of the craft. Two photographs previously supplied. Copyright Royal Gunpowder Mills			
Information supplied by – please include name, postal address and date as well as email DR. J. WRIGHT 1 ALBERY RIDE, CHESHUNT, HERTS, EN9 8XE			

* We need information for all the fields marked * if we are to include the boat on the web

† Note that it is not intended to publish owners' names. All privately owned boats will be listed as *Private owner*

For further information about the NSBR or to enter a boat on the Register contact:

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