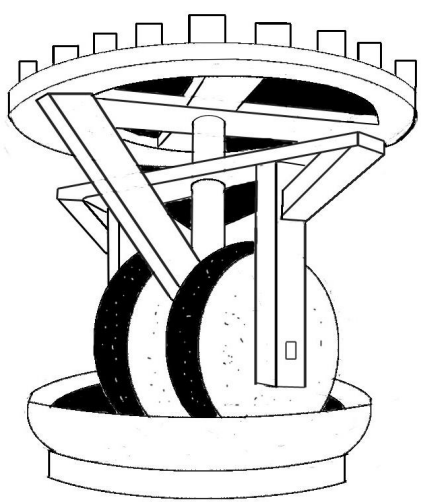
Summer 2023

TOUCHPAPER

The Newsletter of the Royal Gunpowder Mills Friends Association
Registered Charity No. 1115237



Summer 2023

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Deadline for the next issue is 25th August 2023

Chairman's Chat

With only nineteen members eventually attending, the AGM was declared inquorate and postponed until Wednesday 13th September at 10:30. However, we could still present reports and have a general discussion.

Following on from last year when we opened to the public every Sunday until the end of October, this year we were only opening for group visits and pre-booked conducted tours of the site and some exhibitions. This follows from limited numbers of visitors last year and some staff now being on a 3 day week. Group visits have included the Explosives Industries Group of the CBI, the Institute of Physics and the High Sheriff of Essex.

Our main activities over the last year have included maintenance and operation of the John Wilson Railway including purchase of recycled plastic sleepers to replace rotting wooden ones, radios and a strimmer. Also purchased were replacement batteries and controller for the Water Wheel plus a Wacker plate for site use. A number of our members continue to provide volunteer services around the site plus there is a small group working on a history of South Site.

While membership has continued to decrease, income from donations and bequests has more than compensated for this. In view of this and the fact that the Secretary post has been vacant for over a year and the Membership Secretary intends standing down, there was some discussion on the future viability of the Association as a Registered Charity and its long term continuation. We would like your views on this.

Len Stuart

Editorial

As I announced in the Spring issue I am giving up the job as Editor at the end of this year. I have had no volunteers to take over. I hoped someone would volunteer at the AGM; unfortunately this was not well attended. The meeting was adjourned.

Touchpaper has expanded greatly from its earlier size but as I have complained it has lost much of its 'Newsletter' form. It would be good if someone would agree to edit future editions, possibly of smaller size, and with more news of social interest to a steadily diminishing group of readers.

The software I use to produce Touchpaper if free, so if anyone is interested in trying it out I can send details and files for an old issue to play with.

If no one takes over there will be no magazine next year.

Finally link from Grant Privett about changes of work in scientific defence establishments:

https://journal.sciencemuseum.ac.uk/article/we-lost-a-type-of-job-for-a-type-of-person-in-this-country-changing-expectations-of-working-in-the-uk-scientific-civil-service/#references

Brian Clements

Drip Gun

https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/drip-rifle-gallipoli

When I was a child my grandfather told me about an incident that happened to him during the First World War. He and his friend were the only two left in a section of trench after a particularly heavy bombardment. I have no idea of the number of men involved or the size of the trench. After the bombardment stopped, they were fearful that the Germans were going to attack their trench. He told me that they had rigged up the rifles of the dead soldiers to fire with wires to deceive the Germans. For many years I puzzled about this. My grandson recently asked me for information about my grandfather and, on repeating the story, it renewed my curiosity. Having explored Google I came up with this! I presume that the technique became common knowledge during WWI. I had vaguely imagined that they stayed in the trench. But after seeing the above, and giving it some thought, I realise that my grandfather and his companion legged it! Or, to use the more Politically correct term used by the British Army, my grandfather withdrew!

Peter Stone

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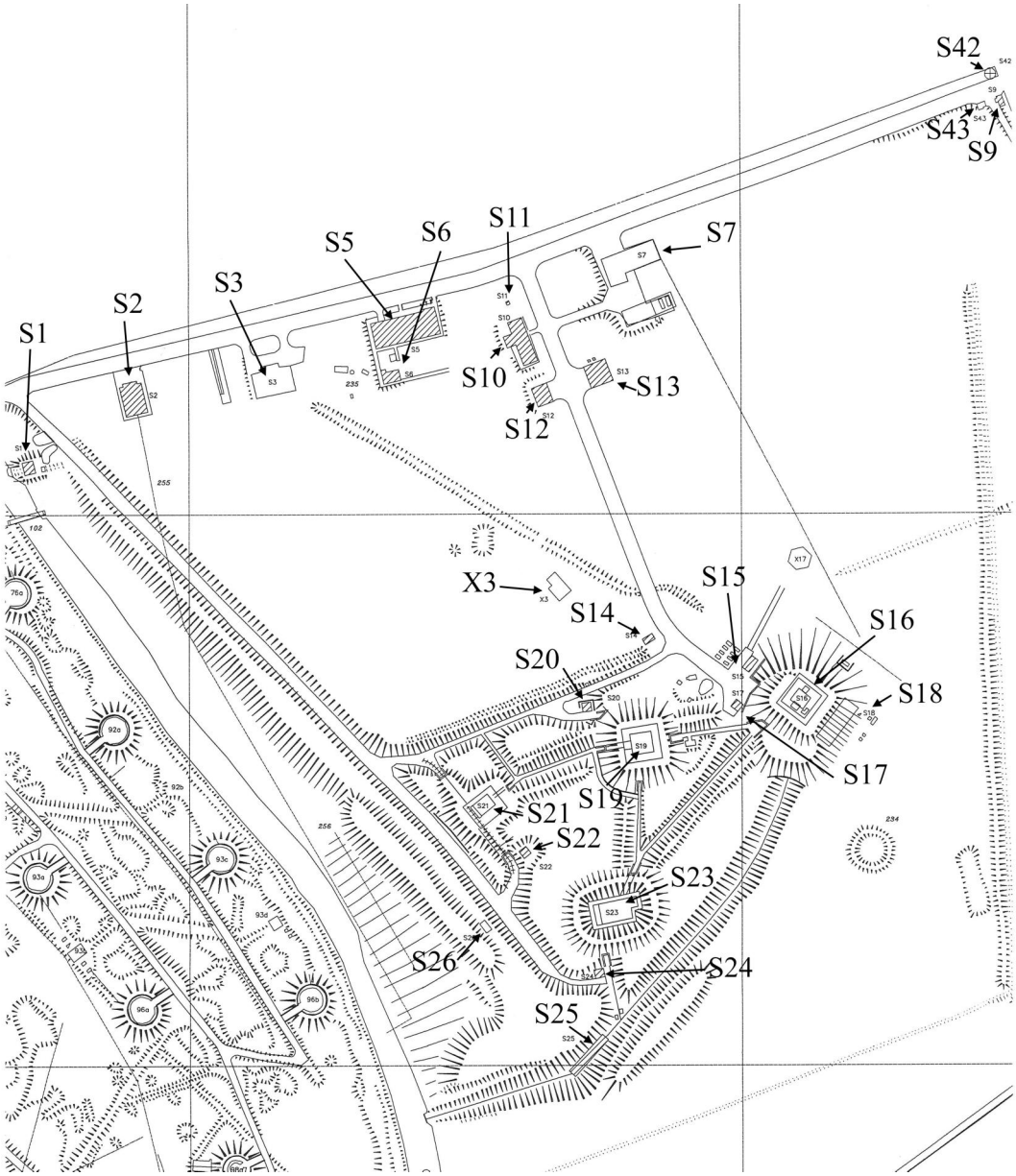
New Hill Nitroglycerine Factory WAI 245-02

Following the 1940 Edmonsey Mixing House explosion, the subsequent Enquiry recommended that, as well as rebuilding the Edmonsey facilities, a back up Nitroglycerine Factory should also be built and this was completed (by Wimpey) in 1941, the development termed New Hill.

The Factory was never actually used for production and in the 1950's the site was adapted to create Firing Points.

The New Hill, with its history of adaptation of original explosives chemical engineering buildings to a totally different explosives role, is a unique site unknown to the outside world and this Historical Summary has been written as a historical record and for possible quick reference in the event of development of the site.



New Hill WAMP 163-14

New Hill Nitroglycerine factory

Based on last available data – RCHME 1993

Bldg No.	Year	Function
S1	1941	Pump Ho.
S2	1941	Electricity sub sta.
"	195?	Transformer Ho.
S3	1941	Store
"		
S5	1941	Charge Machinery
"	195?	Processing Room
S6	1941	Lavatories
S7	1941	Nitromethane Store
S9	1941	Police Gate house
S10	1941	Dark Room
S11	1941	Shed
S12	1941	Fuel Store
S15	1941	Plenum Heater House
"	195?	Firing Point 1 Control Room.
S16	1941	Nitrating House
"	195?	Firing Point 1
S17	1941	Expense Mag.
"	195?	Firing Point 1 Control Room.
S18	1941	Part of S16
"	195?	Compressor Room (part S16)
S19	1941	Washing House
"	195?	Firing Point 2
S20	1941	Plenum Heater House
"	195?	Firing Point 2 Control Room
S21	1941	Mixing House
"	195?	Part converted to Firing Point
S22	1941	Plenum Heater House
"	195?	Firing Point 2 Control Room.
S23	1941	Wash Water Settling House
S24	1941	Plenum heater House
"	195?	Control Room ?

Bldg No.	Year	Function
S13	1941	Store
S14		1941 Solex fuel Store

Bldg No.	Year	Function
S25	1941	Flume Unit House
"	195?	Charge assembly
S27	1941	Magazine (demolished)
S42	1941	Pillbox
S43	1941	Police Gate House
X3	1941	Concrete Filled Sandbag Bunker

New Hill Nitroglycerine Factory

Gravity based
Processing material - - Mixed acids, (also compressed air and steam heating) By pipeline From N. Site Acid factory To

Nitrator S 16 (later FP 1) Nitroglycerine To

Washing House S 19 (later FP 2)

Contaminated waters from Nitrator and Washing House.. To

Wash Water Settling House S 23

Washed Nitroglycerine to **Mixing House** S 21 To

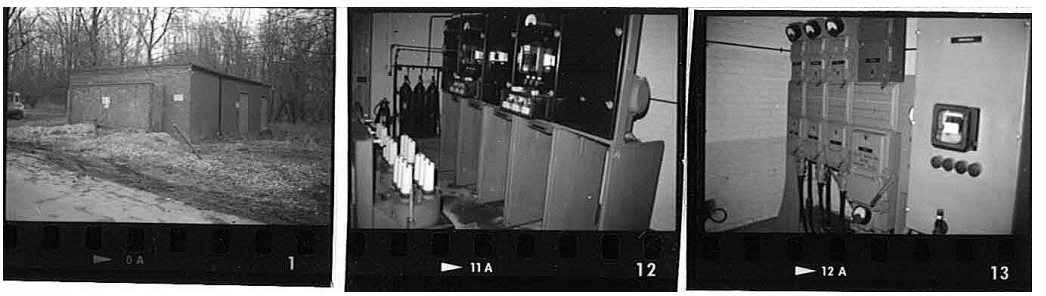
Railway to North Site
Wash water from Wash Water Settling House To

Flume House S 25 To

Filtered Water from Flume House To Cornmill Stream

New Hill Firing Points

Due it is believed to difficulties with the acid pipeline, the Nitroglycerine Factory never went into production and in the 1950's within the earth mounds of certain Factory buildings Firing Points were constructed, with other buildings utilised as control rooms.



S2 Electricity Sub Station

S9 Police Gate House

S43 Police Gate House

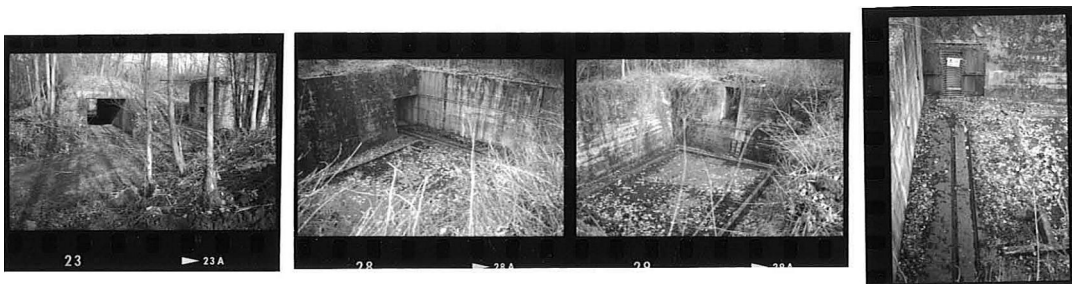
S15 1941 Plenum Heater House 195? FP 1 Control Room

S16 1941 Nitrating House 195? Firing Point 1

S17 1941 Expense Magazine 195? FP 1 Control Room

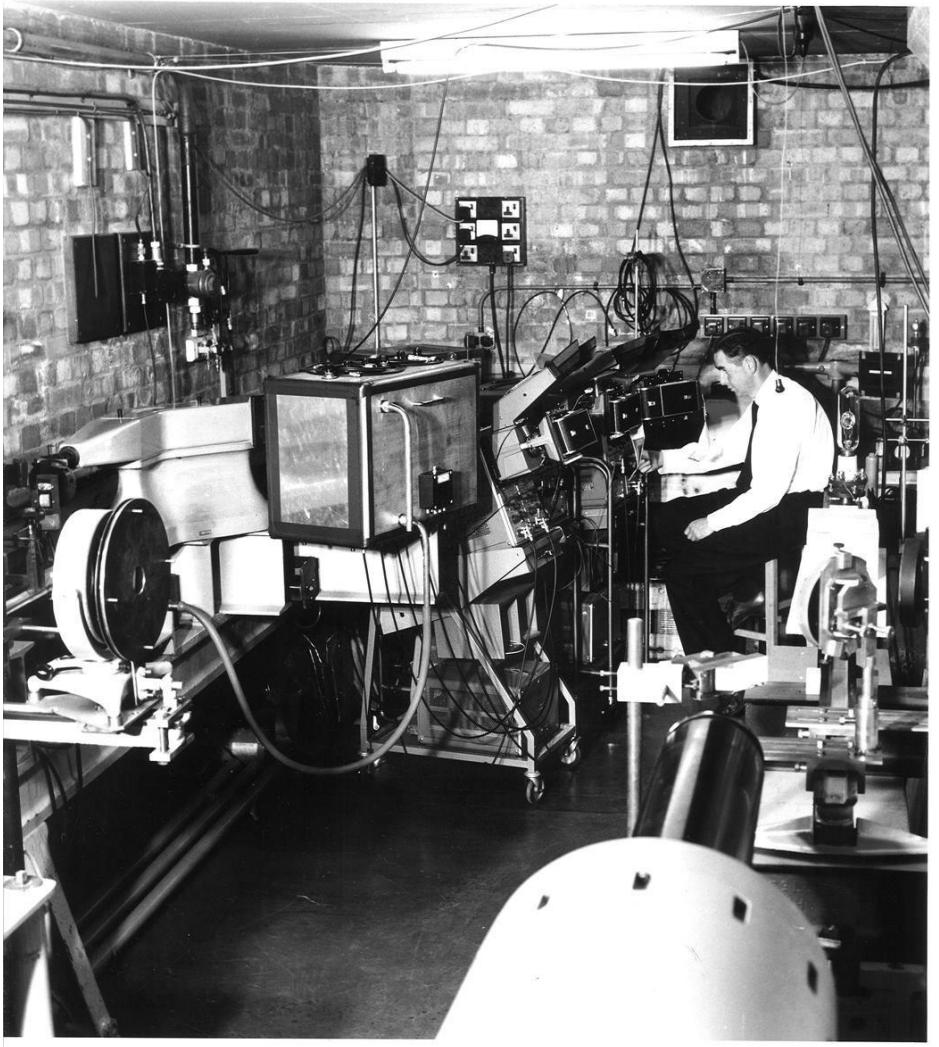
S19 1941 Washing House 195? Firing Point 2

S20 1941 Plenum Heater House 195? FP2 Control Room



S21 1941 Mixing House 195? Part Converted to Firing Point

S22 1941 Plenum Heater House 195? FP2 Control room



WAI 409_01 Firing Point No. 2 Control Room
Tony Burton at work

Les Tucker (Royal Gunpowder Mills Friends Association)

View Mills Archive Online -
https://www.wargm.org/archive_viewer

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Richard Hooker's Questions (c) Archive Reply

In Touchpaper Spring 2023 Richard Hooker asked a series of technical questions. This reply focuses on Question (c) and endeavours to at least throw some extra light, based on Archive information, with the proviso that no overall explanation of the Area system has ever been found in the Archive and the reply is based on random pieces of information gleaned from Online Archive sorting and a certain amount of conjecture. It is therefore subject to revision or correction.

Area System / New Hill – a tortuous story

Buildings: Numbering, introduction of Area Letters

The first Mills Building numbering system consisting of three figure numbers originated prior to WW1 and was applied in detailed 1917 WW1 North and South Site plans, it extended through to near the end of the 20th century. At this time RCHME investigation of the North Site had commenced and before the RCHME Report was written in 1993 it appears English Heritage introduced their own numbers series. At some point after this the Area alphabetical designation system was introduced with a new series of numbers. For the first time these included the building letter prefix reflecting the Area Letter. They were applied to all extant buildings. It is speculated that the introduction of the Area / Letter prefix system was prompted by the requirements of the 1993 Survey? but information is obscure. –*[I think it likely that the letter prefixes date from about the time the site changed from a factory to a research establishment. Ed.]*

So by the time of the Report, three different building categories had emerged and RCHME records quoted all three - first number the original, termed Old, second, termed RCHME series, third, those in the 1993 Report, which included the Area Letter.

Area Designation: Prefixes New Hill

It is conjectured that the basis of Area designation was on the whole topographical, and where possible combining with grouping of a particular process or geographical area, if this is valid, for certain areas it can be conjectured the building number has as prefix the first letter of the geographical name of the Area – thus E for the Edmonsey NG Area. However for Area L it seems universally accepted that the L was allotted to reflect the preponderance of laboratories in the Area; In this case therefore the prefix reflected function.

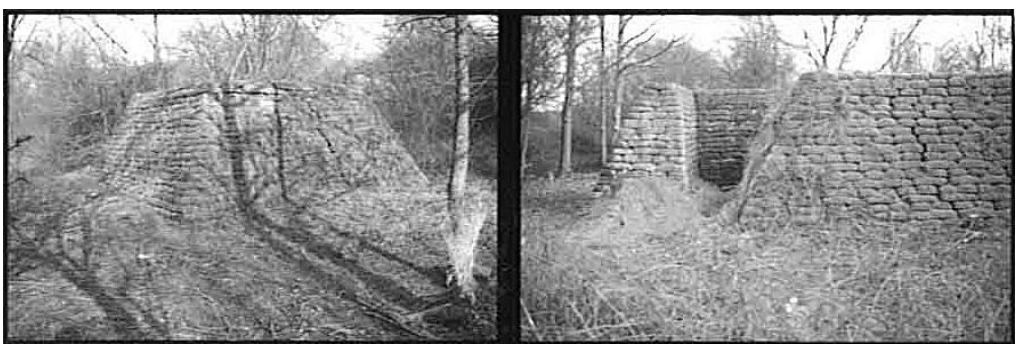
The theory seems reasonable but moving on to the wider field of other prefixes problems arise, e.g. why was the clearly identifiable Tetryl area not given the prefix T? Perhaps because the majority of the plant had been demolished, although slabs were recognised in numbering elsewhere.

This still leaves other prefixes, such as H, unexplained. *[H was used for buildings in the Hoppit Island area. Ed.]*

Turning to New Hill, the problems magnify. As far as can be determined, in spite of being a clearly defined geographical, topographical and process area it appears never to have been formally Area designated, with a prefix. Nevertheless in the 1993 RCHME Report on the New Hill buildings the prefix S appears. It could be speculated that prefix S was applied to any building not within a designated area. Thus e.g.Tetryl numbers were S27-S90 and the New Hill factory buildings numbers all had S and this stayed with them when the function changed with the introduction of Firing Points.

The X3 Mystery

However, there is one building which is a problem all of its own. If the above is valid and S was a blanket reference why did one lonely building standing outside the main New Hill buildings, described as concrete filled sand bagged Bunker have the prefix X and not S ? – X3. What was the buildings function? What was the reasoning behind this single deviation from the norm? What did X stand for? Is the line in front of it some kind of defensive line?



X3

This whole Area subject is an example of the kind of thing which keeps industrial archaeologists amused for the next fifty years as an antidote to the wringing of hands when some piece of priceless industrial heritage disappears for ever – you can't preserve everything. What is a factory? and 'When was the first factory?' is a particular long time favourite which seems to be good for another fifty years off and on.

Perhaps we should all get out more often.

On a wider view, in industrial archaeological terms New Hill is a surviving and quite remarkable possibly unique cohesive complete site, requiring informed interpretation, of one of the foundation processes of the organic chemical industry, in a secret world atmosphere Were access less difficult, hypothetically before overtaken by any future development of New Hill it would be of great interest to technically minded IA and History of Technology groups, such as the Newcomen Society. Also, perhaps school A Level Science groups.

There must be someone out there who has, if not first hand, at least relatively close knowledge of the subject and his information would be most welcome.

In the meantime the Archive hopes Richard has got out more on that bike in this better (patchy) weather. Maybe we should join him.

Les Tucker

Stop Press AGM

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The AGM on Friday the 16th June was adjourned as we failed to attract a quorum. It has been re arranged on Wednesday the 13th September at 10:30, again at the Mills site. Whatever number of members attend shall constitute a quorum.

ROF Bishopton; An Apology

My favorite building at Waltham Abbey was P716. The process for which this this building was designed was the extrusion of large solventless cordite rocket propellant charges. The press cylinder was filled with warm discs of propellant sheet, which were then extruded into the required shape using a hydraulic ram. The area where the cordite presses were located was the size of a Cathedral. It was so robustly constructed that we used to say, that in the event of the outbreak of a Nuclear War, it was the best place to go. The roof was reinforced concrete and, in my memory, it was earth covered. Originally it housed two beautiful presses; a 10.5-inch one and a 15-inch one[1]. Each was in its own, separate huge room as described above. The building was constructed so that each side was a mirror image of the other. Not long before I left Waltham some vandals removed the 15-inch press and used the building for some other trivial purpose. Some of them maybe reading this. If so, please be aware that I have not forgotten nor forgiven!

I can only recall the building housing the Bishopton 22.5-inch press (which was their equivalent) vaguely. It was nothing like P716. It was probably of fairly conventional brick wall and reinforced concrete roof construction with a separate room for the press operator. I seem to recall that the only protection for the press operator from the press itself was a rope mantlet. At P716 the press was housed in a reinforced concrete cell with a huge set of double doors in front of the die; these doors were left open during operation to relieve any overpressure. The walls of the corridor leading to the main press room were constructed of blockwork, which was designed to blow out in the event of an explosion. The building was sited so that the die pointed directly into a vertical face cut into the hill. The press operators were located in a reinforced concrete cell,

well away from the press. The doors to this cell opened outwards and were similar to the water tight ones that you see between compartments in submarines.

Comparing the two designs I think our building was wonderfully designed for an "unplanned" event, would have contained any explosion and given complete protection to the operators. Where that expertise came from, I have never discovered. But all the P1 buildings were beautifully designed; whereas the press building at Bishopton was totally inadequate. This is hardly surprising as the Bishopton factory had been constructed in very great haste just prior to WWII. There were different standards of construction of the ROFs, and it was generally accepted that Bishopton had drawn the short straw.

In the 1990s the Royal Ordnance Factory at Bishopton had an explosion in their 22.5-inch press. It partially demolished the building in which it was housed and threw the die (weighing several hundredweight) three quarters of a Kilometre (sorry about the mixed units!) in the direction of the Administration building[2]. In spite of the fact that the reinforced concrete roof of the control room partially collapsed, there were no physical injuries to the press operators. However, I suspect that they would have been severely shocked at the very least.

The HSE decided to prosecute Bishopton for this accident. I felt a twinge of guilt, in that I had been very much involved with developing the particular propellent involved in the explosion. The HSE inspector appointed asked if I would act as a witness for the prosecution. Also, Eric Baker (my boss at Waltham) was persuaded to give evidence. I did point out to this inspector that Bishopton were hardly to blame for the inadequacy of the building design; they had been privatised prior to this explosion and had no access to any building design expertise. Additionally, my own organisation had inspected them up until privatisation and had not complained about the standard of the building design (I can say this with a clear

conscience as it was before I joined SSO(PE)!) The inspector was insistent that he would prosecute them.

However, I had a plan to try and bring this point out in court. But, on the day before the case, the Solicitor acting for the ROF phoned me to discuss the case. He tried to convince me that it was an HD1.2 explosion rather than an HD1.1. The difference is to do with the definition and size of the explosion and it was very clearly HD1.1. And in any case, it made no difference what you called it. It was a very impressive explosion with great potential for harm. He was so aggressive and bullying that I did not take the obvious opportunity to point out that the best defence would be to say that the ROF had been put in this position by privatisation. And the ROF pleaded guilty hence I never got to make my point. Something I feel guilty about to this day.

The usual caveat applies that I apologise in advance if I have misremembered any of the facts in the above.

1. I never actually used the 15-inch press. It was a bit like having an Aston Martin in the garage but never driving it.
2 Could this have been a deliberate design feature?

Peter Stone

The Wrights

In several instances families served at the Mills through successive generations. One of the most noted was the Wright family whose connection stemmed back through Faversham then onwards to Waltham Abbey and two of whom were of particular significance in gunpowder, in very different locales.

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When the Government purchased the Waltham Abbey Mills from John Walton in 1787 several staff appointments were made. The most senior was James Wright who was in a senior position at the Royal Gunpowder Mills at Faversham and was made Storekeeper at Waltham Abbey at a salary of £150 p.a. The title of Storekeeper belies the scope and responsibilities of the position – a more contemporary title would be General Manager. Wright reported to then Major William Congreve, Deputy Comptroller of the Royal Laboratory at Woolwich, who had been instrumental in the Government purchase of Waltham Abbey. Congreve had instituted a series of studies at Faversham designed to improve and produce a more uniform powder quality. Prominent among these was a concentration on charcoal quality. Arising from this Congreve had introduced a new method of manufacturing charcoal involving burning wood in closed iron cylinders, developed by Dr. R. Watson, Professor of Chemistry at Cambridge. Congreve continued the exercise on charcoal at Waltham Abbey and one of Wright's many resposibilities was to conduct experiments at Congreve's direction and report on the result. Part of the plant involved what were termed 'gasometers' and there is a drawing of one of these in Wright's notebooks (WASC 0394_00).

The idea of scientific experiment was still a novel one and Wright had to be careful to assure the Board that no frivolous equipment expenditure was being incurred. Thus we have the note in his drawing 'The whole is constructed with pipes that were in store and considered unserviceable for other purposes'. Wright proved himself a very able experimenter. 'Having regard to the fog in which chemistry was enveloped early in the 19C – Dalton's "New System of Chemical Philosophy" was first published in 1808, it is remarkable to find Storekeeper Wright expressing his results on charcoal 'distillation' with complete lucidity' (From booklet on Chief Scientists Conference held at Waltham Abbey in 1966).

To add to his burdens, when war broke out with Revolutionary France in 1794 an artillery unit was formed at the Mills, the Waltham Volunteers, was formed with Wright as O/C. Not surprisingly Wright became exhausted with his multiple labours and official correspondence notes that his accounts were 'shamefully behind and renders this office to censure'. In his defence Wright wrote 'I am employed every day (Sundays included) from 9 o'clock in the morning until 6 or 7 at night (one hour and a half excepted for dinner – time) in the duty of my office, and it ever was my wish to discharge business with care and faithfulness'. However in the next year 1805 Wright was replaced as Storekeeper.

William Congreve had staked his career on making a success of the Waltham Abbey Mills. He succeeded and Waltham Abbey became the leading producer in the world of propellant powder. In the vital first two decades in which the Mills stood or fell James Wright played a vital role in establishing the foundations for the future.

In the meantime some time before 1801 members of the family had a stroke of luck when two sons – Joseph and James Jnr., were left a sum of money, sufficient to enable them to set up as merchants in the lucrative West Indies trade and to purchase a sugar plantation on the island of St. Kitts. Unfortunately the French ruined the plantation and the brothers had to return to seek employment in

England. Bearing in mind their father's position it is not surprising that both found positions in the Government gunpowder activity – Joseph as Clerk of Works at the Royal Mills at Faversham and then when Faversham was sold by the Government in 1823 a similar position at the Tower of London and James Jnr. starting as a Clerk at Waltham Abbey, progressing up to Clerk of the Cheque and in 1822 Deputy Storekeeper.

James Jnr. married and had nine children. Of these two were to serve in the gunpowder service, Henry and Frederick, the latter to pursue a very chequered course.

Henry entered a Clerk of Works apprenticeship at the Tower under the tutelage of his Uncle Joseph at the Tower. He was a 'superior apprentice', what might now be termed management trainee. After his apprenticeship his first appointment was as Works Foreman in the Eastern Military District. Then at the very young age of 22 in 1835 Henry was appointed to the post of Clerk of Works at Waltham Abbey. After this he had a peripatetic career supervising works in Government establishments. After Waltham Abbey he moved first to the Dover Military District. At this point he must have irritated someone of influence. He became a suspect as not being politically correct and became the victim of an injustice. Without warning he and his family were posted to Quebec, the Victorian equivalent to a political dissident in Tsarist Russia being exiled to Siberia. The full circumstances have never become known. However we have a letter from Henry in which he describes how 'because I was suspected – very erroneously – to influence the Whig Government's candidate, Lord Melgand, I was not allowed a day's leave, so had to hurry off in the middle of the night' and interestingly describes a dreadful voyage in a vessel 'overladen with gunpowder and rockets'. Henry distinguished himself in Quebec by organising the actions which saved the Quebec magazine holding 6000 barrels of gunpowder from blowing up in a fire. This included disuading a General who had ordered the magazine to be blown up!

He plaintively records that he was refused any commendation, saying 'I presume I had always been a voter in the Conservative interest; the Liberals being then in power'. He was posted back to England supervising Government works largely in connection with coastal defence – Eastern District, then Isle of Wight, Eastbourne and Brighton and Sheerness.

We come finally to Frederick, younger brother of Henry. He was apprenticed at Waltham Abbey on the production side. His ambition was checked for a time when after his apprenticeship he applied for the post of Assistant Master Worker, i.e. Foreman but was sent instead to Faversham for further training, then being appointed to that position. It is at this point that some mystery enters into Frederick's career, for having gained the appointment and hopefully later to succeed the existing incumbent as Master Worker he left Waltham Abbey for America. The reasons have never been discovered. Either by choice or being unable to find employment in the American powder industry initially he found a job teaching in a school in Tennessee. However the clouds of war were gathering and when the American Civil War broke out Frederick found himself in demand as the chief powder maker in the Southern States powder mill at Manchester Tennessee. The South had found itself in a precarious position regarding powder supplies and a brilliant Confededrate soldier engineer Col. G.W.Rains was commissioned to design and erect a powder manufacturing complex based on best European practice – what became the Augusta Mills. Rains was an admirer of Waltham Abbey powder and he discovered that Waltham Abbey could materially assist him in two most fortuitous ways. Firstly he discovered a technical treatise written by a senior Waltham Abbey officer and secondly he became aware of Frederick Wright. He lost little time in bringing him to Augusta where Frederick was to play a key advisory role. After the War Rains gave full credit to the value of the treatise and to Frederick's role, although referring enigmatically to a 'sad defect '. The general consensus seems to be that this was probably an over fondness for Tennessee whisky – not the best qualification in a powder maker!

Notwithstanding this Frederick was appointed official Agent for advising on and obtaining the all important saltpetre in the South. This took him to a mine in a caves complex in Sand Mountain, Alabama. It was customary for mine officials to also do their bit in the guard unit and when Northern forces made a raid on the mines Frederick was taken as a prisoner of war. One wonders whether by this time he was looking back longingly on his days at Waltham Abbey. If so this can only have intensified as he entered the North's military prison system, notorious for harsh treatment, abominable living conditions, starvation and disease. Frederick survived, passing through the system in Louisville, Kentucky, Point Lookout, Maryland and Camp Chase, Ohio, finally arriving at Macon, Georgia where he was released in 1865. After the War he returned to powder manufacture, working for the Sycamore Manufacturing Company (ironically this company had purchased the machinery of the Augusta Mills
)
Frederick died sometime after 1870, around 100 years after his ancestor had arrived at the Waltham Abbey Mills.

The design of buildings and machinery for the Augusta Mills by Col. Rains virtually from a standing start was a remarkable achievement, ranking amongst great achievements of American technology in the mid 19C. Frederick's importance in this achievement was recorded by Rains – 'But one man – Wright – could be found in the Southern States who had seen gunpowder made by an incorporating mill, the only kind that can make it of the first quality; he had been a workman at the Waltham Abbey Gunpowder Works in England……. I was much indebted to his knowledge and experience' .

Les Tucker (Royal Gunpowder Mills Friends Association)
View Mills Archive Online -
https://www.wargm.org/archive_viewer

Tim Strutt - memories

I was just looking at the ERDE Archives, here is a bit more information that I hope might fill in a gap or two.

I started there in 1970 as a sandwich course student in the Organic Section. I was then employed there full time from 1971-74 when I left as an SO on a transfer to the Home Office as a forensic scientist.

At ERDE I worked with John Bell, Dave Salter, and Dave Debenham. For a while I shared an office with Mary Best before she left to marry Frank Carver (who was at Woolwich at the time). Our office was next to the tea room/board room, opposite the organic labs; and was very popular, as it was one of the few places that you could smoke. John Bell left as Section Head and went to the US (Washington Embassy Liaison?) and was replaced by Norman Scilly (not sure of spelling?). I think Mike Healey ran the mass spectrometer which was in another building. A later occupant of the sandwich course position (PhD student?) was Paul Mudge, who was much brighter than I...

Down the corridor were Dick Dedman, John Grindley, Bob Simkins, and Walter Batty (Who had nominally retired, but was kept on as a "Special Merit" position - The story was that he had been awarded the OBE in WW2 for firing armour piercing rounds at nitric acid Sprengel explosive bombs!).

I also helped look after the reference/heritage explosives collection which was stored in its own magazine. This was during the "Three Day Week" when the power and heating were turned off. Obviously there were significant problems if the power was turned off in the magazine, so I had somewhere warm (19-20C?) with lighting to do background research.

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I enjoyed my time at ERDE - Most of the staff were kind to a new entrant, and with their help, I learnt a lot that would be useful in my later career- Including being co-opted as the IPCS junior staff rep (politics and industrial relations).

I left the Home Office in 1981 and went to work for the Scientific Services Division of British Rail Research, running the chromatography and mass spectrometry labs, and later became "The Computer Advisor". I emigrated to Australia in 1991, where I now live; and initially ran the Australian Environmental Laboratories Group, and later became the MD of Information Services & Technology Pty Ltd.

Timothy Strutt

Jean Church Awarded the British Empire Medal

Jean Church

It is a decided pleasure to report that Jean Church has been awarded the British Empire Medal. The citation reads "Jean Margaret Church – for services to the Community in Waltham Abbey, Essex"; very well deserved given what she has done over the years. Jean used to live on the Monkswood Estate with her husband Geoff, who worked at ERDE, but she has subsequently moved further down Monkswood Avenue. She has been a stalwart of a number of local organisations, including the Citizens Advice Bureau, for many years, and she is an active participant in the work of the Waltham Abbey Historical Society. She has also been a regular attendee at the Last Friday meetings of Friends and others at the Crown pub in Romeland, Waltham Abbey for many years.

Geoff Hooper

Obituary

Trevor Knapp

It is with sadness that we have to report the passing away of one of the original trustees of the Royal Gunpowder Factory Operating Company Trevor Knapp on Thursday 8th June after a period of ill health. He was 86. Trevor had been a career civil servant in the Ministry of Defence, rising to the exalted position of Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Infrastructure and Logistics. In that role he had a significant part to play in the re-purposing of the Waltham Abbey site after its closure in 1991. Upon retirement from MOD he became an Operating Company Trustees in 1997 and was the second Chair of the Company, taking over from Don Spinks shortly thereafter and holding that office until 2012. He was also a member of the Foundation Trust from 1998 to 2020. He was highly intelligent; always stimulating company, entertaining and irreverent in equal measures. He steered us through some stormy waters very skilfully and both the Operating Company and the Foundation Trust are the better for his contributions.

Geoff Hooper

Contents

WARGM Friends Association
AGM/Reunion June 16th 2023

Thank you to the 14 people that were able to attend the AGM. Unfortunately, this does not make a quorum so the Chairman declared the meeting inquorate and another AGM will be called. DATE

Reunion

The weather was hot and sunny, with a light breeze, as requested.

22 people attended.

Lunch was served at 12.30 and was enjoyed by all present with no reported complaints. Several of us chose to eat outside on the picnic tables in the shade.

At 13.30 we made our way to the roundabout and towards the miniature railway where we attempted the annual group photograph. How many people can you recognise?

Some of the members of the John Wilson Railway (JWR) team were on hand to offer a ride from the south station (roundabout) to the north station (Main Lab) and back again.

We then moved over to the Land Train and were able to get on to the trailer. Thanks Oggy for a gentle and enjoyable drive around the site. No need for a guide, we all had a comment to make!

In the past year the Friends have provided financial support for the JWR for replacement sleepers for the track, batteries for the tram and various other pieces of necessary equipment.

I would like to thank Luke, Brian P and Mary for giving us a ride on the JWR.

Thanks also to Julia, Liz, Rob, Helen and Julie for their efforts to make the Reunion the success I feel it was.

As the years have passed so the number of Friends coming into the Mills to work on projects or maintenance has declined. If any Friends are interested in joining us, generally, we are on site on Wednesday mornings.

Daphne Clements

Reunion Attendees

Len Stuart		Michael Seymour
John Cook		Suzanne Leeson
Daphne Clements		Brian Clements
Ron McEvoy		Geoff Hooper
Richard Penfold		Terry Stemman
Martin Gough		Linda Gough
Derek Back	&	daughter
Sheilagh Owens		David Debenham
Diane Howes		Kim Henshaw
David Hewkin		Mark Hardman
Jean Church	&	son

Reunion Attendees
Gathered at the Southern Station of the John Wilson Railway