The compilation of a gazetteer of manufacturing sites was proposed at the first meeting of the Gunpowder Mills Study Group (GMSG), held at Birkbeck College, London, in March 1985. At that time there were few readily accessible publications on the history and archaeology of the gunpowder industry. Work had been published in the 1960s on the industry in the Lake Counties (Marshall & Davies-Shiel 1969, Wilson 1964) and at Faversham (Percival 1967), in the 1970s on Cornish explosives (Earl 1978), and in 1981 on the Somerset mills (Buchanan & Tucker 1981). Suddenly a large number of projects were being undertaken, some by local history and archaeology societies with substantial amateur membership and some by local authorities involved in the management of sites as public amenities.

Over the following two decades this activity has produced many publications on individual gunpowder manufacturing sites and regions. It has also resulted in the publication of accessible accounts, which had previously been lacking, of the technology of gunpowder manufacture and the extent and distribution of the industry.(1) Significantly, the subject has also been taken up by official bodies, in particular the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) and English Heritage, with which RCHME amalgamated in 1999, and they have carried out and published several surveys of sites. Also the gunpowder industry was chosen as one of the early subjects for assessment in the Monuments Protection Programme (MPP) conducted by English Heritage between 1986 and 1996. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) has also been active in recording and collecting material and, with the corresponding body for Wales (CADW), has liaised with the organisation in England.

The GMSG was reorganised in 2000 as the Gunpowder and Explosives History Group (GEHG), with a widened field of interest including modern explosives and applications as well as manufacture. Both the GMSG and GEHG have taken an interest in international aspects of the subject. In particular, there has been a strong link with the International Committee for the History of Technology (ICOHTEC).
The Newsletters of the Gunpowder Mills Study Group (1986-2000) and the Gunpowder and Explosives History Group (2000-2008) can be accessed on the website of the Royal Gunpowder Mills, Waltham Abbey, under History. This also provides a link to the on-line Public Forum which has superseded the Newsletters, the GEHG Discussion Board, where the public may post questions to its members. http://www.royalgunpowdermills.com/gehg_index.htm (Added 2010)

This new edition of the Gazetteer retains the scope of the original in concentrating on black powder manufacturing sites in the British Isles. Those interested in an international perspective are referred to publications arising from ICOHTEC Symposia at which gunpowder has been one of the arranged themes. (2)


THE SECOND EDITION

A decision was taken to prepare the new edition in electronic form and, except for correcting errors, to retain the original text and give new information at the end of existing entries. This is headed ‘Additions 2005-’ and presented in a contrasting (sans serif) font. The system of referencing has been simplified, with author/date references in parentheses in the text and a bibliography in one alphabetical sequence.

Some material in the first edition has been omitted: the introductory chapters entitled ‘The Gunpowder Industry in Britain’ and ‘Gunpowder Mills’ are no longer required since the information is readily available elsewhere; the maps and line drawings in the original do not constitute a significant source for this type of information, which ideally should be the subject of a special collection of images.

Some additions have been made. References to official reports of accidents by the Explosives Inspectorate, which were not provided in the original, are now included. Also the following sites have been added:

South-East England: BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, Wooburn; ESSEX, Kynochnowt; HAMPSHIRE, Eyeworth (Fritham); MIDDLESEX, Fulham; SURREY, Southwark; South West England: DORSET, Stockwood Mill.

Northern England: YORKSHIRE, Allerton.

Several new locations are given in the list of Additional Sites which follows the main regional chapters. These are mainly Civil War sites, which provide an opportunity for a future research project.

The original Foreword, Acknowledgements, Explanatory Notes, and lists of Contents and Illustrations are reproduced below.

Thanks are due to members of the Gunpowder and Explosives History Group who have provided information for the new edition.
FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION
This introduction to the Gunpowder Mills of the British Isles is a comprehensive guide to
the many sites which existed to make gunpowder or black powder in the old ways. Because
most of the material evidence had to be destroyed when the gunpowder works closed, the
examination of the remains and history of the sites becomes an enjoyable exploration.

The preparation of this study cuts across the disciplines of several groups, historians,
genealogists and molinologists. The old gunpowder mills used a great deal of power, most
of which was supplied by water. The water power systems themselves are important, wheel
pits which form part of a chain so that the water is used over and over again is but one
example of the study. The sites were, for example, amongst the earliest to use water
turbines on a massive scale. Another facet of the study is contained within the design of
buildings to meet the safety requirements which necessarily became more onerous
throughout the nineteenth century. Massive structures still remain, because they were built
to be indestructible, and these are worthy of discovery and understanding.

The industry, which made blasting powder in mining and quarrying areas and military and
sporting powder elsewhere, was inextricably intermixed and this gazetteer goes a long way
to sort out the pattern of ownership and products.

The Wind and Watermill Section of the S.P.A.B. have published this work so that more
people can learn of this facet of our industrial past and carry the study of British gunpowder
mills forward. Other countries have preserved their sites, we have not been able to do so. It
is hoped that we in Britain can preserve something of this part of our past.

Glenys Crocker and the Gunpowder Mills Study Group have added to our knowledge of
one industrial use of water power. It is hoped that further developments of this study can be
published in the future.

J Kenneth Major
Chairman of the International Molinological Society

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THE GAZETTEER
Explanatory notes to the first edition

The following Gazetteer covers known sites on which traditional gunpowder, or black powder, was produced with permanent manufacturing plant. Modern explosives factories have been included only when they were built as extensions to existing gunpowder mills. Terminology can be misleading since some modern propellant factories were known as gunpowder works, in particular those of the Schultze Gunpowder Company Limited whose products were based on nitrated wood pulp. Such factories, which include those at Eyeworth in Hampshire(1) and Barwick, near Ware in Hertfordshire, have not been featured.

Entries are arranged in major regions of the British Isles, within which sites are in general listed alphabetically under historic counties. However isolated mills for which little information are available are listed in a separate section following the main gazetteer. National Grid References in the main headings are given to four figures only since most sites are extensive, but six-figure references are used where appropriate within the text. Within entries, capital letters are used for sites which have their own headings in the gazetteer.

Each entry consists of a short description of the site and a brief historical note, followed by a summary chronology and references. These are given in abbreviated form, with further details in the bibliography. Published sources are given where possible but in some cases none exist and reference has then made to primary sources or to individuals who have provided information.
A major source of information on gunpowder mills is the series of annual reports of the Explosives Inspectorate which followed the passing of the 1875 Explosives Act and which are published in Parliamentary Papers. Reference has not been made to this source since coverage of accidents would have greatly increased the scope and size of the present book.(2)

The length of entries is not related to the importance of sites but rather reflects the present state of knowledge. Indeed it will be clear that much work remains to be done on the history of many gunpowder mills and it is hoped that this publication will encourage individuals and local societies to carry out further research in order to fill in some of the gaps. The compiler will be pleased to receive any new information, perhaps with a view to preparing a revised edition in the future.

(1) Now known to have had an association with black powder and therefore included in the new edition.
(2) Included in the new edition.

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