

A short history ~

In 1626 the mills were established by the **East India Company** at the dam which carries the modern Blacksmith Lane.

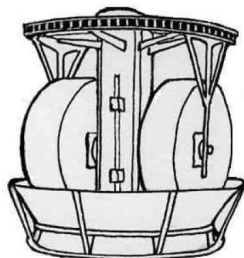
In 1636 Charles I financed expansion. To stop flooding of the hop fields a second dam was made on the upstream end of the mill pond, giving it the rectangular form still seen today. The millstream was then directed into the north side of the pond. More mills were built down the valley at what was now the **Lower Works**. New **Upper Works** were built at Postford Pond 1.5km upstream..

The **Middle Works** were built in 1652 during the **First Dutch War**. They were on a **New Cut** from just below Postford to the south side of the mill pond at the Lower Works.

In the late 17th century there were some eighteen water-powered stamp mills for incorporating gunpowder, plus 'coal' (**charcoal**) and 'brimstone' (**sulphur**) mills for grinding these ingredients. The third and major ingredient of traditional black gunpowder is **saltpetre**.

The **Upper Works** closed at the end of the 17th century and the **Lower Works** became paper mills in 1704. The Middle Works continued as a gunpowder factory but the service and materials processing areas remained on the west side of Blacksmith Lane until the mills eventually closed.

In the 1730s stamp mills were replaced with stone **edge-runner mills**. Many runner stones, and one bedstone, survive on the site.



In the 1860s new **steam-powered mills** were built and the works began to expand eastwards up the valley again.

An Anglo-German company bought the mills in 1885 to make **brown powder**, which made less smoke than traditional black powder. A row of new steam-powered incorporating mills was built near the lane to Lockner Farm.

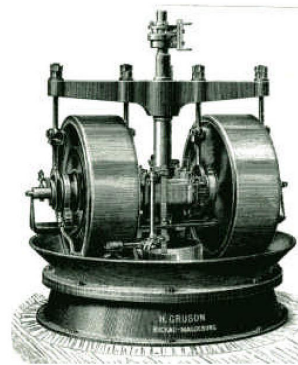
The new company built a works tramway with a link to the local railway station.

In 1892 a new '**smokeless powder**' factory was built at the east end of the works to make modern explosives, in particular **cordite**.

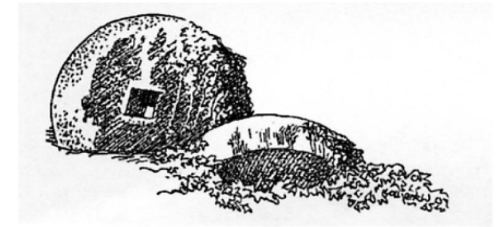
In the First World War the **Admiralty** built another cordite works south of the 1890s factory.

The works closed in 1920, after the war had ended. Much of the site is now protected as a Scheduled Monument.

Iron edge-runner incorporating mill. Six of these were bought for Chilworth from Grusons of Magdeburg, Germany in 1885.

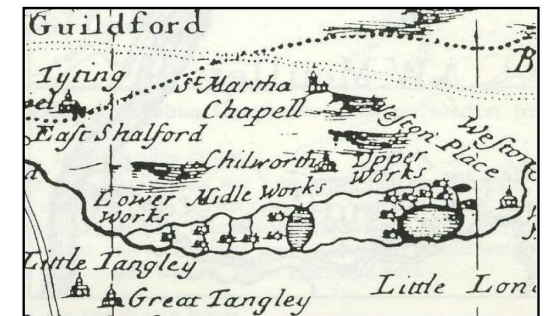


Please note that there are extensive areas of rough ground on the site with pits and hollows, decayed industrial structures, water features and muddy and boggy areas. Care should therefore be taken when visiting, and appropriate footwear is recommended.



CHILWORTH GUNPOWDER MILLS, SURREY, THE MIDDLE WORKS

The area shown on the map overleaf is owned by Guildford Borough Council. It comprises the area known historically as the Middle Works, as shown on the detail from Seller's map of Surrey, which was printed in the late 17th century.



Seller's map of Surrey, c.1679

Guildford Borough Council supports the Chilworth Gunpowder Mills Group which promotes care of the site and encourages research into its past. The Group includes representatives of St Martha Parish Council and local history and natural history organisations. It holds a public meeting each year in November.

Chilworth Gunpowder Mills: Blacksmith Lane to Lockner Farm lane (distance 1km)

