

## 1827

**The Times, March 30, 1827**

About a quarter past six o'clock on Tuesday morning, the inhabitants of Ewell, in Surrey, were thrown into a considerable state of alarm, by the explosion of a powder mill, belonging to Mr Henry Bridges, and situate about three-quarters of a mile from Ewell, on the Kingston road. The shock was so violent as to cause a perceptible vibration of the earth, and many persons declare they felt themselves shook in their beds. Fortunately there was no person in or near the mill at the time. The mill was one in which the powder was blended together by grinding, and being turned by water, it was customary for the person who had the care of it, to visit it only once in two hours, for the purpose of seeing that it was properly fed. On his last visit, which was about an hour previous to the explosion, everything appeared to be safe. How, therefore, the accident occurred, can only be a matter of conjecture, but it is supposed that some metallic particles were among the powder, and that by the irritation of the mill a spark was elicited from them, which caused the explosion. The mill, as may be supposed, was completely shattered to pieces.

## 1843

**The Times, Sep 7, 1843**

### **EXPLOSION AT, AND THE TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF, THE MALDEN POWDER MILLS.**

Yesterday morning, at the early hour of 3 o'clock, the inhabitants of the little village of Malden, which is situate between Kingston and Ewell, were greatly terrified by the report of an explosion, which was so severe in its character as to shake the cottages to their foundations, and entirely demolish the glass in the windows. It was soon discovered that this violent commotion had been caused by the blowing up of two powder mills, which are situate at one end of the village. Upon the scene being visited, nothing but a ruinous heap of the mills, of which there were only two, remained; everything contained in them had been utterly destroyed, but most providentially, no lives were lost. The foreman's life, however, was most

miraculously saved, for he had only locked up the mills, and left them in apparent perfect safety, 10 minutes before the explosion took place. The explosion is supposed to have been the result of friction. We have not learnt the name of the owners of the mills, nor the amount of powder they contained, but we should judge it to be somewhat small.

## 1844

**The Times, Jun 26, 1844**

### **POWDER-MILL EXPLOSION**

On Monday morning at 5 o'clock, the inhabitants of Epsom and Ewell were alarmed by an explosion equalling in effect the discharge of a park of artillery. Upon enquiry being made into the cause, it was ascertained that the roof of a powder-mill in Ewell Marshes, belonging to Sir Henry Brydges, had been blown off, the explosion being occasioned by the accidental combustion of the materials being used in manufacturing gunpowder. Several persons were at work on the premises at the time, but they all miraculously escaped injury. No further damage was done to the works than that above stated.

**The Times Aug 30, 1844**

### **POWDER-MILL EXPLOSION.**

On Wednesday morning, between 4 and 5 o'clock, one of the powder mills on Ewell Marsh, belonging to Sir Henry Bridges, exploded, and the building was utterly destroyed. The report was heard at a distance of two miles. There seems to be a singular fatality about these mills: this is the third or fourth explosion within a twelvemonth, and all are unaccounted for.

## 1863

**The Times Apr 16, 1863**

### **EXPLOSION AT EWELL POWDER MILLS, SURREY**

About 6 o'clock yesterday morning a fearful explosion of gunpowder, by which three lives were lost, took place at the mills belonging to Messrs. Sharp and Adams, of Birch Lane, London.

The manufacture is carried on in five detached buildings, distant from 150 to 400 yards from each other. These are known as - 1, the mixing-house; 2, the

mills, which are worked by steam; 3, the press-room; 4, the corning-house and glazing-room; and 5, the dust-houses. The corning-house and glazing-room formed one building of only one story; it was 40ft. square, and was divided into two apartments by a water wheel, which drove the machinery of the mill, and by a thin partition. It was in this building that the explosion took place. The noise was fearful, and alarmed the whole neighbourhood. The shock was like that produced by cannon and file firing. Within a quarter of a mile of the spot windows were broken in every house. In the High-street of Sutton, three miles off, the shock was severely felt, and the noise caused alarm at a distance of from six to seven miles.

One of the workmen engaged at the time in the press-house, about 400 yards off, on hearing the explosion, said to his companion, "There's a blow," and made his way into the open air. On looking up he saw a cloud of smoke and black spots, which he knew to be charred timbers tossed high into the air by the explosion. The workmen, on repairing to the place after the accident, found the whole space within 100 yards of the mill covered with charred timbers from a few inches to many feet in length.

The mill itself was leveled with the ground, a beam not less than 12 feet long and 15 inches square standing almost upright in the ground at a distance of 30 yards from the place where it had been. It had evidently been blown over the tops of the young elms and ash trees intervening without touching them. Two large ash and elm trees were torn up by the roots, and the old press which stood outside the building was also pulled from its socket. Three men are usually employed in the rooms, and at 6 o'clock they had just gone to work. They were all three in the building, and were blown up with it. Their bodies (or portions of them) were picked up in the adjoining field, belonging to Mr. Gardener, Ruxley Farm. One body, that of Thomas Woolman, was found at a distance of 90 yards; the other two, those of James Baker and Henry Hookham, in different directions 60 or 70 yards from the mill.

The body of the former was the least mutilated of the three, one arm only being blown off. Of the others the heads and limbs were separated from the bodies, and scattered about the field. One of the heads has not been found.

Mr. Sharp's private residence, at some distance from the scene of the

accident, is much damaged. Scarcely a pane of glass remains whole, and the woodwork is much torn. The walls are shaken to the foundation.

Two of the deceased men left families - James Baker, a wife and six children, the eldest only 11 years of age, and Henry Hookham, two daughters, one a widow with children dependent on him. But either he or the other sufferer had just had secured to him through the kind exertions of Mr. Sharp a pension from Sir Henry Bridges, the former owner of the mills. No conjecture has been offered as to the cause of the accident, nor were the workmen able to state what quantity of powder was in the mill at the time of the explosion. A similar severe disaster occurred on the same spot 28 years ago.

**Extract from the notebook of the Reverend George Glyn, Bart., Vicar of Ewell**

**20 April 1863**

An awful catastrophe occurred last Wednesday morning, the 15th at 6.a.m. Three men, James Baker, Henry Hockham and a single man, Weverman, only lately come, had just begun work in the corning house at the powder mills when it blew up and instantly scattered their bodies in mangled pieces over the adjoining fields. Baker has left a widow and six young children, Hockham an elderly man has only left a widow and two daughters, grown up, one married the other a widow. Baker and Hockham were buried in the new churchyard on Saturday, a sum of £200 14s 6d was subscribed and invested in Ewell savings bank in the name of the Vicar and Churchwardens for the sole benefit of Widow Baker.

**Times, 22nd April 1863**

**EWELL POWDER-MILLS ACCIDENT :**

**TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.**

Sir, - Will you kindly permit us to call the attention of a sympathizing public to the case of Widow Baker and her six fatherless children, the eldest not 11 years old, who were deprived of their earthly support by the sudden and awful explosion at the Ewell powder-mills on Wednesday, the 15th inst.? As Baker and his wife both bore excellent characters the case is the more deserving of attention.

It is proposed to place any funds which may be collected under the management of a committee consisting of ourselves and some gentlemen in the neighbourhood, who will be responsible for their due application.

We do not solicit special aid on behalf of Widow Stockham, as we understand that probably some provision will be kindly made for her. The other sufferer was a single man.

We annex a list of a few contributions which have been spontaneously made. Any sums remitted to the "Ewell Accident Fund," at Messrs. Glyn, Mills, and Co.'s, 67, Lombard-street; or at Messrs. Herries, Farquhar, and Co.'s, 16, St James's-street; or to Mr. George Stone, Vestry Clerk, Ewell, Surrey, will be gratefully acknowledged.

We are, Sir, your obedient servants,  
G.L.GLYN, Vicar  
of Ewell.

W.  
WILDERS,)  
W.  
FORSTER,) Churchwardens Ewell,  
April 20.

The Earl of Onslow, £10.;  
The Rev. Sir George L. Glyn, vicar of Ewell, £5.;  
Sir John R. Reid, £3.;  
Lady Reid, £2.;  
Mrs. Gadesden, £10.;  
Messrs. Sharp and Adams, £1.;  
Mr. George Torr, £5.;  
Mr. Thomas Stowers, £5.;  
Mr. J.E. Walters, £5.;  
A Friend per ditto, £1.;  
Mrs. Lempriere, £3.;  
Mr. Henry Lempriere, £2.;  
Mr. Percy Lempriere, £2.;  
Collected by Mr. Henry Lempriere, £4. 4s;  
Mr. William Wilders, £5.;  
Colonel Asketh, R.A., £1.;  
Mrs Robinson, Leamington, 10s.;  
Mr. Hugh Jackson, £5.;  
Mr. H. Arnold, £1.;  
Mr. William Vizard, £3.;  
Mr. William Forster, £3.3s;  
Mr. George Stone, £2.2s;  
Mr Henderson, £2.

**The Times 1863**

**Inquest report from The Times 1863**

On Friday morning, Mr. William Carter, coroner for east Surrey, opened an investigation at the Queen Adelaide Inn, Kingston-road, upon the bodies, or

rather the remains of the bodies, of the three unfortunate men who lost their lives at the frightful explosion which took place on Wednesday morning last at the gunpowder mills carried on by the firm of Messrs. Sharpe and Adams, and Co., situated about a mile and a half distance from Ewell, on the road to Kingston.

From the fact that the corning-mill house, where the explosion took place, had been completely blown to pieces, it was for some time deemed impossible even to conjecture the cause of the disaster. A careful and minute search has, however, resulted, it is stated, in a portion of one of the copper shamps, or glazing-barrels, being found as some very considerable distance from the premises that were destroyed, and as the bung was found in its place, it furnished abundant evidence that the work of unloading, in which the men would have had to be engaged at that part of the premises, could not have been completed when the sad fatality happened. These shamps or glazing-barrels contain from a hundred weight to a hundred weight and a half, but so far, it is not clearly ascertained upon any reliable authority how many shamps there were, or what gunpowder there was in the mill.

The jury having been sworn, with Mr. Robert Henderson as foreman, proceeded, accompanied by the coroner, to view the ruins of the mill, or, as rather should be stated, the charred and blackened ground on which it formerly stood, for not a vestige remains. On inspecting the premises, it certainly appeared that every precaution had been adopted that human ingenuity could devise, to prevent even the possibility of an accident. The corning mill was far removed from all other works, and a large pond (the best non conductor) separated it from a which wood which intervened between it and other buildings.

The jury then performed the painful task of viewing the remains of the unfortunate sufferers, and it is perhaps needless to say that the task was a most harrowing and sickening one. The fragments of the copes had been collected, and as far as possible properly set together in shells. The remains of Henry Hockham showed only the trunk of the body, with the back part of the head, the face being completely blown away, and the left arm blown off at the shoulder. This poor old man had been upwards of 30 years at the works, and

was recently pensioned off, but for a few days past had been working as a substitute. He was a thoroughly experienced man. The lower part of the body only of James William Baker was found; and that, of course, could not be identified until Thursday evening, when part of the skull was discovered and recognised by the hair. This unhappy man has left a wife and six children. The other man, Thomas Warman, or Woolman, had his left leg blown off at the thigh, and the other just below the knee. There was no difficulty in identifying him, as his features were quite perfect.

Dr. Barrett, of Ewell, who was attracted to the spot by hearing the explosion, has since the finding of the bodies, superintended the painful work of putting the fragments together in as near a complete form as possible. It may be added that fragments of fingers and toes are being found all about the place.

The witnesses were for the most part the workmen about the premises, and they described the bode in which the manufacture was conducted, and the precautions taken by the owners of the mills to ensure safety; but as might be expected, they could throw no light whatever, nor suggest any reasonable conjecture as to the cause of the explosion.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death from the explosion of the mills".

## 1865

**The Times, 25 September 1865**

### **EXPLOSION OF EWELL POWDER MILLS.**

A terrible gunpowder explosion took place on Saturday morning at Ewell Powder Mills, carried on by Messrs. Sharpe and Davy, situate a few miles distant from the village of Ewell in Surrey, near Epsom. The mills are spread over a large plot of ground in detached buildings, through which runs a small stream.

The accident occurred in the press mill, containing one hydraulic machine for compressing wet powder into cakes. What quantity it contained at the time of the explosion has not transpired, but from the noise caused by the explosion it is inferred it must have been considerable. The workpeople had just resumed their labour at the different parts

of the manufactory when a tremendous report took place, which was discovered to have been caused by the blowing up of the press-house, wherein two men had but just entered.

The shock was truly terrible, and the workpeople in the other buildings were seized with consternation, for it was fully expected that all the other buildings would go, but, most fortunately, the blast did not reach them. Of the press-house not a vestige remained, and the iron hydraulic press, which stood a fixture in the centre, was hurled into an adjacent field by the force of the explosion. The two labourers who were at work there, it is reported, were literally blown to atoms. Their names were Lewis Hill and James Hoscraft. They had for a long while been in Messrs. Sharp and Davy's service and were considered careful and experienced men.

It is supposed that the explosion was occasioned by some grit or hard substance getting into the press and causing a friction, which ignited the powder. A coroner's inquest on the remains of the sufferers will be held on Tuesday next. The explosion was seriously felt at Epsom, Hampton-court, Mitcham, and every place within 20 miles of the spot. At, and other damage was done to property.

**The Times Sep 26 1865**

### **THE EXPLOSION AT EWELL**

Yesterday evening at a quarter-past 5 o'clock, Mr. W Carter, coroner for Surrey, held an inquest at the Adelaide Inn, Kingston road on the bodies of Lewis Hills and William Dine Horscroft, aged 21 and 26 years respectively, the two men who were killed on Saturday by the explosion in the press-house of Messrs. Sharp and Co's gunpowder manufactory, at Ewell. After the jury had viewed the bodies the inquiry was proceeded with. The first witness examined was Michael Martin, labourer of Ewell, who said that last Saturday morning, about 20 minutes to 9 o'clock, he was in the little washhouse at the mill. Suddenly he heard an explosion on some portion of the premises, and then proceeding past the engine-house, whence the report came, he went to the spot where the press-house stood, and found it totally destroyed by gunpowder. He knew the men who were employed in the press-house;-they were Hills and Horscroft and were called press-men. He last saw them before the explosion at a quarter before 8

o'clock, and they were then in the press-house. They wore their working dresses. They had their usual leather slippers upon their feet. Just before the time mentioned he had taken a boat containing powder from the mill. The powder was in barrels and called 'mill cake'. He took in ten barrels, each of which was supposed to contain a hundredweight. Both men received the barrels at the platform by the waterside. The barrels were open at the top, and were what were called 'headed barrels; the landing or stage was of boarding, and had been totally destroyed. Witness was working in slippers but did not on that occasion go into the press-room. The ten casks were deposited in the first room nearest the landing place. In the house there was a press, but not in the room where they put the powder; it was, in fact, in an adjoining room, and was worked by hydraulic power by using two hand-pumps, which Hills and Horscroft would have to work. Witness had not seen the men since the explosion. He saw some remains on Saturday which appeared to be parts of human bodies. He could not tell which parts they were, but believed them to be parts of the men killed. When they received the powder they were conducting themselves properly, and were on friendly terms with one another as well as with their employers. He had never heard them speak against the latter. Had not seen any one come in or go out of the house that morning. The witness had never seen them smoke in the press-house, but they had done so in the washhouse. He could not account for the explosion in any way. James Hills, father of one of the deceased, a shoemaker of Ewell, gave evidence respecting the deceased, and said he had never heard the least complaint from either of the works not being in a proper state or in any way unsafe. Dr Samuel Barrett, surgeon of Ewell, stated that he had seen the remains in coffins on the premises of Messrs. Sharp and Davie. He could identify them as those of human beings. Latham Osborne said he saw Horscroft in the washhouse at half-past 6 o'clock. He had worked in the press-room with Hills for three days last week, as Horscroft was away. He had worked there on previous occasions for a day or two. He never saw anything dangerous about the works, which were in proper order. Every precaution was taken with regard to the safety of the men. All that portion of the work was carried out by

hydraulic power, by the use of pumps worked manually, and not by anything which would cause friction. He had never pointed out anything which was unsafe to his employers, and would not be afraid to work again in the press-room when re-erected. He could not account for the explosion. Mr. Sharp stated that only a few months back he had a new press made, which cost 500l. He could not account for the explosion. He also handed in a book of rules which stated ht smoking was only allowed in the washhouse. He did not think hither of the men would have smoked in the press-house. William Thomas Baker, millwright, said he had occasion to work in the press-room, which was under his supervision. He was last in it three weeks since when he was repairing the press-box. He had put an iron angle piece (externally) where the dovetail had given way. The box was 2¼in wood, and 3ft 10in by 2ft wide. The sides were lined with copper. The witness here detailed the repairs he had executed, and went on to say the explosion could not have been caused by anything but fire. He thought they must have hit something with an iron spanner used for screwing up pumps. At this stage of the inquiry the court was cleared, and after about a quarter of an hour's deliberation on the part of the jury the public were readmitted, when a verdict of 'Accidental Death' was returned.

## 1870

**The Times 27 October 1870**

### **EXPLOSION AT THE EWELL POWDER FACTORY.**

An accident, unfortunately attended with a loss of life, occurred yesterday morning at Mr. Sharpe's powder-mills at Ewell, in what is known as the corning-mill. Two men who worked in the building, named Osborn and Mitchell, were so seriously injured that the former only survived an hour, and the latter is not expected to recover. From the utter destruction of the building and all around the wonder is that both men were not killed on the spot. Dr. Daniel, of Epsom, and Dr. Barnes, of Ewell, were quickly on the spot, and rendered every assistance. These mills have been for some years free from any serious accident, and are believed to be the oldest powder factories in the kingdom.

**The Times, 29 October 1870**

### **THE POWDER EXPLOSION AT EWELL**

An inquest was held yesterday (Friday) at the Queen Adelaide Inn, Ewell, before Mr W. Carter, coroner for the district, on the bodies of Layton Osborn and Raymond Mitchell, the two men who died from the injuries received by the explosion of powder at the mills of Messrs. Sharpe and Co., Ewell, on Wednesday last.

The following jury were sworn: - Messrs George Stone (foreman), Chairman, Shaw, Baker, Swanson, Cracknell, Monger, Eccles, Bradford, Woodward, Edgcumbe, Killick, Morris, and Winter. The body of Osborn was lying in the engine-house belonging to the works, while Mitchell was conveyed to his home, and succumbed about 11p.m. on Thursday.

After viewing the bodies, the first witness called was James Wagstaff, who deposed, - I am sergeant of police at Epsom. On Wednesday last I was on duty there, heard an explosion in the direction of Ewell Powder mills, saw the smoke arise, and immediately drove over. I found the deceased Layton Osborn in a shed on the premises. He was then alive but terribly injured - his right arm blown off, left leg shattered, and burnt all over his body. He was sensible but made no allusion to the cause of accident. The explosion occurred about 11 o'clock, and deceased died in my presence at quarter-past 2 same day.

W. Mitchell, sworn - I am a powder maker in the employ of Mr. J. Carr Sharpe, and work in the dust house. Knew both deceased well; one of them is my brother. They were both powder makers in the same employ as myself. Raymond Mitchell, my brother, died at his own home in my presence last night at 11p.m. I saw both of them about a quarter of an hour before the explosion. They have worked for Mr. Carr Sharpe 10 or 11 years, and were perfectly sober and in good health at the time of the accident. I asked my brother if he could tell me the cause of explosion. He said he could not. He was removing an empty barrel for the Corning house and Osborn was cracking down the cake; all at once it went off.

W. Clement Daniel, sworn - I am a surgeon in practice residing at Epsom. On Wednesday last I was in the village of Ewell, heard the explosion, and

hastened to the powder mills. Osborn I knew previously, and he was the first of the deceased I saw. He was charred all over, the right arm blown off near the shoulder, his left leg was shattered at the thigh and ankle, and his spine fractured. He was sensible; did not speak in my hearing as to cause of explosion. I never expected he could survive. I did all that was possible to alleviate his sufferings. He lived about three hours, and died from the injuries received. I saw Mitchell in a shed; he was burnt nearly all over the body, and had a deep wound inside the left thigh, which appeared to have been caused by a jagged piece of wood. It was 4in. long and very deep among the muscles; the femoral artery was uninjured; he had also a scalp wound over the left eye. I saw him twice during the day (Wednesday) and once yesterday. He seemed more cheerful the last time I saw him, but his breathing had become worse. I did not think he could recover, and he died last night. There can be no doubt his death resulted from the injuries received at the explosion of the mill.

At this stage the Coroner suggested that for the purpose of examining Benjamin Osborn, who is lying very ill at the Adelaide Inn, the proceedings be adjourned to Thursday next. Benjamin Osborn is the man who conveyed the powder to the corning-house for the purpose of being granulated, and was blown from the boat into the stream. He is brother to the deceased Layton Osborn, and is expected to recover, although it was deemed advisable not to excite him by an examination.

**Times, 5 November 1870**

### **THE EXPLOSION AT EWELL POWDER MILLS**

The inquest on the bodies of Leighton Osborne and Raymond Mitchell, killed by the explosion of the corning-house on the 26th ult., was reopened on Thursday before Mr Carter, coroner for the district, at Queen Adelaide Inn, Ewell at 3 o'clock.

The first witness called was David Trebett, an engine driver, residing on the premises called Ewell Powder Mills. He knew both deceased; they were employed as powdermakers. On the day of the explosion he was at his duties, and about 12 o'clock he heard the explosion. He ran out of the engine-house towards the corning-house, which was almost entirely demolished. The asphalt that

covered the roof was smouldering with fire. The first man he saw was Benjamin Osborne on the bank. He had crawled out of the steam into which he was thrown. He spoke to him; he was sensible, and to witness's inquiries said he was much hurt. He was also slightly burnt. Leighton Osborne, his brother, was lying by the building where the explosion occurred. He was satisfied all reasonable and proper precaution was taken to prevent accident. Benjamin Osborne had his slippers on - the usual ones supplied to the men by the firm. Leighton Osborne had his on. When the men came to their work before going to the mills their clothes were changed for a different suit.

Frederick Freeman, a powdermaker, working in the press-house, said that on the morning of the explosion he went with Benjamin Osborne to the press-house and assisted him to load the boat which conveyed the powder to the corning-house. The cakes were placed in barrels, which are made of wood entirely, and are open at the top. Each barrel is supposed to hold 100 lb. The boats are flat-bottomed, and would hold, if filled, about 20 barrels. On the morning in question nine barrels were taken away to be cornd by Benjamin Osborne, and it was the first quantity removed from the press. About half-an-hour after the boat had left the press-house the explosion occurred in the corning-house. The barrels are rolled on their bottom edge from the press-house to the boat, from the boat into the Corning house the barrels are placed in a wooden scale, and raised by means of a rope working through a wooden pulley.

Benjamin Osborne was perfectly sober, and attended to his work properly. He could give no opinion as the cause of explosion. James Cheeseman, a powdermaker, was employed on the premises when the explosion occurred, working in the manager's garden. He ran to the corning-house and saw the two deceased. Leighton Osborne was lying close to the pond, Mitchell was standing by the water wheel that drives the machinery in the corning-house. He went to Osborne first, threw water over him, his clothes being on fire. Osborne was then removed to an old building. He was sensible and said, "No fault - no blame;" that is every word he said to witness. He could not explain the cause of the explosion.

George Dunnett, foreman to Mr. Sharpe, proprietor of the mills, was

engaged on the works at the time of the explosion. He was Mitchell after it occurred, he was sensible and told witness voluntarily the rollers were going and the cake cracking down when it went, off. He asked Mitchell if anything gave way, and he replied "No." He could not explain the cause of the explosion. The Coroner said there could be no doubt that the unfortunate occurrence was the result of accident, and not brought about by malice or carelessness in the management of the works.

The examination of Benjamin Osborne his wife was afraid would excite him to such an extent that his recovery would be retarded, but if they wished he would adjourn the inquest until he was stronger. The jury intimated there was not the slightest necessity, especially as he was in the boat outside the house when the explosion occurred within.

The room was then cleared, and in a few minutes the jury found that the deceased Leighton Osborne and Raymond Mitchell were accidentally killed by an explosion of powder at the Ewell Mills, and they were perfectly satisfied from the evidence that Mr. J. Carr Sharpe and his manager did all in their power by good management to prevent such unfortunate occurrences. The plant and machinery at these mills are of a duplicate nature, so that the works are not stopped owing to this explosion. The jury presented their fees to the suffering families.

stored away, caught fire, and within an hour of the first explosion the building was burnt to the ground.

Although the actual damage done was comparatively inconsiderable, still great consternation was caused from the well-known fact that the shed blown up formed the centre of a number of other sheds filled with gunpowder. Fortunately, the shed destroyed was surrounded by a chain of ponds, and the fire was confined to the place where it began. The men employed at the mills left off work at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and it is not thought that they left any light behind them. The cause of the explosion is unknown, and we are happy to state that no one was injured.

The night watchman who is employed at the mills states that at a few minutes before the explosion he saw two men cross over a bridge leading from the shed. They were dressed in working clothes, but whether they threw any light into the shed or not he cannot say. The fact has been forwarded to the police, who are investigating the matter.

## 1871

**The Times, 20 November 1871**

### **EXPLOSION AT EWELL POWDER MILLS**

An explosion occurred at the powder mills of Mr. J.C. Sharpe, situate about a mile from the Ewell station of the London and South-Western Railway, late on Thursday night or early on Friday morning last. The vibration was felt for some distance, and created considerable alarm at Epsom, Kingston, and other adjoining places. Upon the nature of the explosion becoming known, vast numbers of people quickly gathered to the spot, where it was found that a shed set apart for the storing of empty gunpowder barrels, but in which there was at the time of the explosion a considerable quantity of gunpowder in canisters, and fireworks which had been