

*From the Archives*  
**Black Powder**  
*the Official Magazine of the*  
**Muzzle Loaders' Association of Great Britain**

**Black Powder Magazine**  
**1953 – 1983**

At the inaugural meeting of the Muzzle Loaders' Association of Great Britain in October 1952 it was agreed that a periodical be issued to members. The elected President, Mr. E.J. 'Ted' Burton suggested the title '*Black Powder*'. The aspiration was that *Black Powder* would be published in February 1953 and thereafter appear on a quarterly basis.

A first issue conceived in half foolscap form, running to 16 pages was made but never published. Permission to reproduce a photograph of Edward VII as a boy, with his old muzzle loading gun had been obtained, but reproduction was not good and the plan abandoned. The magazine finally appeared in duplicated form bearing the cover date 15th July 1953. It covered just 5 single sided 10"x8" pages.

The amateurish appearance (with hand written corrections to typographic errors) was acknowledged in the first 'Down the Muzzle' editorial. With the 'amateurish' club magazine style it was hoped that any member would be "free to submit what articles he likes, and though a little sub-editing may be necessary, no member need be afraid to submit MSS for inclusion in future issues." The Editor was Richard Arnold the then Hon. Secretary of the MLAGB.

The plan was that the magazine would appear on the 15th of every month. With the second issue, dated August 1953, this schedule appeared to be off to a good start. It was not however until December that the third issue, expanded to 15 pages, appeared "under new administration." Hereafter and until 1978 *Black Powder* appeared on a broadly monthly basis. From the February 1954 edition it was printed on both sides to reduce paper and postage costs.

The editorial, now headed 'Down Charge', of the December 1953 edition gave little away as to the problems that had beset publication. In the March 1954 edition and in reporting on the Annual General Meeting, the President E.J. Burton reported;

"Reference was made to the special Committee meeting which dealt with the shortcomings, both actively and financially, of the then Hon. Secretary, Mr. R. Arnold. As the result of this the President had to write to Mr. Arnold and ask for his resignation.

"A 'Caretaker' Committee was set up and our magazine "*Black Powder*" was carried on under the editorship of Mr. R.C. Hockey."

The December 1965 edition of *Black Powder* was the first issue with a front cover. The edition carried a pale blue paper cover featuring a sporting print.

Since its first issue *Black Powder* had been duplicated. October 1967 saw the first of a 10"x6¾" new format produced by offset Litho printing.

In Spring 1969 however there were problems for *Black Powder* due to the failure of the printers. The April issue was two months late and emergency arrangements were put in place. Bill and Mary Curtis prepared and issued a combined issue for May/June together with the July issue, while steps were put in place to secure the services of another printer. The magazine reverted to its earlier duplicated style.

It was not until December 1971 that the last of the old duplicated style of publication was seen.

With the benefits of economies of scale as the membership continued to rise the transition to a printed format became viable. The 10" x 8" stapled sheet *Black Powder* was replaced by an A5 sized booklet with card cover. The first issue of 1972 ran to 20 pages and simply had the words 'BLACK POWDER 1972' printed in bold on the cover; the planned illustration apparently "giving some trouble." The cover issues were resolved by the second edition.

With Hayward Marks' resignation as Editor at the 1971 AGM, the then Association Treasurer Bill Curtis stepped in as Editor. Bill continued as the acting editor throughout 1971, the post of Editor being listed as 'Not appointed' in the directory of officers. With the first issue of the new style *Black Powder* in 1972 Bill's roles were

listed as 'Treasurer, Membership Records, Journal Circulation and Editor.' A busy man!

At the 1979 Annual General Meeting the cost of production of *Black Powder* was discussed, having doubled in one year. A decision was reached to produce only four large decent *Black Powder* magazines each year and to supplement these with a duplicated Newsletter dealing with day to day business.

The quarterly publication continued until 1983, the final edition published being dated September of that year.

The editors of *Black Powder* up to this time were:

Richard Arnold	July 1953 – January 1954
R.C. Hockey	February 1954 – November 1954
Pete Shepard	January 1955 – July 1955
Ted Burton	August 1955 – April 1956
Pete Bedford	May 1956 – March 1961
Margot Bell	April 1961 – March 1963
David Back	April 1963 – June 1965
Ron Wigley	July 1965 – April 1967
Margot Bell	May 1967 – April 1969
E. Baldwin	May 1969 – June 1970
Hayward Marks	July 1970 – March 1971
Bill Curtis	April 1971 – April 1974
Hayward Marks	June 1974 – July 1975
Margot Bell	August 1975 – March 1976
De Witt Bailey	April 1976 – October 1976
Mike Bell	November 1976 – March 1977
George Gear	May 1977 – November 1979
David Back	March 1980 – September 1983

**Black Powder Annual Journal,  
1984 – 2000**



*Volume 31, February 1984*

The May/June 1983 Newsletter carried notice that the future of *Black Powder* was again under consideration, and highlighted the historical stumbling blocks of finding an Editor and finding contributions. Plans for an annual *Black Powder* were announced.

The September 1983 issue was the last of the A5 size booklet style journals. This was to be replaced by an A4 sized glossy magazine to be published annually and featuring well researched, readable and informative articles.

Early plans for distributing the new Journal for December were delayed due to the amount of work necessary for this new venture. The Journal was finally published along with the February 1984 Newsletter. The first issue of this series ran to 44 pages and included articles on gunmakers and historical topics, modern muzzle loading and match reports. It is essentially the 'blueprint' for the current format of *Black Powder*. The Editor for the first edition was Mike O'Donoghue, with an Editorial Committee of Bill Curtis, De Witt Bailey and Andrew Courtney.

Over time, the publication of the Journal migrated towards the end of the year. With Volumes 46 and 47 the cover date was for the forthcoming year, rather than the year ending; the change aiming to assist advertisers with the issue appearing current for a longer time. The last in the series on Journals was Volume 47, published at the end of 2000 (cover date 2001).

The editors of the Journal were:

Mike O'Donoghue	1984 – 1985
Bill Curtis	1986
David Back	1987
Bill Curtis	1988 – 1989
Duncan Bedford	
& Peter Jacques	1990 – 1998
Peter Jacques	2000 – 2001

**Black Powder Newsletter,  
1979 – 2000**

From 1979 articles of a general nature, "Letters to the Editor", properly written up National Shoot reports and results and material for long term archival purposes continued to be published in the main magazine. Information on forthcoming events, Branch News and shoot results, information for rapid dissemination, sale and wants adverts were all planned for the new Newsletter. Bill Curtis was appointed as Newsletter editor.

The first unnumbered edition of the Newsletter appeared in May 1979. From the first issue of the Newsletter of 1982, it was numbered in sequence throughout the year.

During 1988 the National Executive felt that the time had come to effect various improvement and alterations to upgrade the Newsletter. A sample edition was produced in July and from November a new higher quality printed Newsletter format was adopted. With the first edition of 1989, *Black Powder* Newsletter moved to a regular bi-monthly publication. Prior to that, issues had varied between 7 and 10 a year.

Issue 6, October 1996 was a single page 'Emergency Newsletter' headed "Is This The End?" The issue written by the then Chairman, Andy Courtney, urged action from members in lobbying MPs in the face of the handgun ban following the Dunblane tragedy.

*Article researched  
by  
David Minshall*

**Black Powder,  
2001 – to date**



*December 2001*

With the cessation of publication of the annual Journal at the end of the year 2000, the volume numbering was dropped. To maintain continuity the Volume numbering is assumed to continue with number 48 for the year 2001, which makes the present volume number 56.

The December 2001 edition of *Black Powder* was the first of two special issues intended to replace the old style Journal.

This first special ran to 56 pages, had a colour cover printed on glossy paper and bore the banner "Shooting Edition."

In June 2002 the first "Collector's Edition" was published, again with colour cover and in expanded format.

*Black Powder* December 2003 was the last of the bi-monthly editions to be published. It was also the first to be published throughout on glossy paper permitting the use of colour printing. From 2004 *Black Powder* became a quarterly publication and is maintained as such today.

*Black Powder* editors:

Bill Curtis	May 1979 – February 1982
Mary Curtis	March 1982 – December 1988
Pat Dorgan	February 1989 – August 2001
Ken Hocking	October 2001 – December 2003
Kim Minshall	Spring 2004 – Winter 2008
David Minshall	Winter 2009 – to date