

Helen Harris

The process of creating gunpowder.

The process involved combining together three basic substances, there was saltpetre, which is sodium nitrate which was brought in, I think, from the Indian subcontinent, sulphur and charcoal, and I think probably the charcoal was produced here on the site also, these substances had to be combined together to produce the gunpowder. The processes were quite intricate really, the first one involved the refining of the saltpetre, which meant it had to be boiled and crystallised out and then it had to be ground, all the constituents had to be ground and then they had to be mixed in the correct proportions and incorporated together by crushing and mixing and churning and eventually pressing it into cakes and then these had to be broken up into granules and these had to be dried and finished off, so that's quite an involved process.