

WASC 1872  
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WAI 464

Touchpaper June 2007  
Article 'The Boy'  
at the Mills  
on C. Griffiths  
with copy of discharge  
cert.

## The ' Boy ' at the Mills

Well into the 1950s a feature of the British factory and office was the ubiquitous ' boy ', renowned for boisterousness and mischief. Nevertheless the educational system of the time had by hook or by crook instilled in most of them a grasp of the three R's and from such humble beginnings they progressed into decent employment and in some cases to astonishingly high levels.

What visions of incidents are conjured up by the cryptic Section 30 Rule from the Rules of the Royal Gunpowder Factory 1934:

"If a ladder is employed, it is to be held by another man ;  
boys are not to hold ladders."

The Mills were a continuing employer of boys and the following outlines the experience of two of them.

### 1. A ' Land fit for Heroes ' ?

Friend Terry Griffiths' father obtained employment at the Mills as a boy. In 1916 in WW1 he enlisted in the Rifle Brigade. He was wounded and discharged from service, receiving the Silver War Badge awarded to men of that status. Having survived the War he returned assuming that with his previous employment , age and service a grateful nation would automatically reinstate him. The Mills authorities however did not see things that way and Terry's father found himself in receipt of the document bearing the stamp illustrated. His experience after that affords a glimpse into what could be a hard life in the 1920s.

The family lived at 44 Florence Road, Edmonton. As his father was unable to work, Terry's father, who was the eldest of nine children, became the sole earner. He must have had a streak of entrepreneurship as he determined to work for himself. This came in the guise of hiring a horse and cart from a neighbour and going into the ice cream business. This involved driving to West Green Road, Tottenham to collect ice then back to Edmonton to make the ice cream and selling it from the cart. This activity went quite well for a time and then the chill winds of competition blew in the form of Messrs. Walls who eventually put him out of business.

The family were now reduced to the rigours of the 1920s social welfare system. The ruling determinant for receiving help seemed to be that you had to reach complete destitution, including selling the only table in the house !

O. F. Form 55.

ROYAL ORDNANCE FACTORIES.

Royal Gunpowder Factory. (DEPT.)

12 JUN 1918 191

*M. L. Griffiths*

No. 1513

Trade Boys

You are hereby informed that your services  
will not be required in this Department  
after 29 JUN 1918  
on account of **CESSATION OF  
TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT**

If during your service you have met with an  
injury which has resulted in impairment, a form of  
claim for compensation will be supplied to you on  
application.

*Stonbeary*  
for Superintendent.

*It was cheaper to employ 'boys' and many  
were discharged on attaining their majority*

ROYAL ORDNANCE FACTORIES.

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Mr. E. Griffiths

No. 1513

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Geo. Beany  
for Superintendent.