

WAS 168

Reminiscences of  
M. T. Griffiths



P1.]

March 2006 Perhaps you may be interested in the following:

I was evacuated twice.

1) To Frinton-On-Sea with my brother for about 4 months

2) To St. Just-In-Porwith (Not St. Just In Roseland), by myself, until halfway through the war.

In 1998 The St. Just & Pendeen Old Cornwall Society asked me to write some notes regarding my stay. I thought that to complete the period I would also include my stay in Frinton. I am enclosing these for you, hope you like them.

Regards.

From Terry Griffiths.

To Les Tacker.

I originally wrote this note for the W.A. Historical Society (and article); but thought they would not be interested so perhaps you would like it.

About 1975 I was talking to my father. He said that he lived at 44, Florence Rd, and to reach The Mills he would get on a train at Angel Rd Str. Edmonton (about 200yds) then travel via, Ponders End etc. to Waltham Cross Str.

He would leave the train and walk to the Mills (with many other workers), halfway between W. Cross and W. Abbey he would visit a cafe where he would leave his tobacco and matches with

the man behind the counter and collect them again after work.

He worked in a structure (or building) among the trees on the North Site.

In the building which had various valves it was important to watch a glass gauge and if the needle reached a red part then they closed down the valves and ran and hid among the trees until they thought it was safe to return.

I wish I had obtained more information from him!

During the 2nd W.War. he was a first aid worker and one of his visits was to the V2 site in W. Abbey. where today's roundabout was constructed. I looked after his bike as they were frequently stolen and not many were manufactured at this time.

When we <sup>frequently</sup> cycled past the South Site along the Sewardstone Rd. he ~~the~~ told me that this was 'The poison gas Factory.'

So not many people knew its true purpose at that time. (WW2).

## TERRY GRIFFITHS

### EVACUATED TO FRINTON-ON-SEA, ESSEX, FROM APPROXIMATELY JANUARY 1940 – MARCH 1940

The part of the Essex coast comprising Clacton, Frinton and Walton-on-the-Naze consists of a 10 mile strip of flat sandy beach, ideal for a German invasion landing area, allowing easy access into the countryside.

A government expert decided this would be an ideal area in which to deposit hundreds of child evacuees, although the logic of such a decision is hard to understand.

Early in 1940 my brother Leslie. Age 11 years, and myself, age 8 years, arrived in Frinton by train with a group of evacuees from London.

Frinton was a rather select little town which attracted upper class citizens looking for a quiet, refined resort in which to retire in peace. No cafes, ice cream barrows or "kiss me quick" hats were seen here.

My brother and I were taken to a large house complete with tennis court near the sea front. Our foster parents were two old ladies, The Miss McClarens. They did their best to look after us, but I don't think they had ever looked after children before. For instance, when we arrived at the house after school we would have a meal and then be locked in our bedroom until school the following morning. The two ladies smoked Abdulla cigarettes and occasionally we were able to acquire one or two, which we would then enjoy in our bedroom. To our minds this balanced up the equation a little.

After a while we made it known that we were not very happy with our treatment, so we were relocated in a very large hotel type house called 'Ivanhoe'. Approximately 100 children were housed here which completely swamped the available staff.

I remember tea was taken seated on form seats at long trestle tables. Discipline was non-existent and the main object seemed to be to fill one's spoon with tea and flick it at the person sitting opposite. It was here that I contracted impetigo on both legs.

I was told to attend daily the clinic at Walton-on-the Naze for treatment, and I enjoyed the walk along the sandy beach which was about 2 miles each way.

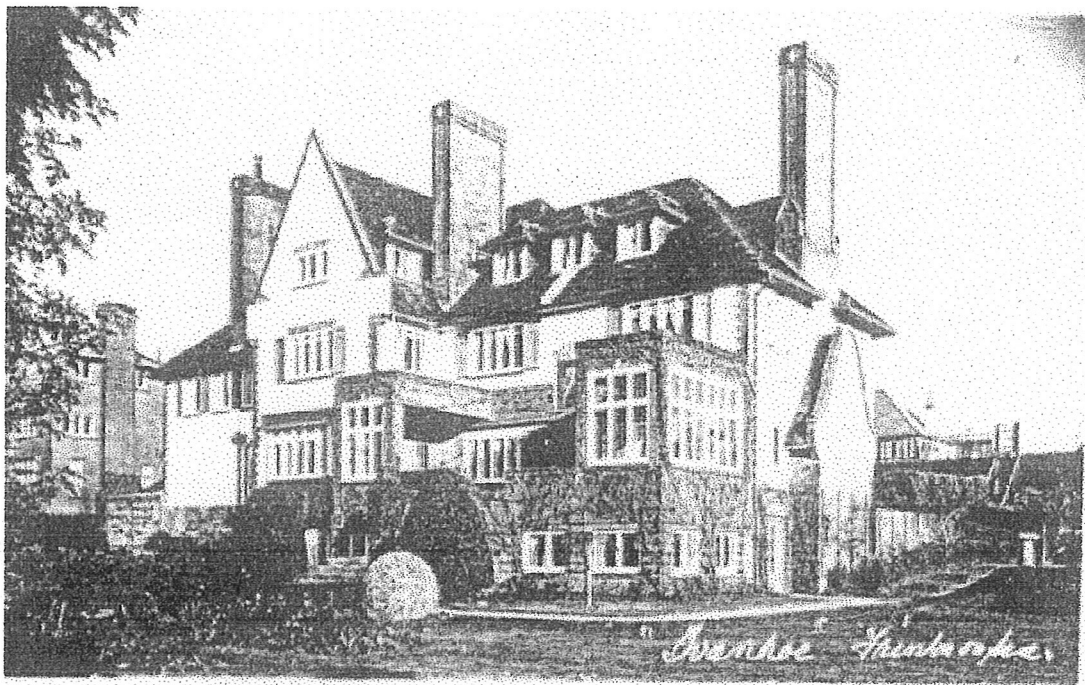
On arrival at the clinic I was told to wait in the hall until called by the nurse. Against the wall opposite me was placed a large red machine with lots of dials, levers, etc., on it. I was rather worried wondering what function it performed.



The lad sitting next to me told me that the machine is used by the nurse to drop one's eyeball out on the cheek for scraping and then replacing in the socket. As he was about 11 years old and almost a man I accepted his explanation.

When the nurse called out my name I entered the treatment room and hastily assured her that my eyes were perfect and that I had come for treatment to my legs. The nurse sat me down and with a piece of lint scraped away the crusty sores on my legs until they bled, then coated them with yellow ointment.

After a few visits to the clinic I decided that I liked the 4 mile return journey along the sea front which was relaxing after the bedlam which existed at my billet. Also I had come to accept the treatment at the clinic, so in order to ensure a few more visits I rubbed dirt into my sores, which delayed healing to a certain extent.



## My "Bedlam" billet in Frinton-on-Sea

The beaches of England should have been bristling with barbed wire, machine gun nests etc. but all I saw on my seafront walks to Walton Clinic were the occasional Local Defence Volunteer men (the forerunners of the Home Guard) armed with wooden drill rifles, but I'm told some had shot guns and pitch forks although I did not see any of these men. How could our Government have been so stupid as to leave us undefended knowing that Hitler had prepared such a vast war machine?

As we now know the early part of 1940 was known as the "phoney" period. Not much else happened in England at this time, the expected bombing had not materialised, perhaps Hitler thought we might negotiate a settlement shortly.

It was therefore decided that as things were quiet and also my brother and I were unhappy at Frinton we could return to London, which we did in March 1940.

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Dear Les

Many thanks for your letter and copy of 'The Boy at The Mills'.

I think you have done an excellent job of converting my rough notes into a readable article.

I can't find any errors or necessary amendments that need to be made.

My father was born in 1899 and joined the Mills at 14 yrs of age.

I believe he started smoking at about 13 yrs of age (me too!), which would explain the mention of matches and tobacco.

Regarding the needle on the gauge, I do not have any info. about this, so it is possible that he worked in the acid factory at that time. The location must have been quite close to the trees for him to quickly take cover there.

Whatever you may like to add or amend, is acceptable to me, so there's no need to get my O.K.

Thanks again for your work and interest.

Best Wishes,

Terry Griffiths.

P.S. My father had the "Silver War Badge", which I think was given to men who were discharged wounded. This would explain his discharge before the end of the War.