

War workers arrive 1939-1940

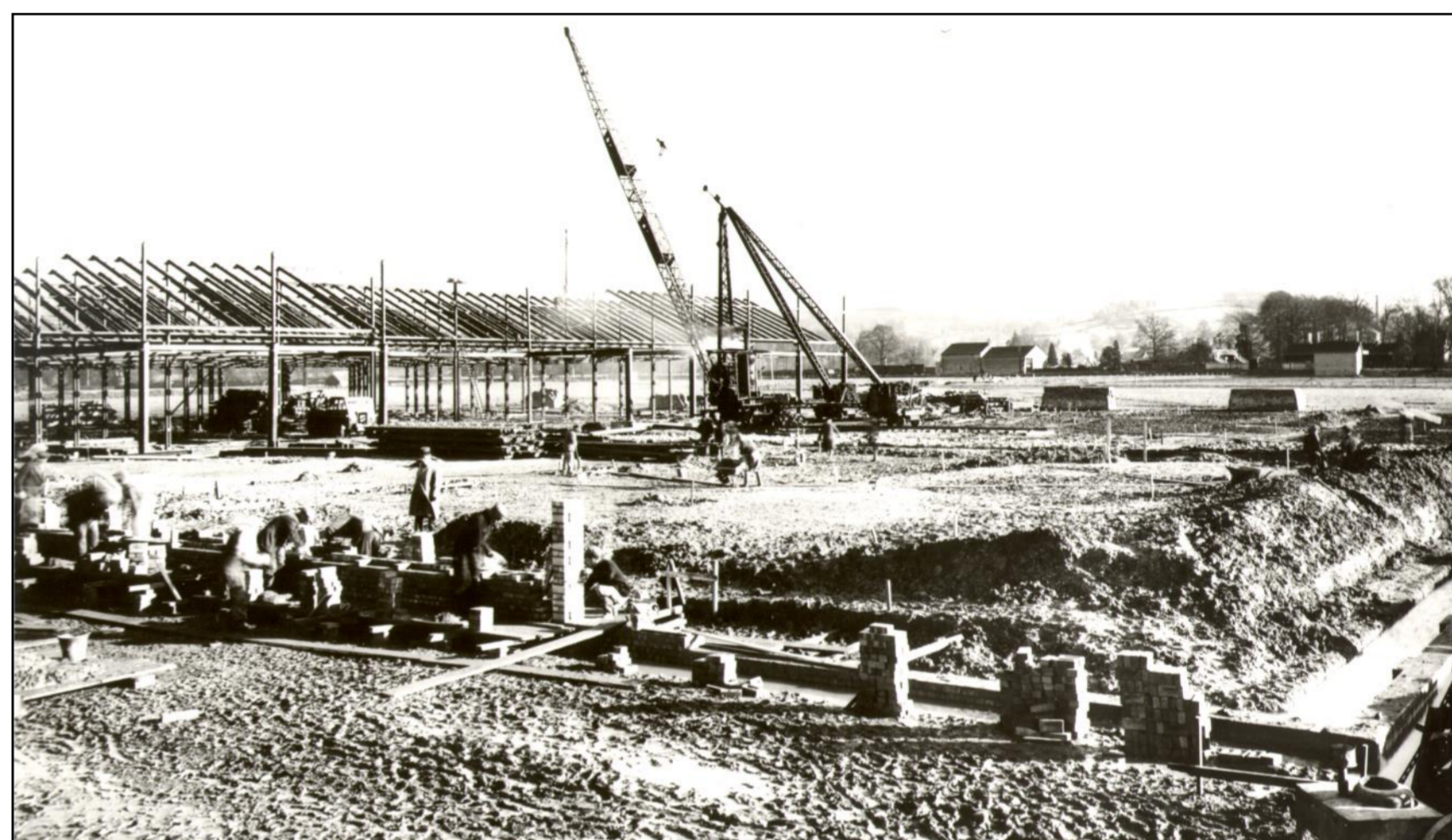
The impact of the Second World War

During the War the population of Stonehouse almost trebled (from around 2300 in 1931) - largely due to the importation of workers by the Hoffmann and Sperry Gyroscope companies for their “shadow factories” (back-up for their parent factories near London).

At the end of the War, many of the workers who had come to work in the shadow factories remained in Stonehouse.

Frank Woodyard was born in February 1918. From 1934, he worked in Hoffmann’s ball bearing factory at Chelmsford near London.

Hoffmann’s “shadow factory” was under construction from 1939, in anticipation that there would be war with Nazi Germany. Frank was one of a number of the workers who were asked if they were prepared to move to Stonehouse (there was no compulsion) and he agreed, not least because he thought it would be well away from any bombing.



Construction photo taken in November 1939.

Workers were transferred to Stonehouse in small batches as construction progressed and different sections became ready for use.

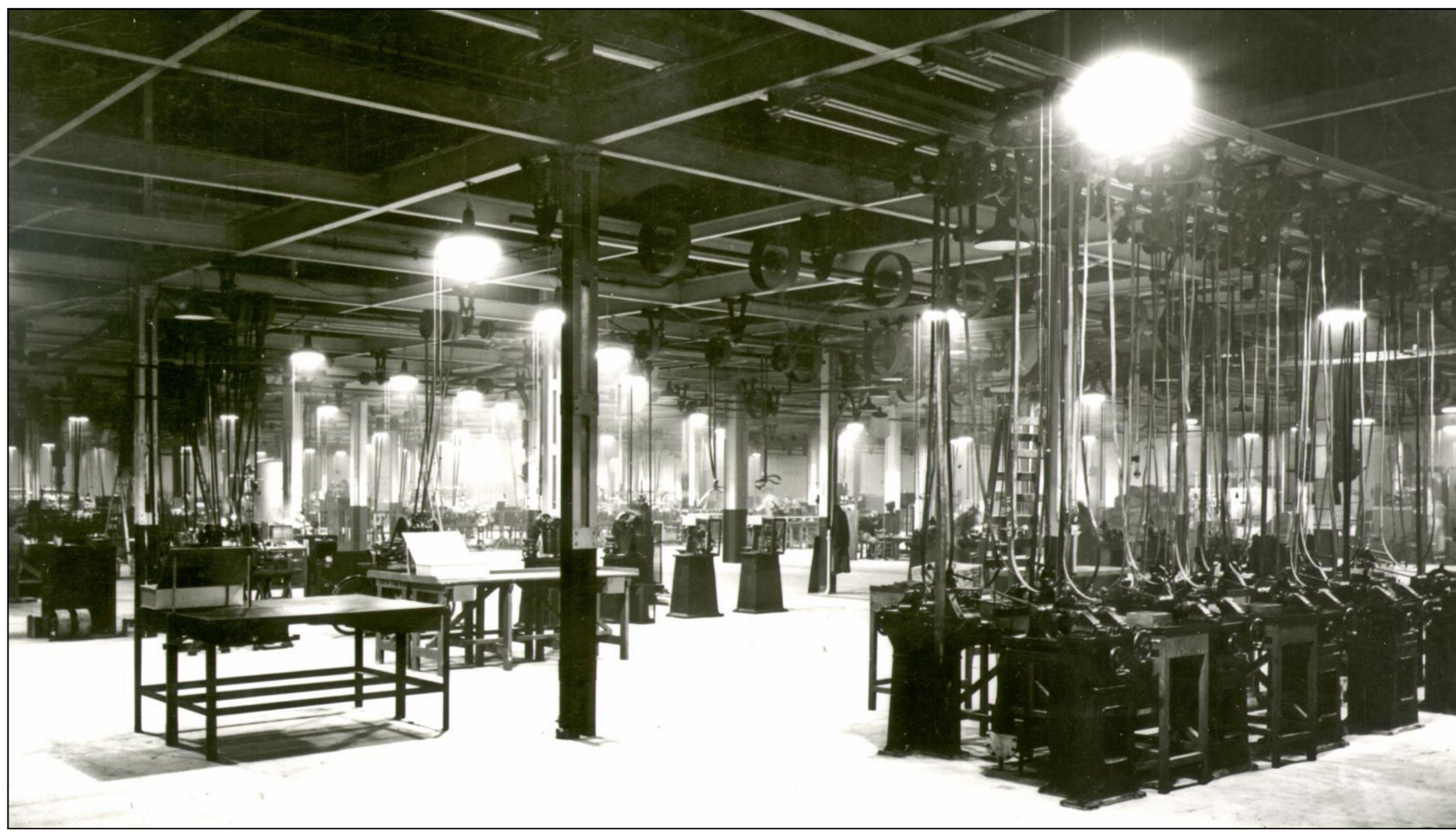
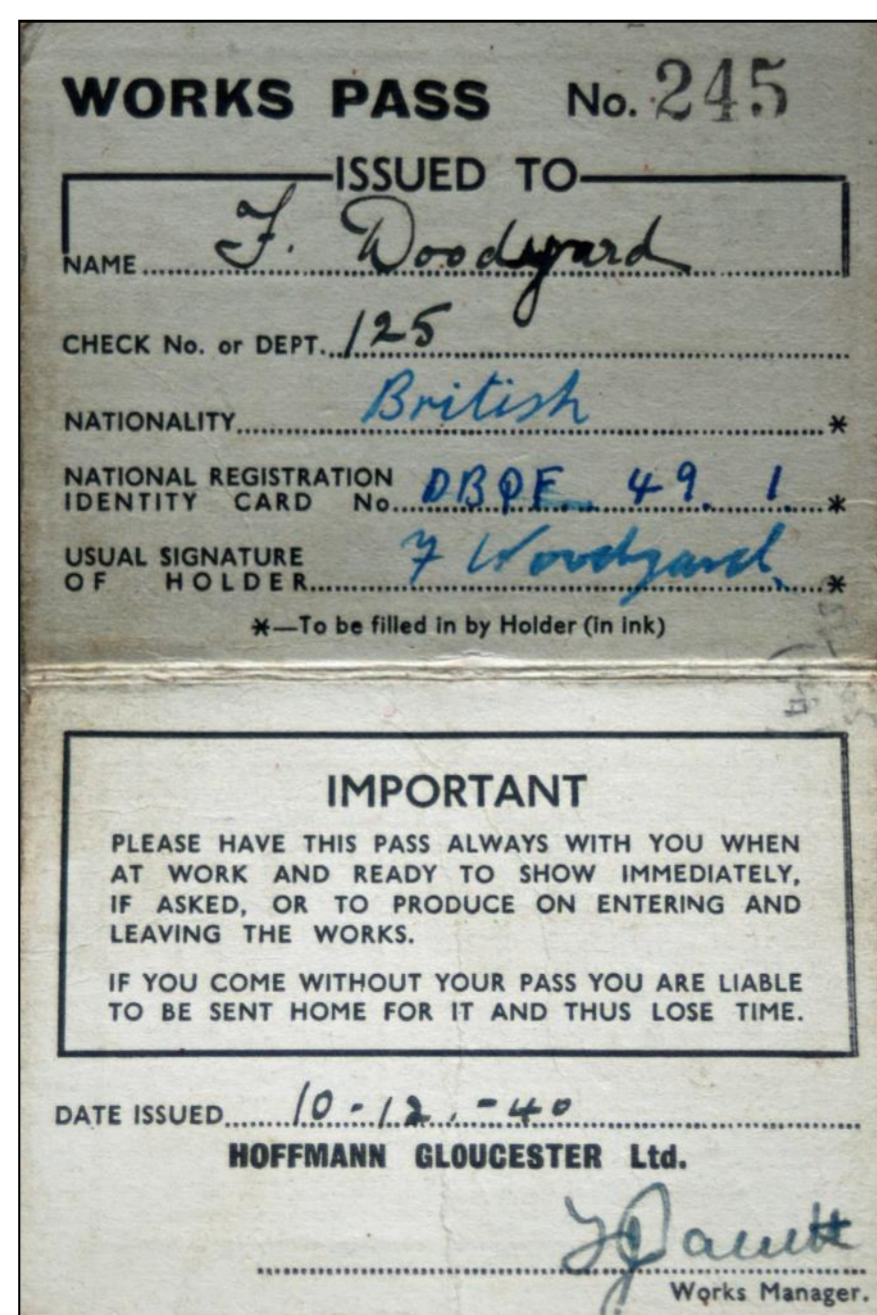


Frank came to Stroud by train, with 3 others, and they were met at Stroud Station by Jack Praill, chief inspector at the Stonehouse factory.

Jack took them to a café, then to Stonehouse by bus. He then took Frank and one of his colleagues to lodgings at “Pendennis” on St Cyril’s Road. The owner, Mrs Keating, was their landlady.

“Pendennis” in 2015

Frank started work at the Stonehouse factory on 10th December 1940 and he worked there until his retirement in 1983.



Photos show Frank in his Hoffmann Home Guard uniform, his works pass and part of the factory on the day he started work.