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The origins of Munitions

Badges and Ministry of

Munitions.



The origins of Munitions Badges and related Documentation.

The origins of the idea of issuing a Munitions badge came from the great armaments manufacturer Vickers Ltd in September 1914, one could wonder why this was necessary; there were two reasons. The need for more men in both the armed services and industry was critical. The army used recruiting sergeants who roamed the streets persuading them to join up and 'Be called to the colours', there were also a strange group made up of super-patriotic suffragettes who organised an onslaught on any fit young man out of uniform; they handed them a white feather which branded them a coward without redress or defence. In August 1914, at the start of the First World War, Admiral Charles Fitzgerald had founded the Order of the White Feather with the active support of the prominent author Mrs Humphrey Ward. The organisation aimed to coerce men to enlist in the British Army by persuading women to present them with a white feather if they were not wearing a uniform. The campaign was very effective, and spread throughout several other nations in the Empire, so much so that it started to cause problems for the government when public servants came under pressure to enlist. This prompted the Home Secretary, Reginald McKenna, to issue employees in state industries with lapel badges reading 'King and Country' to indicate that they too were serving the war effort.

The 'Flight magazine were promoting the idea of badges in 1914. In order to meet the strongly-expressed wishes of their employees, so as to place them in a position of being able to produce evidence to rebut any taunts in respect of their non-enlistment in the Army or Navy, quite a number of firms, especially among those engaged on automobile and aircraft work, have responded to the demand by issuing cards in the name of each individual employee so engaged. On the front of these cards is printed a reproduction in colours of the British Flag, the name and address of the firm, and the words:—" Mr. -----is serving his country by using his best endeavours and work in connection with the

building of (and) for the British Government." While such cards to a certain extent meet the case, they only partially

satisfy the requirements, and, hence, we again give voice to a suggestion we have already advanced, and that is, that the Admiralty and the War Office should undertake the issue of an official badge which persons employed on the production of material for the Government necessary to our Empire winning through, should be able to wear on their coats or caps and so give visible indication to the general public that, although not wearing khaki, they are, none the less, serving their King and Country. See; Flight November 27th 1914.

There were a number of types of badges that arose and they became known as 'O.W.S' or On War (Military) Service. The Royal Arsenal Badge was felt by its wearer the most prestigious than other 'private' companies e.g. Armstrong Whitworth and Bata, W.S & E. Co Ltd, YMCA.

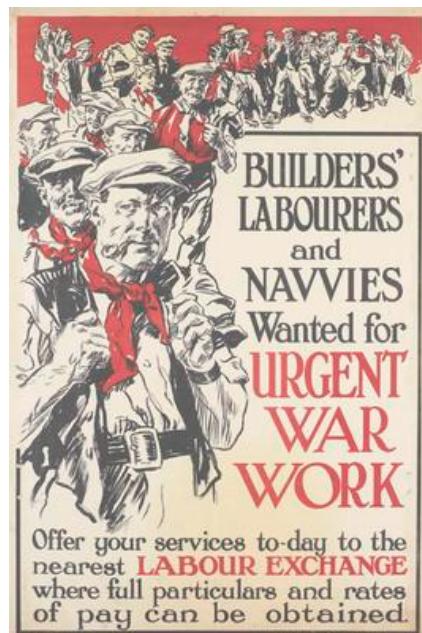
Ministry of Munitions Badge Committee

These were not issued by the Ministry of Munitions Badge Committee and were unofficial. There were two other designs one bearing crossed gun barrels and the other having three cannons one above the other. The presence of a crown indicates that the badge was approved. In May 1916 the triangular Women's Badge, or more correctly brooch came into use, an interesting aside in the respect was that women wearing the badge were given preference on the trams and treated with respect. The Silver War Badge was awarded for service personnel who had been honourably discharged due to wounds, disablement or sickness and was first issued in September 1916 to prevent veterans from being challenged for not wearing uniform and accused of being a coward, see illustration on Page 383. By June 1915 the issuing of badges was handed over to the Ministry of Munitions. This was to overcome the lack of enthusiasm from the War Office who wanted men regardless of their skills and usefulness in producing munitions for a poorly equipped army. The first badges to be issued were to the

prestigious Royal Arsenal - Woolwich. The issue of certificates also helped with reducing the harassment.

By 1916 the misuse of badges became a big problem and was taken so seriously that it became an offence under The Munitions of War Act. Minor breaches could result in six months imprisonment with or without hard labour or up to £100 fine or both, serious offences held penalties of imprisonment for life. If the offence was intended to assist the enemy then the death penalty may be inflicted and the offending badge returned. The policing of munitions factories was conducted by both military personnel and women police officers, a badge was issued to identify them. The use of badges was regulated under The Munitions (War Service Badges) Rules 1915.

One would imagine that in 1914 the picture was of the whole nation working in unison towards victory, sadly this was not the case, there is evidence of fractious trade unions, strikes, shoddy workmanship, restrictive practices, using badges to dodge military service, a total resistance to 'dilution'. Dilution was the use of non-skilled people, such as women, to do the less skilled work allowing the skilled men to undertake more skilled work; sadly this was not the case in every factory, the skilled men objected to others learning the trade. Eventually dilution became the acceptable way of working. Anyone doubting the prevalence of industrial disputes at such a time could do no worse than examine the archives for Nobel's Explosives Limited in the Kew Archives and read The Impact of Catastrophe. The People of Essex and the First World War (1914-1920) ERO. Ross states that the badge was given after one month working at the munitions factory then, after six months continual a 'Bar' is awarded (1) In August 1916 it was reported that nearly 200 plumbers had been trained as Lead-Burners for employment in the explosives and chemical factories. Even Builders, Labourers and Navvies were exhorted to sign up for war work. (2), (3)



Badges; Illustrations of type and issue:





Some badges became quite ornate.



Badges for Private companies. Some were unauthorised.



Admiralty Badge - 500,000 Issued



Official Issue - 27,000 Issued



Unofficial Issue

Approved, Note Bar

Women's Munitions Badges



Royal Arsenal Badges



Original Enamelled Badge



Later Economy Badge



Note Bar

Government Factories

Original Enamelled Badges

1,350,000 Issued

Later Economy Badge



A badge and presentation certificate.



Silver War Badge



Railway Company Badge



Port of London Badge



'Speed up Munitions' Badge.



Constabulary Badges Munitions Police Service



Ministry of Supply



Australian Munitions Badge.

French Munitions badge

Lapel Badges.



Nobel's Explosives Lapel Badge.

Some Oddities

Tokens and Admission Badges



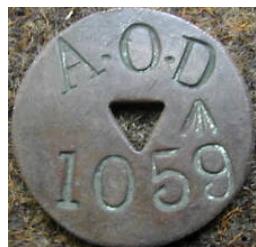
Badges for admission of workers to the factories.



Unofficial Badge.

Tokens and Tallies.

The Royal Army Ordnance Corp Tokens.



Pre 1918 Token/Tally From the Authors collection.

The token was used by the Ordnance Corp as Identification check in badges or tally. In the event of a fatal explosion then the

badge(s) in the rack were those of the men who were missing. There used to be an RAF station in the 1950s responsible for disposing of old and surplus munitions on Carrington Moss. Starting work the person leaves the tally in a special rack, on finishing the person take it back again. This method is still in use. The Army Ordnance Department (AOD) and the Army Ordnance Corp (AOC) were combined in 1918 into the Royal Army Ordnance Corp.



From the Authors collection

This token bears the government Pheon (The broad arrow) and the Legend BWD. It is made out of copper to prevent sparking and on the reverse is the old chemical sign for sulphur which was a component of gunpowder, a suitable sign for explosives.



"O.S.D." (Ordnance Shell Dump)



R.S.A.F." (Royal Small Arms Factory. Enfield



This Token is of unknown source

The National Shell Filling Factory, Chilwell.



The National Shell Filling Factory, Chilwell.

This factory filled half of all British shells fired during WWI. A substantial part of the National Shell Filling Factory was destroyed in an explosion eight tons of TNT on 1 July 1918. In all 137 people were killed, of whom only 32 could be positively identified, and a further 250 were injured. The unidentified bodies are in a mass grave in Attenborough Churchyard. The blast was reportedly heard twenty miles away. Incredibly, the factory resumed production the next day.

The factory was collectively recommended for the Victoria Cross and thereafter was known as "The V.C. Factory". A Memorial was erected bearing the words.

**ERECTED TO THE MEMORY OF THOSE MEN AND WOMEN WHO LOST THEIR LIVES BY EXPLOSIONS AT THE NATIONAL SHELL FILLING FACTORY CHILWELL 1916 – 1918,
PRINCIPAL HISTORICAL FACTS OF THE FACTORY:
FIRST SOD TURNED 13TH SEPTEMBER 1915.**

**FIRST SHELL FILLED 8TH JANUARY 1916.
NUMBER OF SHELLS FILLED WITHIN ONE YEAR OF CUTTING THE FIRST SOD 1,260,000.
TOTAL SHELLS FILLED 19,359,000 REPRESENTING 50.8% OF THE TOTAL OUTPUT OF HIGH EXPLOSIVE SHELL BOTH LYDDITE AND AMATOL 60PD TO 15INCH PRODUCED IN GREAT BRITAIN DURING THE WAR.
TOTAL TONNAGE OF EXPLOSIVE USED 121,360 TONS.
TOTAL WEIGHT OF FILLED SHELL 1,100,000 TONS.**

On the fiftieth anniversary of the explosion, the memorial was restored and plaques were added with the following text:

TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN TWO WORLD WARS AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN AND IN THE MORNING WE WILL REMEMBER THEM THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR

EVERMORE UNVEILED ON 30TH OF JUNE 1968 BY MT
JAMES BOYDEN MP PARLIAMENTARY
UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ARMY ON THE
OCCASION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
EXPLOSION AT CHILWELL THE V.C. FACTORY IN
RECOGNITION OF THE BRAVERY AND FORTITUDE OF
THE EMPLOYEES.

Worker's Exemption



Worker's Exemption check, Bearing the text:
"Coventry Ordnance Works Ltd", "Special War Service".

This badge was to signify that the person had been
'exempted' from Military Service and had been allocated
work at a munitions factory, in this case the Coventry
Ordnance Works Ltd. See ref (6). (7).

Canteen Tokens.



D.N.S.F. Canteen Token (Dundee Naval Shell Factory),



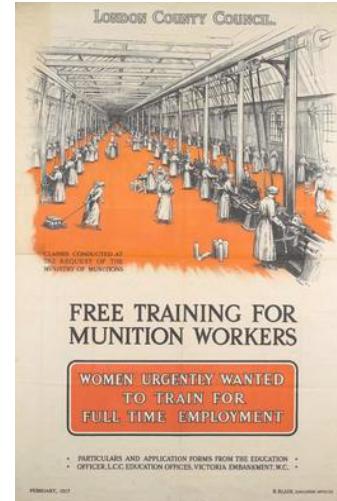
Various Tokens from Munitions factories' canteens.



Munitions Ladies proudly Wearing Their Badges.



Studio Picture of Munitions Worker wearing her Badge.



Advertisements: Promoting Munitions Work for Women.

Documentation Relating to Munitions and War Service.



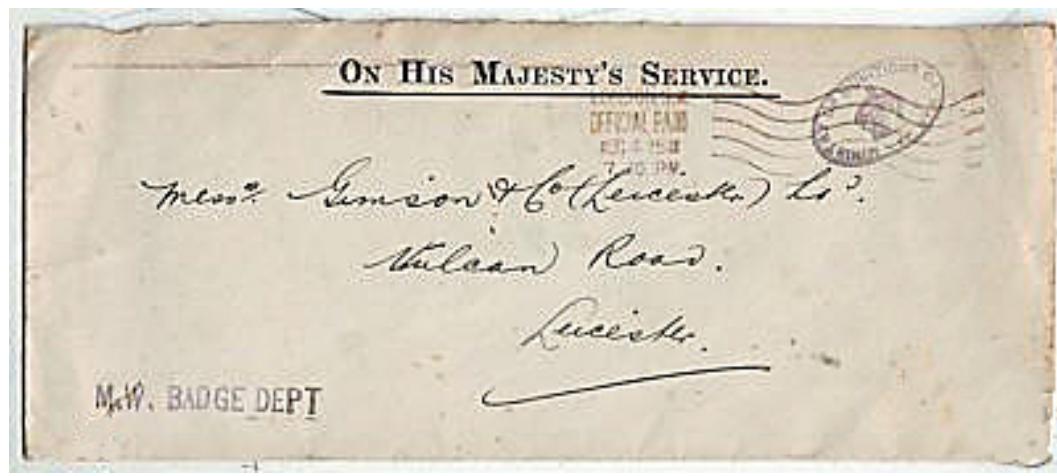
WW1 Munitions Certificate from authors archive, with badge number noted.



Showing Badges stamped number which coincides with that on the issuing certificate (not for the above certificate)



Morale Building Poster.

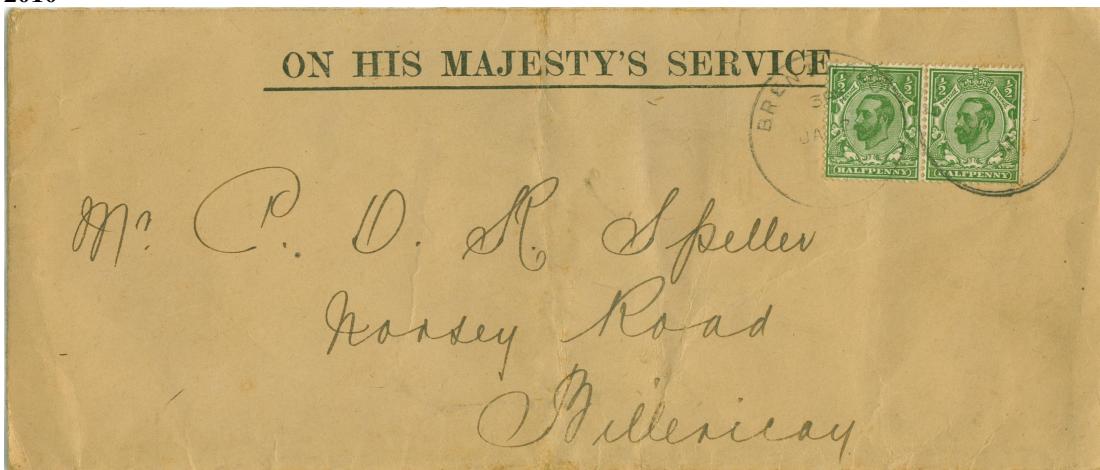


Letter from the Badge Department, Authors Archive

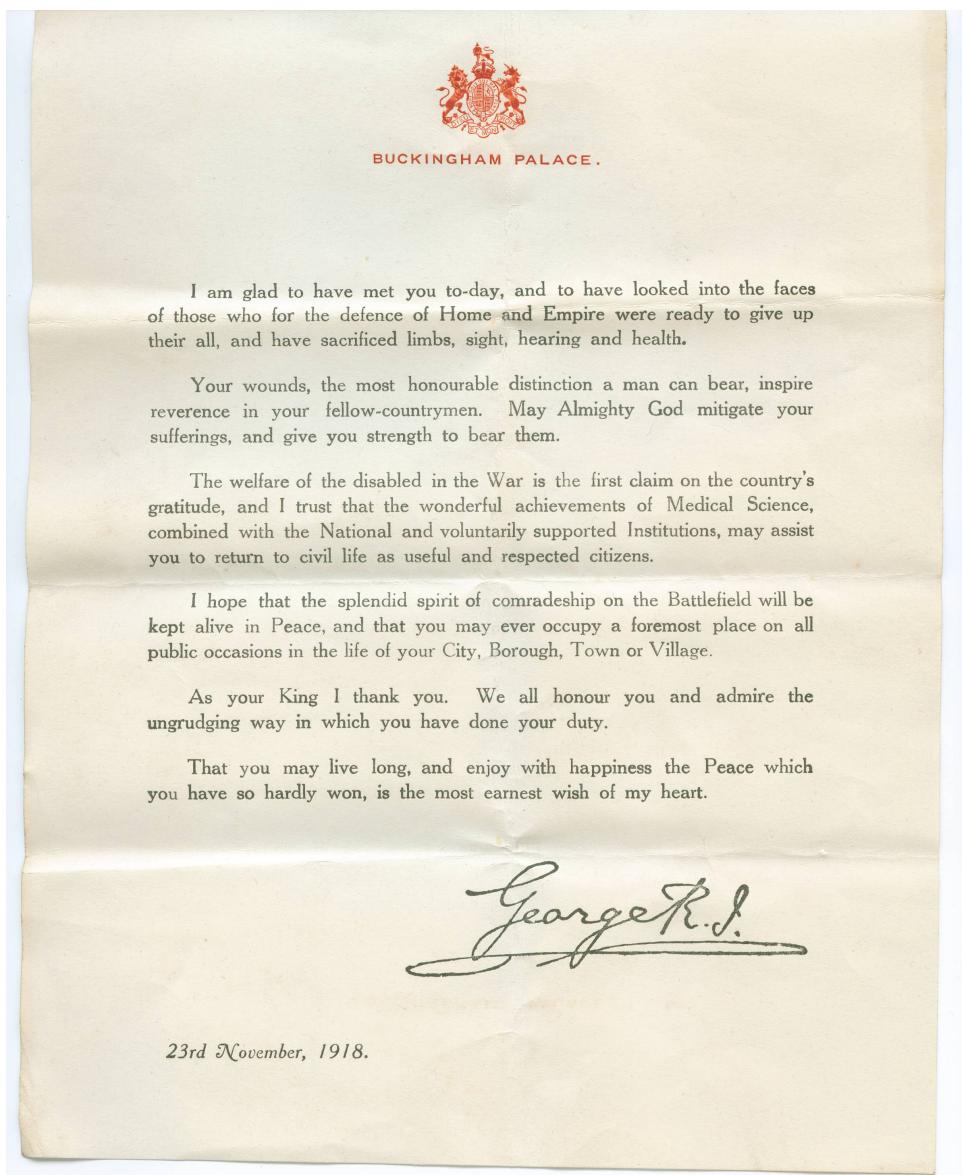


Some of the many documents that munitions volunteer needed to carry.

The Activities of the King.



Envelope of Letter from the King, Authors Archive



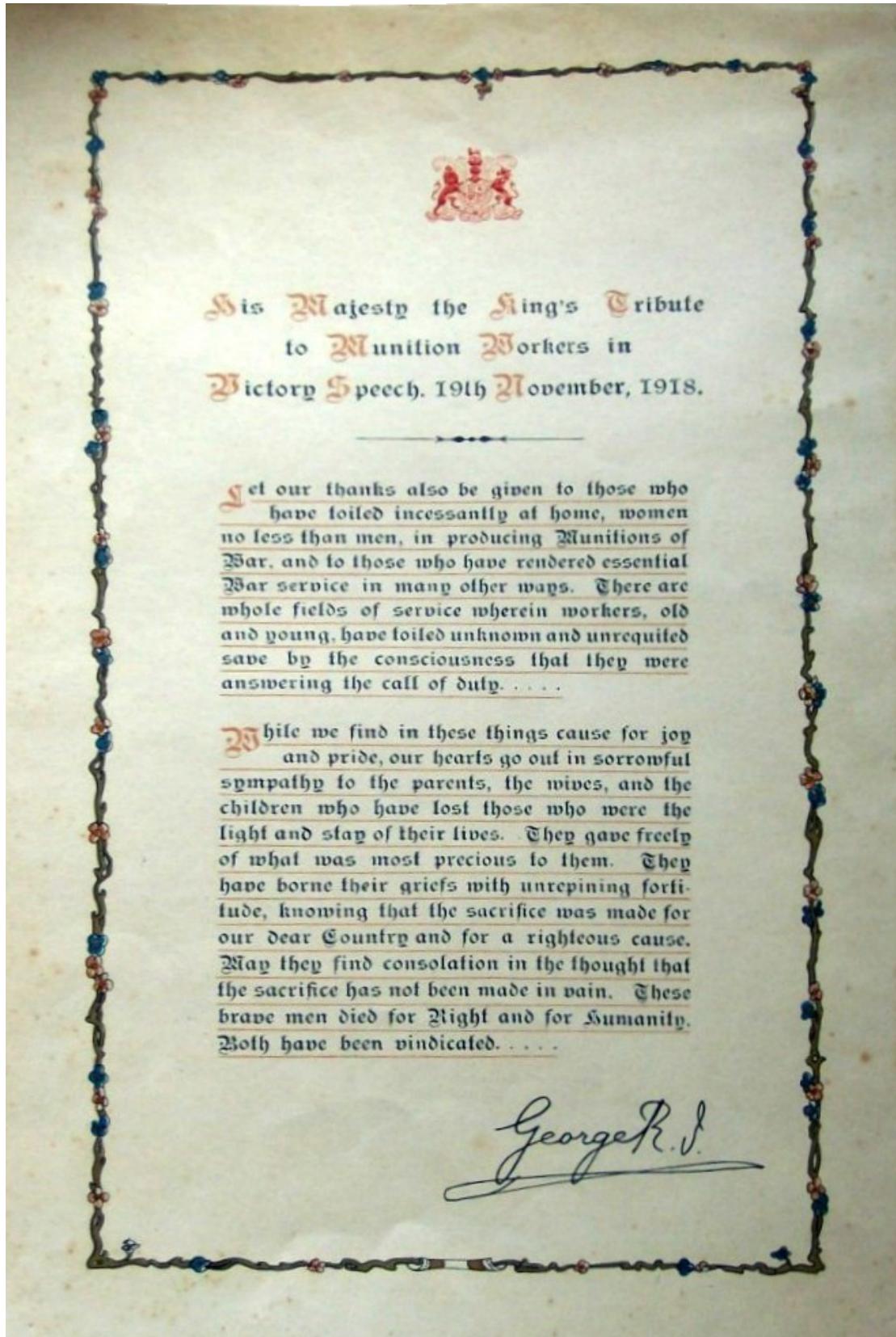
Letter from the King, Authors Archive



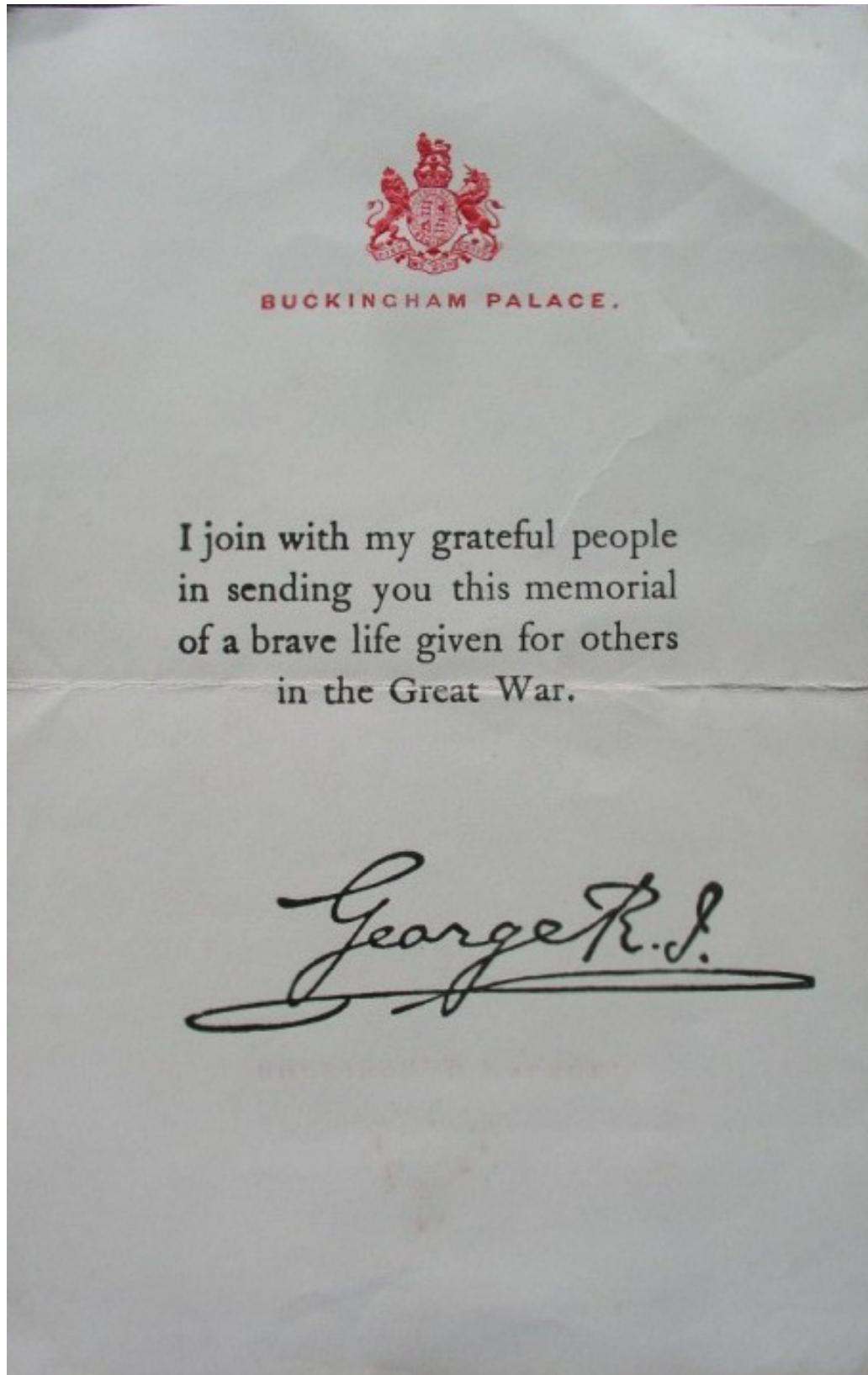
The King and Queen visit some women Munitions Workers.



The King and Queen visit Shell making Munitions Workers.



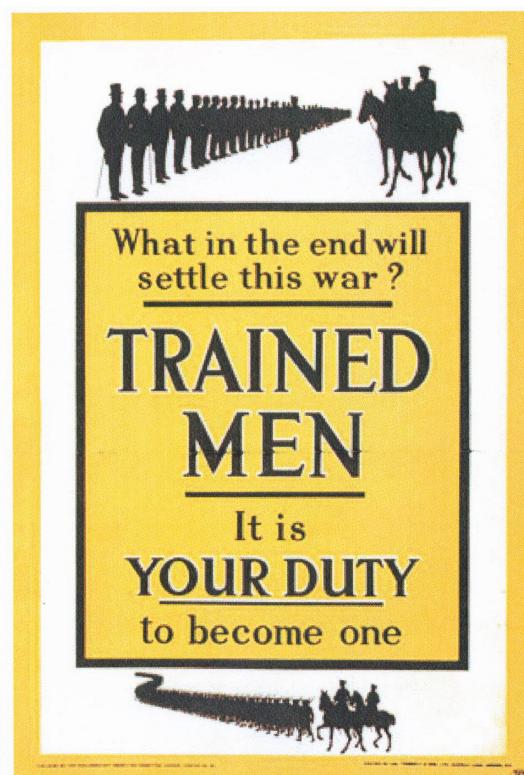
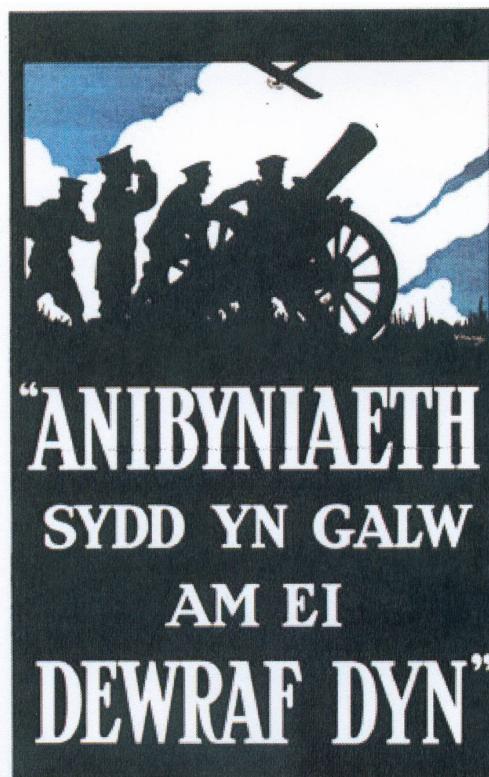
King George Praises the Munitions Workers in 1918 Victory Speech



Letter of Condolence from the King



Honourable Discharge Certificate 1914-1918 War



Anibyniaeth Sydd Yn Galw Am Ei Dewraf Dyn
[Independence Calls for the Bravest of Men]

Sad Associations

The image is of a medallion that came into the author's possession. It is a token used for identification in a munitions factory. It is made from an aluminium 10 reichspfennig coin of the early years of the Second World War, on the tail side it bears that name Eberhard II and on the head side it says Ziegler. The drilled hole is for a string to hold it round the workers neck. The illustration shows the 10 reichspfennig coin alongside the token for comparison.



Tails Side



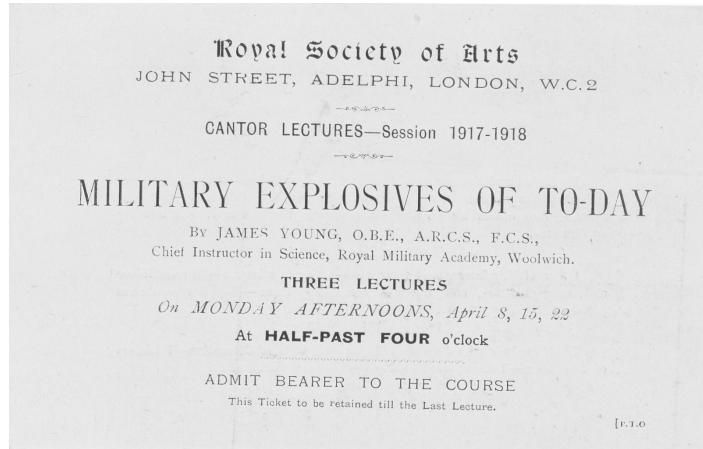
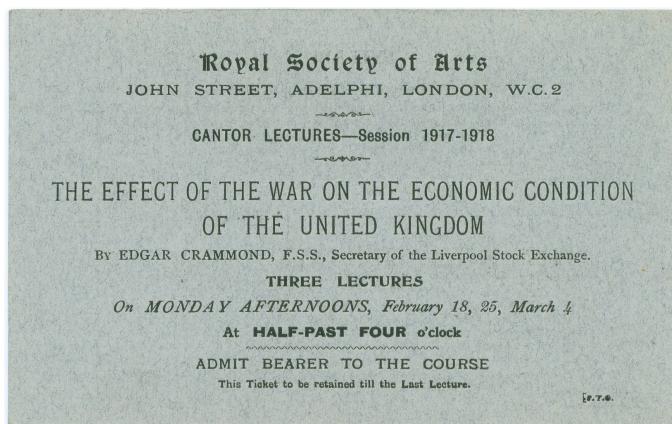
Head Side



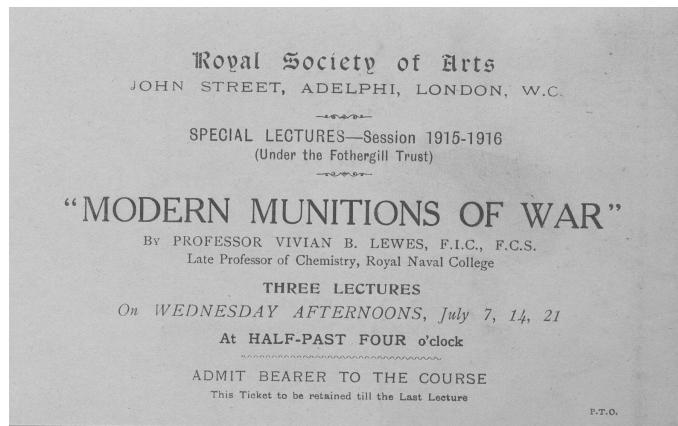
The sad part of the story is the reason for existence of the medallion. It was discovered that the Eberhard stands for Otto Eberhardt Patronenfabrik (Otto Eberhard Cartridge Factory), which was a Nazi German Munitions factory in Hirtenberg near Weiner Neustadt near Linz in Austria where they manufactured cartridges. This company used slave labour from a sub camp of the Grade III Mauthausen-Gusen Concentration Camp designated for "Incorrigible Political Enemies of the Reich". The name Ziegler is perhaps the name of a worker at the factory. (4)

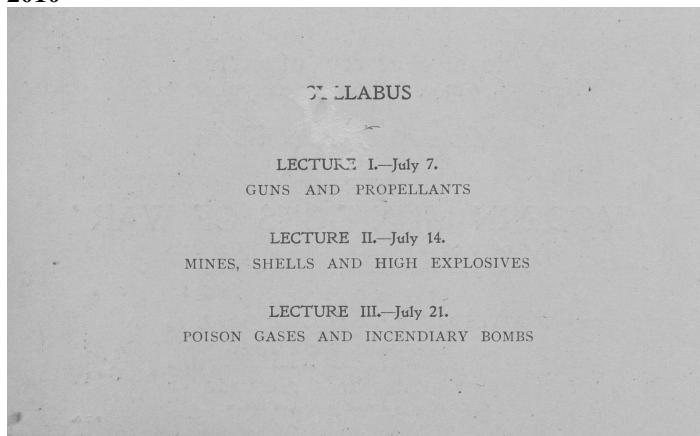


**Roll up Roll up for
Three Daily Lectures
on
Munitions Guns and**



The illustrations are of tickets for lectures on various aspects of War. Munitions (see the syllabus). Military Explosives and the effect of the War on the economy of Britain. One cannot imagine these lectures being offered today. Particularly by the Royal Society of Arts.

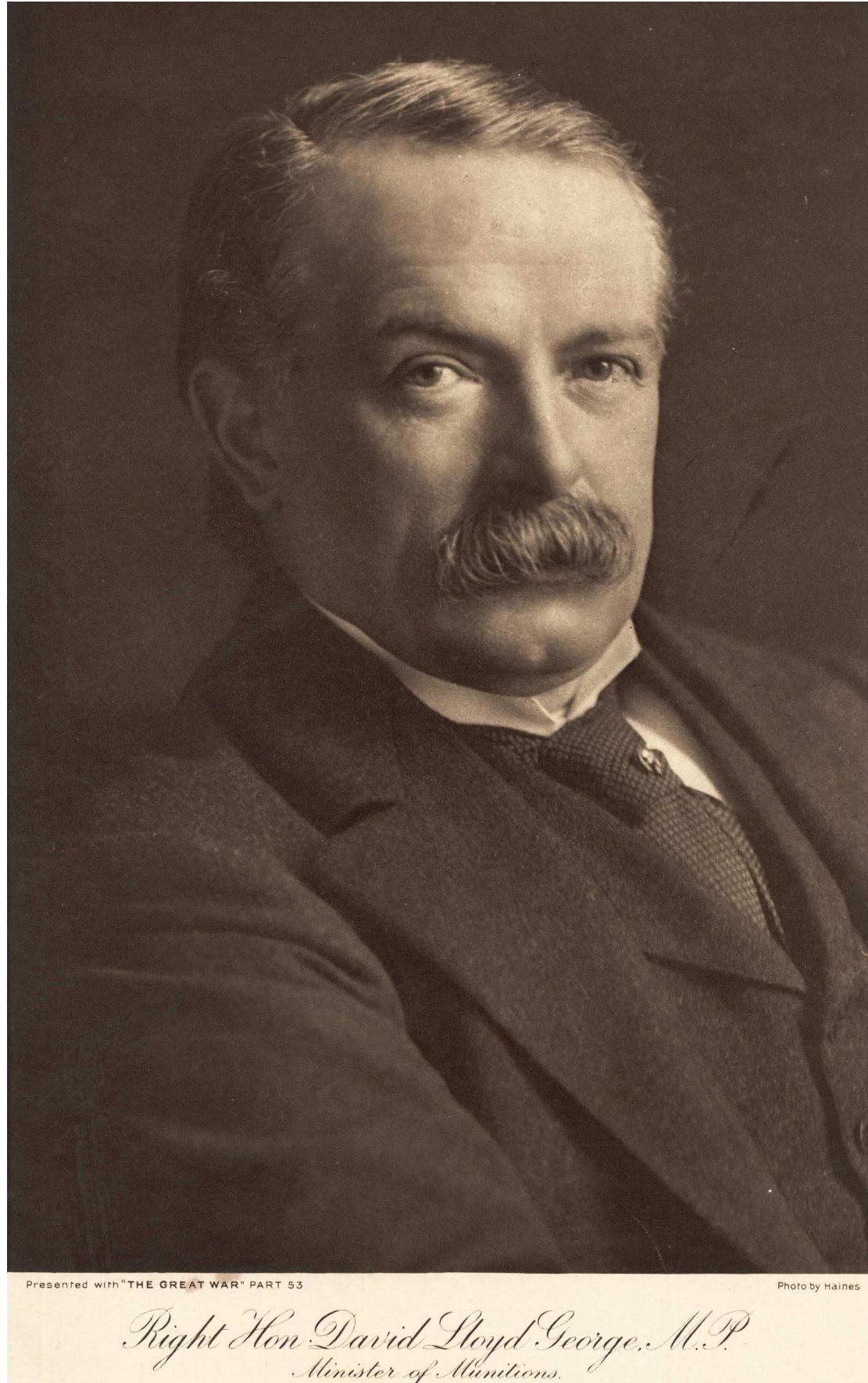




The later softer glamour approach of the Suffragettes attitude or a public reaction against the movement by munitions workers is illustrated here.



The More conventional non glamorous representation of the Women workers.

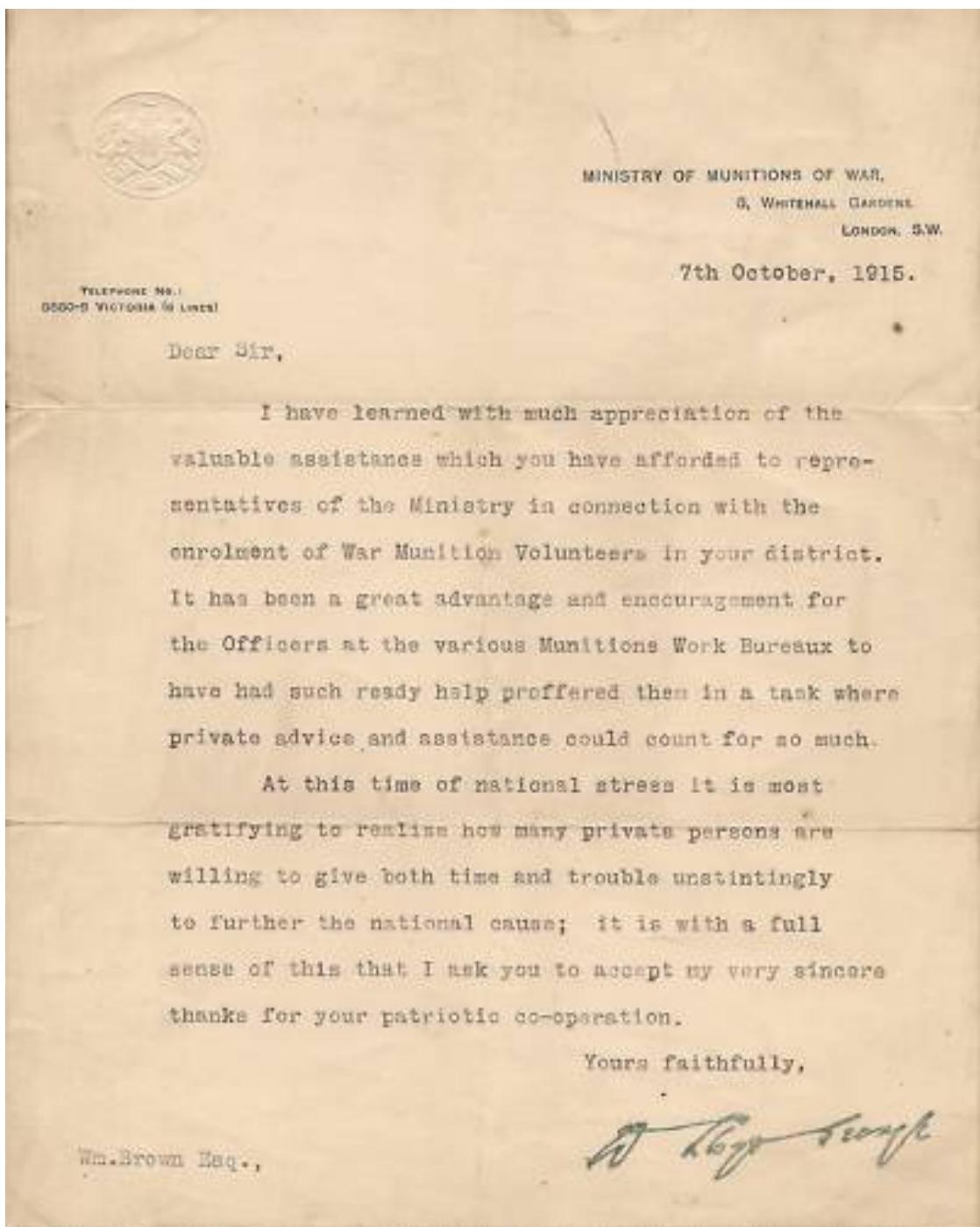


Presented with "THE GREAT WAR" PART 53

Photo by Haines

Right Hon David Lloyd George, M.P.
Minister of Munitions.

From the authors collection.



A letter from Lloyd George thanking the munitions workers.

References:

- (1) **World War I: Primary Documents On Events From 1914 To 1919.** Ross. F. Collins.
- (2) **Ministry of Munitions records at the PRO, sub-file MUN5/64/322/125).** Mun5 is the generic location reference.
- (3) **Arms and the Wizard, Lloyd George and the Ministry of Munitions, 1915-1916.** R.J.Q Adams. 1977.
- (4) **From Authors Archive.**
- (5) **From Authors Archive.**
- (6) **Hansard 1803-2005. February 1917 to 19 February 1917. Commons Sitting. Subject: Worker's Exemption check. HC Deb 19 February 1917 vol 90 cc1025-6.**
- (7) **John. F. Yarwood. Military Tokens of the British Commonwealth (2005).**

For more detailed information on the British Explosives syndicate at Pitsea got to <http://corntocordite.vpweb.co.uk/> Where you can purchase the complete book or eBook and download more information on the book;

**From Corn to Cordite,
By John Williams.**

