



# Dutch and German workers at Meldon Glassworks

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## **Note to readers:**

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Please be aware that while our volunteers have received training in basic research skills, they are not professional historians.

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In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a company (the Granulite Works Glass Company) was set up to manufacture glass at Meldon Quarry where there was a good supply of the raw materials required for glass making. Until that time the process of glassmaking was dominated by European manufacturers so there was no local workforce with the necessary experience and skills. The solution was to bring over a small number of skilled German and Dutch workers to train local young people.

The factory went into production manufacturing medicine and cosmetic bottles. However, it was difficult to produce sufficiently clear glass on a regular basis and in February 1921 about 100 men working in the factory were laid off.

### **Engbert Warnder Roosien**

In January 1927 a Dutch national named Engbert Warnder Roosien, who had been employed at the Meldon Glassworks from 1920-1921, appeared at the Okehampton Petty Sessions charged with contravention of the Aliens Order (as told in a report in the Devon & Gazette on 13/1/27).

According to a report in Exeter & Plymouth Gazette, while working at Meldon, while Roosien was working at Meldon he formed an attachment with a local woman. After the closure of the factory he took her to London and had four children with her. While in London their circumstances became so poor that Roosien was repatriated by the Dutch authorities in May 1926 leaving the woman stranded in London. In September 1927 he arrived back in Okehampton (reunited with his family) where it was found that his papers were not in order. They had not been stamped by an Immigration Officer which meant he had entered the country illegally. On December 30<sup>th</sup> Roosien and his family entered the Okehampton Poor Law Institution.

Roosien pleaded guilty to the charges against him. He was sentenced to 14 days imprisonment and recommended for deportation.