

Information Data Sheet

Category Home Guard & Auxiliary Units

Description

Local Defence Volunteers (LDV) units, later known as the Home Guard, were located in all towns and large villages. Anti-invasion defences were to be defended by the Home Guard and regular Army troops for as long as possible in the event of an invasion. The troops were issued with 'No Withdrawal' orders.

The Home Guard was initially supplied with 250,000 pikes (bayonets welded onto metal poles) and subsequently with machine guns and revolvers from the First World War. They later inherited weapons that were no longer used by the regular Army, including the sticky bomb, the Northover Projector (a blackpowder-powered mortar) and incendiary grenades.

Important elements of the Home Guard ordnance supply included Mills bombs (fragmentation grenades) and Self Igniting Phosphorus (SIP) grenades, as well as machine gun and small arms ammunition.

Records of Home Guard activities and related sites are rarely preserved. Disposal of munitions by the Home Guard was poorly documented and surplus supplies were either buried or dumped in lakes and ponds.

In addition to the regular Home Guard, Auxiliary Units existed which were made up of guerrilla troops trained in sabotage and assassination in case of invasion. Sites used by these Units were Top Secret and many locations are still unknown. It is estimated that there were approximately 3,500 men involved in Auxiliary Units of between 6 and 8. Operational Bases were provided for each Operational Patrol. They were hidden underground, usually in woodland, with a camouflaged entrance and emergency escape tunnel and it is thought that around 400-500 existed. These patrols were given a selection of the latest weapons, including explosive incendiary devices. They were expected to attack invading forces, and patrols often reconnoitred country houses that could have been used by German officers.



No. 76 SIP grenade found in Wiltshire



The emergency escape tunnel of an AU Operational Base

Hazard Home Guard and Auxiliary Unit activity can provide a source of UXO hazard, either through training exercises or the storage and disposal of munitions.

Because Home Guard activity is poorly recorded and training activities were usually unofficial or unsanctioned, caution is prudent in all areas known to have been frequented by these units. Burial of munitions close to anti-invasion defences, particularly in lakes and ponds, is known to have occurred.