

Information Data Sheet

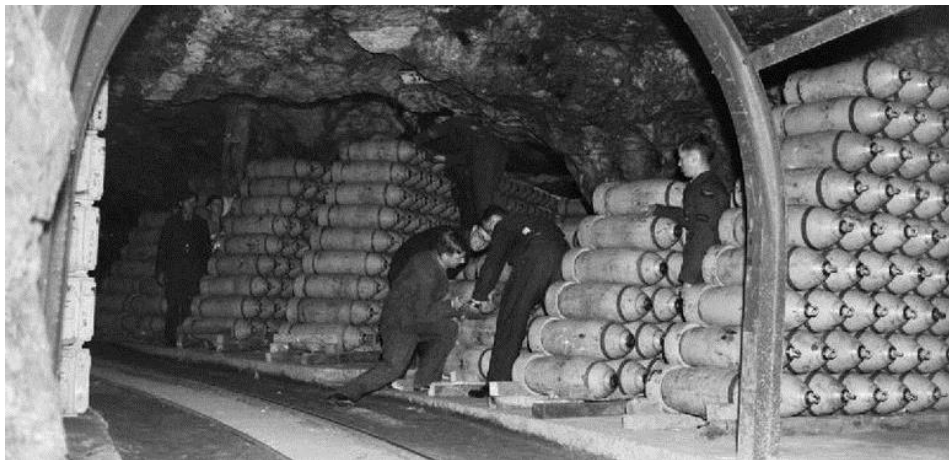
Category Munitions Depots

Description Munitions depots have been required for as long as ordnance has been manufactured. Since the early royal armouries and the gunpowder hulks that lined the River Thames, munitions stores have become increasingly extensive and secure.

Munitions were often stored at the site of their manufacture or at military sites such as airfields and barracks where they were likely to be needed. In WWII, efforts were made to construct purpose-built munitions depots, often in remote areas of the countryside with good rail access that allowed ordnance to be transported easily across the country.

Munitions were stored in blast-protected shelters and concrete buildings (magazines), often in wooded areas that were difficult to target from the air. Some depots were established underground, negating the risk posed by enemy bombing.

Stored munitions would be deployed and returned to these depots depending on operational requirements. Each military force (RAF, Army, Navy) was provided with its own purpose-built ammunition depots across the country and, during WWII, large ammunition depots for the US Army were established. Additionally, smaller munitions stores were maintained around anti-invasion and anti-aircraft sites, often preserved in an ammunition shelter. These were typically removed at the end of conflict.



250lb bombs stored underground at an RAF Reserve Depot

Hazard

Clearance operations at munitions depots took place periodically as ordnance was deemed outdated, defective or surplus to requirements. Disposal methods ranged from burial to burning and dumping at sea.

Most of the munitions depots across the country stored a variety of ordnance, ranging from small arms ammunition to general purpose HE bombs. Chemical weapons were also kept at some depots.

It is important to determine the operational history of any former munitions depot site (particularly the types and quantity of ordnance they stored and any disposal areas), before carrying out any remediation work.