

Information Data Sheet

Category Military Training Areas

Description In September 1939, the area of land occupied by the army for all purposes, including training, was 235,000 acres. By February 1944, this had risen to 9,800,000 acres for training alone. Land was required for infantry and tank training, for beach assault, and for weapon practice.

Coastal sites involved not only use of the land but also the seabed designated by navigational exclusion zones. Where the land was selected, often requiring the civilian population to leave, camps for the incoming troops had then to be built.

Official training areas tend to have clearly delineated boundaries within which training is to take place. During wartime, however, many areas of open fields and woodland were requisitioned under Defence Regulation 52 by military units stationed in the area. Training in these areas was often not subject to any official rules and regulations, or detailed records.

Some training areas had associated firing ranges and others had provisions for armoured vehicle and tank training. In addition to the surrounding camps, the training areas required firing points, stop butts and observation and range control bunkers.

In the build-up to D-Day, marshalling areas for British and American troops were established in park and woodland near to the coast and these areas were commonly used for training exercises using live munitions.



Testing flamethrowers at a WWII Battle Training Area

Hazard The types of UXO that could be present at former military training areas varies depending on their operational history. Ordnance used during exercises ranged from small arms ammunition to grenades, defensive mines, mortars and shells, and unconventional weapons such as flamethrowers.

'Dry' training areas will have primarily used blank ammunition, although even these are likely to have used live munitions at some stage.