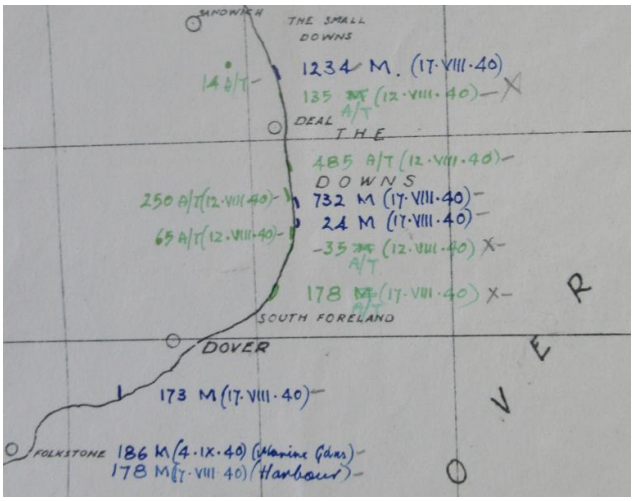
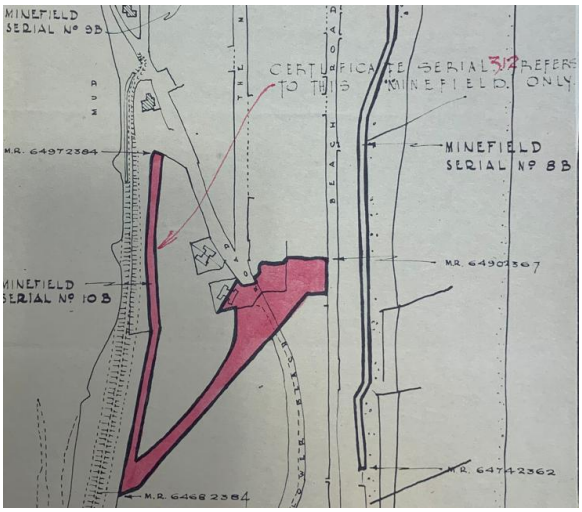
MINEFIELDS

Defensive minefields were laid along many UK coastlines, estuaries, and the banks of major rivers during World War Two (WWII). Although typically concentrated in areas vulnerable to invasion by sea, such as the south and east coasts, minefields could also be established further inland.

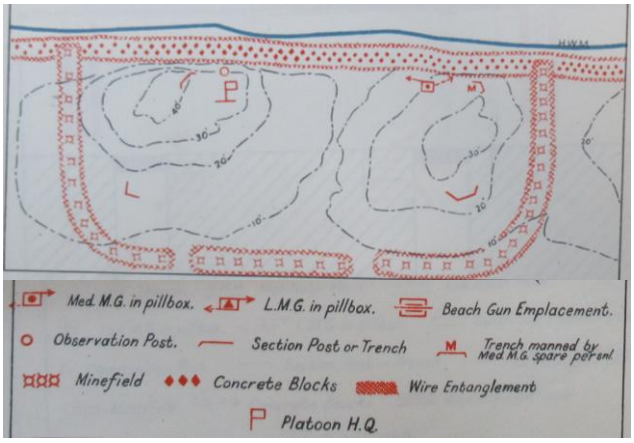
Where infantry invasion was possible, such as a beach or coastline, anti-personnel (AP) mines were deployed. To obstruct enemy vehicles, anti-tank (AT) mines were laid, often around defensive positions or in coastal areas to deter amphibious landings. AP and AT mines were frequently used in combination on the same minefield.



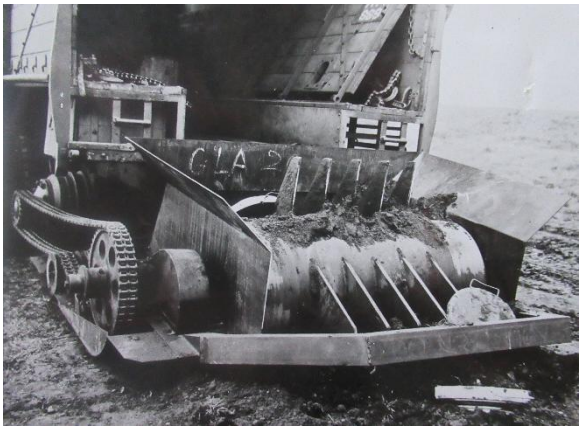
Map of minefields laid along the coast near Dover, WWII



Minefield clearance plan, where red denotes the cleared minefield, 1945



Plan of a minefield supported by anti-invasion defences, WWII



Prototype minefield clearance technique, post-WWII

After WWII, minefields were cleared to allow the land to return to civilian use. Minefield clearance units would use the original layout plans to account for all the mines. However, it was not unusual for some mines to remain unaccounted for, having been displaced due to wave action, enemy bombing, or other disturbances.

Hazard

Areas where it is known a minefield was laid should undergo further research to thoroughly understand the clearance activities that have taken place. Whilst most former minefields have been cleared, it is known that not all mines were accounted for during clearances and there may be the potential for some mines to remain.

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