MUNITIONS DEPOTS

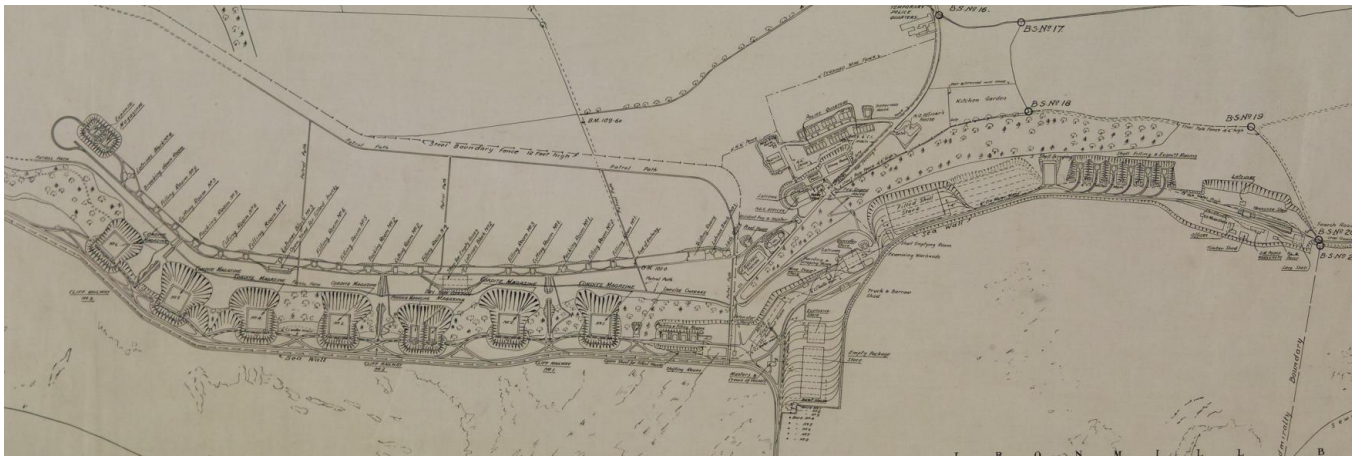
Munitions depots have been required for as long as ordnance has been manufactured. Munitions were often stored at their manufacturing site or at military sites where would be used, such as airfields and barracks. In World War Two (WWII), with aerial bombing presenting a significant threat, purpose-built munitions depots were established in remote areas of the countryside, with good rail access to allow ordnance to be easily transported across the country.

The Royal Air Force (RAF), Army, and Navy were provided with their own dedicated munitions depots. During WWII, large ammunition depots for the US Army and US Army Air Forces (USAAF) were also established.

Munitions were stored in blast-protected shelters and concrete magazines, sometimes in wooded or camouflaged areas that were difficult to target from the air. Some depots were established underground, in quarries or mines, to negate the risk posed by enemy bombing. Munitions were also sometimes stored on an ad-hoc basis on roadsides and country lanes.

Bombs being stacked at a munitions depot in England

Aerial view of an Anti-Aircraft ordnance depot in Scotland



Layout plan of a naval ordnance depot in Scotland

Hazard

Most munitions depots stored a variety of ordnance, ranging from Small Arms Ammunition (SAA) and Land Service Ammunition (LSA), to High Explosive (HE) bombs. Some depots also stored chemical weapons.

During busy operational periods, such as in wartime, munitions may have been inadvertently spilled or improperly stored. Munitions were also periodically disposed of at depots as they became outdated, defective, or surplus to requirements.

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