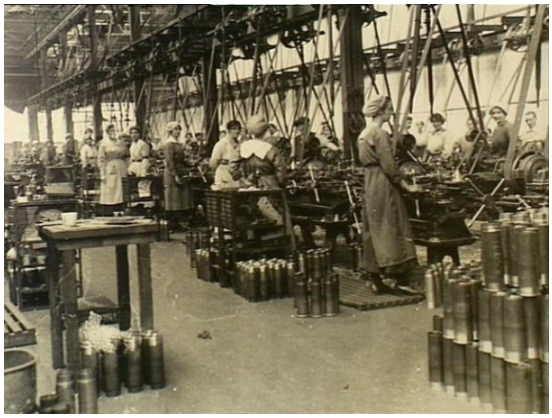
MUNITIONS FACTORIES

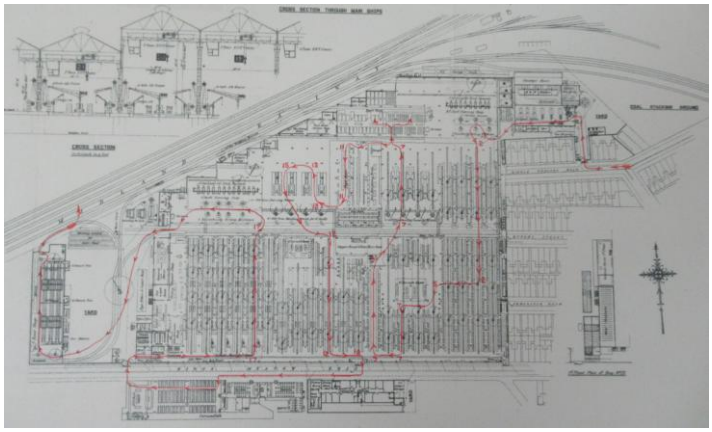
Prior to World War One (WWI), munitions production in the UK was relatively small-scale.

In WWI, the demand for munitions necessitated increased munition casings and Small Arms Ammunition (SAA) production. Production at existing small arms factories was supplemented by the establishment of National Shell Factories (NSFs), National Projectile Factories (NPFs), and Government Cartridge Factories (GCFs).

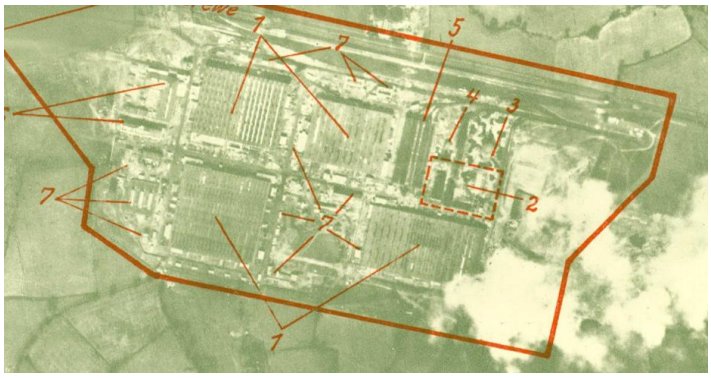
NSFs were established in requisitioned civilian factories, foundries, and large depot buildings where metalworking machinery could be brought in. They were designed to primarily manufacture small calibre shells. NPFs and GCFs were purpose-built near existing production facilities and designed to manufacture larger calibre shells and SAA respectively.



Shell case production at Woolwich Arsenal, WWI



NPF block plan, WWI



Aerial photograph of an SAA ROF, WWII

In World War Two (WWII), civilian factories and foundries were again requisitioned to produce munitions. Purpose-built Royal Ordnance Factories (ROFs) were also established to produce bomb and shell casings, small arms, and SAA.

After WWII, several ROFs remained active under private ownership, whilst other purpose-built factories were demolished and redeveloped. Most requisitioned civilian factories returned to commercial production.

Hazard

During WWI and WWII, munitions factories would typically send their metal casings to dedicated filling factories elsewhere in the UK to be filled with explosives. There is potential to encounter empty munitions casings on or in the vicinity of former munitions factories due to production, storage, or disposal of casings, which should be treated as live until confirmed otherwise.

An Unexploded Bomb (UXB) hazard may also exist at former munitions factories as a result of enemy bombing.

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