

Incident at St Within, Press, 24 October 1940.

Document from the Royal Engineer Museum archives.

HF/7038/IF & DED. 3A

Report on Sterilisation of 250 Kg. bomb
in St. Swithun Press.

1. Date.
24th. October 1940.

2. Site.
The bomb had penetrated 4 R.C. floors, ricocheted off a wall on the first floor and was lying flat on the ground with its fuse pockets at an angle of about 145° .

3. Bomb.
250 Kg. fitted with an El.A.Z. (17) fuze in the rear pocket and an El.A.Z. (50) fuze in the nose pocket. The latter is a new fuze, was painted green and had as subsidiary marking AA 1940, -d.

4. Sterilisation.
Having found and inspected the bomb I rang I.F. & D.B.D. at 1000 hrs from the Air Ministry to report the type of bomb and fuzes.
The Sterilizer arrived at about 0950 hrs and work commenced at 1100 hrs approx.
Drilling proceeded for about 6 minutes when it stopped, on inspecting the bomb it was found that the small drill had just penetrated the shell and it is possible that this drill jammed preventing the machine completing its job. The drill was therefore reset and set to work again in a new position but jamming again occurred; the machine was removed and it was noted that the drill could not be rotated by hand unless first reversed through about 45° .
On replacing the machine in position the drilling operation was completed and steaming out started about 1305 hrs.
Steaming out was continued until 1630 hrs when the machine was removed and the bomb tested with a dipstick. The base plug was then removed and the residual liquid emptied out leaving about 5 lbs of amatol in the bomb. The (17) fuze pocket had broken off and was lying in the bottom of the bomb.

Conclusions.
(i) The steaming out operation was completely successful and the present apparatus is designed on the right principle. An evacuating pump is quite unnecessary.
(ii) The boiler is of adequate capacity provided the operator is skilled and does not reduce the feed immediately the safety valve blows off.
(iii) The squad knew their job but were badly drilled. e.g. immediately they arrived on site a recce should have been made of (a) the bomb (ii) water facilities, and then work should have been started automatically. In place of this I was expected to direct all arrangements personally.

P.W. Kennedy

Oct 40.