

No's 94 and 95 Maintenance Unit, RAF Ridgewell.

This was the storage facility for the Munitions recovered from the Bures FAD between 1945-1948.

This report gives an indication of the consequences of storing large amounts of ammunition on one single site.

No. 21 Maintenance Unit, RAF Fauld.

The **Fauld explosion** was a military accident which occurred at 11:11 am on Monday, 27 November 1944 at the munitions storage depot in Staffordshire. It was one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history and the largest on UK soil.

Between 3,500 and 4,000 tonnes (3,900 and 4,400 tons) of ordnance exploded, mostly high explosives. The explosion crater with a depth of 100 feet (30 m) and 250 yards (230 m) across is still visible today just south of Fauld.

Eyewitnesses reported seeing two distinct columns of black smoke in the form of a mushroom cloud ascending several thousand feet, and a blaze at the foot of the column. According to the Commanding Officer of 21 MTU, an open dump of incendiary bombs caught fire and it was allowed to burn itself out without damage or casualties.

Debris and damage occurred to all property within a circle of the crater extending for 1,420 yards (1.3Km). Upper Castle Hayes Farm completely disappeared and Messrs. Peter Ford's lime and gypsum works to the north of the village and Purse cottages were completely demolished. The lime works was destroyed by the flooding after a nearby reservoir containing 450,000 cubic metres (16,000,000 cu ft) of water was obliterated as a result of the shock-wave from the explosion

Hanbury Fields Farm, Hare Holes Farm and also Croft Farm with adjacent cottages were all extensively damaged. Debris also damaged Hanbury village. The crater was 300 yards (270 m) by 233 yards (213 m) in length and 100 feet (30 m) deep, covering 12 acres (4.9 ha).

The exact death toll is uncertain; but it's believed between 70 and 90 people died in the explosion and the resulting catastrophic flood. An accurate figure was never established.

The cause of the disaster was not made clear at the time. There had been staff shortages, in particular a management position had remained empty for a year, together with 189 inexperienced Italian prisoners of war were working at the facility at the time of the accident.

Some 30 years later in 1974, it was announced that the cause of the explosion was probably a site worker removing a detonator from a live bomb using a brass chisel, rather than a wooden batten, resulting in sparks. An eyewitness testified that he had seen a worker using brass chisels, in direct contravention of the regulations in force.