

Glyn Rhonwy Pumped Storage EN010072

WRITTEN REPRESENTATION REGARDING THE ISSUE OF MUNITIONS

7th April 2016

FROM JEFF TAYLOR ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP "CONCERNED ABOUT GLYNRHONWY"

Reference number: 10031989

Dear Mr Cowperthwaite

Please find enclosed CD with supporting documentation from Gwynedd Archives

A supporting summary, together with relevant electronic files will be sent by email

During World War Two the lower part of the Glyn Rhonwy quarry complex was used as a store for a very large amount of ordnance (ie munitions .. bombs and ammunition of many different sorts)

A large scale cleanup was undertaken in the post-war years up until the mid 1970's but it was clear that material had been scattered both knowingly and unknowingly around the quarry complex. Little information was available to the public, and the MOD were not forthcoming, but would not guarantee the site safe.

Even at the time of the granting of Planning Permission for the smaller scheme in 2014 little information was available to the public to make a rational assessment of the risks associated with this ordnance.

In November 2015, with the SPH submission for a Development Consent Order, a survey commissioned by the Developer and performed by consultancy Zetica apparently in May 2015, was published. This is *Vol3H Appendix 8.5 Zetica (2015) UXO Desk Study Report* in the SPH submission (there is a second Zetica report – 8.6 - which refers to the upper part of the Glyn Rhonwy site but this is of lesser significance for now)

This extensive report details the fate of tens of thousands of individual items of ordnance. It is clear that this was a huge undertaking and that considerable effort was made to document the activities.

However, on reading this document, it is also clear that there was considerable uncertainty about the fate of some of the materials. There are factual errors by the MOD indicated at the simple level of naming of the dumping sites. The report also mentions the dumping on the site of domestic and industrial waste.

From information in the public domain we already knew that In 1946 71,000 Tabun Nerve Gas Bombs captured from the Germans were brought to Glyn Rhonwy and stored there at least temporarily before being transported onwards to RAF Llandwrog at Caernarfon and eventually dumped in the Atlantic Ocean.

The Zetica report introduced uncertainty about the presence of Phosgene bombs at the site although this was inquired into at the time and dismissed as a possibility.

The detail in the report raises more questions than it answers about what is really in the quarries, in particular Q6, and of the possibility of Phosgene and Tabun still on site.

The MOD, when asked about the fate of Tabun bombs in the quarries and the possibility of one having been overlooked and still capable of detonating, replied in November 2015 refusing to divulge any details on the grounds that ..

"The public interest test found that whereas the report is 70 years old and the information concerns a subject of legitimate public interest, release of the information would enable ill-disposed persons or organisations to act against the national interest, and that therefore on balance the information should be withheld. "

this is document *MOD response to our enquiry re Tabun anonymised*

New information has now come to light in the public domain, courtesy of Gwynedd Archives the local repository of many historical records. **.see enclosed CD.** Research here has uncovered a massive amount of documentation regarding Glyn Rhonwy.

Crucially, certain documents in this collection refer to material which was encountered by the RAF ordnance disposal team whilst endeavouring to clean up the site. This included mustard gas and a large bomb which, although not referred to by name, we can reasonably conclude was a nerve gas Tabun bomb.

This material was taken to Porton Down Chemical Weapons Establishment for disposal

See *Correspondance with Porton Down re UUXO 1MAY75* which describes the removal to Porton Down of a large thin case bomb with facility for fusing at nose or tail .. thin case bombs were containers for dispersible chemicals rather than conventional blast weapons, so suggesting of chemical weapon.

Photographs found in the same collection of documents show new conditions Tabun bombs being worked on in a factory .. probably German .. and identical bombs lying in slate crevices, almost certainly pit 2C.

See the folder *Tabun bombs file photos*

An individual was reported to have suffered blistering burns probably due to mustard gas. See *Ref. 71 MU 4111 3 11 MEA p1* from 14th May 1973 which describes an individual suffering blistering attributable to CW and a number of items with grey bodies indicating CW .. and 5 x one liter bottles mustard gas (Y3)

Ref. 71 MU 4111 3 11 MEA P2 describes material transferred to Porton Down for disposal - Y3 , phosphorus grenade and a G2 smoke generator

Ref. 71 MU 4111 3 11 MEA P3 acknowledges CW and defines the area as dirty

In the folder entitled *DEOD Visit July 1973* please find a letter from the Defence Ordnance Disposal School which is effectively a shopping list of items the school would like to take away to practice upon ... it refers to a number of very large bombs .. rather more than the single 1000lb bomb alluded to in the Zetica Report

Other particularly pertinent documents....

Official MoD clearance order 19MAY69 p1 acknowledges that material had been thrown out onto quarry surrounds

Other documents show close communication with the National Pollution Laboratory and Gwynedd River Board Authority regarding concerns about fish mortality .. tests showed the smoke float filling highly lethal to fish in v small concentrations .. there were hundreds of these items found dumped.

Folder *Pit 2c Pictures* shows the extent of the problem faced by the clearance team, and some very large bombs, and also shows bombs covered by rockfall which were probably unrecoverable with the equipment they had

Ref. AF 9379 71 p5 Identifies several items connected with CW

Ref. Received 71 MU Bicester 13JUN1973 p3 refers to a 1000lb bomb in 13JUN1973

Ref. AF 9379 71 p4 **dated May 73** describes them **abandoning the effort in Q5 (3A and B) because it was too difficult and not cost effective!!!!** So cost was undoubtedly an issue

Diagram *Final level of clearance labelled pit 3C must be pit 2C 1975* we think may be wrongly labelled and refers to Pit 2C and appears to show that the bottom of the pile was not touched

In addition to this documentation from Gwynedd Archives we also found in the public domain a report from the American Military team Scitek .. see *Llanberis - an american* report - pages V6 to V9 are particularly pertinent .. their

figures for the amount of ordnance encountered are considerably more than that reported by Zetica and their conclusion is stark, warning their own organisation not to make such a mess of things by dumping in quarries..

To sum up this new information...

We have discovered puzzling discrepancies and omissions in the Zetica document which forms the basis of the Developers assessment of the challenges posed by the munitions history of the site.

They appear to have been using the same sources as we have discovered, although, oddly, their copies are not stamped with Gwynedd Archives identification stamp. But they appear to have used the documentation somewhat selectively.

Their report understates the quantities and size of some of the ordnance, understates the difficulties of removing and fails to address the problem of chemical weapons.

It is not clear whether Gwynedd Council or their predecessors were ever in possession of this information or whether they or the Developers or Zetica have properly carried out their duty of due diligence in researching and presenting and publicising the history of the site

The proposed pumped storage scheme in Glyn Rhonwy quarries involves draining Lower Glyn Rhonwy quarry (Q6 which the military call pit 2C) by pumping out the lake at the bottom into Llyn Padarn, and reworking the quarry with mechanical excavators before sealing it to make it watertight and refilling it from Llyn Padarn.

Given all of the foregoing, this could be a very challenging engineering exercise. Even if successful, water filtering through all this material will be discharged both in constructional and operational phases into Llyn Padarn and could form a chemical soup whose effect on the environment will have to be rigorously controlled.

The consequences of getting it wrong could be catastrophic for public health and safety in the local area let alone environmental considerations in the downstream water catchment areas.

We feel that the public needs to be assured, with convincing evidence openly published and discussed, that any environmental pollution risk can be satisfactorily managed, and even more importantly that there is **absolutely no possibility** of a catastrophic accident due to the detonation of an overlooked and still viable Tabun Chemical Weapon, or of contamination from mustard gas, phosphorus or possibly phosgene.

Given that this mess was left behind from a national war effort it is also questionable whether the challenge and cost of the safe cleanup of this site (if that is even possible) should be borne by private commercial activities or the local community.

Yours Faithfully

Jeff Taylor

On behalf of "concerned about Glyn Rhonwy"