

MUNITIONS DEPARTMENT, MINISTRY OF SUPPLY

In order to give some idea of the not inconsiderable magnitude of New Zealand's war effort in the field of production of munitions and allied stores for the Armed Forces, the highlights of this effort are recorded as follows :—

The complete manufacture and filling of over 5,500,000 hand grenades and of over 1,250,000 trench-mortar bombs with fuzes.

The production of approximately 1,150,000 shell fuzes (fuze No. 119). The manufacture of this fuze was undertaken at the request of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, who sent special missions to New Zealand to investigate our capacity and to satisfy themselves that this intricate and highly specialized munition could be successfully produced, and following their favourable reports special automatic machinery and other necessary equipment and materials were imported. As a tribute to the skill and adaptability of New Zealand workmen, we were gratified to receive advice from the United Kingdom couched in the most commendatory terms and stating that the fuzes produced here proved to be of equally high a standard as those manufactured in the United Kingdom.

The total production of small-arms ammunition amounted to 257,000,000 rounds. This necessitated a considerable expansion of the peacetime plant, and although capacity was expanded to provide for a nominal production figure of 60,000,000 rounds per annum, the factories actually achieved a peak output of 74,000,000 in 1943.

A total of 9,527 trench mortars (2 in. and 3 in.), plus 32,000 parts for maintenance spares, were manufactured in New Zealand during the war, and in addition over 10,000 Sten guns, 1,000 grenade mortars, 3,750 rifle grenade-dischargers, and 1,500 automatic rifles.

The output of 12-gauge cartridges, which were required in large numbers for training of air gunners, exceeded 20,000,000 rounds, 1,308,000 mortar bombs H.E. with fuzes were manufactured and filled complete, and in addition 69,000 aircraft practice bombs were produced for New Zealand Air Force requirements.

Production of universal-tracked M.G. carriers totalled 1,210 units complete with maintenance spares. The contract for the assembly of these armoured carriers was carried out in a large motor-assembly plant and subcontracts for the manufacture of the millions of parts were spread throughout the country.

Large quantities of containers were turned out of our factories during the war, such as 2,848,000 enamelled water-bottles complete with felt covers, 1,796,050 enamelled mugs ordered by the Eastern Group Supply Council, 40,000 mess-tins for New Zealand Army, thousands of milk-cans from 2 gallon to 20 gallon capacity for Eastern Group Supply Council and UNRRA., and 456 cordite containers for New Zealand Navy.

For the New Zealand Army's requirements, 54,000 steel helmets and 20,000 anti-tank mines were manufactured, and in addition 50,000 chemical land mines were produced for the United States Forces in the Pacific area, also over 19,000,000 ammunition-charger clips to the order of Eastern Group Supply Council.

The development of a new gasoline thickener for use with flame-throwing apparatus was a New Zealand achievement. This compound proved to be superior to the standard service types and a quantity of between 5 tons and 6 tons was produced for the American Forces in the Pacific.

Highly specialized and precision work undertaken in our machine shops and foundries included the manufacture complete of 18 Rypa turret and pellet ranges for New Zealand Army, and 4,200 sight and Vickers clinometers with 38,000 maintenance spare parts and 86,000 instrument stands plus 55,000 spares for maintenance purposes to the order of the Eastern Group Supply Council.