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# Hellifield's World War Two Ammunition Dump

With the German Airforce bombing RAF airfields in the early part of the second world war, safe storage was needed for the RAF's stocks of bombs and munitions. One of the areas chosen for this was the Hellifield to Bolton By Bowland road. Several areas on this road were created, cutting into the roadside verges and hedgerows, a walk down this road today will still reveal some of these, often used as overnight parking by owners of mobile homes! In some, traces of the thick concrete bases to support the bombs can also be found.

The official title for this venture was 219 Maintenance Unit RAF Reserve Ammunition Depot! High explosive and incendiary bombs ranging from 250 to 4000 pounds were stored here in the open suitably camouflaged. The depot opened in April 1942, around 70

airmen being billeted in civilian property in Hellifield and surrounding villages.

The unit's first HQ was established in the Baptist chapel on Gisburn road moving to Halton Place from October 1942. The airmen were moved to billets



at the Falcon Hotel Settle from about October 1942 and the HQ relocated there in June 1944.

A railhead was established at Gisburn, munitions more than likely arrived by train from the Royal Ordnance Factory at Chorley in Lancashire and then were transported along the back roads away from the village. The motor vehicles were maintained using Lamb's garage in Settle.

The men of this unit may well have been used in the recovery of an RAF Whitley Mk V bomber which made a crash landing in a field opposite Gallaber farm in Hellifield in April 1942 when it ran out of fuel returning to Dishforth airfield after operations over Rostock in Germany. Fortunately, all the crew were uninjured.

The RAF remained in the area after the end of the war, a new HQ was set up at the Ashfield Hotel (the present day working men's club) in Settle and by April 1947 the area was declared as "cleared", in May of that year the 219 MU Settle was disbanded.

The photo on the opposite page shows bombs, (could these have been stored at Hellifield?), being loaded onto a Whitley bomber at Linton-on-Ouse, North Yorkshire, during the war. (Public Domain Photo).

John Pearcy, Oct 2019