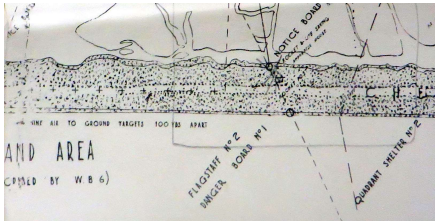


# The Chesil Bank Bombing and firing range - the early years

Don Moxom

In 1930's, conscious of the growing threat of war with Germany, a number of ranges around the UK were established by the War Department to train our pilots in air-to-ground firing, air-to air firing and bombing practice. Chesil was one of them with units operating from RAF Warmwell and Chickerell airfield.

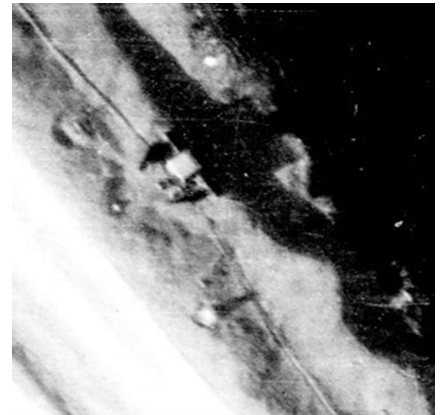
Pilots went on to take part in the Battle of Britain and many other skirmishes throughout WW2. Training continued after the war and through the Cold War period. Afterwards, the range was adapted to meet other needs including assisting in the development of RADAR before finally closing in 1962



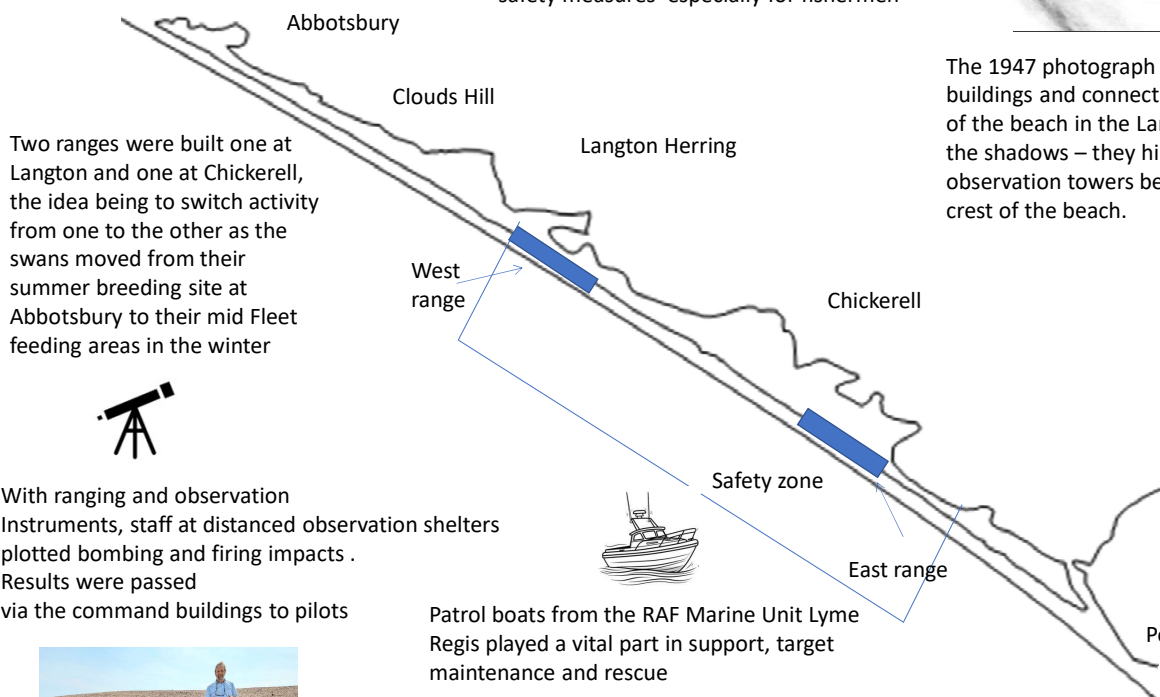
The WD drafted hand drawn notes on OS maps in 1935 revealing what was planned for the range



1938 Range Bye-Laws tell us about boundaries, areas of activity and safety measures especially for fishermen



The 1947 photograph above shows some of the buildings and connecting trackways on the inner flank of the beach in the Langton section of the range. Note the shadows – they hint at the height of the observation towers being high enough to look over the crest of the beach.



Two ranges were built one at Langton and one at Chickerell, the idea being to switch activity from one to the other as the swans moved from their summer breeding site at Abbotsbury to their mid Fleet feeding areas in the winter



With ranging and observation Instruments, staff at distanced observation shelters plotted bombing and firing impacts. Results were passed via the command buildings to pilots

Patrol boats from the RAF Marine Unit Lyme Regis played a vital part in support, target maintenance and rescue



Planes from were guided to targets by massive concrete arrows illuminated at night. Large symbols gave further instructions to the pilots.



The concrete remains of the Command Building in the west range.



The remains of the landing stage on the beach side at Clouds Hill. Another was directly opposite on the land shore. Two other sets were constructed at Langton Herring and Chickerell.



The pyramid roofed building is the only structure still standing on the beach. It is believed to have housed a transformer changing the high voltage feed brought by a cable across the Fleet to whatever the working voltage on the beach might have been.



This painting of the Clouds Hill cottages records the damage done by a nearby stray rocket. Thankfully the cottages were not occupied during the war

The building behind was one of the observation posts known as quadrant shelters. It was destroyed by storm waves in December, 1989.

These two buildings and another nearby quadrant shelter were left standing for use by the seine net fishermen.

**This poster presents information from an on-going study attempting to unravel the mysteries of the range's remnants. If you have any additional information please contact donmoxom@gmail.com.**