



DEFENCE UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE WEBSITE ORDNANCE INFORMATION SHEET

**ALL UXO MAY BE HAZARDOUS IF DISTURBED
DO NOT TOUCH – TAKE A PHOTO – MARK THE LOCATION – CALL THE POLICE**

PROJECTILE – 5.5 INCH

Description

- The British Breech Loaded 5.5 inch (BL 5.5”) Medium gun was developed in 1939 to replace the WWI 60 pounder and the 6" Howitzer and issued to selected Australian artillery units during WWII. It remained in Australian service until progressively replaced by the US M198 155mm (1980s). 35 were still in service in 1982 and the last firing in Australia occurred in 1983.
- Initially only 100lb (45.35kg) HE and Smoke projectiles were available - an 80lb (36.28kg) projectile became available in 1944 to increase the range of the gun. Despite its smaller size, the 80lb contained more explosive filler than the 100lb. Variable Time (VT) or proximity fuzes (T100) were available after 1944, which provided a more accurate 'air burst'.
- Various types of projectile were produced for the BL 5.5” including the following:
 - **High Explosive** (HE) - contains a nose fuse and TNT high explosive.
 - **Smoke** (Smk/BE) - Base ejection shell; multiple colours and screening smoke.
 - **Incendiary** (Incend) - Base ejecting, manufactured the same as a smoke shell.
 - **Chemical** (Chem) – For use with toxic chemicals; base ejection shell.
 - **Illumination** (Illum) or **Flare** (Flare TRBE) - Base ejection, multiple colours.
 - **Drill** (Drill) – no explosive content or fuse. Inert.
- Unexploded items of this type are most often found in/near areas used by the Army for artillery practices - typically buried up to 2.0m deep but occasionally just below the surface. Dumped items may also be found offshore.

Technical Data

- Projectile length : approx. 736 mm
- Projectile diameter : approx 140mm (5.5”)
- Projectile Weight : approx 36.2 - 45.35kg (approx 80-100lb)
- Fuse/Burster : Some types contain an explosive fuse & burster.
- Filling : approx 3.0-6.8 kg of high explosive or other filler depending on munition.
- Identification :
 - Projectile normally constructed of cast iron/steel.
 - Hazardous variants of the projectile are often painted yellow, green or grey with bands of yellow, red or green.
 - **Other colours may have been used or colours may have faded over time. Treat all found munitions as dangerous.**

Images



Figure 1 - Artillery Gunner cleaning a 5.5 inch shell before loading - Italy, 1943 (Gade (Lt), War Office official photographer. Imperial War Museums photograph TR 1501)



Figure 2 - Loading 5.5 in projectile into the gun breech - Italy, 1944. Image cropped from Imperial War Museums photograph NA 12734)



Figure 3 - 5.5 in medium gun – 1941 (War Office official photographer. Imperial War Museums photograph H 8692)



Figure 5 – Unexploded 5.5 in HE projectile found on Sunshine Coast, Qld



Figure 4 - 5.5 in 80lb HE projectile