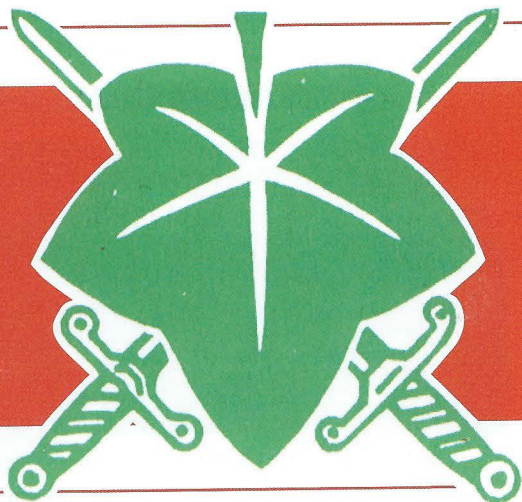


THE FORMATION SIGN

JOURNAL OF THE MILITARY HERALDRY SOCIETY



FRONT LINE DUTY

Until 1936, when the government realised that new factories would be needed for the large scale production of munitions for a future conflict, the Royal Ordnance Factories (ROFs) at Woolwich, Enfield and Waltham produced the government's entire output of munitions. As a result new factories were established in areas not vulnerable to air attack where land and labour was plentiful, many of them the depressed areas of the 1930s. ROFs were of three types: explosives, engineering and filling factories, the last known as Royal Filling Factories. Between them they manufactured all types of weapons and ammunition, except motor vehicles and tanks which remained the preserve of the motor manufacturing industry. When munitions production reached its peak in 1942 forty ROFs were in production employing 300,000 workers, seventy per cent of them women.



In August 1942 an article in the magazine *War Illustrated* announced the King's approval of a new badge "to be worn by men and women engaged in the Royal Ordnance Filling Factories", to acknowledge the debt the country owed to those undertaking this dangerous work. The article suggests the badge was to be metal which seems unlikely at a time when the issue of individual metal badges for the ROFs was stopped on grounds of metal economy and no metal versions of the Front Line Duty badge are known to exist. The cloth version of the badge, presumably intended for overalls was also worn on office clothing as the photograph of ROF Kirkby's Wages Department shows.

It is not known where the plastic version, sealed by the Ministry of Supply as "Badges, ROF, Front Line Duty" on 2nd November 1941, was intended to be worn. Although it has been suggested that the cloth version was worn by ROF Home Guards (see FS 200 and 206) no evidence of this has yet come to light. One further ROF cloth badge known to the Editor is that of the ARP service at ROF 13 at Radway Green in Cheshire and he would be interested to hear of others. A more recent ROF badge was featured in FS 241 and an armband from ROF 19 at Poole in Dorset appears in the centre spread of FS 236.

