

# MORTAR FOUND AT SECRET WARTIME CENTRE

## Archaeologists uncover live shell during excavation

BOMB disposal experts were called in after archaeologists uncovered a live mortar shell at a former secret Army HQ in Coleshill.

The two-inch mortar, along with a bayonet and other artefacts, was among the finds during the investigation in parts of the Coleshill Estate, near Highworth.

After the discovery site was

by **Barrie Hudson**

bhudson@swindonadvertiser.co.uk

cordoned off by investigators, the mortar was harmlessly disabled with an explosive charge by the Army disposal team.

The estate, now a National Trust property and out of bounds to the public, was the base of the Auxiliary Units, a



**DISCOVERY** Archaeologists John Winterburn and Guy Taylor with the mortar shell. Left, Peter Long and Alan Strickland search the area

Pictures: **STUART HARRISON**

secret force trained to sabotage invading German forces during World War Two.

On Saturday and Sunday, members of the Coleshill Auxiliary Research Team (CART), along with other organisations, including Subterranea Britannica and experts from the University of Bristol, surveyed the site.

CART founder Tom Sykes said: "They were surveying very close to the perimeter on Saturday when they found the unexploded two-inch mortar.

"We already had procedures in place should we find something like that - we had a major on the scene who identified it

and then the bomb disposal team came in the early hours of the morning and attached a charge."

Even after the blast that rendered it harmless, the mortar was still recognisable.

The discoveries also included a bayonet behind a piece of wood in a wall, which the team suspect may have been placed there for retrieval if an invasion happened or was imminent.

Mr Sykes added: "We found lots of other items, such as ammunition, foot scrapers, boot polish and a toothpaste cap.

"This ties in with our theory that some of the Auxiliary Units were in the Nissen huts in the woods."

