

## **1937-1945 munitions production.**

**In the late 1930's the company had stopped production of motorcycle engines and gearboxes and even cycle sales were under pressure.**

**Raleigh/Sturmey-Archer decided to invest in munitions production because it involved mass production of small assemblies similar to internal gear hubs and the prospect of war was growing. The company invested in new machinery, ironically mainly purchased in Germany.**

**As war was declared the company was already supplying fuses for Bofors 40mm automatic cannon and later contracts followed for Oerlikon gun fuses. The Oerlikon gun was used in fighter aircraft as well as anti-aircraft [on land and at sea] and anti-tank artillery .Fuses were made under licence from the Swiss owners and specifications were smuggled out of Zurich. Specifications of the latest Sturmey-Archer hub were smuggled the opposite way, so that hub gear production could continue in Switzerland .The production of Sturmey-Archer hubs in Nottingham ,ceased entirely. In 1940 the company signed contracts for the supply of 500,000 Hispano automatic cannon 20mm cartridge cases per week and they were largely used in fighter aircraft.**

**The company became the largest commercial supplier to the Ministry of Supply for small shells, cases and fuses during the war, supplying almost 400 million pieces. The factories worked day and night six days a week, for almost six years employing 10,000 people. That would have played a large part in the Battle of Britain when the Nazi's tried to bomb Britain into submission. Surprisingly, the factories themselves were not damaged in any way by enemy bombing, proving the wisdom of large scale investments in blackout and camouflage.**

**After the war there was huge demand for bicycles and hub gears, so production was quickly switched back to more peaceful pursuits. Machinery paid for by the government did prove very useful in Sturmey-Archer production post-war. The company was proud of their war effort and created this showcase for display in the head office building .**