

HORSE CHESTNUTS FOR EXPLOSIVES

Acetone was needed to produce cordite, but production of acetone could not meet wartime demand.

Cordite powder was the propellant used in guns and artillery ammunition.

Maize starch from America was used to increase production.

Because cordite was smokeless snipers could fire without revealing their position.

BUT in 1917 German submarines in the Atlantic cut off maize supplies from North America – so as an alternative

It was found that horse chestnuts produced acetone, so it was thought they might be used as an alternative to maize.

SCHOOL CHILDREN WERE ASKED TO COLLECT HORSE CHESTNUTS, but not told why – only that it was urgent and invaluable war work.

They also collected blackberries to increase the supply of jam at home and overseas.



HORSE CHESTNUTS FOR EXPLOSIVES

FARNINGHAM COUNCIL SCHOOL MANAGERS' MINUTES - 30 OCTOBER 1917

Horse Chestnuts - The Headmaster reported that 1 Bushel (280 lbs or 127.5 kilograms) had been collected by the children for forwarding to the Ministry of Propellants in reply to the appeal made by the Board of Education Circular of Aug 15th (No 1009).

*hitherto - /
for this room.*

*Horse
chestnuts*

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made by the Board of Education Circular of Aug 15th
(No 1009).*

...ment for water

HORSE CHESTNUTS FOR EXPLOSIVES

CROCKENHILL COUNCIL SCHOOL MANAGERS' MINUTES – 17 OCTOBER 1917

Chestnuts – The Headmaster reported that about 8 pecks (2 bushels) of horse chestnuts had been collected by children for delivery to the Ministry of Propellants. The Correspondent was requested to get into communication with other schools in the district with a view to the chestnuts locally collected being bulked before forwarding.

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HORSE CHESTNUTS FOR EXPLOSIVES - WAS IT WORTH IT?

Not really -

Vast quantities of horse chestnuts were collected by well meaning children, but there were more conkers than trains to transport them so piles of rotting horse chestnuts stood at railway stations.

The factory set up to process them at Kings Lynn was delayed and only started production in April 1918.

Then it was found that horse chestnuts did not yield high amounts of acetone after all, so after 3 months the factory closed in July 1918.

