



BATH

Understanding Unexploded
Ordnance (UXO) Risk in Bath:
Bombing History and
Remaining Threats



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WWII Bombing of Bath



Bath was subjected to raids targeting culturally significant sites, aiming to break civilian morale.

The Luftwaffe's bombing strategy in WWII evolved from targeting military installations to economic and industrial sites, and finally to demoralising civilians through area bombing. Bath, a city of minimal military or industrial importance, was subjected to the "Baedeker Raids" in April 1942.

These raids targeted culturally significant cities, aiming to break civilian morale.

During the first raid on the city, 210 tonnes of bombs, both high explosive (HE) and incendiary bombs (IBs), were reportedly carried by Luftwaffe bombers. Later British analysis suggests that many of these went astray, with only 150 tonnes of bombs falling on or within 50 miles of Bath, and with only 93 tonnes actually recorded as having fallen on the city.

Nevertheless, this resulted in extensive damage and 26 significant fires were reported.

The second attack was on a smaller scale with approximately 100 sorties flown and only 43 tonnes of bombs recorded as striking the city, although of these a higher proportion of IBs were carried. Casualties for these two nights of raids totalled 401 killed and over 800 wounded.

The Baedeker raids were the last attacks on Bath and no bombing was recorded after April 1942.

Key Facts:

- Bath was regarded by many as a safe haven away from the devastating attacks of the Blitz and many thousands of people flooded into the city in the early period of the war swelling the population from 67,000 to almost 80,000.
- Between the 25th and the 27th April 1942, 19,000 buildings were damaged with 1,100 severely damaged and some 417 lives lost.
- By flying double missions over Bath, the Luftwaffe was able to dispatch 151 individual bomber sorties and lost only 3 aircraft

British and Allied UXO in Bath:

- The 5th Somerset (City of Bath) Battalion was stationed in the City of Bath area.
- Bath was not considered to have been a major target, so its anti-aircraft defences were not as robust as some other cities. At least four heavy anti-aircraft (HAA) batteries were situated within proximity to the city centre.
- Some anti-invasion features were located in Bath, alongside a large anti-invasion stop line to the south of the city. Home Guard and military personnel would have regularly manned these fixtures.
- While Bath was not a highly militarised area during WWII, industrial facilities such as the Newark Works facilitated the construction of gun mountings for tanks, torpedo parts, and aircraft manufacturing.
- A Defence, Equipment, and Security site owned by the MOD was located in Foxhill, Bath.

Impact of legacy UXO



Sample of Finds:

- 03/15 – A 1kg German incendiary bomb was found within a residential garden.
- 05/16 – A 250kg German HE bomb was found beneath a school playground.
- A WWII mortar shell was found in the garden of a family home in Batheaston

Legacy:

One of the legacies of this conflict is buried unexploded air-dropped bombs or anti-aircraft projectiles resulting from the failure of a proportion of the weapons to function as designed. It is commonly accepted that the failure rate of these munitions was approximately 10% and, depending on their shape, weight, velocity and ground conditions, many penetrated the ground and came to rest at depth.

Intensive efforts were made during and after the war to locate and render safe all UXO but, unsurprisingly, not all were found and dealt with. This is evidenced by the regular, on-going discoveries of UXO during construction-related intrusive ground works.

Managing UXO risks with Igne

UXO presents a serious hazard to construction projects, causing delays, safety risks, and financial loss. Igne provides expert UXO risk assessment, detection, and clearance, ensuring projects proceed safely and efficiently.

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