

## Information Data Sheet

### Category Bombing Decoys

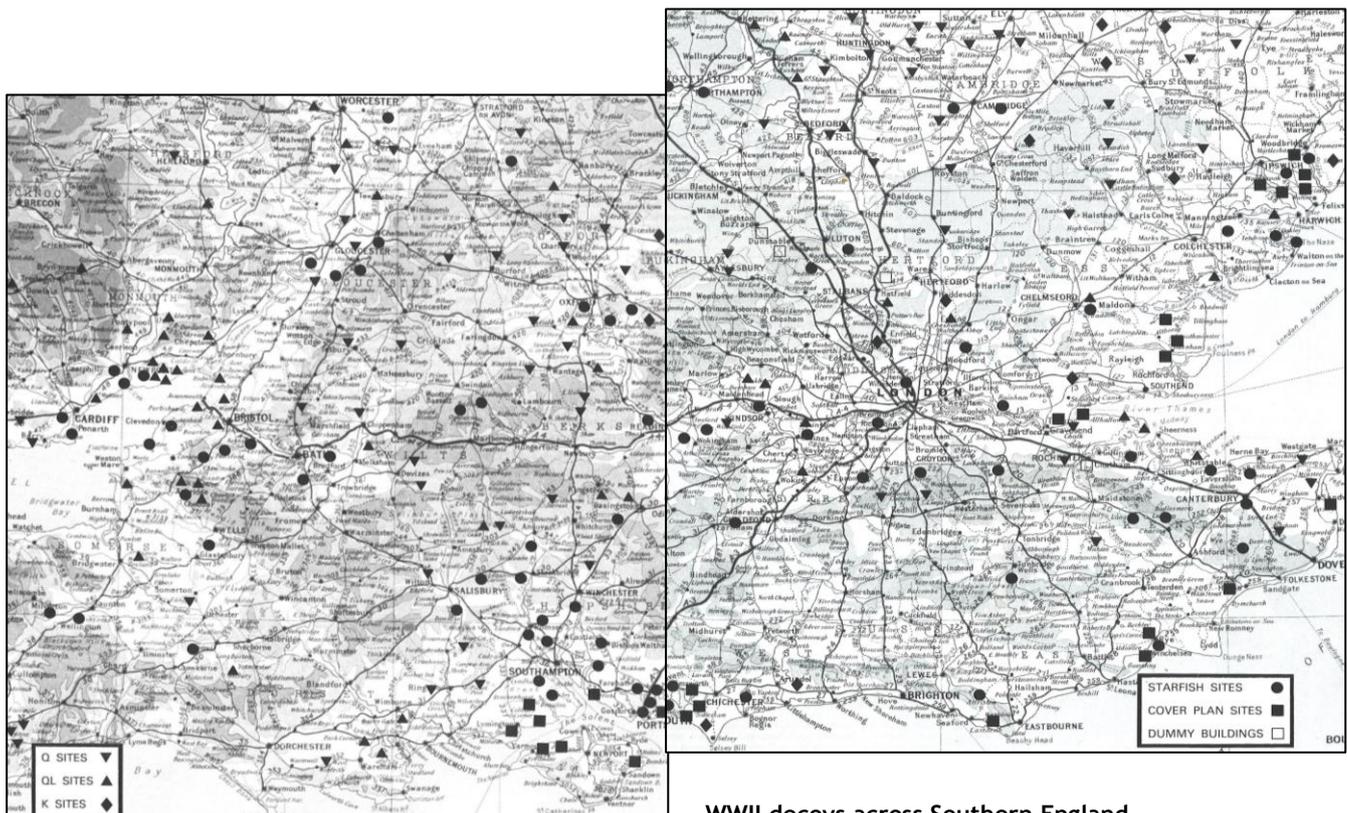
**Description** Bombing decoys were developed between 1940 and 1941, with the intention of creating false bombing targets that were realistic enough to divert enemy aircraft away from the authentic ones. The decoy system proved to be successful in many areas of the UK with at least 5% of the total weight of bombs drawn away from their intended targets. Approximately 729No. static bombing decoys were built at 593No. locations in the UK. Additionally, several temporary and mobile decoys were deployed.

Several different types of decoy were devised:

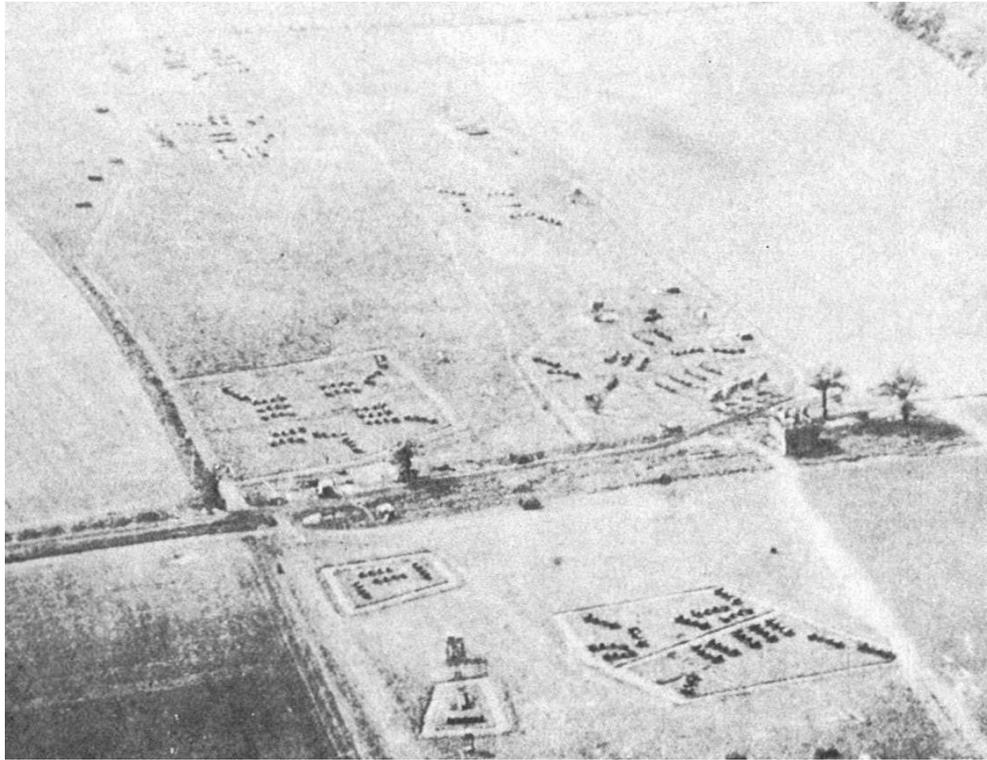
- Night time dummy airfields (Q sites).
- Daytime dummy airfields (K sites).
- Diversionary fires to simulate successful bombing raids on airfields (QF sites), petroleum depots (P sites) and major towns and cities (Starfish [SF] Sites).
- Simulated urban lighting (QL sites).
- Dummy Heavy Anti-Aircraft (HAA) batteries, factories and buildings (C series).
- Mobile decoys representing 'hards' for troop embarkation (MQLs), tanks and other vehicles.

The country was divided into four areas:

- 'K1' referred to the area covering Scotland, Northumberland and Durham,
- 'K2' - Yorkshire and Lincolnshire
- 'K3' covering East Anglia and the counties to the west
- 'K4' encompassing the south-east of the country.



WWII decoys across Southern England



#### **Starfish decoy site**

Dummy aircraft were recreated to add to the illusion that a real airfield was present. Flare paths and landing lights were simulated to conjure up the effect of an airfield at night.

'Q sites' received 359 attacks alone by the end of 1941, whilst the airfields they were detracting the enemy from were bombed 358 times. The 'K' and 'Q' sites were effective; between June and December 1940 there were 30 attacks on 'K' sites, 174 attacks on 'Q' sites and 23 against dummy factories.

The far bigger 'Starfish' decoys were developed in 1940. They were initially developed around Sheffield, Derby, Bristol, Birmingham, Coventry and Crewe and there were 18 sites by December 1940 (3 for each city). These decoys were typically comprised of a building-like timber/metal frame covered in hessian and packed with highly combustible material. They were designed to be used more than once. Between the 2<sup>nd</sup> December and 16<sup>th</sup> March 1941, 36 of these decoys were ignited. By the end of 1942 there were 209 Starfish and 168 'Q' site decoys. Machine gun emplacements and Light Anti-Aircraft (LAA) guns were used to prevent possible enemy landings at decoy airfields.

**Hazard** By their nature, bombing decoys provide a potential hazard from Unexploded Bombs (UXB), both within the decoy site boundary and in the surrounding areas.

Because bombing decoys were established on greenfield sites, many seemingly innocuous fields may have a potential UXB hazard. It is therefore crucial to check the existing database of bombing decoys to ensure that your site is not affected.

It is also key to understand whether any bombing decoy near your site was successful. Whilst many were attacked, some were not and therefore not all bombing decoy sites provide a UXB hazard.