

Information Data Sheet

Category WWI Bombing

Description It is not generally realised that during World War One (WWI) significant bombing took place across some areas of the UK. An estimated 9,000No. German bombs were dropped on Britain during the course of 51No. airship and 52No. aircraft raids. It was the first time that strategic aerial bombardment had been used. More than 1,400No. people were killed during these raids.

Most air raids were carried out on London and Southeast England. Areas along the East Coast were also targeted regularly due to their proximity to the European continent. Bombing raids further inland were rare and West England and Wales were out of reach for German aircraft of the time.

Aerial bombing during WWI initially relied on visual aiming, with bombsights not developed until later in the war. The inaccuracy inherent in this method meant that bombs often fell some way from their intended targets.

The first recorded raid against England occurred on the 21st December 1914 when 2No. high explosive bombs fell near the Admiralty Pier at Dover. Zeppelin raids intensified during 1915 and 1916, with aircraft raids becoming more frequent after 1917. The last raid of WWI took place on the 19th May 1918, when 38 Gotha and 3 Giant aircraft bombed London and surrounding districts, dropping a total of more than 2,500lbs of bombs.



A variety of WWI German bombs

Hazard The potential of coming across an Unexploded Bomb (UXB) from WWI is far less likely than a WWII UXB given the lower bombing densities during raids in the Great War.

Some areas which were subjected to sustained bombing raids, such as parts of London and coastal towns, recorded a higher number of UXB. In these areas, where there has been no significant development for the last century, the potential of a UXB remaining from WWI cannot be totally discounted.