

## Information Data Sheet

**Category** Barrage Balloons

**Description** Balloon barrages were flown in many British towns and cities to protect against air raids and defend key targets such as industrial areas, harbours and ports. Their presence deterred low flying aircraft, making it more difficult for bombs to reach their intended targets; enemy raiders were forced to fly higher and thus bombed targets with far less accuracy. The wires holding the balloons up also served as a form of defence, cutting into the planes.

By the middle of 1940, there were 1,400 balloons, a third of these over the London area. Many of the barrage balloons contributed to 'Operation Pegasus', the Free Barrage Balloon (FBB) operation, in which untethered balloons armed with explosive charges and aerial mines were allowed to drift towards enemy aircraft. Although their use increased as WWII progressed, the success of the balloons was limited as they also posed a significant threat to British aircraft.



Balloon barrage over London

**Hazard** Barrage balloon positions were associated with small caches of munitions, often comprising small arms and minor explosive charges. Most of these were removed at the end of WWII and, in general, these anti-aircraft defences are not considered to provide a significant source of UXO hazard.

Some barrage balloon positions were also targeted by Luftwaffe bombers and therefore there may be a heightened UXB risk in these areas.