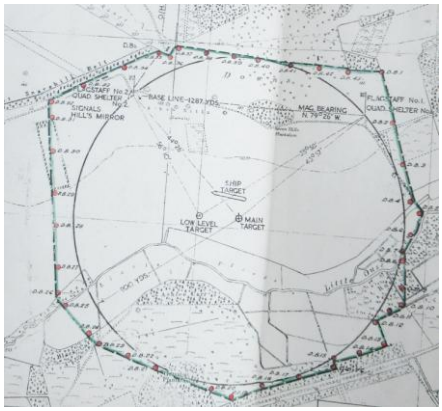
BOMBING RANGES

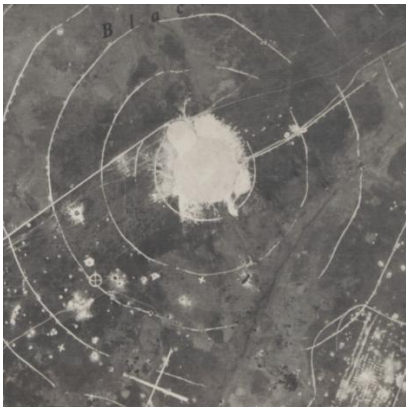
Bombing ranges were first established in World War One (WWI), when strategic aerial bombardment came into use. Practice bombing targets were typically located at or close to military airfields to allow resident squadrons to practice close to their base.

During World War Two (WWII), with ever-growing numbers of Bomber Command squadrons, a significant number of new bombing ranges were established, generally on requisitioned land in rural or coastal areas. The ranges were equipped with target markers, directional arrows to point pilots towards the target, and observation posts to monitor accuracy. The size of the range was dictated by its intended use, with suitable danger areas established to account for overspill bombing around the range area.

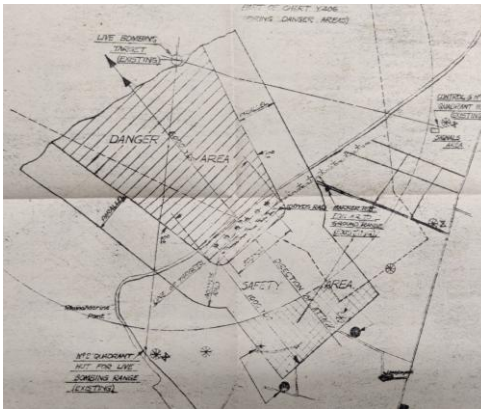
Though designated for practice bombing, many ranges also used live bombs, particularly during wartime. Some ranges were also used to test new, experimental munitions or aircraft equipment.



Plan of a practice bombing range in Suffolk



Aerial photograph of a bombing range in the New Forest



Plan of a coastal bombing range on the Kintyre Peninsula

Hazard

Bombing ranges may provide a potential UXO hazard from live and practice bombs, as well as other projectiles that may have failed to detonate during training. Whilst practice bombs were often cleared from the range after use, clearance efforts were not always consistent. At marine ranges, it is unlikely that any significant efforts were made to recover ordnance used.

The highest concentration of ordnance at a bombing range will typically be around the target/impact area, which are usually designated on plans or identifiable on historical aerial photography. The inherent inaccuracy of practice bombing means that ordnance can also be found in areas around bombing ranges, both within and outside of designated danger areas.

Aircraft practicing on bombing ranges may also have crashed during training with live or practice bombs onboard, posing a further potential UXO hazard.

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