



**SAFELANE**<sup>®</sup>  
GLOBAL

# UXO:

**THE DEVESTATING,  
HIDDEN THREAT TO  
YOUR PROJECT.**

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**WHY WWII UNEXPLODED  
ORDNANCE (UXO) STILL  
AFFECTS CONSTRUCTION  
PROJECTS IN  
MANCHESTER TODAY.**

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# THE BLITZ



## WWII bombing of Manchester

At the start of WWII, the Luftwaffe planned to destroy key military installations, including RAF airfields and Royal Navy bases. They planned to do so during a series of daylight bombing raids in 1940. After the Battle of Britain in the south-east, these tactics were modified to include the destruction of both economic and industrial sites throughout the UK.

In the north-west, the Greater Manchester area was heavily bombed during late 1940 / early 1941, due primarily to the industry located within the city. Targets included dock facilities, railway infrastructure, power stations, weapon manufacturing plants and gas works.

The importance of the Manchester Ship Canal and Salford Docks to the Allied war effort was not overlooked either and this infrastructure was heavily targeted too. Many local companies in Manchester were involved in vital war production work - and putting the city's docks and industry out of action would have had serious consequences for the Allied war effort.

As a result of aircraft losses, daylight raids by the Germans were reduced in favour of

attacking targets under the cover of darkness. Available Luftwaffe Target Maps of Manchester show a high density of locations highlighted for bombing. Between July 1940 and July 1942, Greater Manchester suffered repeated and widespread bombing. The Luftwaffe mounted consecutive heavy attacks on the nights of the 22/23rd and 23/24th December 1940, leaving large areas of Manchester, Salford and Stretford devastated.

In total these two successive nights involved a total of 441 German bombers – the attack became known as the 'Manchester Blitz'.

During these attacks 6 conflagrations, 20 major fires and over 600 smaller fires were reported. This, coupled with concentrated HE bombing resulted in the total destruction of over 4,000 houses as well as serious damage to a further 12,000.[1] In total, 467 tonnes of HE bombs were dropped over Manchester in December 1940 alone. The damage was so extensive that the government ordered a ban on the publication of damage photographs by the media.

684 fatalities were recorded across the city and a further 2,364 people were injured,

however full casualty details were not disclosed at the time to deny the Germans any propaganda material.

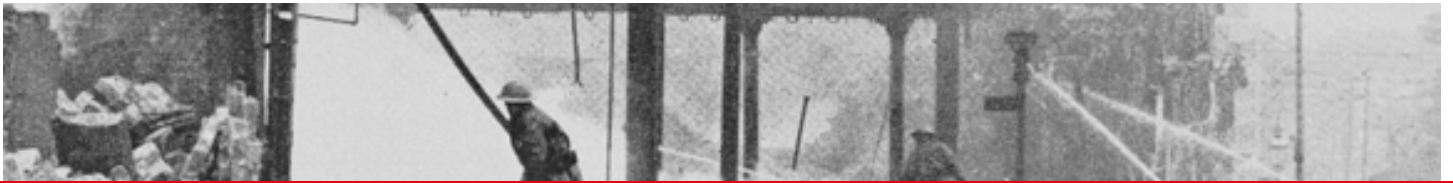
During 1941 two further large-scale raids occurred on the 9th of January and 1st of June. Although each involved half as many aircraft as the 22nd of December 1940 raid, these two attacks still dropped a further 208 tonnes of HE bombs onto the Manchester area.



During 1941 two further large-scale raids occurred on the 9th of January and 1st of June. Although each involved half as many aircraft as the 22nd of December 1940 raid, these two attacks still dropped a further 208 tonnes of HE bombs onto the Manchester area. After June 1941, the raids became more infrequent, but by this time serious damage had been caused to industrial premises, the city centre and the docks. Small scale attacks continued throughout the rest of 1941 and 1942.

From mid-1944 the “V-weapon” (V for vengeance) campaign, using unmanned rockets and missiles, represented Hitler’s final attempt to reverse Germany’s imminent defeat. The V1 (Flying Bomb or Doodlebug) and the V2 (Long Range Rocket) were launched from bases in occupied France, Belgium and Holland as well as from Germany itself. In December 1944, after a two-year lull in bombing, several V1s fell in Greater Manchester. One landed in Oldham killing 27 people, the region’s last bombing casualties of the war.

Although these weapons caused considerable destruction, their relatively low numbers allowed accurate records of strikes to be maintained and these records have mostly survived. There is a negligible risk from unexploded V-weapons today since even if an unexploded 1,000kg warhead had survived impact, the remains of the munition’s body would have left incontrovertible evidence of the strike and it would have been dealt with at the time.



# MANCHESTER FACTS



## Record of German Ordnance Dropped on the County Borough of Manchester

Area Acreage - 27,255

High Explosive Bombs (all types) - 712

Parachute Mines - 18

Oil Bombs - 7

Pilotless Missile (V1) - 1

Total - 738

Items Per 1,000 Acres - 27.1

### Fast facts:

- Over 4,000 houses were destroyed and 12,000 damaged.
- 684 fatalities were recorded from bombing raids in Manchester.
- The damage to the city was so extensive that the government ordered a ban on damage photographs being used by the media. As such, there are some gaps in the records of bombing.



## The deadly legacy of unexploded ordnance in and around Manchester:

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.





# UXO'S LEGACY

## A sample of recent finds:

- WWII bomb found during garden renovations in Swinton, Manchester.
- More than 1,000 explosives found by magnet fishers in Daisy Nook Country Park, Greater Manchester in January 2022.
- WWII bomb found in a Salford garden in October 2021.

Unexploded ordnance (UXO) presents a significant risk to construction and infrastructure projects in parts of the UK as a result of enemy actions during the two 20th Century World Wars and historic British and Allied military activity.

As a result of a generally increased risk awareness amongst professionals involved in ground engineering works and proactive health and safety measures, the risk to life and limb from UXO has been minimised.

However, even the simple discovery of a suspected device during on-going works can cause considerable disruption to production and cause unwanted delays and expense.

Such risks can be more fully addressed by a better understanding of the site-specific risk

and the implementation of appropriate risk mitigation measures.

The complexity of the risks requires end-to-end support, which can be offered by SafeLane Global. With unwavering focus on the removal of risk for over 30 years and for 10,000+ clients, SafeLane Global protects against the threats of harm and commercial loss that unexploded ordnance continues to pose across the UK.



**FIND YOUR  
SOLUTION TODAY**

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