



# SWANSEA

Understanding Unexploded  
Ordnance (UXO) Risk in  
Swansea: Bombing History  
and Remaining Threats



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# WWII Bombing of Swansea

**Swansea was a military-industrial hub, making it a significant target for German bombing runs.**

During World War II, Swansea served as a military-industrial hub, making it a significant target for German bombing campaigns.

The city's strategic value lay in its industrial facilities, including metal refineries, coal depots, and the Llandarcy Oil Refinery, alongside its substantial dock infrastructure supporting the Allied war effort.

Wartime Home Office Incident Reports indicate at least 30 individual air raid incidents took place over Swansea during the war, including six major Blitz-scale attacks.

The most devastating period for the city came during the "Three Nights' Blitz" of 19th to 21st February 1941, when intensive bombing campaigns utilised thousands of both high explosive (HE) bombs and 1kg incendiaries, affecting 41 acres of the city centre.

The more recent discovery of unexploded bombs (UXB) in areas such as Brynmelyn Park demonstrates the ongoing legacy of WWII in Swansea's modern landscape.

Given this context, it is prudent for any new development projects in the region to thoroughly assess and address the risks posed by unexploded ordnance.

## Key Facts:

- The cost of bombing in Swansea by the end of WWII included 230 people dead, 409 injured and 7,000 houses severely damaged.
- 1,273 HE bombs and some 56,000 1kg incendiary bombs (IBs) were estimated to have been dropped within Swansea Borough during the Three Nights' Blitz.
- If an airdropped unexploded bomb fell in Crymlyn Bog, situated next to the old Llandarcy Oil Refinery, it could easily have gone undetected.

## British and Allied UXO in Swansea:

- In preparation for the D-Day Landings, the Singleton area was home to over 1,500 US troops during 1944. The site of the camp is now occupied by Botanical Gardens.
- Due to the strategic importance of Swansea's industrial infrastructure and docklands, several heavy anti-aircraft (HAA) batteries were located across the city. These emplacements would have been in constant use throughout the heaviest raids over the area.
- To protect the docklands from a potential seaborne raid by German forces, the southern wall of the Queens Dock was lined with pillboxes and other defensive fortifications. Features like these would have been manned and patrolled by armed personnel.

# Impact of legacy UXO



## Sample of Finds:

- 02/ 2003 - Three unexploded WWII shells were discovered on a building site in Carlisle Street.
- 06/ 2021 - An unexploded incendiary bomb from WWII was found in Brynmelyn Park.

## Legacy

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.

## Managing UXO risks with Igne

UXO presents a serious hazard to construction projects, causing delays, safety risks, and financial loss. Igne provides expert UXO risk assessment, detection, and clearance, ensuring projects proceed safely and efficiently.

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