

UXB and Bomb Map

Unexploded bomb No.1



On 1 November 2005, this 110kg C250 German incendiary bomb was dug up by workmen excavating stone at the Brett Lafarge Ltd. Fairlop Quarry, Aldborough Hatch.

Hundreds of families were evacuated while the 33rd Engineers Regiment conducted a controlled explosion.

110kg C250 incendiary bomb

(courtesy Redbridge Museum)

Bulldozer driver Wayne Joy had been driving back and forth over the bomb for about three hours before he realised what it was. "I had a feeling I knew what it was and called the digger operator for a second opinion. I feel pretty lucky to be alive."

The device was kept under guard overnight and the Army arrived the following morning to organise a controlled detonation.

At 11.30am police began evacuating residents from Spearpoint Gardens, Aldborough Road North, Bawdsey Avenue, Applegarth Drive, Ramsgill Drive and Ramsgill Approach. The nearby Dick Turpin pub was also evacuated and roads around the area sealed off.

Inspector Nigel Nottidge, from Redbridge police, said everything was under control, adding: "These things are unpredictable and we are following the army's instruction. We have evacuated people from the surrounding area to ensure public safety."

The Community Care Advice Centre further down Aldborough Road North was set up as a rest centre for evacuees, with a bus laid on to transport them there.

Bomb Disposal Officer Staff Sgt Jim O'Kane, of the 33 Royal Engineers (EOD), co-ordinating the detonation, disabled the bomb's fuse on arrival. He said: "The workmen are lucky they didn't set it off when they uncovered it. If you move the fuse it can start the chain of detonation."

Permission to detonate the bomb was requested because it was located underneath flightpath to Heathrow. The A12 was due to be closed in both directions.

Major Keith Lowerson of the 33rd Engineers Regiment, who led the delicate operation, said. "If it had gone off there would have been a huge explosion that would have been heard across London. A bomb like this would bring down a block of flats. This is an incendiary bomb, which means that it should have exploded on impact and released a chemical that then continued burning. When dropped, however, the bomb hit sand and went straight in without exploding. Incendiary bombs were used in conjunction with high explosive bombs, by the Germans during World War Two, for targets of high importance."

Redbridge was bombed heavily during World War Two and the loss of life and damage caused was severe. In total 802 people were killed, 40,000 people were injured, 822 houses were destroyed and 50,00 houses damaged.

See Bomb Map below.

At 8.25am on 2 November 2005 the Army moved into the area and the police evacuated around 200 people from the local vicinity.

Firstly the fuse was removed from the bomb. Then officers dug a pit with 20m high walls and craned the bomb into position. Sergeant Jim O'Kane then set up charges to break the case open and access the incendiary material.

"Even with a controlled explosion, the bomb goes off with the force of a couple of grenades. Anything within 500m was a risk of being hit by shrapnel, and the nearest house to the site was less than 400m away," said Captain Keith Lowerson.

Even at this late stage they experienced further problems. It was getting dark and the two holes blown into the side of the bomb were not big enough to tip the chemicals out quickly.

Making the bomb safe was a lengthy process that took the 33rd Engineers Regiment approximately 9 hours.

Unexploded bomb No's 2 & 3

No. 5 Civil Defence Region Abandoned Bomb Register shows:

Hogg Hill. Hainault (*) x2 50kg bombs abandoned

NE23Yc ()**

(*) Information obtained from Home Office Bomb Register R5/1/6 –no further details available.

(**) Approximate place location – **NOT** a precise UXB location.

618 High Explosive's, 8 Parachute Mines, 7 Flying Bombs & rockets, UXB and 2 enemy aircraft, hit Ilford.

