

6. How successful was Starfish?

It is impossible to definitively answer the question of how successful Col Turner's decoy programme was. His own estimate, considered conservative, was 2221.13 tonnes of bombs diverted to decoys - mostly at night. This figure amounts to c. 4% of tonnage delivered by the Luftwaffe over Britain. The Bristol decoy sites were considered to have been some of the more successful, and certainly the sites at Chew Magna, Stockwood and Downside do seem to have attracted most bombs.

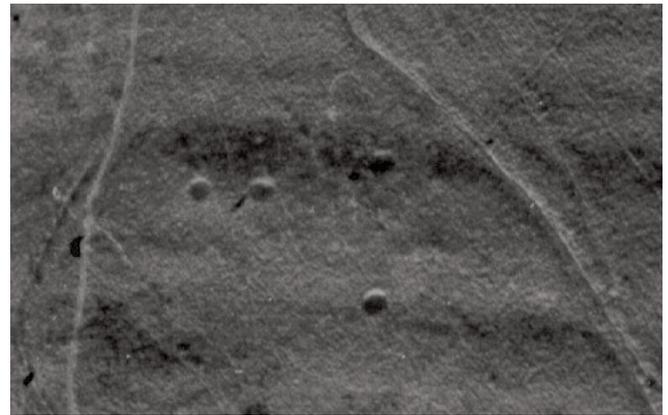
Perhaps the Luftwaffe knew that Black Down or some of the other Bristol sites were decoys. Thanks to John Penny's extensive research, we have this information and extract (below) from the Luftwaffe's diary for 2/3 December, 1940:

"KGr 100 which operated ten Heinkel He 111s over Bristol between 18.37 and 19.06 hrs reported that "about four kilometres north of the Flak 'girdle' around the target, a large light was seen to shine. It later went out and was probably a decoy installation". II./LG 1 which attacked Bristol with eleven Junkers Ju 88s between 19.00 and 19.35 hrs identified two decoy fires to the south and south-east of the city, while KGr 806 which bombed between 21.23 and 22.04 hrs with four Ju 88s reported two decoy fires, again situated to the south and south-east of Bristol."

Besondere Beobachtungen:

Scheinbrände:

Anscheinend 2 Scheinbrände im Süden und Südosten von Bristol. Infolge starker Bewölkung nicht einwandfrei auszumachen. (II/LG 1 und KGr 806). Etwa 4km nördlich des Flakgürtels um Zeil ein grösserer Lichtschein, der später verlöschte, vermutlich Scheinanlage (KGr 100). Bei Weymouth ein Scheinbrand (KGr 806). Westlich von St. Albans head eine rote Lichterreihe anscheinend auf Schiffen.



▲ Four craters about 9m in diameter on Black Down photographed during 1946. Different orientations suggest that they are the result of two different bombing sorties and were probably the result of payloads being emptied after bombing raids on the decoy. The craters are still visible. Trees and shrubs have grown up in them, taking advantage of the shelter they provide.



Mendip Hills AONB



OS MAP

Explorer 141:
Cheddar Gorge &
Mendip Hills West
Landranger 182:
Weston-super-Mare

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WAR WALK

A new War Walk on Black Down is available to download from the Discovering Black Down project website.

AUDIO

You can also listen to interviews with people who were involved and download this and other factsheets in this series.

FILM

The children of Blagdon Primary School have made a short film to tell the story of what happened on Black Down during World War II. Please find the link on the Discovering Black Down website.

Thanks to everyone involved for images, information, time, energy and interest!

What remains?



◀ *Three control bunkers that doubled as bomb shelters can still be seen. They each contained three generators to power the site. It was to one of these bunkers that the 126 telephone call from RAF Radlett to light or fire the site was received.*



◀ *Improved ground conditions during the dry spring of 2015 revealed this embedded metal feature at Burrington c, that emulated Bristol Temple Meads Station. This charred post may have been associated with a trough fire or moving tracks.*



◀ *The 1800 tumps! Details of these and the many much older archaeological features on Black Down can be found with a simple search of Somerset County Council's Historic Environment Record.*

Sources of further information:

- ▶ Fields of Deception by Colin Dobinson
- ▶ Somerset V Hitler by Donald Brown
- ▶ 20th century defences in England, Volume 2: Anti-Invasion Defences of World War II by Colin Dobinson
- ▶ Local Studies collection at Somerset Heritage Centre
- ▶ Second World War remains on Black Down: a reinterpretation Somerset Archaeology and Natural History 142 (1998), 271-286 by Schofield, AJ and Webster, CJ and Anderton, MJ.

www.discoveringblackdown.org.uk

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