

BOWERS GIFFORD AT WAR

The difficult days of 1940 saw Britain's defence planners facing a stern test. After the evacuations of the British Expeditionary Force from the beaches of Dunkirk an invasion of this country was expected at any time. The army had been saved but their weapons – tanks, artillery, machine-guns, mortars and anti-tank guns – lay in the fields of France. In the event of a seaborne landing by German tanks the defence of the United Kingdom would rest with the concrete and steel fortifications being rapidly built all over the country.

The 'stop-line' concept was a system of parallel lines of defence. From north to south, from east to west, they traversed Britain. Hundreds of miles of anti-tank ditches were carved out of the countryside, overlooked by pillboxes, machine – gun emplacements, infantry trenches and artillery bunkers. The most formidable of these was the General Headquarters (GHQ) Line which, on its way south to the Thames, ran through the fields and marshes around Bowers Gifford.

WHAT SURVIVES

Although the anti-tank ditch has long since been filled in, many of the pillboxes which marked its path still stand. They are of three types ranging from a relatively thin-walled, bullet-proof type manned by a squad of infantrymen to a powerful artillery bunker built to accommodate a two-pounder anti-tank gun.

LEARN MORE

Discover more about Essex's World War Two past at:

www.worldwar2heritage.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

World War Two trail funded by European Union WWII Heritage Project and Essex County Council. Project managed by Paul Gilman, Environment and Economy, ECC. Content researched, written and compiled by Fred Nash, for ECC.



www.interreg4a-2mers.eu/en



www.essex.gov.uk



Designed by
www.uglystudios.com

Download the app
for free by following this
link:



onelink.to/x2tcvy

Or visit the following
online stores:

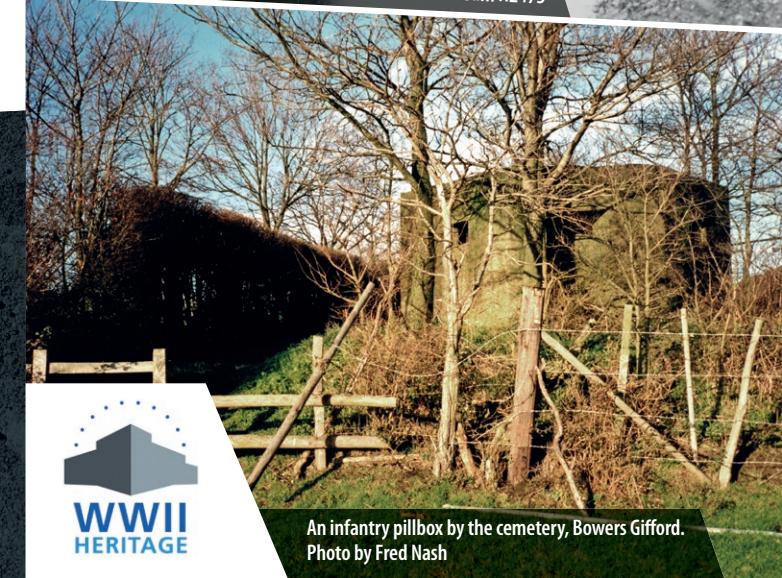


onelink.to/x2tcvy

BOWERS GIFFORD WORLD WAR TWO TRAIL



An anti-tank ditch at Farnham. © Imperial War Museum H2473



An infantry pillbox by the cemetery, Bowers Gifford.
Photo by Fred Nash



FOLLOW THE TRAIL

Walkers may park in the RSPB car park at the end of Church Road. An information board, with a plan of the trail, stands by the path between here and St. Margaret's Church. In the churchyard there are two graves of WWII servicemen, one of whom was awarded the Military Cross for distinguished service in the Netherlands. The trail follows a rectangular route, 2.3 miles (3.7 kms) in total, crossing the path of the GHQ Line and passing pillboxes in the fields to the left and right.

While the trail follows public roads and footpaths, the pillboxes are on private land. We ask that walkers respect this and keep to the public rights-of-way.

START: Car Park, RSPB site

LENGTH: 2.3 miles (3.7 km)

- TRAIL
- PILLBOX
- PILLBOX (DESTROYED)
- ROAD BARRIER (DESTROYED)
- SPIGOT MORTAR
EMPLACEMENT (DESTROYED)
- APPROXIMATE SITE OF HEAVY
ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTERY
- PATH OF THE GHQ LINE
ANTI-TANK DITCH
- i TRAIL BOARD