

FOBBING AT WAR

One of the many secrets which were revealed after the end of World War Two was the use of decoy bombing sites. These were areas of open landscape where dummy airfields, docks, factories, railway yards and oil refineries were built to tempt enemy planes into dropping their lethal loads onto innocuous fields rather than their intended target.

It is not widely known that Fobbing Marshes was home to one of these decoys. This was an Oil QF. Laid out on the flat terrain north of Shell Haven oil installation were all the paraphernalia of night-time bombing deception. On the approach of German aircraft massive fires would be lit using petrol, paraffin and kerosene. Steel chutes would splash water onto the conflagration to create the effect of explosions. Rings of oil were lit to look like blazing oil tanks. Basket fires, boiler fires, grids and arrays all contributed to give the effect of Shell Haven oil installation being devastated by successful bombing. Hopefully, this deception would divert some of the attackers to the dummy.

WHAT SURVIVES

Only twelve Oil QF decoys were built in Britain. Each of them would have had its own purpose-built control bunker. Fobbing is almost certainly the only one left standing, the last of its kind. Inside are the Operations Room with its escape hatch in the roof and the Engine Room which would have housed a diesel generator. Nearby, a mysterious series of long, concrete walls add a puzzle. What are they? Why are they here?

Half a mile to the east, a pillbox and two spigot mortar pedestals (for Home Guard anti-tank weapons) are probably defences of the country's main defence line, the General Headquarters (GHQ) line which used Holehaven Creek as its primary anti-tank barrier.

LEARN MORE

Discover more about Essex's World War Two past at:
www.worldwar2heritage.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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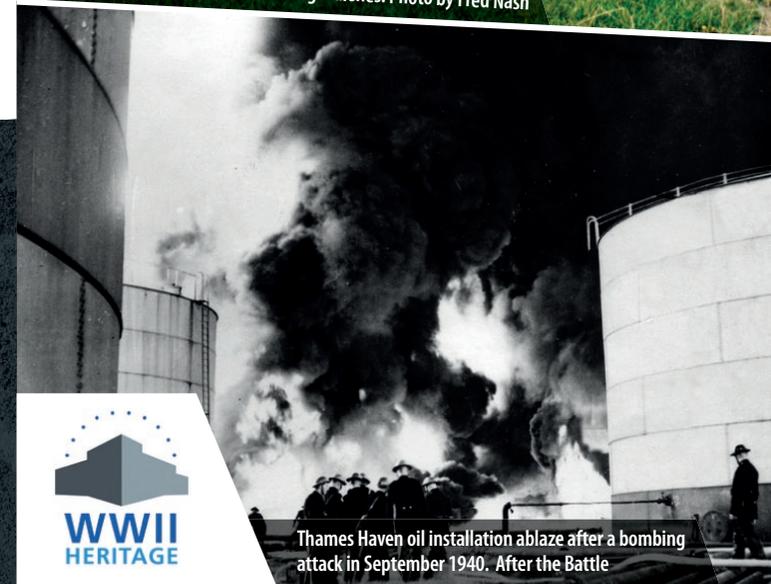


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FOBBING WORLD WAR TWO TRAIL



Decoy control bunker on Fobbing Marshes. Photo by Fred Nash



Thames Haven oil installation ablaze after a bombing attack in September 1940. After the Battle

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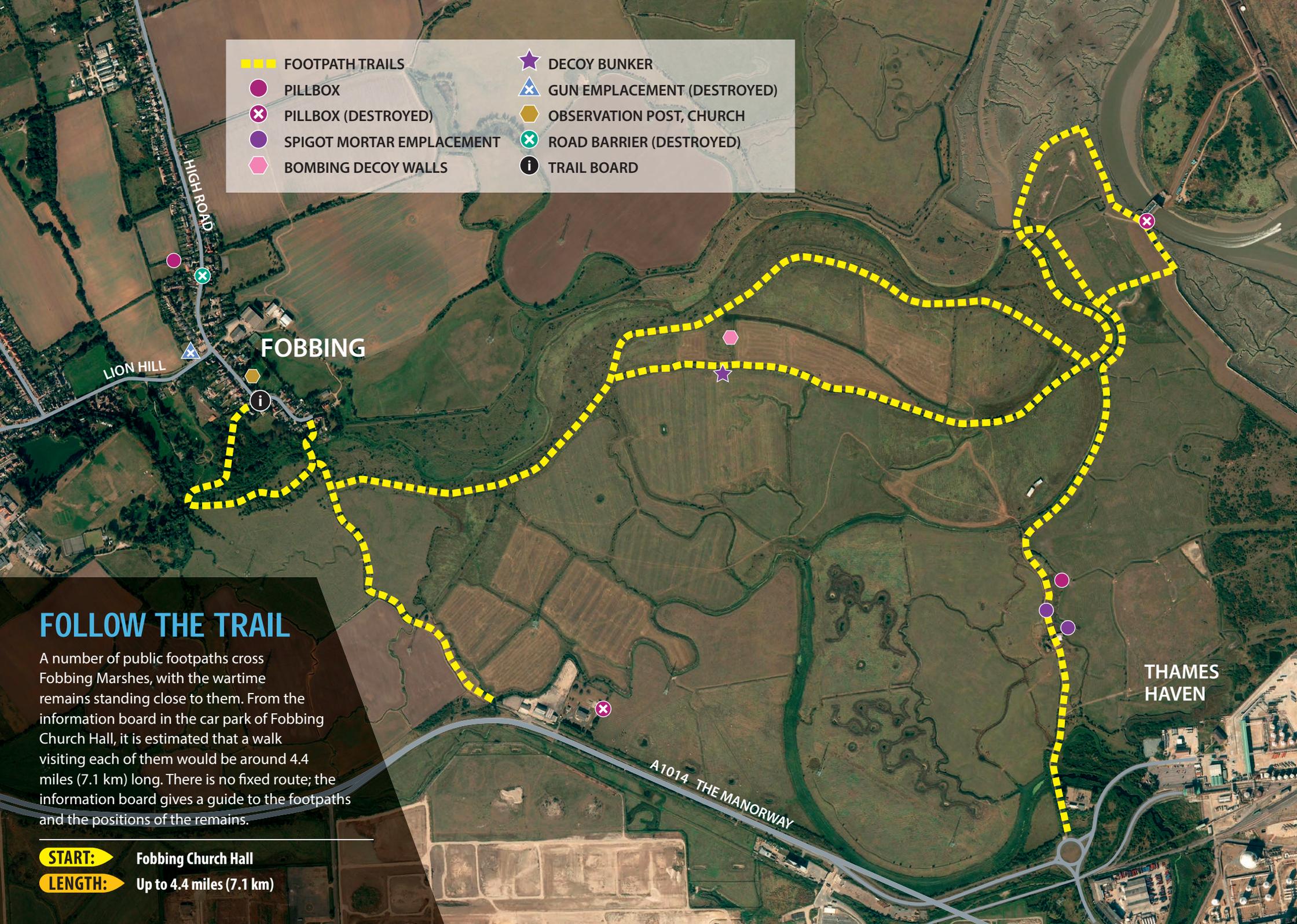
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- ⓘ TRAIL BOARD



FOLLOW THE TRAIL

A number of public footpaths cross Fobbing Marshes, with the wartime remains standing close to them. From the information board in the car park of Fobbing Church Hall, it is estimated that a walk visiting each of them would be around 4.4 miles (7.1 km) long. There is no fixed route; the information board gives a guide to the footpaths and the positions of the remains.

- START: Fobbing Church Hall
- LENGTH: Up to 4.4 miles (7.1 km)