

FORD END/HARTFORD AT WAR

The GHQ (General Headquarters) Line was built as Britain's major line of defence during World War Two. It ran from the north of England south to the Thames before heading west to the Bristol Channel. In Essex, it passed through Ford End and Hartford End using the River Chelmer as its anti-tank barrier, its bank studded with pillboxes to provide interlocking fields of fire from rifles and machine-guns.

The single road bridge along this stretch of the river was covered by spigot mortar emplacements and a 6-pounder gun. This was mounted in an artillery pillbox hidden in the field edge, no doubt camouflaged with netting.

This small part of the GHQ Line would have been typical of the hundreds of miles of such lines built all over Britain. What is special here is the remarkable degree of survival.

WHAT SURVIVES

Pillboxes were built all along the GHQ Line. In the six miles from Broomfield to Ford End there were no fewer than 69 – one every 150 yards – of which 60 have survived to the present day. In the Ford End/Hartford End area the survival is virtually 100%.

There are three different types here including one which held an artillery piece. The 6-pounder gun was of a type originally mounted on the sides of World War One tanks. In 1940, they were taken out of storage and put into pillboxes.

In a field close to the bridge, two spigot mortar gun pedestals still stand. This short-range weapon would have been manned by the Home Guard. The instruction manual advises that fire should be withheld until the enemy tank is within 80 - 100 yards!

LEARN MORE

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

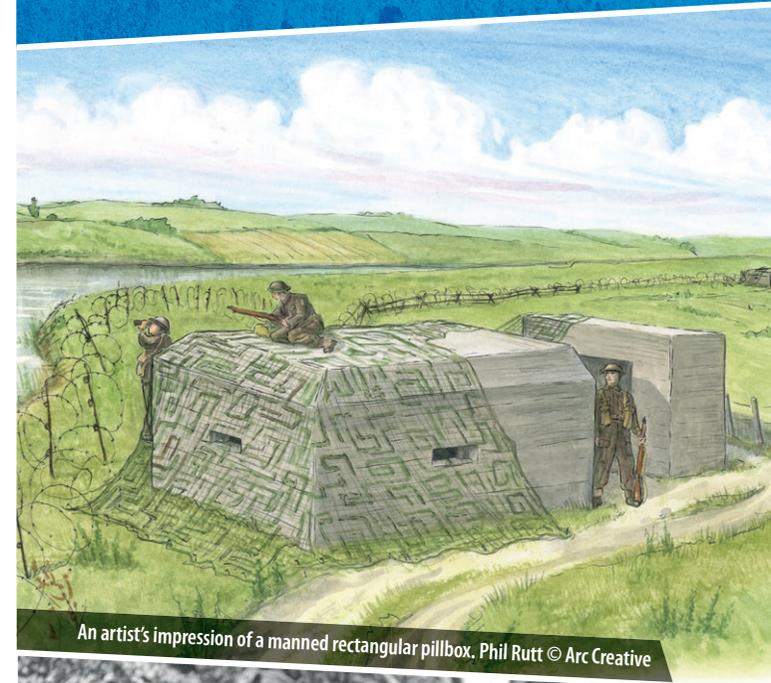
World War Two trail funded by European Union WWII Heritage Project and Essex County Council. Project managed by Paul Gilman, Environment and Economy, ECC. Content researched, written and compiled by Fred Nash, for ECC.



www.interreg4a-2mers.eu/en



FORD END/ HARTFORD END WORLD WAR TWO TRAIL



An artist's impression of a manned rectangular pillbox. Phil Rutt © Arc Creative



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Cumberland Home Guard on manoeuvres.
© Imperial War Museum H30099



Loading a 6-pounder gun, 1940. © Imperial War Museum H4531

- TRAIL
- PILLBOX
- SPIGOT MORTAR EMPLACEMENT
- TRAIL BOARDS



FOLLOW THE TRAIL

The walk has been compiled to take in thirteen pillboxes over a distance of around four to five miles (6.4 to 8 km). There is no fixed route; the public footpaths along which the pillboxes stand provide a variety of walking choices. Free parking is available either

in the car park opposite the church in Ford End or in the rough lay-by half a mile south of the bridge along the Hartford End road. There are information boards at both these points with others on three of the pillboxes.

It should be noted that while the pillboxes are alongside public footpaths

the spigot mortar pedestals are on private land and may only be viewed from a distance. A pair of binoculars may be handy here!

The village pub at Littley Green (the famous 'Huffer' pub - www.compasseslittleygreen.co.uk) offers a convenient half-way stop!

START: Car Park, Ford End or Chelmsford Road, Hartford End
LENGTH: Up to 4.7 miles (7.6 km)