

Project Data

Site: Defence Area 58: Avening World War II Defences
Parish: Avening
County: Gloucestershire

Landowner 1: Mr & Mrs Clark
Star Farm, Avening
GL8 8NU

Land use: Arable Farming

Landowner 2: Mr & Mrs Richards
Avening Court, Avening
GL8 8NZ

Land use: Cattle grazing & public footpath by Mr A Powell

Survey Method: Measured earthwork survey

Date of survey: 07/12/2011 and 05/01/2012

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Useful Descriptions (Taken from Defence of Britain Project)

Pillbox (Type FW3/24): Hexagonal pillbox, often strengthened with thickened walls and roof to make shell-proof. The most commonly-found type of pillbox in southern England.

Pillbox (prefabricated): pillbox, usually rectangular, built with prefabricated walls brought to the site and bolted into place.

Anti-tank ditch: machine dug ditch of sufficient depth and width to prevent the crossing of enemy armoured vehicles. Usually dug in continuous, sharply-angled lengths.

Summary

This HER Expansion reports presents the results of an Historic Environment Record (HER) Expansion on Defence Area 58, Avening in Gloucestershire, of the GHQ Line Green stop line from World War II. Previous projects have looked at this area, including the Defence of Britain report and existing HER's, although both seem to have missed vital elements, which this reports covers. These include road blocks, anti-tank ditches and accompanying banks and pillboxes that have previously been missed or called as destroyed, but are still in fact standing. An earthwork survey was carried out on an unfilled section of an anti-tank ditch, which has presented the modern features.

Acknowledgements

A special thank you goes to Mr & Mrs Richards of Avening Court and Mr & Mrs Clark of Star Farm for allowing me access onto their land, and Mr Powell for his kind help - without their permission this project would not have been possible. I am grateful to both of my surveying teams as they battled driving rain and gale force winds to undertake the surveying efficiently. I would like to thank Mr Slater for his brilliant photographs despite inquisitive livestock. My gratitude also goes to Phil Rowe from the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at University of Bristol, for his initial idea for this report, and his guidance and support throughout its production.

1.0 Introduction

This Historic Environment Record (HER) Expansion has been produced for the assessment of Investigating Landscapes and Seascapes unit as part of the MA Landscape Archaeology at the University of Bristol. This report presents the results from an earthwork survey which was undertaken to investigate further into World War II stop line, GHQ Line Green, Defence Area 58 Avening.

Before the earthwork survey was carried out consent was required from various land owners and farmers. Mr and Mrs Richards of Avening Court, and Mr and Mrs Clark of Star Farm kindly gave their permission for the survey and Mr Powell who farms on the Avening Court land was kind enough to unlock gates and move cattle from the fields which contain the defences. The main earthwork survey was carried out on the 7th of December 2011, with a follow up visit and cross section on 5th of January 2012.

Previous studies on Defence Area 58 of the GHQ Line Green defence have been carried out before, and an HER report has been produced for individual aspects of this line. The Defence of Britain Project carried out a survey, but it was not fully recorded. This HER expansion looks at all of the components together to produce a complete record.

1.1 Location

Avening is a small picturesque village which is situated towards the South West of Gloucestershire in the South West of England. The village is situated between Nailsworth 5 km to the North West and Tetbury 5.6 km to the South East (figure 1). The Medieval village of Avening has a population of c.1000 making it one of the largest villages in the south Cotswolds. The village is placed at the bottom of a large valley which runs from the west of the village all the way through until the nearest town, Nailsworth to the North West. This project focuses on the area to the South East of the village on the South side of the steep valley and the surrounding upland.

As this HER expansion is concentrated on several different sites, each has their own specific National Grid Reference, which can be seen in section 4, Results, the central focus point is Star Farm centred NGR ST 8904 9685.



Figure 1 – Top: Location of Gloucestershire within England
Bottom: Location of Avening (red dot) in Gloucestershire

1.2 Geography and Topography

Avening village is placed at the bottom of a large limestone valley which runs from the west of the village all the way through until the nearest town, Nailsworth to the North West. Defence Area 58 is situated up on the higher ground surrounding the south east side of the village. Avening is in the heart of the Cotswold hills, which are made up of limestone.

1.3 Land Use

Most of the land surrounding Avening is used for animal grazing, arable farming and golf courses. The Avening Court land which holds WW II defence features 1-3 (Figure 2) is farmed by a local farmer who keeps livestock. There is a well used footpath running across the fields. The land belonging to Star Farm, with WWII defence features 5 & 6 is arable land, which also holds local pony club events, and had its own equine cross country course.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The Department of Archaeology and anthropology at the University of Bristol runs a MA in Landscape Archaeology for which this survey and report have been compiled. The objective was to identify an existing HER site and develop knowledge of that site through non-intrusive field survey archaeology. This assignment was also designed to help students gain knowledge of archaeological equipment, and to understand the skills needed to compile a report.

The Defence of Britain Project was carried out between April 1995 and December 2001, and is available for public viewing at the National Monument Record Office. It contains maps and photographs but no earthwork surveys, so that is the main focus of this report. There are several books containing details of Defence Area 58, the most detailed is 'Beaches, fields, streets, and hills: anti-invasion landscapes of England, 1940' By William Foot. Due to the lack of available evidence for the public, the secondary aim of this report is to make information more readily available to anyone who searches.



Figure 2 – Location of each feature which appears in this HER expansion

2.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

This project is focusing on a section of the GHQ Line Green defence. The GHQ lines were static linear defences constructed under General Ironside in preparation for the expected German invasion. These lines were constructed in June 1940 but by the beginning of 1941 they were no longer regarded as being of value and large lengths fell into disuse. The GHQ Green Line was intended to provide an outer defence for Bristol and ran from Highbridge in Somerset over the Mendips along the Avon across the Cotswolds and up to the Severn near Gloucester over ninety miles. Whenever possible these lines would utilise existing obstacles which would be complemented with pillboxes, anti-tank blocks, road blocks and anti-tank ditches (taken from a current HER). The GHQ Line Green joined with other stop lines – the GHQ Line Blue at Whaddon, near Semington and, at Freshford, with the Command Line running to Salisbury and on to Odiham, the full length of the GHQ Line Green can be seen in figure 3. Map 1 (last page) gives the length of Defence Area 58, it indicated the remaining features which are talked about within this HER Expansion and the features which have been removed by the farmers.

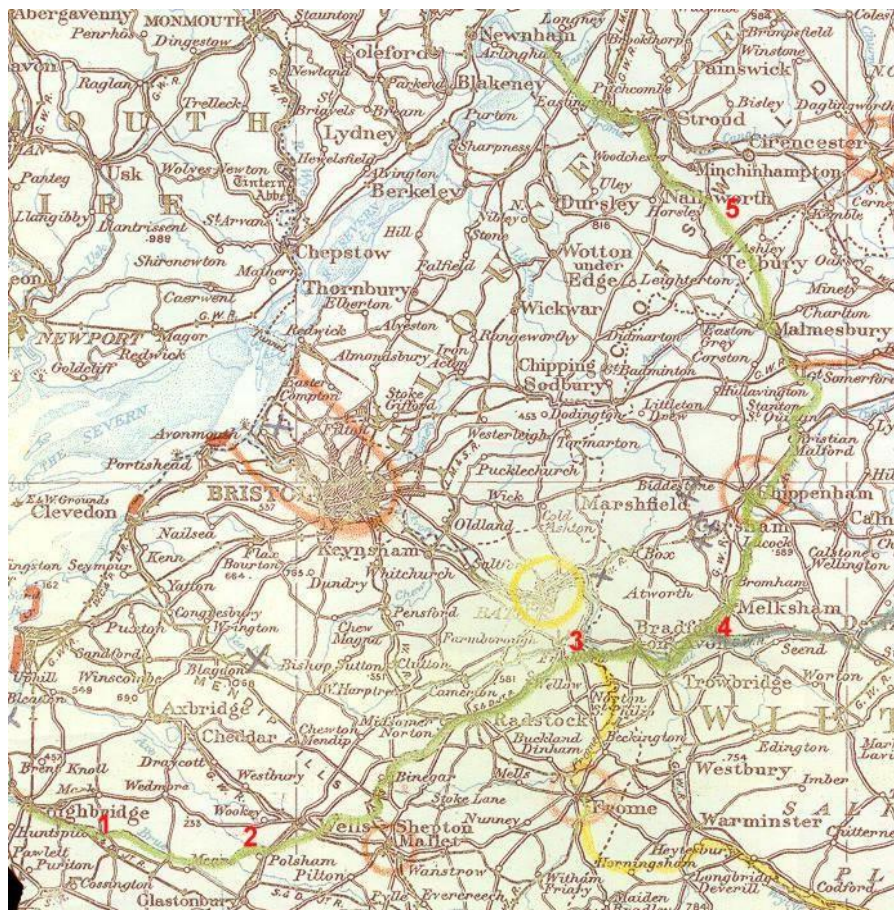


Figure 3 : The course of GHQ Line Green around Bristol. No.1 is Defence Area 20; No.2 is Defence Area 68; No.3 is Defence Area 32; No.4 is Defence Area 27; No. 5 is Defence Area 58 (Avening). Image taken from Defence of Britain Report.

2.1 History of the Area

Despite Avening being a small village in the Cotswolds, it has a lot of history. People have occupied Avening from Prehistory. It is possible to trace the growth of Avening's modern population through many different historical sources. The following information was gained from sources provided by Gloucestershire Archives.

2.1.1 Prehistory

There is clear evidence that Avening was occupied throughout Later Prehistory. There is no evidence for occupation in the Palaeolithic, although a small microlith has been found which can be dated to the Mesolithic.

Surrounding Avening there are 3 Neolithic Long Barrows, one of which contains 11 skeletons in 3 different chambers, was excavated in 1806. Several flint

fragments from a hand axe have also been found when fields have been ploughed. There are several potential Bronze Age round barrows, many of which have trees growing on top. An Iron Age enclosure can be found in crop marks but it has yet been excavated.

2.1.2 Roman

Despite Avening only being 9 miles away from Cirencester, one of the largest Roman towns, there is very little evidence Roman occupation. Only one coin has been found. A fragment of Samian ware, apparently found in association with a human skeleton by workmen making up the road near Old Hill, was taken to Gloucester City Museum for identification by Canon Cooper, rector of Avening. The skull and the 2 bones are kept in the Holy Cross Church, Avening.

2.1.3 Early Medieval, Medieval and Post Medieval

Apart from the Anglo- Saxon cemetery that was found while the local primary school was expanding their play ground, and the 12th Century church, most of the evidence comes from Post Medieval times. Within this Anglo- Saxon cemetery, seven skeletons were found quite close to the surface. One of these skeletons was in an excellent state of preservation, and again like the Roman burial it is inside Holy Cross Church in a glass case. The note with the skeleton states that it is that of a young woman, and dates to c.500-600AD. The skeleton was found with edged with stones which can also be seen in the church - they were originally arranged around the body in a single line.

Holy Cross Church, Avening was built on a Saxon church site, the evidence for which can be seen in the fragmentary carved stones inserted in the west wall of the north aisle, which bears Saxon designs. These fragments were recovered during restoration works at the end of the 19th century and are the only surviving remains of the Saxon church. Holy Cross Church was built for Queen Matilda and has grown with the population changes of the village.

Surrounding Avening there are ten Hollow Ways which can be dated to Post Medieval. Several of these are still used today as local footpaths. There are earthwork remains of a Post Medieval quarry and four square dew ponds. Due to the amount of

modern ploughing and the reuse of the same fields only a single block of ridge and furrow remain.

2.1.4 Modern

There are many different modern elements to Avening, including several houses numbered 14, 16 & 18 on Woodstock lane which can be dated to the 17th century, an 18th century mile stones, a 19th century Baptist church which built in 1805 and altered in 1821. The site of an old corn mill dating to the early 19th century can still be seen. There are remains of many 19th century quarries scattered around the village. Avening as a village grew with the growth of the wool trade in the Cotswolds in the 19th century. It is possible to see this growth from looking at many historical records that are available for public access and through map regression. The wool trade brought with it modern changes to the village, the main alteration was the mill that was built in the early 19th century, with that came more houses as the population grew.

As the monuments this report looks at are modern, they can not be seen through map regression, although they can be traced with aerial photographs.

2.2 Previous Archaeological Investigations

Defence Area 58 and The GHQ Line Green stop defence system in general has had a lot of recent archaeological activity, although most of this is just site visits and a general write up. The Defence of Britain Project, which ran from April 1992 to March 2002 recorded over 20,000 twentieth century military sites, including the ones at Avening.

2.3 Site visits

Prior to commencing the field work on 7th December 2011, several specific site visits were undertaken to assess the extent of the earth work survey. Despite having walked over feature 3 many times, I was unsure of its full extent. But after the site visits and walking the anti-tank bank, its length was clear. During these visits it

was necessary to work out a rough estimate of how long the work would take; the best position for the EDM, and if it would have to be moved. It was during one of these visits that the farmer met the team, and he offered to unlock any gates for which access was needed, and to move his cattle from the fields. However, in order to cause as little disruption as possible to the daily running of the farm his offer was politely declined, as all the features on in his fields were assessable via the footpath and styles. And as long as the cattle were happy with people in their field, they could remain where they were. Access to feature 1 and 5-7 is via the road, which runs alongside joining the features up. At this time, permission to access to feature 4 had not yet been obtained, as it was not clear who this land belonged to. But in early January 2012 permission was granted for a visit and photographs. The land owner also gave useful additional information about the GHQ Line Green defence, what certain elements have been used for, and when they were removed or demolished.

2.4 Aerial Photographs

Vertical and oblique aerial photographs were viewed at the National Monuments Record office, Swindon on 18/01/2012. The chosen vertical aerial photographs date from 1946 – 1975. It was decided by the author not to incorporate any oblique aerial photographs within this HER Expansion as the vertical ones gave a better view of the features. Due to computer malfunction these aerial photographs were not geo-referenced in any software.

AP 1 was taken on 30th March 1946 - this image clearly shows feature 3. Other sections of the anti-tank ditch can clearly be seen from the soil marks heading to and from Star Farm. At this point in time feature 5 is not covered in such dense woodland, and during the initial viewing of the aerial photograph with a magnifying glass, it was possible to make out its outline. Feature 6 is not visible in this photograph but its location is easy to assume it where the soil mark ditch crosses the road. Although not so clear in this copy of the photograph, there is another line running parallel to feature 3, this is thought to be the side the other side of the ditch.

AP 2 was taken on 28th May 1947; again from this image feature 3 is clearly visible. Feature 2 and 4, although small can be seen. Due to this photograph being taken from the South, feature 5 is very clear, it is not hidden from view from the woodland.

AP 3 was taken on 28th May 1947. Soil marks indicate the anti-tank ditch from feature 5 to 7. The location of features 6 and 7 are easy to determine from this photograph if the ditch is followed. The location of this ditch can be seen on Map 1. If AP 2 & 3 are connected (AP 6) then the full extent of Defence Area 58 can be seen from the air.

AP 4 was taken on 15th July 1972. On this photograph feature 3 is a prominent feature and stands out more due to it being different to the surrounding plough patterns. Feature 4 clearly stands out and feature 5 can not be seen at all due to the dense woodland.

AP 5 was taken on 19th May 1975. From this photograph nearly the full investigation area of Defence Area 58 can be seen, feature 7 is just cut off. Again soil marks indicate the location of the original ditch before it was in filled.



AP 1 – Aerial photograph taken in 1946. Visible feature of HER expansion are outline



AP 6 – AP 2 (top) and AP3, joined together to get the full extent of Defence Area 58. Features labelled

3.0 Methodology

During the initial site visit it was decided to consider the whole of Defence Area 58. The original plan was just to look at the pill box on Star Lane (feature 2), but when reviewing other features in close proximity, it was deemed vital to include the other features, as this combination would provide a more in depth understanding of the whole defence system instead of just a single part of it.

3.1 Technique Selection

Due to the extent of this project it was necessary to take the separate features individually so they could later be reassembled. An earthwork survey was going to be the main focus of this project, as the earthworks are prominent and have not yet been measured accurately. A photographic survey has been carried out before but from the images produced it was clear that they had been taken from some distance away, so a new photo study would also be carried out. A geophysical survey did not seem relevant at the time of the site visit and surveying visit, as the exact location of destroyed features was known.

Feature 1 – road blocks: photographic survey.

Feature 2 – pillbox: photographic survey.

Feature 3 – remains of anti-tank ditch bank: earthwork survey & photographic survey.

Feature 4 – pillbox: photographic survey.

Feature 5 – remains of anti-tank ditch & bank: earthwork survey, cross section & photographic survey.

Feature 6 – pillbox: photographic survey.

Feature 7 – pillbox: photographic survey.

3.2 Earthwork Survey Procedure

Feature 5 was the first feature to be surveyed by team 1 - during the site visits initial locations were prepared for the position of the Topcon GTS 210 Series EDM were noted. The position of the EDM was vital because the feature is surrounded by dense woodland, and as much of both the ditch and bank needed to be visible through the first location. The size of team 1 was important because there was a great deal of work to be covered. One member was operating the EDM, with a second taking detailed notes and the readings (figure 4). 3 other members were mobile with the

prism. Due to heavy rain and strong winds, nothing was drawn site. Feature 3 was recorded in the same manner, although one member of the prism team was keeping the cattle away from the EDM and other equipment.

Team 2 carried out the cross section survey. Two ranging rods were placed in the ground either side of feature 5, with a piece of string joining them. A level was placed on the string to ensure it was level before a 30m tape measure was placed between the two rods. Readings were taken every 1m with a hand tape going from the level tape measure to the ground. The measurements were noted down and drawn on site.

3.3 Photographic Survey Procedure

The photographic survey was undertaken on 7th January 2012 by Antony Slater of Slater4 Ltd (figure 5). The photographs were taken with a Canon EOS60D and a Canon Digital IXUS 8515. The photographs were taken with a scale ranging rod each colour section measuring 50cm.



Figure 4 – Team 1 during the earthwork survey



Figure 5 – Photographic team

4.0 **Results**

This section takes each feature in Defence Area in turn, describing the features and highlighting aspects of interest.

4.1 **Feature 1 – Road Block UORN S0006848**

NGR ST 8867 9774



Figure 100 – Feature 1. Concrete Road Blocks x4, Star Lane.

Figure 100 shows the four (numbered) concrete cylinder road blocks which are situated on Star Lane, 70 meters down the lane from feature 2. Previous work on the defence line, shows only evidence for two of these road block cylinders in both the information from Gloucestershire Archive and in the Defence of Britain project, it is unclear why as all four have a similar amount of coverage from undergrowth. These are the only road blocks that have been found around Avening.

4.2 Feature 2 – Pill Box UORN S00068846

NGR ST 88704 97751



Figure 200 – Feature 2, Pill Box Type 24.
Photo taken from the south looking north.

Feature 2 is a Type 24 Pillbox. It is concrete-faced with prefabricated vertical concrete panelling fixed by iron bolts (figure 201). The roof has rounded edges which can clearly be seen on figure 200. It has an attached brick entry porch (figure 202) on the east side with a concrete slab roof. Due to cattle being in the same field, there is an eroded track around the semi-sunken in pill box where the cattle walk. Access into the pill box is limited due to the build up of soil in the entrance porch. Inside the pill box there is a build-up of rubble (figure 203) - it is not known where this has come from. Despite this, the inside of this pill box looks in relatively good condition. As it is entered, the facing wall is still intact (figure 204) and the internal prefabricated panels are still attached with their iron bolts. There is no public access to this pill box which has saved it from damage.

4.3 Feature 3 – Anti-Tank Ditch Bank UORN S0014403

NGR ST 88803 97498 – centre point



Figure 300 –Feature 3. Remains of anti-tank ditch.
Photo taken looking to the north east.

Feature 3 is the remains of the anti-tank ditch. Figure 300 shows the part of the remaining bank. It is not possible to take a photo of all of this section of the ditch due to its length, but figures 301, 302 & 303 indicate some of the sections. From looking at the drawing 502 of feature 5 it looks as though instead of this being the remains of the filled in ditch, stated in both the records from Gloucestershire Archives and the Deference of Britain report, it is the remains of the bank which would have once originally accompanied the ditch. As stated in 2.4, on AP 1 there is a linear line running parallel to this feature which again suggests that feature 3 is not the remains of the in filled ditch, but that of the bank.

4.4 Feature 4 – Pill Box UORN S0006850

NGR ST 88977 97131



Figure 400 - Feature 4. Pill Box Type 24
Photo taken from the south west.

Feature 4 is a Type 24 pill box, it is located near Star Cottages on private land ownership, and is not accessible to the public. From figure 400 it is clear to see that it stands at full height. It has an attached brick entrance porch with a slab concrete roof. It is made up of prefabricated concrete panels secured by iron rods internally and externally which can be seen in figure 401. At first glance this pill box looks to be in a very good condition with a large number of the original concrete panels still in position. However, on closer inspection around the back of the pill box, the damage it has suffered is apparent. Figure 402 and 403 show that a large number of the concrete panels are missing – over time they have been used in the building of paths for Star Cottages, and for sewage pit covers. This information was giving by the land owner. Internally there are calcium deposits forming stalagmites and stalactites from the leaking roof, and there is clear evidence that the pill box has been used by sheep for shelter, and other farmyard storage.

This pill box stands forward of the anti-tank ditch which would originally have run over the lane in the opposite field. This is highly unusual. Facing East, this pill box had a clear view of the surrounding land space - this can be seen in figure 404.

4.5 Feature 5 – Anti-Tank Ditch & Bank UORN S0012508

NGR ST 89234 96895



Figure 500 – Feature 5. Anti-tank ditch
Photo taken from the south west.

Feature 5 is part of the remaining anti-tank ditch that ran across the land joining up the pill boxes. This section of the ditch still remains unfilled. Figure 500 indicates some of the length of the ditch. Drawing 500 (first fold out) is the earthwork survey that was carried out. It is not the full length of the remaining ditch, as the dense surrounding woodland and built up rubbish (figure 501) in the ditch make it impossible to draw the whole distance. It is unclear why this particular section of the ditch remained unfilled, but from local knowledge, when it fell out of use, it was used for silage storage by Star Farm. It is now filling with rubbish and undergrowth. An entrance way has been cut into the ditch, point A on Drawing 500. This was built by the farmer to make it easier to dump rubbish in it. During and after World War II, the anti-tank ditches filled up with water due to a lack of drainage, and were used to teach the local children how to swim. Drawing 501 is a cross section of the anti-tank ditch. From this drawing it is clear to see that the ditch and accompanying bank can still be made out. Figure 502 shows the dry stone walls which can be traced along both sides of the anti-tank ditch.

4.6 Feature 6 – Pill Box UORN S0006851

NGR ST 89793 96522



Figure 600 – Feature 6, Pill Box Type 24.
Photograph taken from the south east.

Feature 6 is a Type 24 Pill Box. This pill box is one and a half miles out of the village of Avening and is right up against the edge of the unnamed lane that goes towards to Tetbury. It appears to have been built into the hedgerow of the field, which can be clearly seen in figure 600. It is semi-sunken and in very good condition. It is made up of prefabricated concrete panels bolted together with iron bolts both externally and internally (figure 601). Internally this pill box is in the best condition compared to the others of the same section of GHQ Line Green defence. It has had some modern additions including the application of paint, some polystyrene roof tiles, and a mattress (fig 602). It has obviously been used as someone's home – probably a vagrant. This pill box does not have an entrance porch like others and not such a clear view out of the windows but this may be due to growth of surrounding woodland and the sinking that has occurred.

4.1 Feature 7 – Pill Box

NGR ST 9032 9630



Figure 700 – Feature 7 – Pill Box Type 24.
Photo taken from the south looking north

Feature 7 is a pill box. It would have originally have been joined up feature 6 but an anti-tank ditch and bank. There is some evidence for the remains on AP 6 of

this but most of it has been destroyed by ploughing. This pill box is made up of prefabricated concrete panels which are held together by iron bolts. There is a considerable amount of undergrowth surrounding the exterior pill box. The interior is in good condition as the entrance was blocked up but has recently been opened. The entrance wall is still standing and the attached entrance porch is in good condition (figure 701).

5.0 Discussion

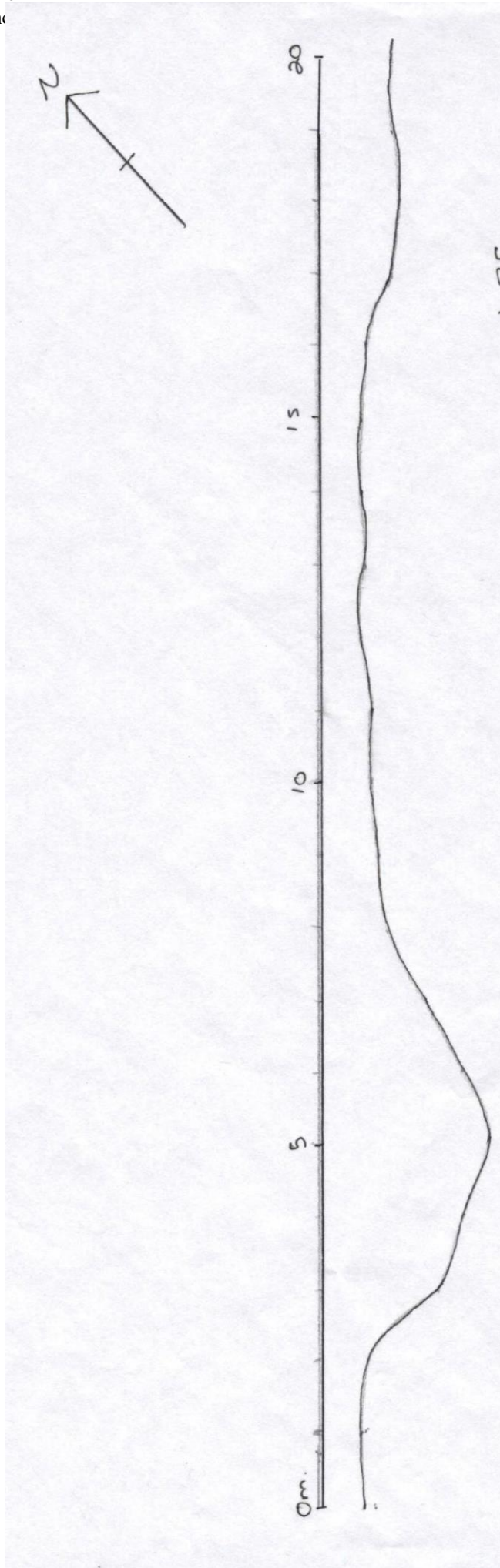
5.1 Interpretation

From both the earthwork and the photographic surveys that were carried out for this report, the results have been worthwhile. The photographic surveys have found extra features, including two extra road blocks that have not been counted previously, and damage to the pill boxes that has not previously been recorded due to lack of access. Previously, feature 6 has been called as destroyed, but due to this survey it can now be known as still standing - although well camouflaged by a hedge. The earthwork survey has elaborated more modern features to the anti-tank ditch, including a cut into it, which cannot be seen in any of the aerial photographs.

5.2 Recommendations for Further Work

Protection and conservation of Defence Area 58 is to be the main focus for further work, as some of the features have been and are still being poorly treated. The undergrowth should be kept under control by land owners or tenants, and the dumping of rubbish should be stopped, as increasing build up could eventually fill in the whole of the anti-tank ditch and pill boxes if this is not monitored.

References



Drawing 501: Cross section of anti-tank ditch. Drawn on the best preserved section of the ditch. Drawn to a scale of 1:75.

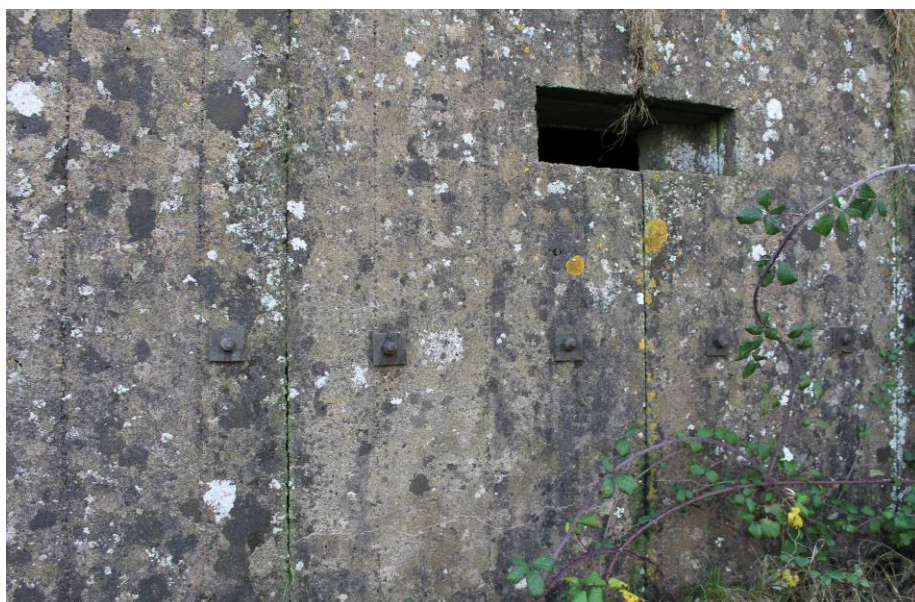


Figure 201 – prefabricated concrete panels and iron bolts



Figure 202 – Entry porch to the pill box, semi-sunken by soil



Figure 203 – Rubble starting to build up in the pill box.



Figure 204 – Entrance wall, directly opposite the entrance.



Figure 301 – Looking north east towards feature 4



Figure 302 – Looking towards feature 2 down the anti-tank ditch towards the end of part 1 on drawing 300



Figure 303 – looking towards feature 2, part 2 on drawing 300



Figure 401 – internal (top) and external prefabricated concrete panels and iron bolts on feature 4





Figure 402 – photo showing some of the damage what has occurred to feature 4.



Figure 403 – photo indicating the damage to the outside of feature 4 which is not visible from Star Lane (photo taken looking towards the lane)



Figure 404 – view from the pill box, looking north



Figure 501 – photo indicating the build up of rubbish in the anti-tank ditch, feature 5



Figure 502 – photo indicating the wall of the anti-tank ditch



Figure 601 – interior prefabricated concrete panels and iron bolts.



Figure 602 – photo indicating modern additions including a mattress, paint on the walls and polystyrene roof panels



Figure 701 – entrance porch of feature 7



AP 2 – Aerial photograph taken 28th May 1947 – visible features 3-5 with soil marks of in filled anti-tank ditch.



AP 3 – Aerial photograph taken 28th May 1947. Visible feature 5 and clear location of 6&7, with soil marks of in filled anti-tank ditch.



AP 4 – Aerial photograph taken 15th July 1972. Visible features 3-5, with soil mark of in filled anti-tank ditch.



AP 5 – Aerial photography taken 19th May 1975. Visible features 3-6, in filled anti-tank ditch can be seen from soil marks, connecting the different features.