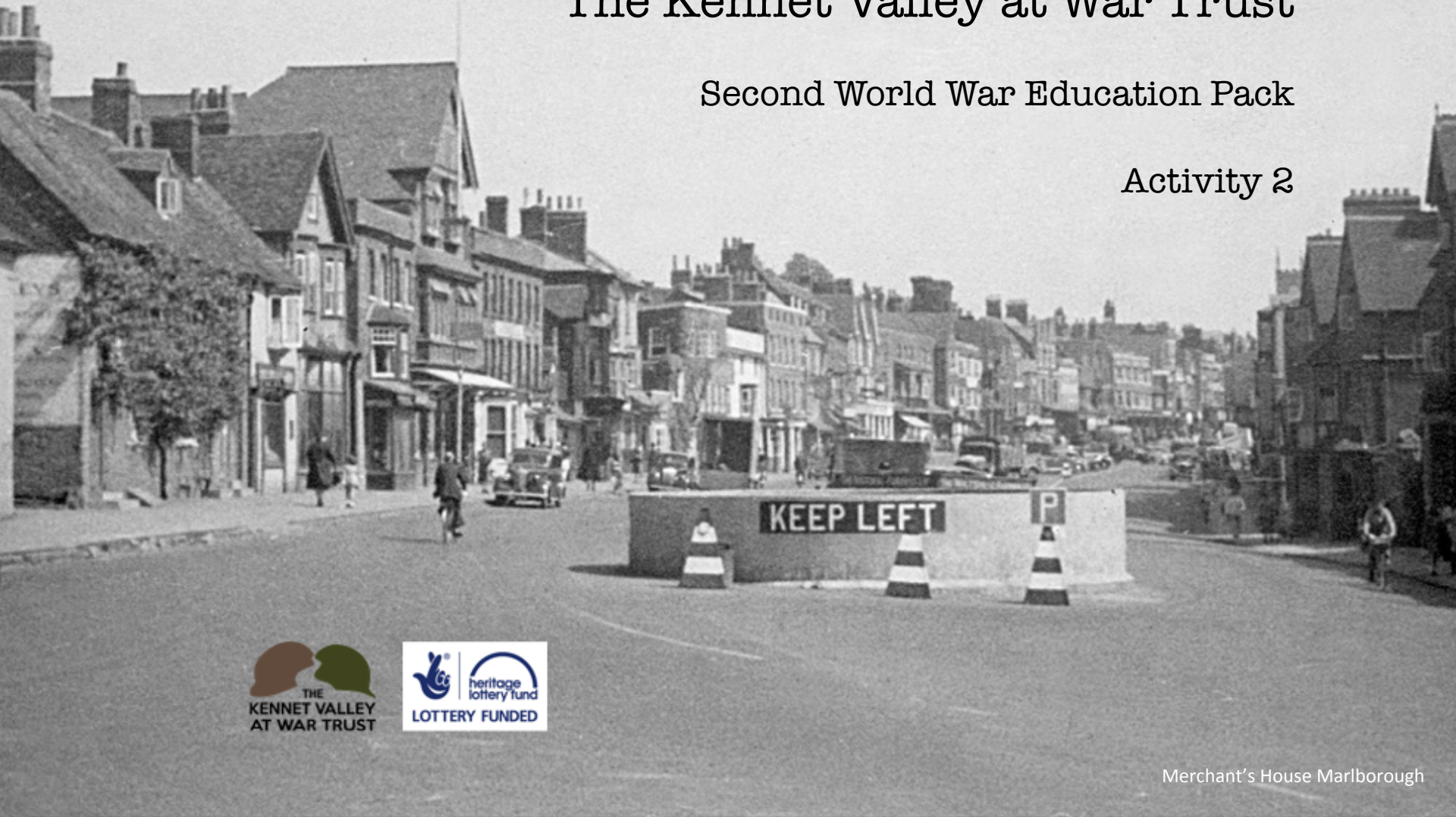


The Kennet Valley at War Trust

Second World War Education Pack

Activity 2



Note to teachers...

This basic slide pack has been prepared for you to use with the Kennet Valley at War Trust's Second World War Education Pack.

Please adapt it to meet your own needs.

How to use the Education Pack

The Education Pack is in two parts: background information and a set of classroom activity plans for teachers; and original images and texts, to be used with those plans.

The activities, which are principally designed for pupils aged between 9 and 14, can be adapted to suit older or younger students who are studying the history of their local area. Each activity includes background information, helpful ideas, and links to curriculum subjects and additional online resources. These can be used in lessons or as part of a larger cross curriculum project.

Slide packs, for use with each activity, can be downloaded from: www.kennetvalleyatwar.co.uk

The activities show what can be achieved with the resources provided, and should be used to develop your own ideas and lesson plans.

As you do so, remember that the pack is about the men and women of the Kennet Valley and those British and American soldiers, airmen and airwomen who were based there, and who lived through the momentous events of the Second World War, and whose sacrifices helped to make the Allied victory possible.

This is their story.



British fighter pilots running for their aircraft,
1940



(© IWM HU 49253)

Activity 2: the defence of Britain

'Operation Sea Lion' was the name given to the German's plan to invade Britain across the English Channel during the Second World War. In response, from May 1940, the rapid construction of fortifications quickly transformed the countryside, especially southern England, into an armed camp.

Lying across a likely German attack route, the natural obstacle provided by the Kennet and Avon Canal was reinforced with a series of concrete pill boxes, anti-tank barriers and reinforced road blocks. Local towns and villages were also fortified against potential attack.

Wilf Atkins, aged 54, is a builder by day and a member of the Home Guard by night. He has been asked to design and build a pill box to defend crossings over the Kennet and Avon Canal near Hungerford.



Defending Britain, December 1940

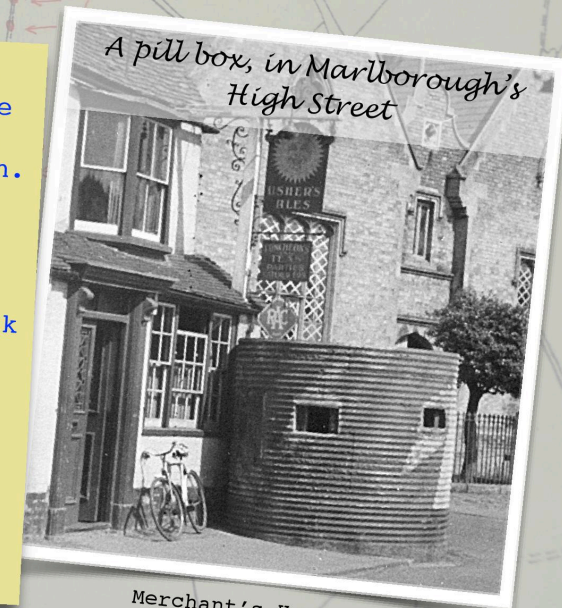
© IWM H5844

Background image: a Home Guard map of Great Bedwyn (Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre)

Using sources C, D and E, ask your pupils to investigate the plans for defending the local area against a German invasion.

Divide the class into pairs; ask each pair to design and build a model pill box using the art materials provided. Ask older children to think about the impact of these and other defences (for example, road blocks) on the lives of those living in the local area.

Get them to discuss their findings.



A pill box, in Marlborough's High Street

Merchant's House Marlborough

Age range: 7-14

Curriculum links: Art and Design, English and History

Learning objectives: study authentic resources about defending the Kennet Valley against a potential German attack during 1940 and design and build a model pill box

Defending Britain, December 1940



A Home Guard map of Great Bedwyn



Great Bedwyn 5 MEN PLATOON H.Q.

POST BETWEEN YEW HEDGE & DITCH IN KERR'S YARD 308

LEWIS GUN POST IN KERR'S YARD 307

RESERVE POST OPPOSITE COUNCIL HOUSES 304

POST ON CROFTON RD. COVERING MILL BRIDGE 302
1 LEWIS GUN TEAM, 2 MEN & 4 MEN

301 HAYRICK PILLBOX

6 MEN STATION BRIDGE 310

STATION BRIDGE 309

4 MEN POST WEST OF STATION BRIDGE & COVERING STATION BRIDGE

305 CHURCH BRIDGE

PILLBOX COVERING CHURCH BRIDGE
SUMMER OBSERVATION HUT 1 MAN

303 MILL BRIDGE

BRAIL FARM

312 2 MEN

SWING BRIDGE 311

3 HIGH TREES COVEYGRE COPSE 1 MAN

Castle Copse

Jockey Copse



A pill box in Marlborough's High Street

Source C: the German's invade France



(German Federal Archive)

By 1940, the German's had harnessed technology to wage a revolutionary new form of 'lightning warfare': Blitzkrieg.

The use of radio allowed Wehrmacht commanders to move freely around the battlefield, enabling them to take control of the situation from the front. Improved tank firepower, mobility and protection, and the integrated use of ground-attack aircraft instead of artillery, also permitted inspirational

panzer leaders, such as General Heinz Guderian, to operate at a higher tempo and defeat their opponents.

On 12th May 1940, following a quiet period known as the 'Phoney War', the German's launched a surprise attack through southern Belgium into France, shattering the Allied front, leading to a rapid collapse in the French defences. Winston Churchill ordered the evacuation of the British Army from Dunkirk, and between 27th May and 4th June 1940 338,226 British and French soldiers were rescued from the beaches.

Had they invaded, the Germans would have used the same tactics in Britain.



General Heinz Guderian during the Battle for France

(German Federal Archive)

Links to articles about Second World War battles:

www.historylearningsite.co.uk and spartacus-educational.com

General Heinz
Guderian during
the Battle for
France



A German Panzer III Tank





Stukas over Poland, 1939

Source D: Ironside's Stop Line

Britain's defences - constructed in 1940 under the direction of General Ironside - consisting of lines of concrete pillboxes and anti-tank obstacles, were the country's last line of defence against the German panzers had they invaded.

Stop Line Blue ran along the Kennet and Avon Canal as far as Reading. Built from reinforced concrete and brick, many pillboxes have survived, and can still be seen alongside the Canal.

Useful links

Anti-invasion defences www.pillbox-study-group.org.uk

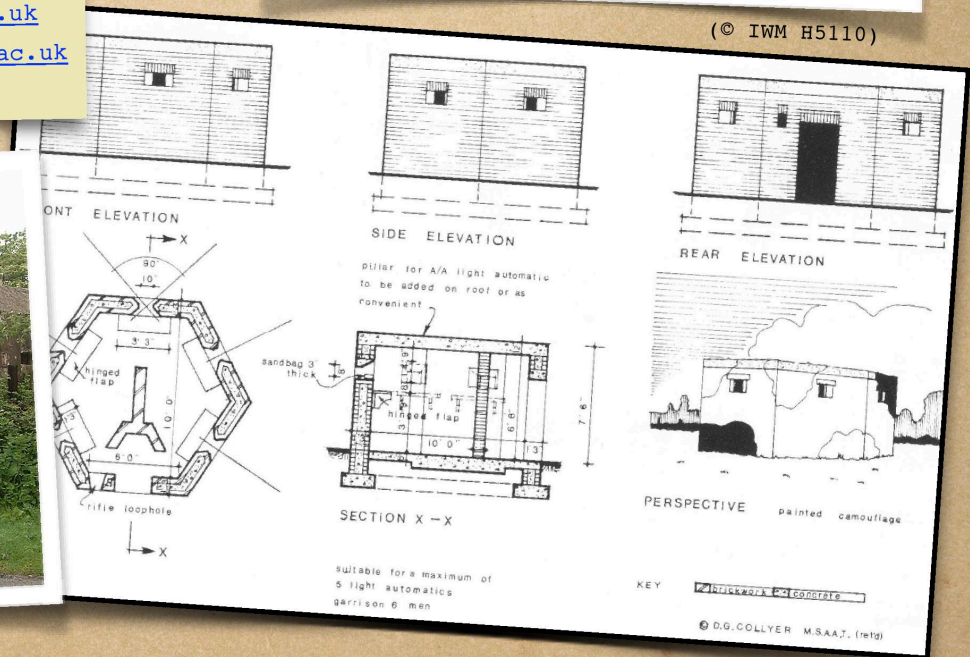
Defence of Britain Project archaeologydataservice.ac.uk

Marlborough War Walk www.kennetvalleyatwar.co.uk



Inside a pillbox

(© IWM H5110)

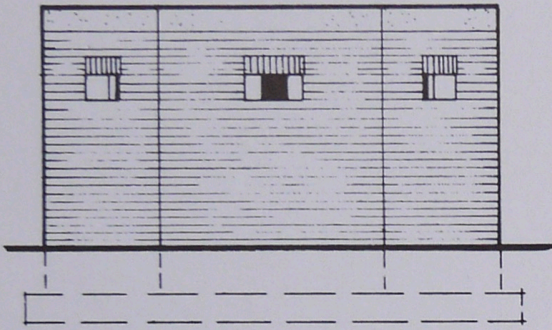


© D.G. COLLYER M.S.A.A.T. (retd)

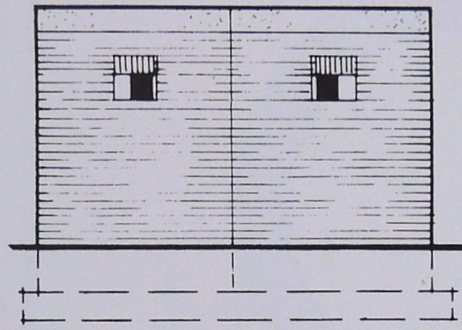
(© H Wills)

Dunmill Pillbox, near Hungerford

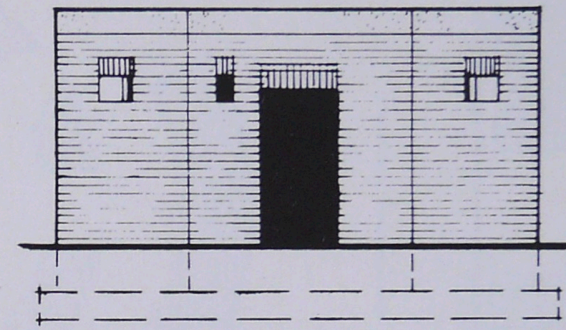




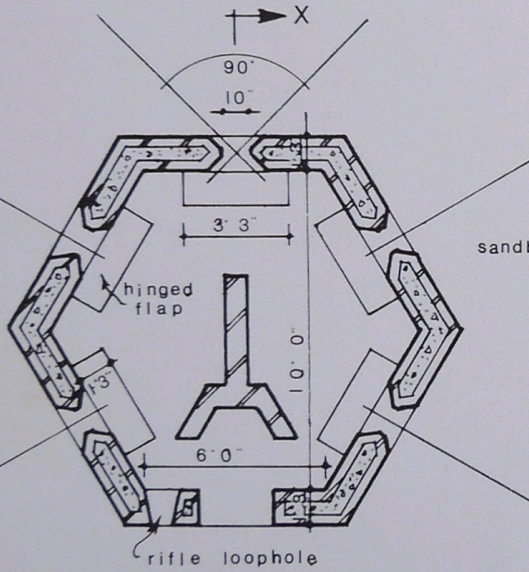
FRONT ELEVATION



SIDE ELEVATION

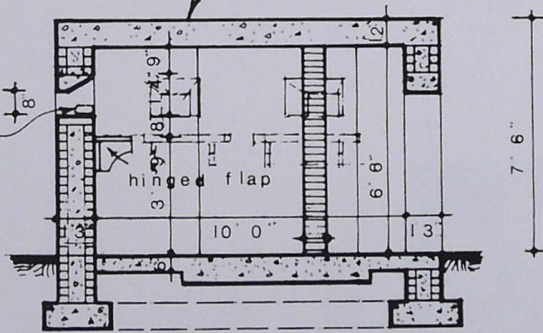


REAR ELEVATION



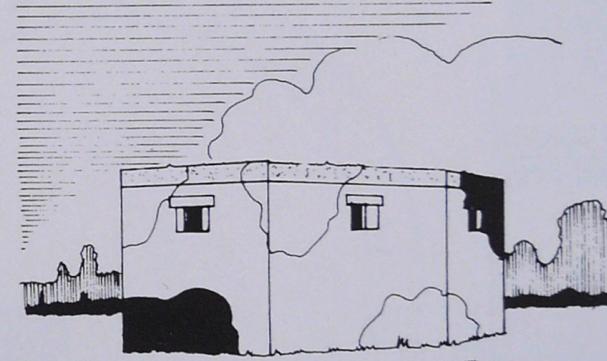
PLAN

pillar for A/A light automatic to be added on roof or as convenient



SECTION X - X

suitable for a maximum of 5 light automatics
garrison 6 men



PERSPECTIVE painted camouflage

KEY brickwork concrete

© D.G. COLLYER M.S.A.A.T. (retd)

STRONG POSTS & PILLBOXES

TYPE 22

Inside a pillbox



Source E: the Home Guard

The Local Defence Volunteer Force, later renamed the Home Guard, was created on the 14th May 1940 to protect Britain from invasion.

By the end of 1940 1.5 million men and boys had volunteered - and almost every town or village in the Kennet Valley would have had its own Home Guard detachment.

In Marlborough, the boys of Marlborough College were asked to volunteer, and those over 17 years - with their parents permission - joined the local unit: The 6th (Marlborough) Battalion of the Wiltshire Home Guard.

Initially armed with a few rifles and some obsolete anti-tank weapons, they were later taught sabotage and guerrilla warfare.

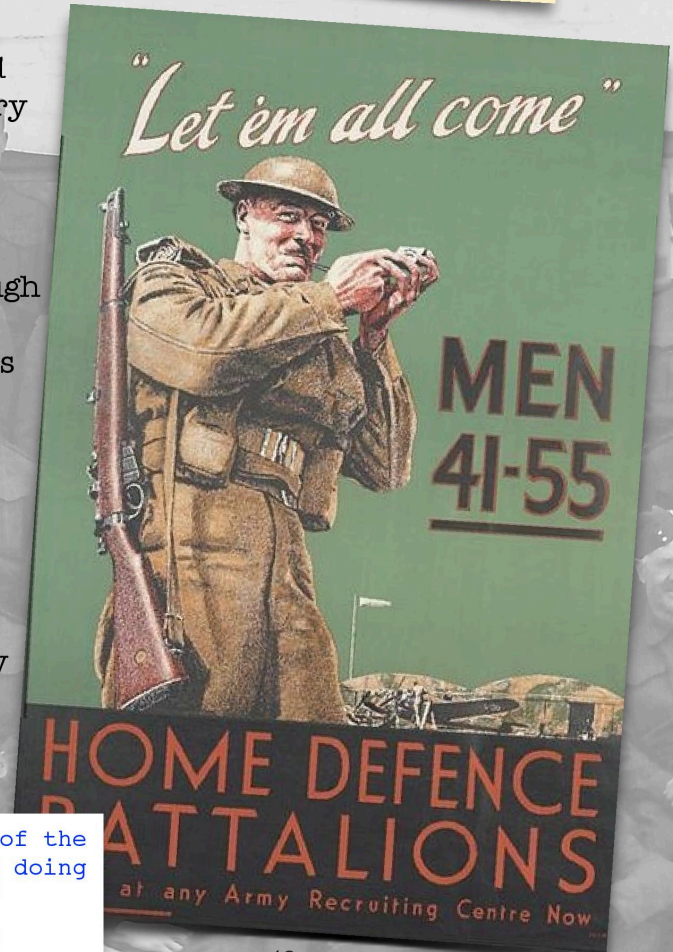
"Summer 1940 was an exciting time at the College, not only because of the situation in the country, but because, although schoolboys, we were doing a man's job and playing a full part in the defence of the country."

John Wilson, a student at Marlborough College, writing in June 1997

Links to articles on the Home Guard
www.primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk/war and
www.historylearningsite.co.uk



(© IWM D4355)



(© IWM Art.IWM PST 14618)

Background image: Hungerford Home Guard Platoon (Roger Day)



Roger Day

Hungerford Home Guard Platoon

“Summer 1940 was an exciting time at the College, not only because of the situation in the country, but because, although schoolboys, we were doing a man’s job and playing a full part in the defence of the country.”

John Wilson, a student at Marlborough College, writing in June 1997

"Let 'em all come"



MEN
41-55

HOME DEFENCE
BATTALIONS

Apply at any Army Recruiting Centre Now



