

# Newbury War Walk



Photo A



Photo B

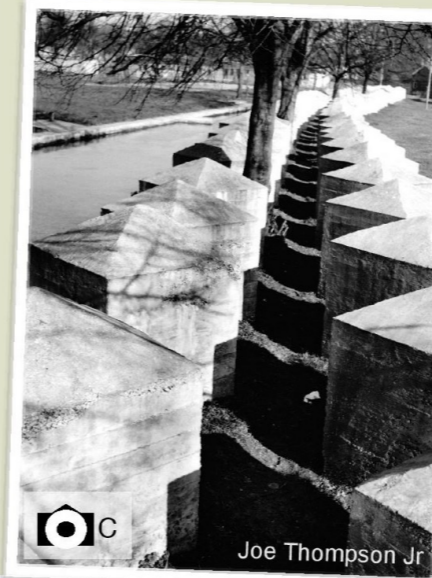


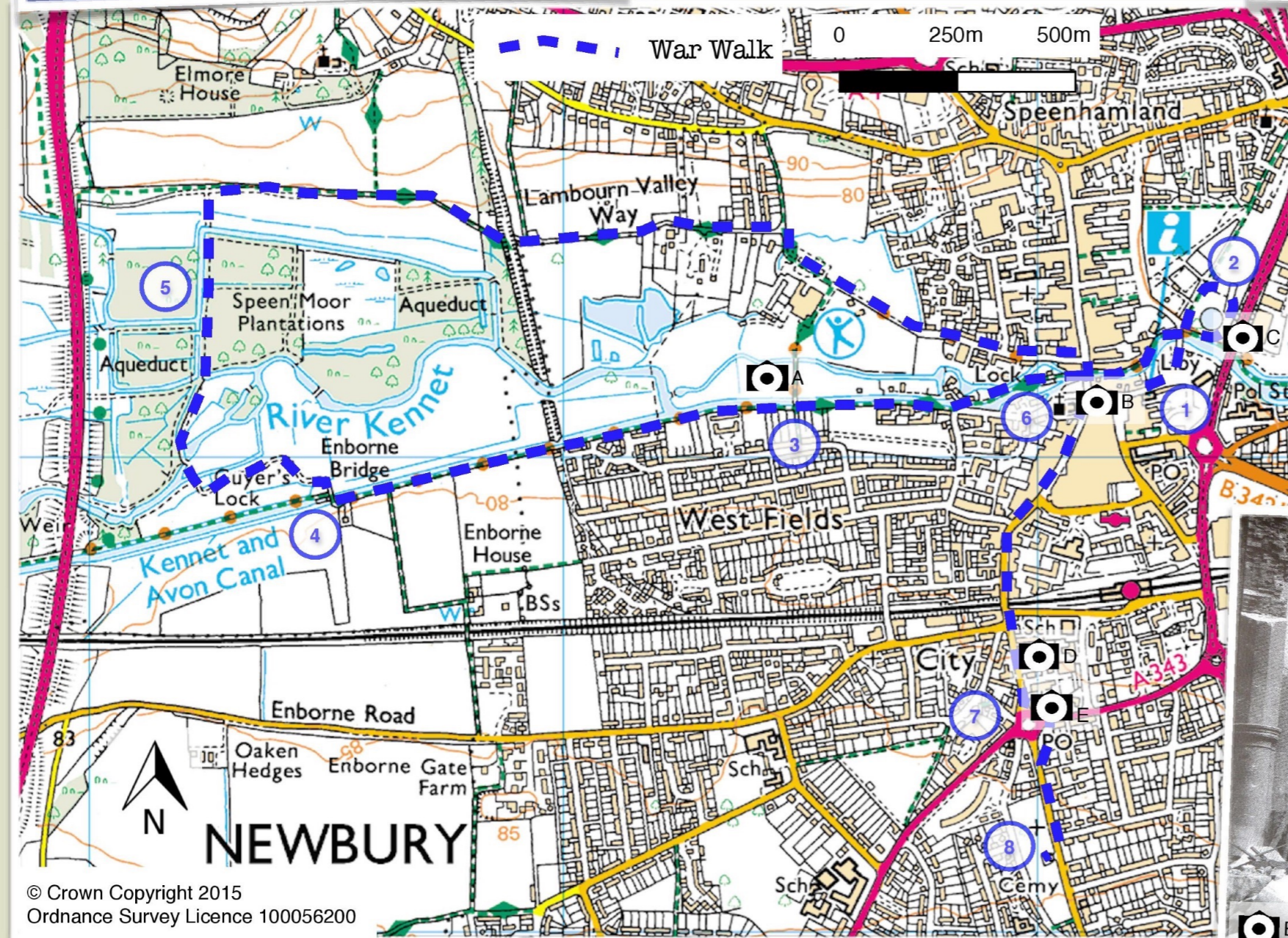
Photo C

Joe Thompson Jr

**Photo A:** A hexagonal Type 22 pillbox, adjacent to the Northcroft foot bridge. One of several hundred similar fortifications built in 1940 and early 1941 to guard crossings over the Kennet and Avon Canal

**Photo B:** Dedicated on 1 October 1922, Newbury's war memorial carries the names of those who fell in both World Wars

**Photo C:** Photographed in 1944, these concrete 'dragon's teeth' anti-tank defences now lie buried beneath the dual carriageway which borders the eastern edge of Victoria Park



© Crown Copyright 2015  
Ordnance Survey Licence 100056200



Photo D

US National Archives

**Photo D:** Two bewildered ladies stand amid the ruins of St. Bartholomew's almshouses on Newtown Road (now the site of the Fairclose Day Centre), destroyed by the same German aircraft which struck St. John's Church on the 10th February 1943. The bomber attacked from the south with machine guns and bombs, strafing Monks Lane, Chandos Road, Newtown Road, the Railway Station and Market Street



Photo E

HH Dennis & JR Hole

**Photo E:** The Sanctuary and Altar of St. John's Church, photographed in February 1943. The church was destroyed by a German Dornier 217E-4 bomber which attacked Newbury at 4.40pm on the afternoon of Wednesday 10th February 1943. Some 265 buildings were destroyed or damaged. Fifteen people lost their lives and 25 were seriously injured in the raid, most of them at the Southampton Terrace houses (marked by the memorial garden, opposite St. John's Church), St. Bartholomew's almshouses and the Senior Council School

Four miles; pavement, canal towpath and other paths; some mud after rain; two hours



...to visit the West Berkshire Museum, at the start of the walk (open 10.00am to 4.00pm Wednesday to Sunday, and Bank Holiday Mondays)... and the site of the former Second World War and NATO airfield at Greenham Common, on the outskirts of Newbury (park in the marked car park on the edge of the old airfield: SU 485 682)

Don't Forget...

West Berkshire Museum, The Wharf, Newbury, West Berkshire, RG14 5AS: SU 472 671

### Start

Ordnance Survey Explorer Series, number 158 (Newbury and Hungerford), 1:25,000

### Maps

SATNAV: Northbrook Street, Newbury, West Berkshire, RG14 1DD

Car: park in one of Newbury's many car parks (charges apply)

Bus: call Traveline (0870 608 2608) for details or visit [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info)

Rail: the nearest mainline station is at Newbury

### How to get there

## Getting There



## Newbury



Newbury, 1944

Joe Thompson Jr

## War Walk

[www.kennetvalleyatwar.co.uk](http://www.kennetvalleyatwar.co.uk)



Library of Congress

General Eisenhower addresses American paratroopers at Greenham Common Airfield, on the outskirts of Newbury, at 8.50pm on 5th June 1944; as they prepare to board aircraft bound for France.



LOTTERY FUNDED

## Useful contacts

Kennet Valley at War Trust  
[www.kennetvalleyatwar.co.uk](http://www.kennetvalleyatwar.co.uk)

Newbury visitor information  
<http://www.visitnewbury.org.uk>

West Berkshire Museum, Newbury  
Telephone: 01635 519562

## The Walk

From the West Berkshire Museum (number 1' on the map) walk north east through the car park and cross the Kennet and Avon Canal by the 'American Bridge' (named after its wartime predecessor, built to an American approved design, which crossed the canal here until it was replaced in 2001). Turn immediately right and enter Victoria Park (2). Look out for the information board which describes the Park's history. Having explored the Park, turn west and walk along the canal towpath for 850m until you reach the Northcroft foot-bridge (3), where you can get a good view of a Type 23 pillbox.

Continue west along the towpath for a further 1km, and cross the canal by the canal bridge adjacent to Lock Number 84 (4). Can you spot the pillbox just north of the lock, hidden by overgrowth? Follow the path marked 'Speen Moors Walk', initially north (5) then east, for 3km until you reach Northbrook Street. Turn right and head south. Cross the canal and continue along Bartholomew Street, passing the town's war memorial (6) on your right and, after 500m, cross the railway line. Continue south along Newtown Road for 200m until you reach St. John's Church - rebuilt in the 1950s - on your left (7). Cross St. John's Road and explore the memorial gardens which mark the site of the terraced houses destroyed by a German bomber in 1943.

The entrance to Newtown Road Cemetery (8), and the end of the walk is a further 200m south along Newtown Road. Retrace your steps to the town centre.



Look out for the grave of Sergeant A W Pryke, Air Gunner, Royal Air Force, in the Newtown Road Cemetery - one of nineteen graves maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Sergeant Pryke died on 27th October 1942. The inscription on his headstone, probably chosen and paid for by his next of kin, captures the mood of the time:

“Tell England, all ye who pass by, I died for her, and here I lie content”.

## Enjoy the countryside

This War Walk follows public rights of way or roads, and is generally easy going.

Many rights of way cross private land, and we ask you to keep to the paths and be responsible when using them.

Please wear suitable clothing and footwear, and take care when crossing roads. Leave gates and property as you find them, take your litter home, protect plants and animals, keep dogs under control and consider other people.

Stretching from Semington in West Wiltshire to Thrale in West Berkshire, Stop Line Blue had several hundred fortified structures along its length, many on the north bank of the canal. Built in less than a year, they would have been occupied by members of the Home Guard, armed with small arms and 2-pounder anti tank guns to take on the invading tanks. Thankfully they were never used in anger.

Silent reminders of the Second World War, many pillboxes can still be seen along the length of the Kennet and Avon Canal.

After the British defeat at Dunkirk in May 1940, Britain found itself on the front line of the war against Nazi Germany, and was faced with the prospect of imminent invasion. To counter this threat, defences were hastily erected along the lines of natural features and obstacles such as canals, rivers and railway lines. Sitting astride the Kennet and Avon Canal and the River Kennet, and the major road and rail communication routes between Reading in the east and Bath in the west, Newbury found itself in the summer of 1940 at the centre of Stop Line Blue - a line of concrete anti-tank obstacles, pillboxes and gun emplacements, and defended villages and towns, designed to stop the German armoured columns “cutting loose” in Britain, as they had in France.