

Channel Tunnel Rail Link
Union Railways (South) Ltd

PILL BOXES AT TUTT HILL, WESTWELL LEACON, NR CHARING, KENT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

NGR: TQ 9725 4688 and TQ 9737 4677

CTRL Contract Ref: S/400/SP/0008/P481

Environmental Statement Route Window 30



Oxford Archaeological Unit
August 2000

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OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
August 2000

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

Summary

Two World War II Pill Boxes were recorded in advance of their demolition prior to the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. The two shuttered concrete structures were built as part of the World War II 1940 defence strategy protecting the country from invasion. They were specifically designed to protect the nearby Maidstone to London railway line. The buildings are examples of the 'Type 24' Pill Box. The six sided structures have one doorway, facing south-west, flanked by two windows. The remaining walls all have a central window providing all round visibility. A brick baffle structure, protecting the doorway and dividing the internal space was largely intact in Pill Box A and had been removed from Pill Box B, but was visible in outline on the ceiling.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned by Union Railways (South) Limited (URS) to undertake the archaeological recording of two pill boxes at Tutt Hill, Westwell Leacon, Kent (NGR: TQ 9725 4688 and TQ 9737 4677) in advance of the demolition of the structures prior to the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (Figure 1). Although no recording was required as a condition of planning consent, URS considered it appropriate to carry out a Royal Commission Level 2 record of the structures before their demolition.
- 1.2 The current recording work formed part of an extensive programme of archaeological investigation and historic building recording work carried out in advance of the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL).

2 RECORDING STRATEGY

- 2.1 The Level 2 record was made on the 31st March 1999. This consisted of a written description of both the interior and exterior of the pill boxes together with a black and white negative and colour slide photographic record of the same. Plans of both of the structures were also produced at 1:20, with 1:10 details of the window types seen in the buildings.

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Pill Boxes form part of the World War II defence strategy of Britain. The German offensive against France and the Low Countries in 1940 led to the fear of invasion and prompted a defence strategy set up under General Sir Edmund Ironside (Saunders, 1989, 215-216). As part of this programme, networks of Pill Boxes were constructed to house machine guns and anti-tank guns and to provide maximum protection to the Home Guard who manned the structures. The lines of defence followed points of weakness and strategic importance such as coastal areas, railways, roads, canals and rivers. The design of the structures made use of shuttered concrete construction techniques and so the buildings were quick, easy and cheap to build – essential qualities in a war-time economy.

4 ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

- 4.1 The two Pill Boxes will be referred to as A and B and Figure 1 shows their relative location. Plans of the buildings are provided in Figure 2 and the buildings are illustrated with a selection of plates taken from the photographic archive (Plates 1-6). The pill boxes are of the same construction type and so will be described together. Pill Box designs have been nationally classified and the two discussed here are examples of 'Type 24' classification. Figure 3 is taken from Henry Wills national study of the structures and shows the characteristics of the Type 24 construction (Wills, 1985, 31). Although the Wills example is brick rendered and the window design is slightly different, Pill Boxes A and B clearly follow this basic design, as the plans made during the survey demonstrate (Figure 2).
- 4.2 The buildings are of shuttered concrete construction with internal steel rod reinforcement. Shuttering marks are clearly visible as vertical planking internally and horizontal planking externally. In Pill Box A a break in the shuttering impressions is seen internally c0.55m from the floor suggesting that the structure was built in two lifts; foundations and footings and then walling and roof. The concrete ceiling (0.34m thick) also shows plank impressions. The six sided structures have one doorway facing south (Plates 1, 2 & 5). The doorway is flanked by a window to either side. In Pill Box A these are window type AA and in Pill Box B they are type CC (Refer to Figure 2 for window types). These windows differ from those in the other walls of the structures and on Figure 3 are labelled as rifle loopholes. The remaining walls are all pieced by a central window (Type BB). The window sills are generally 1.28m above the earth floor and the windows are 0.3m in height. Window type AA have a lower sill at 1.09m from the floor. The openings themselves are 0.17m wide with splays both internally and externally. Pill Box A is 1.8m in height externally and due to a slightly subterranean floor internally floor to ceiling heights are 1.91m.
- 4.3 Partially intact in Pill Box A is a central brick feature (Figure 2; Plates 3 - 4). The 'Y-shaped construction is designed to protect the entrance and also divides the internal space. It is clearly an original feature rising from floor to ceiling. The eastern arm of the structure has been demolished but the footings remained. In Pill Box B the entire structure has been removed, presumably to allow later use of the structure as an animal shelter (Plate 6). The scar of the brick baffle is visible on the ceiling.
- 4.4 In Pill Box A a central drainage channel is visible at floor level in the northern wall. A further feature common to both the Pill Boxes and seen in every wall are two vertical slits in the shuttered concrete filled with timber blocks. The blocks are below the windows and presumably were for attaching the hinged flaps marked in Figure 3. These flaps must have been ledges for resting machine guns on when keeping watch and defending the Pill Box.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The Pill Boxes at Tutt Hill form part of the 1940 defence strategy of war-time Britain and are located to protect the railway, an important transport and communication artery. The two shuttered concrete structures are typical examples of the 'Type 24' Pill Box construction of the national classification system.

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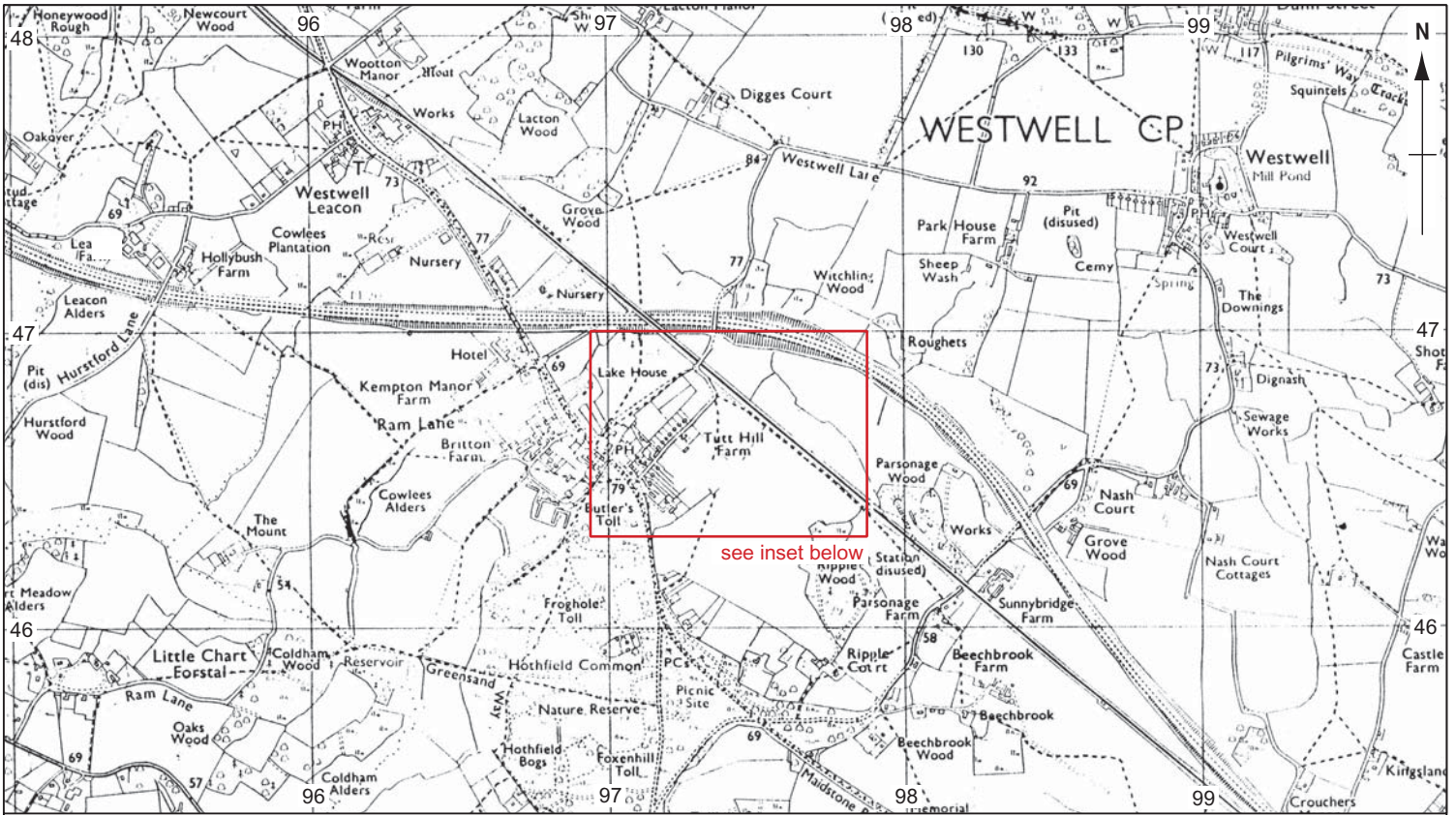


Bibliography

- Wills, H 1985: *Pill Boxes: A Study of UK Defences 1940*
- Saunders, A 1989: *Fortress Britain*

Appendix A: NMR Data

Site Name: Pill Boxes at Tutt Hill, Westwell Leacon, Charing
Parish: Westwell
County: Kent
NGR: A: TQ 9725 4688
B: TQ 9737 4677
Listed Status: Not listed
Visit/Survey Date: 31st March 1999
OAU Site Code: ARC TPB 99



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Scale 1: 25,000

Scale 1:5000

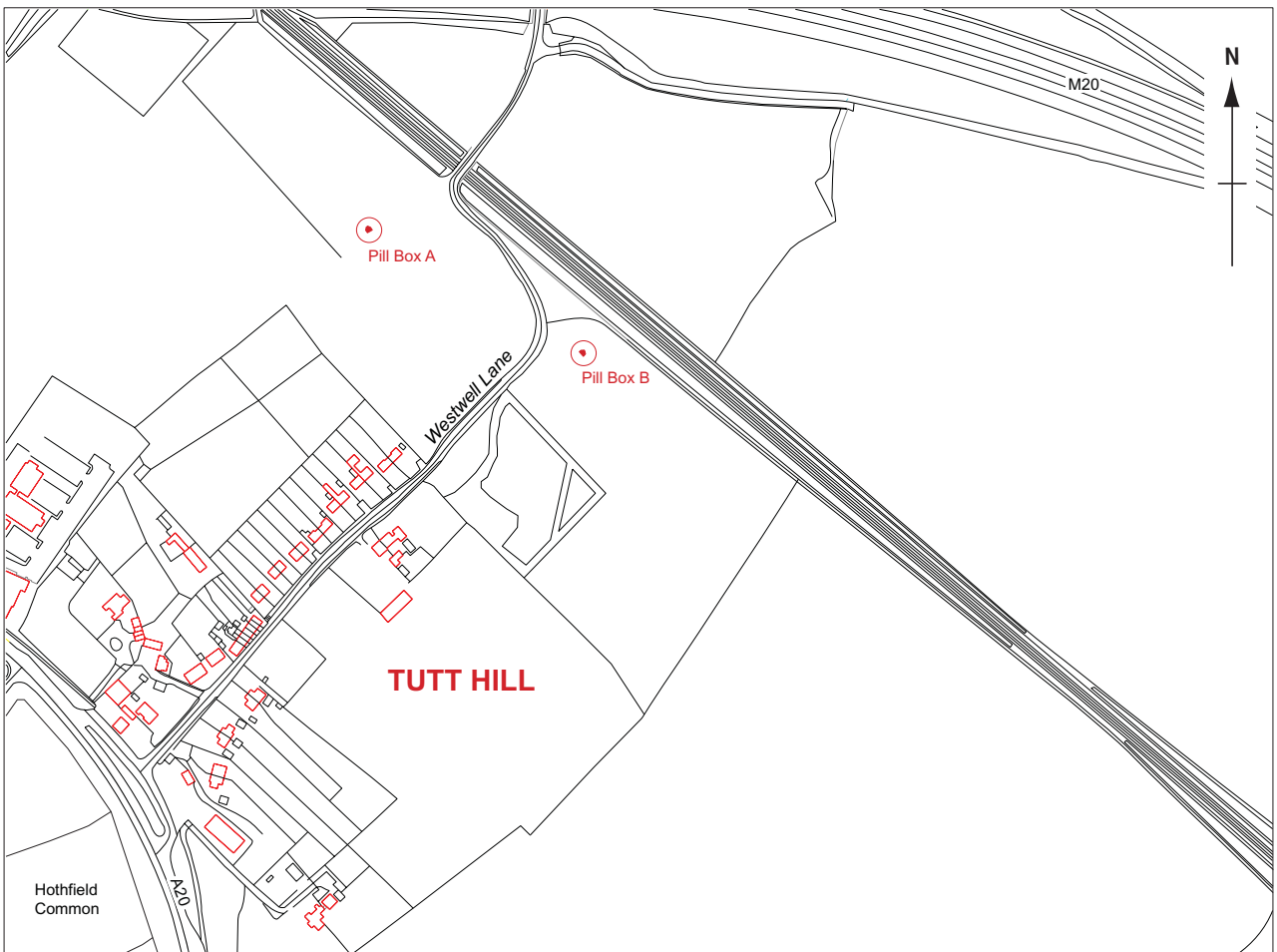
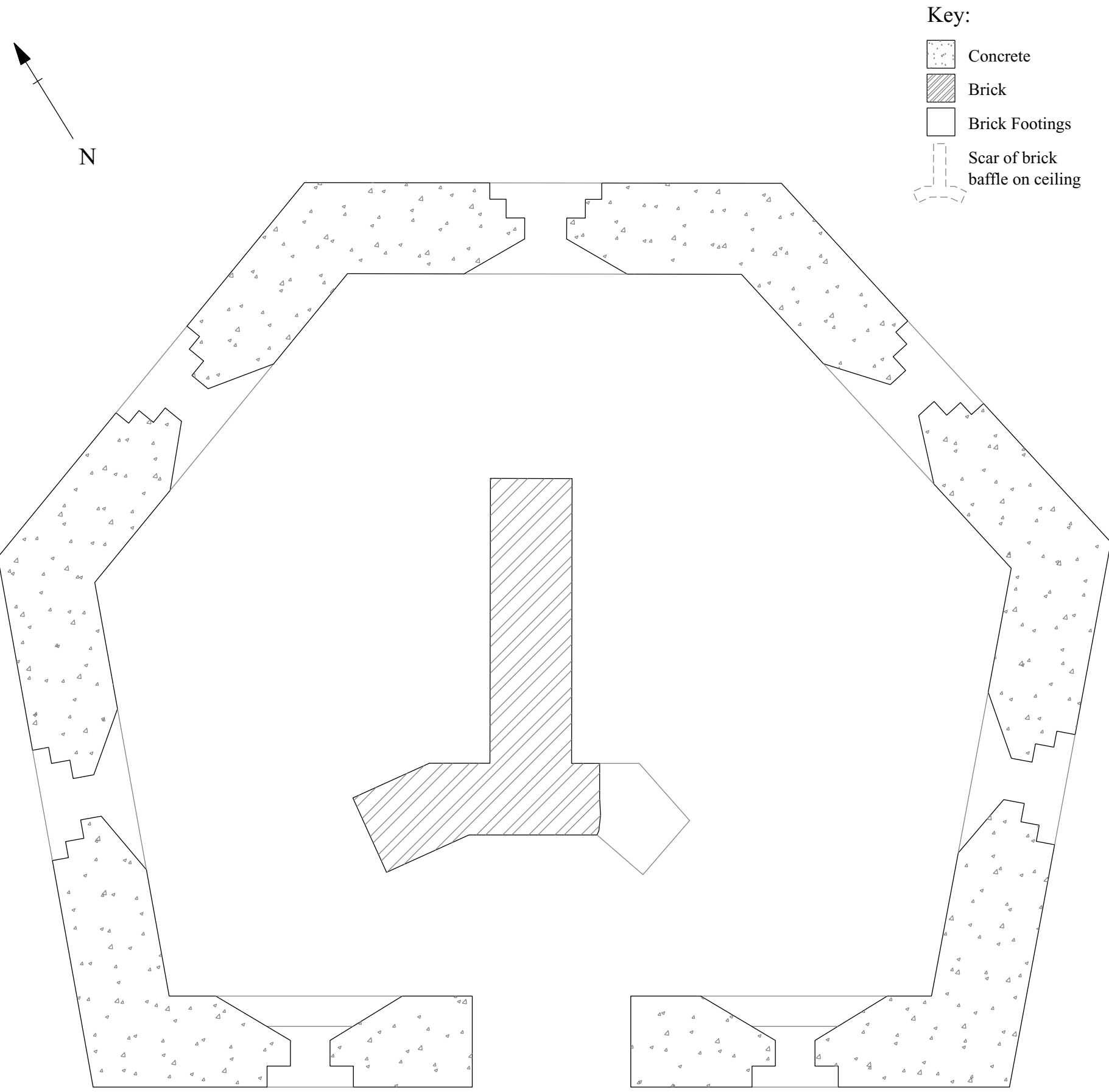
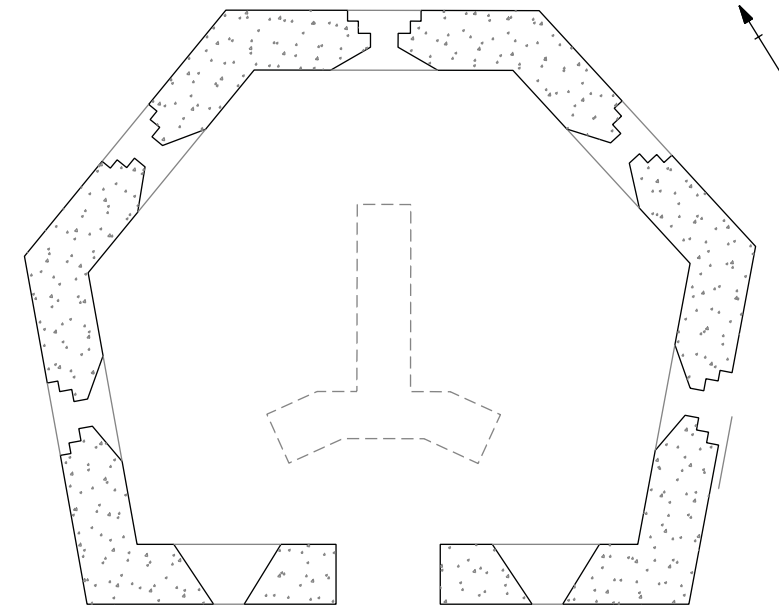
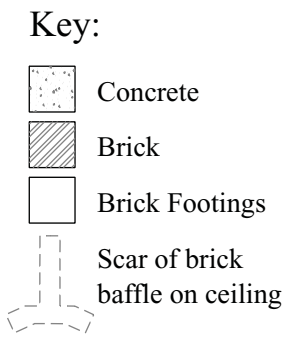
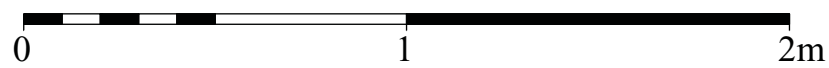


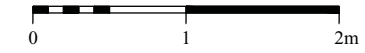
Figure 1: Location Plans



Pill Box A (1:20)



Pill Box B (1:50)



Window types (1:20)

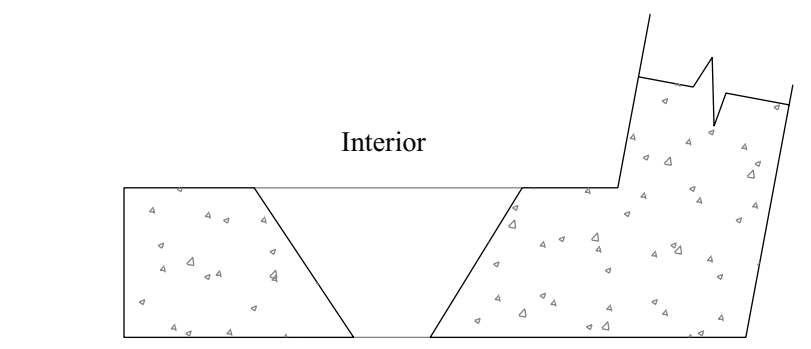
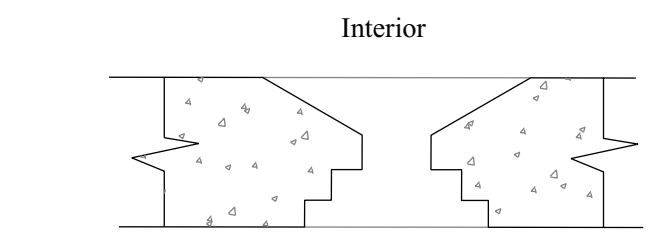
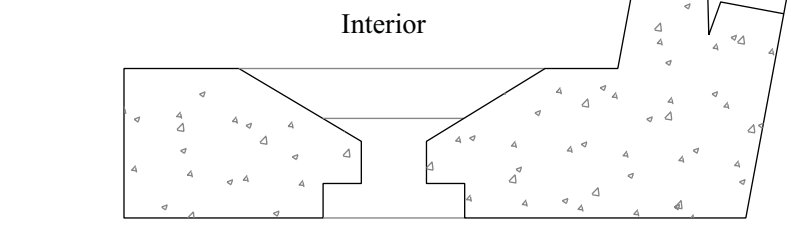


Figure 2: Plans of the Tutt Hill Pill Boxes

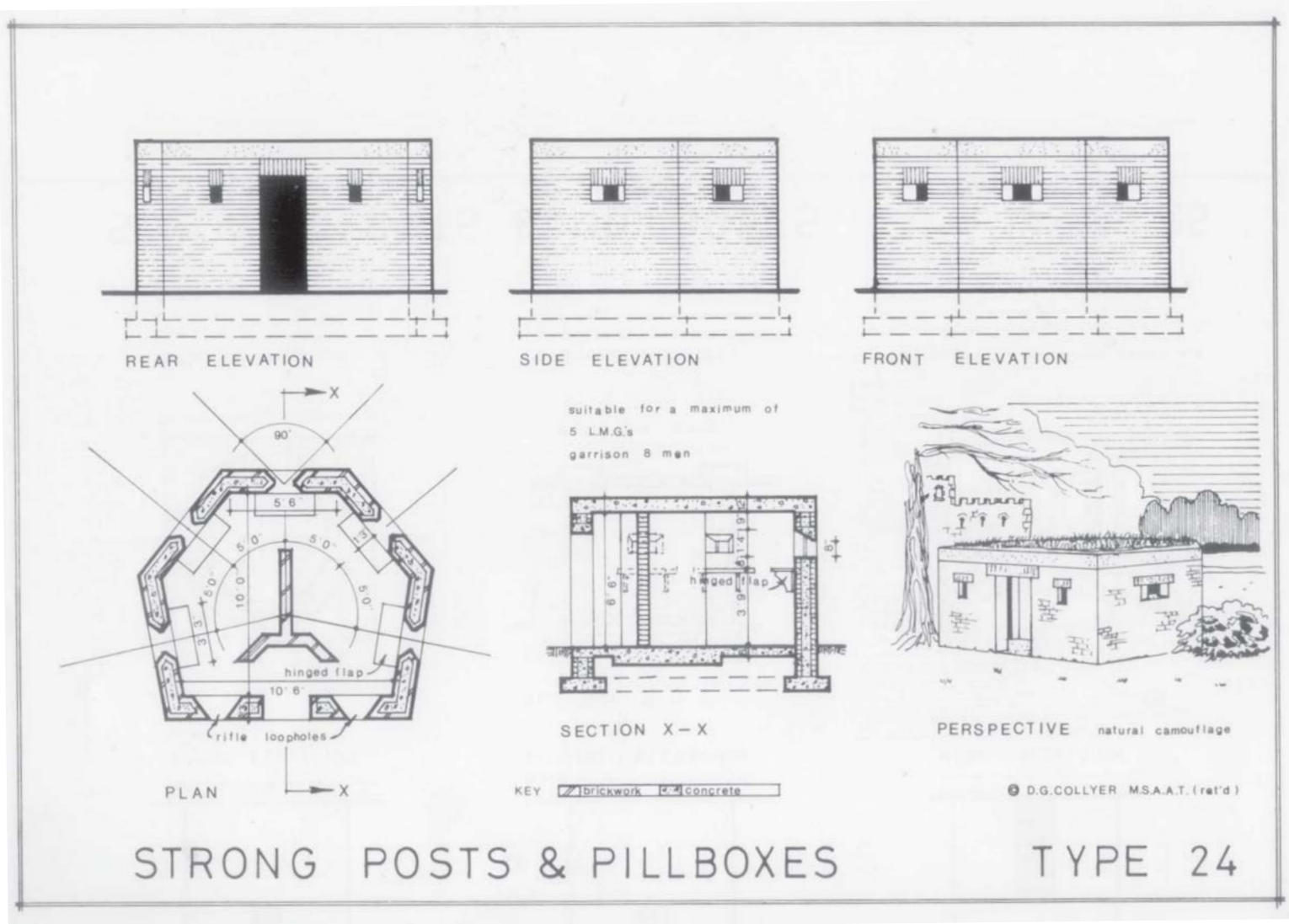


Figure 3: Typical Features of a 'Type 24' Pill Box (taken from Wills, 1985, 31)



Plate 1: Pill Box A, south-west elevation

Plate 2: Pill Box A, south-east elevation





Plate 5: Pill Box B, south-west elevation

Plate 6: Interior of Pill Box B





Plate 3: Partially demolished brick baffle in Pill Box A

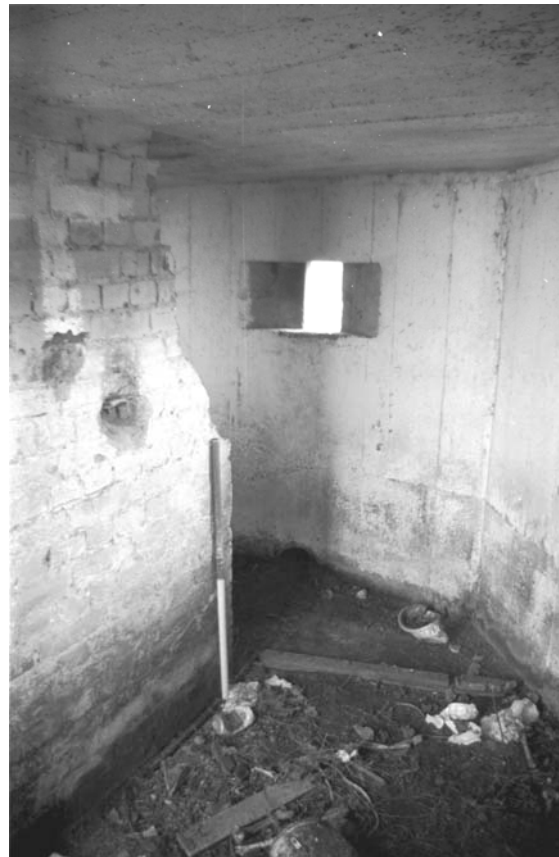


Plate 4: Interior of Pill Box A