

# Case Name: World War 1 Practice Trenches, Tolsford Hill, Saltwood, Kent

**Case Number: 1460165**

## Background

Historic England has received an application to schedule the buried and earthwork remains of First World War practice trenches at Tolsford Hill in Kent.

## Asset(s) under Assessment

Facts about the asset(s) can be found in the Annex(es) to this report.

Annex	List Entry Number	Name	Heritage Category	HE Recommendation
1	1463181	World War I Practice Trenches, Tolsford Hill	Scheduling	Add to Schedule

## Visits

Date	Visit Type
15 February 2019	Full inspection

## Context

The application site occupies the plateau of a chalk ridge known as Tolsford Hill Down, which runs in an east/west direction. The trenches are approximately 1km north-east of the site of West Sandling Camp, and approximately 900m north of the site of East Sandling Camp, both undesignated and both of which used Tolsford for training. The neighbouring protected assets are largely of prehistoric date, and include four scheduled barrows on Tolsford Hill (Schedule entries 1012271, 1012275 and 1012269) situated between the two largest groups of training trenches. The site is also located 440m west of Beachborough Park which comprises three Grade II listed structures (List entries 1061082, 1061083 and 1344194).

There are no live planning cases associated with the site at the time of this assessment (2019).

## Assessment

### CONSULTATION

The Ministry of Defence (MOD), the owner of the neighbouring land, the applicant, the local authority, the County archaeologist and local Historic Environment Record (HER) were all invited to comment on the facts of the case. The owner of the land which borders the field within which the trenches are located confirmed the extent of his land ownership. A meeting on site with MOD representatives was undertaken and the MOD also confirmed that the trenches are located within land which they own. The County Archaeologist responded providing additional information on the HER, which has been incorporated into the Schedule entry where appropriate.

No further consultation responses were received.

### DISCUSSION

The 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act states that monuments are scheduled by reason of their national importance and also their archaeological, historic, architectural, artistic or traditional interest. The Department of Digital Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) policy statement entitled 'Scheduled Monuments and Nationally Important but Non-Scheduled Monuments' (October 2013) sets out current Government policy on the identification, protection, conservation and investigation of nationally important ancient monuments. The statement includes and defines non-statutory criteria which should be considered when sites are being assessed for scheduling. These include: period; rarity; survival/condition; potential; documentation and finds; diversity; fragility and group value.

Further guidance is to be found in our Scheduling Selection Guide on Military Sites Post-1500 (September 2018) which notes that Britain's military sites are eloquent witnesses to the impact of world events on our national story. They also represent the importance of the armed forces in the history of both nation and empire. Military sites have a very wide range of functions: there are both offensive and defensive structures, as well as supporting military infrastructure such as barracks, administrative sites, prisoner of war camps and factories. The First World War (1914-1918), known until the Second World War as 'the Great War', was fought on land, at sea and in the air across the globe. Fighting overwhelmingly took place abroad, so the domestic military structures of this war are largely (but not exclusively) related to training and supply. Mass-enlistment and (from 1916) conscription on a massive scale was a further feature of the First World War, necessitating training facilities and camps for troops prior to their embarkation for the Front. Such ephemeral sites have often left few visual marks above ground, but can be understood through buried archaeology. Alongside camps with a training function, other training facilities also survive such as practice trenches or ranges. Such C20 trench complexes are worthy of consideration and the challenges of precise dating (examples survive from both the world wars) and of having sufficient information to understand their function (whether as training facilities or as anti-invasion defences) are key factors of their significance, as are their legibility and relationship with other complexes.

Both the Schedule entry for the 'WW1 Practice trenches 740m north-west of Short Fell' near Rochester, Northumberland (Schedule entry:1021025), and the Historic England research undertaken at Old Oswestry, Shropshire, note that these features are rare survivals of their type. Further research commissioned by Historic England in 2015 has highlighted that training trenches were widespread throughout England. However, the range of the trenches created in England for training purposes during the First World War were diverse in their context and form, and surviving sites with good levels of preservation and a documented association with military units are unusual. The training trenches at Tolsford show both good preservation and have a well-documented historic context. In terms of its form, the training trench system at Tolsford represents a particularly extensive trench system, both in its overall area, but also in having been created at full scale. The photographic and LiDAR evidence show different features, such as dug-outs and telephone points, indicating an attempt to recreate a section of the western front in its entirety. It is representative of the more extensive training trench systems, that tended to occur in landscapes owned or used by the military for training larger numbers, often associated with more developed army camps; for example across Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, and Bovington, Dorset. Whilst the site was reused for a Second World War anti-aircraft battery, the site has seen less post-1919 training activity than many of these military owned landscapes, and therefore better preserves First World War activity. Indeed, where earthworks are less well defined, this appears to be the result of infilling shortly after 1919, and may therefore represent opportunities for good archaeological deposits to survive. Excavation undertaken at Larkhill and Bustard Inn in Wiltshire has highlighted the archaeological potential of levelled trench systems (Brown and Osgood, 2009). An equally significant consideration of historic interest is the association, construction and occupation of the camp by the Canadian Expeditionary Force. A war memorial located on the site of the East Sandling Camp suggests that the trench systems were also utilised by British troops, RAF Cadets, 31st Middlesex regiment and the Russian Relief Force.

For these reasons, it is considered that the remains of the First World War Practice Trenches, Tolsford Hill, Saltwood, Kent should be scheduled as a monument. Modern gates and fencing are to be excluded from the scheduling, although the ground below them would be included.

## CONCLUSION

After examining all the records and other relevant information and having carefully considered the national importance of this case, the criteria for scheduling are fulfilled.

## REASONS FOR DESIGNATION DECISION

The earthwork and buried remains of the First World War Practice Trenches, Tolsford Hill, Saltwood, Kent, constructed in or around 1914, are recommended for scheduling for the following principal reasons:

**Historic interest:**

\* the First World War was a short but intense period of major change in response to industrialised warfare on a global scale. The large-scale training of recruits prior to their departure to the Western Front enhances our understanding of national defence policy, eloquently illustrated in this monument.

\* the monument acts as a poignant memorial to the young men of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, RAF Cadets, 31st Middlesex regiment and the Russian Relief Force who trained here before going on to fight in the trenches in Europe.

**Diversity:**

\* such training trenches vary in complexity, type, extent and quality of survival. The extensive training trenches associated with the Sandlings camps illustrate a diverse range of training features and are a good example of this class of monument.

**Survival:**

\* whilst preservation across the site at Tolsford is varied, the western and northern groups are very well preserved as earthworks, and can be examined as a cohesive monument.

**Documentation:**

\* documents and archive photographs relating to the trenches, and recent research undertaken by Historic England, describe and analyse the layout of the trenches and the associated earthworks. The dating and function of the remains are well understood.

**Potential:**

\* the trenches have significant archaeological potential, having been backfilled shortly after 1919. Surviving archaeological features and artefacts will enhance our understanding of the context and development of First World War training facilities in England.

**Countersigning comments:**

Agreed. The First World War practice trenches at Tolsford Hill are well preserved and a documented, rare example of this monument type, displaying diverse features. They have both national archaeological and historic importance and should be scheduled. SG 8/719

**Annex 1****List Entry****List Entry Summary**

This monument is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as amended as it appears to the Secretary of State to be of national importance.

**Name:** World War I Practice Trenches, Tolsford Hill

**List Entry Number:** 1463181

**Location**

Tolsford Hill Down, SE of Postling, Kent, CT21 4EN

The monument may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
Kent	Shepway	District Authority	Postling
Kent	Shepway	District Authority	Saltwood

**National Park:** Not applicable to this List entry.

**Grade:** Not Applicable to this List Entry

**Date first scheduled:**

**Date of most recent amendment:**

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**Legacy System Information**

This section only relates to older records, created before the introduction of the National Heritage List for England in 2011.

**Legacy System:** Not applicable to this List entry.

**Legacy Number:** Not applicable to this List entry.

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**Asset Groupings**

This List entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

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**List Entry Description****Summary of Monument**

The site comprises the buried and earthwork remains of three distinct groups of practice trenches dating to the First World War.

**Reasons for Designation**

The earthwork and buried remains of the World War I Practice Trenches, Tolsford Hill, Saltwood, Kent, constructed in or around 1914, are scheduled for the following principal reasons:

**Historic interest:**

\* the First World War was a short but intense period of major change in response to industrialised warfare on a global scale. The large-scale training of recruits prior to their departure to the Western Front enhances our understanding of national defence policy, eloquently illustrated in this monument.

\* the monument acts as a poignant memorial to the young men of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, RAF Cadets, 31st Middlesex regiment and the Russian Relief Force who trained here before going on to fight in the trenches in Europe.

**Diversity:**

\* such training trenches vary in complexity, type, extent and quality of survival. The extensive training trenches associated with the Sandlings camps illustrate a diverse range of training features and are a good example of this class of monument.

**Survival:**

\* whilst preservation across the site at Tolsford is varied, the western and northern groups are very well preserved as earthworks, and can be examined as a cohesive monument.

**Documentation:**

\* documents and archive photographs relating to the trenches, and recent research undertaken by Historic England, describe and analyse the layout of the trenches and the associated earthworks. The dating and function of the remains are well understood.

**Potential:**

\* the trenches have significant archaeological potential, having been backfilled shortly after 1919. Surviving archaeological features and artefacts will enhance our understanding of the context and development of First World War training facilities in England.

**History**

The First World War (1914-18), known until the Second World War as 'the Great War', was fought on land, at sea and in the air across the globe. Fighting overwhelmingly took place abroad, so the domestic military structures of this war are largely (but not exclusively) related to training and supply. Mass-enlistment and (from 1916) conscription on a massive scale was a further feature of the First World War, necessitating training facilities and camps for troops prior to their embarkation for the Front. These ephemeral sites will sometimes leave visual marks above ground in the form of earthworks, and much more can be understood through the archaeology of these places.

By the early C20 the method of trench warfare was a familiar practice; it was the First World War, however, with static battle conditions and modern weapons that saw the development of trench systems of unprecedented scale and complexity. The same war saw an acceleration of the acquisition of land to construct sophisticated land and coastal defences, troop accommodation and training and testing areas. A feature of many First World War sites such as these are practice trench systems, which were developed in order to build the physical strength and resilience of new recruits and also to establish bonds of teamwork, trust and comradeship. They were also used to teach recruits how to construct and maintain them so that they could be occupied for both defensive and attack purposes. As such many had to accurately replicate conditions on the front, with many combining British and German trench designs.

Typical features include lines of fire trenches, characterised by their regular, crenellated trace, creating firebays. The trench lines were usually three deep and were often connected to each other and to the rear by the more irregular communication trenches. Both types of trench would employ upcast earth to create a parapet at the front of the trench and a parapet to the rear side, serving to increase the depth of the trench, providing increased headcover and protection from shells. Other structural elements include fire steps, saps extending into no-man's-land, positions for Vickers medium machine-guns and latrines, and E-shaped grenade training trenches. When originally constructed the trenches would have been revetted with a range of materials including; timber planking, wattle hurdles, sand bags, or expanded metal (XPM) or corrugated iron sheet, held in place with angle irons. Other construction materials and features included metal cables

used for revetting, wood trench boards (duckboards) or elements of 'A' frames used to brace trench edges and support trench boards in wetter areas.

The trench system located on Tolsford Hill was one part of a larger more extensive military landscape in the area. The army camp at Shorncliffe (located approximately 4.1km south east of the trenches) was originally established in 1794 for training during the Napoleonic Wars and already knew and utilised Tolsford Hill for manoeuvres. In 1821 the army used the hill as part of their work to extend the trigonometric survey of England (the genesis of the Ordnance Survey) in an attempt to tie this in to the French survey by direct observation across the Channel, although the exercise was not successful. From 1915, the Canadian Training Division was stationed there, utilising the site as a staging post for troops departing for the Western Front, in part because of its proximity to both London and Folkestone. The Canadian Army Medical Corps also ran a hospital at Shorncliffe from 1917-19, and also at Westenhanger. Due to limited space at Shorncliffe a number of new camps were established nearby for the Canadian troops, including at Otterpool, Dibgate, East and West Sandling, Beachborough, and Lyminge. The trenches on Tolsford Hill were associated with East and West Sandling Camps, which were constructed in Autumn 1914 primarily for training the battalions of the Canadian Expeditionary Forces. Documentary sources in the form of letters and war diaries from the 21st Battalion CEF contain references to training on Tolsford Hill and marching back and forth during the morning and at night. A war memorial located on the site of the East Sandling Camp suggests that the trench systems were also used by British troops, RAF Cadets, 31st Middlesex regiment and the Russian Relief Force.

War Training diaries relating to a number of battalions include direct references to the creation of the trenches by the Canadian Expeditionary Force. In addition to learning how to construct the trenches, they provided an opportunity to practice going 'over the top'. There is also some evidence to suggest the trenches were constructed above Folkestone and Hythe as a form of ready defence in the event of invasion. Informal photographs belonging to Sergeant Joseph Thomas Dutton of the 21st Battalion show the trenches in use. They confirm technical details, including that the trenches were full scale and included features such as dug-outs. A number of letters from individuals who trained at Sandling Camps, including Vincent MacCarter Eastwood (attached to the 39th Battalion, and Private Sidney Brook of the 17th Reserve Battalion, make fleeting references to the trench system.

In 1989 the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) undertook a pilot study of Kent. This provided basic mapping of the site which has been augmented subsequently by more recent aerial surveys.

## Details

**PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS:** the site comprises the buried and earthwork remains of three distinct groups of practice trenches dating to the First World War. It is located on the plateau of a chalk ridge known as Tolsford Hill Down, running in an east-west direction, centred at TR 15521 38294 and positioned approximately 170m AOD.

**DESCRIPTION:** the practice trenches are sited approximately 1km north-east of the site of West Sandling Camp, and approximately 900m north of the site of East Sandling Camp, both of which utilised Tolsford Hill for training. The site is approximately 3.1km due north from Hythe, and approximately 7.8km east-north-east from the centre of Folkestone.

Three areas of trenching are present on the site with no evidence for interconnecting trenches linking them. The orientation of these discrete groups suggests that they were constructed by different battalions during separate episodes of training, as opposed to being a recreation of opposing forces on the front line as seen on sites such as Cannock Chase, Staffordshire or Browndown, Hampshire.

The largest group comprises a complex of trenches occupying approximately 10.14 hectares of the western half of the down. It consists of a series of at least six crenelated fire trenches running in an east-west orientation for approximately 610m. They follow the contour of the crest of the hill with a group of zig-zagged communication trenches running from them, orientated north-south. A number of regularly arranged mock-shell craters form in linear arrangements around the trenches, which would have either been excavated manually or are the result of controlled explosions. Some of the fire trenches cut into each other demonstrating that some of them were backfilled during the period whilst Tolsford was in use for training, a practice noted elsewhere such as at Cannock Chase.

The smallest group of trenches consists of a pair located on the north-facing spur of the down north of this main group. The trench to the west, which is the better preserved of the two, comprises a T-shaped group of

zig-zagged trenches, running approximately 50m north-east/south-west, with a separate arm running approximately 25m east/west. The second trench is about 70m long and exhibits curved traverses, on the adjacent spur to the east. The form of this trench is clearest from the 1940 aerial photographs, although recent satellite imagery demonstrates that it survives as low earthworks.

The group on the eastern side of the down survive as low earthworks which are less well preserved, comprising a series of irregularly arranged crenellated trenches running for approximately 440m east-west, with a circular earthwork, representing a gun emplacement, in the middle of the trench. The earthwork measures approximately 30m in diameter. The crenellated trenches, whilst following standard practice, form a layout more indicative of a redoubt system.

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## **Selected Sources**

### **Books and journals**

Appleby, C, Cocroft, W, Schofield, J, *The Home Front in Britain 1914-18: An Archaeological Handbook*, (2015)

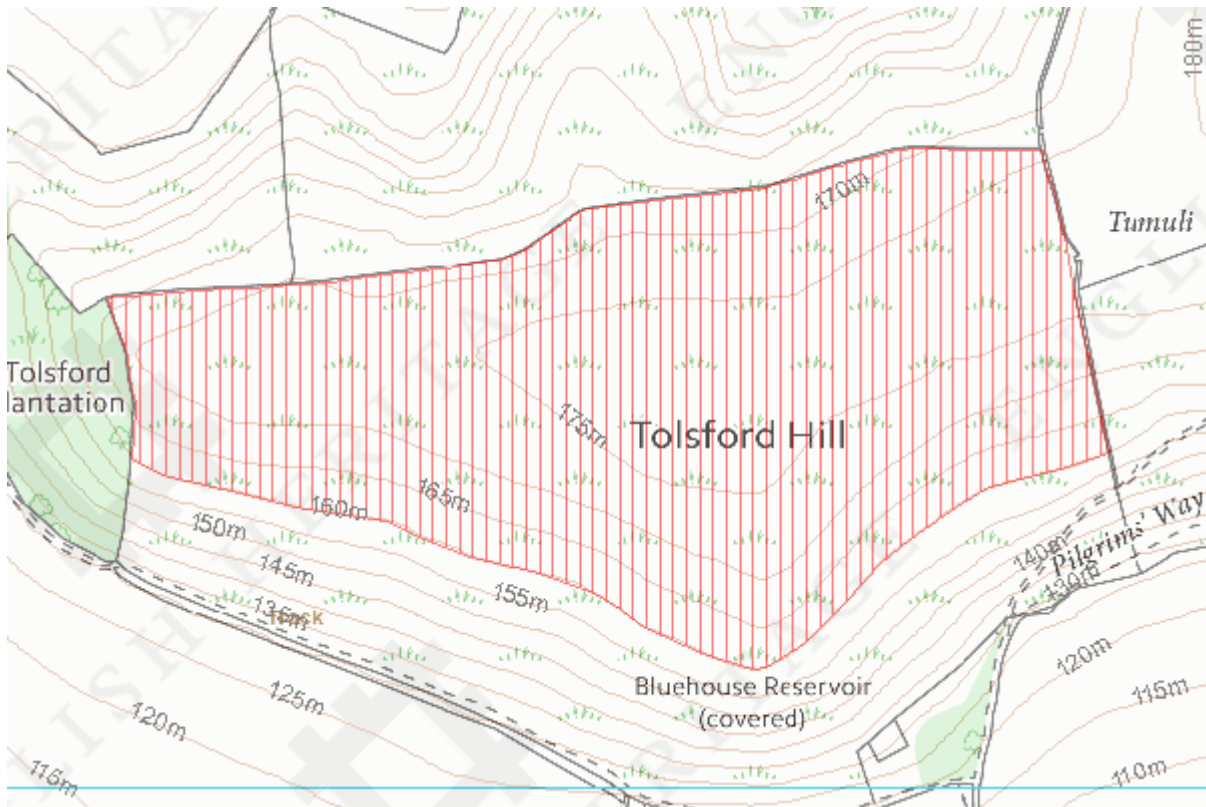
Brown, M, *First World War Fieldworks in England* (Research Report Series no. 61/2017), (2017)

Cocroft, W, Stamper, P, *Legacies of the First World War*, (2018)

### **Other**

Dugdale, M. *Discovery of First World War Practice Trenches*, Tolsford Hill, Saltwood, Kent (2016).

Rees, L. *Tolsford by Cheriton Training Trenches*; Research Report. Historic England (2018).

**Map****National Grid Reference: TR1552138244**

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The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - 1463181\_1.pdf