**“STOP!” Is starting**

Never was so much owed by so many, to so few as in the Battle of Britain. Today we take for granted the success of the young pilots of Spitfires and Hurricanes who stopped Hitler from ruling the sky so Nazi Germany could launch an invasion of Great Britain.

At that time, nothing was taken for granted. German forces commandeered barges from across conquered Northern Europe in preparation of the launch of Operation Sea Lion, their plan to conquer this country. Had the RAF fallen, invasion would come from the sea and England would become a battlefield.

In 1940, ready for such an event small forts, known as “Pill Boxes” were rapidly built across the country; their locations chosen to give their defenders the best chance they had to repel or delay attacking forces.

The Trent Valley Landscape formed part of this network, with pillboxes situated to take advantage of the rivers’ and canal’s ability to act as barriers for invading forces to cross. Had invaders forced their way to the Midlands, ill-equipped Home Guards and weary troops, recently evacuated from Dunkirk, would have used these pillboxes to defend “Stop Line 5,” the network of defences running through our area.

Until recently these remnants of War were often viewed as eyesores and of little, if any, value. That’s why the “STOP!” project was created. It is important for us to learn more about these remaining features and to protect them. We will create new roles for some of these little forts, such as nesting places for birds, shelters for walkers and roosts for bats, and create guidance for others who may wish to do the same. Working with local people and community groups we will protect and maintain the remains of Stop Line 5 as features people can see and learn from; and as reminders of the effect of war upon the Trent Valley Landscape.

“Stop!” is one of Cultural Heritage themed projects included in Transforming the Trent Valley. Find out more in our next newsletter to find out how we will work with local communities, volunteers and landowners to record and improve the condition of vulnerable heritage across the Landscape.