There is a presumption in favour of public access to the Defence Training Estate, on Public Rights of Way, balanced against the over-riding national requirement for safe and sustainable military training and conservation. For people who just like to stroll and look there is plenty of spectacular scenery within the Home Counties Estate: woodland, wetlands and heathland walks abound, many of which can be accessed from convenient car parks. Considerate visitors will always be welcomed on areas that are free from military training activities. We ask that all visitors respect the sites by not causing any disturbance to plants, animals and other visitors – and to take their litter home (DTE HC’s bill for clearing ‘fly-tipping’ runs close to £100,000 per year). Dog owners should also spare a thought for the soldiers crawling through the undergrowth during training. Please help us to keep our training areas as clean as possible so that people can relax and enjoy the sites when the military is not training.

When permitted onto a training area:

Follow the Country Code
• Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
• Guard against all risk of fire
• Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls
• Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone
• Take your litter home
• Take special care on country roads
• Make no unnecessary noise
• Keep to the public paths across farmland
• Fasten all gates
• Keep dogs under close control
• Protect wildlife, plants and trees
• Help to keep all water clean

Great care is taken to ensure the safety of these areas, although any land used by the Armed Forces for training can obviously be dangerous – and this applies throughout the DTE HC. Anyone walking on MoD land must obey all signs and bylaws relevant to the area being visited.

Remember! Unexploded Ordnance: do not touch any military debris.

Always comply with the following:

Safety
Do not enter areas where there is an obvious military presence.
• Do not approach, touch, or pick up any objects lying on the ground
• Keep to the footpaths and do not deviate from them
• The use of metal detectors is prohibited
• Keep away from all buildings, bunkers and military installations except where it is clearly shown that public access is permitted
• No camping or fires are permitted

If you see anything suspicious, unusual or otherwise of concern, please contact the Ministry of Defence Police Control Room on 02392 722707

PART OF OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES
To assist in this task no fewer than eight conservation groups have been set up within the Home Counties. Many local experts and people with a genuine interest in environmental matters, join these groups which ensures the MoD has the very best knowledge at their disposal when making decisions which may affect the local area.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
In addition to this Public Information Leaflet for the Home Counties, the DTE, Defence Estates (DE), each produce other literature: the DTE Annual Report summarises yearly progress by the DTE organisation; DE’s Walks on MoD Land details a number of walks on 10 DTE estates including Salisbury Plain, Castlemartin, Catterick, Dartmoor and Otterburn. DTE also produces In the Field magazine, published each autumn, which contains news from some of the smaller training areas around the country, as well as updates on developments in management techniques. Finally, DE’s annual publication Sanctuary contains articles about the Defence Estate across the whole country. All these publications are free and may be obtained from the relevant addresses below.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Headquarters DTE Home Counties
Longmoor Camp, Liss, Hampshire GU33 6EL
Telephone: 01420 483362

Headquarters Defence Training Estate
Land Warfare Centre, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 0DJ
Telephone: 01985 222856

Defence Estates
Blakemore Drive, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B75 7RL
Telephone: 0121 311 2000
www.defence-estates.mod.uk
Ministry of Defence Access Website www.mod.uk/access
WHY THE ARMY NEEDS TO TRAIN

The British Army is held in the highest regard around the world. This respect has been hard-won over recent years in Northern Ireland, the Falkland Islands, the Gulf, the Balkans – and countless peacekeeping operations. But such professionalism does not happen by chance. It is attained by constant, thorough and tough training, in realistic conditions. The Defence Training Estate (DTE) provides the principal facilities to achieve this.

ORGANISATION

The Defence Training Estate in the UK is controlled by Headquaters DTE, based at Headquarters Training Support Command (Land) at Warminster, near Salisbury. The Estate is sub-divided into 12 regionally-based areas, many of which have been used for training by the military for periods of well over 100 years. Each has its own headquarters and staff. DTE Home Counties (DTE HC) includes training areas around ‘The Home of the British Army’ – Aldershot – and manages sites from the Isle of Wight in the south, to Ol Moor in Oxfordshire to the north, Barton Stacey in Hampshire to the west, and Ash, Pirbright and Hawkhurst to the east. The Estate covers an area in excess of 26,000 acres (10,500 hectares).

TRAINING IN THE HOME COUNTRIES

DTE HC is responsible for the military estate and its contents, both natural and man-made. The Home Counties, much of it is shared with farmers, who enjoy normal agricultural usage or grazing rights. The Army’s requirement to use the land for training is paramount, but sensible arrangements are negotiated to ensure that farmers’ animals and crops, and the indigenous flora and fauna, are not subjected to any unnecessary damage.

The Home Counties Training Estate has long been used for live firing of a variety of weapons and – understandably during the years of World Wars – clearance of these areas was not given any priority and large areas of land were fenced off. Many are still off limits to the general public, and it will be many years before they can be cleared to such a degree of certainty that visitors will be permitted. Even in cleared areas it is still possible for live ammunition to rise to the surface as a result of movement in the earth’s crust. For example, even today on First World War battlefields such as Ypres and the Somme, shells, mines and other ammunition continue to appear. Visitors must therefore never touch any object they find on the military estate.

TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The training on many areas has changed or is about to change because of the options taken during the Strategic Defence Review. Many units are being re-roled and moved from traditional locations. As a result, areas that have been exclusively used by the infantry and other arms of service are being developed. The training on many areas has changed or is about to change because of the options taken during the Strategic Defence Review. Many units are being re-roled and moved from traditional locations. As a result, areas that have been exclusively used by the infantry and other arms of service are being developed.

Like the monuments, buildings and archaeological sites of the Battlefields, the indigenous fauna and flora have often survived far better in the Training Estate than on other sites. Indeed, many forms of life on the edge of extinction live quite happily on military land where they have learned to co-exist with the rifle fire and pyrotechnics, which hold few fears for the wildlife that resides on ranges. For example, the steep sides of one firing range contain a colony of sand martins.

CONSERVATION OF FAUNA AND FLORA

Like the monuments, buildings and archaeological sites of the Battlefields, the indigenous fauna and flora have often survived far better in the Training Estate than on other sites. Indeed, many forms of life on the edge of extinction live quite happily on military land where they have learned to co-exist with the rifle fire and pyrotechnics, which hold few fears for the wildlife that resides on ranges. For example, the steep sides of one firing range contain a colony of sand martins.

Cats and Dogs are just as well served on the areas. Among the species to be found are grizzled, green hairstreak, silver studded blue, dingy skipper, small heath and small copper. The list of coleoptera (beetles), diptera (flies) and hemiptera-heteroptera (bugs) is apparently endless and people who study these creatures will not be disappointed during their walks through the training areas.

DTE HC includes one of the few areas to hold within its boundary representatives of all 6 species of indigenous reptiles – namely 3 snakes and 3 lizards. The 2 species of toad, the common frog and all three species of newt are also to be found making it very rich in reptile and amphibian life.

CONSERVATION

DTE HC is also a potential treat for bird watchers: no fewer than 175 species have made their home in the area. Annual bird counts, initiated by the MoD and carried out by local enthusiasts, enable the populations to be monitored. The results of the information gathered from each count is used to undertake conservation projects for the protection and enhancement of many locally and nationally important bird species.

The training areas are also the answer to a botanist’s prayer. Among the rare species to be found are bristle bent, lesser butterfly orchid, black bog rush, bog pimpernel, royal fern, slender cotton grass, carnage sedge, Dyer’s greenweed, petty whin, sawwort, little robin geranium and yellow horned poppy. Several populations of roe deer are to be found within the training areas. These areas are necessarily managed to ensure that their existence is sustainable in the long term. A few munjcas, ‘invaders’ from Japan, are known to live within the Estate; but being nocturnal these are seldom seen.

Few visitors will know of the Atlantic Wall built in the heart of Surrey. This wall, complete with the evidence of the breaching methods, still stands on the slopes of Hankley Common. Built during the Second World War, it was used to train D-Day troops in the art of attacking Hitler’s fortifications. Visitors may think about the way many lives were saved because of the thoroughness of the Armed Forces’ training and in doing so realise why training areas are required.

There are 2 war memorials located within the Estate. Bramshott, forever synonymous with the Canadian and the training area that is home of one of their most important war memorials. An avenue of red maples and sugar maples has been planted alongside the A3 road. This is a regular site of pilgrimage for many Canadians, and all visitors are requested to show the normal respect due to such a site. The avenue replaces the original memorial, which was demolished during a non-military road-widening scheme. Visitors should include the Bramshott village church in their itinerary, as 318 Canadians are interred in the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery which forms part of the church grounds. Also, a Second World War memorial is located within the Longmoor Training Area near the site where the pilot, Richard Pryce-Hughes, was killed on 15 April 1942 when his damaged bomber crashed as he guided it away from the residential area.

The Longmoor and Bordon areas are the historic home of ‘railway’ soldiers. The original railway line was built to move a complete camp from Longmoor to Bordon in the early 1900s. From this relatively minor start the British Army’s railway transport system was built which was to develop into a major railway artery during the Second World War. The centre was disbanded in 1969 but there is still much evidence of it in the form of buildings and memorabilia.

Military hardware is to be found on many of the Home Counties sites: ablem of an Abbott self-propelled gun (of Cold War vintage) is to be found in the Longmoor area, alongside 2 Chieftain tanks. These weapons are still used as training aids and are not touch. This experience is educational to children: though attractive, these old vehicles hold many traps. They were never designed as playthings or climbing frames; they are dangerous.