BLACKHEATH WW2 SEARCHLIGHT

The 1897 Ordnance Survey map shown here has the symbol of a triangle with a dot in the middle and the height 332 (feet above sea level), this being the symbol for a Triangulation Pillar, more commonly called a Trig Pillar or Trig Point. This is the highest point on the common apart from Rosemary Hill and is the location of the Blackheath Searchlight base

The second picture is a typical OS Trig Pillar on Merrow Golf Course.

In the expediency of wartime, it seems that the trig pillar on Blackheath was broken up and used as rubble for the concrete searchlight base but it was never replaced and does not appear on post-war maps.

In the Second World War (and to a lesser extent in the first), searchlights were used to identify enemy planes for the anti-aircraft guns and also to drive them to fly higher from where their bombing would be less accurate. Many searchlights were mounted on mobile trailers but others were fixed on concrete blocks around 4 feet cubed.

They all have a threaded metal spigot in the centre with a triangle of cement to keep the searchlight in place, and a rectangular hole in the side, presumably for electrical equipment. There is still a wooden plate in the back of the hole which the equipment could have been screwed onto.

For comparison I am showing a few other remaining concrete searchlight bases from around the country.
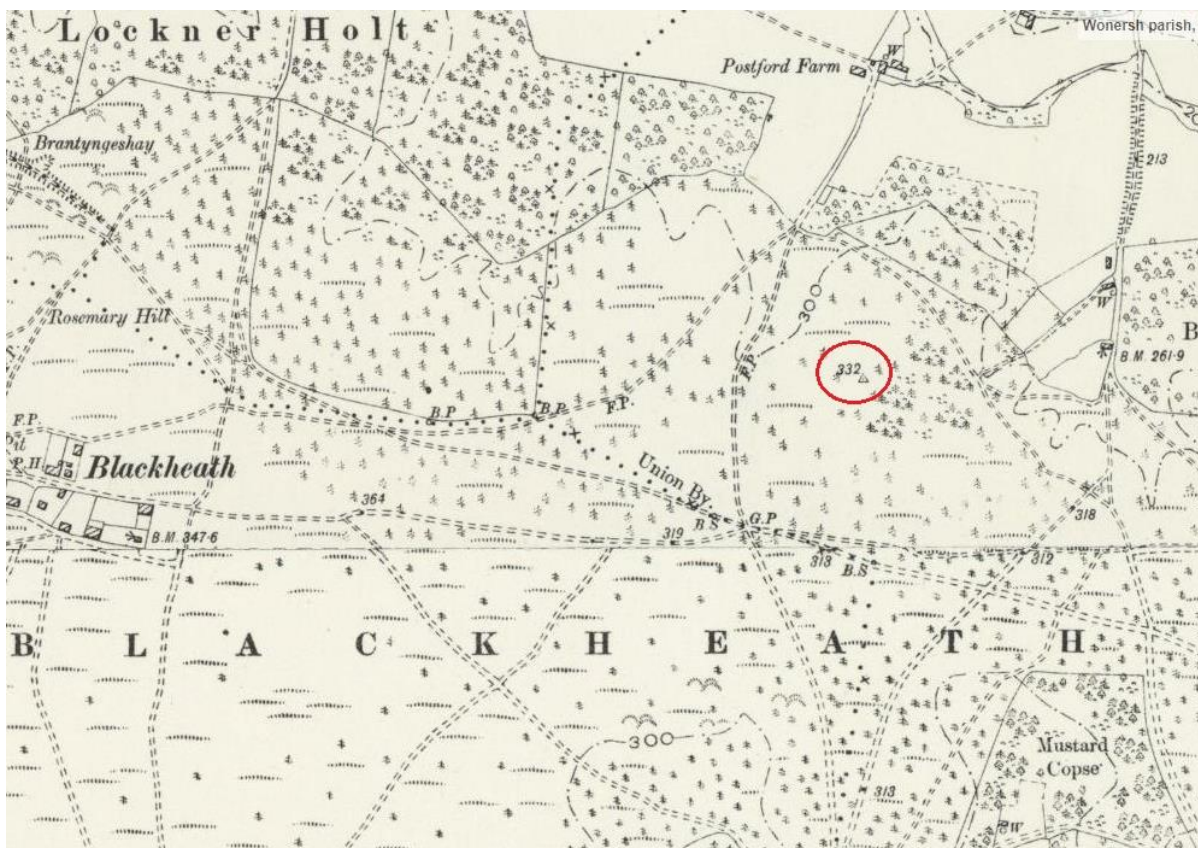
1897 Ordnance Survey Map

Merrow Trig Pillar

Blackheath Searchlight base.

British troops manhandling a searchlight.
Presumably using the concrete blocks meant that the truck
could be backed up at the same height.

A WW2 searchlight in an RAF museum, showing the triangular base.
The small tracked wheels were for moving it as in the photo above.

Northumberland Coast

New Forest

Sheppey

South Coast

Tyne and Wear

John Dawson 2021