



BLYTH BATTERY

DEFENDING OUR PORT

TEACHER INFORMATION



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Planning and Booking Your Visit

Pre-Visit – If you would like to arrange a pre-visit meeting with at the Battery, please get in touch.

Booking – Please confirm your booking arrangements with the Woodhorn Education team, including discussing a personalised itinerary for your day.

Workshops and Bespoke Packages – In addition to guided tours of the site, a number of curriculum-linked workshops are available. New workshops and programmes are also being developed for the site so please get in touch if what you need is not covered in this information pack.

Costs – All educational visits are **free** of charge.

Numbers – Facilities and available space at Blyth Battery restrict pupil numbers to a maximum of thirty five. If your group is larger than this, we may be able to rotate activities or arrange other activities with local education providers – please get in touch to discuss your needs.

Arrival – On arrival, please report to the Shelter Building.

Facilities and Local Information

Parking – Coach and car parking is available free of charge on site at South Beach.

Location – Blyth Battery is situated at the southernmost tip of South Beach, Links Road, Blyth, NE24 3PQ. If arriving by coach/car, follow the brown signs for South Beach. Proceed on foot from the coach parking, taking the tarmac drive to the beach at the end of the car park. The Shelter building is the second grey concrete building on the left, after the metal barrier.

Shelter Building – This restored building is available for workshops, handling sessions, art activities and as a lunch space in wet weather. Space is limited to 35 pupils maximum, depending on activities.

Magazine – The restored Magazine tells the story of Blyth Battery through display panels, a short film, and recreated ammunition stores and shifting lobby.

Toilets – Blyth Battery has one disabled toilet in the Shelter Building. Additional public toilets are available in the Dave Stephens Centre on Blyth Links.

First Aid – The Education Officer is a trained first aider, as are a number of the Blyth Battery Volunteers.

Access – The Shelter Building and the Magazine are wheelchair accessible. Other buildings are accessible by stairs and over uneven ground.

Staffing – All pre-booked visits will be delivered by Education Officer Elanor Johnson, with occasional support from the Blyth Battery Volunteers. All staff and volunteers undergo a CRB check. When planning your visit, the Education Officer may specify that some activities are led by teachers/helpers from your school.

Opening times for group bookings – Blyth Battery is open for school visits on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, year-round. The Battery is open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays, May-September. Pre-booked visits for other groups can be arranged at other times by contacting Blyth Battery Volunteers via lindsaysdurward@tiscali.co.uk

Clothing and Footwear – Blyth Battery is a coastal site and the majority of your visit will be outside. Please ensure pupils bring warm, waterproof clothing, sturdy footwear, and adequate sun protection if appropriate.

Links to the National Curriculum

Overview

All activities and workshops have been developed to link closely with the National Curriculum at both primary and secondary level. Whilst the site lends itself most clearly to the teaching of the history of the First and Second World War, or teaching local history, activities offered on site also have a strong cross-curriculum element. In particular, the Defending Our Port workshops also focus on speaking and listening skills, working as a team, and use drama and role play to bring the past to life for pupils.

With the current emphasis on Literacy across the subject areas, all activities also provide pupils with the opportunity to develop and practice their speaking, listening and reading skills in an out-of-the-classroom environment. Activities with links to other curriculum areas are planned in future – please get in touch with your ideas.

Primary Curriculum for Historical, Geographical and Social Understanding

Programme Area	Notes
Essential Knowledge 1a, 1b	Guided tour focuses on how Blyth Links developed and was shaped by past events, explores continuity and change over the twentieth century, and how historic buildings are protected and conserved for future sustainability.
Key Skills 2a, 2b	Defending our Port workshops and the guided tour encourage pupils to compare, interpret and analyse artefacts and historic buildings, investigate buildings and their past uses, and use artefacts for historical enquiries.
Cross-Curricular Studies 3a, 3b, 3c	Defending our Port workshops encourage literacy skills and personal, social and emotional development. Visit to an historic site inspires children to learn more about their local area and how it fits in with the wider world Additional links to Numeracy and Science are developed through workshop activities
Breadth of Learning 4d (1,2, 3, and 4)	All activities link to the study of World War Two at a local, British and international level
Curriculum Progression Citizenship L7	Working with Blyth Battery Volunteers offers opportunity for children to consider how people can work together to benefit their community

History M10, M11, and L12	All activities link to these areas of learning, for example how to interpret historic buildings and artefacts as evidence, exploring how the events of the twentieth century shaped Blyth Links.
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Key Stage 3 Programme of Study – History

Programme Area	Notes
Key Concepts 1.1, 1.3	Guided tour considers chronological development of Blyth Battery, themes of change and continuity across the twentieth century, and how historic buildings are interpreted by historians, architects and heritage professionals
Key Processes 2.2	All activities encourage pupils to use artefacts and the historic environment as source material, to evaluate these sources, and to communicate about the site and the period both in small groups and individually
Range and Content 3g, 3i, and 3j	All activities relate to the history of Britain during the First and Second World Wars, in particular life as a soldier, life in the Home Guard, and life on the Home Front. Workshops focus on the role of Blyth Battery in a global conflict
Curriculum Opportunities 4b, 4c	Activities and workshops investigate how the Blyth and Blyth Battery related to the broader events of the First and Second World Wars Pupils are encouraged to discuss issues relating to the care of historic buildings, including the differences between conservation and restoration, and how interpretative materials influence museum visitors.

Working with Key Stage 4

All activities and workshops offered can be altered to suit a Key Stage 4 group. In addition, the Education Officer may be able to develop a tailor-made package of classroom and site-based learning to suit students studying for a GCSE or other qualifications. Please get in touch to discuss ideas.

Hazard Identification Sheet

Please note: This is not a Risk Assessment. Schools/Groups should carry out their own Risk Assessment for their visit.

This Hazard Identification Sheet covers all aspects of a general visit to the site. Additional information is available for Defending Our Port workshops.

Hazard Identification	Risk and to whom	Existing Control Measures	Minimum Further Action by School
Car/Coach Park	Visitors, pupils, staff or helpers could be run over or lost	Coach Parking is situated near to the Shelter Building meeting point	School responsible for supervision and head counts Adult Supervision by school staff
Steps to BOPs	Slips, trips and falls, adults and children	Briefing by Education Officer, including advise to climb down the steps backwards	Identify pupils prior to visit who may struggle or be unable to climb steps/heights, and inform Education Officer. Adult Supervision by school staff
Heavy metal doors	Crushing and trapping injuries, concussion injuries, to adults and children, particularly if windy	Briefing by Education Officer Use weights/chains to secure doors. Education Officer to monitor wind conditions.	Adult Supervision by school staff
Toilet	Toilets dirty or unhygienic, wet floors causing slips, need for assistance	Check by Education Officer at start of visit. Toilet alarmed. Additional toilets available at Dave Stephens Centre	
Uneven floors inside buildings	Slips, trips and falls, adults and children	Briefing by Education Officer Adult Supervision by school staff	School responsible for footwear advice prior to visit Adult Supervision by

		Ensure all lighting is switched on in Magazine whilst groups move about	school staff
Uneven, rough and slippery ground on site	Slips, trips and falls, adults and children	Briefing by Education Officer Adult Supervision by school staff	School responsible for footwear advice prior to visit Adult Supervision by school staff
Limited lighting in buildings	Slips, trips and falls, concussion injuries, adults and children	Briefing by Education Officer Adult Supervision by school staff	School responsible for footwear advice prior to visit Adult Supervision by school staff
Exposure to adverse weather conditions	Exposure, hypothermia, sunstroke, sunburn	Education Officer to cancel visit in extreme weather conditions	School responsible for clothing and sun cream advice prior to visit. Pupils with unsuitable clothing not to be brought to site
Open site with no perimeter fence	Pupils could become separated from group		School responsible for head counts Adult Supervision by school staff
Handling Artefacts (heavy, sharp edges, degrading materials)	Trapped fingers, crush injuries, piercing injuries, cuts, infection, inhalation leading to respiratory problems	Education Officer and volunteers to regularly check and clean artefacts. No gas masks to be tried on.	Adult Supervision by school staff

The Education Officer and a number of Blyth Battery Volunteers are trained First Aiders/Emergency Responders

Supervision

Pupils aged 7 and over – 1 adult to 10 children

Pupils under the age of 7 – 1 adult to every 6 children

Activities and Workshops

A typical visit begins with a role play exercise, based on Homeguard marching drills. Pupils are introduced to the idea of training to be a homeguardsman, and this theme is then carried through the visit.

Guided Tour

All visits to Blyth Battery include a guided tour of the site, giving pupils the opportunity to explore the restored military buildings. The guided tour includes access inside the Observation Posts, gun emplacements, and Magazine ammunition store.

The guided tour tells the story of the Battery from the moment a ship appears on the horizon to the firing of the guns and the replenishing of ammunition.

The guided tour can be extended to include the beach and the dunes, taking in the remains of beach defences and exploring how geography and landscape influenced the defence of the North East coast during the twentieth century.

Defending Our Port Workshops

Pupils are divided into small groups to continue their homeguard training, with a variety of practical, hands-on workshops. Groups are rotated around each workshop, with most visits including three different activities. Workshops are led by education staff or by the teacher – this will be discussed when booking.

Target Practise – Pupils use air powered rockets to practice their aim! This activity encourages teamwork and has links to the science curriculum

Secret Messages – Using basic semaphore, pupils transmit secret messages across the site, encouraging literacy and teamwork

Potato Grenades – Pupils compete to hit the target with their potato grenades, an activity straight out of the Homeguard Training Manual

Firefighting – Using original World War Two stirrup pumps, pupils must work in teams to move water from place to place. This activity encourages both teamwork and competition!

Object Handling – A handling collection of real World War Two artefacts from military and domestic life is available for touching, looking and recording, bringing pupils face to face with the past.

Make Your Own Gas Mask – Craft workshop to make a cardboard gas mask to take home

A Brief History of Blyth Battery

Blyth Battery is a First and Second World War anti-invasion coastal defence gun battery, strikingly restored in 2009 with funding from the Heritage Lottery, English Heritage and Blyth Valley Borough Council (now Northumberland County Council). The Magazine building has been refurbished as an exhibition space and one of the Troop Shelters is now an education/reception space.

Blyth Battery was built in 1916 to protect the port of Blyth and its submarine base, *HMS Elfin*, during the First World War. It was upgraded for re-use during the Second World War. During the Inter-War and Post-War years, the buildings were used as beach amenities, cafes, and a base for both lifeguards and the St John Ambulance. The Battery is the most intact and accessible defence battery on the north-east coast, with individual buildings and features of considerable rarity.

Blyth Battery is run by the Blyth Battery Volunteers, a local community group passionate about the site. The Battery is open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays from 1st May until 30th September, and on additional occasions for special events and group visits.

Why build a gun battery at Blyth?

The Battery was needed to protect Blyth harbour, its submarine base, known as *HMS Elfin*, and the coal trade. Blyth Battery was also needed to play a part in the defence of the region, with its hugely important naval shipbuilding and weapons industry. Despite this, work on the Battery only started in August 1916. It was not ready for action until February 1918, a few months before the war ended.

What structures remain at Blyth Battery?

Blyth Battery is unusual as the standard military designs were adapted to cope with the sandy site. It is also unusual because the buildings have survived, in part because of their later re-use as beach amenities.

The **Gun Emplacements** were the most important buildings on the site. Each contained a 6-inch diameter gun with a range of nearly 11 kilometres (7 miles).

The **Magazine** was a store for shells and cartridges. This was normally built underneath the gun emplacements, but at Blyth it was separate because the sand dunes affected construction.

The **Battery Observation Posts** (BOPs) acted as look outs and controlled the direction and distance of fire. The armoured turret on the First World War BOP is believed to be the most intact one of its kind in the world

In addition, two **searchlights** lit up approaching ships for inspection, a **blockhouse** protected the Battery from landward attack, an **engine room** housed the generators for the power supply, and various other buildings acted as **troop shelters, stores** and **workshops**. There were also various encampments around the Battery, housing troops based at the Battery and elsewhere.

The majority of the structures were built in concrete, and the entire site was surrounded by barbed wire fences and entanglements. According to notes on the original plans, it cost around £3000 to build.

Why is Blyth Battery painted pink?

The colour scheme chosen during refurbishment reflects the age of the different buildings. The grey structures were all built during the First World War, the pink indicates Second World War alterations and additions, and is based on paint scrape analysis, and the white indicates post war alterations.

How the Battery was camouflaged in the First World War is unknown, but during the Second World War fake pitched roofs and other domestic features were added to the buildings to disguise them.

Who operated Blyth Battery?

The Battery was manned by 4 officers and 75 men of the Tynemouth Royal Garrison Artillery when it became operational in 1918.

At the start of the Second World War, the Battery was staffed by the Royal Artillery with 10 officers and 110 men. From April 1944, the 6th Battalion (Northumberland) Home Guard took over as regular soldiers prepared for the Normandy Landings. The Commanding Officer was Lt Col Parry, Headmaster of Blyth Grammar School.

The Battery at Peace

At the end of the First World War the guns were removed and the Battery was obsolete. In the 1920s and 30s, Blyth Links developed as a leisure facility, with the construction of the bandstand and promenade. The Battery buildings were re-used for First Aid by the St John Ambulance, cafes, storage and a shop and toilets.

After re-use during the Second World War, the guns were again removed in 1949. In the decades that followed, Blyth Links again became a popular beach resort, with new chalets built and the Battery buildings again re-used. The Magazine became storage for the Blyth Kayak Club, and the Second World War BOP became the base for the Blyth Lifeguard and Swimming Club. Other buildings were used as public toilets, chalets and deckchair storage. By the 1980s however, the Battery was in decline, and demolition was considered.