

Ideas for Pre-Visit Classroom Activities

What was Blyth Battery?

Using the Gallery page at www.blythbattery.org.uk, show pupils images of Blyth Battery to begin an enquiry.

Discuss what the purpose of the Battery was, when and how it was built, and why it was needed.

Pupils can then investigate the history and function of Blyth Battery, using the following resources as a starting point:

- www.blythbattery.org.uk/gallery
- www.blythbattery.org.uk/background-info
- Maps and Plans of Blyth Battery are available as downloadable PDFs in the Resources section of www.blythbattery.org.uk/educational-visits

Who were the Homeguard?

Watch clips of *Dad's Army* at www.davidcroft.co.uk/Dads-Army to introduce the idea of the Homeguard to pupils. The myths about the Homeguard created by *Dad's Army* will be discussed during your visit to Blyth Battery.

Blyth Battery Homeguard was made up of volunteers who lived in and around Blyth, many of whom worked in the shipyards and other industries. Use the call out list in the Resources section of www.blythbattery.org.uk/educational-visits to find out where these men lived. Plot the addresses on a modern map of Blyth, and find out how the town has changed since World War Two.

Pupils could also investigate the role of the Homeguard and other voluntary civilian organisations in defending Britain during World War Two, using web and print based resources.

Defending Our Coast

"From Cromarty Firth to the wash..." the Tyne must be regarded as the second major objective after London" – Winston Churchill, August 1940

The threat of invasion via coastal attack was very real during the early years of World War Two, as evidenced by the above quote from Churchill's War Diaries. Discuss the defence of the British coastline, and the North East in particular, with pupils before their visit. Pupils may begin their own enquiries, using the following questions to guide their research:

- Why did the British coastline need defending during World War Two? How real was the threat of invasion?
- Why did the North East coast in particular need to be defended? What resources needed to be protected?
- What kinds of defences were built? Think about buildings, gun emplacements, pill boxes, tank traps, and beach defences.
- What evidence survives of wartime coastal defences? What documentary evidence might help answer this question?

The following resources may be of use to pupils:

- <http://ww2today.com/30th-june-1940-british-coastal-defences-prepare-for-invasion>
- Maps showing Anti-Invasion Sites across the UK and along the North East coast are available as downloadable PDFs in the Resources section of www.blythbattery.org.uk/educational-visits

What do you want to know?

As a class or in small groups, draw up a list of questions that you would like to answer on your visit to Blyth Battery. Email questions before your visit and we will do our best to ensure pupils discover the answers whilst they are at the site.