

Roker: Protecting the Port

This walk starts next to the beach and takes in the locations of coastal defences before heading inland to areas that suffered from bombing in World War II. A pleasant stroll through Roker Park takes you back to the coast and cliff top defences before dropping back down to the start. Surfaces are mainly good, but there are a couple of steepish climbs. Allow time for fish and chips and an ice cream at the end!

A 'Defended Land' Walk 2 miles/4km

- P** Car park on Marine Walk, over the road from the play area. Grid ref NZ408 586. Approx postcode for Sat Nav SR6 0PL. There are cafes and toilets nearby.
- Bus** The 700 'Sunderland connect' bus links Roker Beach with the city centre. www.simplygo.com
- Train** Sunderland is connected to Newcastle and London by rail services and metro to Newcastle and the Airport.

- 1 From car park, cross road to coast path and turn right.
- 2 Keep left past Yacht Club and onto the old pier. Turn right to follow pier into harbour. Keep right to walk alongside marina to a car park and the Maritime Activity Centre.
- 3 Turn right into car park and out by road between houses. At junction turn left and then left again following road up hill. At roundabout turn left, cross road when it is safe to do so and keep on past Queen Victoria pub. Just after next pub (Harbour View) turn right into Benedict Road then first left into Bede St. Head towards Methodist Church at end of road.
- 4 Turn left. Cross side road to Roker Park Newsagent, then go over the zebra crossing. Walk up Grantham Rd and continue until Sandringham Terrace. Turn right on to Leeds Street and then left into Duke Street North.
- 5 At the end of Duke Street North turn right along Fulwell Road. Turn right into school entrance (blue 'No entry' signs) and pick up tarmac path to right of school grounds. The path becomes an embankment before dropping down to Kelvin Grove. Turn left and follow the road round to the right. At junction cross Roker Park Road and into park. Turn left to follow perimeter path through park. Leave park next to children's play area, turn right and walk down Side Cliff Road towards coast road.
- 6 Turn right and cross zebra crossing. Turn left, heading towards the memorial cross. Just past the cross walk to seating area. From the seats turn back and head towards lookout on cliff top. Go back over zebra crossing, turn right then first left back into park. Take next left over footbridge, then right and right again down into dene. Finally go right again, under bridge and onto promenade. Turn right along promenade and head towards the pier. Walk to the end of the pier and back before returning to the start point.

The 'A Defended Land' project is part of the Heritage Lottery funded Limestone Landscapes Partnership. The purpose of the project is to conserve and interpret the history of the north-east's coastal defences. From Roman forts to defences against marauding pirates in the early modern period, there is a long history of coastal defence in the north-east. But the bulk of information left to us comes from the perceived threat of invasion by France in the latter half of the 19th century and the very real threat of German invasion during the two World Wars in the 20th century. This leaflet accompanies one of four walks along the coastline that explore the remains of defensive features from this period and the stories surrounding them.

- 1 Marsden to Trow Point
- 2 Roker cliffs and pier
- 3 Seaham
- 4 Hartlepool



This project has been coordinated by Groundwork NE & Cumbria. www.groundwork.org.uk/northeast Look for us on Facebook and Twitter!

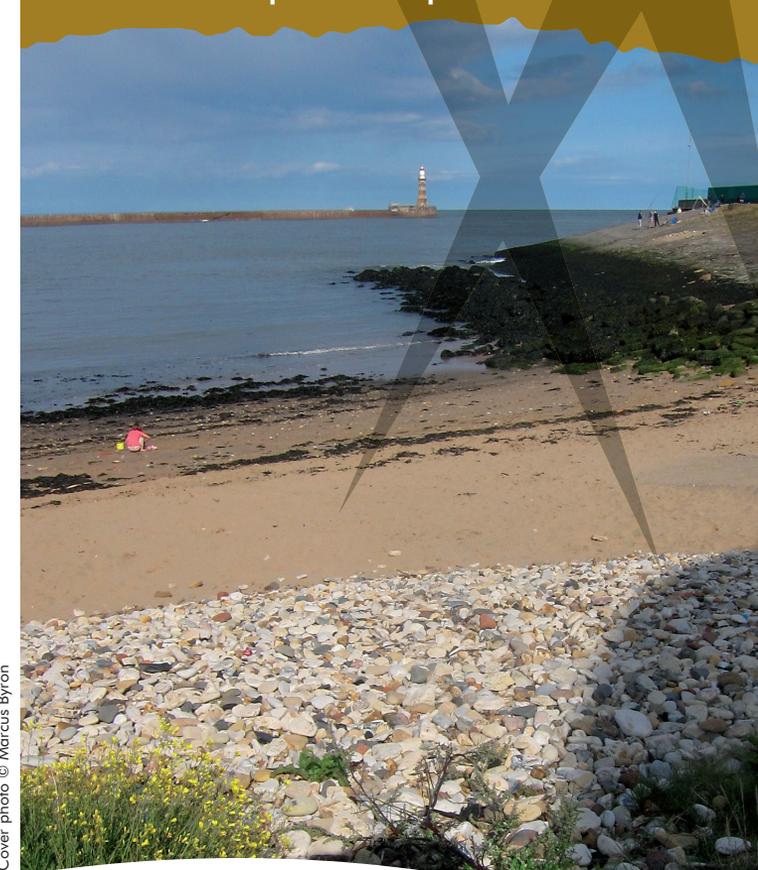
For more about the Limestone Landscapes project go to www.limestonelandscapes.info



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Roker: Protecting the port

A 2 mile walk via the coast, park and streets, taking in signs and memories of war to the peace of a park



Cover photo © Marcus Byron

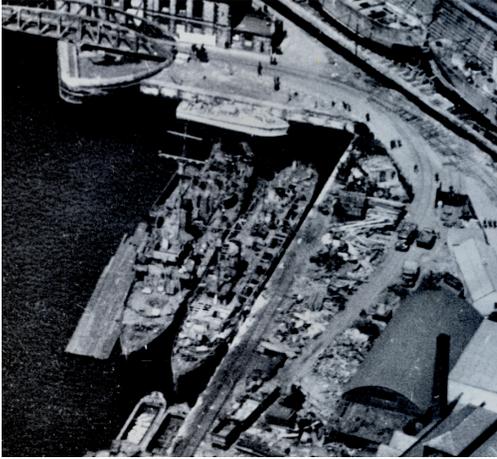
Limestone
Landscapes

Making a positive difference to the unique environment of the Magnesian Limestone area

a There have been gun defences guarding the harbour since 1860. Across from the old north pier was the **South Pier Wave Basin Battery**, built to protect the inner harbour. Defences were increased during the first and second World Wars. By then enemy attacks came almost exclusively in the form of aerial bombardment, so anti-aircraft guns were used to protect the town. Wave Basin Battery itself was armed with anti-aircraft machine guns.

An additional line of defence here was a wire cable stretched across the inner piers as a barrier to prevent attacks from high-speed 'e-boats'.

b As you look across the harbour you can just make out the Town Moor above the port. In WWII an **anti aircraft gun** on the Town Moor protected Hendon Docks and residential areas.



Sunderland Harbour in WWII

c Street names such as 'Turnstile Mews' on the estate to the left of Grantham Road are the clues that this was the site of **Roker Park** football stadium, the home of Sunderland Football Club until 1997 (indicated with a dashed line on the map). The stadium was hit in an air raid in 1940, killing a Special Police Constable who was walking past the ground. The stands were damaged and six unexploded bombs landed on the pitch.

This area was badly hit during successive raids on the 5th and 6th September 1941. On one night houses were demolished on Duke Street North, Sandringham Road, Westburn Terrace, Sandringham Terrace and Francis Street.

d The wounded from the bombings were taken to Redby School which functioned as a first aid station and Reserve Regional Control Centre during the war. Redby School used to be on the far side of Fulwell Road – on the gate pillars behind the bus shelter you can see 'BOYS' inlaid into the brickwork (right).



© M Byron



On 4th May 1941 a bomb demolished twelve houses in Duke Street North and badly damaged another thirty. Eight people were killed and a further eight seriously injured.

e Both **Roker Park** and the road bridge that spans the ravine were opened in 1880. They served as a nucleus around which the late Victorian and Edwardian suburb developed. The park is a registered Historic Park and Garden in recognition of its special historic interest.

f There have been **gun batteries** on Roker Cliffs from the late 1800s but they did not see any action until the First World War. The site of an earlier battery is the next stop in this walk.

In 1940, as air raids started over Sunderland, two 6" guns and search lights were installed here. Looking at the photo of a similar 6" gun at Heugh Battery in Hartlepool (right) you can see how the circular area created into seating matches the original installation.

g Roughly where the Lifeboat lookout is today was **St Abbs Battery**. Guns here saw action during World War I, most notably on 1 April 1916 when soldiers fired at a Zeppelin which had carried out a bombing raid on the city.

In the Second World War soldiers were billeted in the houses behind you and people who lived along the front were moved inland.

The naval mine is from 1940.

h It is hard to imagine today, but during the Second World War the beach here was covered with barbed wire. All around were signs warning of land mines.

i In 1885, the construction of Roker Pier commenced along the line of a natural rocky outcrop. In front of the lighthouse near the end of the pier was a torpedo battery, put in place around 1942 to protect the harbour from enemy vessels. There were three torpedo launchers, taken from the deck of a warship. The launchers faced in towards the harbour entrance to provide a last line of defence. The idea was to sink the first enemy ship that tried to enter the harbour, then the wreck would block any further enemy attempts to get in. The flat-roofed building that remains today would have been used for storing torpedoes.

In 1917 the crew of a German submarine were laying sea mines along the Sunderland coast when they accidentally struck one of their own mines. Nineteen of the crew died but the Captain and two of his crew were blown clear of the sinking vessel and rescued by the Royal Navy examination boat that patrolled the harbour waters. The wreck was discovered by divers in 1989 and the site was designated as a war grave. The wreck lies about 400 metres north of the lighthouse.

Below: The U-32 submarine that sank off Roker Pier
Bottom: 6" gun at Heugh Battery

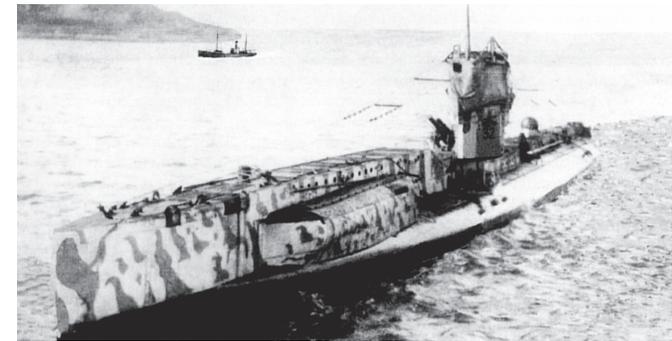


Image courtesy of Loie Foster at Heugh Battery Museum

