

Marsden to Trow Point

This leaflet takes you on a tour of the coastal defences between Marsden Bay and South Shields beach. There are intriguing clues that remain to tell the story of how this coastline has been protected in the past. You can either complete the full loop, walk to Trow Point and get the bus back, or park at the south end of South Shields beach which leaves a short walk (but with a steep climb and some steps) to Trow Point.

A 'Defended Land' Walk 4 miles/6km

The coastal path is fairly even and level. Keep a look out for cyclists who often use the same path. The climb onto Trow Point is short, but steep and rough in places.

The area is very popular with dog walkers. If you have a dog with you please pick up after it – there are plenty of waste bins in the area.

P Marsden Bay car park. NZ397 650. Charges apply.

Bus Services E1, E2 and E6 operate between South Shields and Sunderland, with stops along the coast road. www.stagecoachbus.com

Directions

- 1 From the car park head to the coast and follow the coast path north. Keep straight on over the path down to Marsden Bay (short flight of steps down and up). Keep to the cliff-top path for just over a mile.
- 2 Just as you start to round Frenchman's Bay look for a small path heading towards a mound ahead. Take this path and climb up and over the mound (this is the site of Frenchman's Battery). Down the far side of the mound keep straight ahead to meet the coast path again.
- 3 At the junction of paths take the route straight ahead that leads down a ridge into Trow Quarry. Keep straight on until you meet the end of the promenade road. Turn right to follow sandy track to foot of hill. Take the flight of steps and keep on to the concrete gun emplacement on Trow Point.
- 4 Return by following the north west side of the promontory. Back at the foot of the slope turn left to pick up the coast path, skirting the bay on your left and then gradually climbing up to meet the cliff-top path again. Either return by your outward route or pick up the grassy track that heads straight back across The Leas.

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



Research/text Groundwork North East & Marcus Byron. Leaflet design ©Marcus Byron.
Maps: All Rights Reserved ©Crown Copyright 2014. Ordnance Survey Licence Number 0100041467
Every attempt has been made to ascertain the provenance of any images used and acknowledgments have been made in good faith. Please let Groundwork NE know if there are any errors or omissions.

Marsden to Trow Point

A 4-mile walk along a dramatic cliff-top path to Trow Point, where signs of the preparations for war can still be seen



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



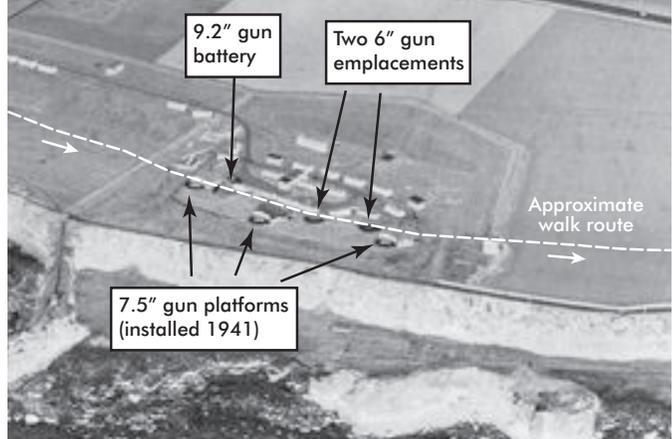
a Not far from the start point was the short-lived **Kitchener Battery**. It was built, along with another battery north of the Tyne at Hartley as a response to the German shelling of Hartlepool in 1914. It was not completed until 1921, by which time the gun and turret, which had come from an old warship HMS *Illustrious*, were already obsolete. It did not last long, being abandoned in 1926. Nothing remains today as the site has since been quarried. Although never fired in anger it was decided to fire the gun just once prior to decommissioning. The shell was fired out to sea, but caused a vacuum over Marsden village which ripped slates off the Co-op roof (right) and damaged several houses!



© www.marsdenbannergroup.btcc.co.uk

b **Marsden Leas** has a long history of use for coastal defence that dates back to the start of the Durham 3rd Artillery Volunteers in the 1860s. The open space in front of you would once have been covered in the tents of a pre-World War I army training camp. This was used by volunteers from across the northern region.

c All that remains of **Frenchman's Point Battery** is this grassy mound. The battery was built in 1905 to form a sister battery to Tynemouth Castle, providing cover on both sides of Tyne. With the advent of World War II a new battery was constructed in 1941 to mount three 7.5 inch naval guns that had been taken from HMS *Effingham*. These had a longer firing range and so were more suitable for anti-aircraft use. The site was a significant installation at the time as can be seen from this aerial photo taken in the 1940s. The site was abandoned in 1943 as the emplacements were unsound due to subsidence from underground mining operations.

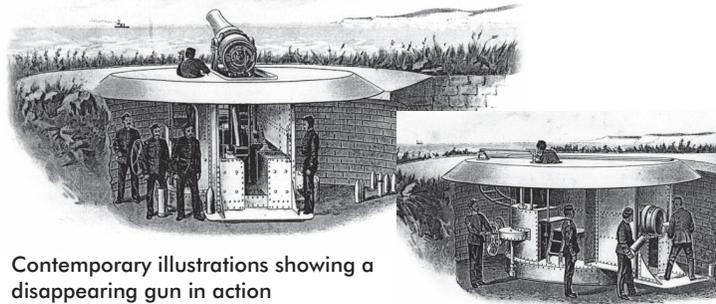


The layout of the battery based on information from Joe Foster from Heugh Battery. Emplacements for the 9.2" gun and two 6" guns can be traced on the ground in winter when vegetation is low. Image courtesy of Britain from the Air and English Heritage.

d Down on the quarry floor were **rifle ranges** used in the late 1800s by volunteers.

e There is plenty of military interest at **Trow Point**. Most noticeable is the original concrete emplacement of the **Trow Point Disappearing Gun**. The replica naval gun mounted on the platform was installed in 1987 to commemorate 100 years of gun trials at Trow Point.

During the late 1880s the Mark IV 6 inch breech loading gun was developed. It was designed to punch holes through the iron armour of enemy ships and had a firing range of 30,000ft, twice that of previous guns. What was unique about this gun emplacement was that it used innovative mountings that allowed the gun to disappear below ground so the soldiers could reload out of sight of the enemy. However, although the gun itself was a success the platform was a failure, as the raising mechanism was too slow to be of any use in battle conditions.



Contemporary illustrations showing a disappearing gun in action © Creative commons/Victorian Forts.

Just a few metres further on you can see the remains of two steel mountings on the ground for earlier 64-pounder rifled muzzle loading guns. Look for the circular tracer ring that the gun wheels ran on. The two mountings are very close together, surely too close for two guns to have been operating side by side. It is possible that this was to allow volunteers to practise the art of dismounting, moving and remounting guns, a favourite training exercise of the time.



Firing at Trow Point 21 June 1887 www.northumbriangunner.blogspot.co.uk

With the failure of the disappearing gun the emplacement at Trow Point was abandoned and in the early 1900s defences were built at Frenchman's Bay, seen earlier in the walk.

Trow Point was the site of **military defences in World War II**, including pill boxes, trenches and reinforced gun positions. One remaining pillbox has slumped down the cliff to the bay. There is also a reinforced gun position overlooking the beach.