



u3a

Tynemouth

The first meeting point was Tynemouth Metro station. Originally opened in 1882 by North Eastern Railway, the line was electrified in the early 1900's but due to operating costs converted to diesel multiple units in the 1960's. British Rail were still operating services until the day before the station was connected to the Metro network in 1980! The station itself is a grade 2 listed building and hosts markets on Saturdays and Sundays.



Opposite the station exit is Kings Priory School which takes its name from the three kings buried at Tynemouth priory (Oswin, Osred the Second and Malcolm the Third of Scotland. King Malcolm's body was later disinterred and taken to Scotland). The school's crest, as well as North Tyneside Council's coat of arms, display three crowns in recognition. "Old boys" include Stan Laurel and Ridley Scott. Although brother Tony was born here, their parents (father was in the Royal Engineers) were posted to Hartlepool.

Walking up to the second meeting point towards Tynemouth Castle and Priory, a green space displays monuments to the Boer Wars, Queen Victoria and a First World War memorial (now also reflecting later conflicts).

The headland jutting out into the North Sea has been occupied since the Iron Age, and it is thought that the Romans built a signal station there as it was opposite to the fort Arbeia (South Shields) built on a headland on the opposite side of the Tyne. The priory was built in the 7th century, sacked by the Danes a couple of times and abandoned, but was eventually rebuilt in the early 12th century. The stone castle was built in the 13th and 14th centuries on what was a rudimentary earth structure. After the reformation, most of the priory building were destroyed with the nave left to serve as the parish church. Much of the headland was militarised by various factions up to, and including anti-shiping artillery in the First World War.



Following Pier Road and heading up toward the Collingwood monument there is a small group of houses bearing the name "Spanish Battery". The battery was built in 1545 under orders from Henry the Eighth to defend his fleet before his invasion of Scotland, and was manned by Spanish mercenaries. The positioning of the gun emplacements can be seen in the picture below. The earlier defences were built to deter landings on the beach as can be seen here, and also at the castle. The gun emplacements at Clifford's Fort similarly covered part of the river estuary.



Next on the trail is the afore mentioned Collingwood monument. Sometimes referred to as the forgotten hero of the Battle of Trafalgar, it was Collingwood that, after the fatal injury sustained by Nelson, carried through the plans that they had developed. The four cannons on the monument are from his Trafalgar flagship HMS Royal Sovereign.



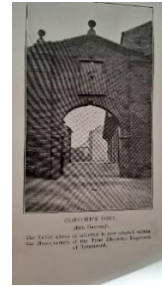
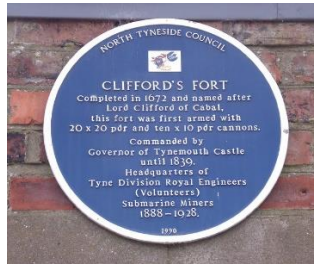
Following the path along the riverside, the notorious Black Middens rocks saw many shipwrecks. It is thought that sailors, once into the mouth of the Tyne, lessened their vigilance. In 1864, five ships were wrecked in three days. The Tynemouth Volunteer Life Brigade was formed that year, and still operates as a partner operator to HM Coastguard, and is independent of the RNLI.

On the way to the fish quay, past a marker buoy, and on Fiddlers Green, there is a metal statue of a fisherman dedicated to the memory of those lost in the North Sea.

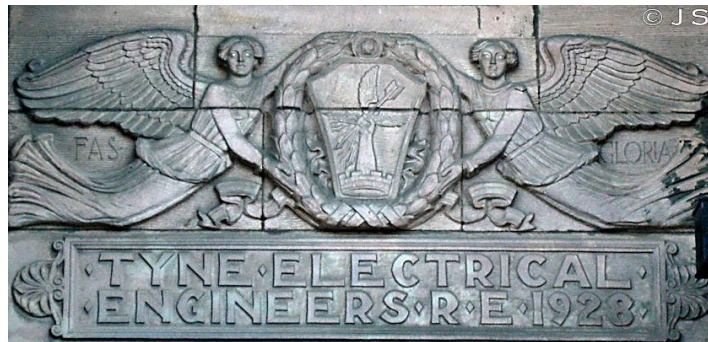


To one side of the fish quay are the remnants of Clifford's Fort, built at the start of the Anglo-Dutch wars in the 17th century as a defensive gun battery. The military connection continued through the 18th and 19th centuries eventually becoming the headquarters of the Tyne Division Royal Engineers (Submarine Miners) Volunteers. The undersea mines were connected by electric cables and detonated remotely. Subsequent to the transfer of submarine mining to the Royal Navy, the unit converted to the operation of searchlights for coastal defence, earning the unit the title Tyne

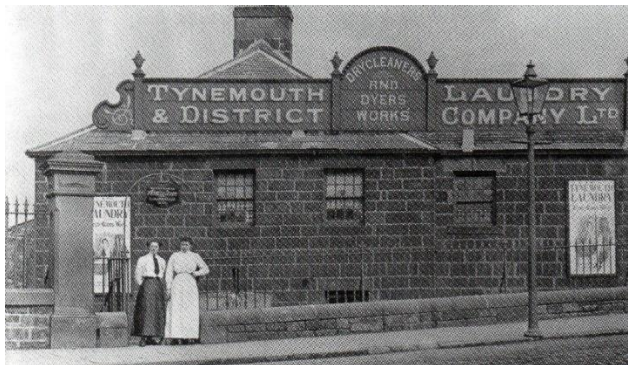
Electrical Engineers. The tablet above the original main gate was replicated on the patches worn by the Tyne Electrical Engineers and their descendent Royal Engineer units.



Becoming the property of the local authority in 1928, the buildings, after refurbishment, found alternative uses as smokehouses and fish wholesalers. The Royal Engineers were relocated to a purposed built drill hall with an adaptation of the original panel above the main entrance.



Moving onwards, the site of the Old Correction House was passed on the way to Northumberland Park. It was a prison for "for minor miscreants, such as prostitutes and petty thieves". It was later converted to a workhouse, then a laundry. More serious offenders were sent to the county goal at Morpeth as North Shields was part of Northumberland at the time. The Tynemouth Lodge Hotel, a few yards up the hill, housed visiting judges. There used to be a locked tunnel between the hotel and Correction House through which meals were taken into the prison.



From there, the direction led via Northumberland Park, an oasis of countryside in between the conurbations of North Shields and Tynemouth. At the corner of the junction of King Edward Road and the A193, there is a blue plaque bearing the name of Norah Balls. An article written to commemorate International Women's Day in 2022 quotes "Norah Elizabeth Balls, the daughter of a North Shields mariner, fought alongside suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst to secure the vote for women. As well as being a prominent member of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), she was also a magistrate, a Girl Guide Leader, a Tynemouth town councillor, and a founder member of Tynemouth Business and Professional Women's Club.

On the way back towards Tynemouth's Front Street, the three memorials were passed again and subjected to a closer inspection. Now at the end of the amble, the problem of sustenance was resolved by visiting the Cumberland Arms (other venues are available!).

