

The impact of the Second World War on Cleethorpes and Grimsby – By Alex Formby



Damage to Cleethorpes Road

Grimsby and Cleethorpes suffered from large numbers of air raids between 1940 and 1943. This was part of what was known as 'The Blitz', and happened nationwide. Grimsby was a target for the Germans because of its fishing industry.

295 people were killed in 30 separate air raids on the area. However, it was not just civilians that were killed in these devastating raids. Members of the emergency services were also killed in their efforts to save lives. These included firemen, police officers, and air raid wardens.

On June 14, 1943, the Germans used a terrifying new weapon for the first time on Grimsby and Cleethorpes. **These weapons were called butterfly bombs**, due to their winged appearance. These bombs were **the first anti-personnel weapon to be used on the civilian population of Britain**. They were designed to latch onto telephone lines and burst into homes, with the sole purpose of killing people when triggered. **Some would explode on impact, but others had timed fuses, so could be set off when people had gathered around the damage to assist.**

After a bombing raid which involved the use of a 1000kg bomb, huge destruction had already occurred. However, the next day, **2000 butterfly bombs were found littered across the area**. 30 people died within an hour of the raid, unsuspectingly triggering these bombs with just a single touch. **The final death toll was around 114 people, a number that the government censored for good morale.**

Most of these bombs were cleared, but their presence remained for many years. For example, tragically, a 9-year-old boy was killed in 1944 attempting to retrieve a bomb from a tree.

Unexploded butterfly bombs are still being found, decades after the war ended.

- 1) Why should we remember June 14th, 1943?
- 2) Were you surprised to learn that Grimsby/Cleethorpes were such high priority targets for the Germans?
- 3) Do you think we can tell the story of 'The Blitz' without mentioning Grimsby/Cleethorpes? Why?



Bomb damage, Duchess Street, Grimsby



Haile Sand Fort

Bull and Haile Sand Forts

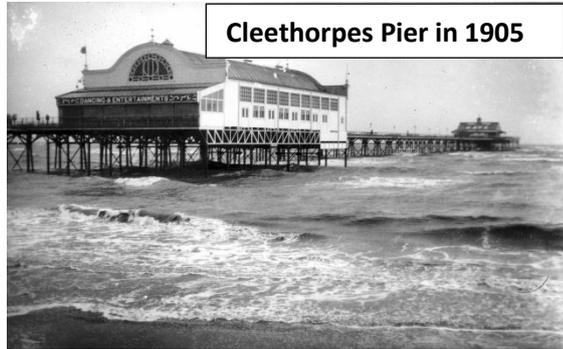
Both of these forts can be seen from the seafront, and were **constructed during the First World War to defend the Humber Estuary from the German Navy, particularly U-boats**. They were both heavily armoured and weaponised to deal with this threat. **A large, submarine net** was set up between the forts to prevent attacks. The forts saw most of their action during the Second World War.

Cleethorpes Pier

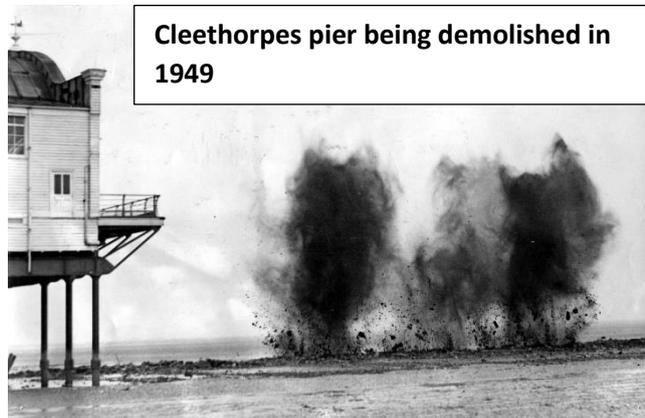
The pier used to be much longer than it is today, measuring 1,200 feet.

This is because a section of the pier was **dismantled during the Second World War**. This happened to a large number of piers on the East Coast, as **the authorities believed the Germans may try to use them as a runway to land planes on!** No German plane ever attempted this during the war.

The pier was **demolished and rebuilt in 1949**. The timber from this was used to help repair Leicester City's football stadium, which had been damaged by bombing.



Cleethorpes Pier in 1905



Cleethorpes pier being demolished in 1949



R.A.F. North Coates Strike Wing Memorial

This memorial can be found close to Cleethorpes seafront. It commemorates the airmen, navigators and ground crew of the **North Coates Strike Wing** during the Second World War.

The Strike Wing flew planes called **Beaufighters**, and targeted German shipping. They inflicted heavy losses and damage, attacking by both day and night. These bombers flew at low altitudes, often under heavy anti-aircraft fire.

They destroyed over 150,000 tons of enemy shipping. This memorial commemorates all those that served.

- 1) Considering the examples on this page, were you surprised to find that the area was so crucial in defending the East Coast?
- 2) Do you believe that we should commemorate events and people involved in this defence?

Beau fighter

