



Talking Tees Valley Activity Pack

The Bombardment of

the Hartlepoons



Tees Valley
Museums



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND





Welcome to another edition of the Talking Tees Valley Activity Pack

Each month we will use objects from one of our museums in the Tees Valley to take a closer look at the lives and stories from people in our area.

On the 11th of November we remember those who fought and died in wars. This is sometimes called poppy day because we wear a poppy as a sign of remembrance. This Poppy Day we are looking at the Bombardment of the Hartlepoons during the First World War.

The First World War was declared on the 4th August 1914. At the time it was called the 'Great War' and it changed British society and warfare forever by harnessing new technologies into weapons such as tanks, zeppelins, airplanes, and chemical warfare. For the first time war was close to home and civilians were vulnerable to attack from the skies and the seas.



The Bombardment of the Hartlepoons

On the 16th of December 1914, at around 8am Hartlepool came under attack from the German Navy. In a bombing raid that lasted 40 minutes, 1,150 shells rained down on the towns killing 130 people and injuring many more.

The bombardment destroyed buildings and homes whilst terrifying the residents. At first people thought it was an invasion and the Germans had landed on the beach. People loaded up prams and carts and fled into the countryside for cover.

The bombing began in the morning just as people were heading to work and children were on the way to school.



Three men pose for a photograph after the Hartlepool Bombardment. The middle man is holding an unexploded 5.9 shell from the German Navy.



Violet Muers was just a child at the time, but clearly remembered her mother clutching her bairns close and saying she'd not go "up country". "If the Germans are going to kill me I'll be killed in me own home."

Violet also recalled her husband's experience t. He went to the butchers on that morning to get some bangers but when he got home, he found his whole family had fled the bombs, abandoning him.

When she asked him "What did you do?"

He simply replied, "I had a really good feed!"

Two young boys examine the damage of the Baptist Church after an unexploded shell passed through the building creating a large hole.



Despite the mass casualties and fatalities, the town refused to be subdued and donated more to the war effort than any other town. The attack which also targeted Scarborough and Whitby, resulted in a mass join up of men in the county.

‘We're tough you know and what happened that day, we all got back on our feet in no time - good people, tough folk.’ - Myra Docherty, bombardment survivor.

Remembering through Poetry

On the 16th December 1914 at around 8am, German ships named Seydlitz, Blücher and Moltke, attacked the coastal towns of Hartlepool. The attack was led by a man called Franz von Hipper who the British press would later call the baby killer. We remember those lost in the attack and the damage done and how it changed the area and face of the British coast.

My name is Sarah York, a member of the Tees Women Poets. These poems were created after looking at the stories and events during the attack. The stories I found, while doing my research, showed the tale of British resilience and the fantastic human way that we come together in times of need.

1150 Lights in the sky,
Stealing, homes, churches, lives,
But not hope,
Not spirit



Ballad of 1914

Eight in morn, nineteen ten four,
Baby killer came to town,
With Blücher, Seydlitz, Moltke large,
Cold brass laid on the ground.

Sky smoke black, air full of screams,
A line of guns and tact.
Caught off guard, ship want of steam,
But battery full racked.

40 mins felt 40 days,
Til Blücher hid, the shooting stayed

Within the hour the town unite
To dig and fight and save,
"They're known good people, tough folk
them lot."
Of Hartlepoons and their bays.

Sarah York



The House of Light

There once was the light
At the end of the world
That stood in defiance
And protector of all

The fight reached the light
At the end of the peace
"Get out of the way"
The army men call

They came for the light
At the end of its shift
When going to bed
As morning did fall

Unmoved was the light
At the end of the day
For it had hope to defend
With its features pulled tall

They rested the light
At the end of its life
A beacon, a hero
And protector of all

The first Heugh Lighthouse
1846 - 1915

Sarah York



Shells

A quiet town, quite out of reach
Finding rocks grey, gold and teal
And shell collecting on the beach

The man abroad, an angry speech
With giant monsters and harsh cold
steel

A quiet town, quite out of reach

A man and dog, a broken peace
Strong wind blows, uneasy feel
And shell collecting on the beach

They think them right, new world to
preach

A rain of death, a changing deal
A quiet town, quite out of reach

Run and hide, count each child each
A world unknown so very real
And shells collecting on the beach

The quiet returns with sky burnt peach
People out, town to heal
A quiet town, quite out of reach
And shell collecting on the beach

Sarah York



Have a go...

If you would like to create some poetry yourself here are some ideas for you to base your poems around:

-What was it like for the people at the time, both during and after the attack?

-Put yourself at the time of the bombing, what would your senses feel? Look closely at the images in this pack then close your eyes and imagine what it would be like to be in one. What could you hear, smell, see?

Use the images in this pack for inspiration

Get in touch with us at – Teesvalleymuseums@stockton.gov.uk .All previous Talking Tees Valley Packs can be found here -<https://teesvalleymuseums.org/news/>

All images in this pack are courtesy of Hartlepool Museum Service.
We would like to thank Sarah York for her work on this pack.