

# DEFENCE AREA 26

## CAYTON BAY

### 1. Area details:

Cayton Bay is 3 miles SE of Scarborough and 4 miles NW of Filey.

County: North Yorkshire.

Parishes: Cayton / Osgodby.

NGR: centre of area, TA 066845.

### 1.1 Area Description: [see Map 1].

The defence area consists principally of Cayton Bay which curves north-west from Lebberston Cliff at its eastern end to Osgodby Point. At the northern end, the wooded heights of Clayton Cliff overlook an area known as Johnny Flinton's Harbour. The eastern extent of the beach is particularly broad and sandy, lying beneath the eroding Killerby Cliff. Over the years the cliffs have slumped from the top, a process which continues, forming a tumbled series of ledges rich in vegetation. Dominating the centre of the bay is an early nineteenth century red-brick pumping station with distinctive terraced grounds.

The A165 coastal road runs close to the bay, and passes through Osgodby which is now connected to Scarborough by a continuous line of suburbs. South of Osgodby and west of the A165 stands Cayton Bay Holiday Village, with a caravan park and a pay car park on the east side of the road, the latter for public access to the bay.

A viewshed is formed by the sweep of the bay, with its cliffs behind and Osgodby Point to the north.



*Fig. 1 - Cayton Bay seen from Killerby Cliff. Osgodby Point forms the northern end of the bay. In the distance are South Bay and the heights of Scarborough Castle. Section post, UORN 2760, stands in the right foreground.*





*Fig. 2 - The central and northern areas of Cayton Bay seen in a 1948 air photograph. The pumping station stands towards the bottom right, and towards the top is Osgodby Point with the wooded heights of Cayton Cliff behind.*

## 2. **Assessment.**

### 2.1 **Defences:** [see Map 2]

#### *Defence overview -*

Cayton Bay formed the right Sub-Sector of the Scarborough Sector of the military North Riding Sub-Area.<sup>1</sup> In 1941 its defence, together with a further fifty miles of coastline, was the responsibility of the 215th Infantry Brigade. The one and a half miles of Cayton Bay were considered a 'dangerous beach', i.e. vulnerable to enemy attack.<sup>2</sup>

Earlier, however, during the critical invasion danger months of June-September 1940, the bay had been defended by the 197th Infantry Brigade, being situated in its No.2 Central Sector. A reconnaissance for its defence was carried out at the end of May and early June 1940, and one infantry company from the 2/5th Bn. Lancashire Fusiliers was positioned here, with platoon areas at the north, centre, and south of the bay coinciding with its various slopes and approaches. Sandbagged posts were

<sup>1</sup> TNA: PRO WO 166/6770.

<sup>2</sup> TNA: PRO WO 166/1068.



prepared, armed with four machine guns. Use was also made of the pumping station as a fortified post, although evidence for this is lacking today.<sup>3</sup>

In July and August 1940, concrete pillboxes were built at Cayton Bay, and at Cornelian Bay to the north, by 257th Field Company Royal Engineers. By the end of July three pillboxes had been built and camouflaged perimeter wire erected, and bombing and rifle posts with connecting slit trenches dug. A dummy pillbox was also erected in August. Section commanders were told to liaise with the contractors regarding the angles of embrasures, and to report to brigade when the pillboxes were ready to be taken over. A complete system of reference numbering was organised.<sup>4</sup>

The most southerly of the pillboxes on the beach was the cause of some anxiety as it was being washed by the high tide. A concrete apron was added at the front, and a wing wall and eighteen inch step at the doorway. It was decided to build a further pillbox at a higher level above the beach, although it was admitted that sites were hard to find and that a special design was needed. This pillbox, with three rifle embrasures as well as those for machine guns, was eventually completed, but only after it had had to be restarted after the initial work by the civilian contractor was found to be unsatisfactory. After an abusive response from the contractor, the Army cancelled all further contracts with him.<sup>5</sup>

The Lancashire Fusiliers first manning the pillboxes are previously recorded as having been 'very comfortable' in bathing huts and chalets. In those early days of invasion danger, the defensive works had become mixed up with visitors and 'bathing belles' in a way that was described as 'demoralising'. The civilians disappeared when the whole of the Yorkshire coast was declared a prohibited area.<sup>6</sup>

A principal fear was that the Germans would attack the bay using special mountain troops to scale the cliffs, and, combining with airborne troops, form a bridgehead to attack the port of Scarborough from the rear.<sup>7</sup> In the event of such a successful attack, a 'forming up area' where the retreating troops could regroup was designated: this lay in the area of Cayton and Tenants' Cliffs. A rear boundary on the line of the Scarborough-Filey road was also designated. A series of fortified houses were prepared protecting this land perimeter, and blocks set up on approach roads as well as on paths leading up from Cayton Bay. These blocks were manned by 18 Platoon of 'F' Company of the 10th Bn. North Riding Home Guard.<sup>8</sup> Minefields were also laid at Osgodby Point and behind the cliffs.

By 1941, under 215th Infantry Brigade, the concept of extended lines of defence had been abandoned in favour of a number of defended localities, one being at Cliff House (now under the site of Cayton Bay Holiday Village).<sup>9</sup> The infantry battalion manning the defences was now the 9th Bn. Loyal Regiment, which had one

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<sup>3</sup> TNA: PRO WO 166/1050.

<sup>4</sup> TNA: PRO WO 166/1050.

<sup>5</sup> TNA: PRO WO 166/3726.

<sup>6</sup> TNA: PRO WO 166/4408.

<sup>7</sup> TNA: PRO WO 166/4447.

<sup>8</sup> TNA: PRO WO 166/6770.

<sup>9</sup> TNA: PRO WO 166/4408.





company with a sub-section of medium machine guns at Cayton Beach. By September 1941, the defending troops were recorded as one platoon and one section mortars.<sup>10</sup> A Lyon Light [beach searchlight] facing south was built on the shore at Johnny Flinton's Harbour. To the north at South Bay, two 6in. guns of 544 Coast Battery protected the approaches to Scarborough harbour.<sup>11</sup>



*Fig. 3 - Central area of Cayton Bay seen in a 1941 oblique air photograph. The pumping station and its terraced cliff can be made out towards the right. On the far side of the road, the predecessor of the present Cayton Bay Holiday Village can be seen. In 1940, its chalets were used as accommodation for defending troops.*



*Fig. 4 - Johnny Flinton's Harbour beneath Osgodby Point at the northern end of Cayton Bay. This was the scene of considerable defence preparation, the remains of which can be seen today.*

<sup>10</sup> TNA: PRO WO 166/4447.

<sup>11</sup> TNA: PRO WO 166/1068.





*The defence works -*

Four pillboxes of the local variant type for medium machine guns [see as well Defence Area 52 - Speeton], with various remains of other defence structures, survive on the beach at Cayton Bay. The southernmost pillbox [UORN 2758] has been turned upside down, still affixed to its concrete raft: it is not clear if this is the pillbox which had to be further protected against the sea in 1940 [see 'Defence overview' above]. Another pillbox [UORN 2756] has also clearly been displaced as it now stands on top of boulders. The position of these pillboxes must be close to their original sites, however, for it is unlikely that either has fallen from a higher location on the cliff edge above. Pillboxes, UORNs 2755 and 2759, still stand unmoved on the beach, and other than for being filled with sand and shingle, survive in a battered but stable condition.



*Fig. 5 - UORN 2758 [left] - a medium machine gun pillbox turned upside down by the action of the sea.*

*Fig. 6 - UORN 2756 [right] now stands awkwardly on boulders, but is probably close to its original position.*



*Fig. 7 - UORN 2759: this pillbox, defiant of sixty years of battering by the sea, still stands unmoved on Cayton Beach. The type, with its projecting buttresses beneath the embrasures, and two entrances at each side of the rear face, is a local variant of a hexagonal machine gun pillbox found frequently on the Yorkshire coast.*



By March 1941, two 'section posts' [long, angled rectangular pillboxes with multiple light machine gun and rifle embrasures in all faces] had been built on the top edge of Killerby Cliff. These structures are likely to have been the 'further pillbox' that was built to a special design about which there was a problem with the civilian contractor [see 'Defence overview', p3]. The easternmost of the two section posts, which stood close together, has fallen in recent years over the eroding cliff, and the remaining one is increasingly perilously poised. These section posts are rare, and, although others can be found further to the north at Greatham Creek [see Defence Area 33], it is believed this surviving structure [UORN 2760] is unique on the Yorkshire coast.



*Fig. 8 - UORN 2760: section post on Killerby Cliff. The small embrasures could be used by Bren guns as well as rifles.*



*Fig. 9 - The rare section post, UORN 2760, seen from the rear, with an entrance at each end (the northern one now destroyed by cliff erosion).*





*Fig. 10 - A fallen section post [UORN 2762] lying on a ledge of Killerby Cliff.*

At Johnny Flinton's Harbour at the northern end of Cayton Bay is a pillbox [UORN 2755] standing amongst a jumble of remains including anti-tank cubes, piles of concrete and brick debris, and close by a huge semi-buried concrete block that may be the remains of a command post [UORN 2754]. A further pillbox once stood on the south side of Osgodby Point, but is now destroyed.



*Fig. 11 - A huge concrete block structure [UORN 2754] in the background that appears to have a now buried entrance but whose purpose is unknown - seen from pillbox UORN 2755.*

## **2.2 Landscape:**

There have been few developments since the Second World War to the immediate shoreline of Cayton Bay and the area of cliffs behind it. A car park has been laid out



to the west of Killerby Cliff, and there is a newly surfaced approach path from it via a gully to the beach. The Cleveland Way coastal footpath passes the head of this gully. A caravan park occupies an area of the cliff top between the car park and the pumping station. Further away from the coast, however, to the west of the A165 Scarborough-Filey road, Cayton Bay Holiday Village now spreads over a wide area, as do the suburbs of Osgodby, itself linked by continuous development to Scarborough. Some of the land is in the care of the National Trust.

Killerby Cliff continues to erode, threatening the remaining section post [UORN 2760]. These cliffs on the course of the Cleveland Way are dangerous, and care should be taken when inspecting this structure.



*Fig. 12 - The eroding Killerby Cliff with section post [UORN 2760] projecting over the edge.*

The surviving defence structures can mostly be inspected from Cayton Beach, or from public footpaths on the cliffs behind. The exception is pillbox, UORN 2750, on the north side of Osgodby Point which can only be approached from Cornelian Bay. The beach defence works are best viewed at low tide.

### **2.3 Statement of Significance:**

Cayton Bay provides an excellent example of coastal defence in an area where the cliffs backing the beach might have been thought to have lessened the danger of an enemy assault and, therefore, the degree of defence provision needed. The surviving pillboxes, although battered, are an important group of such beach front defences, usually removed by erosion or 'tidying-up' in other areas. The surviving section post on Killerby Cliff [UORN 2760] is a rare example of its type, and needs to be recorded fully, and a measured plan made, before its inevitable collapse.

One of the chief interests of this area comes from the amount of documentation that has been identified which enables the development of its defences to be traced from the earliest days in June 1940 to the full defence plan of mid-1941. Such detailed documentation is unusual.





A circular 'pillbox walk' could be established here taking the visitor from the car park along the beach front and back along the top of the cliffs.

3. **Recommendations:**

1. That the surviving anti-invasion defence works in the Cayton Bay area be considered of national importance. They enable the defence of this section of the coast of North Yorkshire to be interpreted, and provide evidence of the articulation of the defence and the inter-relationship of its functionally different components. Such interpretation is assisted by the documentary evidence provided in this report of defence structures that were built as part of the overall strategy but which have now been removed.
2. That the section post, UORN 2760, be professionally recorded before it collapses to the cliff ledge below.
3. That consideration be given, in a possible initiative with North Yorkshire County Council and the local authority, to establishing a 'pillbox walk' here. An information board on the Second World War defence of Cayton Bay, and the Yorkshire coast in general, could also be set up, possibly within the car park at Killerby Cliff.

4. **Supporting material.**

4.1 **Photographs:**

Figs. 1 and 5-12 - taken (AWF) during field survey, 29-30.4.2003.

Fig. 2 - 541/187 fr.4147 (23.10.1948) - NMR.

Fig. 3 - MSO 31039 fr.3726 (13.3.1941) - NMR.

Fig. 4 - MSO 31039 fr.3728 (13.3.1941) - NMR.

4.2 **Documentary Sources:**

257th Field Company Royal Engineers War Diary, 1940 - TNA: PRO WO 166/3726.

2/5th Bn. Lancashire Fusiliers War Diary - TNA: PRO WO 166/4408.

'Operation Order No.9', 24.6.1940 and '197 Brigade Home Defence Scheme', 5.9.1940 (from 197th Infantry Brigade War Diary) - TNA: PRO WO 166/1050.

'Operation Order No.1', 20.2.1941 and 'Operation Order No.3', 30.9.1941 (from 9th Bn. Loyal Regiment War Diary) - TNA: PRO WO 166/4447.

'Operation Instruction No.4', 31.5.1941 (from 215th Infantry Brigade HQ War Diary) - TNA: PRO WO 166/1068.

'Home Defence Scheme', March 1942 (from North Riding Sub-Area War Diary) - TNA: PRO WO 166/6770.

4.3 **Aerial Photographs:**

4H/BR42/B fr.110 (1.8.1940) - NMR.

MSO 31039 fr.3724 (13.3.1941) - NMR.

MSO 31039 fr.3725 (13.3.1941) - NMR.

MSO 31039 fr.3726 (13.3.1941) - NMR.



MSO 31039 fr.3727 (13.3.1941) - NMR.  
MSO 31039 fr.3728 (13.3.1941) - NMR.  
MSO 31039 fr.3729 (13.3.1941) - NMR.  
541/187 fr.4147 (23.10.1948) - NMR.  
MAL/65081 frs.118-119 (21.9.1965) - NMR.

4.4 **Ordnance Survey 1: 2500 Plans:**

TA 0684-0784 (1970) - BLML.  
TA 0685 (1968) - BLML.

4.5 **Defence of Britain Project Database:**

[see 5. 'Annex'].

