

Site Visit and Introductory Notes



By Emerald Ant www.emeraldant.com

North Hill in World War II

Minehead, Somerset

SCHOOLS RESOURCE PACK

for Key Stages 2 & 3

These 3 pages are to be used on a site visit, with the rest of the pack. An Ordnance Survey map and compass may be useful.



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North Hill – Radar Station and Tank Marshalling Area.

Image credit: Royal Commission Historic Monuments & Google Images

We suggest you start at the Tank Marshalling Area in Moor Wood (far right). Set your compass to North and use the maps above to navigate your way around.

USING THE PRESENT TO UNCOVER THE PAST

Look for the signs that tell the story of the past. You will see concrete tracks, moorland and gorse, linear earthworks to the west and large concrete areas in the woods to the east (below). Are there any houses or farms, or people?

Start your exploration in North Wood, at the large concrete ramp in the Tank Marshalling Area...



Photograph credit: Sarah Butterworth

What kind of floor is it? Are there any additional layers on top, or evidence of previous buildings around? How old do you think these might be?

Tanks were brought here on tank transporters to minimise damage to roads. They were serviced and re-fuelled in this area.

Find out more about tank training on North Hill (p6-9 Background Reading). If you have time, drive west along the road on North Hill to the old firing ranges. There is little visible evidence of the ranges but an aerial photograph on p7 shows their layout

Moor Wood in WW2 source Exmoor Park

Image source: www.facebook.com/mineheadatwar?fret=ts

Walk north through the woods, towards the sea and radar station. You will pass concrete foundations. The remains provide a clue as to the function and shape of the original buildings.



How many people do you think occupied one building? What furniture, resources or equipment might have been stored here? We think there may have been Nissen huts here for

soldiers' accommodation. What might conditions have been like in the summer and in the winter? Do a quick sketch of what it might have been like for soldiers living here.



Photograph credit: Sarah Butterworth



Photograph credit: Fred McCosh

Opposite the radar station there are more building foundations and steps, as well as mangled metal railings in the concrete floor. Do you think something might have been stored underground here? Why do you think there is very little remaining now?



Remains opposite Radar Station
Photograph credit: Sarah Butterworth

Ways of Interpreting Evidence to Discover the Past

Archaeology is the study of past human activity. An **archaeologist** studies remains that have been left behind by human populations; architecture, tools, clothing and belongings, ceremonial grounds and cultural landscapes. Using facts together with recorded data, an archaeologist helps us build a picture of past people and events.

Using Aerial Photographs to understand the past... Have a look at google earth aerial photographs to see how tanks left their mark around North Hill in WW2, (Background Reading p6-7). Aerial photographs are used by map makers. Archaeologists and historians use them to understand ancient and modern settlements, roads and field systems. They enable us to see from a great distance, making land markings and buildings visible, that are not obvious at ground level.

During the First World War aerial photography became useful for finding out about the enemy. Zeppelins and other airborne structures were used with basic camera equipment. In the Second World War aerial photography, and the interpretation of aerial photographs rapidly developed. Today drones, satellites, and other remote controlled equipment is used.