

Notes for Walking Tour of Brixham (Map Provided)

Introduction -Brixham and World War 2 (1939-1945)

Welcome & background

Walk in our streets and imagine what it would have been like to be in Brixham during the 1940's. It was one of the most crucial periods of British history. Brixham played a vital role in sending the first ground based assault troops onto the first beach to be liberated on the 6th June, codenamed Utah, in Normandy. Locally we are known as 'The town that saved Europe'.

The Second World War has been the most destructive in human history. A recorded 63 Million people worldwide died. Countless millions more also suffered bereavement, injury, dislocation, loss of homes and property.

Brixham was just a small coastal fishing port of circa 8,000 people. It was radically changed. Over 125 local inhabitants are recorded as killed and many more suffered. Brixham men and women played a vital role in the 'war effort' either in the 'Land Army', Auxiliary Services, 'Home Guard', or at sea in minesweepers, merchant vessels or arctic convoys, or in the air in fighter or bomber planes.

Brixham had a large refugee population during the war, mainly from Belgium. The Americans also arrived in 1943 and frequented the pubs and dance halls. The people 'left at home' also suffered deprivations and rationing of basic necessities, or injuries from the bombing of the town. Years were filled with long hours of relentless work. People also worried about the fate of kinfolk as the mobile phone and television of today did not exist.

Throughout the country, people faced first the threat of invasion, then a long five year relentless war. People learned to 'pull together'. They valued kin and community and focused on 'seeing it through'. They were led and inspired by Winston Spencer Churchill, the Prime Minister whose speeches even today are still regarded as some of the greatest in the English language.

Today we can still recall this period of our history. It is there in our buildings and our streets. So please walk around and visit the exhibitions, displays, and enjoy the activities. Remember the people who were our parents, grandparents or great-grandparent or other relatives. Remember we owe them so much of what we enjoy today.

We have arranged a number of exhibitions, displays and activities for all generations to enjoy under our 'Back to the 1940's' celebrations of Brixham between 1st and 9th June 2019 and this daily tour is part of those commemorations and celebrations.

Starting point -

1) The Old Coaching Inn-61 Fore Street, Brixham

One of the delightful **FREE** attractions in Brixham Town Centre at 61 Fore Street. `The Old Coaching Inn` is a `must see` for all visitors to Brixham as one of our most historic sites and starting point for this tour.

Step back in time to 1939 and the beginning of World War 2. By 1943 thousands of American troops were billeted in the local area with local families or under canvas in nearby fields awaiting embarkation orders for D-Day –the invasion of Europe. The town was a major attraction to `off duty` American servicemen who attended numerous dances and local public houses.

Rumour has it that the Coaching Inn played a very important role by surreptitiously becoming a BROTHAL. Once the American servicemen departed the premises returned to its usual business of providing accommodation, a drink and rest for the weary traveller.

The Old Coaching Inn, formerly named `The Globe Inn` then `The Globe Hotel` opened in 1790 at a time when the demand for coach travel was at its peak. At this time Brixham was becoming a thriving commercial centre with an economy based around fishing and victuals for the Military Garrison at Berry Head and the Royal Navy anchored nearby.

In the early 1800's the Garrison Town was transformed into a Civilian one and prospered. The `Old Coaching Inn` attracted mostly commercial travellers, the military and the local fishermen until by the 1930's you see adverts seeking to attract a broader range of guests.

The configuration of the Inn/Hotel remains largely unchanged, even if the functions of some rooms have. There was a modest well-appointed dining room, a rustic Tap-Bar interconnected to the kitchen, 4 guest bedrooms varying in size, 1 large bedroom with its own dressing room (presumably used by proprietor), 4 small bedrooms for staff and a large well-appointed public room for hire (with an adjoining service area).

The large lean-to Stable was a later addition (c.1840-50) funded and built by quarrying the stone behind the Coaching Inn to build the east elevation, whilst utilising the rock face to the south and west and the existing building to the north.

Today the `Old Coaching Inn` is again at the heart of the community providing food and drink and music and entertainment for visitors and local people. It will be open from 1030am till late providing beverages, drinks and entertainment and activities.

We will also be providing a FREE 1940s film at the `Old Coaching Inn` -Fore Street (230pm -4pm every day except Sunday 2nd June and Monday 3rd June). No reservations are possible and seating is on basis of first come only. The list is on the website or available at the Bar inside.

Please note the Methodist Church in Fore Street which if open is also worth a visit as used by generations of Brixham Sea folk

Stop Point 2

2) Town Hall, Theatre and Scala Hall

One of the major attractions in town is our historic theatre which will be holding a number of evening performances to mark the 75th Anniversary of D-Day. There will be AJ`s `Big Band` performing 1940`s Music on Thursday 6th June. It will also be open to the public during the day for people to simply view the spectacular Victoria architecture.

The 1940`s was a time without mobile phones or television sets. Yes, life can and did exist before the mobile. People relied instead upon radio and newspapers to know `what was going on`. They also talked and `word` even `rumour` spread like wildfire around communities.

Most entertainment came from the latest film or visiting this theatre. Brixham is fortunate that its theatre located in the town hall has survived virtually unchanged.

The Scala Hall which opens as a Pannier Market Mon-Weds is unchanged from the 1940`s –and indeed we will be holding a 1940`s dance there on Saturday 8th June 730pm –Tickets £10 –see website.

Stop Point 3

3) Brixham heritage museum.

This small museum situated in the town`s old police station next to the main town hall. It has a number of galleries that contain displays about Brixham in the wartime period. There are many interesting and rare local family WW2 heirlooms. There is a short film about Brixham`s Belgium community during the war years and a small number of military items for people to view. The volunteer guides will be happy to answer your questions and a number of publications are for sale.

Daily life in Brixham changed dramatically as local people adapted to `war-time` conditions. Our people lived under the threat of enemy `hit and run` air raids. Over 1,400 evacuees came to Brixham mainly from south London. All were allocated accommodation and assimilate into our community. The impact of children and Belgium refugees strained the community which met the new challenge.

The Brixham Heritage Museum holds a collection of items which reflect the daily lives of Brixham people. Food rationing was introduced with an acute shortage of meat. Daily luxuries and imported goods became scarce. People were issued with gas masks to carry at all times. All local industries were re-orientated to war production. Our local boat-builders Upham`s and Jackman`s went on to produce or repair 1,000 vessels.

The Free museum is open 10am -4pm every day.

4) St. Mary`s Church

If you walk up Bolton Street for half a mile you will come to St. Mary`s Church and graveyard. Although not part of this tour we would recommend you visit as the wooden Saxon church was succeeded by a Norman church 14 feet wide with walls 28 inches thick, the foundations of which are just within the columns of the North and South aisles of the present building.

The Norman Church was extended and it is likely that St. Mary's was commenced about 1435. The sandstone of which St. Mary's is built almost certainly came from the local Berry Head seams, and the stone for the arches and supporting piers from the quarries at Beer, in East Devon.

Outside the historic graveyard contains 43 registered war graves and these are clearly marked with poppies for the week. It is worth a visit to pay your respects at some very poignant gravesides.

As part of the D-Day celebrations St. Mary's will be open every day from 2nd to 9th June between 1030am -4pm with friendly Church-wardens who can guide you around and talk on the wonderful aspects of this historic site.

On the 5th June a **FREE** public inter-denominational service will be held on the evening before the 75th anniversary D-Day to give thanks for the safe embarkation of over 120,000 invasion troops mainly British and Americans.

The service will be an opportunity for the whole community both visitor and resident to come together in one of Brixham's most historic churches to mark the sacrifices made and the freedoms won. Music will be provided by the Brixham Town Band and the Orpheus Male Choir.

So, come along and enjoy an evening that will be both commemorative and entertaining.

Stop point 5

5) Council Car Park

The ground you see before you is reclaimed land as the rivers used to flow down here creating an estuary which gradually silted up over the centuries. When the new building on the corner was built a few years ago they found stonework and a mooring ring which showed that boats came all the way up to the Town Hall site.

This area was once part of the town gas works which provided cooking, heating and lighting to the town before the advent of natural gas. It was bombed during WW2. Later it became a multi-storey car park and was subsequently demolished and remained as is. Various plans have been put forward to regenerate the site but none have proved economical to date.

Stop point 6

6) Baptist Church

The church was built in the 1880's and remains a hub for the Christian community.

A wonderful **FREE** performance awaits you from one of the most famous Choirs in the country. To mark the 75th Anniversary of D-Day they will perform a range of music from the 1940's sung by women whose husbands are currently serving in our Armed Forces.

This famous Choir was founded in October 2011 Lympstone and was a founding choir in the Military Wives Choirs Foundation. Having recorded a number one single and four albums we have enjoyed musical collaborations with artists such as Cliff Richard, Lulu and Katherine Jenkins.

The Lymestone Military Wives Choir will be performing at 2pm-3pm on Saturday 8th June at the Baptist Church in Brixham. The Concert is free to the general public but all donations to the Choir are gratefully received. Public entry is on the basis of `first come` and no reservations are possible.

Stop point 7

7) Middle Street

This street is built on part of the escarpment which flanked the original estuary and has been settled from the Middle Ages and gradually developed along with the town from Victoria times. The `back-ally-ways` contain many of the original fisherman`s cottages. Up the stairs IS `All Saints` Church which is also worth a visit and from where the Vicar Rev. Leyte composed the famous hymn `Abide with me`.

On the 19th May 1941 alone 2 bombs fell upon Middle Street and Fore Street, Brixham resulting in 2 deaths, 4 serious injuries and 17 slight injuries. Two houses were destroyed and 25 were badly damaged. Brixham`s most spectacular raid was in 1941 when the gas meters in what is now the town central car park were hit.

A **FREE competition** open to both the parents and children is the 1940`s treasure hunt. This will be run by the Market Street Traders from whom forms can be obtained at either shops or the Craft Market underneath the old fishing market on Saturday the 2nd or 8th June or Wednesday 5th June 10am -4pm.

The treasure hunt will involve seeking out items pertaining to the 1940`s in Brixham and completing your own `Treasure Map`. This **FREE** activity will keep our youngsters engaged and also stimulate curiosity about the 1940`s period.

Stop point 8

8) The Old and new Fishing Quay

Fishing still remains part of the heritage of Brixham. Side by Side we have the original quayside now used for entertainment and markets alongside the modern facilities for the landing and processing of circa £20M of fish every year. Here is also the point where William of Orange landed marked by the Plinth on his march to London to claim the English throne.

During WW2 most fishing ceased and Brixham Fishermen served on Minesweepers, arctic convoys and other Naval Vessels. Many served with great distinction and 25 awards for gallantry were won. Most of the women were engaged in one form of `war industries` from driving, agriculture & forestry, etc

Stop Point 9

9) Brixham Battery Gardens

The original Brixham Battery was built in 1586 to protect the Brixham harbour from the Spanish Armada which arrived in the English Channel in 1588 and was attacked by English sailors such as Sir Francis Drake and was destroyed by a great storm.

In June 1940, with the threat of further invasion Winston Churchill ordered 116 armed defence batteries to be built around UK including Brixham. Only 2 survive –one of which is ours and is open to the public. The main coast defence armament were two 4.7 inch guns designed by Vickers Armstrong with a range of 6 miles but never fired in anger

The Battery also had several anti-aircraft weapons including a 40mm Swedish designed Bofors Gun and a 6 pounder French Hitchkiss gun in a pill box facing the outer harbour and breakwater. There were 25 raids on Brixham from late July 1940 to early 1944 and 5 aircraft were shot down in the Torbay area.

From January 1942 to Dec 1944 the Battery was manned by the Home Guard which consisted of 100 men (over 50 years old) doing day and night duty and living in the holiday camps.

The Brixham Battery Museum is located at the top of Battery Gardens to the north of the town along the coastal path. It will be open FREE to the general public at extended times during the period.

Stop Point 10

10) FREE PUBLIC ATTRACTION -Motor Torpedo Boat 102

Subject to weather conditions we will have a unique **FREE** attraction in the MTB 102 at the Town Pontoon marina from Tues **4th June to Sunday 9th June 1030am-4pm**. Brixham harbour hosted both Royal Navy and Canadian flotilla`s of these small craft during WW2. Our local St. Mary`s Churchyard contains the graves of several crewmen from these small vessels.

The MTB 102 was launched in 1937 she was crewed by two officers and eight men, and during 1939 and 1940 she saw active service mainly in the English Channel.

During the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force and Allies from Dunkirk, she crossed the channel eight times. When the Destroyer HMS Keith was disabled, Rear Admiral Wake-Walker transferred to MTB 102, using her as his flagship. A Rear Admirals flag was created with an Admiralty dishcloth and some red paint! MTB 102 was the third to last vessel to leave Dunkirk.

In 1944 she carried Winston Churchill and General Eisenhower on their review of the ships assembled on the south coast for the D-Day landings.

At the end of the war she was sold off and found by a Norfolk Scout Group in 1973 and refurbished as a WWII MTB for the 1976 film 'The Eagle Has Landed'. She was also used in a Dutch film 'Soldier of Orange' (also known as 'Survival Run').

This historic vessel will be open free to the public every day between Monday 4th June to the Sunday 9th June at the Public pontoon on the MDL Marina subject to weather. All donations are welcome.

Stop Point 11

11) The Outer harbour, embarkation slipway and hard

To launch an invasion of Europe at least 100 slipways were required along the south coast of England. In May 1942 the Royal Engineers built 2 slipways adjacent to the Breakwater. The larger one at 90 yards wide and a smaller one at 12 yards wide. The slipway at Brixham was used to load modified Sherman tanks, weapons, equipment and troops for all training exercises (including the disastrous `Exercise Tiger`) and for D-Day on 6th June.

The American 4th Infantry Division departed from this slipway and lost 197 young men on Utah Beach. The adjacent beach Omaha the Americans lost 5,000 men and many of you will have seen the film `Saving Private Ryan`.

One of the major **FREE** public attractions will be the 6th June 2019 Parade to mark the 75th Anniversary of D-Day. The Parade will be led by Scottish Pipers and drummers alongside the Royal British Legion (Brixham Branch) with representative groups from military and civilian organisations throughout the south-west and further afield. We anticipate representation from allied nations providing colour and variety in the parade.

The Parade will leave the `Man & Boy` statue on the southern quayside at 1045am and march to Breakwater Beach where an inter-denominational service of commemoration will be held. Our pipers and town-band men and women will provide music for a moving service that marks the sacrifice of all nations in this terrible conflict.

There will be a minutes silence and wreathes will be laid along the breakwater from where so many departed our shore in the cause of our freedom never to return. We will conduct a small service. The traditional hymn `Abide with me` was written and first performed in Brixham and is now a traditional lament recognized the world over in remembrance services.

This is a major Public Event mark the 75th Anniversary of D- Day to which the visiting public are welcomed to attend.

Stop point 12 Ramp opposite Breakwater

12) SHOALSTONE POOL -1940`s FASHION SHOW

Brixham has an `art deco` outdoor swimming pool which is filled by seawater and is a popular attraction. We are holding an inspiring **FREE** fashion show set in the iconic Shoalstone sea water pool on Monday 3rd June between 12 noon -1pm. Brixham people had to `mend and make do` in the `war years` and this show pays tribute to the skills of the housewife and local seamstresses who made sure everyone was adequately clothed despite the shortage of materials.

The war years resulted in `gray` utility clothing becoming an acceptable dress form. Many men and women would consider themselves `rich` if they had one good `Sunday` suitor dress and many material were simply harsh linen. Depending on occupation people wore a variety of dress and also there were different military uniforms both within and between the allied nations.

The Brixham Charity shops will be displaying clothing of the era in the windows and perhaps there will be an opportunity to `bag` a bargain from this increasingly rare historic clothing.

So come along and see what you think of the clothes that great grandmother and grandfather wore and perhaps afterwards try some for yourself?

This FREE Shoalstone Pool fashion show will be on Monday 3rd June 12 noon-1pm.

RETURN TRIP STOP POINT 13

13) Churchill Gardens and Brixham War memorial.

The site was originally 2 houses demolished to provide a `turning circle` for Sherman tanks to be loaded onto the Embarkation craft below.

The Brixham War Memorial was established in 1922 and contains the names of 216 men killed in WW1 and 125 killed in WW2

RETURN TRIP STOP POINT 14

14) STRAND ART GALLERY - `VICTORY` EXHIBITION

Brixham has had an `Artist Colony` since the 19th Century. Today the town has many artists' residents both amateur and professional. The Strand Art Gallery has been here for over 50 years and is holding a wonderful **Free Exhibition** for those who have an interest in the artistic heritage of this small port. Brixham has been the `home port` of many artists who grew up in the `war years` and have left us with their recollections of what the conflict was like in vivid colour.

The Strand Art Gallery presents its ``Victory Exhibition`` of original artwork by Brixham's artists commemorating WW2. The paintings on display include classic originals including Victory flights, Army vehicles, sinking of the Bismarck, Spitfires, Gloucester Gladiators, and Hercules Bomber, war time Churston Station and Brixham Railway Station during the period.

The studio in which many still paint is today run by Gina and Andrew Stockman direct descendants of their famous father Bill Stockman whose famous work adores local, national and international homes. The entrance is `tucked away` up the stairway to an original sail-loft opposite the `Prince William of Orange` Statue on the quayside.

It is well worth a visit and is open daily 10am -5pm, admission Free.

RETURN TRIP STOP POINT 15

15) OLD COACHING INN

Brixham Town will be `made -over` to represent the 1940's period and constitutes a major **FREE** attraction for visitors and residents alike. Numerous premises and window displays will help create the `war-time` feel in the town alongside the music, sounds and re-enactors from the period. Sit down in a cafe and hear the great speeches of Sir Winston Churchill; the sound of the air-raid siren followed by the `all clear`; stop and admire the historic 1940's vehicles in the streets; the displays or

music in our old fishing market or at Shoalstone Pool; or just simply chat to the re-enactors around you. The Town's local historian Robbie Robinson will be wandering around and is happy to stop and talk to people most days and frequently attracts a crowd!

We will be showing a film by the South Devon Players which records many of the memories of Brixham people who lived through these amazing times on Sunday 2nd June here at 730pm.

Enjoy your walk and take it easy.

Finally there will be a number of other pay to enter **Events in Town**. One is our 1940's Dance in the Scala Hall on Saturday evening of the 8th June. Another is the 1940's Swing Band AJ's that will be performing at the Brixham Theatre on Thursday 6th June at 30pm.

We hope you enjoy your time with us and hopefully catch one of our FREE Events.

FREE FILMS AT OLD COACHING INN

The following seven film shows are scheduled for **2:30 pm -4pm in the `Old Coaching Inn` at 61 Fore Street, Brixham**. Entry is free, but maximum capacity is 125 seats on first come basis. A bar will be available. Alternatively teas and coffees can also be obtained. There will be no interval. Toilets are available. Children below 18 years must be accompanied by an adult.

Saturday 1st June 2019- `Songs that won the war`

Staring Vera Lynn known as `the forces sweetheart`. Many of her songs epitomized the war-time `spirit` of British people fighting first for survival and then victory. **Time appox** : 1 hour 10 Minutes.

Sunday 2nd June 2019- Brixham on D-Day

Staring local people who recollect their memories of WW2 when they were children. Filmed locally by the South Devon Film Company and Directed by Laura Jay. **Time appox**: 1 hour

Tuesday 4rd June 2019- `Rebecca`

A 1940's thriller that won 13 Oscars. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock a `master of suspense`. It stars Laurence Olivier and Jane Fontain who became screen legends. **Time appox**: 1 hour 40 Minutes.

Wednesday 5th June 2019- `Flemish Farm`

This 1943 film tells the story of a squadron of Belgium Pilots who take shelter in a farm as their country is over-run by the advancing Nazi's. Brixham had strong connections to Belgium in the war years as many refugees sought shelter here. **Time appox**: 80 Minutes

Thursday 6th June 2019- `Fighting 69`

Staring famous American actors Jimmy Cagney, Pat O'Brien and George Brent. When Nazi tanks rage across Europe the road for American involvement is open. **Time appox**: 86 Minutes

Friday 7th June 2019- `Nine Men`

True story set in North Africa behind enemy lines. The film stars Gordon Jackson and Fredrick Piper whose later careers spanned screen, television and theatre. **Time appox**: 1hour 30 Minutes

Saturday 8th June 2019- *‘Battle of the V-1’*

Based in occupied Belgium, starring Michael Rennie, Patricia Medina and David Knight. The true life story of the struggle to stop the Nazi's secret weapon .**Time appox:** 1 Hour 40 Minutes

Sunday 9th June 2019- *‘Private Buckaroo’*

A musical film that reflects the war time `spirit` of British people. It stars the famous Andrews Sisters and the Harry James Orchestra in a classic black and white film. **Time appox :** 1 hour 15 Minutes

No film showing can be guaranteed and substitutions will be made if necessary. For further details on films please contact: Steve Watkins -01803 850596