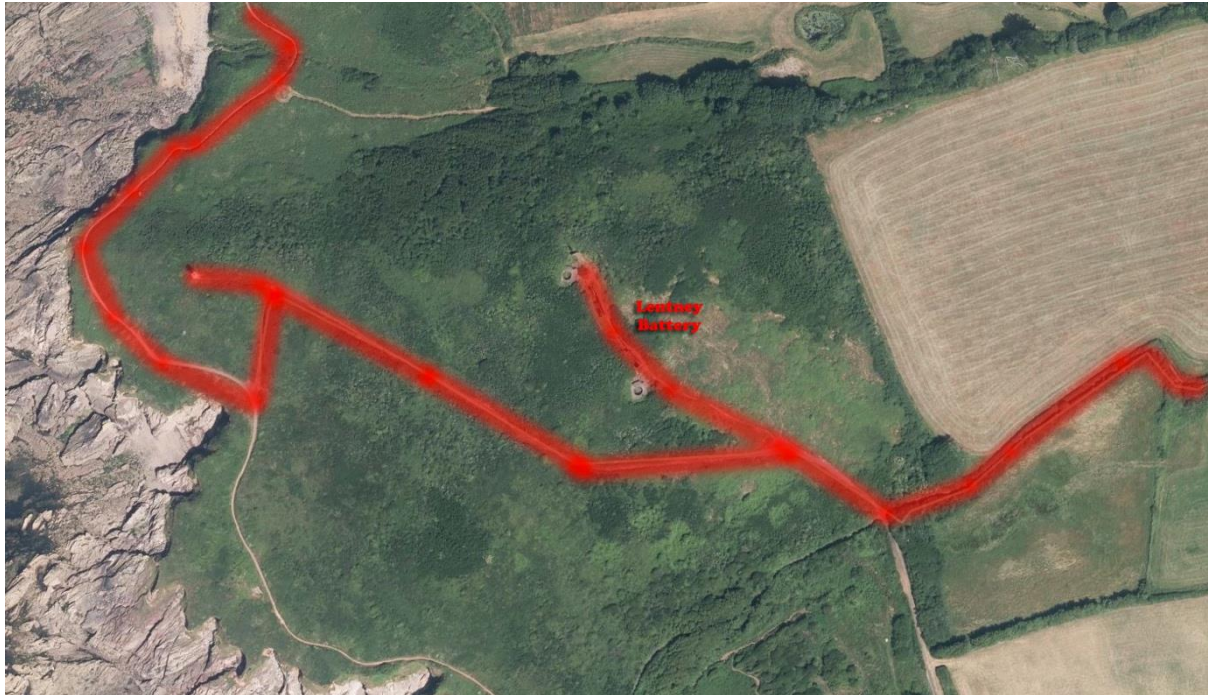


This is a very simple walk that should take no more than 2 hours even with time to explore the impressively preserved Lentney Battery which is tucked away just behind the coastal path (and which few people ever visit). This walk can be done in either direction but it is perhaps easier to find the start of the path to Lentney Battery by going clockwise. Near the bottom of the hill at West Point there is a footpath sign for Down Thomas. Take this footpath (known locally as Seaweed Lane and Bayside Lane) towards Manor Bourne Road. It goes uphill and bends to the right. Soon you will meet the tarmac of the road to Down Thomas. Follow this road leftwards and keep going up the hill. Before you reach Down Thomas you will see another sign for a footpath across a field. Cross the stile here and head to the top right corner of the field. There you will see a path. Follow the path until you reach Renney Road. Turn right on to Renney Road and head away from Down Thomas towards Heybrook Bay. This road is a little busier than the previous road so take care as you gently descend. You will start to see some houses on your left – continue a bit further until you see a footpath sign to your right. Follow this footpath down the hill. Follow the path to the left and continue to descend. When you reach an old tarmac road you will leave the footpath to turn right. If you follow this path and stick to the upper tarmac (but very dishevelled) road, it will take you to Lentney Battery (see history of Lentney Battery below). It is certainly worth a bit of exploration although perhaps a torch may come in useful if you want to look in the underground bunkers. It is in surprisingly good shape but do take care with your footing. Once you have explored Lentney Battery head back a little the way you came but now take the lower path down to the right and which wraps around below Lentney Battery. You can actually follow this all the way down to a navigation beacon that offers fine views back across the Breakwater. As you go down to the beacon you will notice the

footpath on your left that you will later need to follow to get on to the Coastal Path that will take you back to the Bovisand Estate.

For a shorter walk in future you can leave the Estate along the Coastal Path until you meet the footpath you came back on and go up to the Battery.



History of Lentney Battery

Lentney Battery is remarkably well preserved although ravaged by graffiti unfortunately. Notwithstanding that, the site still show signs of their old electric systems and the metal work may be rusting but still in remarkably good nick. The underground bunkers even contain complete examples of shell and cartridge hoists. Lentney Battery was part of the pre-World War One extension of defences around Plymouth in reaction to the German Tirpitz Plans which began in 1898 and sought to challenge the Royal Navy's dominance of the seas. The Edwardian period was full of international suspicion and anxiety and indeed this fortification was completed in 1905 just a year after the Entente-Cordiale between Britain and France. The original Palmerston Forts may have been aimed at the French, but the Edwardian defensive extensions were far more concerned about the threat from the Kaiser's Germany. This battery was originally armed with 6 inch Breech Loading guns with a view of protecting Plymouth Sound from assault by enemy warships. They had fine views out to sea although it is a bit overgrown these days so it isn't quite as clear to appreciate the vistas. During the Second World War a twin six pounder quick-firing gun and two 12 pounder quick firing guns were added. These were felt to be more useful in being used against smaller, nimbler craft like E-boats or landing craft. In reality, the battery was used mainly as a training establishment throughout the war in order to give gunnery practice to coastal artillerymen. After the war, it was used as a proving ground for captured German guns to assess their ranges, reliability and accuracy. The site itself was abandoned as a military site in 1956.

Stephen Luscombe

September 2021

stephen@britishempire.co.uk

The British Empire