

1939

# WW2-Local History

## Knowledge Organiser

1945

Just three months after Britain had entered the conflict the residents of Great Yarmouth awoke to discover the Great War on their doorstep.

Too wary of the powerful British fleet to risk open battle, the German navy opted for small-scale operations to lay mines in North Sea and shell the British coast – after a disastrous attempt to rig the Thames with mines backfired the East Anglian seaside resort was their next target.

According the Robert K. Massie's book *Castles of Steel*, the German force of eight ships reached Yarmouth Bay at 6.30am, where it encountered just two small British vessels, *Halycon* and *Lively*. Although they posed little threat, they succeeded in delaying their enemy and while remaining relatively unscathed.

Frustrated by their ineffectual attempts to sink their modest adversaries, the German fleet fired a few half-hearted shells towards Yarmouth before turning back to sea. Their shots harmlessly hit the beach, averting any civilian casualties.

Despite the initial shock of seeing enemy ships so close to the British coast, locals were unimpressed by the half-hearted attack. An eyewitness account [recalled by the Eastern Daily Press](#) remarked: "If it was a bombardment of the town it was a very poor half-hearted effort," which served only "to cause breakfasts to be left almost untouched".



W.R.N.S. Quarters, Queen's Road, March 18th, 1943

How was Great Yarmouth and the surrounding areas affected during WW2?

During the Second World War Great Yarmouth was a target for German bombers. St Nicholas Church was destroyed in 1942. Parts of the old town were also destroyed. There used to be many narrow streets in Great Yarmouth called Rows. Once there were 145 Rows. (They were so narrow goods were transported along them in two wheeled carts called troll carts). However most of them were destroyed during the Second World War.



Middlegate Street, April 8th, 1941

### Vocabulary

Vocabulary	
Evacuee	A person who is moved away from a place of danger.
Rationing	A fixed amount of food and provisions for people.
Blackout	The turning off of all lights in a city so that bombers can't see their target.
Shelters	A safe place to hide during an air raid.
Air raid	Military aeroplanes sent to bomb an area.
The Blitz	A huge air strike on London over 57 nights.
Gas mask	A protective mask to prevent breathing in of poisonous gases.
Nazi	A German fighter.
Concentration camp	A place where Hitler sent groups of people he did not like to live and die.