



TRANSFORMED BY WAR 1939 - 1945

Britain's Heritage Harbours and World War 2

From June 1940 Britain's coasts were the front line. Dunkirk brought the reality of war close to home.

Over the next 5 years:

- To forestall invasion the Admiralty identified 30 small ports for closure and coastal areas became restricted zones. Over 10,000 private vessels were requisitioned for war service;
- Admiralty orders revived small shipyards and traditional skills, including wooden boatbuilding. In one shipyard newly trained women welders, making prefabricated sections, enabled the construction of a new steam tug every week;
- To divert vital supplies from the greatest danger, an emergency port was created in the Clyde anchorages using London dockers and over 400 barges and specialist vessels from the Thames, starting operations on 12 September 1940;
- Cities on the south coast were at times wholly dependent on steam coasters to provide coal to generate gas and electricity but these were highly vulnerable to attack – in the last 6 months of 1941 85 coasters were sunk;
- With canal barges lacking crew, a Boatwomen's Training Scheme was started.



SS Hestmanden
Norwegian War Sailors Museum



Woman welder
Image: IWM DB65 Cecil Beaton

**Visit Heritage Harbours to see and hear more.
See the list of events and visits in the guide at the end of this National Trail.**