

The National Service Act of 1948 made all men aged 17-21 liable for service in one of the armed forces for a period of eighteen months (in 1950 extended to two years). However, the Act was passed in a hurry and often military bases were not equipped to house all the new conscripts. RAF Patrington was no exception - the 'domestic camp' at Haven Side was not fully operational until 1952. Accordingly, servicemen were billeted with local families. Hughes lodged with the Snaith family at 2 Northside, sleeping on an RAF camp bed in the terraced house's downstairs front room alongside two other

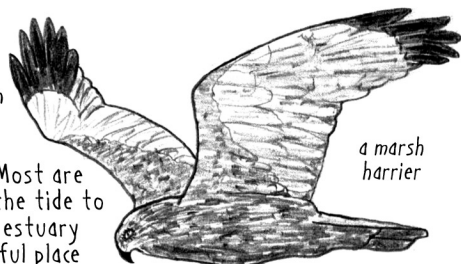
servicemen - a 'Cockney' named Bert and an 'Irishman' named Don Sullivan. Throughout his life Hughes would find affinities with friends from Celtic nations and he credited his National Service period for establishing this pattern. The domestic camp is now transformed into Patrington Haven leisure park, but the park's layout is substantially that of the camp and many of the RAF buildings are still in use, albeit modernised and adapted to new purposes. Hughes would have only visited the domestic camp to visit the Nissen hut which functioned as the RAF recreation room.



Grimsby Dock Tower seen across the River Humber

The Ground Control Intercept Radio Station where Hughes worked was nicknamed and generally referred to as 'The Happidrome' (as were similar installations throughout the country). The Happidrome's function was to guide night fighters onto attacking Russian bombers. The RAF Patrington Happidrome comprised three buildings: the Operations Centre, located at Sunk Island, contained the radar equipment, and the radio transmitting and receiving buildings (generally known as 'the VHF') were located a mile away near Patrington, because the radio signals interfered with the radar.

The mudflats and saltmarshes of the Humber Estuary remain an important feeding site for flocks of **migrating birds**. Most are pushed inland by the tide to roost and so this estuary shore is a wonderful place for birdwatching. Marsh and hen harriers, redshank, snipe, curlew, peregrine, kestrels, yellowhammer and reed warblers can all be seen at different times of the year. **Roe deer** are often seen in the vast fields of this landscape and a representation of one is incorporated into 'The Deer's Cry', a 2018 woodcarving by Allan Stichler located in St. Patrick's churchyard. The carving was made from a fallen ash tree and its title echoes that of a prayer for protection composed by Patrick in 466.



a marsh harrier

Discovering Ted Hughes's Yorkshire is a series of six route maps that will allow walkers to encounter the Yorkshire landscapes – Mytholmroyd and the Upper Calder Valley, Mexborough & the lower valleys of the Don & Dearne and Patrington in East Yorkshire – that formed and inspired Ted Hughes, poet laureate 1984-1998.

Edward James Hughes was living with his family at Mexborough when, in December 1948, he won an Exhibition to read English at Pembroke College, Cambridge. However, he decided to defer 'going up' in order to complete his National Service, which had been reintroduced in 1949 due to the Cold War and the Malayan Emergency. Hughes probably chose to enlist in the RAF (rather than the Army or Navy) because his older brother Gerald had served as a mechanic in the RAF during the Second World War.

Hughes began his service on the 27th October 1949, undergoing basic training – 'square bashing' – at RAF West Kirby on the Wirral. Early in 1950 Hughes was transferred to RAF Sutton-on-Hull where he was trained as a Ground Wireless Mechanic prior to his permanent posting in Patrington in East Yorkshire in the spring of that year. During his time at Patrington, Hughes worked as a Ground Wireless Mechanic, monitoring and maintaining the radio equipment that allowed ground radar controllers to communicate with patrolling fighter pilots.



The Happidrome's Operation Centre buildings

In May 1951, Hughes passed a 'Fighter Plotter Course' and it is possible he was briefly posted to RAF Fylingdales or Staxton Wold, both in North Yorkshire. He was discharged on 5th October 1951, at which point he began his university education, though he remained in the RAF reserve until at least 1955.

Hughes wrote several poems whilst stationed at Patrington, although only *Song* (written in 1950) was published, in *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957). Several other finished poems from this period exist in the various Hughes archives. Much later, Hughes wrote two more poems inspired by his National Service landscape, *Mayday on Holderness* (from *Lupercal*, 1960) and *The Road to Easington*, first published in *The Listener* in 1962.

This map was commissioned by the Discovering Ted Hughes's Yorkshire Consortium, the Ted Hughes Network, University of Huddersfield and enabled by generous funding from Patrington Parish Council. Thanks to Carol Hughes for her help and support in producing this map.

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DISCOVERING TED HUGHES'S YORKSHIRE

East Yorkshire

MAP 6: PATRINGTON

A 6-mile walk around Patrington and Patrington Haven, where Ted Hughes did his National Service at RAF Patrington



St Patrick's Church, Patrington

'From Hull's sunset smudge
Humber is melting eastward, my south skyline:
A loaded single vein, it drains
The effort of the inert North'
(from *Mayday on Holderness*)

Ted Hughes
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