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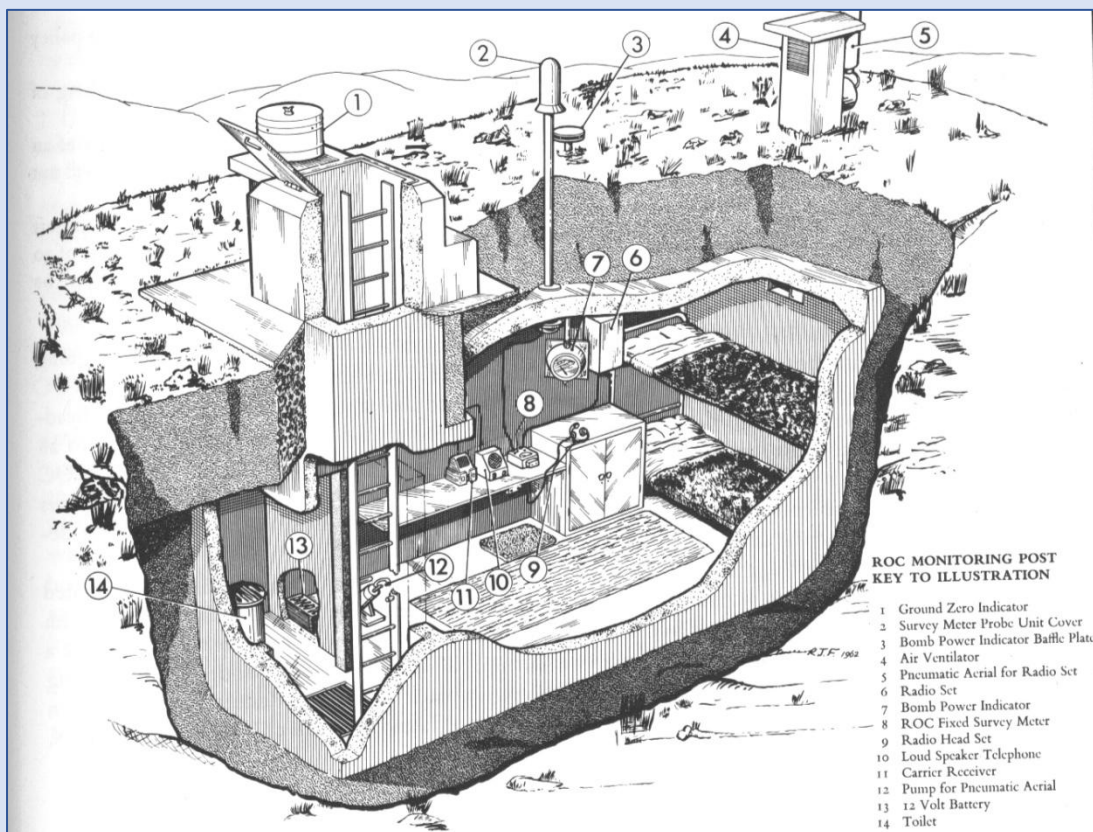
A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE!

“Would you like to visit an Underground Nuclear Bunker in Staffordshire, near Leek and Macclesfield?”

We are a group of enthusiasts who run and maintain a former **Royal Observer Corps Monitoring Post**. If you would like to get into a ‘hole in the ground’ and find out what went on then please use the contact details below.

Groups of between 5 and 10 people are preferred to make things easier for both our visitors and volunteers. Larger groups can be accommodated.

While we do not charge for a visit any donations to help with running costs will be most gratefully accepted.



Telephone David on 01538 398761 or email g8yqa.1@gmail.com.

(Forwarded by the ROC Association Heritage Team)”.





MEMORIES OF A WARTIME OBSERVER

By Gerald Mee, a WW2 Observer at NAN 3 Observer Corps Post, Rushton Spencer.

The NAN 3 Observer Corps Post was on the hillside farm belonging to Walter Hulme, our Chief Observer. It was up on the hill on the right hand side of the road (A523) passing through Rushton Spencer, from Leek and was approached via a path and then a walk across fields.

I was usually on duty with Leslie Price and we travelled together from Leek, firstly on his motor cycle and later in my Ford 8 car (which I had bought for this purpose). Leslie offering to teach me to drive. The first time I went to the Post on my own, I had never driven before and I didn't even know how to change gear (no modern synchromesh, you had to double de-clutch). When I came to a hill I had to stop and start again in bottom gear. I had not yet taken a driving test (Driving tests having been suspended on 2nd September 1939) but had a special Wartime car licence called a G licence and issued by the RAF, along with petrol ration coupons. We could only use our vehicles on one route and only for Observer Corps Duties.

LISTENING

While on duty, we spent most of our time listening for, and during daylight, looking for aircraft. We reported aircraft passing over us on their way to and from the North West's cities...Manchester and Liverpool. We learned to identify enemy planes from their engine sounds and, in daylight, from their silhouettes. The enemy planes, on their

bombing raids, mostly came during the hours of darkness. We reported all sightings to our regional HQ in Derby – we wore headphones and a chest mounted microphone and were in constant touch via telephone landline.

The Post was a circular brick structure with hinged glass screens around the top of a low wall. The centre was open to the sky. In the centre was a circular raised platform on which stood the Post Instrument which we used to "sight" the planes and evaluate the position, direction and possible altitude of any aircraft in the vicinity. On cloudy days we had to rely on our ears for all information. We also had to provide periodic weather reports to our Derby HQ.

NIGHTLIGHT

The nights were often very cold and damp, but we had a "potbellied stove" which we fed with coke, and as it glowed red when it was fiercely roaring away, we had to shield the glow from the sky, otherwise any passing bomber aircraft might have targeted us. This stove was useful for brewing up and also for heating a watering can of water that we used to carry down to fill the car's radiator on cold and frosty mornings.

ANTIFREEZE

In those days, Antifreeze had disappeared from the shelves (presumably all going for military use) and it was necessary to drain the car's radiator every night, into the watering can which we had to carry up and down the steep hill to the Observer Post.

There was a small hut attached to the brick post for use during

rest periods, but we rarely used this as it was far too cold in the winter. We used to wrap ourselves up in rugs over our Observer greatcoats and crouch down by the glowing stove. We had limited lighting from paraffin lamps. We divided the night duty up into watch periods of two hours.

At the end of each shift we had to fill in the Post log and make our report of the eight-hour watch. In summer life was much more pleasant, particularly during day shifts and we could even sunbathe on the surrounding grass while our colleague was on duty.

POND

The farm had a small pond and new recruits found this useful for moulding their heavy boots. They used to sit (in the summer) with their feet in the water which softened the boot's leather and moulded it to their feet.

They were interesting days and we felt that as part timers we were trying to do our bit for the war effort. We were all either in reserved occupations or under (or over!) age for full military service.

I served with the Observer Corps until the autumn of 1945, after the Second World War had ended in Europe. I then left Leek for University in London before doing my two (compulsory) years of National Service in, yes of course, the Royal Air Force.

Gerald Mee. January 2000

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