

## Scottish Heritage Report for National Committee Meeting - 26 February 2022

### Compiled by Cheryl Stewart for The Royal Observer Corps Association Heritage Team

This report covers Scottish ROC activities and other ROC related items of interest in Scotland.

#### 24 Group - Edinburgh - Info from Joe Yearly

24 Group reports that the Group is still going along for now under a new structure with a slimmed down Admin. A face to face meeting in November 2021 was managed before the new wave of Covid struck.

Some of the members have been liaising with the National Museums of Scotland over the last couple of years on a project in respect of former ROC equipment and materials they hold. The project includes interviews, visits and video recorded interviews explaining the use of the equipment and the roles of the Corps.

#### 25 Group - AYR 23 Post - Skelmorlie - Info from Restorer: Frank Alexander

AYR 23 Post will be opening April to September 2022, normally on Sundays, unless by special arrangement. Covid precautions will be in operation as per Scottish Government guidelines on website specific to Museums.

**March:** Special visit by SNP shadow Armed Forces Minister.

**April:** Filming by National Museums Scotland on Cold War Project.

**May:** Special visit by youth group(s) and possible visit by the Provost of North Ayrshire.

**June:** Beacon lighting with the beacon specially built and site installed by Mackies agricultural engineers in Largs.

**June:** Special museums ham radio event over two weekends with Elderslie radio club in Renfrewshire helping us out.

**August:** Exhibition diorama on German bomber model types used in the Clydebanks and Bomber raids as part of the Viking Festival in Largs using our Gazebo.

We have funding bids in progress for:-

1. Viewing point at the post.
2. Log/Wood carving of Fiery Fred.
3. Beacon lighting event.

## **28 Group HQ /Sector Control - Dundee**

### **Group HQ and Sector Control - Cragiebarns - Dundee - Info from Gavin Saxby**

2021/early 2022 has been fairly quiet. A few more unusual things like Angela Barnes' hen night was held. Well known Comedienne Angela Barnes is also Patron of the 28 Group Observed (SCIO) Charity that manages the bunker. We also held a Virtual Goth Night which was a great success - pictures of these events can be viewed on our Facebook Group at 28 Group Observed. The site also has lots of information and pictures relating to the Project.

Because of Covid we have only managed one work weekend although our team have been occupied working at home and at the HQ.

We have the Message Exchange Switch working more fully and have been able to pull original text and messages off it and save them.

Wendy Harvey has done a lot of great work in the archive to scan and sort out our journals and paperwork.

Mike has worked miracles on our BT Cabinet 11Bs in the BT room so they are now fully wired up in exactly the same way as the original ones and we have more pieces of IT and radio equipment restored and ready to work.

We are very excited about the trophies that the Heritage Team have found and have been kind enough to let us display at Craigiebarns and we can't wait to get them on display.

We will be participating in The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacons Lighting on 2nd June 2022.

We hope that 2022 will let us run tours again and we can start to get a bit more back to normal with work parties when our many dedicated volunteers can meet up again.

### **28 Group - DUN - 22 Post - Glamis - Info from Restorer: - Steven West**

Steve and Sandy continue to keep Glamis Post in good condition although not able to open to the public at present.

### **28 Group - DUN -23 Post - Clova - Info from Restorer: - Steve Dalton**

Clova is currently in mothballs but is checked regularly. Steve is concentrating on the Military Museum Scotland, West Lothian where he is a volunteer and detailed later in this report.

### **28 Group - DUN - 25 Post - Edzell - Info from Restorer: Jim Sherrit**

Edzell is still on pause waiting for safer times. A shame that as we completed the refurbishment, Covid hit, halting plans to open. I don't see much happening this year but we're finally nearing the end of Covid hopefully, so all going well, next year we'll get back on track. Meanwhile site visits are made regularly and the Post is in good condition.

### **28 Group - DUN - 36 Post - Abernyte - Info from Restorer: - Mike Scott**

An enforced quiet year again and due to Covid restrictions no open days in 2021.

Regular winter maintenance has been carried out recently. The Post continues to remain in good condition. A small infestation of woodworm in the cable battens was treated and seems to have been successfully dealt with.

This year (2022) I intend, weather permitting, to repaint the exterior and replace two rotten fence stobs - hopefully I will be able to organise an open day or two as well.

### **28 Group - DUN - 38 Post - Arbroath - Restorer: Cheryl Stewart & Team**

We are hoping we can be up and running again during 2022. We have such a long waiting list of folk wanting to visit. Hopefully the BBQ will be back on the agenda too.

We had The Arbroath Post AGM 30 September 21 followed by a gathering of like minded people to remember the sad day thirty years earlier when Stand Down was announced.

At our AGM seven new members were voted in to join the Team. They consist of the Dundee Team plus former ROC members from local and afar. They will bring younger ages to the Team and we are looking forward to their ideas and agility to assist us!!

We managed a few work parties towards the end of the season as restrictions relaxed for a while. It was good to have the Team together again and a lot was achieved as usual. The portacabin, hatch and louvers were painted. Several runs were made to the tip to dump rubbish that had built up. The maintenance work still has to continue despite no visitors.

Again in lieu of a physical opening for Doors Open Days Weekend/ European Heritage Days we submitted our Presentation for online digital viewing.

We will be participating in Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee Beacon Lighting - June 02 as we did for her Diamond Jubilee - was it really ten years ago!

Storms Arwen and Barra dealt us a blow at the end of last year, blowing several tall Monterey Cypress trees from the land next door across our entrance. We have eventually got it moved and the trunks are now sawn up for wood burners with the branches waiting for a calm day (if we ever get one) to have a bonfire. The emergency lighting cables linking the buildings were ripped away so a job for Mike Scott this year and one of our flag poles has had to be taken down for safety.

### **29 Group - Aberdeen - Info from Mary Bruce**

We are hoping to arrange a get together of The Group soon. It has been difficult to get all the Committee together with the present Covid conditions and hospital appointments.

Regarding Heritage, we are very grateful to James Mackie for his continuing newspaper snippets. Some we already have in 'Joy Webster's scrapbook but others are new to us that we can add. A very deserved award at Reunion for Jim.  
Also thanks to Edwina for her updates which keep us in touch.

## **Barnton Quarry**

Not directly related to the ROC but never the less of interest to those followers of Cold War refurbishments. Originally used for RAF fighter command operations during WW11 it then became a Rotor Radar 4 Station and SOC (Sector Operations Sector) before its final operational years as an RSG (Regional Seat of Government). In 2011, Barnton Quarry was bought by the owners of Anstruther Rotor Station - Scotland's popular 'Secret Bunker' and a team enthusiastic volunteers have devoted themselves to restoring the burnt-out bunker back to its 1952 construction state.

Dundee 28 Group follow this project with interest and the Cragiebarns Team at Dundee work closely with Grant More the Project Manager at Barnton. We are all so pleased with the news of their museum plans being approved by Edinburgh Council as below.

### **Press release courtesy [edinburghlive.co.uk](http://edinburghlive.co.uk)**

Edinburgh nuclear bunker to become museum as plans approved by council.

Until 1982 the Barnton Quarry bunker played a key role in the country's defence against nuclear threat from Russia - and would have been home to hundreds of politicians and civil servants in the event of an attack.

A secret Cold War bunker in Edinburgh that was once Scotland's first line of defence against the threat of a nuclear attack will be turned into a museum after plans were approved by Edinburgh City Council.

Buried 100ft below Corstorphine Hill and behind 10ft of reinforced concrete and tank-metal blast doors, the Barnton Quarry bunker has been out of use for nearly 40 years. Now thanks to a hard-working team of volunteers who've spent the last decade clearing, fixing and restoring the Category-A listed site, it is set to open to the public.

Between 1946 and 1982, as the possibility of an attack from Russia loomed, it served as the RAF's operations command centre for all of Scotland's radar stations, scanning the skies for potential threats and gathering data from across the country.

The stone quarry itself was operational until 1914 before first being used for RAF fighter command operations from 1942. The nuclear bunker element was built ten years later.

### **Emergency operations bunker in the Highland capital of Inverness**

Another location that has seen varied activities from WW11 onwards includes The ROC's 39 Group HQ during WW11 and later 30 Group HQ - fondly known as Raigmore and finally becoming an Emergency Operations Bunker.

Some may remember I mentioned the purchase of Raigmore by Dr Iain Maoileoin in my Report of February 2020. Iain seems to have made plenty of progress in these last two fallow years and is now offering tours.

An abbreviated report from The Ross-shire Journal follows. The full report which contains a number of photographs can be found at:-

<https://www.ross-shirejournal.co.uk/news/emergency-operations-bunker-in-highland-capital-houses-relic-262321/>

#### **Extract from The Ross-shire Journal:-**

People passing by could be forgiven for thinking they are back in the Cold War era with the latest arrivals at the Emergency Operations Bunker in Inverness.

The site's owner, Dr Iain Maoileoin, has acquired an armoured personnel carrier and a helicopter - which has flown the then Prime Minister among its passengers in 1981.

He bought the former council property and military installation in Mackintosh Road in 2019 and his long-term plan is to create a guided tour museum there.

He said: "The place is steeped in history and has been in constant use since it was built, as one of three bunkers in 1940."

In the past, the bunker was used by the RAF as a filter room for processing raw data from the Chain Home and Chain Home Low radar stations that were around the coast of Scotland, northern England, part of Ireland and also the Isle of Man.

It was later used by members of the Royal Observer Corps (ROC) as one of two bunkers they used and, when the ROC was disbanded, the local authority took over the three bunkers - two were later destroyed.

The planned renovation work will focus on the radar and on the nuclear side of the building's history and so far there is a creation of a 1939/40 radar system and filter room.

He said: "So far we have had around 700 people through the building in small-group guided tours. Part of these tours were done under Doors-open Days and some under the Highland Archaeology Festival."

One of the more unusual tours was aimed at getting people out of the house on Christmas Day.

## **Military Museum Scotland SCIO - Kirknewton, West Lothian**

This museum has just celebrated its 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Ian Ingles runs the Museum as a Trust. It offers a fascinating insight into Scotland's Military History covering WWI to the present day.

The Primary aim of Military Museum Scotland, and the newly launched Military Museum Scotland Outreach, is education and reminiscence, from Primary schools to Senior Citizens, it caters for everyone including not surprisingly our Veterans.

Veterans Drop in takes place every day the museum is open. The Veterans breakfast Club, now in its second year, is on the 2nd and last Sunday of every month.

Steve Dalton refurbisher of Clova Post is a volunteer and displays his ROC Collection. Most recently a couple of weeks ago and Ian Ingles made this acknowledgement to him on their Facebook Page as follows:-



Huge thanks to Stephen Dalton for putting on our Royal Observer Corps temporary exhibition, it was a great success for Military Museum Scotland. This temporary exhibition will return later on in the year. Part of it will also become part of our permanent Royal Observer Corps "Secret Bunker", coming soon to Military Museum Scotland. Great display and explanations, cheers Stephen.

The museum has indoor and outdoor displays, a cafe and a gift shop.

I look forward to visiting in due course.

That about rounds things up for this Report. I hope it has been of interest and many thanks for all the information received from others to help put it together.