

Scottish Heritage Report for National Committee Meeting - 28 January 2023

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

This report covers Scottish ROC activities in Scotland subsequent to my previous Report dated July 2022

24 Group - Edinburgh - Info from Joe Yearly

A few 24 Group stalwarts met for a Festive meal and get together in December.

Joe is now officially one of the Arbroath Team members and his assistance at events and maintenance days is a great help.

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

This year we had improving visitor attendance numbers after the Covid pandemic.

Events

Doors Open day weekend which was oversubscribed.

Ardrossan unit of HM Coastguard, for rope rescue training exercise for unit members.

Organised groups included Air Training Corps, Scouts, and Boys Brigade.

The museum site now contains:-

- 1) Underground monitoring post 25/23.
- 2) Replica above ground underground post 25/24.
- 3) Museum exhibit anti-vandal cabin.
- 4) Replica WW2 aircraft reporting post.
- 5) Groundhog self-contained welfare messroom/toilet.
- 6) PV solar panel electricity supply.
- 7) Permanent Beacon basket on a pole.
- 8) Permanent Flagpole.
- 9) Working National Attack system from WB1800 to WB1400 to carrier receivers to sirens.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Website www.skelmorliesecretbunker.co.uk

Visitor attraction leaflets.

Meta Skelmorlie Secret Bunker group.

Videos on You tube of 23 post Skelmorlie.

The site is now a recognised visitor museum attraction within North Ayrshire and we are looking forward to our 20th anniversary in 2023.

28 Group Group HQ and Sector Control - Cragiebarns - Dundee

Project Manager Gavin Saxby is currently in the US on business so a few words from me in lieu of his usual report, mainly taken from 28 Group Observed SCIO Facebook which chronicles the work at Cragiebarns. <https://www.facebook.com/28Group>

The first Open Day since Covid took place in August and was over subscribed.

Crew One Officer Scott Williamson visited in August for the first time and they were absolutely delighted with the massive collection of artefacts he brought along as a donation to the Project.

A couple of work parties with volunteers from all over the UK have been achieved and it was good to have everybody together again.

They have recently transformed BT - big changes. They have moved the manual phone exchange and spare SX2000S out and shifted the desk to be by the door. This will make it a lot easier for visitors to get further into the room and see more.



They have also got this DEC terminal wired up to a Raspberry Pi and it's all configured to automatically connect to the terminal server on the bunker SX2000 so it will work exactly like it used to, except they can remotely log into the SX2000 from anywhere in the world at the same time.



October saw them host a party from Subterranea Britannica. Unfortunately the same day as Cheryl hosted 51MI Coy so the Reserves were unable to visit to see the Sector Control/HQ side of ROC life. Two sizeable parties just wouldn't have worked.



SUBBRIT VISIT



VIRTUAL GOTH NIGHT



AUGUST OPEN DAY

Another use for a former ROC Sector/Group HQ - A Virtual Goth Night - this was a weekend fund raiser with Gavin hosting VGN who streamed live from the bunker mid December.

Gavin and Team are looking at May to start their programme of Open Days for 2023.

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

Steve and Sandy continue to keep Glamis Post in good condition.

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

Sadly Steve Dalton has relinquished his agreement with the landowner. The empty Post is securely locked. Steve exhibits ROC equipment at the Military Museum Scotland, West Lothian where he is a volunteer.

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

We now see light at the end of the tunnel following a hold due to Covid and plans are starting on the way ahead. Edzell is fully restored and has all the original items ready to display.

First some spring cleaning and maintenance.

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

A few visitors came to the Post.

Regular maintenance is undertaken. 2023 will see me repairing the compound fence which our security cows have flattened - this to be done before the beasts are back in the field!



Mike's MAF (Make a Fake) cutaway Fixed Survey Meter Dome shows the PDRM82F sensor.



In October I was invited by Dundee Transport Museum to have an outside stand at their Military Vehicle Day.

Ewan MacGowan came to help and Cheryl joined us with George Thayre for a couple of hours.

Despite the bitter high winds there was a lot of interest from visitors.

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

The Arbroath Post came out of Covid hibernation in July to host the first BBQ since 2019.

Our loyal regular visitors attended from all the Scottish Groups - 45 in total and as usual the afternoon went too quickly.

We were especially pleased to welcome Edna and Bill. Edna is the daughter of the late Ness McConachie who served on Tarland Post in 29 Group and was also Seaborne. Edna kindly passed on many treasured memories that Ness left behind him. She was keen to see what Dad had done in his nuclear role - so here she was. They also brought Jean Milne with them - sister of Ness and widow of Dick Milne who some may remember was Chair of ROCA Aberdeen Group. A sprightly 87 she and Edna ventured underground and both were so pleased to have visited and to see Ness's Seaborne badged uniform on display.

Gavin from Dundee HQ was food shopper and chef this year and he put on a good spread for our visitors.

Our next event was Doors Open Days/European Heritage Days weekend. We already had a long waiting list to visit. When the weekend came we had another hundred added to the list. It was a full time job fielding the enquiries and reluctantly turning folk away - all go onto the waiting list but it will take time to clear them.

Two interesting visitors attended. Namely Alan Douglas. Alan was on Clova Post in the 60's and is the son of the late Alistair Douglas former Group Commandant of 28 Group. Alistair instigated the sculpting of the 'Firey Fred' by his friend and eminent sculptor Scott Sutherland and cast in sterling silver. The Corps presented this to HMQ for her Silver Jubilee in 1977. Six replicas were made for the Groups and HQROC and one is displayed on the top table at our Annual Reunions. Alan was unaware that his sister (a former Chief Obs (W) - ROC runs in the family!) had contacted me ten years ago and given me a CD containing their father's manuscripts and letters with HQROC concerning this matter. I have assembled this into an illustrated account which charts the history from the inception to the finished result and has been displayed at Reunions.

Air Commodore M H Miller accepted the finished sculpture from Scott Sutherland at 28 Group HQ Cragiebarns on 2nd February 1977 just days before its delivery to the Palace.

Pat had also given us some of their parents (their mother Anne was an Officer (W) at Cragiebarns) ROC memorabilia including a photograph of Alistair in Mess Dress standing on the steps of the then family home in Forfar. This framed photo is on the wall opposite the entrance to the Arbroath ROC museum and it was quite an emotional moment when Alan saw it. Alan gave us his beret from his own Service and First Class Proficiency Certificate from 1969. Several of our Team remembered Alan from all those years ago.

Another visitor told me he had bought the land on which the Master Post to our Cluster stands. Newbigging Post is in very bad condition having been vandalised. Michael is keen to rescue it maybe even open it to the public. I am going to introduce him to the Team at 28 Group HQ for some advice on refurbishment. If all goes to plan we will have three of the Posts in this Cluster refurbished - Arbroath 38 Post, Abernyte 36 Post and Newbigging 35 Post. Sadly we will never have the fourth Inverkeilor 37 Post as it was filled in by the farmer the minute we were stood down.

We thought that was going to be our lot for the year. Then the phone call - can we bring 36 yes 36 Army Intelligence Corps Reserves (51MI Coy) to visit middle of October. Thank goodness this turned into 30 on the day. With a bit of forward planning we split them into three parties - the weather held dry which was key for the beginning with all gathered around the Post. Joe came up from Edinburgh and took charge of the Museum and TTW procedures. George and Johan demonstrated the GZI and Dosimeter and charger in the lecture cabin (to avoid congestion at the hatch) while I went underground and stayed there for the duration of the three parties rotating. Best place for me - out of the way!

It was very much a fact finding mission for them - how we did it back in the day with a view to going forward!! We were even asked to keep their personnel photographs in-house.

A successful opening and a nice donation was deposited to our bank as a thank you and appreciative words sent from their Project Officer: 'Many thanks for hosting us and for the certificate of attendance - Please pass my thanks on to all of the volunteers who helped make the experience truly memorable. The stories that we heard and the demonstrations that you gave were the highlight of the weekend for us all.'



A little prep work was undertaken in November for our proposed solar/wind project and will resume in the Spring. I visit the Post daily to feed our pet robins but it is definitely a summer venue!

29 Group - Aberdeen - Info from Mary Bruce

Mary Bruce advised that the small Cabin Museum in Vidlin, Shetland has a display of ROC material which a ROCA member visited recently.

Mary is currently helping me with the enquiry below by searching through the late Joy Webster's detailed records.

Scottish ROC WW11 information required

We have links with the Scottish National Museum of Flight at East Fortune. Their Assistant Curator Ian Brown had a book published last year titled Radar in Scotland 1938 - 1946. He now wishes to write a companion volume looking into much more detail of the air defence system in Scotland during WW11. He has plenty of RAF info on Ops, filter rooms etc and plans to include the same for each of the Scottish ROC Centres. However he has been unable to obtain much information dedicated to Scotland. It is my understanding that much of our war records were lost to a fire years ago. Unfortunately Scottish Groups don't seem to have unofficially written up our WW11 role as many of the English Groups did. It would be good to have our role detailed in a book for future reference and if anybody has any suggestions please let me know.