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'Recording 20th-Century Wartime Landscapes in Scotland: An Introductory Summary of Progress' by Geoffrey Stell (Building Historian)

IDENTIFYING AND RECORDING WARTIME REMAINS IN BRITAIN

Understandably for a nation and a world wearied by two global conflicts and worried by the prospect of a third, Britain took at least a generation after 1945 for the physical relics of war on the home front to be regarded with anything other than indifference or, at worst, positive distaste. However, recognition that these were much more than ugly, mainly concrete, scars in the landscape and that they were tangible monuments to vital and significant episodes of modern history slowly gathered pace in the 1960s.

A significant first, path-breaking stage in this process was marked in 1973 when the fruits of a research group formed in 1970 at the University of Bath resulted in the publication by Keith Mallory and Arvid Ottar of a major work that was entitled in Britain *Architecture of Aggression* (Architectural Press, London) and in the USA as *The Architecture of War* (Pantheon Books, New York). Later, in 1979, it was re-issued in London as *Walls of War* and helpfully sub-titled *A history of military architecture in North-West Europe 1900-1945*. Under these different titles, this same book presented for the first time in English a broad international perspective of the salient physical products of 20th-century warfare in 'the fortress zone' of Germany, France and Britain, and set them in their political, military and architectural contexts and landscapes. The authors effectively demonstrated that, allowing for technological mutations, constructions in this period fitted into the three time-honoured military categories of fortification: temporary field; permanent; and counter fortifications. From an architectural standpoint the authors drew attention to another underlying set of principles that have remained virtually the same since the beginnings of warfare and fortification, that is, a 'continually adaptive process' in which structures responded and adapted to events.

An important further stage was reached in 1975 when the Fortress Study Group (FSG), an international body dedicated to the study of artillery fortifications, including those of the two World Wars, was founded. The early issues of the Group's journal, *Fort*, provided a vehicle for pioneering, academic studies of wartime defences, and, with further landmark publications such as Henry Wills, *Pillboxes, A Study of UK Defences 1940* (London, 1985) and Andrew Saunders, *Fortress Britain*

(Liphook, 1989), the subject of wartime remains, at least in a British historical perspective, finally came of age in the 1980s.

The FSG had long been aware of the urgent need for a survey of 20th-century defence structures. In 1992, in what proved to be a successful and rewarding test of recording techniques and processes, some of the Group's members were commissioned by the former RCHME (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, England) to carry out a wartime landscape survey of the Holderness area of East Yorkshire.¹ Shortly afterwards, in 1995, the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II in both Europe and Asia provided a unique opportunity to heighten general awareness of the importance of such remains and of associated wartime memories. A programme of investigation and recording was thrown open to the nation under the auspices of the Defence of Britain project which enlisted voluntary help in the huge task of creating a publicly accessible database of 20th-century sites and monuments of war in Britain. Launched in April 1995, the project was initiated and run by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) and the FSG, supported by the Department of National Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Imperial War Museum. The project ran a successful and much-acclaimed course until March 2002 when the database was consolidated. The project data was made publicly accessible via the CBA website,² and paper copies were distributed to National and Local Sites and Monuments Records throughout the United Kingdom. These bodies assumed responsibility for the maintenance and updating of the records through their own systems, so that all the Scottish records, for example, were absorbed into the Canmore database operated by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS).

Much in the best military traditions, the project was accompanied by a handbook and guide that was designed specifically to serve as a training manual for the army of voluntary fieldworkers. However, such modest aims belie the true worth of Bernard Lowry (ed.), *20th Century Defences in Britain, An Introductory Guide* (CBA, Practical Handbooks in Archaeology, No 12, revised edition, 1996). Covering a vast range of types and technologies over which no single expert could possibly have command, the editor and his team of specialist contributors, most of whom had worked on the preliminary Holderness survey, created a work of immeasurable and lasting value. The only significant

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gap in its coverage related to marine defences and associated shore-based stations.

As the Defence of Britain project advanced, it became apparent that the bulk of the records that were being gathered were of defence works that had been built mainly in the critical years of 1940-41 against threatened German invasion. Reflecting the balance of the fieldwork, the project thus acquired an anti-invasion emphasis, and for data entry purposes the records became divided between 'Anti-Invasion' and 'Non Anti-Invasion', that is, all the many other categories of 20th-century military sites. The sheer weight of numbers in the 'Anti-Invasion' category is graphically represented by a map on the project website that was generated from the first-phase Defence of Britain database and showed a dense distribution of some 11,500 anti-invasion sites of various types. By the end of the project the 'Anti-Invasion' database contained records of 14,691 individual sites, and the 'Non Anti-Invasion' 5,778, making an overall total of 20,469.

Following completion of the Defence of Britain project in 2002 and using the records it generated, the CBA, with funding from English Heritage, undertook a study of specific 'defence areas' across England. This project resulted in extensive revisions and additions to the original Defence of Britain database and the results were published in a series of research reports. The most substantial of these was William Foot's *Beaches, Fields, Streets, and Hills: The Anti-Invasion Landscapes of England, 1940* (CBA Research Report, No 144, 2006), which further developed the dominant anti-invasion emphasis of the original project.

Correlating the fieldwork with the abundant historical documentation, lodged for the most part in the UK National Archives (TNA) at Kew,³ was, as always, key to understanding what was planned, what was built, and what survived. The documents enabled individual surviving remains to be set within a mapped strategy involving the defence of likely invasion beaches, vulnerable points (VPs), and the creation of stop-lines and other linear barriers. During and after the Defence of Britain project, the wartime documentation thus guided and informed all aspects of the field survey, while, then and later, ground survey itself has often amplified, modified or even contradicted the historical record, an unsurprising conclusion given the constant need during wartime to make on-the-spot decisions

or changes of plan in accordance with local site conditions.

Archive-led assessments of specific groups of World War II military remains were also carried out under the auspices of English Heritage's Monuments Protection Programme. These ultimately led to the publication of a series of substantial thematic monographs in a Monuments of War series authored by Colin Dobinson: *Fields of Deception: Britain's bombing decoys of World War II* (London, 2000); *AA Command: Britain's Anti-Aircraft defences of World War II* (London, 2001); and *Building Radar: Forging Britain's early warning chain 1935-1945* (London 2010). Another theme, war art, was also published collaboratively by English Heritage and the CBA: Wayne Cocroft et al., *War Art: Murals and Graffiti* (Research Report No 147, 2006). Meanwhile, guides to specific monuments with wartime attributes continued to be issued by English Heritage, including, for example, Jonathan Coad, *Hellfire Corner, Dover Castle's Secret Tunnels and the Dunkirk Evacuation* (London, 1993) and Paul Pattison, *Landguard Fort* (London, 2006).

RECORDING WARTIME REMAINS IN SCOTLAND

With support from Historic Scotland, RCAHMS and the Council for Scottish Archaeology (CSA), Scotland participated fully in the Defence of Britain project, and, as shown in Table 1, some 1,975 records were gathered, 733 of which were classified as 'Anti-Invasion' and 1,242 as 'Non-Anti-Invasion'. Three of the named contributors to the accompanying *Guide* were also acknowledged experts in Scottish wartime remains: Ian Brown (radar), John Guy (coastal defence) and Nigel Ruckley (geology and water supply). Prior to serving as project co-ordinator in Scotland, John Guy had already been commissioned by Historic Scotland to carry out a wider survey of 20th-century defences throughout the country, placing an emphasis on those that formed part of what had been designated as a wartime coastal 'crust'. The outcome was a series of 12 illustrated reports issued by Historic Scotland between 1993 and 2002. Started before Scottish local government was re-organised in 1996, all the reports were issued in accordance with the pre-1996 regions, some of which in any case corresponded closely or exactly with the newly created local council areas: in chronological order of appearance they comprised Orkney (1993),

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Grampian (1993), Fife (1994), Shetland (1995), Lothian (1997), Dumfries and Galloway (1998), Tayside (1999), Borders (1999), Central (1999), Highland (2000), Strathclyde (2001) and, finally, Western Isles and Inner Hebrides (2002).

Overall, the 12 Guy reports made reference to 841 sites in Scotland with known or recorded wartime remains (Table 2). This information was fed into the RCAHMS Canmore database, where it was merged with data generated from other sources. Calculations based on the best available data showed that by the end of 2005 Canmore then contained 2,886 entries in the wartime remains category, that is, 2,045 more than the Guy survey.

However, these numerical shortfalls and discrepancies were misleading and open to misinterpretation. Many additional entries were indeed the result of other Defence of Britain project contributions, most notably that carried out by RCAHMS itself in Orkney, but most additions arose out of a data entry methodology that required multiple sub-divisions and sub-numbering of the component parts of large unitary complexes. The exigencies of a national database serving many different purposes requires a data input discipline that distinguishes and separates individual items, while making it technically possible to retrieve the information on a collective or group basis. Hence, like major industrial and engineering monuments that often extend over wide areas and are made up of many different component parts, extensive wartime remains, such as airfields and military camps, have a collective integrity but incorporate several structures and features that demand individual description and sub-numbering.

The not particularly sizeable World War II airfield at Findo Gask, a few miles west of Perth, may be taken as a typical example. It was the subject of a survey by SUAT Ltd which distinguished and placed on record 66 component features.⁴ Another example is the military camp at Laxobigging in Shetland that served both the Coastal Command seaplane base of Sullom Voe as well as its nearby attendant fighter airfield at Scatsta. In the Guy report on Shetland reference is briefly made to 'RAF Camp' and a 'Light Anti-Aircraft Battery', two items, while in the Canmore database there are 14 separate entries relating to the camp alone. The clear differences in approach and accounting speak for themselves: from just two cases out of several hundred,

the wider implications of a somewhat misleading 'numbers game' become easier to appreciate. The identification, mainly from historical air photographs, of several sites, most of which are known or assumed to be no longer extant, has also added considerably to the accounting discrepancies. By the terms of reference under which the survey was originally carried out, the Guy benchmark figure of 841 was probably hundreds, not thousands, short of the full tally, and few, if any, of the major sites appear to have been omitted in his reports.

It took over another decade for the 733 Scottish anti-invasion records generated by the Defence of Britain project to be brought more closely into line with English statistics and to receive historical and archaeological amplification. Following on from a detailed case-study,⁵ Gordon Barclay's *If Hitler Comes, Preparing for Invasion: Scotland 1940* (Edinburgh, 2013) is a commendably thorough three-part appraisal of (a) the historical and military background, (b) the different phases and approaches towards the construction of defence works from May 1940 through to 1942 (and in one case in Orkney, to 1943), and (c) what was actually built and what has survived.

With references, this descriptive inventory makes up a substantial 172 pages out of the 318-page work: subdivided into the seven sections that reflected the contemporary army defence organisation in eastern and northern Scotland - two areas, four sub-areas and a command line - it is supported by field descriptions, clear maps and many contemporary illustrations. Unfortunately, what it does not appear to contain is a numerical summary, even approximate, of built and extant physical remains on either a regional or national basis. A cursory review suggests that the work has enlarged the existing record by several thousand entries, but we are going to have to await the absorption of this material into the RCAHMS Canmore database before rough estimates can be converted into precise figures. Outside the main eastern zones covered by Barclay, there are also a few slightly more unlikely areas where anti-invasion measures are known to survive: at Ardrossan and Stevenston on the Ayrshire coast of the River Clyde, for example.

Since the 1980s, well before the Defence of Britain project, survey and recording of wartime remains had been carried out by RCAHMS on an ad hoc basis, among the earliest subjects of detailed survey being

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a group of World War I aircraft, seaplane and airship hangars.⁶ In a subsequent survey of the buildings of St Kilda, account was taken of the U-boat attack in May 1918 which damaged the village storehouse and led to the permanent installation in October 1918 of a naval gun and ammunition store.⁷ Wartime remains themselves became the central focus of survey in 1995 when Commissioners decided to make a contribution to the Defence of Britain project and to devote field resources to a detailed area survey of wartime remains. The decision was narrowed to a choice between Orkney and the Firth of Forth, and was finally settled in favour of the defences of Scapa Flow, largely on account of the greater density of surviving remains and the relative lack of access restrictions and development pressures compared to those at Rosyth Dockyard, the historical centrepiece of the Forth's wartime defences. The fieldwork of the ensuing survey, arguably the most detailed of its kind ever to have been undertaken in Britain, was completed by 1999, but, for a variety of reasons, its publication and further supporting research stalled. Eventually, in late 2011, as a result of agreement reached between *The Orcadian* Media Group and RCAHMS, the first in a planned two-volume work based on this survey was published.⁸

This survey work was also complemented by parallel activity in the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS), a branch of RCAHMS that had developed after 1966 out of the Scottish National Buildings Record (SNBR). Given that the genesis of the SNBR in 1941 had been prompted by the threat of wartime aerial bombardment, it was fitting that the aerial collections in the NMRS eventually provided a rich source of wartime and immediate post-war records. Published by RCAHMS between 1999 and 2004, *Scotland from the Air 1939-49* was a three-part series of illustrated catalogues that introduced significant early aspects of those collections. The first of these catalogues (Edinburgh, 1999) served as guide to a small but highly informative group of 126 images and 28 maps of Scotland produced by the Luftwaffe during World War II.⁹ The second (Edinburgh, 2000) was a guide to a valuable collection of some 4,000 photographs of wartime Scotland taken by the RAF, a collection which had, incidentally, remained secret until 1997. The third (Edinburgh, 2004) catalogued some 19,000 oblique air photographs also taken by the RAF as part of a national survey in the immediate post-war period, many of the images depicting wartime defences which had only

recently been stood down.

It has taken yet another commemoration – this time of the centenary of the outbreak of war in August 1914 – to prompt and give sharper focus to official efforts to identify and, where appropriate, protect wartime remains. In 2013, Historic Scotland and RCAHMS joined forces to sponsor and support an audit of the built heritage of World War I in Scotland, and contracted Gordon Barclay to carry out the six-month project. Completed in September 2013, made public in March 2014 and underpinned by hundreds of detailed records in the Canmore database, the structure and content of the report marked a considerable step forward in official approaches to wartime recording and evaluation in Scotland.¹⁰ Two of its greatest attributes are, firstly, an effective marrying of the documentary and archaeological evidence, and, secondly, a strengthening of the links between recording and the mechanisms of designation and conservation.

Here is a thoroughly competent, almost model, appraisal of the subject, arranged and grouped in ways that make sense militarily, coupled with a totally transparent listing of extant sites whose designation status is clearly indicated, many said to be 'under review'. A feature of the report is the attention that is paid to the logistical 'tail' and not just the armed 'teeth' of wartime defences, two-thirds of it focusing on hospitals of military origins and use or on Territorial Army drill halls, buildings which remain surprisingly enduring and numerous.¹¹ Designed to characterise the quantity and quality of the built heritage in Scotland during the Great War, in bald statistical terms the project updated or created over 830 additional records, representing more than 600 sites in the Canmore database. At the same time, the corpus of over 2,000 World War I era records onto which these were grafted was rendered more consistent and capable of discrete identification and extraction. Geographically, the report tends to avoid distinguishing the strategically outstanding areas of World War I Scotland, but, overall, as the latest and best official document on the subject, it is to be warmly welcomed.

INVENTORISATION OF MODERN HERITAGE: URBANISM AND LANDSCAPE

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Geoffrey Stell and John Guy, 'The FSG Holderness Pilot Study, 1992', *Casemate*, 100 (May 2014), 18-22.

2. See: <http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cba/projects/dob/>; and the 2006 update of the project archive at <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/dob/>.

3. The vast bulk of the anti-invasion records are in the War Office (WO), Home Forces series WO 166 and WO 199: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C14373> and

<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C14406>. Relevant published guides include John D Cantwell, *The Second World War: a guide to documents in the Public Record Office* (London, 1972 and 1993), Michael Roper, *The Records of the War Office and related departments 1660-1964* (Kew, 1998).

4. David Bowler, 'Survey of WWII remains at Findo Gask Airfield, Clathymore, Perth and Kinross', *Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal*, vol. 11 (2005), 103-13.

5. G J Barclay, 'The Cowie Line: a Second World War "stop line" west of Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 135 (2005), 119-61.

6. Geoffrey D Hay and Geoffrey P Stell, *Monuments of Industry* (Edinburgh, 1986), 230-8.

7. Geoffrey P Stell and Mary Harman, *Buildings of St Kilda* (Edinburgh, 1988), 17.

8. Geoffrey Stell, *Orkney at War: Defending Scapa Flow*, volume 1, *World War I* (Kirkwall, n.d. [2011]); idem, volume 2, *World War II* (in course of preparation).

9. The largest British collection of German wartime aerial reconnaissance photographs is held by the Imperial War Museum see: <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205015285>; <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205011790>;

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205004233>. See also <http://www.njcpublishings.co.uk/photos.htm>, a partly published private collection which includes some Scottish subjects.

10. See: <http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/collection-highlights/first-world-war>.

11. Mike Osborne, *Always Ready: The Drill Halls of Britain's Volunteer Forces* (Nottingham, 2006).

Table 1: Defence of Britain project records relating to Scotland (from CBA Defence of Britain database re-arranged in regional order)

Former Region	Anti-invasion records	Non-anti-invasion records	Totals
Borders	22	36	58
Central	4	11	15
Dumfries and Galloway	7	47	54
Fife	135	165	300
Grampian	135	145	280
Highland	132	214	346
Lothian	118	168	286
Orkney	49	89	138
Shetland	30	94	124
Strathclyde	32	166	198
Tayside	68	88	156
Western Isles	1	19	20
Totals	733	1,242	1,975

Table 2: Comparative numbers of records of wartime structures in Scotland (from CBA Defence of Britain database, John Guy, *A Survey of 20th-Century Defences* (1993-2002), and RCAHMS Canmore database entries (as supplied to Historic Scotland in 2003-5))

Former Region	Defence of Britain	Guy survey	Canmore database
Borders	58	36	93
Central	15	15	56
Dumfries and Galloway	54	41	179
Fife	300	92	324
Grampian	280	105	325
Highland	346	133	376
Lothian	286	62	256
Orkney	138	72	511
Shetland	124	51	145
Strathclyde	198	114	320
Tayside	156	84	249
Western Isles	20	36	52
Totals	1,975	841	2,886