

North Clyde Archaeological Society
Military Project 2015 >
On going report updated as work commences

Mollandhu Farm Military Installations
Tam Ward. September 2016



Frontispiece. Illustration from Mugdock Park HAA gun site.

Abstract

*The remains of Heavy Anti Aircraft gun batteries (HAA) along with control rooms and ancillary buildings, surviving in the area of operations of the NCAS are currently being researched, surveyed and recorded by photography as part of NCAS **Military Project**. This report deals with the site at Mollandhu Farm near Cardross.*

Introduction

The River Clyde Estuary contains the largest number of HAA and other military coastal defence sites in Scotland. The heavily defended site of Scapa Flo in Orkney comes second in numerical terms to that of the Clyde.

North Clyde Archaeological Society (NCAS) are engaged in a Military Project to record the surviving remains of all periods in their area of interest, and to compile research on such sites with a view to publishing the results more fully in due course. The sites consist principally of former gun installations with ancillary buildings, although hospitals, POW camps and other sites also existed in the area.

Methodology

The buildings and their layout are surveyed using the taped offset method and/or measured as an upstanding buildings survey. Drawings are completed at appropriate scales and the entire sites are recorded by digital photography.

This project comprises of a survey of visible remains only and therefore some interpretations of buildings etc may be compromised by lack of data at particular sites. Many buildings now survive merely as rectangular concrete slabs and vegetation probably covers some of those, therefore understanding their original layout and function is difficult, although comparanda with other places where survival is better, and from other available information, may help in due course. This survey uses metric measurements however the original construction sizes were probably imperial.

MOLLANDHU FARM SURVEY Centred NS. 3355 7880 **OS Explorer Map 1:25,000 Series. Loch Lomond South. No 347**

The site lies (Fig 1) at the above NGR on the north coast of the Clyde Estuary, NW of the village of Cardross and to the east of Cardross Crematorium. Located on an elevated piece of ground at 50m OD, it overlooks the adjoining HAA site of Murrays (Geilston Farm) to the south. The site has fine views of the Clyde Estuary.

The site now comprises of four well preserved gun emplacements (Fig's 2 & 3) built with brick walls and concrete roofs and wall tops. The former camp and Command Post are now almost completely absent as visible evidence, only a few lumps of concrete and a single platform can be seen of the former camp area, the Command Post is entirely absent and there is no indication of a radar mat area, if it ever existed.



Fig 1. Location plan.

THE SURVEY

The four gun emplacements were recorded as a group and a single example; the best preserved and most easily accessible gun position (No 4) was surveyed in more detail. The entire site is heavily overgrown in brambles, nettles and scrub trees.

Each of the four gun positions is identical on plan and the only difference apart from alignment is that some have higher walls in places, which in turn means some of the shell storage cubicles are different in height. The height difference is uniformly 0.5m and the higher walls are shown as hatched areas on Fig's 2 & 3.

The gun emplacements follow a fairly standard design as is seen on the other surveys undertaken by NCAS on this project (Ward 2016 x 3of), although differing in a few minor details. At Mollandhu they consist of double brick walls measuring 0.4m in thickness and forming two sets of opposing cubicles, each is 1.5m wide by either 1.5 or 1m high (see each building below). The surrounding walls and each cubicle are covered in shuttered concrete slabs >150mm thick, the concrete is flush with the interior walls and has a slight overhang on the exterior side.

The octagonal interior is 7.5m across and the entrance gap measures 3m between two wall stumps of 0.4m square.

No details were available of the interior floor surfaces due to vegetation.

Gun No 1. Fig 3. Pl 2.

On this structure the wall only rises on one leg of the perimeter and is level with concrete roof slab on the southern side of the emplacement, making that one 1.5m high and the other three only 1m high.

Gun No 2. Fig 3.

On this structure the wall heights rise 0.5m to the levels of the rear two cubicles and share the same arrangement of cubicle heights as Gun No 4.

Gun No 3. Fig 3. Pl 3.

On this structure all of the wall and cubicle heights are uniformly the same, the cubicles are therefore all 1m high.

Gun No 4. Fig's 2 & 3. Pl's 5 – 6.

The two cubicles flanking the entrance were both 1m high internally while the other pair were 1.5m high. The height difference being accounted for by the raised walls shown as hatched on Fig's 2 & 3.

Discussion

Why the walls and cubicles were built with varying heights is unknown, also and unusually, the entrances to all emplacements face away from the internal arc of the complex, where the Command Post is usually placed, and which may be visible on Pl 1. A third distinction at Mollandhu is the absence of small chambers adjacent the entrances to each emplacement as is seen on all previous surveys in this series. The Mollandhu emplacements are therefore more simplistic in construction.

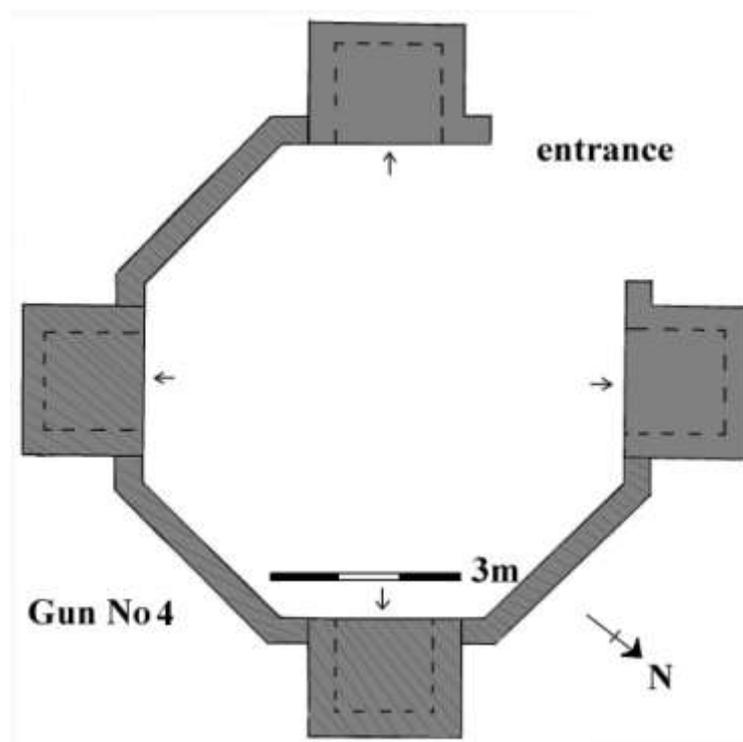


Fig 2. The short arrows indicate access to the cubicles, none of which was fitted with a door.

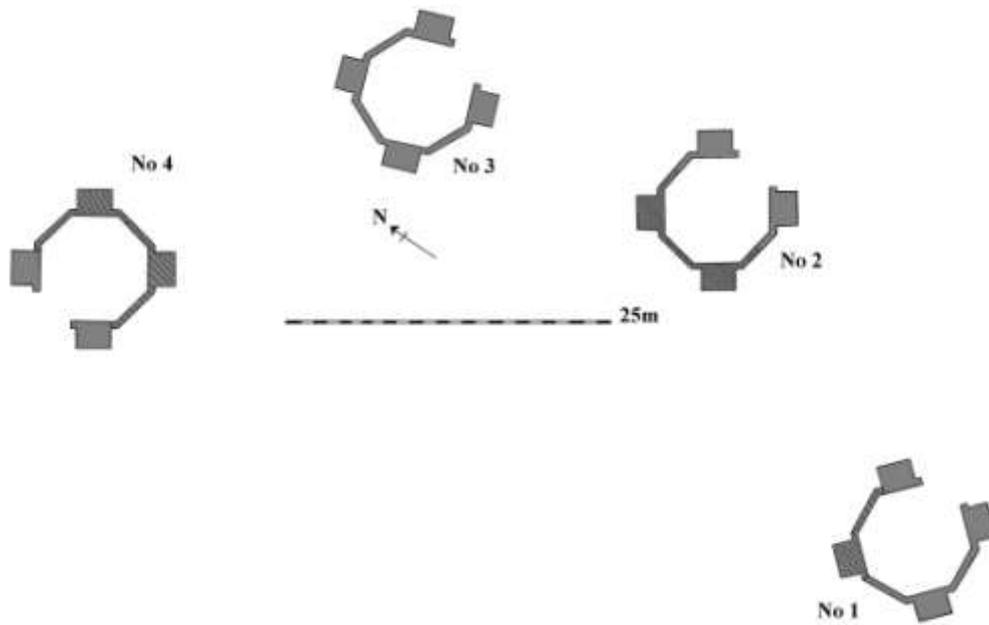


Fig 3. Showing the layout of the gun emplacements, note the elevated parts shown as hatched and the entrances all pointing away from the central area.



Pl 1. Showing the site layout of guns and camp, note the bomb craters. The gun positions as seen in the photograph are numbered anti clockwise 1-4 on the survey.

The camp area.

The camp area is known from aerial photographs of the site (Pl 1) and which show the camp as a linear arrangement of huts, some of which are Nissen types, aligned as a double row of buildings along the strip of mature woodland on the north side of the gun field. Hardly any of this is now detectable on the ground. The same photograph shows the four gun emplacements and the probably Command Post within the arc of the gun positions, a nearby Nissen hut is also visible.

Of particular interest in the image are the series of bomb bursts evident across the fields, it is likely that these occurred during the bombing of Cardross on 6th May 1941 when both the church and the golf club house were totally destroyed. Further research and access to more aerial photographs will elaborate on the general story.



Pl 2. Gun No 1.



Pl 3. Gun No 3.



Pl 4. Gun No 4. With weeds.



Pl 5. Same view as Pl 4.



Pl 6. Gun No 4. Showing two higher cubicles.

Mollandhu is the fourth WW II HAA gun site which has been surveyed by NCAS for its Military Project. Research on the subject is gathering pace and all reports are already outdated. When the research, especially of aerial photographs taken during and immediately after the war by the RAF is exhausted, the entire project will be revised and updated. A few other local HAA sites are completely or nearly completely eradicated; no trace survives of Rosneath Castle Farm, very little of Peaton Hill (or Mamore) and similarly little appears to have survived at Whistlefield. Nevertheless evidence of these sites and of the places now included in the survey, will undoubtedly add considerable data towards a final publication on the local Military installations.

The present report on Mollandhu, like all the others is therefore a work in progress.

Acknowledgement

North Clyde Archaeological Society are indebted to Mr William Cullen of Mollandhu Farm for permission to carry out the survey.

The following members of NCAS contributed to the work; Nick Maidment and Sandra Kelly, Tam Ward directed the work and completed the site plans.