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Stobs Camp Project Quarter 2 Report July – September 2017

Executive Summary

During this period the project began an EDM survey of the site and supervised a search for the foundations of a number of barrack hut buildings. Volunteers were able to participate and learnt new survey skills. A metal-detecting survey was conducted over the camp hospital which resulted in many interesting finds. Two Finds Processing workshops were run for volunteers and the Hut Search Group began visiting the site of potential buildings sold off in the 1920s and 1950s. Progress was made in developing content for the mobile heritage trail app. The Project Officer ran two tours at Stobs and was invited to speak at a First World War conference. He also gave a talk to a local community group. A total of 499 volunteer hours were recorded during the three months from July to September 2017.

Introduction & Background

Stobs Camp was a military training camp prior to the First World War but then became first a civilian internment camp and then a military POW camp. It is internationally important as so much of it remains upstanding or visible. The local community and other stakeholders are keen to see the site properly recorded and receive adequate recognition.

The Stobs Camp Project is a community project being led by Archaeology Scotland (AS) co-operating with Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Borders Council Archaeology Service, Live Borders Museums and Archives, Hawick Archaeological Society, Hawick Callants Club, Project Hawick, Borders Family History Society, University of Aston, Edinburgh Napier University, landowners and other organisations (including Youth Borders and Voice Of My Own), individual volunteers and local schools.



Aims & Objectives

The aims of the **Stobs Camp Project** are to encourage both local people and the global online community to:

- Better understand Stobs Camp and the role it played in the First World War
- To value, share and commemorate Stobs and the people connected to it
- To protect Stobs Camp for future generations

Progress towards aims:

Objective 1 – to better understand Stobs Camp and the role it played in the First World War

1. EDM survey

A programme of work to survey the building foundations and topography at Stobs began in July and continued through to August. A Total Station was hired for this purpose. The aim was to record the location of the First World War barrack huts in the POW camp but locating these proved to be difficult because they were either hidden below ground (or beneath later features) or were permanently lost. As a result of these difficulties the survey initially focused on identifiable targets including the remaining barrack hut in Camp D (Fig.1), ancillary buildings in Camps C and D, the quarry or dump, the Second World War parade ground and the entry road.



Fig.1. EDM survey of the POW camp, 3 August 2017

Additional work was undertaken in August to expose individual hut corners (Fig.2). Six huts across Camps A, B, C and D were found and surveyed. As no two huts adjacent to each other could be found the spacing between the barracks could not be identified. The exploration, however, provided additional information on their foundation and construction. At regular intervals around the perimeter of each hut there were concrete pillars cast with metal bars to which support joists were bolted. There was an outer layer of bricks but their layout and orientation was not uniform across the six huts located. There appeared to be no hard material lain down as a foundation. On some a



drainage channel was located outside of the brick wall suggesting that it transferred excess water from the roof. A total of 18 volunteers took part in the survey and exploratory work. Further survey work will take place in 2018.



Fig.2. Locating hut corners, August 2017

2. Metal-detecting at the hospital

A metal-detecting survey was commissioned at the POW Camp hospital. The aim was to compare this area of the camp with the finds uncovered in Camp B during Quarter 1. It was also hoped that more could be learnt about its use as a medical facility. Although the day started out with heavy rain a team of eight detectorists from SARG and the SDC Detector Club managed to locate over 185 finds. The area was GPS-located at 20m transects. Detectorists were asked to set their machines to discriminate against iron to eliminate nails and rusting wire etc. Ten volunteers followed the detectorists to bag and record the finds. The quality of the material was in stark contrast with the finds from Camp B. A handful of coins were located. One was dated 1926 and the remainder from the 1940s. Finds also included a gaming token and a possible cartwheel penny (dating to the late 1790s) although neither side of this coin was identifiable. A significant number of fired and live cartridges were also found. These finds are currently being assessed and will form the material for a finds processing workshop for volunteers in October.

3. Finds Processing workshops

Two Finds Processing workshops were run during this period. Each workshop commenced with a short presentation on the legislation that applies to finding artefacts. Volunteers then cleaned, measured and recorded the finds from Quarter 1's excavations at the former cemetery and the practice trench and the metal-detecting rally in Camp B (Fig.3). This provided an opportunity for volunteers to learn more about the finds from Stobs. The work at these workshops will inform project reporting and submission to Treasure Trove.



Fig.3. Finds processing at Wilton Dean Village Hall, July & September 2017

4. Hut Group search & survey

The Hut Group team continued their work to research and locate buildings sold off in the 1920s and 1950s. Twenty-one potential huts have been discovered of which fifteen are still upstanding. In this period the team began visiting the sites to record the structures and evaluate their condition. In August they explored a building at a small-holding in Robertson (Fig.4). They took measurements, wrote a site description, discussed the building's condition and risks, took photographs and sketched its layout. It was concluded that if the hut had been transferred from Stobs it had been re-constructed to fit its new space. The style of windows, weatherboarding and nails and the measurements taken all suggest that it was originally a First World War hut. The data gathered will be added to the Home Front Legacy database in 2018. A visit to a second building in Hawick was made in September.



Fig.4. Kirk O'er farm building at Robertson, Scottish Borders, 11 August 2017

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5. Oral reminiscence

On 5th September the project recorded a discussion with Walter Oliver who had lived at a number of farms on the Stobs estate during the Second World War. He provided fascinating stories of what it was like growing up there. The audio will be transcribed and made available on the project website early in 2018.

Objective 2 – to value, share and commemorate Stobs and the people connected to it

Work has continued on the mobile heritage trail app that will encourage visitors to the site and help to illuminate the visible and hidden remains. The app will be accessible from the internet so will be of interest to the wider public. There are 19 trigger points that focus on specific features of Stobs Camp (Fig.5). During this quarter the text for the app was written and 13 navigational points added. Modern photographs were also uploaded. The next task is to record voiceovers.

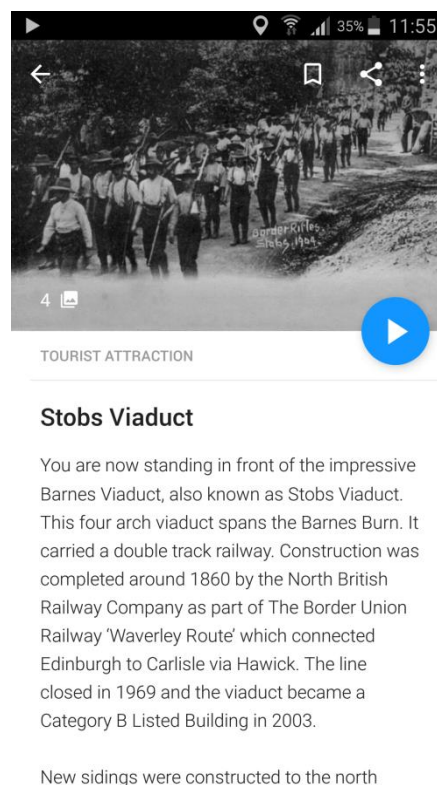


Fig.5. The Stobs Camp mobile heritage trail app

The Project Officer led two tours around Stobs Camp during this period. Twenty-five members of the Old Gala Club visited Stobs in August following a talk given earlier in the year. And forty members of the public attended a guided walk as part of the Borders Heritage Festival in September (Fig.6). During the latter members of the "Scots in the Great War" living history group were invited to erect a bell tent near to the entrance.



Fig.6. Living History and Guided Walk at Stobs Camp, 3 September 2017

The Project Officer spoke at the “Saving and Sharing the Borders experience of the First World War” conference in Galashiels and was invited to speak to the Hawick Rotary Club.

An article appeared in the summer edition of the Scottish Borders Council’s *Connect* newspaper.

Researchers at the Borders Family History Society continue to look for connections to prisoners, internees and British soldiers’ families. They are focusing on completing biographies for twenty-five individuals. These will then be added to the project website early in 2018.

The Stobs Camp Project Twitter account now has over 450 followers and tweets have reached many thousands of people.

Knowledge and findings are being shared across similar First World War projects. Good working relationships have been established with the Skipton POW Project in Leeds and with Suzie Thomas from the Dark Heritage Project in Lapland.

Objective 3 – to protect Stobs Camp for future generations

All the work described above will contribute to the future conservation plan and continuous assessment of the standing remains is a constant of the project.

An assessment of the upstanding barrack hut by Addyman Archaeology has been commissioned by the Scottish Borders Council Archaeology Service.

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October 2017