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Stobs Camp Project Quarter 3 Report October – December 2017

Executive Summary

During this period the project ran a small excavation of the POW camp tramway system. Volunteers were able to participate and learnt new skills. A Finds Processing workshop was run for volunteers and the Hut Search Group found tangible links to a Stobs building sold off in the late 1950s. An Open Day was hosted in Hawick and was led by project volunteers. Progress was made on recording voiceovers for the mobile heritage trail app and the Project Officer spoke to a number of historical and archaeological societies about the past, present and future of Stobs. A total of 312 volunteer hours were recorded during the three months from October to December 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. Tramway excavation

During the 24th and 25th October the project team began exploring the tramway that connected the POW camp to Acreknowe siding almost 1 kilometre to the north. Supplies that arrived via the rail network were unloaded at the siding and brought in to the camp on the tramway. It was believed to have been narrow-gauge and horse-drawn. Figure 1 shows the path of the tramway (in red) as it entered the camp and passed by the hutted compound of Camp D. Here the tramway split; one branch took supplies up to a large bakery on YMCA Road and the main line passed through Camps C, B and A and terminated at the hospital.

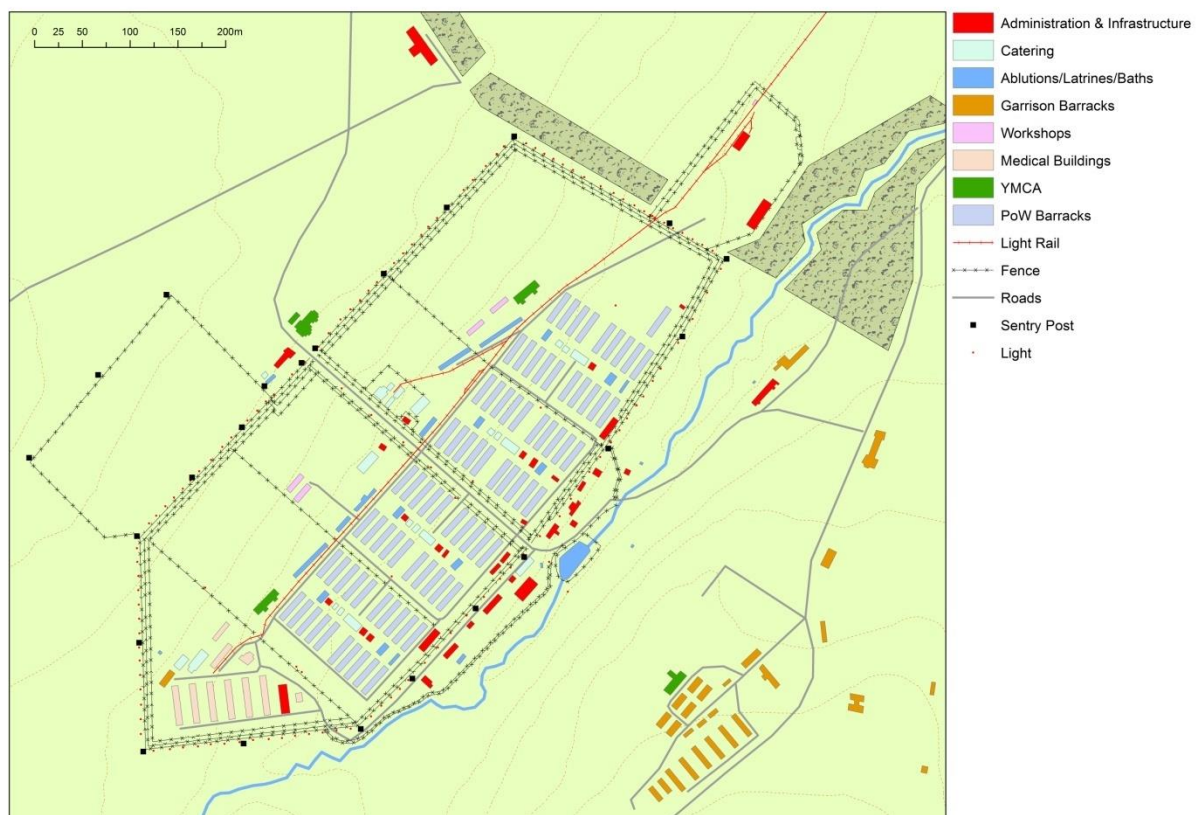


Fig.1. Site plan showing tramway in red, with kind permission from Dr Gordon Barclay



The aim of the excavation was to locate the exact path of the tramway and to learn more about its construction. Only a handful of site maps contemporaneous with the POW camp are known to exist. A walkover inspection located an area believed to be the point where the bakery branch line split from the hospital line (Fig.2 & 3).

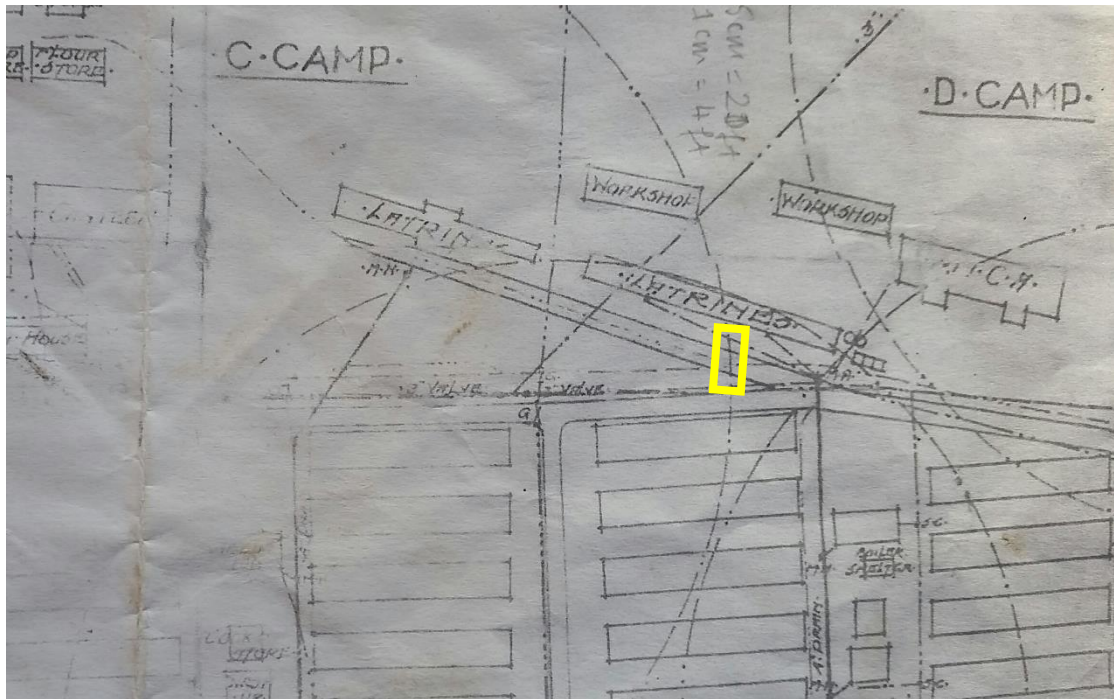


Fig.2 & 3. Location of the tramway trench, marked in yellow



This site was chosen based on its proximity to the latrine block and the NE-SW road. This was also supported by the presence of linear depressions visible in the ground which appeared to follow the direction of the tramway seen on a 1917 Royal Engineers plan (Fig.2). Following a short metal-detecting sweep a small 5.1 x 1 metre trench was marked out for excavation. Over two days 13 volunteers excavated and recorded the trench under the supervision of Archaeology Scotland and a contract archaeologist (Fig.4).



Fig.4. Volunteers excavating & recording the tramway trench, 25 October 2017

During excavation two stone courses were unearthed and it is possible these provided support for sleepers and rails (Fig.5). The gap between the stone courses was approximately 1.2 metres wide. There was no evidence of the rails in situ but a number of nails were found including an item believed to be a rail spike or crampon. Two small sondages were opened in an effort to determine the depth of the stone courses. The cut of the north-westerly stone course was found to be deeper than expected. Excavation ceased at a depth of 0.65 metres. The stone deposit was large (circa 0.2 metres in size) and was loosely packed offering an alternative suggestion that the courses were drainage channels. Their purpose was not concluded. Volunteers also completed a section drawing of the trench.



Fig.5. The tramway trench showing the two stone courses – image facing NW, 24 October 2017

2. Finds Processing workshop

A third and final Finds Processing workshop of 2017 was run during this period. It commenced with a short presentation on the legislation that applies to finding artefacts. Volunteers then cleaned, measured and recorded the finds from Quarter 2's metal-detecting rally in the former hospital (Fig.6). This provided an opportunity for volunteers to learn more about the finds from Stobs. The work at this workshop will inform project reporting and submission to Treasure Trove.



Fig.6. Finds processing at Wilton Dean Village Hall, 7 October 2017

3. Hut Group survey

The Hut Group team continued to record and assess possible Stobs buildings sold off in the 1920s and 1950s. Earlier in the year twenty-one potential huts had been discovered of which fifteen were still upstanding. At the end of October the team explored a hut at Selkirk which was believed to have been moved from Stobs to Philiphaugh in 1960 and then to its current location in the 1980s (Fig.7 & 8).



Fig.7 & 8. Hut and sign at Selkirk, October 2017

The volunteers took measurements, wrote a site description, discussed the building's condition and risks, took photographs and sketched its layout. The Project Officer demonstrated the principles of completing a plane-table survey with the volunteers and a sample drawing was made of the structure. During conversation with the owner the team learnt that writing was visible on the underside of a number of roof panels. On closer inspection they provided strong evidence of the hut's provenance (Fig.9).

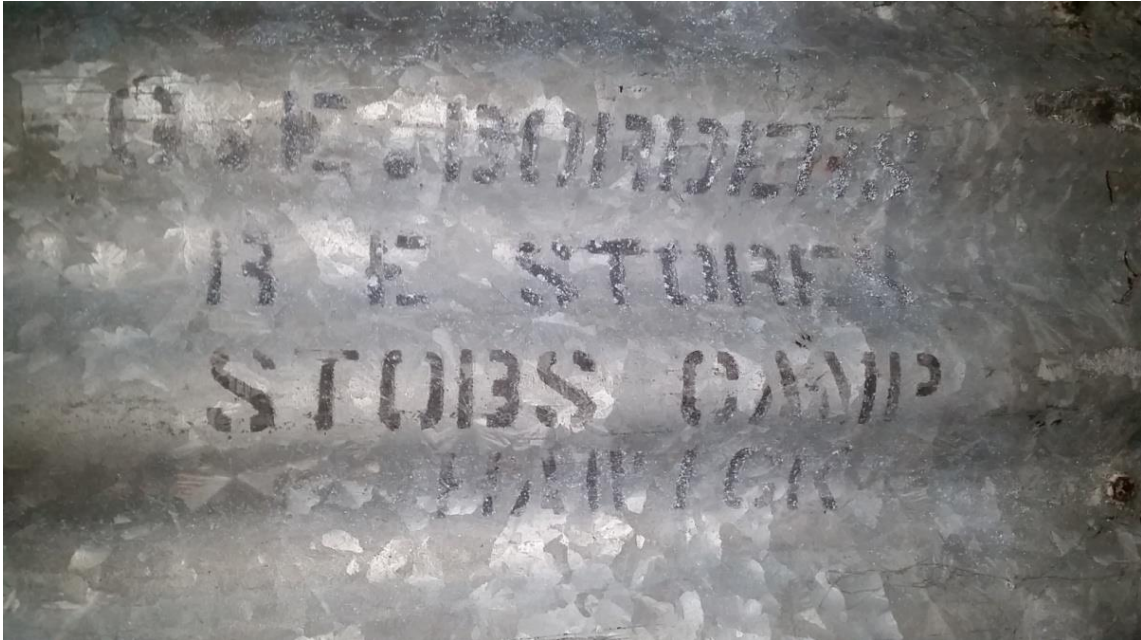


Fig.9. Stencilling on roof panel, Selkirk hut, October 2017

Analysis of the writing is ongoing but the style of the stencilling suggests that it may date to the interwar period or early Second World War. The wording says: -

G.E.BORDERS
R E STORES
STOBS CAMP
HAWICK

The data gathered from the hut survey will be added to the Home Front Legacy database in 2018.

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

An Open Day was hosted at the Lesser Town Hall in Hawick on Sunday 29th October. Prior to the event a press release was written and distributed to local news outlets. Subsequently an article appeared in The Hawick Paper. Members of the public were invited to drop in and talk to project volunteers about the work they had been doing. They were also invited to record their stories and share their memories of Stobs. The aim of the day was to celebrate the work achieved so far but also to encourage more volunteers to sign up for further activities (Fig.10).



Fig.10. Stobs Camp Project Open Day, Hawick Lesser Town Hall, 29 October 2017

There was support from:

- Ian Shields, Jude Coles and Grant Little of the “Scots in the Great War” living history group who brought their First World War artefacts and costumes
- Morag Cockburn who showcased the work of the Saving and Sharing Project (a project, led by Live Borders Archives, that is exploring how the Scottish Borders experienced the First World War)
- Jake Coltman who brought selected Stobs items from his personal collection
- Jared Squirrell, Wendy Mayfield and Lorna Kinnaird from the Borders Family History Society who shared the current findings of their Stobs-related genealogical research
- Evelyn Jackson who brought copies of the Hawick Archaeological Society’s *Transactions* containing articles on Stobs Camp
- Ian Lowes who demonstrated the ongoing work of the Hut Search Group
- Delsie Ritchie who demonstrated how metal-detecting works

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. During this quarter two volunteers recorded the audio files for all the trigger points and navigational instructions. These were then uploaded to the app by CMC Associates. The Project Officer returned to Stobs in December to conduct final tests. Although one or two triggers need minor alterations the first version will be launched early in 2018. Preliminary work has already begun on a second version to add images of Hawick Museum’s Stobs artefacts.

The Project Officer met Paul Wheelhouse, MSP for South Scotland, and his assistant and gave them a tour around Stobs.



The Project Officer delivered a talk to a number of historical and archaeological societies during this period. They included:

- Lauderdale Probus Club, on 10th October
- Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society, on 11th October
- Jedforest Historical Society, on 12th October
- Hawick Archaeological Society, on 7th November
- Community Heritage Conference in Glasgow, on 10th November
- Peeblesshire Archaeological Society, on 16th November

Between October and December the activities of the Stobs Camp Project appeared in *The Hawick Paper* on four occasions, the *Border Telegraph* and *Peebles Life*.

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 485 followers and tweets have reached many thousands of people.

Training on how to update and maintain the project website is being provided to a volunteer from the Borders Family History Society. This person will help build the website timeline and upload the biographies created by the society.

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.

Andy Jepson
Project Officer
January 2018