

HUME CASTLE IN THE WAR

A fascinating insight into the wartime role of Hume Castle has come to us via Mr Phil Rowett of Longridge Towers School, who has been in touch with Mr Frank Hewitt, who was a member of the Royal Corps of Signals.

He became part of the Aux Signals and was in charge of the Hume Castle site for 19 months until possibly Nov 1943.

At Hume Castle, inside the entrance and immediately to the left in the corner was the working hut. The sets were repaired and tests were run to ensure the stations were working. The aerial was in the wall, plastered in at the top left hand corner of the side wall.

Entry to the Castle required a huge 6" or 7" key that had been held by the village schoolmistress. This was then held by Frank and so he controlled the entry to the site. If the wind was blowing it needed 2 of them to hold the door shut so that the key could be turned.

The men were billeted in the village, and if any villagers asked what they were doing the reply was "secret work" and no more questions were asked. Tobacco and baths were taken at Charterhall and the RAF were intrigued to find what they were doing. Several aircraft flew very low over the Castle, but no-one was any the wiser.

Batteries were recharged by a local Polish Regt as there were no non-Polish troops within 25 sq miles. Any set that could not be repaired at Home was taken to their HQ in Rutland Square, Edinburgh, which was in a large block. Trips were made to this site every month.

The dugout, Zero Station, was situated in front of the entrance. Here there is a small wall, 18" high, at the side of this a toilet was built of the Elsan Sort. The elsan was screwed to the wooden floor. If a catch was sprung the floor lifted up and the operator went underneath. A good shove closed the hatch and settled the dust. This was not the original entrance. When Frank arrived there was a square with rocks on it, on a brick base. This was counterbalanced. However, this never managed to blend in and the square was too obvious, so the toilet was built.

Under the ground was a Nissen hut. The site was reached through a series of concrete drain pipes that made the entrance tunnel. The first section encountered was panelled with wood, had shelves, rabbit nets, an old gun in a corner, and was designed to look like a poacher's den.

Only if the right nails were pulled out of the end wall did the door swing open, and once it was shut again wires were pulled, these were soldered to the nails and these were pulled back into place.

The second compartment had beds, radio set and living quarters.

Beyond this the third section held the generator, toilet and escape hatch, which led to concrete pipes forming the escape tunnel. This led outside the castle, emerging below a dip along the far wall, where it was thought the men could hide amongst the loose rocks.

Aerials ran from the dugout, which was under the space between the small and main walls, the aerials ran up the wall. The one on the far right hand corner broke down and Frank had to go up and fix it, with a sheer drop on the other side of the wall.

Please remember that Hume Castle is a designated Ancient Monument listed by Historic Scotland, so excavation work to uncover any wartime relics is not permitted.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Since the last report some 75 Planning Applications have passed this way, most of which were not controversial. However, the application by Duns Rugby Football Club to move from their present location in 51 Newtown Street, Duns to 24 Newtown Street caused a deal of disharmony with many of the coterminous proprietors, mainly on the grounds of noise, disturbance, etc, this resulted in the Authority imposing conditions which were unacceptable and the Application was refused.

As reported to the Chairman, I, on behalf of the Civic Society, did not object to this Application for the following reasons:-

- 1 The proposal was to reinstate this listed building, externally and internally to it's former condition and this is our main concern.
- 2 The Club and traffic generated have existed within Newtown Street for several years.
- 3 An enquiry to the Licensing Authority as to nuisance etc. stated that no complaint has been received on this subject.
- 4 This is not the only licensed premise on Newtown Street.
- 5 On many Sundays some 260 children attend the Club to prepare for matches some 200 having to change in the street - and this is 1998!!! What price success?

The foregoing convinced me that, even after reading the objections received, my decision was correct and whilst locating the Club in Newtown Street is by no means an ideal solution it would have served the purpose and I will be most surprised and indeed disappointed if the Civic Society Committee do not agree. As stated the Application was refused, resulting in the youth of Duns and visiting teams having to continue to change in the street!

David Lamb

APPLICATION FORM

(To be completed in Block Capitals)

I (full name)

of

.....(full postal address)

hereby apply for Membership of the Berwickshire Civic Society and agree to be bound by the Constitution thereof. I deliver herewith my first Annual Subscription of £5.00

Signed Date

BANKERS ORDER

To the Manager of

.....

(insert above the name and address of your Bank)

Please pay now to the Royal Bank of Scotland, plc, Market Square, Duns, Berwickshire for the credit of the Berwickshire Civic Society (Account No 00 11 16 67), and on the 6th April annually hereafter the sum of FIVE POUNDS (£5.00).

NameA/C No

Address

Signed Date

Please send this application form, with cheque or Bankers Order to:
Mr Douglas Maxwell, Hon Treasurer, Ryslaw House, Duns, Berwickshire
TD11 3HX