

Book Review

A WARTIME ENIGMA IN OBAN

by Lindsay Campbell, Kilmore.

Booklet available from St. John's Episcopal Cathedral, Oban. £1.50.

It is a well-known fact that Oban was home to the Sunderland Flying Boats and repair facilities for Coastal Command during WWII. A lesser-known fact is that the area also played a part in Field Intelligence and had there been an invasion, Oban would have been at the Southern-most tip of the great West Highland defence line, behind which the British government and remaining forces would have retired. A hint to this local intelligence involvement may have recently come to light with the discovery locally of a suspected civilian bunker, still extant though unfinished.

Amid the partially accessible foundations of St John's Cathedral, Oban, one particular area attracted the attention of the verger, Lindsay Campbell, also the cathedral archivist. After extensive documentary, on-site and word of mouth research, Lindsay has produced a plethora of evidence which points strongly to some sort of covert wartime hide-out or bunker being planned and partly set in motion within a foundation void next to the boiler room at the cathedral. Several well-known Obanites seem to have been involved in the activities, including Oban police, while there is evidence that the Oban Head of Intelligence was a member of the congregation.

Exactly what the foundations bunker was intended to be, will probably never be known; work was halted at the death of the incumbent in 1942, and by the time his successor was installed, the whole civilian defence movement (covert or otherwise) was being wound down. The site certainly wasn't an air-raid shelter, nor an official bunker for the Auxiliary Unit patrols, but had it been finished, it would have had the dimensions and facilities of a hide-out for the Special Duties branch of the 'Aux Units' or perhaps a Royal Observer Corps bunker. Similar sites are being discovered all over the UK, and while the R.O.C. certainly had a presence in the town and in the congregation, there is also evidence of a Special Duties agent acting within 27 miles of Oban.

The bunker and adjoining areas have now been mapped

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