

Flookburgh in the Second World War 1939-1945

We were recently asked if we had any information about the Royal Artillery Training Camp at Cark. I knew that it had been located at the end of the Mile Road, Flookburgh beyond the curiously named Cark Airfield which was occupied by the RAF from 1941 but I knew very little else about it so I carried out some research on the Internet. One of the first items I found was in a digitised newspaper ¹. On 5 August 1939 the Barrow News reported on an open day at the camp. 600 people from Barrow and Ulverston arrived by train and many more also came from the local area. It was estimated that at least a thousand people walked around the site on a bright Sunday afternoon. The camp was described as being in fine condition and well laid out, 'occupying a spacious site with plenty of fresh air and sea breezes, and there seems to be about 1000 men under canvas'. New buildings were under construction but the main attraction was the anti-aircraft guns. They were described as 40mm guns with a range of 2000 yards that fire a 2 pound shell at a rate of 120 rounds a minute. There were also 3.7, pom-pom and Bren guns. The target, or sleeve was towed 600 yards behind a plane, from Blackpool, flying backwards and forwards over the Bay. The wireless station also attracted large crowds. Amazingly people were allowed to roam at will and they visited recreation marquees and the refreshment department. It was explained that the 14th West Lothian Royal Scots (Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment) R.A (T.A.) with portions of the 18th and 19th regiments were in residence that week.

'The men are brought here for training in the engagement of low-flying aircraft and they come in fortnightly batches. They train for one week and shoot the following week (except the Territorials, for they come one week and do their shooting that week)'.

The camp was a permanent camp with permanent buildings under construction but currently the troops slept under canvas. I subsequently found references to a camp here in 1897. During 1939 newspapers in Lancashire, Liverpool, Leeds, Falkirk, Birmingham and Edinburgh reported specific regiments departing by train from cities to train at Cark.

A further interesting find on the Internet was an account by a local lady who had worked at the Camp during the war ². Her job as baker was to provide cakes for the camp personnel. Bread was delivered to the site. She recalls baking all day and that the camp was bigger than the Air Force camp. What I found most interesting was her description of how

lively the village was because of all the extra men. The pubs were busy and dances were held in the village hall.

I discovered that the camp was called the 9th Light Anti-Aircraft practice camp and was run by the Royal Artillery. It trained many hundreds of men in the use of Bofors guns which were often used to defend airfields. Also present at Cark was No 6 Anti-Aircraft co-operation unit. After the war ended and the Royal Artillery left, the buildings were used as a resettlement camp for Polish personnel of the 21 Baon Piech³. Today there is little remaining to remind us of this important use. The land is now part of the large Lakeland Caravan Holiday Park owned by Haven at the end of the Mile Road.

Does anyone have any more information about the Camp? We do not have much information about 20th century activities on the Peninsula.

Pat Rowland

References

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