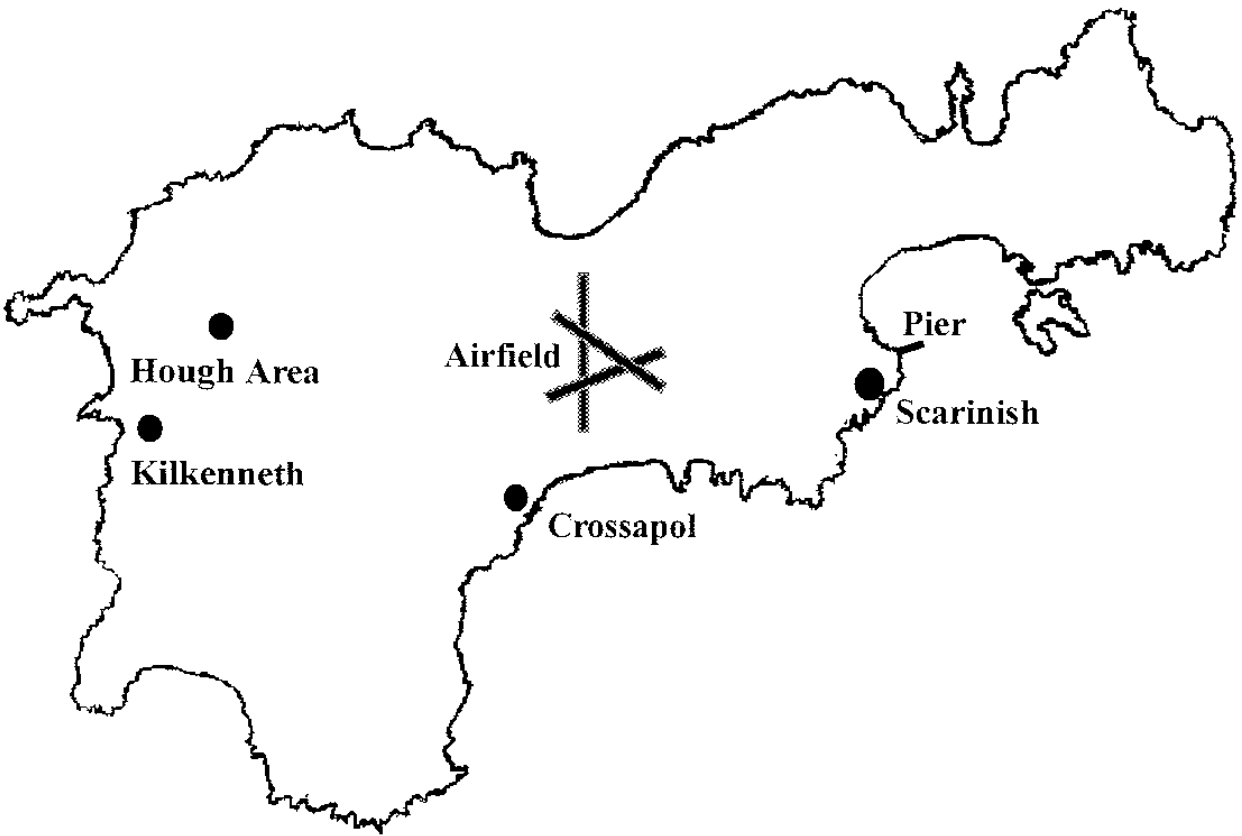


Halifax of 518 Squadron : Three

A Guide To RAF Three

An Iodhlann

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A Guide to R.A.F. Tiree

By 1940 Atlantic convoys had assumed a crucial importance to the British war effort and it became vital to establish forward air bases along the west coast of Scotland.

The Reef on Tiree, site of an earlier civilian airstrip, was requisitioned by the Ministry of War. Contractors such as Tawse and Melville, Dundas and Whitson were brought in to construct an aerodrome and radar station.

In 1940, a workman's camp was set up in Crossapol and a radio hut with three masts was erected opposite the Scarinish police station. Radar screens complete with army checkpoints on the road were built in Upper Balinoe and on the Middleton machair. In April 1941 the 31st Embarkation Unit arrived and established their headquarters where MacLennan Motors have their garage today.

R. A. F. Tiree was formally opened in November 1941 as part of 15 Group, Coastal Command. Its work can be seen as having two phases.

In April 1942, 224 Squadron came, flying Hudsons on anti-submarine patrols and air sea rescue. Later the 304 (Polish) Squadron arrived flying Wellingtons. In July, 224 Squadron converted to Liberators, planes with a vastly superior range. In autumn of that same year this squadron was moved to southern England and the base was little used during the following twelve months.

But in September 1943, R.A.F. Tiree had a new lease of life as 518 Squadron moved to the island flying Halifaxes out to the Atlantic on weather reconnaissance duty. This was dangerous but vital work, and weather information from Tiree was widely used in planning offensives such as the D Day landings.

In February 1944, 281 Squadron flying Warwickcs on air-sea rescue duties arrived to reinforce the station.

While the aerodrome was busy, the machair west of Beinn Hough was also developed as a powerful radar centre with several tall masts and semi-underground control rooms. There was also a radar screen on the hill itself, reached by a line of steps. To the east lay a support camp with its own N.A.A.F.I. and army guard quarters. Called 'Kilkenneth' by the R.A.F., it was actually in Hough and Balevullin. This radar cluster was an important part of the air defences along Scotland's west coast, and the forerunner of today's 'Golf Ball' on Beinn Hymish, run by the Civil Aviation Authority.

At the end of the war most of these buildings were pulled down and buried at the shore, as at Traigh Bhàigh. Crofters were allowed to relocate some of the huts at their own expense, and these can still be seen around the island.

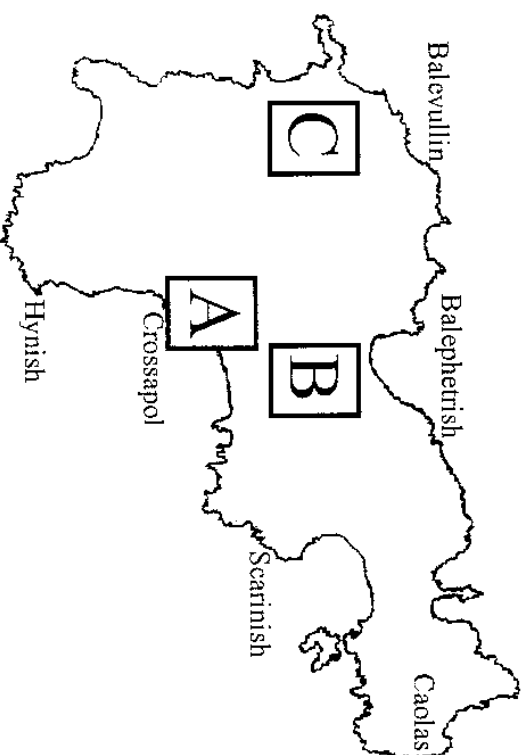
Some wartime buildings remain and are used for storing cattle feed or to provide shelter for stock in winter. Most of the area we know as 'The Camp' in Crossapol was built after the war, as were the disused radar buildings on Beinn Gott and Balepheitish.

As we walk around the sites of R.A.F. Three, the foundations of which are now covered with beautiful machair flowers, we can sometimes feel the wartime ghosts. This guide helps us identify the sentry boxes, the latrines and the accommodation blocks of the base and takes us closer to the fears, the laughter, the bravery and the sheer boredom of wartime life.

Using maps collected by the late Danny Gillespie, *An Iodhlann*, has put together this field guide. We hope you find it useful.

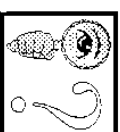
Dr. John Holliday
Chairman, Three and Coll Gaelic Partnership, July 1999

We thank the MacRobert Trusts for the grant that made publication of this guide possible. Ian Bale for his excellent line drawings, Mary MacLean for doing much of the research and John & Maire Brady for their considerable help in its production.



War Time Sites Covered In This Guide

A Crossapol 4 to 27
 B Aerodrome 28 to 43
 C Hough & Kilkenneth 44 to 51



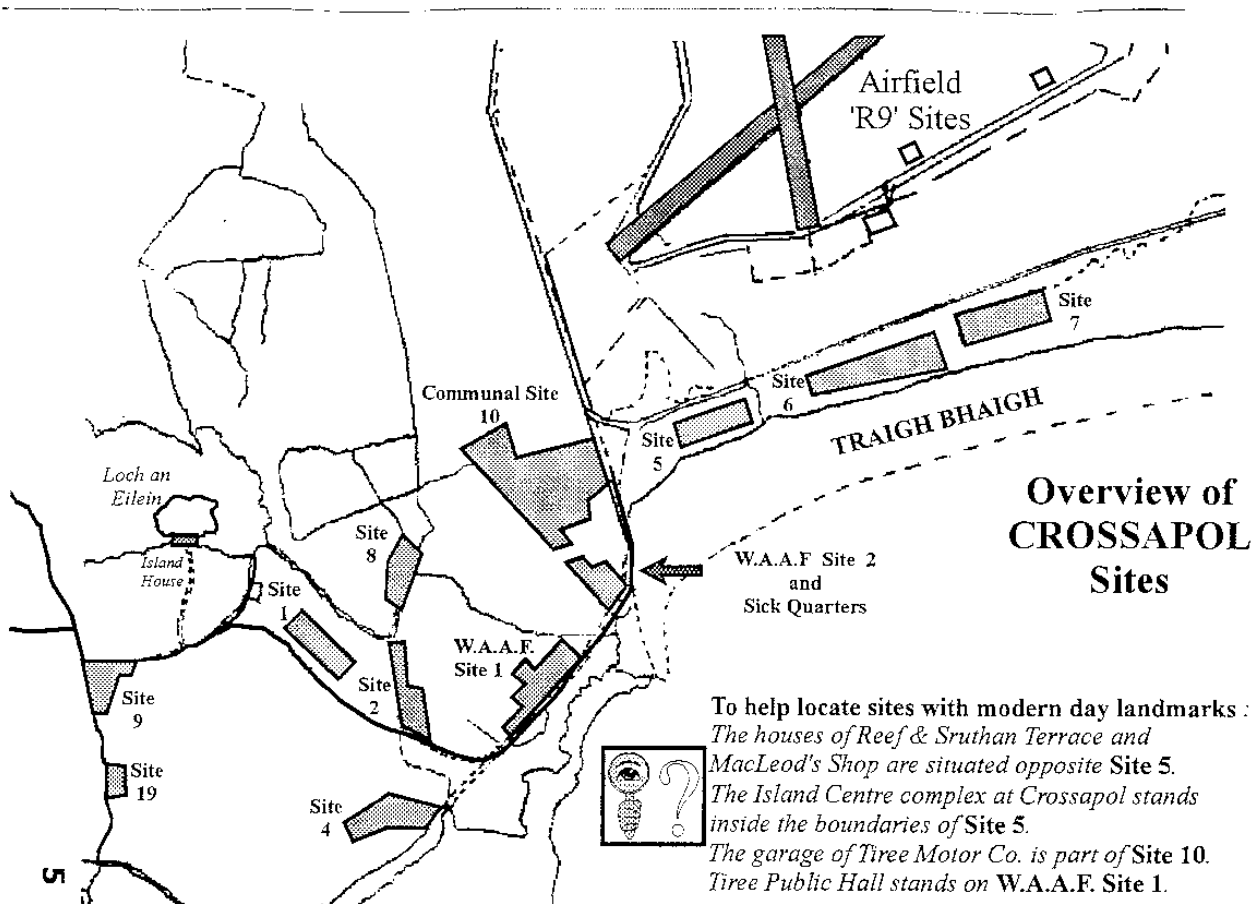
To assist you in locating the sites, look out for the helpful tip which is shown along with this symbol.

Overview of Crossapol Sites

The main activities in and around the township of Crossapol were concentrated on the operational requirements of the nearby aerodrome.

Sites were required for the construction and subsequent manning and crewing of this vast engineering project. The sites were allocated identifying numbers by the R.A.F. and we have maintained their numbering system as given in their 1942 layout maps.

Site No.	Main Purpose	Key and Map on Pages
1	Accommodation.	6 - 7
2	Accommodation.	8 - 9
4	Accommodation.	10 - 11
5	Operations & Construction	12 - 13
6	Accommodation.	14 - 15
7	Accommodation.	16 - 17
8	Accommodation.	18 - 19
9	Accommodation.	20 - 21
W1	W.A.A.F. Accommodation.	22 - 23
W2	W.A.A.F. Accom. & Sick Quarters	24 - 25
10	Communal	26 - 27

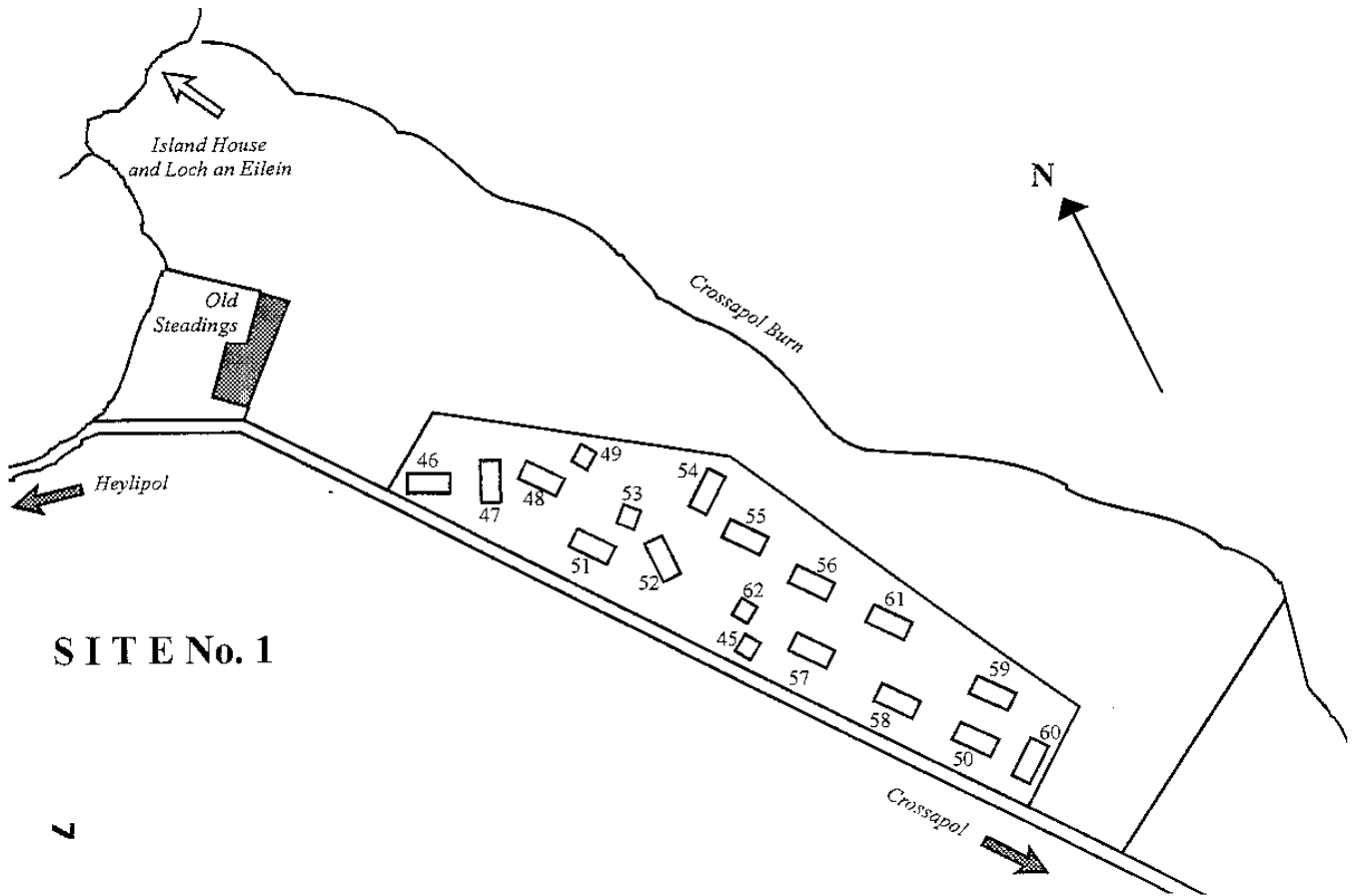


Site No. 1

- 45 Picket Post
- 46 - 48 Officer's Quarters
- 49 Officer's Latrines
- 51 - 52 Sergeant's Quarters
- 53 Sergeant's Latrines
- 54 - 60 Airmen's Quarters
- 61 Airmen's Latrines
- 62 Transformer Plinth



This accommodation site was located near to the old steadings which lie near to Island House. Travelling on the modern day road from Crossapol to the 'T' junction locally known as 'Piccadilly Circus', you will pass this site on the right after crossing the bridge near the township sign for Heylipol.

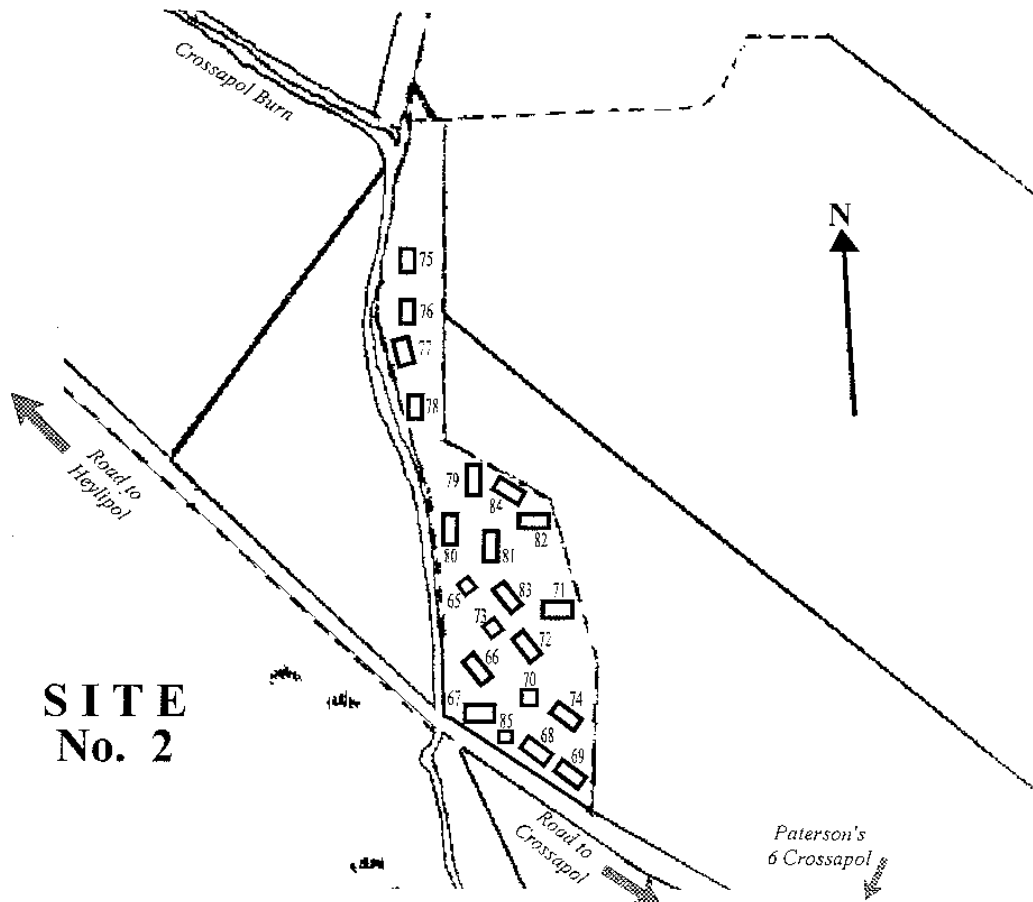


Site No. 2

- 65 Picket Post
- 66 - 69 Officer's Quarters
- 70 Officer's Latrines
- 71 - 72 Sergeant's Quarters
- 73 Sergeant's Latrines
- 74 - 83 Airmen's Quarters
- 84 Airmen's Latrines
- 85 Transformer Plinth



This accommodation site lay in the middle of the machair between Crossapol and Island House. One side of the site runs parallel with the stream that flows down from the Island House loch to Soroby shore.

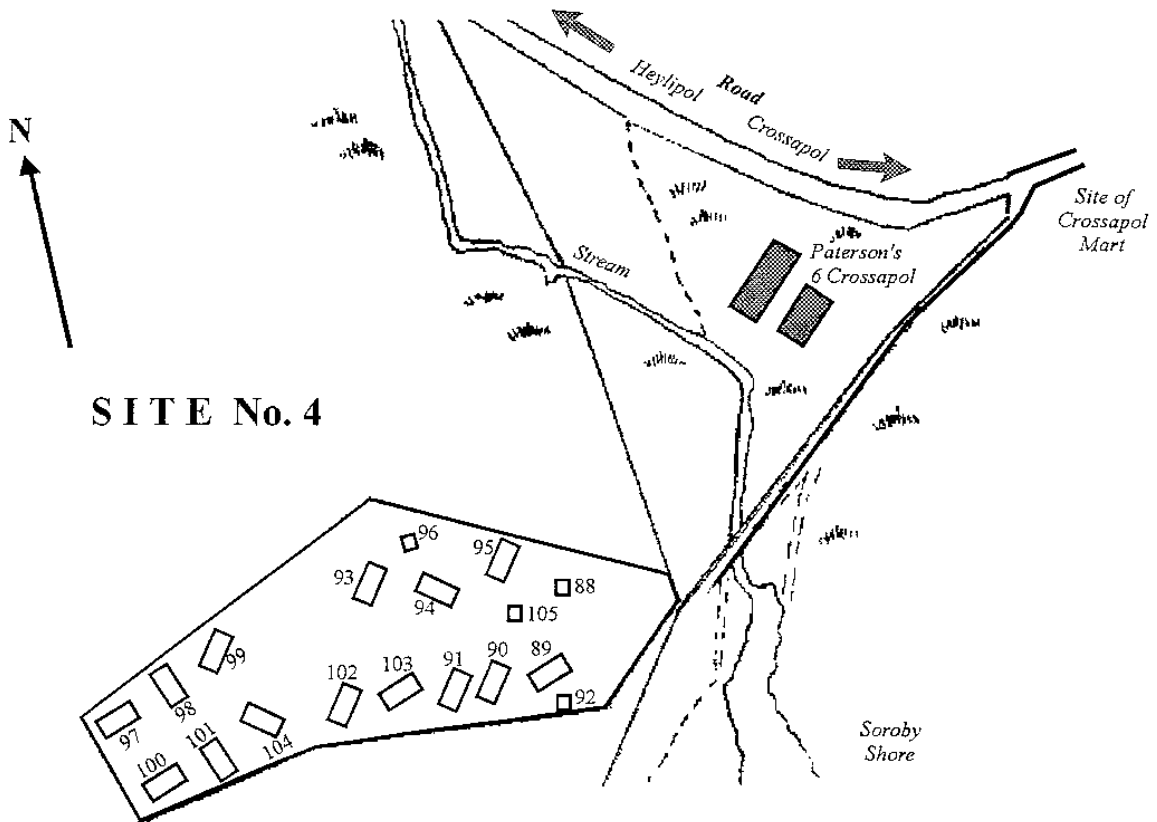


Site No. 4

- 88 Picket Post
- 89 -91 Officer's Quarters
- 92 Officer's Latrines
- 93 -95 Sergeant's Quarters
- 96 Sergeant's Latrines
- 97 -103 Airmen's Quarters
- 104 Airmen's Latrines & Drying Room
- 105 Transformer Plinth



This is a rather secluded site at the very edge of the Crossapol township area. From the existing Mart buildings at Crossapol, take the track towards Soroby beach. The remains of the site can be seen amongst the fields and small dunes to the right of the track.



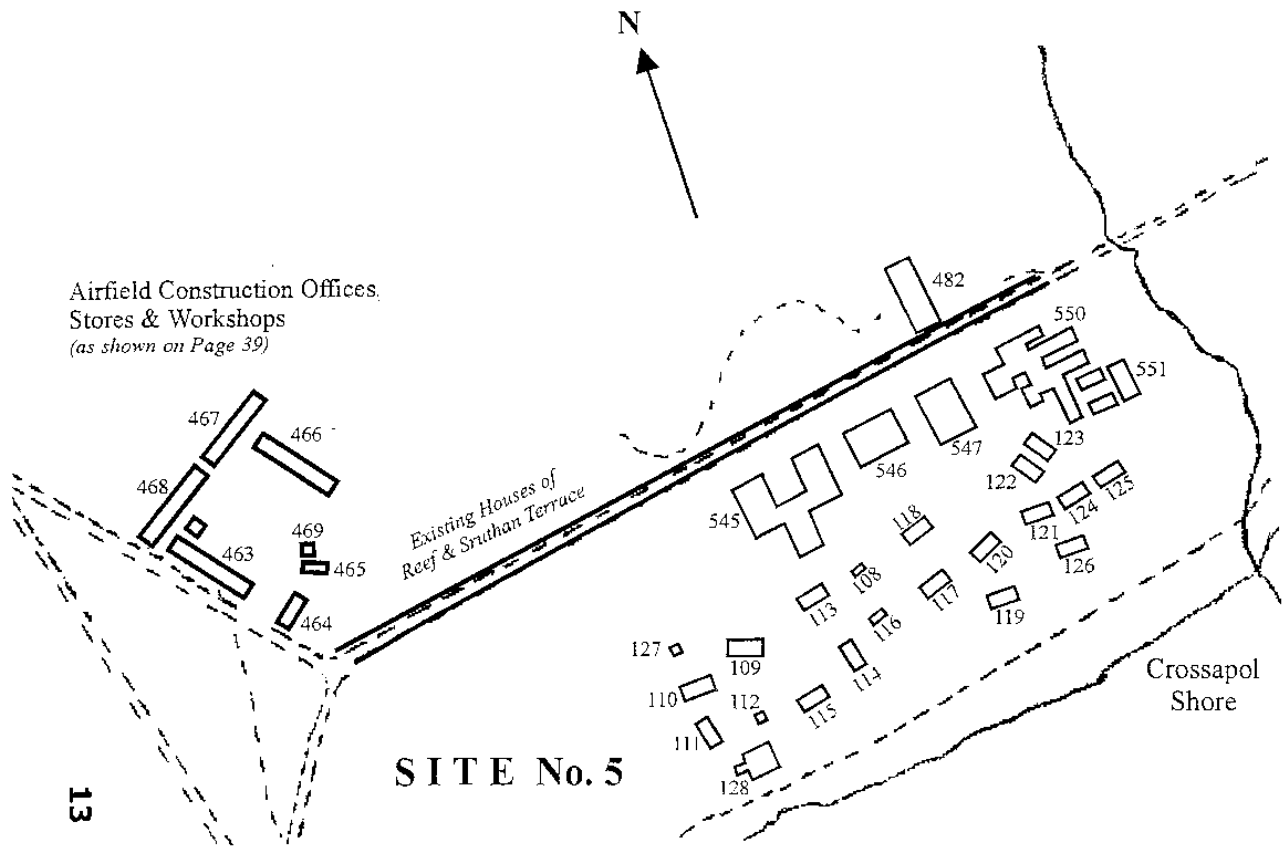
Site No. 5

- 108 Picket Post
- 109 -111 Officer's Quarters
- 112 Officer's Latrines
- 113 -115 Sergeant's Quarters
- 116 Sergeant's Latrines
- 117 -125 Airmen's Quarters
- 126 Airmen's Latrines
- 127 Transformer Plinth
- 128 Ablution Block (brick)
- 482 Post Office
- 545 Contractors Dining Room
- 546 Contractors Canteen
- 547 R.A.F Equipment Stores
- 550 Air Crew Canteen
- 551 P.o.W Accommodation

For details of Airfield Construction Site please refer to Pages 38 & 39



Remnants of the foundations from the site are very obvious in and around The Island Centre and in the grass opposite the houses of Sruthan Terrace which face the main road. Foundations of Building No. 546 are in the gardens of The Island Centre.



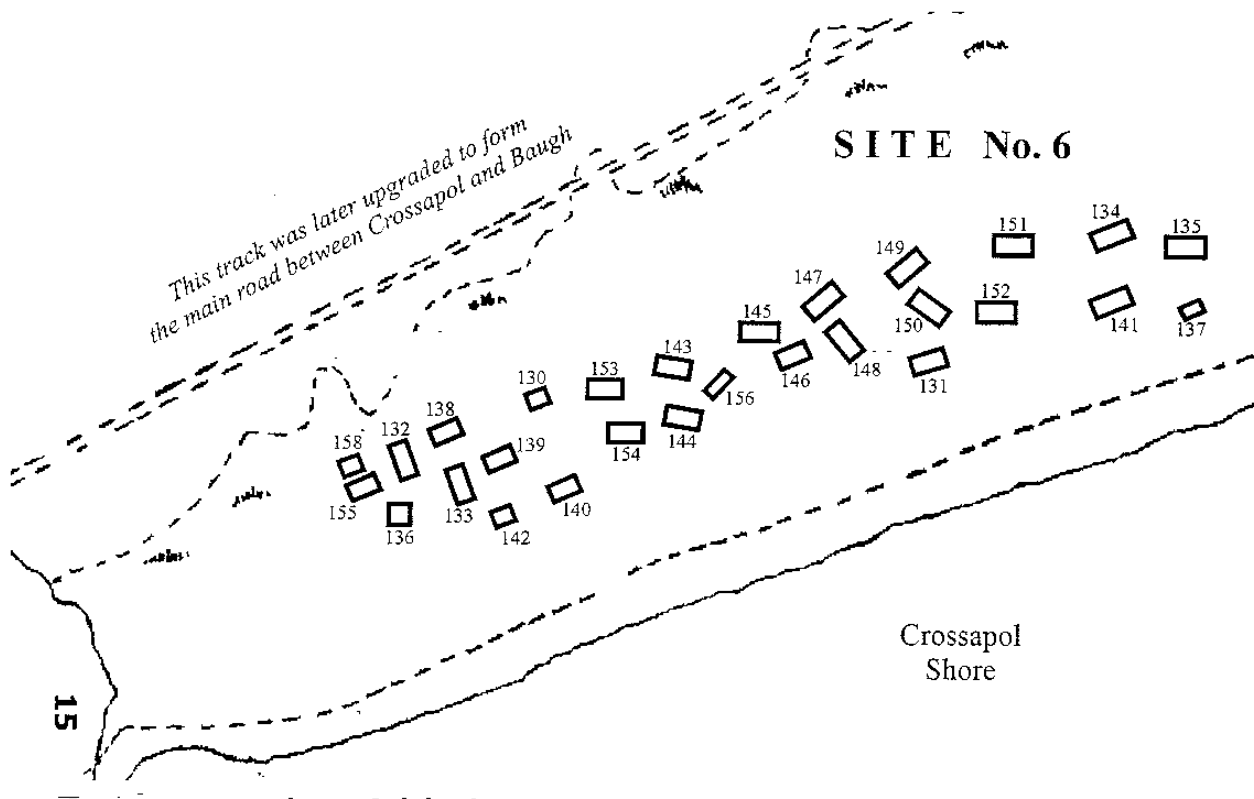
Site No. 6

130	Picket Post
131 -135	Officer's Quarters
136 -137	Officer's Latrines
138 -141	Sergeant's Quarters
142	Sergeant's Latrines
145 -155	Airmen's Quarters
156 -157	Airmen's Latrines & Drying Room
158	Transformer Plinth

* Bldgs No. 137 & 157 incomplete, no fittings, windows or doors. (1942)



*If you walk along Crossapol shore towards Baugh bridge, you will find a small burn, **An Sruthan Ruadh**, just after the buildings of The Island Centre. Recent erosion of the dunes at this point reveal the dumps where bulldozed remains of Sites 5, 6 & 7 were tipped after the war.*

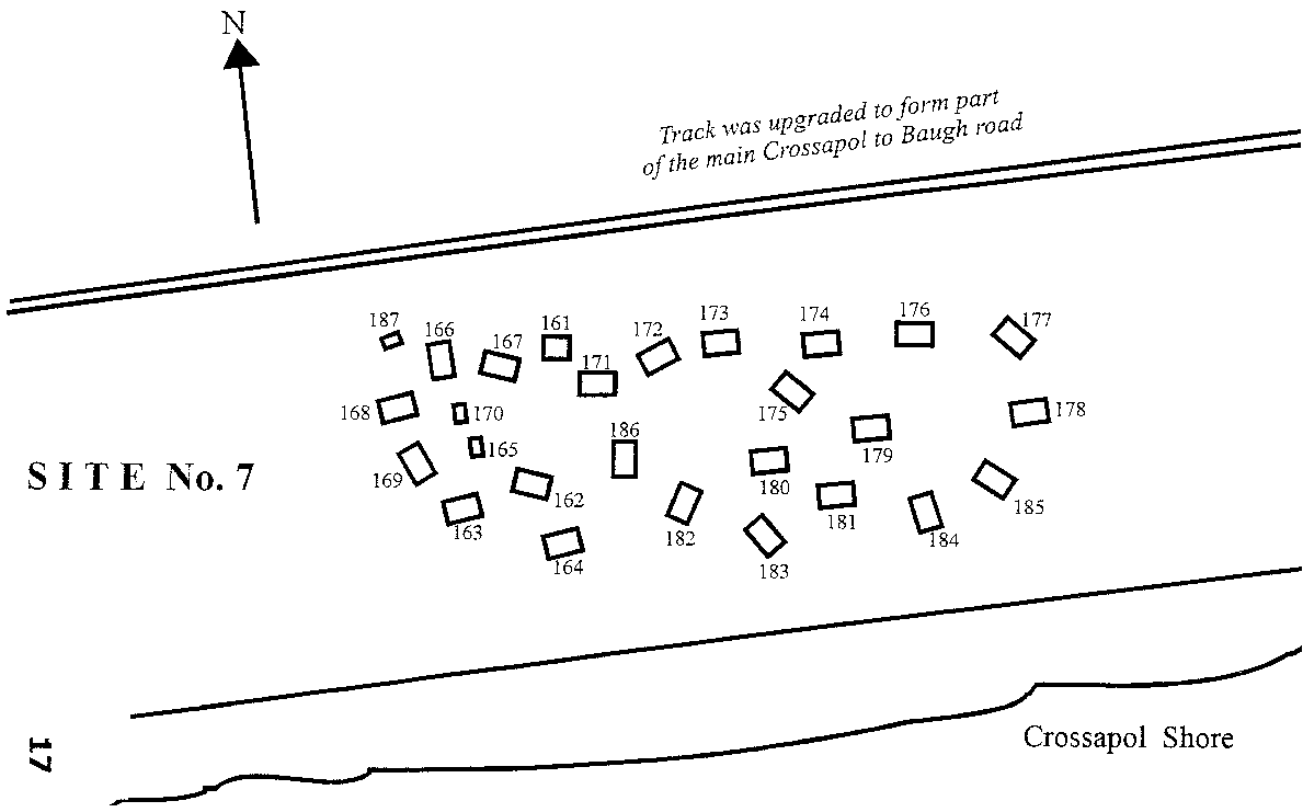


Site No.7

- 161 Picket Post
- 162 -164 Officer's Quarters
- 165 Officer's Latrines
- 166 -169 Sergeant's Quarters
- 170 Sergeant's Latrines
- 171 -185 Airmen's Quarters
- 186 Airmen's Latrines & Drying Room
- 187 Transformer Plinth



This site was bulldozed at the end of the war, although some foundations remain to be seen on the machair between the Crossapol - Baugh road and the sand dunes of Crossapol Shore. The concrete buildings which can now be found at the head of the main track to the shore, were constructed after 1942 and do not appear on this map.

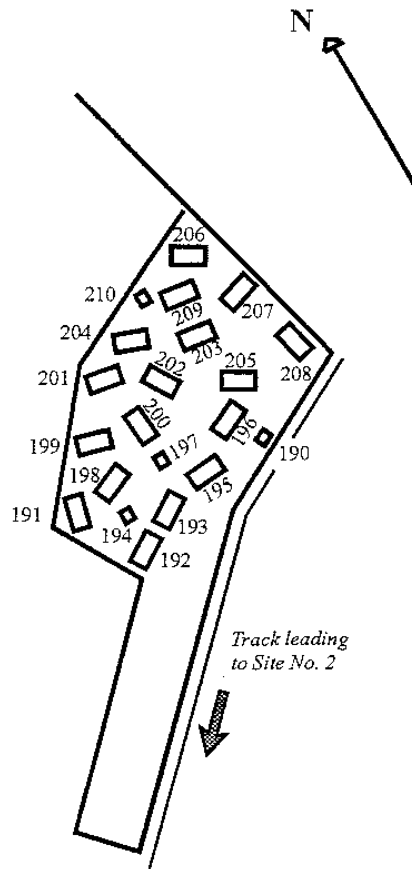


Site No. 8

- 190 Picket Post
- 191 -193 Officers' Quarters
- 194 Officers' Latrines
- 195 -196 Sergeants' Quarters
- 197 Sergeants' Latrines
- 198 -208 Airmens' Quarters
- 209 Airmens' Latrines & Drying Room
- 210 Transformer Plinth



*Site No. 8 is difficult to reach.
The remains of this site can be seen by looking towards Beinn Hough from the fuel pump area of the Tiree Motor Co. garage at Crossapol.*



SITE No. 8

Site No. 9 and Site No. 19

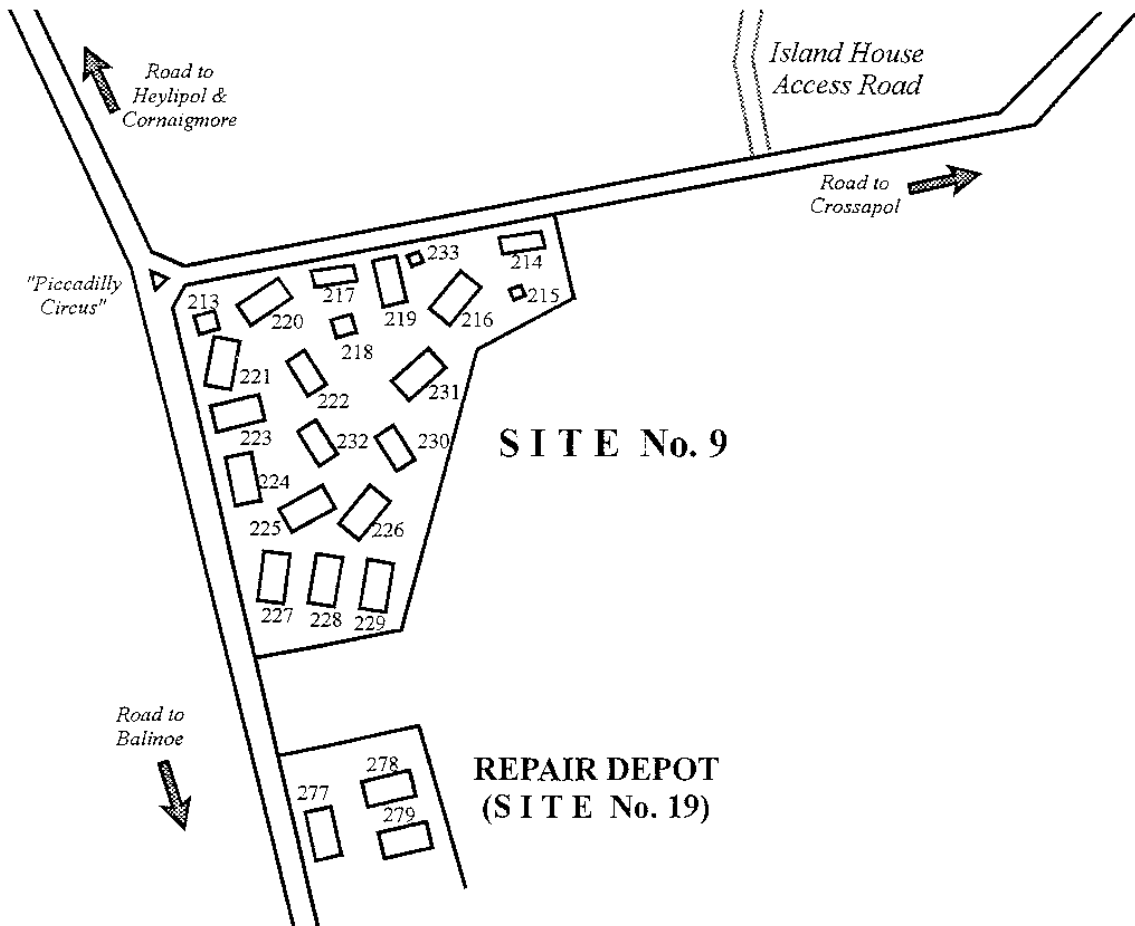
- 213 Picket Post
- 214 Officer's Quarters
- 215 Officer's Latrines
- 216 - 217 Sergeant's Quarters
- 218 Sergeant's Latrines
- 219 - 231 Airmen's Quarters
- 232 Airmen's Latrines & Drying Room for 8 huts.
- 233 Transformer Plinth

Repair Depot (Site No. 19)

- 277 Store Hut (Standard Nissen)
- 278 Store Hut (Standard Nissen)
- 279 Store Hut (Standard Nissen)



Both these sites can be easily viewed from either roadway which runs alongside them. You will find these sites at the existing 'T' road junction near to Island House, then by turning left and heading for Balinoe.

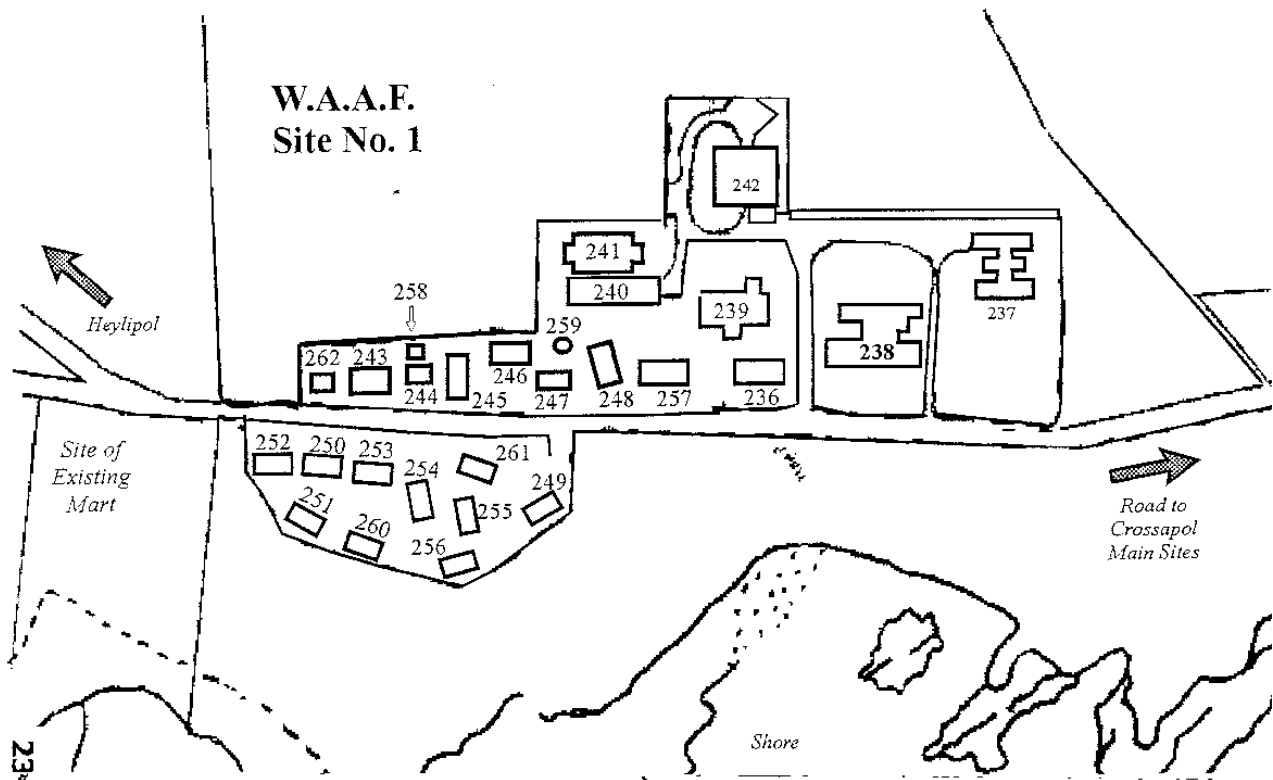


W.A.A.F. Site No. 1 (Communal)

- 236 Picket Post
- 237 Officers Mess & Quarters
- 238 Dining Room & Sergeant's Mess
- 239 Institute with Sergeant's Recreation Room
- 240 Ablutions & Decontamination etc.
- 241 Hairdressing Block
- 242 Fuel Compound
- 243 to 256 Air Women's Quarters (with Night Latrine)
- 257 Sergeant's Quarters (with Night Latrine)
- 258 Latrines (2 W.C.'s)
- 259 Latrines and Drying Room (2 W.C.'s)
- 260 Latrines and Drying Room (2 W.C.'s)
- 261 Picket Post
- 262 Transformer Plinth



This is probably one of the easiest sites to locate, as Building No. 238 has served as Tiree's Public Hall for many years. Most of the foundations of these buildings can still be seen today.



W.A.A.F. Site No. 2 & Sick Quarters

W.A.A.F. Site No. 2

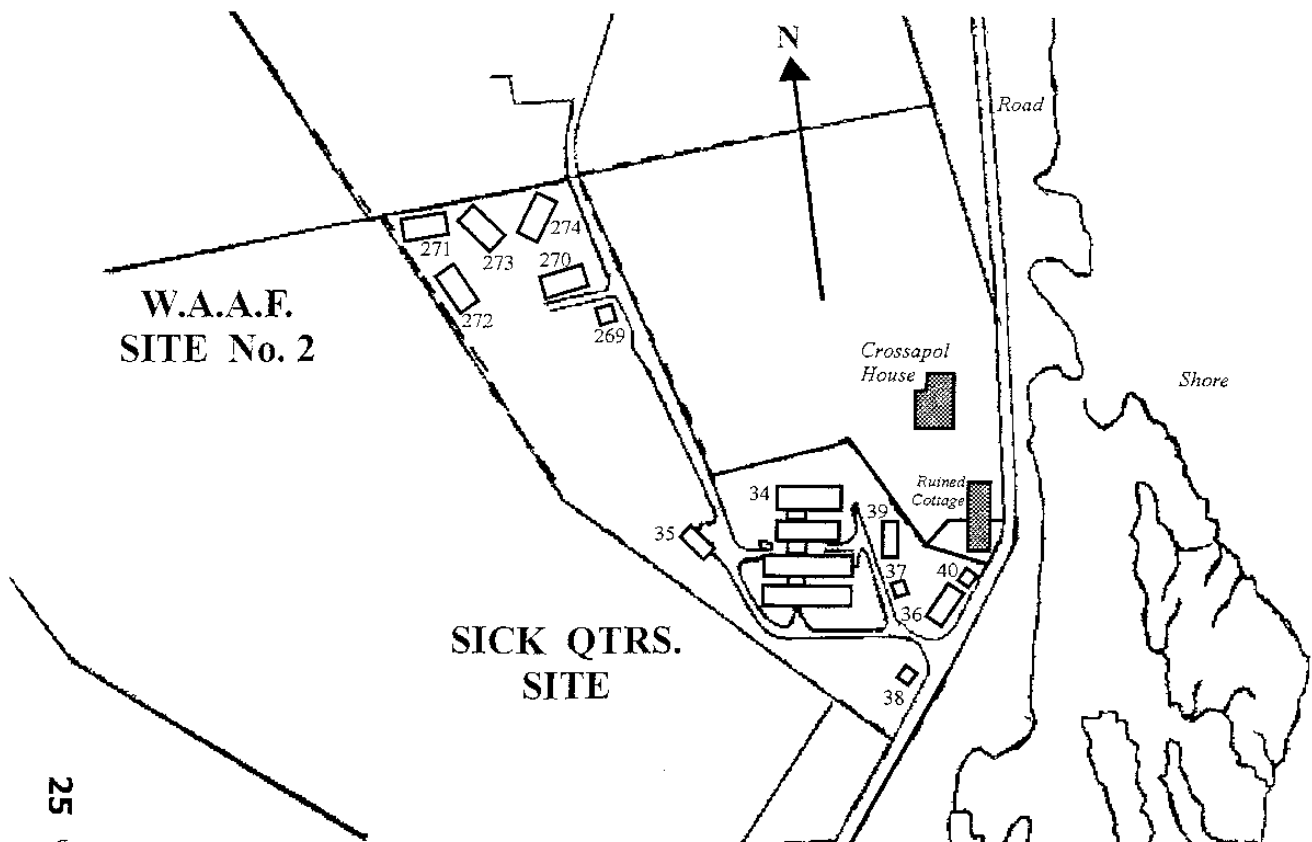
- 269 Picket Post Type B
- 270 Ablutions & Latrines Type 8B
- 271 - 274 Air Women's Quarters

Sick Quarters

- 34 Sick Quarters
- 35 Ambulance Garage & Mortuary
- 36 Sergeant's & Airmen's Quarters
- 37 Sergeant's & Airmen's Latrines
- 38 Picket Post
- 39 General Purpose Hut
- 40 Transformer Plinth



Taking the road from Crossapol towards the Public Hall, the remains can be seen behind the ruined cottage which stands on the last corner in the roadway prior to the large cattle grid.

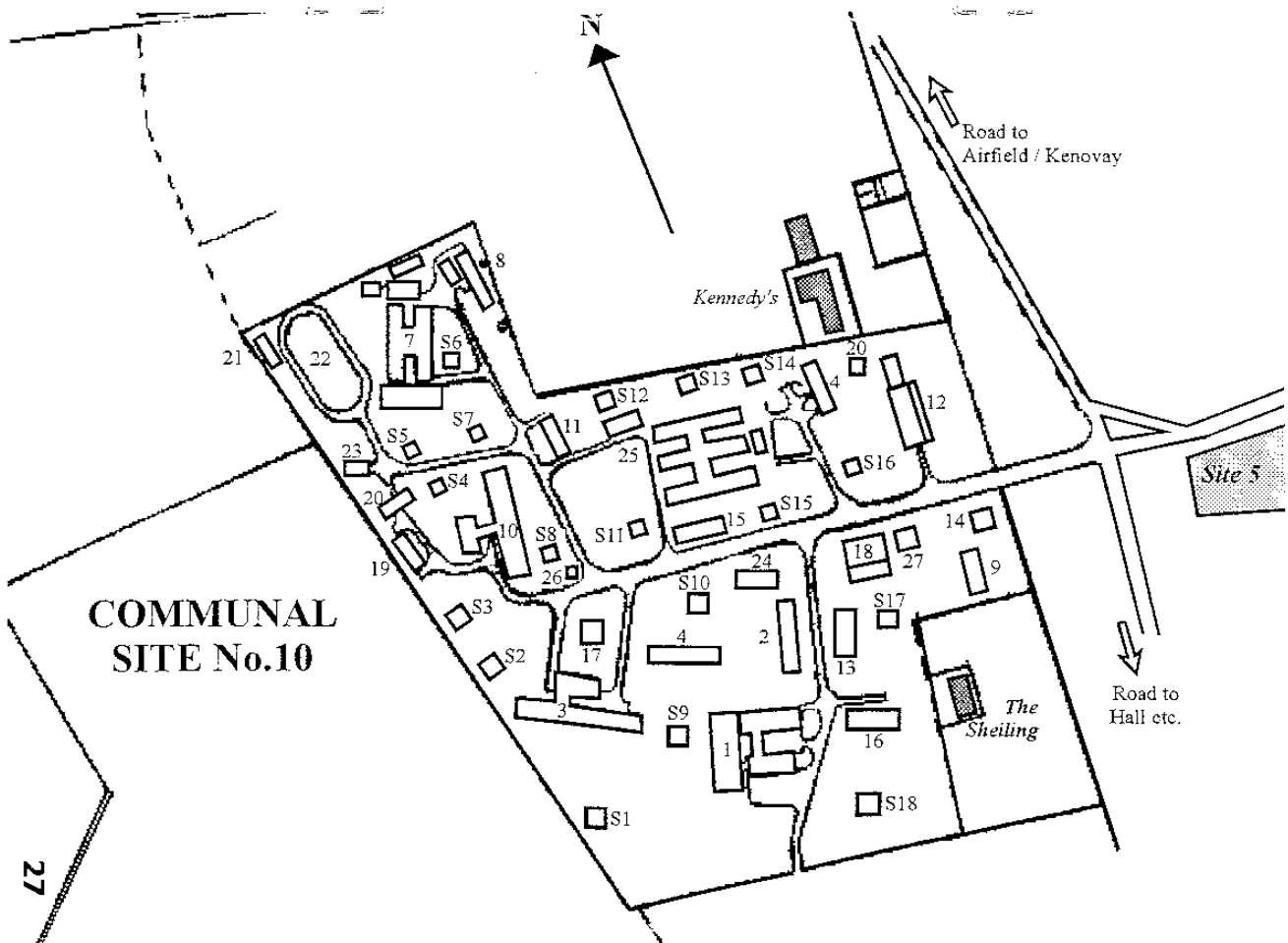


Communal Site No. 10

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|----------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Officers' Mess | 15 | South Africa Gift Hut |
| 2 | Officers' Baths & Latrines | 16 | O.C. Quarters |
| 3 | Sergeants' Mess | 17 | Sergeants' Latrines |
| 4 | Sergeants' Baths & Latrines | 18 | Stand-by Set House |
| 5 | Dining Room | 19 | Washing Hut |
| 6 | Nation Store | 20 | Ironing & Drying Hut |
| 7 | Institute | 21 | Pig Sty |
| 8 | Grocery & Local Produce | 22 | Fuel Compound |
| 9 | Barbers, Tailors & Shoemakers | 23 | Incinerator |
| 10 | Airmens' Baths & Latrines | 24 | Senior Officers' Quarters |
| 11 | Airmens' Latrines | 25 | Bakery |
| 12 | Gymnasium with Chancel | 26 | Transformer Plinth |
| 13 | Squash Court | 27 | Transformer Plinth |
| 14 | Picket Post | S1 - S18 | Air Raid Shelters |



The main approach road shown on this map is the present day access road to the Tree Motor Co. garage at Crossapol. (Building No. 18)



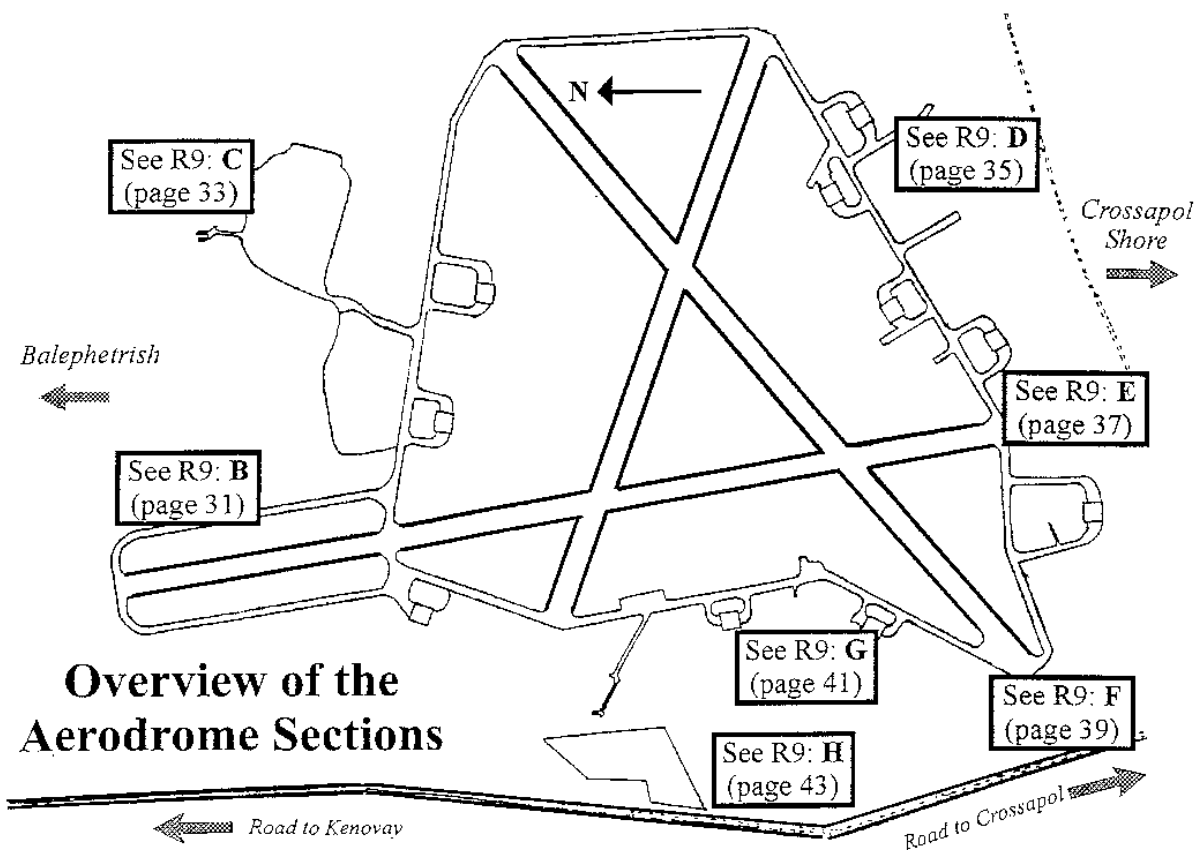
Aerodrome Site Overview

The general aerodrome area is subdivided into seven distinct zones, some used for general operations and some for aircraft manoeuvring.

When viewing these maps please use the 'North pointer arrow for orientation. Balephetrish Bay lies north of the aerodrome and Crossapol shore (Traigh Bhaigh) lies to the south.



The details shown are from original maps dated 1942. The present day area known as 'The Camp' was built after the war and therefore does not appear on these maps.

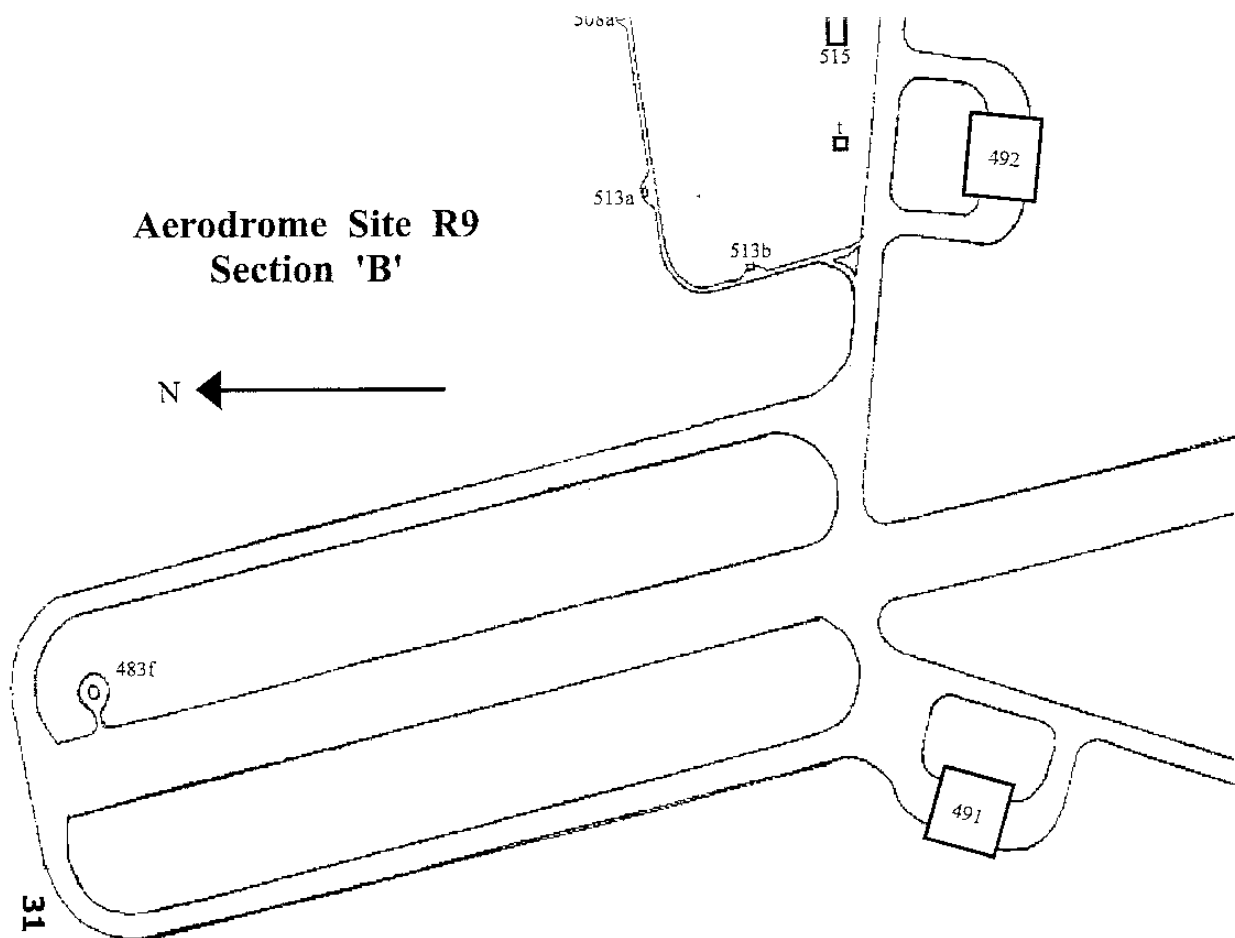


Aerodrome Site R9 Section 'B'

483 f	Hard standings, A.C. Caravans & Chance Lights
491	Aircraft Shed 'T2' 13 Bays
492	Aircraft Shed 'T2' 13 Bays
508a	Smoke Bomb Stores
513,a,b.	Component Stores Type 'B'
515	Telephone etc. for Bomb Stores (16 Nissen)
t	Transformer Plinths



Section 'B' is at the Balephetrish end of the aerodrome. Aircraft could approach or depart directly across Balephetrish Bay. Recently this area of runway was re-opened by Highlands and Island Airports and is used by smaller aircraft in certain wind conditions. It is now known as the 'north' runway, and can be clearly seen from Kenovay.

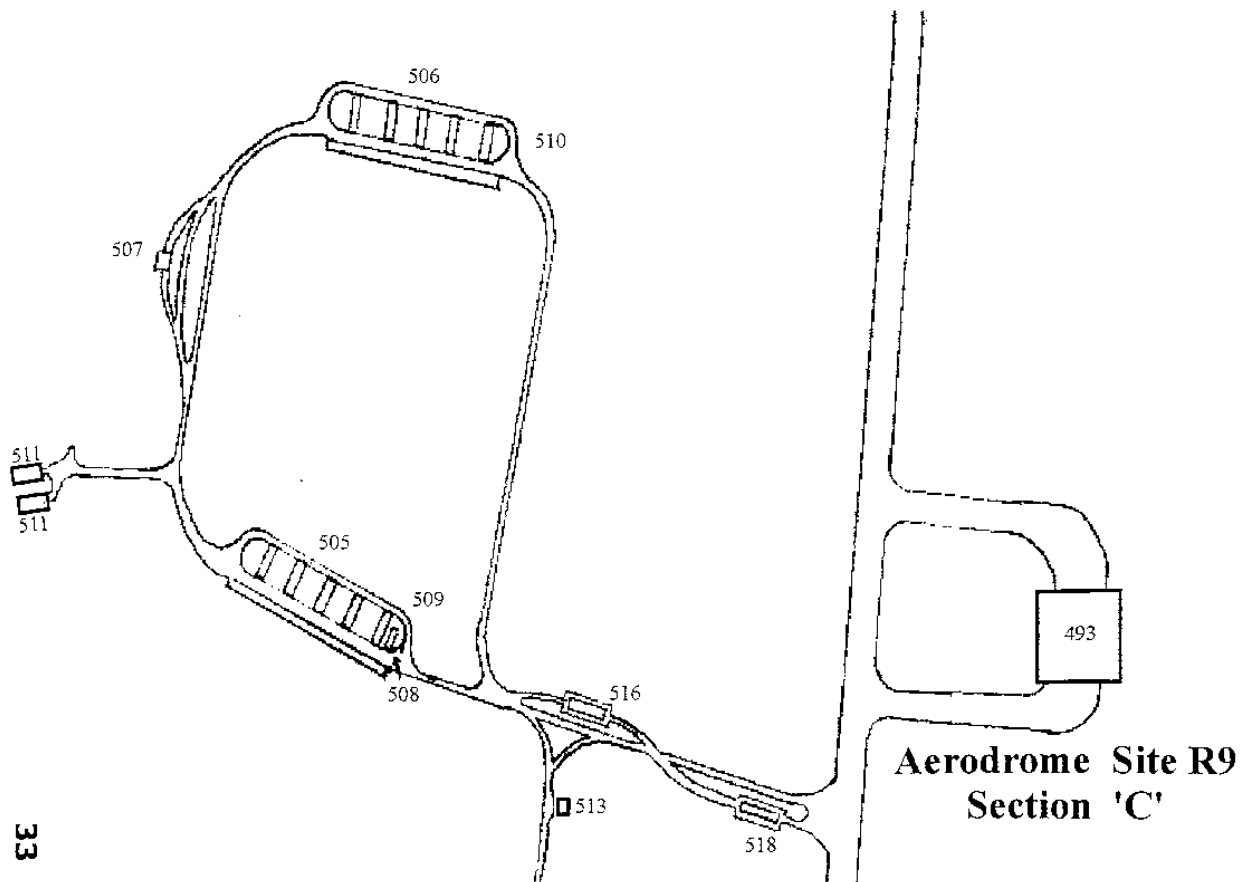


Aerodrome Site R9 Section 'C'

- 493 Aircraft Shed 'T2' 13 Bays
- 505 Bomb Stores Type 'D'
- 506 Bomb Stores Type 'D'
- 507 Fused & Spare Bomb Stores
- 508 RH Small Bomb Container Stores
- 509 Tail Unit Area, with Bomb Stores
- 510 Tail Unit Area, with Bomb Stores
- 511 Incendiary Bomb Stores Type 'B'
- 513 Component Stores Type 'B'
- 516 Fusing Point Building -- Heavy - Light
- 518 Fusing Point Building -- Heavy - Light



Section 'C' is possibly the most inaccessible area of the present day airfield and lies facing Balephetrish Hill. The ground is very marshy and is prone to winter flooding.



Aerodrome Site R9 Section 'D'

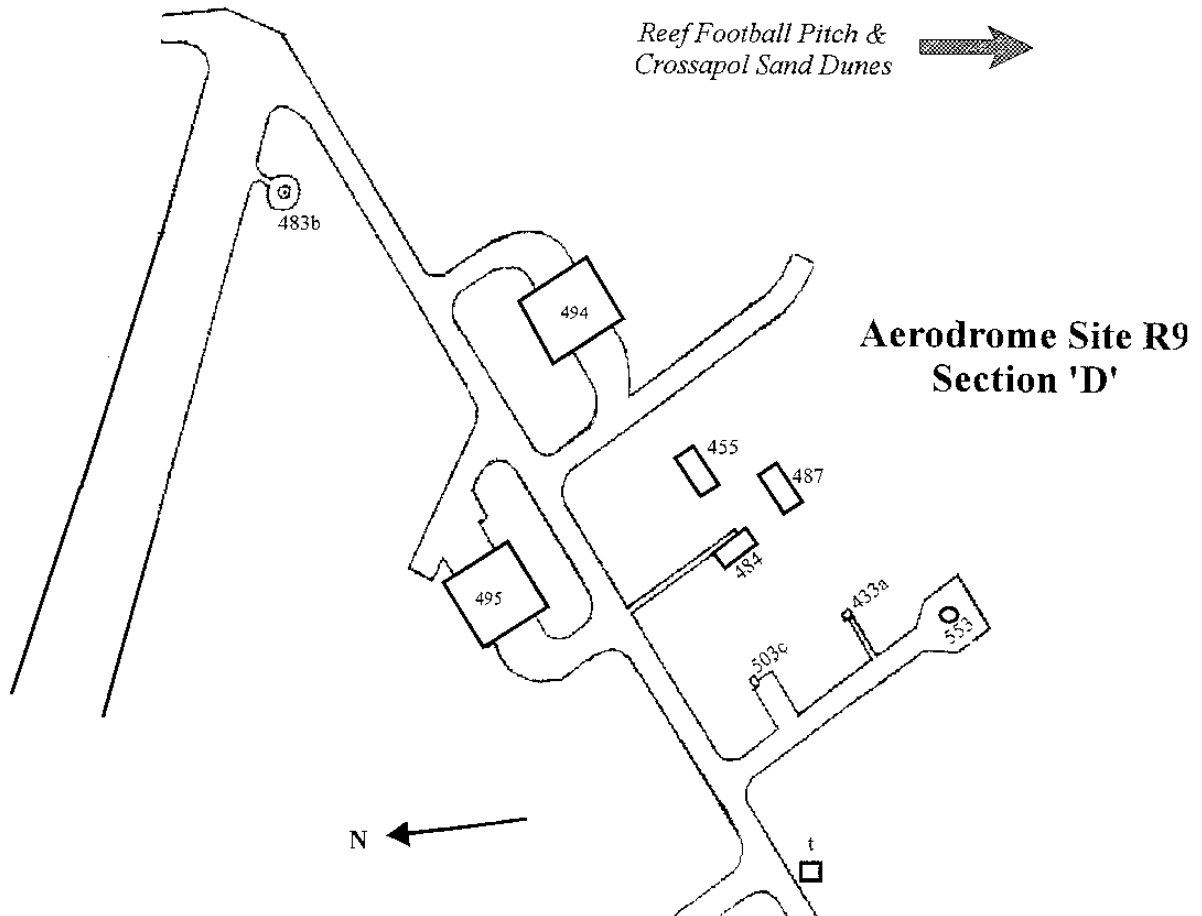
- 433a R.U. Pyro Store Type 'C'
- 455 Sleeping Shelter
- 483b Hard Standings, A.C. Caravans & Chance Lights
- 484 Flight Offices (Dispersal)
- 487 Latrines & Drying Room
- 494 Aircraft Shed 'T2' 13 Bays
- 495 Aircraft Shed 'T2' 13 Bays
- 503c S.A.A. Stores (Bulk) Type 'C'
- 553 Compass Swing Base 12'0 Diameter

Aircraft were rotated slowly whilst their internal compass was checked.

- t Transformer Plinths



Site 'R9D' is located along the existing airfield perimeter fence line and runs roughly parallel with the road between Crossapol and Baugh. There is a small track off this road near the football pitch which allows access to the fence line.

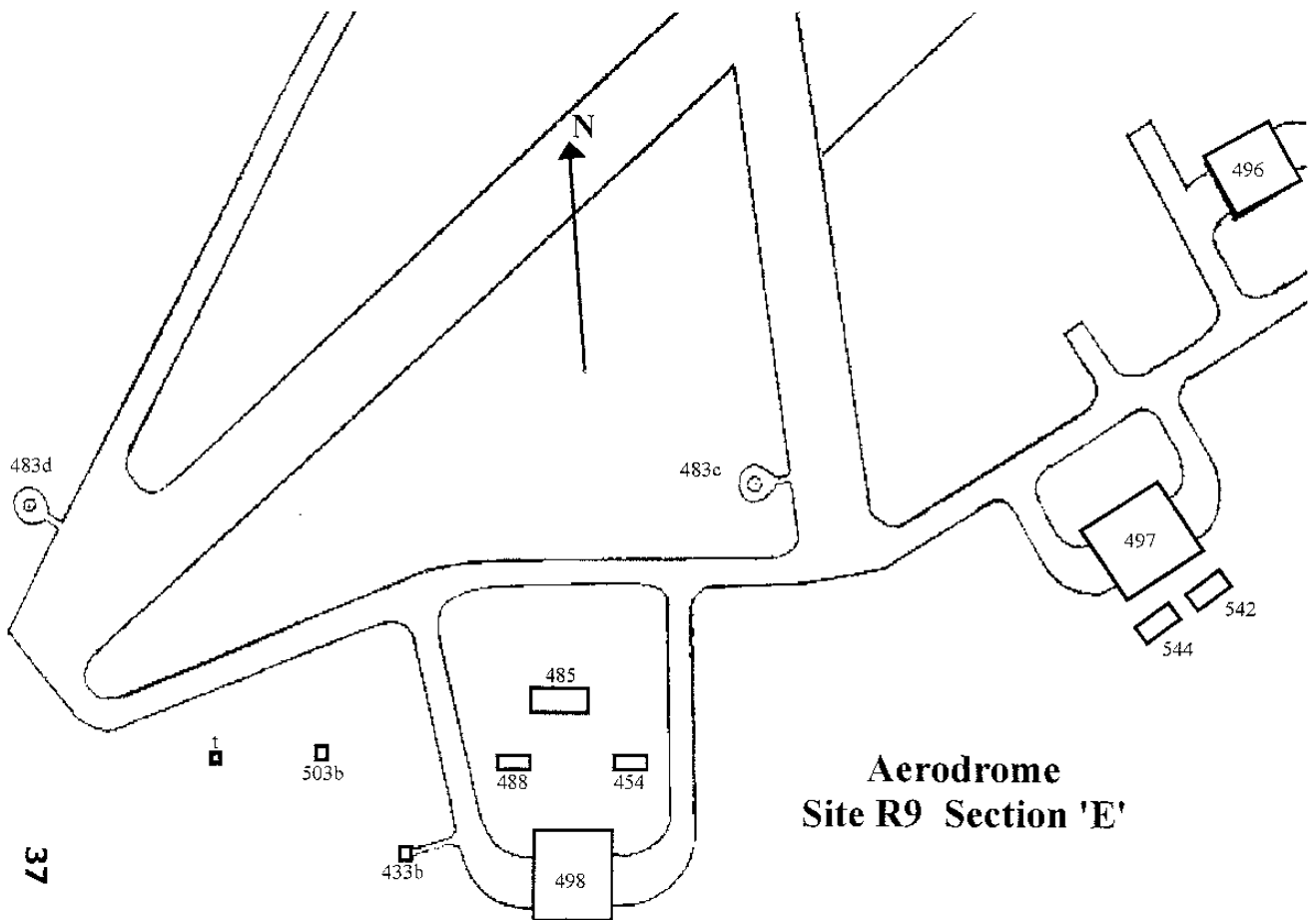


Aerodrome Site R9 Section 'E'

- 433b R.U Pyro Store Type 'C'
- 454 Sleeping Shelter
- 483 c & d Hard Standings, A.C. & Chance Lights
- 485 Flight Office (Dispersal)
- 488 Latrines & Drying Room
- 496 -498 Aircraft Sheds 'T2'
- 503b S.A.A. Stores
- 542 W.A.A.F. Resting Hut (½ Nissen)
- 544 M.T. Offices
- t Transformer Plinth



Site R9 Section 'E' like Section 'D' lies roughly parallel with the roadway between Crossapol and Baugh, although nearer Crossapol. Again fenced by the present airfield perimeter fence line, this area is near the large circular installation opposite The Island Centre which has a series of orange colour aerials around its roof. This is a modern civil aviation directional beacon.



**Aerodrome
Site R9 Section 'E'**

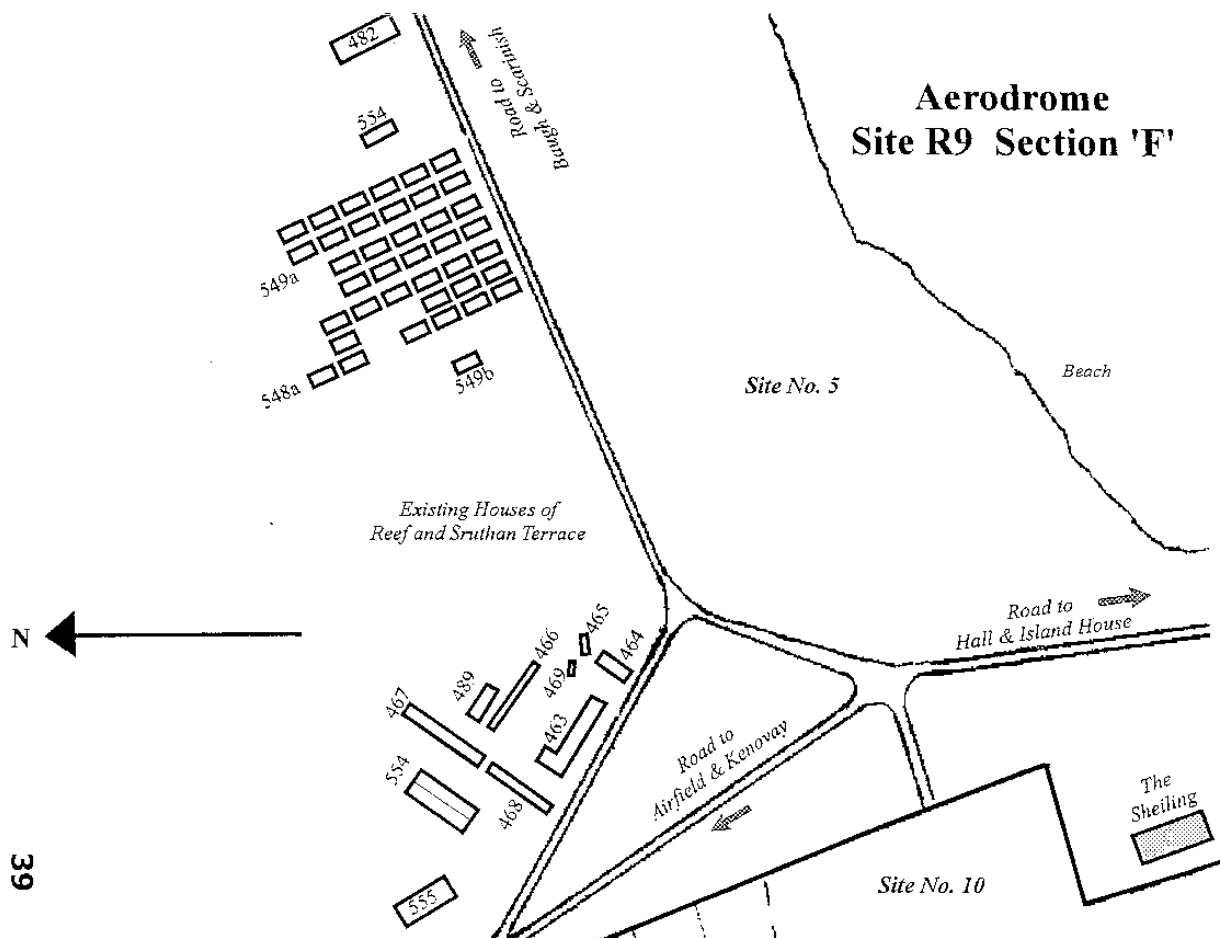
Aerodrome Site R9 Section 'F'

A.C. = Airfield Construction

- 463 A.C. Offices & Stores Nissen
- 464 A.C. Mechanical & Electrical Engineering Office
- 465 A.C. Motor Transport Garage
- 466 A.C. Plumbers' & Painters' Stores
- 467 A.C. Plant etc. M. & E. Stores Nissen
- 468 A.C. Carpenters' Shop etc.
- 469 A.C. Latrines
- 482 Post Office
- 489 A.C. Timber Store Nissen
- 548a R.A.F. Barracks
- 549a Ablutions & Latrine Block
- 549b Ablutions & Latrine Block
- 554-5 Storage Huts



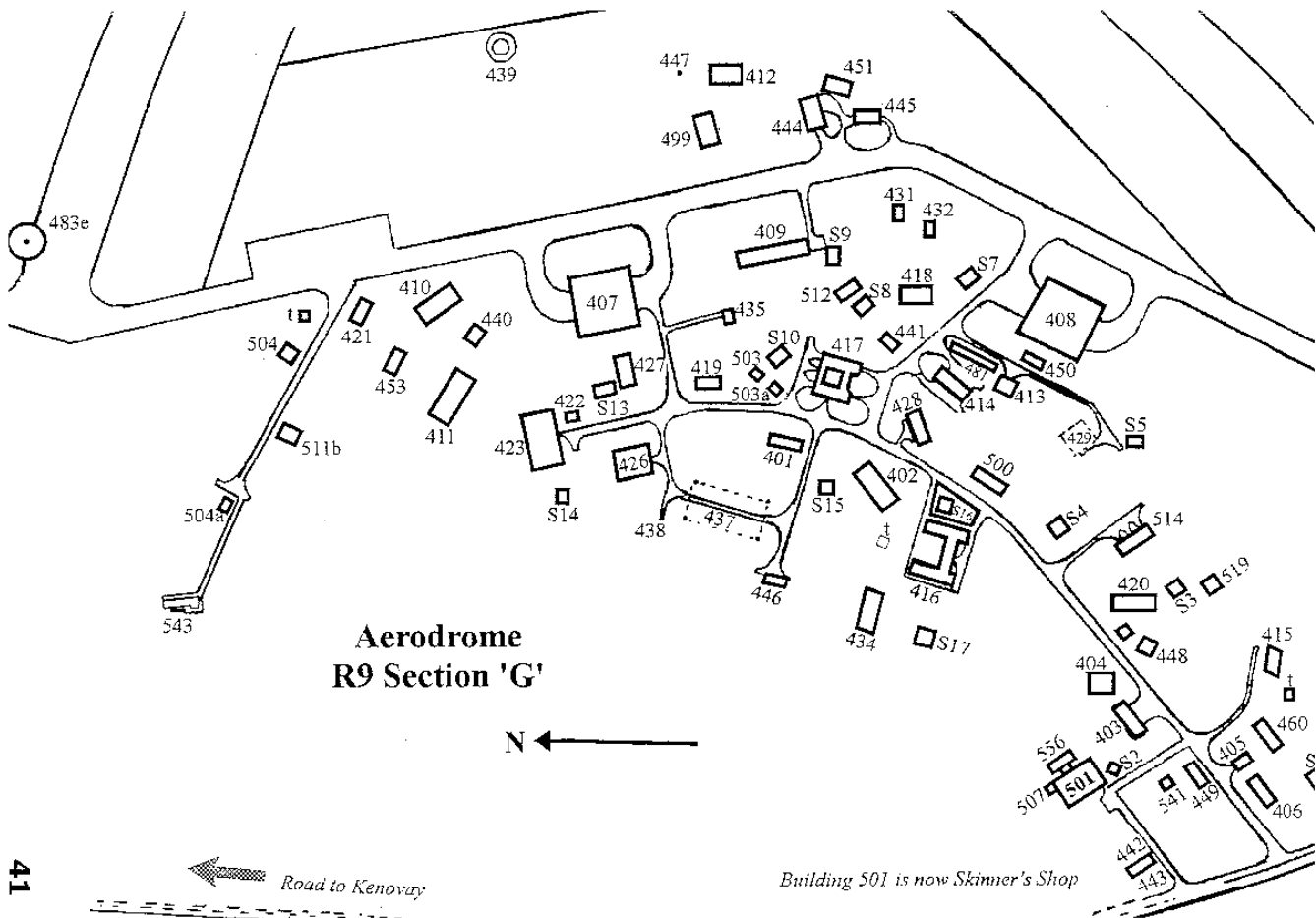
Building No. 464 was located near to the existing houses of Reef Terrace in Crossapol, an area used solely for the various services required in the construction of the airfield. The foundations for Building No. 482, 'Post Office' can be clearly seen opposite the Island Centre near the first chicane.



Aerodrome Site R9 Section 'G'

401	Gas Defence Centre	434	Power House
402	Gas Clothing and Respirator Store	437	Fuel Compound
403	Station Headquarters Offices	438	Destructor House
404	Stores & Accounts Office	439	Compass Platform
405	Fire Tender House	440 & 441	Technical Latrines
406	Guard & Fire Party House	442 & 443	Water Storage Tanks
407 - 408	Aircraft Shed 'T2' 13 Bays		
409	Squadron Offices (Fighter)	444	Fire Tender Shelter & NFE Store
410	Flight Offices & Crew Room (GR)	445	Floodlight Trailer & Tractor Shed
411	Crew Rooms Lockers & Drying Room	446	Salvage Shed
412	Flying Control Building	447	Sleeve Steamer Mast
413	Oil Bowser Tractor Shed	448	Link Trainer
414	Maintenance Unit	449 - 453	Sleeping Shelters
415	Work Services Hut	460	Pigeon Loft (<i>see notes</i>)
416	Main Stores	481	Maint. Wing & H.Q. Offices
417	Main Workshops	483 a	Hard Standing
418	Armoury (GR)	499	Battle Headquarters
419	Armoury (Fighters)	500	Cine-Camera Gun & Lecture Room
420	Photographic Block	501	GR Operations Block
421	Gas Chamber (<i>see notes</i>)	503 & 503a	S.A.A. Stores Type 'B'
422	M.T. Office	504	20 MM HE & Inc. Type 'B'
423	M.T. Sheds (10 bays)	504a	3" OSB & Grenades Type 'B'
426	Petrol Installation - MT	511b	Pyrotechnics Store Type 'A'
427	Parachute Store	514	Turret Instructional Building
428	Lubricant & Inflammable Store	519	A.M.L. Teacher
429	Bulk Oil Compound	541	Speech Broadcasting Bldg. (<i>see notes</i>)
431 - 432	Sea Markers & Flame Floats Store	543	R.D.F. Workshop
433	RU Pyro Stores Type 'C'	556/7	General Huts
t	Transformer Plinths	S1 - 17	Blast Shelters

Notes :
For (*see notes*) please refer to the inside back cover



Building 501 is now Skimmer's Shop

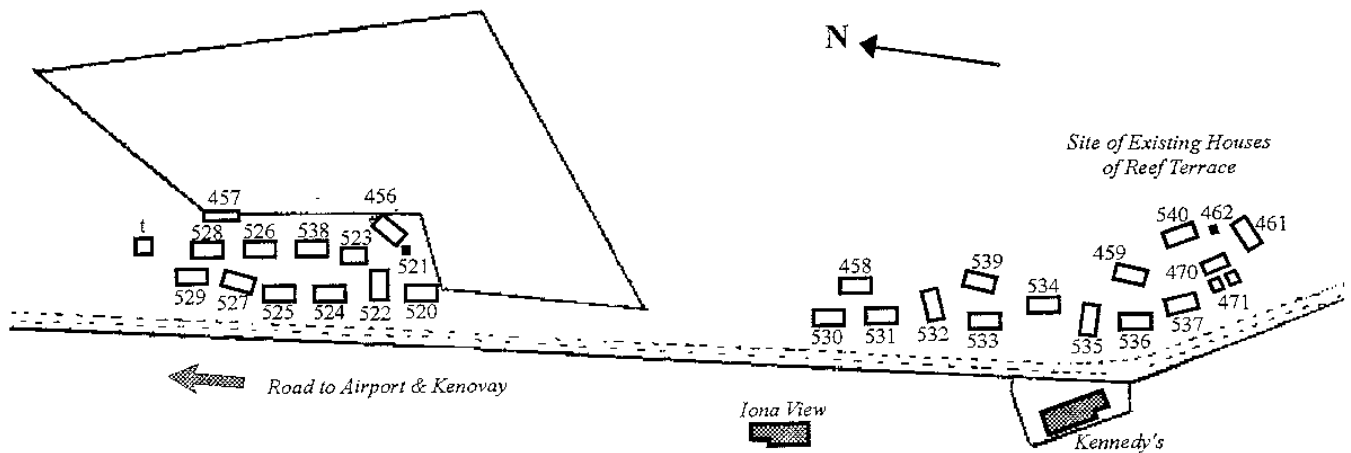
Aerodrome Site 'R9' Section 'H'

- 456 - 459 Sleeping Shelter, Defence Site
- 461 Pigeon Loft
- 462 Pigeon Loft Store 10 x 10 Timer
- 470 Responder Beacon Building
- 471 70' Timer Towers
- 520 Officers' Quarters
- 521 Officers' Latrine Block
- 522 Sergeants' Quarters
- 523 - 537 Airmens' Quarters
- 538 Sergeants' & Airmens' Latrines & Drying Rooms
- 539 Airmens' Latrines & Drying Room
- 540 Lecture Hut
- t Transformer Plinth



Site 'R9H' was spread along the airfield side of the existing roadway between Crossapol and the entrance road to the airport. Some of the foundations remain to be seen in the grass.

Aerodrome Section 'H'



Hough and Kilkenneth

Despite the fact that the R.A.F. decided to name this area 'Kilkenneth', the installations were actually in the townships of Hough and Balevullin.

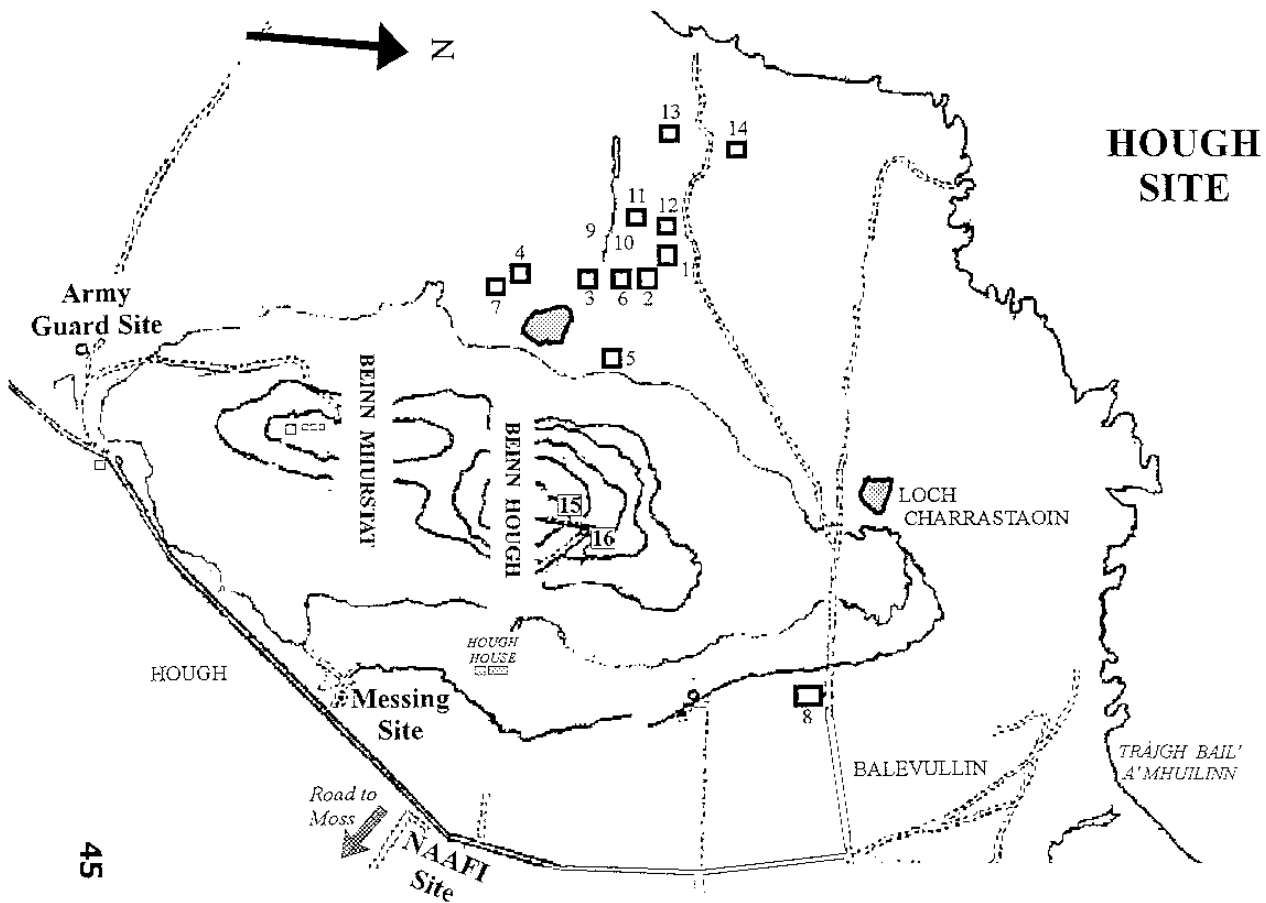
We show the detailed maps of the area on the machair below Beinn Hough facing the sea, where tall radar and radio masts were erected. These masts were secured by massive concrete anchoring points which can still be seen dotted around the area. An excellent vantage point for the machair sites is from the top of Beinn Hough.

Hough Machair Site

1 - 4	Radio Rooms
5	Power House for Masts
6 - 7	Iron Masts & Strainers
8	Power House for NAAFI & Cooling Tanks
9 - 10	Tall Wooden Radio Mast
11 - 14	Metal Radio Mast with Double Strainers
15	Steps
16	Radar Screen



Sites on the machair at the seaward side of Beinn Hough are better accessed from the track which leaves Balevullin township and heads over the base hill of Beinn Hough after passing Building No 8 as shown on the map below.

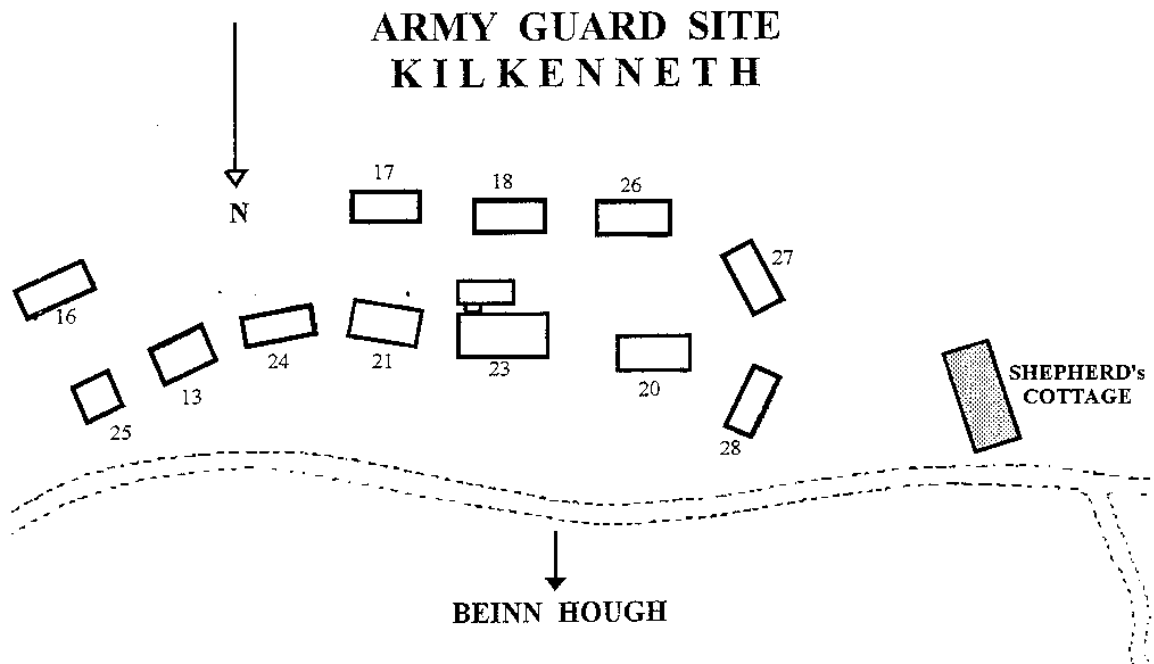


Army Guard Site Kilkenneth

No key to this site is presently available, but the foundations can still be clearly seen.



Travelling along the road from Balevullin heading towards Kilkenneth you pass a cattle grid at the foot of Beinn Mhurstat. Off on a track to the right, just after the cattle grid, you will see a blue and white sign bearing the words 'Private Road'. This road leads up Beinn Mhurstat. The Army Guard Site was located just beyond the blue and white sign.

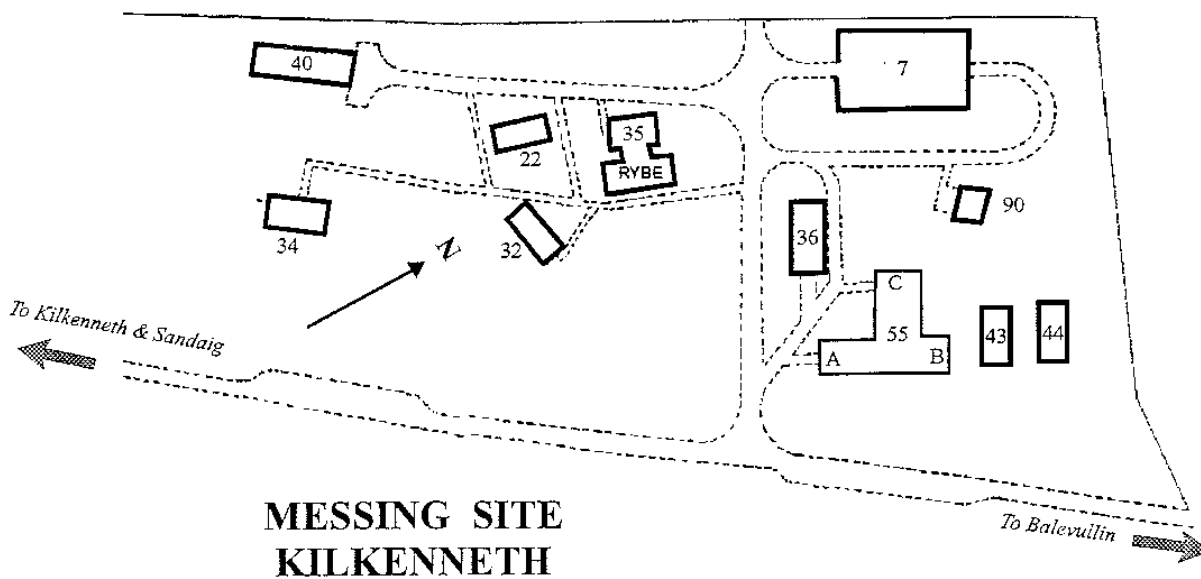


Messing Site Kilkenneth

- 7 Coal Store
- 22 Sleeping Huts
- 32 Sleeping Huts
- 34 Commanding Officer's Office
- 35 Cookhouse
- 36 Food Store
- 40 Sick Bay
- 43 Sergeant's Quarters (Nissen Huts)
- 44 Sergeant's Latrines
- 90 Boiler House (Water originally from a well)
- 55A Airmen's Mess
- 55B Sergeant's Mess
- 55C Cookhouse
- RYBE Officer's Mess



The foundations of this site can still be clearly seen from the road between Balevullin and Kilkenneth at Hough, on the right just after the Moss road junction.

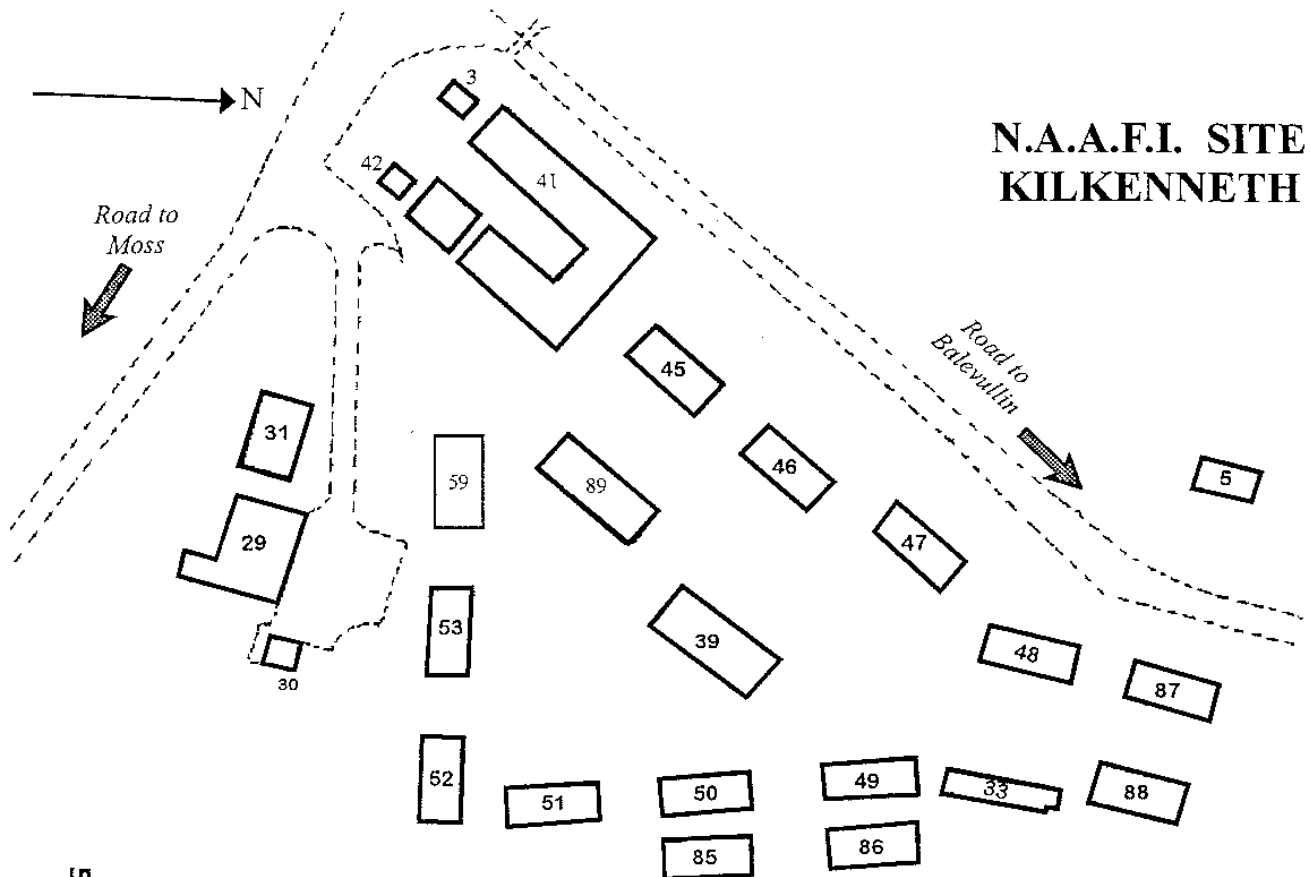


NAAFI Site Kilkenneth

- 3 Tin Guard House
- 5 Sewerage Pump House
- 29 Motor Transport
- 30 Fuel Store
- 31 Motor Transport
- 33 Accommodation
- 39 Air Raid Shelter
- 41 N.A.A.F.I.
- 42 Accommodation
- 45 K1, Recreation / Mess Area
- 46 K2, Recreation / Mess Area
- 47 K3, Recreation / Mess Area
- 48 - 89 Accommodations



Buildings from this NAAFI site are still standing at the junction of the Moss and Balevullin roads. Building No. 45 was a popular venue, locally known as the 'Booze Shop'.



An Iodhlann

Notes

An Iodhlann (pronounced an yull-an) is Gaelic for the stackyard, the enclosed area behind the house where the harvest is stored. We have chosen this name for our collection to reflect Tiree's poetical name *Tìran Forna*, the Land of the Barley. We have 2,000 text items, 160 old maps, 105 audiotapes and 1800 photographs about the island.

The Gaelic Partnership

Co-Roinn Ghàidhlig Thìridh 's Chòlta (the Tiree and Coll Gaelic Partnership) owns *An Iodhlann* and has researched and prepared this guidebook. The Partnership was set up in 1994 and is a Scottish Charity (No. SC022642).

Its aims are to encourage the use of the Gaelic language here and to develop an archive and museum of Tiree's history, archaeology, flora and fauna, geology and weather - in fact anything at all about the island and its people.

Operational Costs

Tiree has a rich and fascinating history, but if it's not properly recorded, much of it will be lost to future generations. The Tiree and Coll Gaelic Partnership are striving to capture the island's past through this project, but we do need your help.

It has cost us £30,000 a year for three years to set up and develop *An Iodhlann*. If you can help us financially, in any small way, we would be very grateful.

If you have any old photographs, books, letters or information pertaining to the island, which we can copy for the archive then return to you, please get in touch with us at this address.

An Iodhlann, Sgarinis
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Page 40 : Aerodrome Site R9 Section 'G'

Blag. Special Note

421 Gas Chamber : where gas masks drill was checked.

448 Link Trainer : an early form of aircraft simulator where pilots were trained.

460 Pigeon Loft : two men were detailed to look after pigeons in case the radio system was destroyed.

541 Broadcasting : this was the centre for the tannoy system each hut contained.

