

Former Air Raid Precautions Control Centre Roseburn Park Edinburgh Application for War Memorial Status

1. This document sets out a request to the War Memorials Trust to inscribe this Second World War era building as a War Memorial. No grant funding application is involved.
2. This request is submitted with the support of several local community organizations, led by the Friends of Roseburn Park SCIO¹. FoRP is a community-based charity which has for many years undertaken Park improvement works and community events, often collaborating closely with the City of Edinburgh Council, which owns and manages the Park and its buildings. The ARP Control Centre building – also known as the Armoury, which it never was – sits in the middle of the Park and is used as a store by FoRP and the local amateur cricket and rugby clubs, which are also represented on FoRP's board. All three local Councillors, which include the Lord Provost of Edinburgh Frank Ross, are FoRP members. The application also has the support of Murrayfield Community Council.
3. The building's bombproof construction and unprepossessing outward appearance, characterised by a flat concrete roof and blank harled brick walls, preserved it but evidently did not inspire research into its history. It never featured in any Planning Department assessments of the area, nor – until very recently - in Royal Commission (RCAHMS) or Historic Scotland, now Historic Environment Scotland (HES) documentation, despite their greater interest in recording and protecting wartime buildings, coinciding with increased public attention at significant WW2 anniversaries. While the local name identifies it as having had some military purpose, no-one seems to have established why it was built and located where it was. Almost all the diminishing number of local people who knew this, usually because they had worked there in the War, or had a relative who had done so, have either died or moved away. Last year the building's interior was accessed to try to answer these questions, which together with archival research, uncovered something of its exceptional historical significance. An application for statutory listing was then submitted to HES, assisted by Professors Geoffrey Stell, a former director of RCAHMS with long experience of wartime structures, and Niall Logan, organiser of Duping The Luftwaffe, the National Library of Scotland's 2018 exhibition on Edinburgh's Civil Defence history.
4. While this was being considered FoRP took steps to commission a well-researched and well-publicised artwork to commemorate the building's forgotten place in Edinburgh's Second World War Civil Defence history. It proposed to engage with the local community in creating a mural painting, and then complete it in time for the 80th anniversary of the start of the Second World War. FoRP has long aimed to ensure that the Park and its buildings' historical and cultural significance is widely understood and appropriately interpreted. Besides underlining the Park's central place in the community, this helps secure its legal status as an inalienable Common Good property, by adding to an already powerful case for inclusion in the long list of public parks protected by Fields In Trust status. The Park is a much-used local amenity, but it also forms part of the Water of Leith Walkway and a

network of cycleways, hugely popular regional recreational and wildlife resources. The artwork would therefore be seen by many thousands of people on a regular basis. Funding from the City Council's Community Arts programme was obtained after winning a competition for groups seeking to create murals in their areas. Council policy encourages appropriate high-quality mural artworks in public places, and FoRP has experience of undertaking them: their 2011 mural was led by the same artist and is included in Historic Scotland's national register of public mural art. After consents were obtained the artist led a workshop with local people to decide the design, which was then carried out with more community participation, including schoolchildren.ⁱⁱ The Lord Provost duly unveiled the completed mural in September 2019, an event widely publicised in the local press.ⁱⁱⁱ Undertaken with Historic Scotland's approval, the mural does not affect original fabric. By carrying out a measured survey and consulting record photographs it has been possible to draw up a reconstruction of the building's wartime appearance. Much of it still remains, especially internally: despite their bricked-up openings, and missing anti-blast shutters, for example, its original Crittal windows are still in place, as is the hand painted lettering naming the original room doors, discernible beneath later coats.

5. Now designated a Grade B listed building, equivalent to English Heritage's Grade II^{iv} it is one of the best-documented and least-altered WW2 Civil Defence buildings left in Scotland, and the only one of its type still standing. In 1941 Edinburgh built five similar ARP control centres in its Parks – one for each Police sub-division - and so the surviving Roseburn building is also representative of those buildings, and, more widely, of the City's enormous Civil Defence effort. All were designed by the office of esteemed City Architect Ebenezer Macrae, and were based on national guidelines, interpreted to suit local conditions. To avoid the need for conventional camouflage, the Roseburn building was effectively hidden from the Luftwaffe under the Park's stately central tree avenue, much of which still exists, a local strategy commemorated in the separate "tree shadows" mural on the building's south gable. Perhaps the earlier red-tiled Pavilion next door also contributed, as it could have distracted a pilot's eye.

6. The historical significance of the Roseburn ARP centre is greatly enhanced by being featured in a 1942 Government training/propaganda film, *The Message Must Get Through*, accessible online via the National Library of Scotland's Moving Image website.^v This provides not just a record of how it was used, but also of the civilian volunteers, both men and women, who staffed it. A well-detailed documentary record also exists in Edinburgh City Archives, which both provides the wider context, and chronicles many issues – roof leaks and bedding problems for example – and key events in its history, and those of the other centres. It also lists some of the young people who became cycle messengers, which included many girls as well as boys, though girl messengers do not appear in any newsreel film of the period. Those at the top of Edinburgh's multi-faceted Civil Defence organization included Sir William Darling, its celebrated wartime Lord Provost (1941-44) and Chief Air Raid Warden (1939-41); and Commandant of the Messenger Service, Scout leader and artist Tom Curr, who first suggested involving Scouts and Boys Brigade members as bicycle messengers. His painting, now in the Imperial War Museum, provides the best-known image of an ARP messenger. It was used on the City's letters - each one signed by Darling - thanking messengers when they left, usually to join the armed services. The image has also been incorporated into the Friends' mural.

7. The building by itself is a remarkable survival. With its associated records, it provides a uniquely visible testament to the lives, work and sacrifice of local Civil Defence personnel, several of whom died or were injured helping to defend the civilian population of the City of Edinburgh and the Lothians from aerial attack. Understanding its history also brought the realization that it could become a War Memorial. It presents an opportunity for a tangible and emblematic local memorial to the civilians who volunteered to join the area's Civil Defence organizations, and to the local civilian casualties of that war. This is of course one of the many roles of the current memorial to them, the Scottish National War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle (WM reference 2002) which houses the roll containing the names of all Scottish civilian casualties. It is however only one part of its more widely known purpose as the principal military memorial of the country. There is already one local War Memorial dedicated to Civil Defence personnel in Scotland, the Clydebank Blitz Memorial (WM reference 44687), which comprises a memorial garden in Graham Avenue Clydebank. There are however none in the east or south east of Scotland, nor in any other part of Scotland. In the rest of the UK, there are four: Belfast Civil Defence Memorial at Belfast City Hall, reference WMO/245686; the commemorative window at St Mary Aldermary Church in the City of London, reference WM 17932; the commemorative window at Bristol Cathedral to Bristol Civil Defence (Wardens and Police), ref WMO 249242; and the Civil Defence Memorial Garden at Lichfield, reference WM 51070.

8. South-East Scotland endured many bombing raids especially in the early part of the War, beginning with the Luftwaffe's first mainland attack at the Forth Bridge on 16th October 1939. Almost 300 local civilians were subsequently killed or injured by enemy action.^{vi} One of these events is recorded in the following extract from the Scotsman newspaper of April 9th, 1941 (see Fig 9). There are of course many others.

9. The Park itself had many wartime roles, with much of its area appropriated for trench shelters and food production. (The collapse of one of the trench shelters killed or injured a number of local children.) It also became a venue for the City's wartime 'Holidays At Home' scheme, when large numbers - 6000 people on one occasion - were entertained here, enjoying picnics and al fresco dances. Mothballed after the War, the ARP Control Centre was retained in reserve for several years, and in 1952 was included in a review of the City's civilian nuclear defence capacity during the Cold War, before becoming a Parks Department store.

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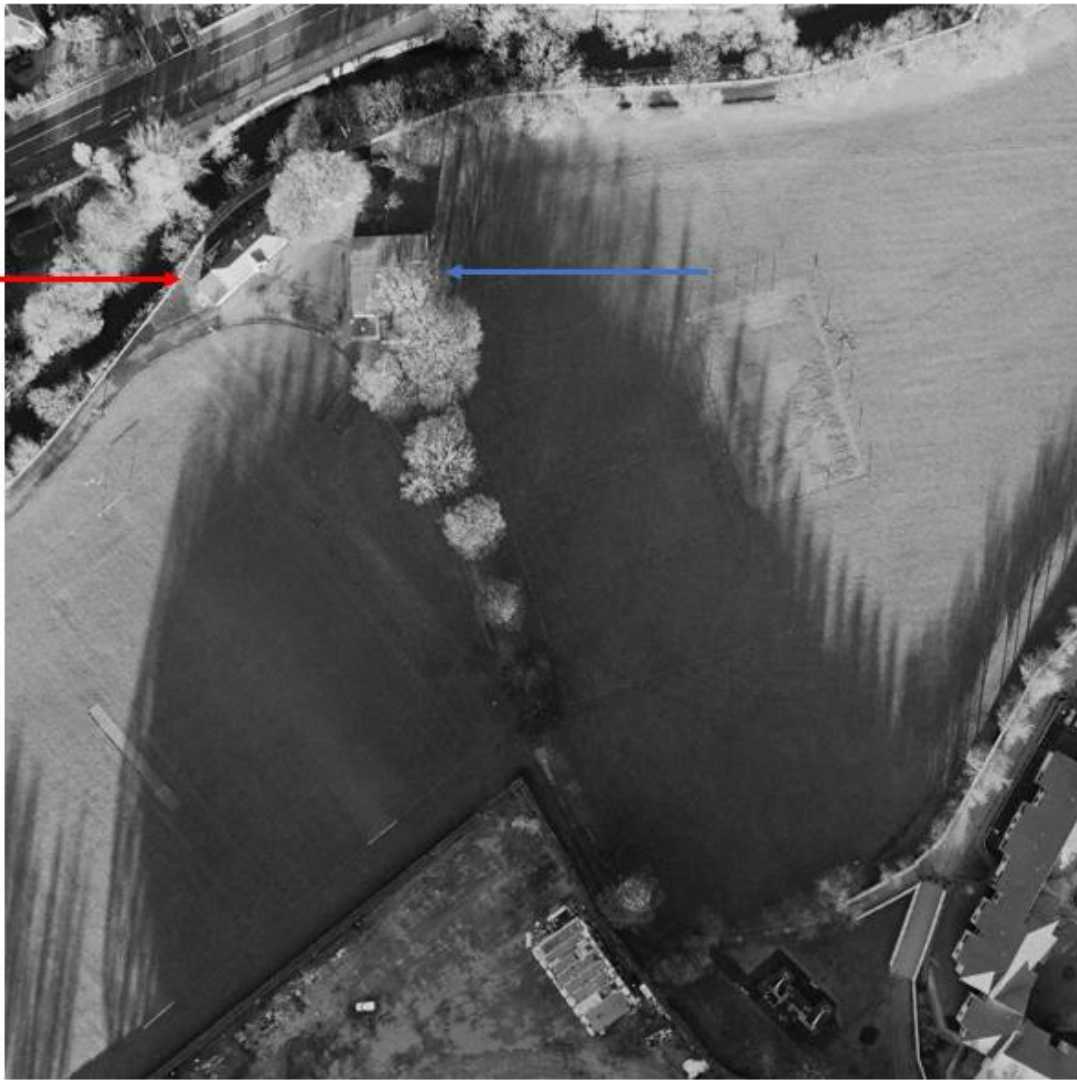


Fig 1. December 1975 Aerial View (from Scotland's Places website)

Pavilion at red arrow; former ARP HQ building at blue arrow; with Stadium's winter afternoon shadow.



Fig. 2 Former ARP Control Centre with its 2011 North Wall Mural (Artist Kieran Gorman of Zap Graffiti) and nearby 1935 Pavilion



Fig 3. Thomas Curr: 'ARP Messenger' painting in Imperial War Museum ref Art.IWM ART 15864

ARP BUILDING.
MURAL DESIGN.

COLOUR SCHEME: SHADES OF GREEN

ELEMENTS:

BACKGROUND: MAP TO RESEMBLE SEARCH LIGHTS

EDINBURGH / ROSBURN SKYLINE

CHARACTERS

TEXT: WILL BE MORE CLEAR AND ALLOW ALL IN BACKGROUND TO BE VIEWED



Fig 4 : The Message Must Get Through, artist's proof by Kieran Gorman August 2019



Figs 5 and 6 : Former ARP Control Centre's West Wall with 'The Message Must Get Through' Mural (Artist Kieran Gorman of Zap Graffiti) completed September 2019



Fig 7: South Wall with 'Tree Shadows' mural completed September 2019. The corrugated profile haunching shows where its lean-to bicycle shed stood, added 1943.

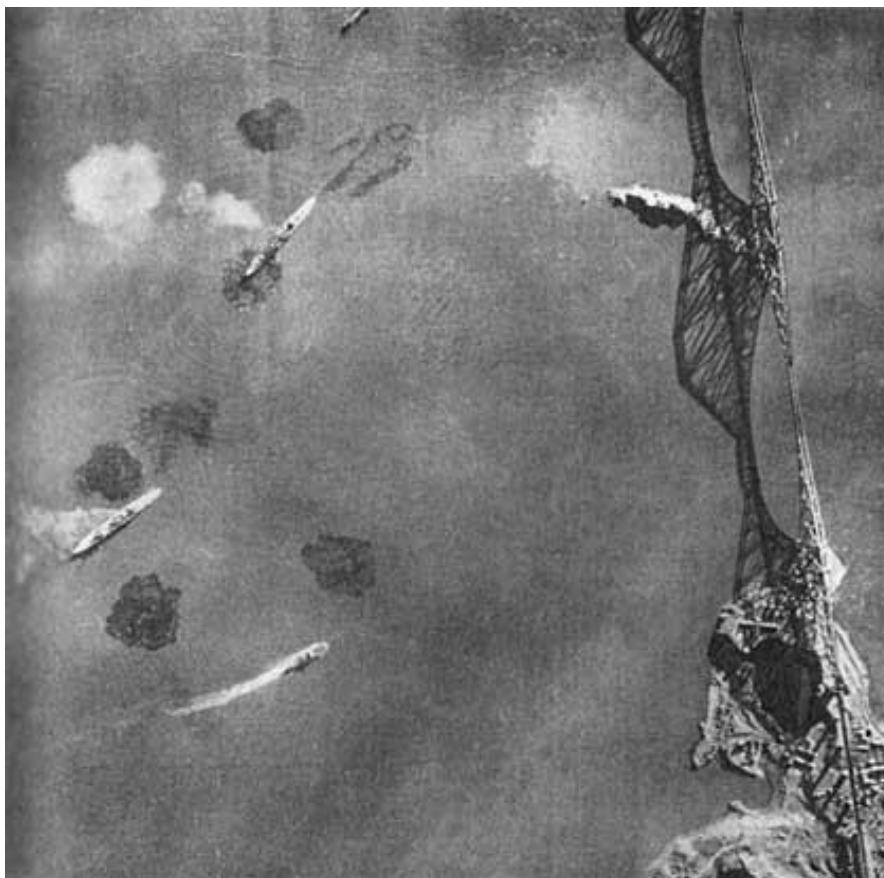


Fig 8 Aerial view Forth Bridge Raid 16 October 1939



Fig 9: Scotsman newspaper April 9th, 1941 p 6, censored to omit exact locations. 17-years-old Ernest Smith is named as a casualty.

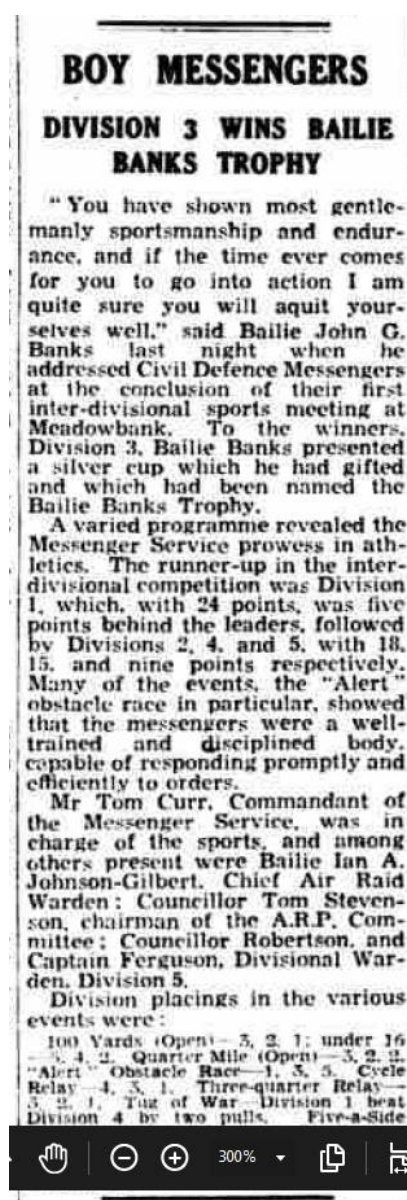


Fig 10: Edinburgh Evening News article, 1940. Most messengers were aged between 15 to 18, and used their own bicycles.

Endnotes/links

ⁱ <http://www.friendsofroseburnpark.org.uk>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.friendsofroseburnpark.org.uk/2019/04/13/armoury-mural>

ⁱⁱⁱ Edinburgh Evening News, article dated 31st August 2019; <https://theedinburghreporter.co.uk/2019/09/new-mural-to-be-unveiled-in-roseburn-today/>

^{iv} <http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB52496>

^v https://movingimage.nls.uk/film.cfm?fid=1396&search_term=Roseburn

^{vi} Taylor, L., Luftwaffe over Scotland, Caithness 2010, p. 125.