

Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society



Fall 2020

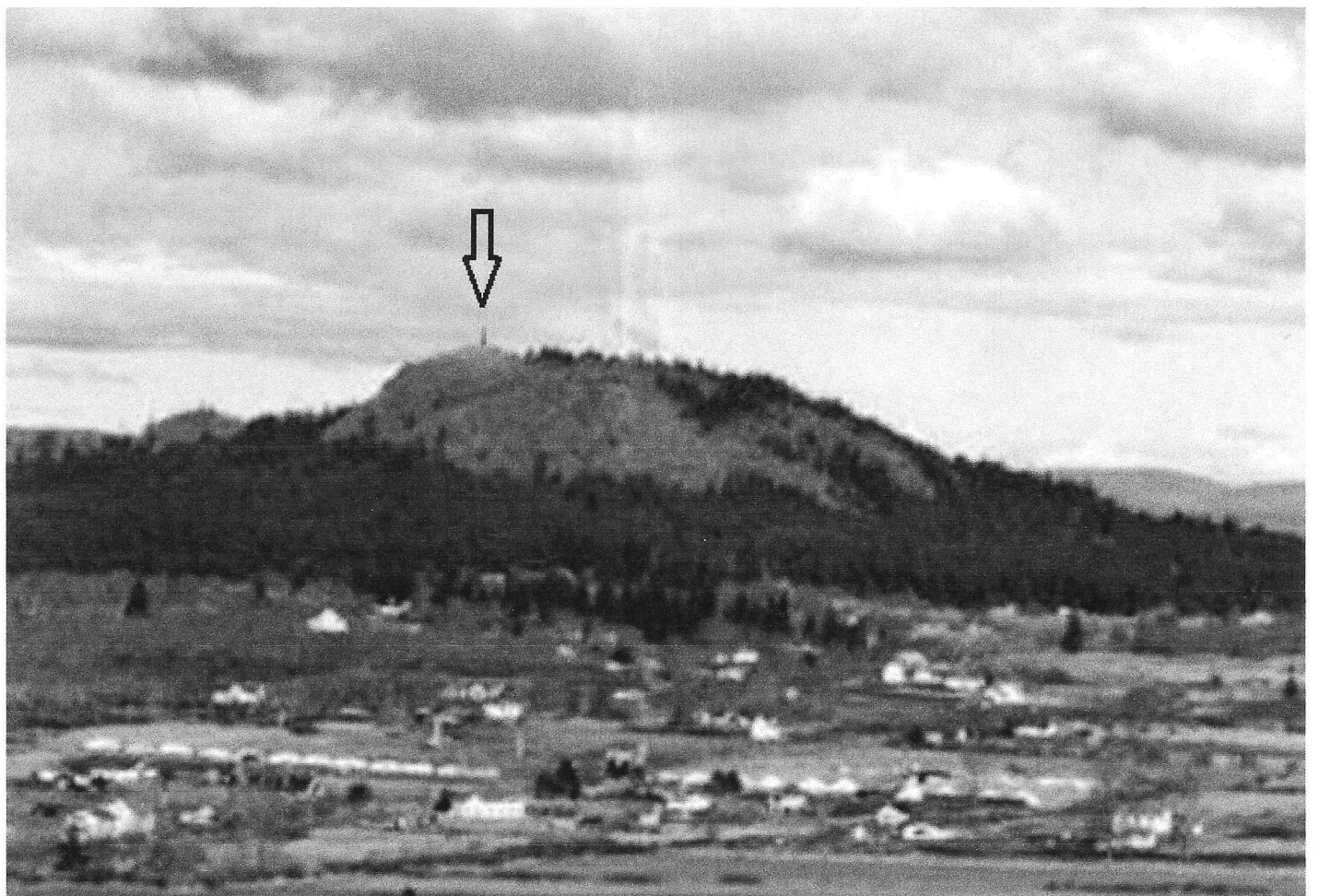
Rendition of WWII Secret Military Radio Direction Finding Silo on Mt Douglas

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Secret WWII Military Base at Mt Douglas Summit

Back in 2015 we visited both the Victoria and Saanich archives looking for any historical information. There was mention of a Huff-Duff military site at the Mt Douglas summit during WWII which was featured in a Fall 2015 newsletter article (<https://mountdouglaspark.ca/web/Newsletters/2015-Fall.pdf>). Briefly, Huff-Duff is RCAF slang for a high frequency (Huff) direction finding (Duff) radio system. Several long time residents remembered a secret site at the summit and described it as a "silo" shaped building. This all seemed plausible, especially when internet searches turned up similar looking Huff-Duff submarine tracking sites in England, so called "Y-stations" connected to Bletchley Park. A commonality was the dimensions of the octagon foundation on Mt Douglas and an identical concrete octagon at Point No Point.



*WWII photo of Mt Douglas showing radio direction finding silo at summit.
BC Archive photo dated 1944 was taken from Mt. Tolmie.*

Despite the newsletter article and many other efforts, no additional information came forward until this year when contact was made with WWII radio historian Jerry Proc (http://jproc.ca/ve3fab/mount_douglas.html) in Ontario who also brought in Tom Brent, another radio historian from Texada Island and a new story unfolded.

Having never heard of such installations in B.C., they were initially skeptical until a photo from the BC archives taken from Mt Tolmie clearly showed a silo on the Mt Douglas summit.

Shortly after, an old article was found in the Sooke News Mirror that showed a photo of a similar silo at Point No Point. Although the silo is no longer there, the concrete base remains and has identical shape and measurements as the Mt Douglas octagon.

Then a postcard was found showing the same Point No Point silo from a different perspective and within days another photo of the Mt Douglas silo, this time taken from Cedar Hill Road appeared. We knew we were on to something, but didn't know the exact



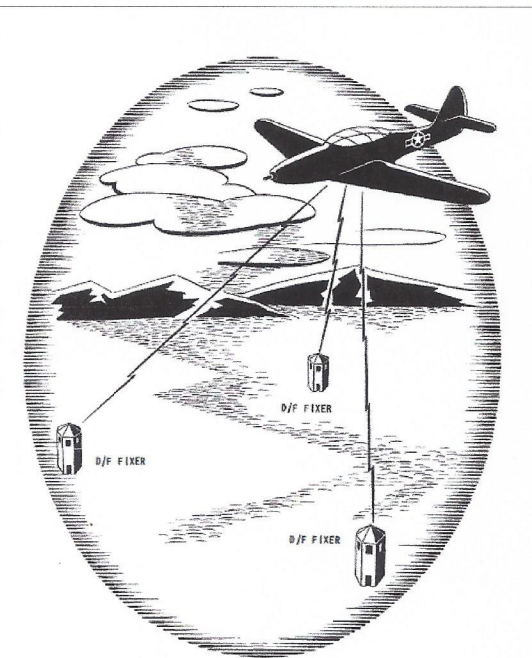
Radio Direction Finding Silo at Point No Point dated 1955, Sooke News Mirror

purpose until Tom Brent found a WWII VHF Fighter Control Equipment Handbook. This turned out to be a gold mine of information!

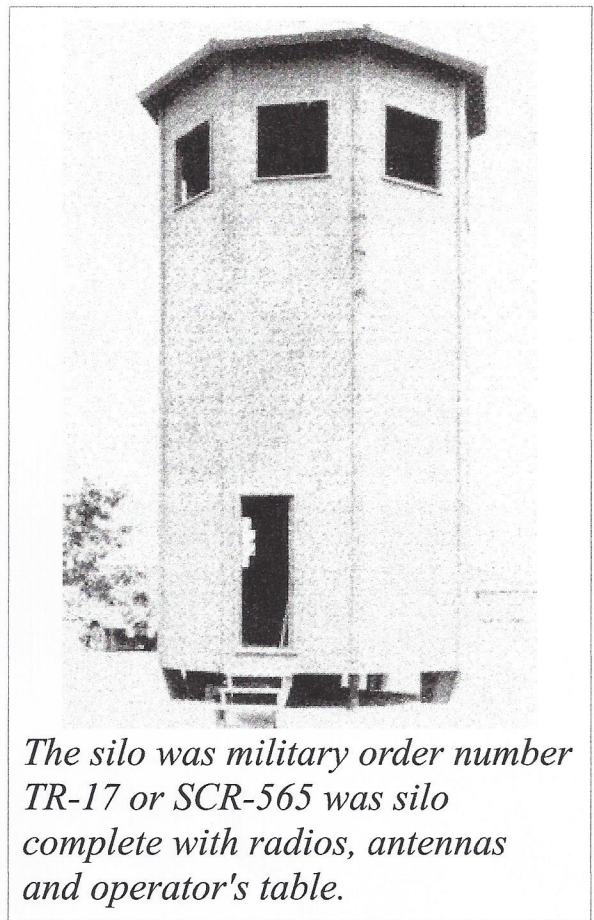
First, it described the silo, order number TR-17, with base dimensions identical to our octagon base! And order number SCR-565 gave you the silo with all the necessary radios, antennas, and even the operator desk.

Elsewhere in the manual, the purpose of the Mt Douglas site and the Point No Point site was described. Both sites were called "fixer D/F sites". They would determine a bearing to fighter planes called a "fix".

This fix would be relayed to a Filter Room that would triangulate the different fixes and relay this to the plane (remember, this is before gps!).



Several D/F Fixer stations would obtain a radio bearing (fix) to a plane. These fixes would be triangulated at a Filter Room and the resulting position sent to the plane. Remember no gps during WWII!



The silo was military order number TR-17 or SCR-565 was silo complete with radios, antennas and operator's table.

Doug Rollins, the librarian/historian at the BC Aviation Museum wrote about the Filter Room location in his article "Victoria's Secret" (http://jproc.ca/ve3fab/mount_douglas_victorias_secret.pdf). It turned out, one of the most strategically important Canadian defensive facilities of WWII, the No. 2 Filter Room for Western Air Command was in the basement of the Belmont House, right across the street from the Empress Hotel!

Also in the Fighter Control Handbook was an excellent overview of how the stations worked as a unit. We found two Fixer D/F stations and the Filter Room (Fighter Control Area Operations Center).

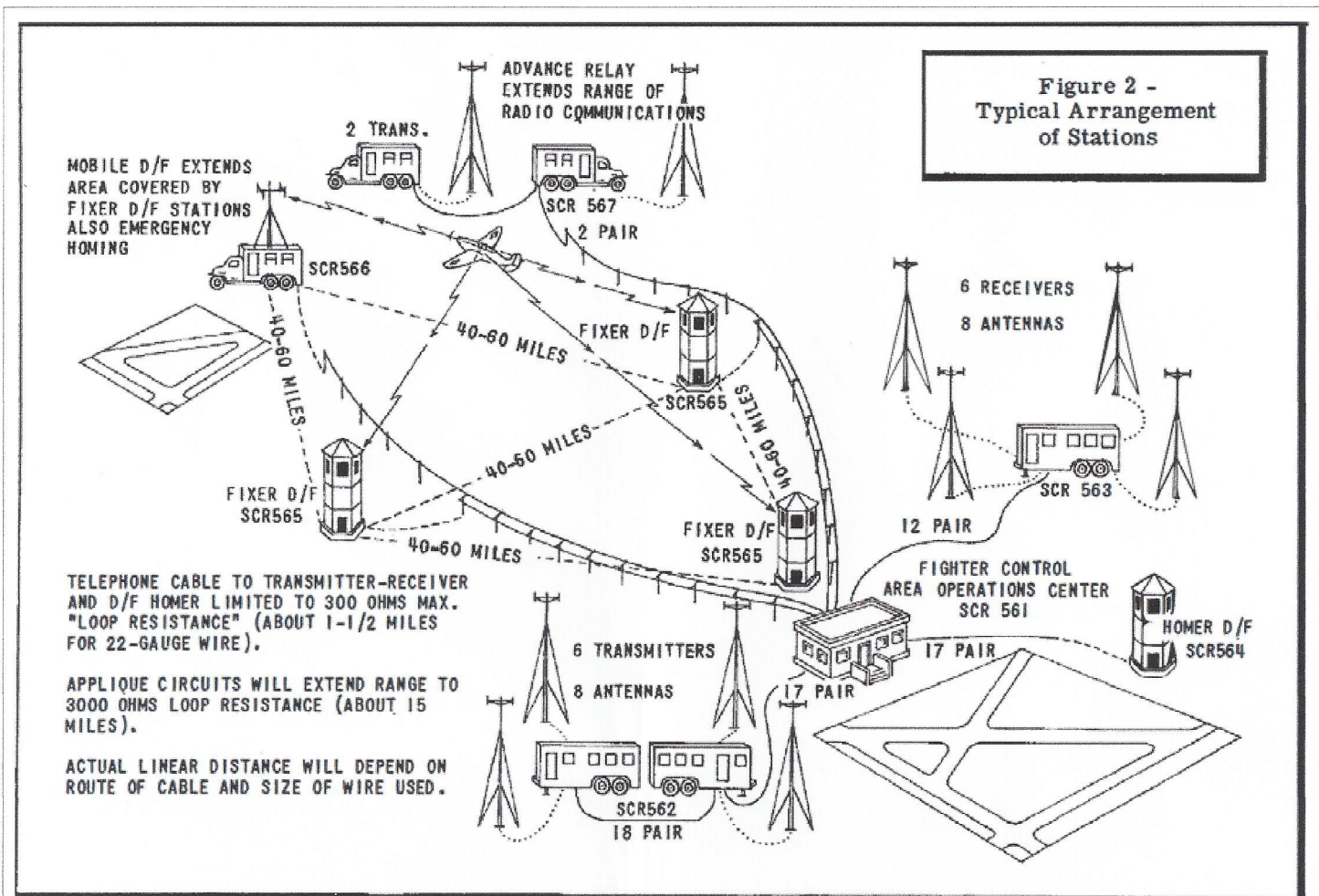


Figure 2 - Typical Arrangement of Stations

The Fixer stations and Fighter Control Centre (Filter Room at Belmont House) worked as a unit to provide location information for the planes, necessary at night or in fog years before gps.

Next time you are at the summit, notice the octagon concrete base of our Fixer station. The silo was dismantled shortly after the war. In 1960, Victoria, with a donation from Rotary, constructed the wall and seating on top of the military base. (Mt Douglas Park was a Victoria park until 1990.)

It's very likely there were additional Fixer stations, but where?

Hazard Trees

What is a Hazard Tree? The saying "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" comes to mind. If that same tree falls in a lonely forest, surrounded only by forest, was it a hazard tree? The answer to this is usually no. To be defined as a hazard tree, it needs to have the potential to cause harm to a target such as a

of the Park, we all need to think about the values within the Park, what needs to be preserved and what we each need to do to preserve it for generations to come. It could be as simple as *Don't take anything but photos, don't leave anything but footprints on official trails.*

Halloween Pumpkins



Many pumpkins were smashed this year, leaving candle votives to litter the Park.



The number of pumpkins is increasing

Cartridges from WWII



Inscription:
DAC 1943 QIV

Blank Proof Centre-Fire Cartridge

Manufactured 1943
DAC: Dominion Arsenal Co.
Q: proof round
Mark IV .303 caliber

These were found on Mt Douglas summit area last year. Evidently these are not an uncommon find. Perhaps some target practice by the WWII radio site operators?