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I'm Susan Hamilton. I work in the Survey and Recording section at RCAHMS, and am responsible for a number of data-led projects, which include exciting work sharing our database with a number of partners, for example the National Trust for Scotland, the Orkney Council Archaeology Service and the Garden History Society in Scotland.



I've chosen the [Island of Inchkeith](#), in the Firth of Forth. Located in a strategic defensive position in the middle of the Firth, it helped protect the important Port of Leith and the City of Edinburgh as well as the sheltered anchorage provided by the Forth. As a result, it is covered in defensive structures, some of which date from the [16th century](#).

Today, some of the most visible remains are the concrete and brick shells of the [First and Second World War defences](#). I've



been on fieldwork on Inchkeith and was struck by the evocative nature of the island. It has been more or less uninhabited since the end of the Second World War, and in some parts it is hard to believe it is almost 70 years since up to 1000 service personnel were stationed here. In a number of the buildings, wooden rifle racks and shelves for helmets survive by the entrances. Observation posts retain painted regimental badges on the walls and small tables where maps and plans (or the daily rotas) may have been laid out.



For me, what is interesting about places like Inchkeith is that they demonstrate the massive changes that the infrastructure of the Second World War imposed on the Scottish landscape. Although this island fortress may be an extreme example, it reflects the very real fear of invasion and the threat of aerial attack under which people lived. Sometimes it seems easy to present a British view of the conflict coloured by ‘Dads’ Army’ and ‘Boys Own adventures’. As we enter a period when there will be fewer and fewer survivors telling their stories, we need places like Inchkeith to remind us of the difficulties and folly of war.