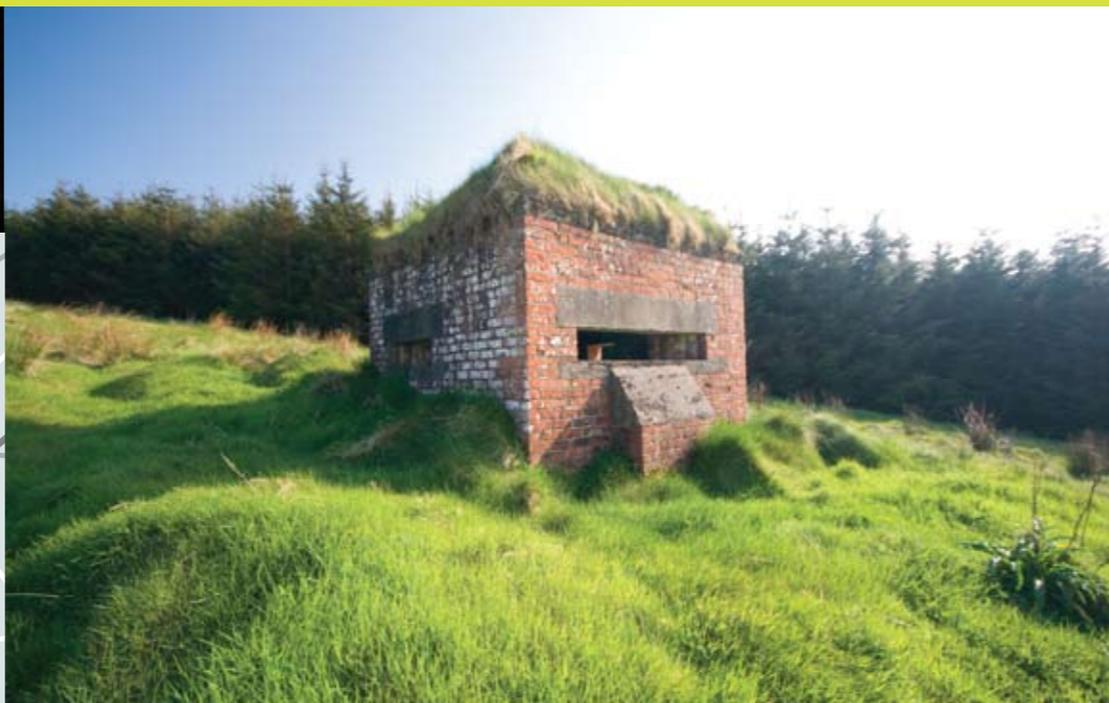




# World War II



## Limavady Airfield, Aghanloo



**PERIOD**  
C20th

**TOWNLAND**  
Artikelly

**ACCESS**  
Private, permission must be gained from landowner

The impact of World War II on the Limavady area is still in evidence in the local landscape today.



Large numbers of American, Canadian and British forces were stationed at airfields at Limavady and Ballykelly to defend the north coast from German U boats. Army forces received pre-invasion training on Magilligan Strand in preparation for D-Day.

Some of the pill boxes built along the strand can still be seen. There were also forces stationed at Dungiven, who set up firing ranges in the Benedy Glen. Nissen huts were built for local military personnel at Roe Valley Hospital, formerly Limavady Workhouse, some of which are still standing.



Courtesy HMSO Belfast

Benbradagh was dotted with aials for a substantial US communications base, which remained part of a hotline between America and Russia during the Cold War. The US army constructed the road up the side of the mountain and some people say they built an underground nuclear bunker at its top.

Ballykelly Airfield, Courtesy of Ernie Cromie, Ulster Aviation Society



Limavady Airfield opened on 1st December 1940. Three runways were constructed, but there were no hangars, so aircraft had to be parked and serviced in the open. For administrative and residential purposes, a number of nearby premises were requisitioned, including Gorteen House, Drenagh House and Greystones Hall. Station Head Quarters was Red Pillar House on Main Street.

The airfield acted as an important deterrent to German U-boats during the Battle of the Atlantic. It was used by Lockheed Hudson and Hurricane fighter planes, as well as Blenheim Bombers and Whitley Bombers equipped with the new top secret Air to Surface Vessel Mark II radar. In the first year, aircraft operating from Limavady accumulated a record 25,591 hours on patrol.

By 1942 Coastal Command training facilities had been established at Limavady. High ground on three sides of the airfield, flights over water in bad weather and inexperienced trainee crews resulted in a high accident rate. Drumachose Parish and RC graveyards contain many OTU personnel and parts of wreckage could still be found on the slopes of Benevenagh years after the war. Limavady Airfield closed in 1945, when the Coastal Command Anti U-boat Devices School was disbanded.

The dome used for training flight bombers and gunners still survives and is unique in Northern Ireland, with only 3 or 4 surviving in the UK as a whole. Some of the hangars, the control tower and a fortified underground Battle Headquarters also survive.