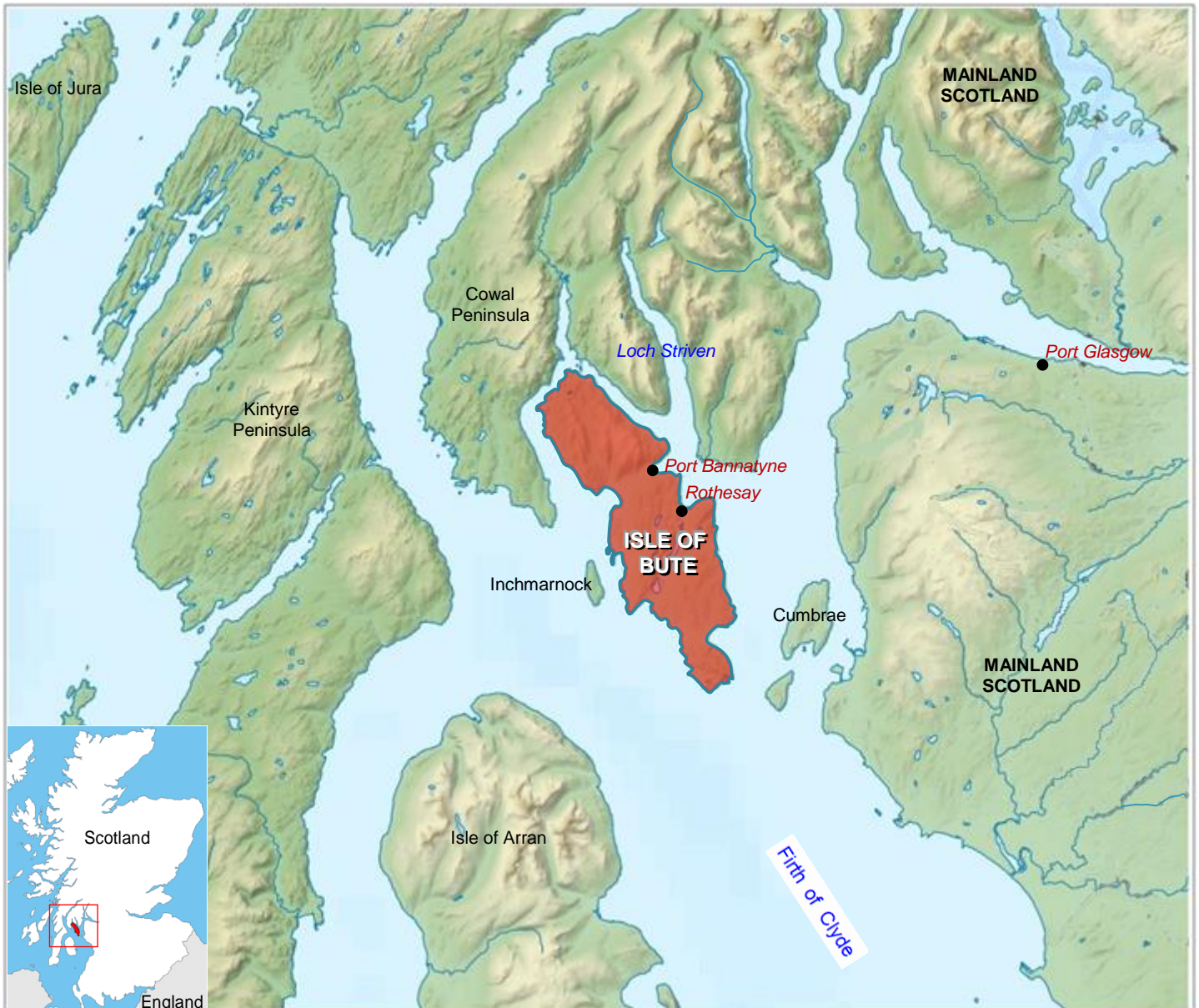


ISLE OF BUTE IN THE CONTEXT OF SCOTLAND



The ISLE OF BUTE is a small island in the Firth of Clyde on the west coast of Scotland, approximately 20 miles from Glasgow as the crow flies. There cannot be many parts of Britain, especially on a geographical scale of only 15 miles long and 5 miles across at its widest, that can claim to have witnessed greater and more varied World War II military involvement than this tiny island, strategically snuggled amongst neighbouring islands, lochs, and mainland peninsulas in the Western waters of the Clyde Estuary. It was the Island's insular character, and its protected and secluded location, that combined to make for a perfect combination of factors favouring Bute's selection for its key strategic role in protecting the Western Approaches, and thereby become a key element in Britain's Atlantic naval operations.

Bute's two main towns are *Rothesay* and *Port Bannatyne*, and both played crucial roles during the war.

Rothesay Bay became the home-base of *HMS Cyclops* which was the depot ship for the 7th Submarine Flotilla. "Almost like a mother-hen she sat with the submarines nestled around her". It also accommodated allied submariners who had escaped from Poland, Holland and Norway. 95% of all British submariners trained here. The town witnessed a huge influx of military and support personnel which put great strain on social services.

Port Bannatyne was a frantically busy place during the war. The *Liverpool & Glasgow Salvage Co.*, which moved there in 1940, was responsible for all marine casualties in the entire Western Approaches. Equally significant, and following the development of the midget submarines (X-Craft), the luxury 88-bedroomed *Kyles Hydro Hotel* overlooking the port, was requisitioned by the Admiralty in 1942 to become the headquarters of the 12th Submarine Flotilla. It was from this location, known as *HMS Varbel*, that the top-secret deployment of X-Craft midget submarines was masterminded, including the famous and audacious attack on the German battleship, *Tirpitz*. There was also a small de-gaussing range (neutralising the magnetism of submarines) located in Port Bannatyne.

For a full account of the Isle of Bute's involvement during World War II click on the link below:

www.bute-at-war.org