

Dry Tree in Chiaroscuro:

The fractured archive of a Second World War radar station

Submitted by Benjamin David Oldcorn, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Geography in August 2010.

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Abstract

The word 'chiaroscuro' is defined as 'the treatment of light and shade in a work of art' (Oxford English Dictionary). It is employed in this context to highlight the light and shadow that characterises the former radar station RAF Dry Tree at Goonhilly, Cornwall. More generally it is also employed to demonstrate the tensions that manifest themselves at Dry Tree and similar sites. The material remains of the recent past are becoming the focus for official and unofficial heritage producers and consumers alike. How we respond to and manage these sites is becoming increasingly important. Through the use of oral histories, traditional typology and experiential investigation this thesis will endeavour to examine one site – RAF Dry Tree - and begin to suggest ways in which we might approach and manage such sites in the future, both as researchers and heritage practitioners.

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Abbreviations

ACH	-	Advance Chain Home
AMRE	-	Air Ministry Research Establishment
BT	-	British Telecom
CCC	-	Cornwall County Council
CH	-	Chain Home
CHL	-	Chain Home Low
GPO	-	General Post Office
HES	-	Historic Environment Service
ICH	-	Intermediate Chain Home
PBX	-	Private Branch Exchange
RAF	-	Royal Air Force
RDF	-	Radio Direction Finding
Rx	-	Receiver
TRE	-	Telecommunications Research Establishment
Tx	-	Transmitter
WAAF	-	Women's Auxiliary Air Force
WAAFA	-	Women's Auxiliary Air Force Association

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

(Ozymandias, Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1818)



Ordnance Survey map indicating the location of the research site – adjacent to the southwest border of the Goonhilly Satellite Earth Station. Detailed maps, site plans and aerial photographs can be found in Chapter 5.

1: Introduction

This thesis examines the emerging heritage of the recent past; this is achieved through exploring the tensions that are implicit in the concept of heritage, as it is currently constituted¹. The first tension examined emerges in the relationship between typology and phenomenology: that is to say the way in which one approaches a heritage site. The overarching principle employed by the heritage industry today is that of typology, which seeks to identify the *type* of building and understand it within the context of a site. It is suggested here that this approach is inadequate but necessary when approaching the difficult (both aesthetically and typologically) buildings and sites of the twentieth century. An experiential approach is necessary, to engage with the site(s) on a personal and subjective level. These two approaches, taken together, will generate more comprehensive understandings of place. By transcending typology one can move towards a richer and more vivid experience.

This thesis may be considered as an exploration of the military heritage of the supermodernity. The buildings and landscapes created during this time course with conflict and tensions: often built in haste out of a variety of materials – some temporary and constructed from timber, others hulking poured or cast concrete forms – they leave a mysterious footprint on the ground. Built to last ‘for the duration’ sites were often abandoned when they had ceased to be of use, allowing nature to begin the slow process of reclamation (Figure 1). It is these landscapes and buildings that hover somewhere in the nether regions between past and present, visible and lost, preserved or decaying that we will begin to evaluate as a new heritage.

The second tension examined by this thesis is the friction that exists between preservation and decay. Coupled with an experiential approach, the decay of a site becomes integral; approaching a preserved, pristine heritage site generates radically different responses than those generated by the approach to abandoned ruins. The National Trust’s approach to Orford Ness is utilised to exemplify this

¹ By official heritage bodies – the National Trust, English Heritage etc

point. The question of preservation or decay is one that must be examined in order to manage these sites in the future.

The final tension to be examined is that of the production and consumption of 20th century heritage sites. Broadly this takes place on two levels: official and unofficial. Official consumption is managed and mediated, the experience carefully controlled, whereas unofficial heritages are produced and consumed on a personal level through exploration and back room historians. There is a fascination with these once secret twentieth century structures that can be revealed by a simple Internet search: the number of websites playing host to urban explorers and home-spun historians grows on a daily basis. The oldest and most established of these organisations is Subterranea Britannica² and they typify this unofficial production and consumption of military heritage.

These three tensions affect the way in which we experience spaces of twentieth century military heritage, and unmediated spaces of the past. This becomes increasingly apparent when we begin to examine sites from near history as heritage; indeed the tensions become more pronounced the closer to the present day we get. The scope of this thesis is focused on the latter part of the twentieth century and the military ruins and landscapes that it created; a period of time identified by Gonzales-Ruibal as the *supermodernity*³. It is characterised by the revolution of speed, new modes of communication, transportation and new spatial relations. Indeed,

‘The period that started with World War I, here identified as ‘supermodernity’, has been characterised by increasing devastation of both humans and things and the proliferation of archaeological sites, such as battlefields, industrial ruins, mass graves and concentration camps. The mission of a critical geography of this period is not only telling alternative stories but also unveiling what the supermodern power machine does not want to be shown’⁴

² <http://www.subbrit.org.uk>

³ González-Ruibal *Time to Destroy: an Archaeology of Supermodernity* Current Anthropology 49 Number 2 (2008) 247-279:1

⁴ González-Ruibal 2008 *Time to Destroy*: 1

Strange and Walley⁵ use Yorkshire as a case study to examine Cold War heritage, and this regional approach will be adopted in this thesis, examining Cornwall as a militarised landscape. Specifically, Goonhilly Downs on the Lizard with the Second World War radar station RAF Dry Tree at its centre. The fieldwork site is drawn from the very middle of the *supermodernity*: RAF Dry Tree, which is adjacent to the BT Satellite Earth Station on Goonhilly Downs, Cornwall. The site has been a nexus of human activity for the last five thousand years, climaxing in 1940 when the Air Ministry began the construction of a radar station. Dry Tree was operational between 1940-45 and in the post-war years remained in a mothballed condition. During this time the site was both home and workplace to hundreds of people. Closed and partially demolished in the early 1950s, half of the site was overwritten by the Telstar Project. Following this the buildings of Dry Tree have remained untouched, slumbering in the heath. It is therefore an ideal site on which to explore the tensions of a contemporary heritage. A deeper historical and landscape context of the site can be found in the following sections. It is important at this point to highlight the contingent nature of the research and the incomplete nature of the history of the site. The approaches utilised in this thesis are only a handful of possibilities among many and while every effort has been made to be as accurate as possible the research remains subjective.

The deeply embedded militarised nature of the landscape has evolved and is continuing to evolve in both a local and international context. Certainly the sites 'on the ground' are local and their relationship with place is key to oral history, but in a wider sense the research site played an international role.

Each of the tensions outlined above have been examined and played out at the research site. By beginning in a traditional heritage mode and evaluating the typology of the site, this provided a foundation on which the rest of the research could be built. On top of this, I have superimposed an experiential approach, embedding myself both in the site and in the research. Once the buildings were identified, it was possible to begin to comprehend the processes at work; these are processes of destruction, decay, neglect and preservation. A fragment of memory

⁵ Strange I, Walley, E *Cold War Heritage and the Conservation of Military Remains in Yorkshire* International Journal of Heritage Studies 13 Number 2 (2007) 154-169

has returned to the site: no longer shells and walls and ruins, but once generator blocks and now, perhaps - blast walls again. The buildings were identified through a typological approach, but what of the people who built them, worked in them and lived within their walls? In order for the site to become more than just bricks and mortar, for us to appreciate this near history, this tangibly close heritage, people must tell their stories. In this thesis the site will be informed by the oral histories of people that remember the site, either through working there or as a local other, looking into the site from the outside.

The loss of both institutional memory and built form has rendered RAF Dry Tree ruinous. A typological approach identified a number of buildings, while others remained nameless; the phenomenology of the site, the experience of visiting and the emotional stirrings it inspired began to make a typology (no matter how incomplete) almost redundant. Comprehending and identifying the built form however, was essential to beginning to understand the site as a whole and its function: typology provided the context within which an experiential approach could flourish.

It was during the research for this thesis that I was invited to join the Dry Tree Building Identification Project, in partnership with Natural England and Elizabeth Haven. We were charged with identifying the buildings on site and building up a gazetteer to aid in the future interpretation of RAF Dry Tree. Consulting a fractured archive made this a challenging but vital aspect to research on the site.

The tension of production and consumption also developed in an interesting way during the research; I had approached Dry Tree in an unofficial capacity prior to undertaking the project, primarily as a photographer making a study of the decaying buildings. I then became a semi-official agent, approaching the site in a legitimate and official way, compiling a typology of buildings. Finally, I became fully entrenched in an official capacity, collaborating with the site managers, Natural England, to complete a report on the site and to provide interpretative material. This evolution of my relationship to the site, from unofficial user to agent of the heritage industry will be evaluated in the research and its effect on the project considered.

In 2007 Strange and Walley called for more sensitive and nuanced tools with which to pursue, interpret and manage heritage sites from the twentieth century⁶. This thesis will answer their demand. By approaching the site in a traditional, typological way we can establish a foundation reasonable certainty, created from the ruined remains of the archive. Onto this foundation we can build our more sensitive and nuanced tools; these are an experiential approach and oral histories. These three approaches together coalesce to form a comprehensive toolset with which we can approach other sites from the supermodernity. It is not suggested that these tools will form a generic approach for the heritage industry as a whole, but perhaps for other researchers, official or otherwise, they may form a starting point. It is also worth considering that the tensions outlined in the preceding section may be impossible to resolve: there may be no solutions to them. For example, the initial desire to preserve supermodern sites as opposed to letting them decay would disrupt the experience of place, building a fictionalised version of the site for posterity.

By utilising phenomenology and autoethnography I am locating myself in the heart of the research. There is no abstract view from nowhere: my experiences are my own and my responses to Dry Tree are personal. Drawing inspiration from W.G. Sebald via John Wylie⁷, this thesis is written in a reflexive style. There are two reasons for this; firstly to locate myself within the research, and secondly to attempt to convey through the written word some of the scenes, sensations and experiences of RAF Dry Tree. This is discussed in more depth in the following chapters.

Where I may feel awe at the brutal architecture employed by the Air Ministry, another may feel nothing but disgust at the concrete monolith hulking amongst the furze. This was highlighted in the experiential investigation I conducted on the site; a group of participants kept notes of their personal responses to the site and one saw nothing but an eyesore ruining a nature reserve. Heritage sites from the supermodernity are subjective in the extreme.

⁶ Strange I, Walley, E Cold War Heritage and the Conservation of Military Remains in Yorkshire: 167

⁷ Wylie, J *Landscape* Routledge, 2007: 207 - 8

The following pages contain a historical introduction to the site, radar and the Second World War, followed by a discussion of the broader landscapes generated by the War in Cornwall. Fixing Dry Tree within both the present day landscape and the historical landscapes that preceded it forms an essential starting point from which we can begin to examine the academic literature that surrounds the tensions of heritage.

Historical Context

Goonhilly Downs has been a site of human habitation and activity since the Neolithic period. The imposing standing stone – the Dry Tree Menhir, marks this era⁸. Later this ancient marker represented a fixed point on the landscape where the five local parishes met, and as a result of this confluence Dry Tree became the site of the Lizard gibbet; in popular folklore it is from this site of execution and exhibition that the site draws its unusual name. Alleged home to the Lizard Highwaymen and later to tithe farmers, the lived history of Dry Tree is colourful to say the least. The remains of industry exhibited on the landscape include quarrying, grazing and ‘furze ricking’⁹. The start of the twentieth century also marks the start of a change in landscape use on Goonhilly Downs: first a metrological station closely followed by an airship station. This information was drawn from the HES survey of the RAF Dry Tree site, a flawed but vital reference text for this thesis; it was essential in providing a starting point for creating the typology of the site. These supermodern sites define the first wave of technological development to alter the landscape; the construction of the radar station and the BT Satellite Earth Station represent the climax of this change. This research is focused on the middle of this period of change, broadly from 1939-1960, with particular attention paid to the Second World War years.

The years 1939-1945 were characterised by the struggle between the aggressive far right parties of Europe and the Far East and the Allied nations of Europe and the United States. This was a truly global war, with theatres ranging from deep under the Atlantic to high over the skies of the Pacific Ocean. Our focus, however, is on a small corner of Great Britain, thrust out into the English Channel, facing the Axis in

⁸ Johns, C *Goonhilly Dry Tree Site: Archaeological Assessment Survey* Cornwall County Council, 1999

⁹ Johns, C *Goonhilly Dry Tree Site: Archaeological Assessment: 20*

mainland Europe. By virtue of being an island, the United Kingdom is a naturally defended place, but it is also made vulnerable by its 'cut off' nature. It has no neighbours, and no buffer to warn of incoming enemies.

It is for this reason that the development of radar in the mid-1930s became an essential defensive tool. The ability to detect and identify approaching aircraft and shipping gave the country an advantage over the aggressive enemy; the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party in 1933 shifted the balance of power within Europe to the extent that a conflict seemed inevitable. The ability to detect the enemy and to put forces in his way before he could strike was essential.

The concept of radar has its origins in the pursuit of the 'death ray'; according to Penley the

'idea of using rays to kill or disable people or machines was very popular at the time, and many submissions were made by crackpot inventors to say they had a 'black box' which would do whatever was required. Their bluff was called by offering £1000 to anyone who could kill a sheep at 100 yards with such a device, with no questions asked about the inside of the box. The mortality of sheep remained unaffected!'¹⁰

From these outlandish origins, the challenge of building a 'death ray' was handed to Mr. Watson-Watt, who was the Superintendent of the National Physical Laboratory Radio Research Station at Slough, with the instructions to develop a radio death ray with 'enough energy to melt metal or incapacitate a pilot'¹¹.

In the hands of professionals it was very quickly determined that there was no possibility of achieving significant destructive effects at a distance with foreseeable radio techniques. Watson-Watt did however indicate that there ought to be enough energy reflected from an aircraft to enable it to be detected at useful ranges. On the 26th February 1935 the now famous Daventry Experiment took place, along with the advent of radio direction finding. Watson-Watt utilised the powerful BBC short-wave transmitter at Daventry and a receiving aerial installed in a van seven miles from the transmitter in a field. A Heyford bomber was flown at 6000ft along the

¹⁰ Penley, B 1993 *The Early Days of Radar – R&D for the RAF 1936-42* http://www.penleyradararchives.org.uk/documents/Penley/early_radar/: 2

¹¹ Penley, WH *The Early Days of Radar*: 3

beam and the results were immediate and conclusive - Watson-Watt turned to his colleague Rowe and declared 'Britain has become an island again'¹². From this experiment in a field, developments were swift: by the 13th May 1935 Watson-Watt and his and his small group of technicians and scientists moved to Orford Ness and within months the blueprint for the wartime RDF station and equipment was finalised.

In September 1935, Watson-Watt submitted proposals for a chain of stations to be erected around the coast to provide warning of attack and positional information which would enable defensive fighters to be 'scrambled' and be told where to engage the attackers, thus avoid the need to maintain 'standing patrols'. On 19th December 1935 the Treasury sanctioned the scheme to provide a chain of five stations covering the approaches to London. The R.D.F (Radio Direction Finding) Chain was extended in 1937¹³ to include the west and southwest. The design for final stations was prepared (for example see Figure 2): four 360ft steel towers were to be used at each station for the transmitting aerials and two 240ft wooden towers for the receivers¹⁴. Included in this extension was Station 16 – Dry Tree: this is where the recent history of the research site begins.

Initially Mobile Radio Units were installed to test the suitability of the site, followed by the Advanced Chain Home installation, Intermediate Chain Home and climaxing with the Final Chain Home buildings that make up a large proportion of the remains on site. When the aerials at Dry Tree detected the approach of hostile aircraft, it was reported to RAF Portreath and RAF Predannack, where Beaufighters fitted with airborne radar were then scrambled. The Ground Controlled Intercept (GCI) Station, or "Happidrome", at Treleaver would then make contact with the aircraft and guide them towards their targets. At any one time a typical radar station would have an establishment of some sixty-three RAF personnel and sixty WAAFs, with a total compliment of one hundred and twenty three. These personnel would operate on three watches of unequal length, the longest being the night watch from 9pm to 9am. It is speculated the Dry Tree continued to be used after the war by Bomber Command until 1946, until it was

¹² Penley, WH *The Early Days of Radar*: 3

¹³ PRO Document AVIA 7/282 'Extension of RDF Chain 1939-40'

¹⁴ Penley, WH *The Early Days of Radar*: 9

finally closed down and partially demolished to make way for the Telstar Project in the early 1960s.

This is as far as the known history of Dry Tree extends. It is drawn from the Cornwall Historic Environment Service site survey 2004R041, who in turn cite Acton and Cater¹⁵ as their primary sources. The HES survey provided an essential starting point during the research; the site plan it contained and the tentative building identifications that it made were the springboard from which this thesis was launched. The research site suffered from a chronic loss of institutional memory in the years following its active use. Partial demolition in the 1960s did not help in preserving the built form and for sixty years 'Station 16' has slumbered amongst the vegetation, gradually forgetting its history. What little information exists concerning the history of the site has provided a starting point; we know when, where and why the site was built. Untangling the complicated threads of history and the palimpsest landscape found at Goonhilly form and inform the typological examination of the site.

Within a Broader Landscape

'Landscape is everyone's fundamental heritage...'¹⁶

This section will discuss the physical landscape of the Lizard Peninsula and the theoretical concepts surrounding the notion of landscape. Understanding the site within these contexts - the narrative of the Second World War and broader considerations of landscape - provides a starting point. Another is the work of John Wylie. His book 'Landscape'¹⁷ provided many of the theoretical and practical foundations of this thesis. Wylie begins by identifying landscape as tension, and then identifying exactly what these tensions are and how they manifest themselves¹⁸, these landscape tensions are proximity/distance, observation/inhabitation, eye/land and culture/nature. Like Wylie, I have identified the tensions of RAF Dry Tree; a review of the literature surrounding these tensions follows; which, combined with the landscape and historical context we can then begin to engage with the research site.

¹⁵ Acton, V and Carter, D *Cornish War and Peace* Landfall Publications 2nd edition, 1995.

¹⁶ Lowenthal, D *Living with and Looking at Landscape* Landscape Research 32 Number 5 (2007) 635-656: 635

¹⁷ Wylie, J *Landscape* Routledge, 2007.

¹⁸ Wylie, J *Landscape* 2007 Introduction - 1.1 Tensions; 1-11

The concept of landscape itself is riddled with tensions¹⁹, and can be seen as more than just a palimpsest but as an active, present-and-future oriented engagement with the environment²⁰ and might best be described in terms of the entwined materialities and sensibilities with which we act and sense²¹. The central tension identified by Rose (2006) is that of presence/absence, and of performing, creating and perceiving presence:

The nature of presence (as a horizon, a marking, a dwelling, a construction), and the issue of how presence and absence emerge and entwine (produced, embodied, perceived, affected), is the problem of landscape.²²

Nowhere does this *problem of landscape* become more apparent than when considering the rapid writing and re-writing of the twentieth century. By unpicking these often discrete and regularly connected layers, a wider understanding of the relationships between landscape, place and history can be reached. This palimpsest is visible both on the ground and theoretically at the Dry Tree site, and once the Second World War layer is identified, it reaches out from the Lizard and extends locally to other defence sites and nationally into the larger narrative of the Second World War.

Dry Tree did not exist in isolation: the Lizard Peninsula was host to three other radar stations during the War - Pen Olver, Trelanvean and Treleaver. These stations protected the Western Approaches from attack by sea and from air by feeding information into a larger network and a larger landscape of defence. Enfolded within this landscape was the airfield RAF Predannack, centrally located between the radar stations; it is from here that Allied aircraft would scramble and intercept the radar contacts. These are the obvious and built remains of the Second World War, identifiable by their design and through fragments of known history. A subliminal landscape that flickers occasionally into view – often for only seconds at a time – is the lived landscape that existed within the built form.

¹⁹ Rose, M *Animating Landscape* Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 24 (2006) 475–479: 475

²⁰ Lee, J *Experiencing Landscape: Orkney hill land and farming* Journal of Rural Studies 23 (2006) 88–100: 88

²¹ Wylie, J *A single day walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path* Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 30 (2005) 234-247: 245

²² Rose, M *Animating Landscape*: 260

Second World War defence sites demanded large quantities of labour, both in construction and maintenance and later in the operation in the form of pilots, officers and WAAFs. These people would have lived *somewhere*; they would also have travelled from place to place, visited friends, attended dances ...they would have lived within a landscape that has been subsumed by the layers of modern re-writing. Fleeting references to this landscape can be found, in the chance remark of the surviving WAAF, or in a photograph taken long ago, curled and yellowing: the foreground is plain to see, it is when we start to look in the background we see the details. In order to fully immerse ourselves within the research site, it is essential to understand the minutiae of the every day: engaging simply with the built form and historical records will give a two dimensional impression, generated from a twenty-first century perspective. There has to be an engagement with the lived landscape, the people and their lives.

The Lizard Peninsula has a long history of being a centre for communications, from the Marconi 'over the horizon' transmission of 1900 and the construction of the Lloyds Signal Station²³ and later still, the Telstar Project and the BT Earth Station²⁴, momentous events in the history of communications have happened there. It is also still an important landing point for the undersea cables that connect the United Kingdom to the rest of the world. It is almost fitting then that within this historic landscape of communication we should find our research site, itself connected into a larger network of signals, telegrams, wireless and radio signals. Indeed, on this one peninsula we can see the development of radio from Marconi's 'Spark' transmitter, to the radar of the Second World War and finally climaxing with the satellite tracking of the late twentieth century. A continuous theme throughout the twentieth century of radio on the Lizard is the natural geology and atmosphere. It was because of the serpentine bedrock, clear atmosphere and wide-open spaces that made the landscape attractive to first Marconi, later the Air Ministry and finally the GPO.

Understanding the notions surrounding landscape and its importance when considering the cultural impact on it are central to understanding heritage.

²³ <http://www.lizardwireless.org/history.html> - accessed 01/11/2009

²⁴ <http://www.connected-earth.com/Daysout/GoonhillySatelliteEarthStation/> - accessed 01/11/2010

O’Keeffe examines this in detail in ‘Landscape and Memory: Historiography, Theory and Methodology’ in *Heritage, Identity and the Politics of Identity*²⁵. He states that ‘until the 1980s most scholars within the humanities were happy to treat landscape as a naturally produced canvas – the metaphor is deliberate – to be primed and painted over by people but to which people are fundamentally external’²⁶. In this view, landscape is primordial: it does not require human inhabitation, cognition or representation to exist. Certainly it can be altered by human agency, but it is not, of itself, a socially produced space. Landscape is what culture demands of it at the time; whether that is agricultural land, nuclear test site or semi-sunken concrete bunker. It exists independently of society and culture but is symbiotic at the same time.

Landscape is tension, but it is also an articulation of power and authority. ‘...as well as the physical fabric, it [landscape] is about people’s experiences and perception of the landscape ...Landscape, therefore, is about the relationship between people and place’²⁷. In the Marxist interpretation landscape tended to externalize non-élites: now we see ourselves as situated inside landscapes forming and reforming them²⁸. The write/re-write palimpsest nature of landscape in the United Kingdom is what has led to the rich tapestry of antiquity and modernity in both urban centre’s and rural districts, and as Schein (1997) notes, it might be useful to view the landscape as a palimpsest rather than cultural strata – an analogy that at least provides the possibility for erasure and overwriting and the co-existence of several different scripts, implying not just different historical eras, but several historical and contemporary actors as well²⁹. To this end, the funeral vista and graffitied wall can now be understood as not landscape situated responses (of compliance, resistance) to authority that is articulated in the landscape, but as acts of landscape construction and so of identity formation in their own right³⁰.

²⁵ O’Keeffe, D *Landscape and Memory: Historiography, Theory and Methodology* Ashgate Publishing, 2007.

²⁶ O’Keeffe, D *Landscape and Memory*: 3

²⁷ Cheape, H, Garden, M and McLean, F *Heritage and the Environment* International Journal of Heritage Studies 15 Number 2 (2009) 104-107: 105

²⁸ O’Keeffe, D *Landscape and Memory*: 4

²⁹ Schein, R *The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene* Annals of the Association of American Geographers 87 Number 4 (1997) 660–680: 662

³⁰ Schein, R *The Place of Landscape*: 662

Understanding the importance of landscape in identity formation, power and authority is key to the generation of heritage, indeed:

It is not enough to study landscape as a scenic text. A more *substantive* understanding of landscape is required. Such a substantive understanding of landscape derives from the historical study of our changing conceptions and uses of land/landscape, country/countryside and nature. Such an understanding recognizes the historical and contemporary importance of community, culture, law and a custom in shaping human geographical existence – in both idea and practice³¹.

Nowhere do notions of landscape, identity and material culture come together so vividly as within the discourses of heritage³² and according to O’Keeffe, the conception of heritage as currently constituted, and as currently curated by a self-styled industry is more problematic than helpful. The ‘Heritage Industry’ has its own menu of criteria by which landscapes (and buildings) can be evaluated as cultural-historical ‘things’, especially for preservation or non-preservation in the face of demands from other, more environmentally aggressive, types of industry. While their criterion of antiquity, uniqueness, history and/or historical association may seem reasonable, all landscapes qualify as somebody’s heritage, even if the term ‘heritage’ is rarely allowed such liberal application³³. O’Keeffe is certainly not advocating that all landscapes should be conserved or preserved because someone may have an abstract heritage stake somewhere within it, rather that heritage is a much broader concept than can be defined as simply unique, or of antiquity.

In the same way that ‘heritage’ is about more than places and things so, too, it is about more than ‘the past’ and it is equally important to consider the engagement with the environment as remembered, as lived and as envisioned in the future. A focus on heritage and the environment as a key component of ‘pastness’ and remembering was governed not only by a look back into ‘the past’ but also by setting the sights on the view ahead’³⁴.

The term heritage and its application are therefore contested: one man’s heritage is another man’s eyesore.

³¹ Olwig, K *Recovering the Substantive Nature of Landscapes* Annals of the Association of American Geographers 86 Number 4 (1996) 30–653: 630

³² Cheape, H, Garden, M and McLean, F *Heritage and the Environment*: 104

³³ O’Keeffe, D *Landscape and Memory*: 9

³⁴ Cheape, H, Garden, M and McLean, F *Heritage and the Environment*: 106

The following chapter will examine the current literature surrounding the themes of the research, defined as three tensions – production and consumption, decay and approach.



Figure 1: Nature finds a way (Photo: Author)



Figure 2: Typical East Coast RDF Station Dominating the Skyline (Photo: Durness Community Archaeology)

2: Literature Review

'The object must die twice, first at the moment of its own death and secondly through the subject's unhitching from its own identification. It is only then that the object can pass into history and that the stones can be set – for mourning and memorial are a phase apart'
(Cousins, 1996: 36)

Introduction

The following chapter contains a review of the current academic debate around the tensions that surround heritage sites from recent history. We will begin with the tension of approach, discussing the 'traditional' typological perspective and an alternative experiential one. This is followed by an examination of the aesthetics and nature of decay at twentieth century military sites, with a discussion of an example of managed decay at Orford Ness. The final tension to be examined is that of production and consumption, which is then further subdivided into official and unofficial modes of producing and consuming. The chapter is then closed by a discussion of material culture, the material ephemera in an environment that carry meaning.

These tensions provide a foundation for the study and management of heritage sites from near history, those sites that are surrounded by uncertainty and defy management and interpretation by traditional processes. With the increasing interest in the built and cultural remains of the twentieth century, new approaches to these sites and events must be forthcoming. As this literature review will demonstrate, typology is essential for providing a background or a footing into a site but fails to reflect the full range of experiences and responses generated in these places that must be further developed through personal experience. While there may be a necessity for ruins³⁵, there is also a desire to preserve and to venerate; how we mediate between these two poles will dictate the survival of twentieth century remains into the future. Central to the heritage of the twentieth century so far is the unofficial production and consumption of these sites; with official agents of heritage becoming more interested in the remains and the history this heritage is beginning to change. The movement from unofficial to official

³⁵ Jackson, JB *The Necessity for Ruins and Other Topics* The University of Massachusetts Press, 1980.

production and consumption will have a dramatic effect on the buildings, sites and landscapes that are selected for preservation.

The following literature review will begin to work through these tensions; firstly, approach.

The Tension of Approach

Perhaps the biggest tension implicit in the study of recent historical remains is that of approach. Typology seeks to classify, to define by *type*; this process of identification and rationalisation is the bulwark of 'traditional'³⁶ heritage industries. By defining a menu of criteria by which landscapes and buildings can be evaluated, the official agents and arbiters of heritage can begin the process of designating by type. While their criterion of antiquity, uniqueness, history and/or historical association may seem reasonable, all landscapes qualify as somebody's heritage, even if the term 'heritage' is rarely allowed such liberal application³⁷. This section will provide an overview of the arguments surrounding typology and phenomenology.

English Heritage is perhaps the most proactive group in the preservation³⁸ of twentieth century sites. Following the Defence of Britain project – an assessment of twentieth century military fortifications in the United Kingdom, spearheaded by the Council for British Archaeology - English Heritage conducted its own study of buildings and landscapes of the recent past and was able to classify every twentieth century military site into eight categories. These range from Air Defence to Research Establishments and to sites related to the Peace Movement. By ascribing a site to a category, the first stage of heritage assessment is complete; each site or structure is then subjected to further categorisation. Assessment criteria include survival/condition, period, rarity, diversity and cultural/amenity value. The findings of the English Heritage study were published in 'Cold War: Building for Nuclear Confrontation'³⁹ and further elucidated in 'A Fearsome Heritage'⁴⁰. Both

³⁶ Traditional in this instance referring to the actions and processes of the heritage industry to date

³⁷ O'Keeffe, D *Landscape and Memory*: 9

³⁸ Read: listing

³⁹ Cocroft, W *Cold War: building for nuclear confrontation* English Heritage, 2005.

⁴⁰ Cocroft, W *A Fearsome Heritage* English Heritage, 2007.

books are co-authored by Wayne Cocroft, English Heritage's authority on heritage from near history, with a particular interest in the built form of the Cold War.

Cocroft details the process of recording twentieth century sites in England and their subsequent assessment to determine the most significant sites for conservation and preservation:

'This appraisal maintained that the remains represented a distinctive national assemblage, determined by a range of interconnected factors, including geography – both the United Kingdom's position as an offshore island ('the unsinkable aircraft carrier') and the legacy of existing military infrastructure.'⁴¹

A result of the typological approach utilised by English Heritage is to suggest that cultural heritage comprises of a series of spatially discrete sites and material remains, emphasising further that these discrete locations are somehow disconnected from their broader historical and landscape contexts⁴².

Strange and Walley (2007) performed an in-depth examination of Cold War remains in Yorkshire, and concluded that protection for twentieth century military sites depends on three factors:

1. The quality of the remains judged against the Monument Protection Plan
2. The degree of local advocacy shown in support of the remains; and
3. The degree of awareness shown towards both the Monuments Protection Plan and the remains by local and regional heritage and conservation actors.

They describe the scheduling process as idiosyncratic and, as an archeologically based process; it relies on the survival of physical remains. Where these are not extant the complete assemblage of military installations and systems cannot be achieved. Local sentiment towards Cold War sites and buildings is also factored into the reasoning behind preservation but this again is problematic, as it cannot be readily quantified in the scheduling process⁴³.

⁴¹ Cocroft, W *A Fearsome*: 107

⁴² Moylan, E, Brown, S and Kelly, C *Toward a Cultural Landscape Atlas: Representing all the Landscape as Cultural* International Journal of Heritage Studies 15 Number 5 (2009) 447-466: 447

⁴³ Strange I, Walley, E *Cold War Heritage and the Conservation of Military Remains in Yorkshire*:167

Strange and Walley concluded that:

‘Current approaches to tackling the heritage of the recent past are potentially discouraging and disabling of our understanding of the nature of activity during the Cold War and how it inscribes itself on the landscape. A reassessment of this activity is needed because we have moved beyond categorisation into practice. Sites have become accessible to specialists and the public, and as a consequence we will need more sensitive and nuanced tools with which to pursue, uncover and interpret the remains and traces of activities of the recent past’⁴⁴.

‘We have moved beyond categorisation and into practice...’ and as a result of this move from categorisation to practice, Strange and Walley’s demand for more sensitive and nuanced tools will be examined and developed in this thesis. Through the use of phenomenology and autoethnographical techniques, a keener understanding of the unique nature of these sites and the ways in which we respond and relate to them will be forthcoming. Sophia Davis (2008) begins the process of creating this new heritage toolset in her article ‘Military Landscapes and Secret Science: the case of Orford Ness’. The paper takes the form of an atmospheric walk through of the former Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, describing in detail the First World War airfield and the iconic ‘Pagodas’ of the atomic age. Davis also elucidates the National Trust’s current policy at Orford Ness: ‘the National Trust (is) allowing the laboratories to become more evocative as they ruin...’⁴⁵. This management approach will be examined in the following section ‘Decay’. The Orford Ness site is utilised in this thesis as a counterpoint to RAF Dry Tree; similar in age and comparative ruination, the approach adopted by the National Trust is one that is applied to Dry Tree; that of personal and subjective experience coupled with the small amount of history that is known.

By utilising the phenomenological/autoethnographical approach, Davis has successfully created a rich image of the Orford Ness site. Transcending typology and mere description, Davis is able to bring her own personal response into the article. Through autoethnographic techniques and the application of phenomenology, defined by the Dictionary of Human Geography as:

⁴⁴ Strange I, Walley, E Cold War Heritage and the Conservation of Military Remains in Yorkshire:167

⁴⁵ Davis, S *Military Landscapes and Secret Science* Cultural Geographies in Practice 15 (2008) 143-149: 6

'A continental European philosophy which is founded on the importance of reflecting on the ways in which the world is made available for intellectual inquiry: this mean that it pays particular attention to the active, creative function of language in making the world intelligible'⁴⁶

It is possible to begin to examine the heritage of near history with new eyes. Phenomenology however encompasses far more than reflexive use of language in interpreting the world; it forms a comprehensive approach that involves the awareness of experience and the study of *phenomena*. Phenomenology also involves the inclusion of the senses not only in the act of research, but embeds the researcher within the work. As a result, autoethnographic writing and use of the personal pronoun will play a major role, making the research both subjective and personal.

In 'A Phenomenology of Landscape' (1994) Tilley suggests that there is a need to re-engage with the qualitative aspects of landscape by exploring the ways in which social and cultural meanings are ascribed to places. It is not enough to study landscape as a scenic text, it must be engaged with on a critical level to generate a more substantive understanding of both present, past and future landscapes⁴⁷. The significance of past landscapes cannot be grasped by creating two-dimensional representations of space⁴⁸. Human experience and understanding of the world are mediated through the body and because the body is always already in the world, it has no existence apart from in the world, and the world itself can only be realized through embodied experience⁴⁹. As a result landscape, place and wartime sites are always experienced as three dimensional and sensuous: a point that is neglected in the current discourse of heritage management that follows a typological approach. Tilley argues that to understand a landscape or monument, it is necessary for archaeologists (and geographers?) to document their own physical engagement with these spaces as they move around and through them⁵⁰.

Another exponent of approaching landscape through experience can be found in

⁴⁶ Johnston, RJ, Gregory, D, et al *The Dictionary of Human Geography* Blackwell Publishing, 2000: 579

⁴⁷ Olwig, K *Recovering the Substantive Nature of Landscapes*: 630

⁴⁸ Tilley, C *A Phenomenology of Landscape Explorations in anthropology series*, Oxford, 1994: 10

⁴⁹ Brück, J *Experiencing the Past?* *Archaeological Dialogues* 12 Number 1 (2005) 45-72: 47

⁵⁰ Tilley, C *A Phenomenology of Landscape*: 73

John Wylie who has written extensively about his encounters with landscape ‘on foot’⁵¹. Adopting an autoethnographic style similar to that utilized in this thesis, Wylie takes the reader through historical context, physical location and geographical features of the landscape before embarking on his personal, walking narrative. Indeed,

‘The walk sought to activate a space and time within which I might engage with and explore issues of landscape, subjectivity and corporeality, in the context of their current discussion within cultural geographies and cultural theory more generally’⁵²

The inclusion of the other senses in experiencing sites from the past can facilitate a deeper understanding of the landscape and architecture under scrutiny. Variations in Wylie’s passage present meditative resources for a dissolution of the fixed categories of self and landscape; walker and terrain melt into a range of faculties and feelings, emerging amid elemental phenomena, happening there, then, singularly in those circumstances.⁵³

As culturally embedded as we are in the present, is it feasible to experience wartime sites and buildings as they were at the time of construction? That is to say, through utilizing all five senses what else can we gain through experiencing these concrete sites? Photographs, video and audio have been utilized in recent years but these come with a caveat: they are composed and edited experiences with an author with an agenda. That is not to say however, that photographs cannot be utilized as a supplement to actual experience.

In 2007 Tim Edensor wrote ‘Sensing the Ruin’, a comprehensive examination of an industrial ruin in Manchester that synthesizes both autoethnographic writing and a phenomenological approach. His inclusion of all of the senses in his experience of the site can be used to inform our own experience of sites from recent history. He begins by establishing the normal sensory environment, that is to say the heavily mediated and controlled cityscape, with its associated sounds, images and smells. Moving beyond, and arguably below the contemporary city into the industrial ruins

⁵¹ Wylie, J *An essay on ascending Glastonbury Tor* Geoforum 33 (2002) 441–454 and Wylie, J *A single day walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path*

⁵² Wylie, J *A single day walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path*: 234

⁵³ Lorimer, H *Cultural geography: worldly shapes, differently arranged* Progress in Human Geography 31 Number 1 (2007) 89–100: 90

of another age, Edensor argues that the body is freed from the self-conscious performative constraints of the city and may move in a non-linear, improvisatory fashion across a variety of textures, confronted by powerfully unpleasant but also pleasurable and surprising smells and sounds – fundamentally disrupting normal aesthetic conventions⁵⁴

The ruin in Edensor's example is typical of the diverse derelict properties that continue to haunt Britain and other post-industrial nations. Like many other such sites, it is supposedly off-limits, designated as useless yet dangerous space. It is however, a venue for a host of social activities and colonized by non-human forms; that is to say animal and plant life finding some way to re-enter these sites. Like other abandoned places, the ruin continually changes as it decays and falls apart and so it is continually productive of changing sensual effects⁵⁵. This phenomenological experience of a constantly changing place makes each visit a unique experience. The susceptibility of ruins to the weather can radically alter the perception and experience of place from one visit to the next. The sensory experience is as at odds to the everyday landscape as the ruin itself. Edensor notes the peculiar smells that inhabit ruined spaces, ranging from the pungent and offensive to the sweetness of decay. Another notable sensory quality found within ruins is that of silence, indeed 'the qualities of silence are amplified, because to walk through large abandoned chambers, often clothed in vegetation, foregrounds awareness of relative urban silence'⁵⁶. When one has adjusted to this uncanny quiet, there is the existence of a delicate soundscape: discrete sounds that emerge and contribute to a sparser sonic backdrop that is in 'contradistinction to the thick racket of everyday life'⁵⁷.

'The ruin feels very different to smoothed over urban space, rebukes the unsensual erasure of multiple tactilities, smells, sounds and sights. It is not a world of silken sheen or velvety textures, polished surfaces, ceaselessly swept flooring or plush carpeting. Instead, it contains the rough, splintery texture of a wooden workbench or floorboards, crunchy shards of glass on concrete flooring, the mulch of moldering paper, moss and saplings, decomposing clothes, corroding steel and slimy, rotting

⁵⁴ Edensor, T *Sensing the Ruin* Senses and Society 21 Number 2 (2007) 217-232: 217

⁵⁵ Edensor, T *Sensing the Ruin*: 223

⁵⁶ Edensor, T *Sensing the Ruin*: 224

⁵⁷ Edensor, T *Sensing the Ruin*: 224

wood. In their unfamiliarity, such things invite touch...'⁵⁸

Ruins are deregulated spaces, where the performativity of the body and sensory experience are unshackled from the formality and regulation of the every day modern world. Ruined spaces illicit new responses from trespassers who find themselves within their walls; emotional resonance and sensory experience conspire to subvert the normality of surrounding landscapes. Through utilizing all of our senses and being aware of our environment on a level beyond everyday practice, the experience of a site is heightened. As a result autoethnographic writing and applied use of phenomenology can generate new and previously unexplored representations of space that typology is unable to match.

A practical example of this approach in practice was on a tour around a disused tin mine that took place in October 2008. The mine itself is privately owned and the owners are preserving the mine and keeping it dry, as a 'worked example', quite at odds to the World Heritage mining sites. When we reached the lowest level of the mine, all electric lights were extinguished, and one tallow candle was kept burning: we stood in silence and almost darkness hundreds of feet underground. It was only at this moment that the gravity, atmosphere and history of the mine came alive. While the experience of simply standing in the mine does not fully recreate the experience of the miners, it does allow for a keener understanding of the working conditions of the day to day. The damp, cold and semi fetid air conspired with the darkness to raise goose bumps down the spine. One does not have to believe in ghosts to be affected by the *presence* the mine exuded. Certainly men had died down there, and certainly their discarded tools and ephemera were all around, but it was only in semi-darkness and experiencing it first hand that the mine began to resonate with a lived history.

This example of phenomenology underlines the need for experience. One could read about wartime sites, study photographs and watch video footage all day long; it is not until one steps inside a crumbling receiver block and feels the subtle change in temperature, the clawing damp in the air and experiences the faint smell of decay that the *history* of the site comes alive and the oral histories and narratives begin to carry any resonance.

⁵⁸ Edensor, T *Sensing the Ruin*: 228

Emily Orley reminds us of the words scribbled by James Joyce in the margin of his notes for *Ulysses*: 'places remember events'.⁵⁹ It is from this point that we can begin to consider the history of a site and how that history might impact upon the present moment of viewing. Riesenweber notes David Lowenthal and reminds us that the past we know or experience is always contingent on our own views, our own perspective and above all our own present.⁶⁰ Just as we are products of the past, so is the known past an artifact of ours⁶¹. Orley highlights the fact that the scholar-practitioner invariably faces the challenge of trying to find ways to negotiate the divide between practice and theory⁶². A two-stage methodology is suggested that is intended to assist the scholar in the navigation of practice and theory.

The first stage involves a self-reflexive awareness⁶³ of ourselves in place⁶⁴, examples of which can be found in John Wylie's 'walking encounters' with landscape⁶⁵, Tilley's landscape phenomenology⁶⁶ and DeSilvey's encounters and deep autoethnography on a Montana homestead⁶⁷. This process begins with a close and stilled observation of the place's details. If the visitor in a place is still and quiet enough, and pays close enough attention, they can become aware of what the place is 'doing' around them, as well as their own response. This cannot be rushed. That is not to say that to engage with place in a meaningful way always has to involve a slow process, but that, as visitors we concentrate on the quality of attention that we bring to the place⁶⁸.

⁵⁹ Orley, E *Getting at and Into Place: writing as practice and research* Journal in Creative Practice, Intellect 2 Number 2 (2009) 159-171: 159

⁶⁰ Riesenweber, J Landscape Preservation and Cultural Geography in *Cultural Landscapes: building nature and heritage in preservation practice* Minnesota Press, 2008: 32

⁶¹ Lowenthal, D *The Past is a Foreign Country* Cambridge University Press, 1999 214-216

⁶² Orley, E *Getting at and Into Place: writing as practice and research*: 159

⁶³ Bull, J and Leyshon, M Forthcoming *Writing the Moment: Landscape and the memory-image in Process: Landscape and Text* ed. Catherine Brace and Adeline Johns-Putra (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010)

⁶⁴ Bull, J and Leyshon, M Forthcoming *Writing the Moment*

⁶⁵ Wylie, J *An essay on ascending Glastonbury Tor* and Wylie, J *A single day walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path*

⁶⁶ Tilley, C *A Phenomenology of Landscape*

⁶⁷ DeSilvey, C *Art and archive: memory-work on a Montana homestead* Journal of Historical Geography 33 Number 4 (2007) 878 - 900

⁶⁸ Orley, E *Getting at and Into Place: writing as practice and research*: 159

The second stage of the method involves a processing of our engagement with place. This can involve a thinking-through and remembering of the encounter, or on a more practical level, a documentation of it (in writing, by drawing, with photography, or with sound or video recording). This opens up the possibility of making other work, inventing new critical or artistic projects developed from our initial encounter. In this way, we can animate the place as a site for reflection, creativity and change⁶⁹. This two-stage methodology comes with a caveat:

‘It is important that we are conscious of ourselves as rememberers and imaginers, that we are alert to the fact that we bring our own contexts (cultural, social and historical) to the context of the place, and will inevitably project our own fears and desires onto the surfaces that it offers. *By documenting our individual encounters with place, we are documenting one possibility amid many*’⁷⁰

By approaching the site in a reflective way, taking the time to form a relationship and record this association through a variety of medium - text, photographs etc - we can begin to outline a path through the divide between practice and theory. While experiencing a place *in depth*, it is important to be aware of the fact that my experience and interpretation is entirely subjective; Geertz’s ‘thick description’ involves the understanding of an action (place/event) in depth, so that the action itself is understood, along with the context so as to make it understandable to an outsider⁷¹. Countless people have experienced this place before me, and countless will after me: each forming their own experience, their own response and each taking away their own memories. I would document my own experience with its context, but it is no more valid than any other.

The following section will discuss the themes and literature surrounding notions of decay, the concept of which is central to many twentieth century military remains, but can also be applied more generally to other heritage sites.

⁶⁹ Orley, E *Getting at and Into Place: writing as practice and research*: 160 and Crang, M *Between Places: producing hubs, flows and networks Environment and Planning A* 34 Number 4 (2002) 569-574

⁷⁰ Orley, E *Getting at and Into Place: writing as practice and research*: 160

⁷¹ Geertz, C *Thick Description: toward an interpretive theory of culture* in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* Basic Books, 1973 1 - 30

The Tension of Decay

The tensions' surrounding decay and preservation is an emerging conflict surrounding military buildings and sites of the twentieth century. While there is a desire or a need to preserve some examples, part of what gives these buildings their appeal would be lost in the restoration process. There is a sense of adventure, of trepidation and of transgression when one visits a 'bunker', abandoned in place. The aesthetics of ruination and decay are integral to experiencing these sites. In a restored condition they would be more educationally informative, certainly, but the imagination of the visitor would potentially be stifled in the process.

Coupled with the notions and theory of physical decay, there are also considerations of more *metaphysical* decay – that of the memory and the processes of forgetting. Legg⁷² asserts that space is a key component of memory formation. Memories that are of a transient nature as DeSilvey notes they 'decay and disappear, reform and regenerate, shift back and forth between different states and always teeter on the edge of intelligibility'⁷³. Analogous to the research site itself, the memories of Dry Tree have been used, re-used, honed and shaped until only the largest and impressive remain.

It is in the design of sites and buildings of the twentieth century that the tension between preservation and decay has its origins. This military architecture is functional, but it is also reminiscent of the Brutalist style of architecture that flourished in civilian circles between 1950 and 1970, with some examples still emerging today. As a style it has largely been replaced by *structural expressionism* as steel structures have become more advanced, practical and vogue. Deriving from the French *Béton Brut*, or *raw concrete* the outer surface is left unfinished and exposed visually⁷⁴. One acknowledged shortfall of *Béton Brut* is the fact that concrete facades do not age well in maritime climates – like North West Europe – and quickly become streaked with water stains, rust leaches out of the steel reinforcing bars and it makes a natural habitat for moss and lichens⁷⁵.

⁷² Legg, S *Reviewing geographies of memory/forgetting* Environment and Planning A 39 (2007) 456–466: 456

⁷³ Desilvey, C *Observed Decay: telling stories with mutable things* Journal of Material Culture 11 Number 3 (2006) 318-338: 336

⁷⁴ Colguhoun, A *Modern Architecture* Oxford University Press, 2002: 22

⁷⁵ Colguhoun, A *Modern Architecture*: 22

The results of these factors can be seen in wartime sites: the form dictated by the function and informed by the Brutalist school of architecture, constructed out of exposed concrete stained with time, make them aesthetically difficult. Preserved examples carry a sublime majesty that makes them challenging to ignore, whereas abandoned sites like many of those in the United Kingdom are perhaps easy to miss, but once noticed impossible to ignore. With their haunting and mysterious shapes, devoid of contextual meaning, they convey far more of a story and a history than their pristine museum counterparts.

The removal of these sites from their historical context allows for endless reimagining of spaces⁷⁶. In many cases the original purpose of sites has been lost with the removal of equipment. What remains offers only tantalising clues to a contemporary visitor. Context is also further removed with the withdrawal of maintenance – as nature begins to reclaim the site, it becomes increasingly unclear.

Another conflict found at these abandoned military sites is that of nature and the built form. With the withdrawal of people, there is also a withdrawal of maintenance⁷⁷. Unchecked vegetation begins to invade the periphery; weeds sprout in previously immaculate paths. Eventually the vegetation is inside the buildings, pulling the very fabric apart⁷⁸. Invariably life finds a way, and animals and plants living in the most unlikely places confront us. It is the capacity for these sites to shock, surprise, thrill and frighten that makes them so *vital*. They are, in the classical sense of the word – sublime.

Referring again to the Orford Ness site, the National Trust are allowing the buildings to decay back into the landscape⁷⁹, and it is the aesthetics of this ruination and the historicity of the site itself that is its attraction. A sterile, whitewashed concrete complex would no doubt be educational and informative, but the ruins and decay allow the imagination to thrive: who could imagine what diabolical experiments took place here? Without signposts and information boards

⁷⁶ Hill, J *The Story of the Amulet: Locating the Enchantment of Collections* Journal of Material Culture 12 Number 1 (2007) 65 – 87. The removal of artefacts from their context and presenting them ambiguously within a museum space allows for reimagining/different encounters.

⁷⁷ DeSilvey, C *Observed Decay*

⁷⁸ Edensor, T *Sensing the Ruin*

⁷⁹ Davis, S *Military Landscapes and Secret Science*

we are able to experience our own heritage at these sites; without being told exactly what we are looking at, its function and construction matter, we become free to imagine, to experience in our own way and in such produce new narratives and alternate understandings to those prescribed by typology.

Jackson takes a rather clinical approach to the process of ruination. He states that:

‘There has to be an interval of neglect, there has to be discontinuity; it is... essential. That is what I mean when I refer to the necessity for ruins; ruins provide the incentive for restoration, and for a return to origins. There has to be an interim of death or rejection before there can be renewal and reform. The old order has to die before there can be a born-again landscape’⁸⁰

According to Jackson, society considers that a period of neglect and ruination is essential if there is to be a motivation to preserve. We are now at this point with the military ruins of the twentieth century. They have decayed, ruined and have been neglected. In many instances buildings have been vandalized, modified in their use or just abandoned in place. By Jackson’s rules we are now at the point where there can be renewal and reform - if there is incentive to do so. It is how we conserve, preserve or present these buildings and landscapes that is the next challenge. The resolution of the tensions outlined in this literature review will form the first stage in the process of reconciling these culturally, aesthetically and physically difficult sites.

An early example of the desire to preserve twentieth century ruins can be found at the end of the First World War. Winston Churchill had strongly advocated ‘freezing’ the remains of Ypres and preserving it forever as an ossified commemoration of the war⁸¹. Its pulverized medieval buildings would, he argued, be a more articulate than any carved memorial or reverential monument (Figure 3). Churchill argued the same point at the close of the Second World War, suggesting that a portion of the Blitz damaged House of Commons should be preserved as a reminder of the bombing of the capital⁸².

Ruins, abandoned landscapes and neglected buildings act as a repository for

⁸⁰ Jackson, JB *The Necessity for Ruins*: 102

⁸¹ Gough, P: *Commemoration of War* The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity, 2008: 215

⁸² Gough, P: *Commemoration of War*: 215

memory and as a tribute to the people that spent time there. In turn, these memories manifest themselves as ghosts within the ruin. Not the chain-rattling, wailing ghost of Victorian houses: our supermodern ghosts are less melodramatic and more mundane⁸³.

Ruins, landscapes and other sites of decay – less regulated places – in which signs of the past have not been obliterated or contained and contextualised, are spaces in which involuntary memories may be stimulated. Ruins are a point of transition, passages from reason to myth, moments of magic that exist at the interstices of modernity⁸⁴. The challenge in managing these sites is striking a balance between preservation and decay. Certainly, the whitewashed ‘as was’ museum piece complete with curatorial boards would act as an informative, educational space. Equally, a discretely managed but fundamentally ‘left alone’ site, like Orford Ness comes complete with its own unique traits: less educational, perhaps, but easier to relate to and understand on a personal level.

The genesis of the arguments surrounding preservation, restoration and ‘leaving alone’ are to be found in the 18th and 19th centuries with the restoration of Lichfield Cathedral by James Wyatt⁸⁵; Ruskin (1885) argued ‘Do not let us talk then of restoration. The thing is a lie from beginning to end’⁸⁶. These arguments have roved backwards and forwards in the intervening centuries and still no consensus is apparent. On the one hand, the restoration of ancient churches and sites was seen as sacrilegious and on the other it was seen as a just and correct exercise⁸⁷. Indeed ‘hundreds of churches were in desperate need, in a state of ‘ruin and profanity. In one church a steam engine had been installed...’⁸⁸. These early restorers and preservers sought to return the buildings to the original appearance that had been lost by decay, accident or ill-judged alteration, and in doing so created fictional buildings that never really were; grudgingly including later additions the *original* was preferred. This destruction and fantasy reconstruction of a building was undertaken in the name of restoration, and can now be seen as anti-historical in

⁸³ Edensor, T *The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins*: 836

⁸⁴ Edensor, T *The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins*: 845

⁸⁵ Null, J *Restorers, Villains and Vandals* APT 18 Number 4 (1985) 27-41: 27

⁸⁶ Ruskin, J *The Lamp of Memory in the Works of John Ruskin* John B Alden, 1885: 185

⁸⁷ Null, J *Restorers, Villains and Vandals*: 27

⁸⁸ Null, J *Restorers, Villains and Vandals*: 27

approach. Null goes on to say that,

‘As architecture is memory, then, serving both standing history and historical consciousness, two duties devolve upon us; “the first, to render the architecture of our own day historical, and the second, to preserve, as the most precious of inheritances, that of past ages”.⁸⁹

This is the first stage in managing ruins as architecture. Certainly they can be restored or regenerated or a facsimile put in its place, but in doing so the fabric and historical integrity of the original site is lost:

‘In other words, what sets the historic building apart as unique from any other building or work of art is its age – the history, the time and events which it contains and expresses in its physical fabric. The visible signs of history have emotional and artistic value in and of themselves, in addition to their documentary value. Simply stated, the underlying principle is that preserving the history of the building is of the first and paramount importance over stylistic of any other considerations *because without its history intact the building loses its essential value*⁹⁰

In this way the actions (or inaction) of the National Trust at Orford Ness can be justified and understood. According to Ruskin and Null, to restore would be to remove the essential value of the site, that is to say its history. In their expressed desire to allow the site to become ‘more evocative as it ruins’ the National Trust are also answering Ruskin’s claim that the visible signs of history have emotional and artistic value in and of themselves. By ‘leaving alone’ and allowing to ruin, the act of preservation is far more honest: no fantasy reconstructions, no textbook examples. Architecture is memory, and memories fade; it seems only right that these buildings be allowed to fade back into the landscape and that we should experience this final decay.

The following section contains an examination of the literature and practice surrounding the production and consumption of heritage sites.

The Tensions of Production and Consumption

This section will examine the different ways in which the heritage of the recent past is produced and consumed. There are two further subdivisions to the tension of

⁸⁹ Null, J Restorers, Villains and Vandals: 31

⁹⁰ Null, J Restorers, Villains and Vandals: 31

production and consumption of heritage, these are: official and unofficial. This section will address the way in which heritage is produced and consumed officially, through bodies such as the National Trust and unofficially, through the exploration by individuals of unmediated sites.

According to Harvey⁹¹, heritage is difficult to define. Emphasising its lack of fixity and the presentness of its creation, Harvey highlights an innate sense of dispute or dissonance within heritage, and raises questions about agency (who is creating heritage?) and about the means through which heritage is conveyed and knowledge produced. He states that:

‘One can portray heritage as a vehicle (often, but not only, a site) where *cultural memory* and various phenomena of *history culture* reside. Cultural memory comprises the collective understandings of the past as they are held by people in any given social and historical context’⁹²

If we accept this definition of heritage, the difference between official and unofficial production and consumption becomes clearer. The official production/consumption follows an agenda, whether it is local or national, which preserves and represents an accepted history, heritage or cultural memory. Unofficial production and consumption can be considered apolitical within the sphere of heritage officialdom⁹³. By looking for the sake of looking, or by exploring simply because one is interested we can operate outside the *diktat* of the official heritage industry. In this way, new heritages can be formed or discovered, and new approaches to them developed.

In recent years, oral histories have begun to be taken more seriously by academics and heritage practitioners alike in their explorations of the past, particularly with respect to uncovering the lived experiences of a world that was produced and consumed in complex and multiple ways⁹⁴. Oral history approaches have

⁹¹ Harvey, D *The History of Heritage* The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity Ashgate, 2008: 21

⁹² Harvey, D *The History of Heritage*: 21

⁹³ See Subterranea Britannica for instance; a political and concerned only with the identification and preservation of ‘underground manmade structures’, with a particular interest in the hardened concrete buildings of the Cold War.

⁹⁴ Riley, M & Harvey, D *Landscape Archaeology, Heritage and the Community in Devon: An Oral History Approach* International Journal of Heritage Studies 11 Number 4 (2005) 269–

considerable potential for how heritage is interpreted and managed, by offering a more nuanced, dynamic and rich account of a landscape that is seen as being far more than a collection of physical attributes and measurable artefacts. Harvey goes on to say that ‘new heritage practices, such as oral history projects have blurred the boundaries between producers and consumers’⁹⁵.

It is also important to consider that oral histories cannot be considered definitive in their retelling of the past⁹⁶. They are partial, subjective, reflexive, ambiguous, sometimes contradictory and often tensioned⁹⁷. Indeed,

‘They can give voice to people and views that are not often heard, but they are voices that are often mediated and used by academics and others for particular purposes’⁹⁸

These mediated, partial and unheard voices of the Second World War can inform our understanding of the research site, but must be taken at face value as the memories of an individual – not as statements of fact. However, oral histories (especially when taken in conjunction with material evidence) are capable of filling the vacant historical spaces that surround all of material history⁹⁹. The telling of oral histories produces new, unofficial and personal heritages that form vignettes that have the ability to tell discrete stories within a broader narrative. Placed within a broader historical context however, they begin to resonate with the landscape and the built remains; oral histories will begin to bring Edensor’s ‘more mundane’ ghosts back to life and implant them back into the landscape.

An example of the National Trust creating alternative heritage spaces can be seen at Orford Ness, where the Trust offers an official production of heritage, but allows the visitor to create his or her own unofficial consumption¹⁰⁰. The ambiguous terms in which the Orford Ness site are presented reflects an uncertainty about the exact purpose of the activities which took place in some of the specific structures, due

288: 270 and Ritchie, DA *Doing Oral History: a practical guide* Oxford University Press, 2003.

⁹⁵ Harvey, D *The History of Heritage*: 31

⁹⁶ Portelli, A *The Peculiarities of Oral History* History Workshop Journal 12 Number 1 (1981) 96–107: 105

⁹⁷ Riley, M & Harvey, D *Landscape Archaeology, Heritage and the Community in Devon*: 274

⁹⁸ Riley, M & Harvey, D *Landscape Archaeology, Heritage and the Community in Devon*: 274

⁹⁹ Alexander, B *Excluding Archival Silences* Archival Science 6 (2006) 1-11: 11

¹⁰⁰ Davis, S *Military Landscapes and Secret Science*

either to continuing barriers of official secrecy and lack of oral records, or the limitations of the archaeological records themselves. According to Strange and Walley, this ambiguity reflects a desire to shy away from more direct explanation either in terms of the celebration of a place significant within the national history of military technology or a site of conscience opposed to nuclear weapons¹⁰¹. This unofficial consumption in an officially produced, mediated and moderated environment allows articles like Davis' to exist; if the site was a sterile museum with information boards plastered on every surface the atmosphere that gives the place its 'soul' would be removed.

It is because many sites from 'near' history are outside the remit of officialdom (the control, maintenance and moderation of authority) and legitimacy that they have become a focus for groups of amateur historians and more recently 'Urban Explorers'¹⁰². In terms of the latter this is largely an Internet-driven phenomena where the explorers 'find' sites of interest and post details and photographs of their incursions into them. In this way, sites that have lost their institutional memory, or have slipped from use and fallen into disrepair, are remembered, their histories rediscovered and retold¹⁰³. Abandoned sites begin to generate new narratives within these online communities. This unofficial production and consumption of heritage has seen the cataloguing and recording of almost every Cold War observation post in the United Kingdom- a task that would surely daunt English Heritage – for posterity (see www.subbrit.org.uk).

Another example of the unofficial production and consumption of 'dark' heritage can be found in Tom Vanderbilt's 'Survival City: adventures amongst the ruins of atomic America' (2001). In which he states:

'I became a Cold War tourist, visiting the places not listed in guidebooks (and some that now are), glimpsing places that seem in danger of vanishing even as we are

¹⁰¹ Strange I, Walley, E *Cold War Heritage and the Conservation of Military Remains in Yorkshire*: 161

¹⁰² The source of the term 'Urban Explorers' is unclear; the website www.simoncornwell.com/urbex carries the epithet 'Postmodern ramblers tired of the rural scene? Or overcurious trespassers? Whatever.' Other sites (as this is a web based phenomenon) include www.28dayslater.co.uk and www.urbexforums.co.uk

¹⁰³ This unofficial consumption is also reflected in some official productions and consumptions. See Stone, P *Consuming Dark Tourism: A Thanatological Perspective* *Annals of Tourism Research* 35 Number 2 (2008) pp 274-595

just beginning to understand their history, seeing the raw spaces that may someday be refurbished and outfitted with carefully selected curatorial text, but which now stand empty, eerie and fascinating. I necessarily became a tourist in history as well, through documents and stories. Much of the Cold War landscape is, of course, quite secret; this also turns history into a sort of voyeurism, a hopeful glimpse through curtains that rarely part for more than a moment'¹⁰⁴

He succinctly sums up the state of twentieth century military heritage: buildings on the periphery of contemporary society and a social anti-space. Spaces teetering on the brink of vanishing forever, before they are fully understood or recognised; Vanderbilt identifies the fork in the road that all sites and heritage bodies must navigate. One direction leads to restoration, preservation and presentation – with carefully selected curatorial text – while the other leads to oblivion: demolition, re-use or just forgotten.

Harvey very succinctly concludes that:

'Despite Orwell's statement that history is produced by the winners in society in order to support their moral, political and economic authority heritage today appears far less strident in its claims. Indeed, some have noted that heritage today often appears to be led by the losers in society. Certainly there appears to be a greater cogency and value given to the heritage of those that have been deprived of agency in the past – the downtrodden, the exploited and the defeated – even if this only scratches at the surface of the hegemonic power structures of authority'.¹⁰⁵

This turn in heritage away from large production of cultural memory, of the celebration of the past to affirm the future can be seen at Orford Ness. The site is presented in ambiguous terms, but the National Trust provides the salient interpretative information. The onus is therefore on the visitor to construct their own heritage, which taken together will form an overall narrative of the site. This synthesis of official/unofficial production has the potential to form legitimate and worthwhile interpretations of recent history, which may in turn be construed as heritage.

¹⁰⁴ Vanderbilt, T *Survival City: adventures amongst the ruins of atomic America* Princeton Architectural Press, 2002.: 21

¹⁰⁵ Harvey, D *The History of Heritage*: 32

Sara McDowell defines multiple types of memory: official, unofficial, public, private, collective, communal, local, national, societal, historical, emotional, postmemory, literal and exemplary¹⁰⁶. These memories of scale, varying from the personal and private to the national and public are analogous to, and not unlike the notion of heritage. Like memory, heritage can be selective in that they serve particular interests and particular ideologies in the present. Heritage is also subject to contestation and bound in the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of memory and identity. In the official production of heritage power is central, and those who wield the greatest power can influence, dictate or define what is remembered and consequently what is forgotten¹⁰⁷. The unofficial production and consumption of heritage subverts this official stranglehold, by deciding on a personal and niche level what is heritage and what is worthy of veneration, the unofficial consumer can sidestep official, linear narratives of power.

If we accept that the official agents of heritage (English Heritage, the National Trust etc.) are driven by an agenda outside that of simple altruism, it becomes clear why the military sites, and more generally *modern* sites struggle to fit into their narrative of history. Certainly history may be 'written by the winners'¹⁰⁸, but the selective nature of this history has to conform to an ideal perpetuated not only by the official producers, but the consumers as well. Heritage has an imagined image that the consumer expects – as a result, the producer must uphold this image. It is for this reason that when one says 'heritage' the subsequent responses are steeped in a long history: country houses, mining landscapes, and chocolate box scenes of a fiction that never really was.

By subverting these images of heritage we can reveal a lived and alternative landscape. If we take St Michael's Mount as an example: this property is owned and run by the National Trust, and maintained in a state of suspended age. Artefacts from every era gather dust in glass cabinets and carefully selected furniture tells a different story in each room. These assemblages narrate a fictional history that is consumed by visitors. This is heritage as it is currently constituted today –

¹⁰⁶ McDowell, S *Commemorating dead men: gendering the past and present in post-conflict Northern Ireland* *Gender, Place and Culture – A journal of Feminist Geography* 15 Number 4 (2008) 335-354: 40

¹⁰⁷ McDowell, S *Commemorating dead men*: 43

¹⁰⁸ Harvey, D *The History of Heritage*: 32

managed, eclectic and constrained. Twentieth century military sites pose more of a problem. They are sites of tension and conflict, and cannot be so easily managed; they are sites where a much larger metanarrative is at work, one that cannot simply be examined in isolation.

Unofficial production and consumption acknowledges this metanarrative and the site in context. Without the official dictation and signposting, one approaches twentieth century sites in a different way; certainly we are still experiencing sites within our own personal and cultural frame of reference, but it is a personal encounter. Free from narratives of official interpretation we can begin a more personal and subjective experience of these sites; further research will begin to return the history to a ruin, but it is the first spark of discovery that makes unofficial heritage so thrilling to experience.

The National Trust's management of Orford Ness, in a state of suspended decay somewhere between built form and total collapse provides a window through which one can see the past, without the signs that politely ask 'Please, do not sit on the furniture'... This hinterland of heritage, managed in an official way but presented in unofficial and ambiguous terms is perhaps most effective way a site of this type can effectively be managed. Financial concerns aside - the complete restoration of a site like Orford Ness would be quite unworkable. The loss of original equipment and the expertise to recreate facsimiles stops this plan in its infancy, and the addition of the ephemera of every day use (coffee cups, paperwork, pens etc) could not be reintroduced to the scene without looking staged and artificial. The only viable option is to suspend what is left, to maintain where possible and to let go where it is not. Eighty years after it was first proposed, Churchill's suggestion of preserving ruins, to ossify remains as a cue to cultural memory has been realised. Certainly our twentieth century ruins are not the battle scarred remains of Belgian gothic churches, shattered by the shellfire of the First World War; rather they form a quieter, less dramatic history: informing but not drowning out the broader narratives of the twentieth century.

In the following section I will examine the notions of matériel culture and conclude the literature review.

Materiel Culture: By Way of Conclusion

'Heritage is not a "thing", it is not a "site", building or any other material object; rather, it is a social construction. Heritage itself is a cultural process of engaging and experiencing'
(Cheape, Garden & McLean, 2009:104).

The last two decades have seen a radical shift in the paradigm of approaches to twentieth century heritage in the United Kingdom.

'At a time of global economic and political uncertainty and the emergent threat of capricious international terrorism and nuclear proliferation, the apparent certainties of the Cold War now even evoke a certain nostalgia, and its artefacts and structures are being recast as 'heritage'¹⁰⁹.

This is reflected not only in the literature across academic disciplines, from archaeology to geography and beyond; but also in the attitudes of heritage organisations in the public sector towards sites from the supermodernity. The foundation of this thesis is this desire for a better comprehension and appreciation of the nations more recent past.

Within academic writing and the heritage industry there is an emergent and established interest in the material culture of the twentieth century: particularly with reference to the military remains. There are hundreds of unrecognized sites that are in a state of decay in the corners of fields, or threatened by eager and unsympathetic developers¹¹⁰. In order to understand these sites we must first understand the context in which they were built and how we find them today and we must also understand the relationship between the landscape and culture.

Over the past decade, twentieth century defences, fortifications and experimental and military production sites have become an accepted part of the cultural heritage¹¹¹. This has led to new challenges in conservation for the preservation of concrete structures designed to last 'for the duration'. It has also necessitated a balance between cultural tourism and the emotions these sites often provoke; coupled with this is the liaison between heritage professionals and amateur groups

¹⁰⁹ Hughes, J *Deconstructing the Bomb: recent perspectives on nuclear history* British Journal for the History of Science 37 Number 4 (2004) 455-464: 456

¹¹⁰ See <http://www.rafha.co.uk/7.html> for further information concerning the demolition of sites; popular uses for Cold War 'bunkers' include data storage/archiving; airfields are often demolished for industrial units.

¹¹¹ Schofield, J 2002 *Materiel Culture* Routledge, 2002: 143

like *Subterranea Britannica*, who have been conducting surveys of twentieth century sites for the last thirty years – often unofficially.

In England and Wales, all legislature and non-legislative government advice relating to the historic environment currently hinges on the related issues of character (or typology) and significance. Sites are generally only considered for statutory protection through scheduling only where they constitute ‘buildings, structures or works or the remains thereof’ and where they are demonstrably of national importance¹¹². According to Schofield,

‘Wartime sites will present particular difficulties, given the scale of some operations, the conservation challenge which some structures present, and health and safety issues, not to mention classified information and access restrictions.’¹¹³.

An early exponent of contemporary ruins can be found in Paul Virilio, the French cultural theorist and urbanist. His text ‘Bunker Archaeology’, originally published in 1994, stemmed from an exhibition of the same name that opened in 1975 at the Decorative Art Museum. Like the exhibition, the book is composed almost entirely of photographs of the Atlantic Wall along the northern French coast, supplemented with the occasional interpretive line. Unlike the exhibition ‘Bunker Archaeology’, is precluded and concluded by five informative chapters where the origin of the ‘bunker’ and hardened construction are discussed at length.

The ‘Defense of Britain’ project ran from 1995 to 2002 under the auspices of both the Council for British Archaeology and English Heritage. In their own words: ‘the purpose of the Project was to record the 20th century militarised landscape of the United Kingdom, and to inform the responsible heritage agencies at both local and national level with a view to the future preservation of surviving structures’¹¹⁴. In its seven year life the project compiled a database of approximately 20,000 twentieth century sites across the United Kingdom: an impressive figure. On closer inspection however, a localised search of the database to a specific area – Penzance for instance – and only three sites are listed. Fieldwork undertaken previously by

¹¹² Schofield, J *Materiel Culture*: 146

¹¹³ Schofield, J *Materiel Culture*: 148

¹¹⁴<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/cba/projects/dob/> Council for British Archaeology Website, accessed 09/10/2009

myself has unearthed dozens of sites; is this simple oversight or endemic of the project as a whole?

While the Defense of Britain project has clearly missed some sites and buildings in its survey, the archive it has created is invaluable for the future preservation of twentieth century military constructions. Perhaps the most valuable result to emerge from the project is the text 'Cold War: building for nuclear confrontation' assembled and published by English Heritage. Falling somewhere between history book and textbook it provides a vital reference for the interpretation and understanding of the *sites in situ* as it were. Often overgrown, dilapidated and in varied stages of decay, understanding the original use of the concrete monolith before you can be challenging at best; 'Cold War' provides schematics, photographs and explanations of the types of site as they were first constructed. It is in this way that a building can go from cattle shed to radar receiver block at the turn of a page.

English Heritage utilises the Listing system to preserve sites or buildings of importance: 'listing helps us acknowledge and understand our shared history'. The process considers and celebrates a building's special architectural and historical interest, and also offers a modicum of protection when it comes to future planning applications. Age plays a key factor in the Listing Process: 'All buildings built before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition are listed, as are most of those built between 1700 and 1840. The criteria become tighter with time, so that post-1945 buildings have to be exceptionally important to be listed: a building normally has to be over thirty years old to be eligible for listing'¹¹⁵.

The following chapter approaches the research site in terms of the tensions outlined in this literature review; this is prefaced by a description of the site and an introduction to the methodology.

¹¹⁵ [Http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/protecting/heritage-protection/what-can-we-protect/listed-buildings/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/protecting/heritage-protection/what-can-we-protect/listed-buildings/) English Heritage Website, accessed 14/10/2009



Figure 3: The Ossified Remains of Coventry Cathedral: destroyed during the Blitz of 1940 (Photo: Andrew Walker)

3: RAF Dry Tree

Introduction

This chapter forms a combined methodology and discussion; utilising the narrative style of Sophia Davis¹¹⁶ and responding to Strange and Walley's¹¹⁷ demand for more sensitive and nuanced tools, the research site RAF Dry Tree will be approached from three discrete angles. Firstly, through phenomenology in the style of John Wylie – personal explorations of place on foot (and in the case of Dry Tree from the air) – through typology and archive work in the traditional way and finally in Chapter 4 through oral histories, which will be utilised to enliven and enrich the narratives of place.

The focus of my original research proposal was on the built and lived heritage of the Cold War, specifically the work and sites of the Royal Observer Corps. I began my exploratory research by contacting former Observers – but the results were not at all promising. There was a definite sentiment amongst the research subjects that the work of the Observer Corps didn't matter and that they were reticent to reply in any depth to my questions. This was quite a blow, as it seemed to sink the research at the first hurdle. Fortunately, through the School of Geography at the University of Exeter I was informed of a site from the Second World War that was about to undergo new interpretative and identification work.

Central to the new interpretative work was Elizabeth Haven, the Penryn based artist and designer that was liaising with Natural England on the Dry Tree project. Elizabeth (or Lizzy, as she prefers) has a long association with the site and has been involved in the Happidrome¹¹⁸ projects - a series of installation and performative art exhibitions that highlight alternative uses of space and approaches to heritage which are discussed in Chapter 6. Lizzy explained the project to me: Natural England wanted to 'open' the site up and improve access, but also to provide clearer information and interpretive material about the buildings, and building remains that can be found on site. It became known as the Dry Tree Building Identification Project, which it was - pursuing archive material

¹¹⁶ Davis, S *Military Landscapes and Secret Science*

¹¹⁷ Strange I, Walley, E *Cold War Heritage and the Conservation of Military Remains in Yorkshire*

¹¹⁸ <http://www.happidrome.org.uk>

and evidence on the ground to identify the main buildings on site. In this respect, the traditional heritage aspect of typology was fulfilled.

However, identifying buildings does not constitute a geography thesis. I wanted to extract more from the site, to examine it in terms of a heritage lost – or indeed, a heritage becoming. The remains of the RAF Dry Tree site covers approximately 900 square meters (0.2 acres) and contain almost fifty buildings, building remains and associated structures (Figure 4). All the features on site are constructed from a variety of materials – red brick, concrete block and cast concrete. Identifying the buildings provided a template on which Dry Tree could be understood in terms of its original function; missing from the picture (and missing for sixty years) were the people of Dry Tree - the engineers, builders, WAAFs, RAF personnel and scientists - the hoards of people that were associated with this small corner of the County. By pursuing these oral histories, the memories of Dry Tree could be stirred from their slumber. Enlivening the landscape with the imprints of people, the site would move beyond typology towards a lived narrative of place. The loss of memory at Dry Tree, both officially and on the ground, was almost total: the building remains hold their secrets and the National Archives and Public Records Office hold their confused papers in anonymous files. A lateral approach was therefore necessary: to approach the site on the ground, and repopulate it with the memories of its history.

Strange and Walley's¹¹⁹ call for 'more sensitive and nuanced tools with which to pursue, interpret and manage' contemporary heritage was an ever present maxim throughout the research. This is, after all, the aim of the research - to develop, or to begin to develop the new heritage toolset that Strange and Walley call for. This toolset is intended to be an alternative and comprehensive series of methods for approaching contemporary heritage sites. Building on the work of Sophia Davis and her phenomenological and autoethnographical account of Orford Ness, Dry Tree would be approached in a similar way¹²⁰. I would be fixed firmly within the research: the thesis would offer my first person experiences of the research site, and the research process itself. Given the nature of contemporary heritages, it

¹¹⁹ Strange I, Walley, E *Cold War Heritage and the Conservation of Military Remains in Yorkshire*: 167

¹²⁰ Davis, S *Military Landscapes and Secret Science*

seems only fitting that we discard the view from nowhere, and approach with fresh eyes and a view from here.

This thesis also represents a new archive of Dry Tree, created from the research and the gradual accretion of documents and oral histories. It is certainly not the first archive of the site – this is presumed to be lost, or still classed as ‘secret’ – and it by no means complete. This archive is a personal and shared construction that encapsulates the Dry Tree that I encountered in 2009-10.

With all of this in mind, the following chapter becomes an amalgamation of methodology, results and discussion; to carve it up into separate chapters would disrupt any narrative that begins to flow, to the detriment of the research. The first tension to be examined is that of approach in the form of a phenomenological enquiry.

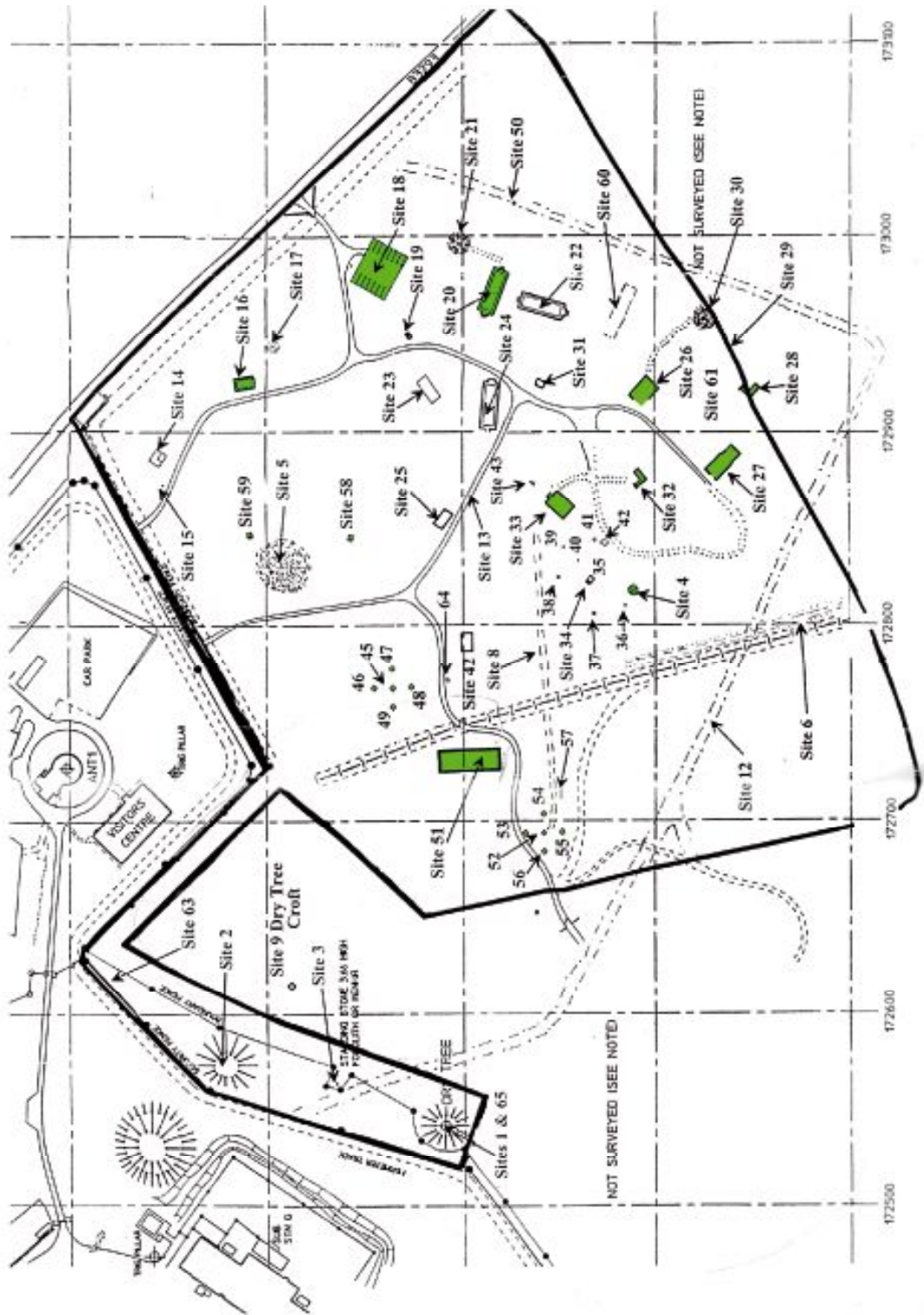


Figure 4: RAF Dry Tree site plan. Green buildings indicated those that NE wanted to identify. Taken from the HES Survey, Copyright BT PLC (1996)

A Phenomenological Enquiry

Phenomenology is a subjective method of interpreting place. Given the age of Dry Tree, I am not looking to interpret the site as perhaps one would with a Bronze Age barrow (of which Dry Tree has several...). It is the experience of place that constitutes many official and unofficial consumptions of heritage¹²¹. There is an inescapable emotive element to the military ruins of the twentieth century, which is again subjective: some buildings inspire a cold rush of fear when the torch flickers and falters in the dark. Others appear hum with the quiet comfort of safety. It is the personal response to these places that make them enthralling to visit; where I may be amazed at the sheer force of architecture in the concrete casting of the receiver block, others may find it visually offensive. Certainly Dry Tree does not fit the aesthetic norm of the Lizard Peninsula, with its granite cottages, white washed stone and a thoroughly traditional Cornish vernacular. Conversely however, for the entire twentieth century it has been a site of technical and communication innovation – perhaps, I thought it could be argued that the presence of science within the landscape is now part of the natural vernacular of the Lizard?

So where do we begin? It was approximately five years ago that I first visited the site. I had gone with a friend in the dead of night to take some photographs – long exposures with artificial lights employed to deceive the eye – and it was my first experience of not only a ruined space, but of a contemporary history that was so close and yet so unreachable. Sufficed to say this first visit was thrilling and left an impression on me that I have yet to shake. For me, Dry Tree is still that place. Hauntingly illuminated by the moon, illusively lit to the extent that distance has no meaning. Scale, too, became senseless as these impossible buildings in such a natural environment struggled to keep their walls above the vegetation. Peering tentatively into the receiver block (I didn't know it then), squinting through the shadows trying to discern... anything?

On these early visits the radar station thwarted us. Not in any melodramatic sense, like it resented our presence, more that it was difficult, both in our encounters and

¹²¹ Davis, S *Military Landscapes and Secret Science*, Wyle, J *The Spectral Geographies of W.G. Sebald, An essay on ascending Glastonbury Tor, A single day walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path and Landscape*. Also Tilley, C *A Phenomenology of Landscape*

in interpretation. Indeed, it was virtually impossible to comprehend the site: paths were overgrown and impassable and the buildings were covered with and full of dense, rotting vegetation. It was as exciting as it was impassable. These early experiences of Dry Tree were reminiscent of the work of John Wylie¹²² and also Tim Edensor's encounters with ruined spaces¹²³ and the notes I kept in various notebooks were written in the narrative format demonstrated by Wylie. This experiential approach was central to the way in which I approached the site.

This was the beginning of my relationship with the site. Subsequent visits before I undertook this research were few and far between, but with each foray into the undergrowth my understanding grew a little bit at a time. It was a struggle to clamber through, and often over, the dense vegetation that has recolonized the site, but invariably the reward was the same visceral thrill. To go from windswept and brightly lit exterior to an almost hallowed, dark and unnaturally cool interior was a sensation that Dry Tree could provide consistently and frequently. There was also the sharp sense of disappointment to the entry of a 'new' building; the sense that someone or many others had been there before, had 'beaten me to it' was a constant undercurrent. Perfectly understandable, given its age, that I shouldn't be the first person to step over the threshold, but it was still... disappointing. As was the state of the inside of those buildings that were intact: completely denuded of their original fixtures and fittings they had become empty spaces of pure imagination – non-spaces of the supermodernity¹²⁴. With little or no context with which to frame them, one could only understand them in fanciful terms. What was the purpose of this building? Who worked here? Why is it like this? These were all questions prompted by the empty spaces.

And that is how I experienced Dry Tree for five years: as a playground for the imagination and a theatre for the staging of elaborate plays of light onto film. It remained reassuringly unchanged, bar the quiet creep of the heathland. Wylie highlights the work of W.G. Sebald (1994, 1998, 1999, 2001) as the inspiration for

¹²² Wyle, J *The Spectral Geographies of W.G. Sebald, An essay on ascending Glastonbury Tor, A single day walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path*

¹²³ Edensor, T *The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins and Sensing the Ruin*

¹²⁴ Augé, M *Non-Places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* Verso, 1995.

recent geographical engagements with landscape writing¹²⁵. Wylie credits Sebald with creating an innovative literary form, one that:

‘Incorporates elements of existential memoir, autobiography, travel writing, cultural history and phantasmagoria. In and through this format Sebald conjures a strange metaphysics of landscape, one that succeeds in both pressing together and unraveling past and present, text and image, experience and memory. Like landscape itself, therefore, we are presented with fact, fiction, travelogue, memoir and lament, all at once’¹²⁶

It was this literary engagement, this approach for getting to know a place by experiencing it as minutely as possible and recording the observations and experiences that stemmed from it – coupled with Wylie’s own work¹²⁷ that provided the academic foundations for this thesis.

Only with the advent of this piece of research and the vigor with which Natural England were re-managing the site did things begin to change. Almost imperceptibly, subtle changes *were* being made: vegetation cleared here, a path remade there, until a site visit in November 2009 when everything was different. Ray Lawman of Natural England had decided he was going to locate and reinstate the original RAF footpaths on the site, in his own words to ‘improve access for everyone’. This marked the beginning of the end for *my* Dry Tree. Where before you could start in the car park and forge your own footpath through the undergrowth to the buildings and clamber around to your hearts content, now there were footpaths. Not the trodden footpaths of dog walkers, but the raised, graveled, edged footpaths of authority. The sort of footpath one is obliged to follow, for to leave it suggests some transgression; these new footpaths certainly did improve access throughout the site, but were they really a good thing? Their construction and reinstatement radically altered the way in which one could interact bodily with the site; an air of officialdom and ‘Please, Keep Off the Grass’ has begun to permeate.

At the same time the footpaths went in, some dramatic clearance took place on

¹²⁵ Wylie, J *The Spectral Geographies of W.G. Sebald* Cultural Geographies 14 (2007) 171–188: 207

¹²⁶ Wyle, J *The Spectral Geographies of W.G. Sebald*: 207 - 208

¹²⁷ Wylie, J *An essay on ascending Glastonbury Tor and A single day walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path and Landscape*

site. Building Number 33 on the HES plan (what I now know to be an Intermediate Stage Receiver Hall, see section 'Typology', but at the time was an impenetrable fortress of concrete blocks and trees) was exposed in its entirety. The remade footpath now takes you right to the door and the cavernous interior is now quite accessible, where before just to get to the entrance was no small feat. With each improvement in access, a little element of the mystery evaporated. It no longer seemed like an adventure, or somewhere to explore, more... like a walk in the country. This process of clearance and access is ongoing and the results are yet to be seen; they may still be satisfactory and the integrity of Dry Tree will prevail, but the site that I began to know and to explore and, to an extent - consider my own, is well and truly gone.

By far the most important building still standing at Dry Tree is the Receiver Block. During the War it would have been the focus of activity, the hub in which people would spend hours staring at screens, waiting for that tell tale blip. In the present day it is the most important, and the most imposing simply because it is so intact and so exposed. Throughout the research I spent a great deal of time both in, around and on top of the receiver block, gathering my thoughts on the research and letting my imagination go. Before this project, access to the inside of the receiver had always been barred to me - an iron fence and gate, securely padlocked had been erected by Natural England some years ago. Ray Lawman, the site manager for Natural England was more than willing to give me free access and I was given the combination lock number, the same dread disappointment was awaiting me inside. Not only had all the original equipment been removed - right down to the light fittings - but also the interior walls had been cut away, right down to the floor level. Like so many other Second World War installations of any real size at some point in the past a local farmer had reused it as a machinery store.

The stumpy, shattered remains of the internal walls did offer one small compensation - it was possible to compare the remaining footprint to the Subterranea Britannica plan of a Type B building and confirm its identity beyond any doubt. It was also possible to map the rooms off the plan onto the floor of the building. In doing so I could walk around the inside of the receiver block and know exactly where I *would* have been standing seventy years ago. I visited this building innumerable times throughout the research; in it I found some glimmer of what I

had had with the *old* Dry Tree. Here was a building that was (it seemed) exclusively mine, off limits to the general public. In its suspended decay, and given the floor plan I could imagine. I visited the receiver block at night only once (Figure 5), with a camera, tripod and torch; here the shadows would be of my own creation and having one of the main senses rendered almost redundant by the dark meant other sensations could be experienced in full. The most striking sensation was the silence: for me, pure and aching in its totality. Straining desperately to hear... something and being rewarded with perhaps, a slight breath of wind somewhere in the building. I began this evening of photography feeling not at all concerned about being there alone, but as the darkness became complete and the silence became louder, the wide-open space within the receiver block began to feel considerably smaller.

An almost animal fear began to creep into my bones: not a fear of the dark, but what was *in* the dark. Certainly, I wasn't afraid of ghosts or people or animals: there wasn't anything to be afraid of. Regardless a primeval, jaw-clenching unpleasantness gripped me, with every hair on the back of my neck standing on end. Calmly, as ever, I gathered my belongings and made my way outside, closing the gate behind me. From the safety of the car it was easy to look back and be cavalier about the whole experience, but on reflection it seemed to me that the ambience of the place shifted with the departure of natural light. Indeed,

‘A place takes place through a spectral event of displacing. There is place if there is *dislocation*, or sudden uncertainty regarding location in space and time, uncertainty regarding even the reliability of these measurements; in other words if there is a disturbing irruption of doubt or memory, a confounding of past, present and presence all witnessed by a troubled stricken figure, a figure haunted by this very process...’¹²⁸

Architectural features took on new sinister appearances and dark rooms became very dark rooms. Even the mysterious steel straps that hang from the ceiling began to look menacing.

This was not the last time I was unnerved by Dry Tree. The second occasion was in broad daylight and followed a similar story. Following my aerial fly-by and the

¹²⁸ Wyle, J *The Spectral Geographies of W.G. Sebald*: 180

identification of 'new' buildings outside the survey area I returned to site to investigate. With a copy of the aerial photograph, a torch and my notebook I made my way to approximately where I thought they were on the ground. I was rewarded almost immediately with just the hint of concrete in the trees. I pressed on, well off the path now and feeling much as I had done in the years before: adventurer and explorer. The results of my adventure though were quite mundane: a wartime toilet block, devoid of its roof, fittings, doors and windows. Put simply: the concrete shell of a toilet block. I photographed it and recorded its position on my ever-growing site plan. It was then that it struck me how odd it was that this toilet block should be in the middle of nowhere: it was so inconvenient. Which building, exactly was it serving? The main receiver block was some distance away, along with the rest of the site. I began exploring in the stand of trees adjacent to the toilets and was... surprised.

Nestled in the trees, invisible from both the air and ground was a large building. Covered with earth and thoroughly overgrown, it was little wonder I hadn't seen it before. Emboldened by purpose I strode forward and through the dogs-leg doorway, into a wall of blackness. Flicking the torch on to read in chalk on the wall 'This Building Now In Agricultural Use'- written who knows when and by whose hand it was impossible to say. Around another corner into the pitch dark, cursing as I tripped on a step. The familiar cold damp air started working its way into my clothes and the same roaring silence permeated the air. Crunching over gravel and glass I put the torch into each room and peered in: empty, empty, empty. One room had a hole in its floor, filled with water that disappeared to black, emerging out of it twisted and torn pieces of metal; I felt a certain relief that I had a reliable torch as to fall into this pit would have been lethal.

The central corridor opened onto a large, sunlit room: another entrance was open and the creeping vegetation was working its way inside. Another two rooms (Figure 6) fronted onto this large space: one was predictably empty; the other housed a complete air conditioning plant. Motors, fans, ducting all crawling with rust but all still present, remarkable given the savage demolition of the rest of the site. I recorded the floor plan for confirmation but I was fairly certain I was standing in the receiving room of a Type C receiver block (Figure 7) - the stand by to the Type B on the main site.

This done, I began to work my way back through the building to the way I had come in. Traveling from the well-lit portion into the wall of impenetrable dark made the torchlight seem quite ineffective. I gave each room another look to make sure I hadn't missed anything and pressed on. Yet again the darkness and the silence conspired to unnerve me. Again, it was not a fear of the dark, or a fear of anything – but a definite compulsion to leave. For the second time I felt like a trespasser at Dry Tree; like a guest that has overstayed their welcome. I have visited a number of Second World War and Cold War sites in the last five years and Dry Tree is the only one that has successfully managed to unnerve me and encourage me to leave.

However, these experiences are vital to understanding Dry Tree as it is today. It is not a sterile, museum piece but a living ruin. Animated by wildlife and vegetation, and brought to life by overactive imaginations it is the capacity of the site to thrill, to frighten and to inspire that make it such a valuable place, both in terms of experience and of heritage. It is also in its nature and current condition that make it such a difficult place to manage and interpret in terms of heritage; it is fundamentally a dangerous place. In order to make it accessible to the public and conform to numerous health and safety laws it would have to be unpicked and rebuilt. In doing so we would lose a substantial part of what inspired these sensual and emotive responses in me.

What became apparent to me when I was writing this thesis were the many different layers of ownership and interpretation that manifest themselves at Dry Tree. That I thought I had 'discovered' the Type C Receiver Building in the trees, abandoned in place since the end of the War was fanciful. I had found nothing - rather it had been a personal discovery. Certainly people had been there before me; the mysterious hand that had written 'Building in Agricultural Use' to suggest just one. Further evidence of use in the burned candle stumps that littered many of the rooms underlined the fact that I was not the first, if anything I was the last in a long succession of illicit visitors. This building underlines the phenomenological experience¹²⁹ at Dry Tree; it is without doubt the most intact and best surviving, coupled with the fact that it is away from the beaten track and damn near

¹²⁹ Wylie, J *Landscape*: 139 - 186

inaccessible conspire to make it a truly special place. When I later took a group of people out to Dry Tree on an experiential fieldtrip it was in this building that we spent the most time. The decay, ruination and obscurity of the structure – coupled with the absence of natural light – made it fertile ground for the imagination. The sensory aspects of ruination are all present here too: the smells of decay, the sounds buried in the silence and the colours that manifest themselves around rotting woodwork and rusting metal all come together in a concert of experience that, from my perspective at least, offered tantalizing clues to what had occurred in this building when it was originally in use and what had taken place in the intervening years to when I stepped over the threshold.

It was easy to be swept up in the excitement of exploration and the thrill of discovery but it became apparent that I was at the end of a long line of people that had experienced the site. Even now, given the glorious weather, it would be safe to say that there are people walking their dogs on Goonhilly Downs; walking amongst the ruins. Perhaps, not even noticing them anymore, perhaps they have blended into the background, as things tend to do if we are constantly exposed to them. Or perhaps the same dog walker has paused, shielding their eyes from the sun, and is making a study of one of the ruins. Perhaps with a furtive glance over their shoulder (are they transgressing?) they tentatively step off the path and approach the crumbling structure. It is in this way that relationships to the site are constantly formed, forged and forgotten. There is no real ownership at Dry Tree; certainly Natural England manage the site, but the structures, experiences and memories of the site are subjective and different for each visitor: throughout the research it defied both ownership and identification, remaining aloof amongst the heath. In this respect the site is challenging; it also boldly challenges aesthetically. After all, are these ruins not just bricks and mortar?

The two intact receiver buildings at Dry Tree are the two sites at which past and present come together; the suspended decay and suggestions of what came before are closest to the surface here. Their almost complete nature shortens the leap of imagination that has to be made to interpret and understand them within the context of not only the site itself, but within the broader context of the Second World War. While Dry Tree was one radar station in a chain that surrounded the British Isles, playing its own small and local role, we can begin to understand the

complex and interconnected web of associations that connected it with the rest of the country. Each of the receiver buildings has the ominously named PBX or Private Branch Exchange where the telephone lines would leave our site and connect it with the rest of the defense network. It is from this room, now denuded of its desks, telephones and wiring that the WAAF on duty would call in the targets to the Filter Room, who in turn passed them on to the local airfield to arrange the interception. Standing in the semi-darkness and the silence, one begins to wonder how many German pilots were consigned to a terrible fate from this room? Certainly it was war, but it was from this room that the executioner's call was made. This is something that has been apparent throughout the research: the operation of the radar stations was not a glamorous occupation, nor was there 'action'; it was a back room operation without the glory of the front line forces. There was no bloodshed at Dry Tree, no aggressive enemy action but it is inescapable that the work undertaken here resulted in the deaths of German pilots, navigators, airmen and in some instances, sailors.

But there was something clinical and cold about the work performed at Dry Tree, where people were reduced to an electronic blip on a screen to be reported and neutralized. Standing in the empty halls of the receiver buildings, they began to feel increasingly sinister. No longer the place that I frivolously explored in earlier years, it had begun to take on a far more serious tone. These were the buildings where death warrants were written, signed and executed. It is easy to entertain a thought like this now, seventy years after the site was operational looking back at a situation that I could not begin to understand in context or otherwise. The sensation of decay that permeated the physical fabric on the site had taken on this new and ominous meaning; there was far more death at Dry Tree than simply the built form and its memory.

Unsurprisingly my relationship with Dry Tree has changed dramatically over the course of the research. With the advent of my typological approach which is discussed later in the chapter, the mystery of the buildings began to evaporate. Certainly they took on new roles in my mind, for instance I could stand in the remains of one of the barrack huts and know that seventy years ago the RAF Regiment, whose duty it was to protect the site would have slept here. From the information gleaned from various archive sources I also knew that there would

have been one stove located centrally within the building to heat over a thousand square feet of space. Living locally and knowing how cold and unrelenting the winter weather is, a certain empathy began to form with the men who would have had to 'make do' not only with their meager ration of food, RAF issue bedding and poorly heated accommodation, but with the weather that races across Goonhilly Downs all year round. By understanding the buildings, informing my understanding with a typology, I was then able to embark on the phenomenological aspect and the two approaches together formed a complimentary strategy. In this way I was certain I was beginning to understand Dry Tree, and this understanding was allowing me to form the very beginnings of ideas concerning the management and interpretation of not only this site, but perhaps of others like it.

In the following section I will discuss the role of photography both within this thesis and as the starting point from which I first approached the site. Included in this is a discussion of the historic photographs that can be found in Chapter 5 which illustrate the site and people as they were when the station was operational.

The Role of Photography

This thesis contains a large number of photographs of RAF Dry Tree from its inception in 1940 to the present day. Also included are images of neighbouring sites on the Lizard and photographs of the people that worked at the radar stations. The main reason for the inclusion of so many pictures is because the written word can only describe *so far*. The political nature of photographs and photography must be considered when utilising images to convey the sensations the site was able to elicit; associated with this is the frank dishonesty of the camera and the ability of the *auteur* to create deliberate images of deception and gravity. It is from this perspective however, that I first approached the site, and as a young photographer the site offers a theatre for tricks of a light and shadow (*chiaroscuro*).

As my first interactions with the site were through photography, it seemed only fitting that photographs should play a central role in carrying not only the narrative of Dry Tree, but of my own experiences in researching this thesis. Like John Berger (2006, 2008 and 2009), I initially approached Dry Tree from an artistic perspective. My first 'study' of Dry Tree was in 2007 when a friend and

myself drove up to the site in the dead of night and lit the ruins of the buildings with portable coloured lights. At this time I had no idea what the station was, its original purpose seemingly lost in the mists of time. On developing the pictures and doing a bit of light research I began to realise that the National Nature Reserve on the Lizard held more than just a rare type of heathland; rather a whole complex of contextless, nameless and ruined structures. This was the beginning of my interest with all things man-made, occasionally subterranean and always concrete. As it was for Paul Virilio¹³⁰, a landscape of ruining buildings was revealed to me: frustratingly close to the surface of the everyday, but blinking just out of view – unless you were looking for it. Defense structures were everywhere, and none were safe from my nocturnal lens: from the nuclear-proof telephone exchange in the heart of Truro, to the ubiquitous and quite frightening (at night...) Royal Observer Corps post, three metres below the ground. Even multi-story car parks began to take on a sublime attraction; in the dead of night my friends and I made a study of concrete.

Throughout this period, I continued to return to Dry Tree. To explore a little further each time and to peer between the bars of the closed buildings: who knew what was left inside? Each building offered a different vista, but always the same theme of nature and concrete battling for dominance. The few daytime visits I made to Dry Tree during this time always left me feeling a little disappointed; the bright sunlight obliterated any trace of mystery or shadow and the buildings themselves seemed resigned to nature and to decay. This sentiment of disappointment only began to change with the beginning of the research for this thesis: no longer were the daytime ruins just that. They began to take on names, purposes and a lived history. In many respects the site enjoyed a rebirth in my mind: no longer a tangle of light and shadow, more... the remains of a radar station. The site at night kept its mystery and suspense, but the site by day had come to earth with a crash.

There was something comforting about the uniform nature of the weather at Dry Tree: it was nearly always windy and generally cold. It seemed that regardless of the time of year, day or night, the wind remained constant. On the few days in the

¹³⁰ Virilio, P *Bunker Archaeology* Princeton Architectural Press, 2009.

summer where the wind abated and the cloud cleared the ambience of the site shifted radically; the heath and gorse would be in flower and the scene became one of more natural wonder (think the *Secret Garden*) than bleak, windswept Peninsula. One of my visits to the site during the winter of 2009 found Dry Tree blanketed in several inches of snow and the drainage pond on the site frozen. Stepping out of the car into the virgin snow, and exploring the site in the almost artificial hush was new and yet to be repeated experience. One could almost believe that I was the first person to set foot on the site since it was closed, as the snow was untrodden and there was no one in sight.

The photographs that I have taken that are included in this thesis are, on the whole, daytime photographs detailing a portion of the site. This was done in order to locate specific sites and building remains and to give the reader an accurate impression of the remains on the ground. In the section on the *experience* of Dry Tree there are a number of less 'factual' pictures; one of the main receiver building is contrived and deliberately lit, very much in the vein of my early work at the site. The other was taken as it happened, on the discovery of partially burned candles in the smaller receiver building. These have been included with the intention of conveying to the reader at least the suggestion of what it is like to experience the site, where the insides of the buildings are *always* dark.

The historic photographs are included because they represent the remains of the archive of Dry Tree; dispersed, fragmentary and mysterious at best, these photographs allow for an unaltered, and largely unmediated view of the site. In them we find no veneer of publicity or metanarrative at play. This is particularly true of the photographs taken by the GPO during the construction of the Satellite Earth Station, because their focus was not the radar station but their own engineering project. As a result, we can look into the background of these pictures and see the radar station lying amongst the vegetation – the young gorse plants, the heath encroaching on footpaths - in its pre-demolished condition. Indeed, to date these are the only images 'on the ground' of the transmitter portion of the site. As a result, the medium of photography has preserved in perpetuity a view that has long been lost to the contemporary eye.

Also included in later sections are the photographs of the people of Dry Tree; black and white prints now seventy years old and digitised for posterity. I considered the

oral history of the site to be paramount to the understanding and interpretation, so it seemed only rational that the people of these oral histories, the principle actors as it were should appear. One particular snap of WAAFs sitting outside their billet captures a moment of repose; some are smoking cigarettes others are sharing a joke. In one small black and white print we, like Vanderbilt, part the curtains of history and are allowed to glimpse through – momentarily – to a split second, seventy years ago.

Photography also performed the vital task of bridging the gap between phenomenology and typology; from my earliest experiences at Dry Tree as a photographer and unofficial heritage consumer to cataloguing buildings and drawing up a site plan as a (semi) official heritage producer, photography has been invaluable. Acting in a dual capacity, photography captured moments of experience on the site – literal vignettes – those fleeting moments that made the site so vital, while at the same time provided a permanent record of the buildings, remains and traces left in the landscape.

In the next section I will approach the research site from a more conventional typological approach. Utilised by the heritage industry to identify and classify by *type*, this approach forms the foundations on which the rest of the research can be superimposed.

From a Typological Perspective

ty·pol·o·gy (tī-pŏl'ə-jē)

n. *pl.* **ty·pol·o·gies**

1. The study or systematic classification of types that have characteristics or traits in common¹³¹.

Throughout the research I had been in close contact with both Natural England who manage the site and Elizabeth Haven, a local artist and designer who had been instrumental in the setting up of the Happidrome project. Lizzy had already conducted a lot of research into the site, and had recently been commissioned by Natural England to compile a dossier identifying the buildings on site. I was invited to contribute and it became known as the Dry Tree Building Identification Project (this in depth typology can be found in Appendix 2); Lizzy and I worked

¹³¹ Oxford English Dictionary 2010

independently and pooled our resources at regular meetings and on an online blog. The resulting document was presented to Natural England in April 2010, following this I was invited to write the interpretative material for the buildings themselves. I began to compile my typology, identifying the buildings through archival research, comparison with other sites and consulting people that were involved with the construction and operation of these stations. It was my opinion that the first step in understanding the site was to create a typology, a site plan that would give the buildings and ruins meaning. Without an accurate and complete typology, my later enquiries into the experience of place and the oral histories would be without context. The following pages contain an overview of the site and a discussion of the identification processes.

A total of six buildings survive, more or less intact at Dry Tree. These are a Type B Receiver Block, a Type C Receiver Block, two Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) cubicles and two *almost* unidentified and similar buildings. These buildings were straightforward to identify for a number of reasons. Firstly their almost complete nature meant that their full size and layout could be appreciated. Secondly the Air Ministry constructed all of its buildings to a pattern - a pattern that did not change from site to site. As a result the dimensions alone were often enough to positively identify the buildings, the survival of an internal plan was just the icing on the cake,

Subterranea Britannica¹³² proved an invaluable archive of layouts, photographs and similar examples for comparison. It is from this starting point that I was able to immediately identify the intact buildings: these were dutifully marked up on the site plan derived from that found in the HES survey¹³³. These identifications left an alarming number of extant, but damaged buildings unidentified. These would prove to be more of a challenge and the identifications would take months to be forthcoming, and were derived from aerial flights over the site and archaeological digs inside it. Natural England had identified a number of key buildings they

¹³² Subterranea Britannica was formed in 1974 and is a society devoted to the study and investigation of man-made and man-used underground places. Most members have an interest in just one or two specific areas of research and investigation. As a result many members are experts in particular types of structures – Cold War bunkers, World War 2 military sites, icehouses and limestone quarries. <http://www.subbrit.org.uk/about.html>

¹³³ Johns, C Goonhilly Dry Tree Site: Archaeological Assessment Survey Cornwall County Council, 1999.

wanted interpreted, with their intention being to provide new interpretative material and a circular walk that visitors could embark on to 'take in' the whole site. I therefore made the identification of these buildings a priority. I consulted the Public Records Office and self professed experts in the field, while Lizzy extracted information from the staff of the RAF Museum in London. Between us we began to gather enough information to make a number of informed decisions about some of extant remains.

A real break came from a conversation with a member of Subterranea Britannica who had in his archive a number of comprehensive archaeological assessments of the 20th Century Military remains on the Isle of Man, published in 2005. These were forwarded to me and the section related to the Manx radar stations proved to be a comprehensive catalogue of not only dimensions, but photographs, original use and typical features of most of the buildings on the RAF Andreas site. Eagerly I began comparing these buildings to those found at Dry Tree; with the HES report and my own measurements I first examined the long, narrow buildings identified on the plan (Figure 4) as Sites 20, 22, 24 and 60. I was immediately rewarded with not only a photograph of an intact building, but the complete measurements and wartime usage. It was then possible to say that these buildings were the Defence Party Barrack Huts and would have been the living accommodation for the RAF Regiment, stationed on the site. The huts are described as '18' in span with seven or eight bays totalling 70-80' in length...'¹³⁴. Blackout porches at the entrance also identify the buildings; and an examination of the remains at Dry Tree confirms these features. It is also reasonable to assume that one of these buildings would have been the Air Ministry Works Department (AMWD) Offices, Stores and Workshop as their dimensions and configuration are the same. Without an original plan, or the testimony of an eyewitness it would be impossible however to say exactly which one (Figure 8).

The next major challenge came as I approached Sites 26 and 33 on the HES plan (Figure 4). These are some of the biggest and most imposing remains found at Dry Tree; block built and now roofless hulking monoliths rising out of the heath to force themselves onto the skyline. Overgrown with gorse, ivy and a particularly

¹³⁴ Francis, P *Isle of Man 20th Century Military Archaeology: RAF Andreas and Associated Sites* Manx Heritage Trust, 2005: 89

invasive creeper (I think it was convolvulus), largely inaccessible and utterly defiant of identification they sat silently, tauntingly even, in the landscape refusing to divulge their secrets. None of my usual contacts at SubBrit or the Radar Museum could be any help, one thought he might have seen 'a building like it' on the Shetland Islands but couldn't be sure. Uniformly, the experts¹³⁵ replied with a collective shoulder shrug. Returning to the site I took detailed pictures of the construction, and accurate measurements of the buildings external dimensions. Carefully noted and plans drawn, I was sadly still drawing a blank. I pinned my hopes of resolving this mystery on a visit to the National Archive in Kew.

Lizzy had already been through the files directly related to Dry Tree, finding some articles of interest. The 1940 site plan however, remained elusive. From online searches of the catalogue I had identified three possible files, which seemed to be assorted collections of papers relating to radar, these were simply titled as 'Extension to R.D.F. Chain' with a date range of 1939-40. It seemed reasonable to assume that some information relating to Dry Tree would be in these files.

I had a limited time at the National Archive at Kew but I had prepared in advance and knew which files I wanted to view. The documents were filed in three large, thick manila folders, each tied with a ribbon, and stuffed with thin, wartime paperwork. Given the time constraints there was no possible way I could look at each fragile document in detail; I confined myself to scanning for key phrases - Dry Tree, Cornwall and Goonhilly. Each drawing was also examined for any clues to identify the ones that remain on site.

As my hour was drawing to a close - success! Four hand drawn schematics relating to the Intermediate Stage Transmitter and Receiver Halls for Chain Home sites, stapled together in an anonymous file. These were photographed, returned to the archive and I had to leave the archive knowing for certain there was more.

On returning home and studying the photographs of the plans, comparison between the schematics and my own measurements on site revealed some likely correlations. Site 26 measured some 37'4" by my measurements, while the Air

¹³⁵ Particularly Mark Avons from Subterranea Britannica who I contacted through the mailing list. With an archive of photographs and information he was invaluable in assisting in the identification of buildings. Often he would confirm or refute my identifications, or offer suggestions where I might look to find the answer.

Ministry drawing for an Intermediate Stage Transmitter Hall gave a long axis of 36'. Measuring the building again after the archive visit revealed it to be no more and no less than 36' long. Likewise, Site 33 by my measurements has a long axis of 27'. The Air Ministry drawing for the Intermediate Receiver Hall has a long axis of 28'. Returning to site and reassessing the building revealed it to be exactly 28' in length. The reason for these discrepancies can only be attributed to trying to measure a twenty-eight foot long building, with a tape measure, on my own in the middle of winter on the windswept Downs. A willing assistant holding one end of the measure made all the difference.

I was reasonably certain in my identifications, but wanted to confirm it so there could be no doubt. Having the Air Ministry drawing with the proposed floor plan of the building it seemed reasonable to clear the soil and vegetation out of one of the ruins and expose the floor - if they matched, that would seal it. I emailed Ray Lawman of Natural England who is responsible for the site, and requested his permission to begin excavating in Site 33. Finally, a week later after an insufferable wait, on the 17th of February, permission came through.

Equipped with a shovel, trowel, measure and notebook I arrived on an uncharacteristically sunny and windless day. I began my excavations directly inside the entrance of the building (Figure 9). Seven years ago I participated in an afternoon of archaeology with the University of Manchester, and what little I remembered from this I put into effect at Dry Tree. It didn't take long before I was cleaning off two concrete blocks that had been bedded down into a compacted surface of sand and aggregate. I extended my search laterally along the walls, removing the soil and consistently arriving at the same compacted surface. I was expecting a cast concrete floor, with the remains of partition walls that would tally up neatly to the schematics taken from the archive. I was disappointed.

The only really identifiable find from the excavations came from the 1940s aggregate layer, alongside one of the concrete blocks. Like a badly staged scene from a budget documentary I found a piece of pottery in context, dated 1942 and bearing the Royal Crest. To my untrained eye it looked like the bottom of a saucer, perhaps dropped by the RAF officer of my imagination one evening during the war. Confused and rather disappointed by the absence of *anything* I took a step back and

examined the inside of the building afresh, and was able to draw some conclusions from my excavations:

1. A test pit in the middle of the building showed the site to be waterlogged in the extreme, with the water table just below the top layer of 1940s aggregate.
2. It therefore made sense that when this building was constructed a sand and gravel raft was poured and compacted, giving a firm foundation on which to build.
3. This waterlogged foundation would have been unsuitable to cast a concrete floor over, therefore the floor inside the building was raised off the ground, and suspended on fourteen piers, seven on each side of the long axis, the remains of which are still visible today.
4. Access to the building was gained up a flight of steps, the stand for which is likely to be the two set concrete blocks in the entrance way.
5. Two thirds of the way up the interior wall of the building is a line that runs all the way around, if one were standing on a raised floor this line would then be at waist height - the height of desks and workstations.

From these conclusions I believe it is possible to locate the building within the context and history of the site. It seems likely, given the construction technique and the 'checkered' block laying to camouflage that Sites 26 and 33 on the HES plan are some of the earliest, pre final stage buildings at Dry Tree; this was confirmed by Lizzy who sent details of the buildings and a site plan to Mike Dean at the RAF Museum. He observed that the buildings are consistent with the Intermediate type and are arranged in such a way that conforms to the earlier 'Line of Shoot' that Dry Tree monitored for enemy aircraft¹³⁶.

Through archival research and measurements 'on the ground', another two buildings had been tentatively identified (Sites 26 and 33). These represented the Intermediate stage of construction and would have housed the equipment that swept the skies for enemy aircraft while the final stage concrete buildings were constructed. Their use after the final stage was completed can only be speculated

¹³⁶ Personal email between Elizabeth Haven and Mike Dean

about, unless an eyewitness is forthcoming; it seems likely that they may have continued to function as stand-by buildings, given the activity surrounding them in the 1943 aerial photograph.

There are two buildings on site that almost defied identification throughout the research process, and it was not until the end of March that I managed to shed some light on their usage. Identified on the HES plan as Sites 28 and 32, these 'L' shaped buildings of block and brick construction are protected by an earth revetment and a blast wall covering the entrance (Figure 11). These buildings were originally identified by the HES as 'air raid shelters', a description that I disagreed with as soon as I read it. I had no substantiating evidence that I was right and that they were *not* air raid shelters, but it just struck me as unlikely - given their location on the site and proximity to each other. I consulted the experts at SubBrit and various other radar sites in the locality but failed to find any other similar building that Sites 28 and 32 could be compared to. It was only when I broadened my search to include airfield-building types that I found a likely candidate: at RAF Portreath there is a remarkably complete assemblage of wartime buildings and amongst them, several 'L-shaped' buildings of varying size. Disappointingly known as, and identified as... air raid shelters (Figure 12). I was genuinely surprised at the identification, but pleased at the same time - it was better that the building was identified and confirmed as such, rather than left uncertain.

The best contemporary overview of Dry Tree is an aerial photograph taken by the RAF in 1943; retrieved from the archive at the Imperial War Museum by Bill Scolding, another local artist and designer, this photograph provided a unique insight into the site as it was, prior to demolition for the Telstar Project¹³⁷. Taken from alongside the site at a reasonably long range, the entire complex is visible - including the now buried transmitter complex. Following a conversation about Dry

¹³⁷ The Telstar Project took place in 1962 and was the first use of a satellite to broadcast television pictures and other communications around the globe. The satellite was not geostationary and had to be tracked on the ground in order to transmit/receive. The first dish at Goonhilly - Arthur - was built to this end. It was for the construction of this aerial that the Dry Tree site was demolished. See FD Taylor 1964 *The Goonhilly Project* Institute of Electrical Engineers.

Tree with a friend who owns a light aircraft, I was offered the chance of a flight over the site to see if a view from above would help clear the layout of the site up.

So on Saturday the 13th of February we took off from Perranporth airfield (itself a relic of the Second World War, complete with air raid shelters, battle HQ and pill boxes), and flew under the clouds across the county, approaching Dry Tree in a similar way to the pilots that were contemporary with the station. Circling over the site, the building outlines and layout became clearer and made far more sense than the Historic Environment Service site plan; circling around, and flying across the site I took picture after picture of buildings in close up and panoramas capturing the site as a whole. As we made our final run, Andrew the pilot asked

‘Would you like a proper birds eye view?’

To which I replied

‘Well, I’ve already got quite a good one...’

He smiled and shook his head slightly. The ‘plane gave a slight lurch and rolled right over onto its side, the net effect of which left me looking straight down at the site (Figure 13). For the first few seconds I was, understandably, rather surprised - it felt as though I was hanging, suspended in air, looking down as only a bird can. After I came to my senses I began to take the oblique angle photographs. An unexpected side effect of crawling an airplane through the air on its side is the alarming effect on the human body. Within a few seconds my limbs and head felt desperately heavy as the blood was forced into the top half of my body. The photographs may have suffered as a result...

As we settled back down onto a more even keel I began to reflect on the experience. Not only had German reconnaissance pilots done exactly the same thing seventy years ago, but the hardship of sensation pilots on both sides must have gone through was immense. An hour wheeling around in a light aircraft was physically exhausting, performing the same act for hour after hour and day in, day out during the war must have been ruinous. Looking at footage and photographs after the flight of pilots waiting at the dispersal for the alarm, their reclined bodies in repose begin to look less ‘relaxing in the sun’ and more ‘completely exhausted’.

The next section returns to the autoethnographical/experiential mode of

encountering Dry Tree and discusses my return visit to the National Archive at Kew.

Return to the National Archive

On the 22nd of April 2010 I had the opportunity to return to the archive at Kew for a prolonged visit. I boarded the train in Penzance in the early hours of the morning and settled myself down with my notebooks to recap; I was hunting for any more official documentation, paperwork or plans that related to Dry Tree – and that might shed any more light on the typology of the site. Rather, that might verify my typology of the site. As the train made its inexorable way north, I left behind the warm, blue skies of Cornwall and passed into the overcast skies of the capital. Stepping from the train I was staggered at the temperature difference - it was cold, and I wasn't really dressed for it.

For my return visit to the archive I had drawn up a short list of files that I wanted to see, these were more general 'Extension to R.D.F. Chain' documents. As a starting point, it seemed reasonable as the files that related directly to Dry Tree had been examined by Lizzy and were found to be devoid of really helpful material. As I already knew which documents I wanted, I entered the reference numbers (all beginning AVIA7/) and they were listed on the screen.

I found my locker – 27E - and pulled out the manila envelopes, tied with cord. I had the same twist of excitement in my stomach that I had had on my first visit; the sensation that I might be at the very edge of a discovery that would further the story of Dry Tree beyond its current conjecture. Documents in hand I made my way to the seat by the window.

The table I was allocated to was a long, rectangular one divided into bays for the other avid researchers I was sharing it with. All with heads down, and an assortment of decaying pages being turned by delicate hands; a note here and a photograph (without the flash, please) there. I felt incongruous with my bulky, typed files. I settled down and began to open AVIA 7/258 – the unsorted Extension files, dated 1940/1. I turned page after impossibly thin page, reading a passage here, and a sentence there. All the while skimming for the 'buzz-words': Dry Tree, DSR Station 16, Goonhilly, and The Lizard... and found nothing. Page after page, file after file was filled with technical jottings, the site plans for various sites, building types, more technical blurb, but nothing relating to Dry Tree. Before I knew it two

hours had passed and I had been through my allotted three files with a fine-toothed comb: nothing. Returning them to the 'Returns' desk, I left the reading room and returned to the electronic catalogue and broadened my search.

Again, I found nothing. Well, specifically I found nothing relating to Dry Tree; I read many interesting documents, telegrams between stations and studied the familiar, neat drawings of the Air Ministry. The research however, was no further forward. A quick glance at my wristwatch indicated the time; Richard would be in the car park waiting. Documents returned and the cold dread of failure creeping into my bones I left the building and quickly found my transport and host.

An early start the next morning and Richard joined me in the archive at nine; with two of us in the reading room we could request six documents at a time, and I felt confident that today, we would make progress. Bundle after bundle of documents arrived, and I stopped noting down the reference numbers now: better to keep a note of the file that we find something in, I thought. But, like Groundhog Day, the scene became all too familiar. We had offset our request/collection times so that when my files arrived, Richard requested more. In this way we would have a constant stream of files, rather than prolonged periods of inactivity. More telegrams, drawings, letters, supply requests, maps, sketches, calibration reports - all for every other station in the Home Chain. It was almost as if Dry Tree had been excluded from the paper chain and its archive was stored elsewhere, completely inaccessible and unacknowledged.

We passed the whole day, flickering between the reading room and the document request computer. Dozens of files must have passed through our hands and countless hundreds of pages turned: all in vain. My return train was booked for early evening, so after a forlorn sandwich in Richards's kitchen, he dropped me to the train station and I embarked for home. On the train home I reflected over the last two days of intensive archival research and in my research diary, where I had earmarked space to write notes from the trip I simply wrote 'Bust', marked the page, and closed the covers. A sleep on the train did wonders for my temperament and when I awoke I again began to consider the archive, and Dry Tree. While it was frustrating that there was apparently nothing in the National Archive pertaining to Dry Tree (at least nothing currently accessible), another thought struck me: Dry Tree was notable by its absence.

There was a yawning silence in the archive where Dry Tree should have been. I did not think for a second that there was anything sinister concerning this silence, rather that it seemed fitting that the site should decay into the natural landscape, why should the archive not be allowed to fragment as well? The official archive of Dry Tree seemed to me to be forever lost, dispersed amongst nameless files or just destroyed. The only reason any of these documents seem to have survived is because they were closed by the Official Secrets Act until 1991; where the Act was less vice like in its control¹³⁸ the frenzy of post-War restructuring meant many of the documents were destroyed. Had the Dry Tree archive met the same fate, or was it still under lock and key? Given its suggested use as a ROTOR station in the 1950s it seemed almost possible that the files would remain secret until next year at the earliest.

So on Friday the 23rd April 2010 I stepped off the train in Penzance, sometime around midnight. Starting the car, and relieved to be back under my own steam I made my way home, singularly empty handed from my archive visit. Surprisingly however, I wasn't disappointed. Where before I had hit the archive like a hurricane and shot through three files in about an hour, I came away feeling certain that I had missed something – some clue, or drawing that would fill in the blanks. On this occasion however, I had spent nearly two full days in the reading room, taking my time to read each page. I came away feeling not like I had missed something; but that I had performed a thorough search and that there was nothing to miss. I simply hadn't found anything, because (it seemed) there was nothing to find. In the days that followed, I reflected on 'how can you be satisfied with finding nothing?' I tried to impress upon myself that it was better that I went and returned empty handed, than to have not gone and left some vital clue languishing in one of those ubiquitous manila envelopes.

In many respects, this lack of an archive seemed to verify what I had been doing. In lieu of an official history or paper trail, it became apparent that the work contained within this thesis represented the most accurate and comprehensive history of Dry Tree available. Through archival research and typological comparison I had

¹³⁸ RAE Farnborough, for instance, who's archive owes its existence to a chance discovery in a skip by a former employee; dozens of manila wallets containing all the Most Secret research from the war was being binned to make way for new filing cabinets. Duly rescued and re-housed, the Farnborough Air Sciences Trust was born

replaced the original 1940s site plan with a comprehensive one that covered all three phases of building, with building identifications as positive as I could make them (See Appendix 2). While it was a shame that there were no documents at Kew that related to Dry Tree that could have filled in some of the blanks, the every day use and maybe even the names of some of those stationed there, this archival absence gave me all the encouragement I needed to complete the research; regardless of the outcome of this thesis, I had managed to preserve and reawaken the radar station. Where the detail had been lost to the decades and the slow creep of vegetation, I had been successful in partially restoring it. The archive that I had accumulated was nowhere near the scale of those that can be found at Kew for other radar stations, but it at least provided a starting point.

I had approached Dry Tree on foot, from the air and from the archive, consulting experts and having my own archaeological dig. The results of all this is the comprehensive site plan I have adapted from the Historic Environment Service. They had missed some buildings out of their survey and misidentified many of the ones on site. The scope of their HES survey was also misleading; one would assume they had surveyed the extent of the radar station complex that is not buried beneath the BT satellite dishes. It was only after I had been on my 'photographic detail' that I became aware of a further three buildings *outside* the survey area - not miles away, just quite literally a few meters. The discovery of these buildings and their exploration is discussed in the previous section. I now had my typological approach complete; Dry Tree was a West Coast Chain Home station, an Air Ministry Experimental Station (AMES) Type 1. I had identified the key buildings on site, along with some of the more minor ones. The location of the accommodation for the RAF Regiment, officers and WAAFs had been plotted from photographs, site plans and Ordnance Survey maps. The development of the site from the earliest buildings to the final layout had been outlined utilizing sources as disparate as an RAF aerial photograph to a German Bomb Plot, taken during the earliest phase of construction.

A Changing Relationship

As I have discussed in earlier sections, I first approached RAF Dry Tree as a photographer, almost always at night, staging and setting long exposures with the use of coloured lamps and spots. As an unofficial and almost illicit consumer the

site was somewhere that seemed exclusively mine. When I visited Dry Tree at night, I invariably saw no other people. It was only when I began to visit the site by day, and began exploring the remains of the buildings with a keener historical interest that I began to encounter other official users of the site – dog walkers, ramblers and the occasional Natural England employee driving across the site in their distinctive Land Rover.

This was my relationship to the site for four years: somewhere to explore, to photograph and to experience. It was only with the advent of this research project and my change from unofficial heritage producer/consumer to semi-official researcher that my relationship to RAF Dry Tree changed. Synonymously with my change of status, a number of changes happened on the site; Natural England became far more proactive in their approach and buildings were cleared of vegetation and the old RAF paths were reinstated. These two simple actions – in and of themselves not devastating or dramatic – changed the site. Where before the unofficial paths and overgrown buildings had allowed a sense of freedom to prevail, these official lines drawn across the heathland bore the hallmarks of authority. During my early visits to the site the lack of paths had meant that no building or stand of trees was off limits, but now with the improved access and clearly defined footpaths order had been brought to the site.

If these footpaths were the indelible evidence of authority on the landscape, then to leave these footpaths, or to visit buildings not connected to a pathway was to defy this authority. Stepping off the paths was not an act of exploration now, but more an act of defiance. By improving the access to the RAF Dry Tree site Natural England seemed to have, conversely, restricted it at the same time.

Central also to my earlier experiences of Dry Tree was the overgrown and complete ruination of the site; the vegetation that denied access made each of the buildings unique. These unique moments and scenes across the site formed experiential watermarks; one could go to Site 33 and *know* that the building would be clogged with a mass of rotting wood, shrubs and trees. When I visited the site in November 2009 and walked down the recently reinstated footpaths I found myself at the entrance to Site 33. The crisp gravel path had taken me right to the door and inside was... nothing. All the vegetation had been cleared and the accumulated soil on the floor had been exposed. For the first time it was possible to walk inside the

buildings unhindered. The removal of the vegetation had exposed Site 33 for what it was – the shell of a building. Four walls, no roof and nothing left internally. In its decay and ruination the building had been so much more: a site for imagination, for experience and of mystery. The knowledge of what it really was, that it contained nothing was disappointing.

The re-management of RAF Dry Tree by Natural England had irrevocably altered my relationship to it. New footpaths were articulations of authority on the landscape: innocuous modes of controlling the flow of people through and around the site. The removal of the vegetation and the improved access to the buildings that had been forbidden for years served to remove some of the mystery of the site. Perhaps mystery is the wrong word; the subjective experience that I had come to expect, that had become familiar had been removed and the new experience that had been left in its place was one of straightforward knowledge. That is to say that I could no longer visit Site 33 and wonder, or imagine what lay behind the vegetation, what secrets the site still jealously held. I could visit Site 33 and look at its cavernous shell and see it in its entirety.

From a typological perspective however, a site gazetteer or a reference manual of building types is required. There is still no ‘official’ collection of drawings or blueprints, no single reference work from which one can identify the remains of buildings. Diffuse archive resources, drawings available on ‘SubBrit’ and the eyewitness accounts of surviving WAAFs are the current sources of information. If Dobinson¹³⁹ had included an appendix of building types and diagrams, ‘Building Radar’ would have been *the* comprehensive reference text with which to approach radar sites. As it currently stands, it now serves as a reference text of development.

What is remarkable about Dry Tree and many other similar sites around the country is the total official amnesia. Documents, plans, letters, and telegrams - the enormous paper chain that surrounds anything official has been dispersed. Whether they are lost forever or just languishing in some unknown archive it is impossible to say. Not only has the built form on site forgotten itself, the sheer concrete defying identification but also the archive one would expect to exist does

¹³⁹ Dobinson, C *Building Radar: forging Britain's early-warning chain 1935-45* English Heritage Monuments of War series published by Methuen, 2010.

not. With this in mind, the typological approach has begun to recreate the archive and memory of Dry Tree. While there is no official site plan, there is one drawn up between Lizzy and myself that identifies many of the buildings. Their functions are defined, but there is more to interpretation and understanding than just typology - I would have to go further.

From the typology it was possible to define exactly what took place in each of the identified structures and to understand exactly what role these buildings played not only within the context of the site but in a much broader context. Information received at Dry Tree would have been passed all around the South West region, until finally directing fighters to their targets. This, however, was all the typology could tell me. In order to understand in *more sensitive and nuanced* ways, I would have to pursue other avenues of enquiry.

In the next chapter I will begin to pursue these more sensitive and nuanced ways of understanding in the form of oral histories from Dry Tree.



Figure 5: The interior of the Type B Receiver Block: long exposure taken at midnight, torches used for illumination (Photo: Author)



Figure 6: The Receiver Room of the Type C Building: air conditioning plant can be found intact through the doorway (Photo: Author)

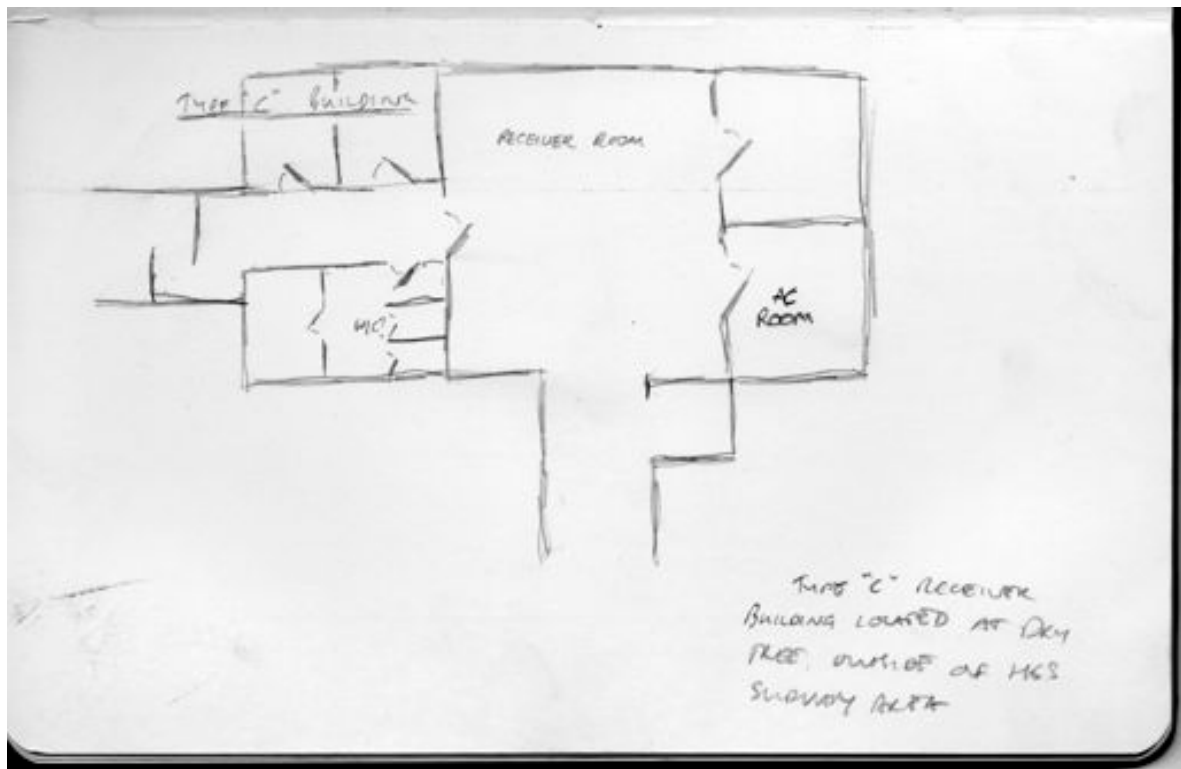


Figure 7: The interior of the 'newly discovered' Type C building in the undergrowth. This plan was drawn in the dark as I explored

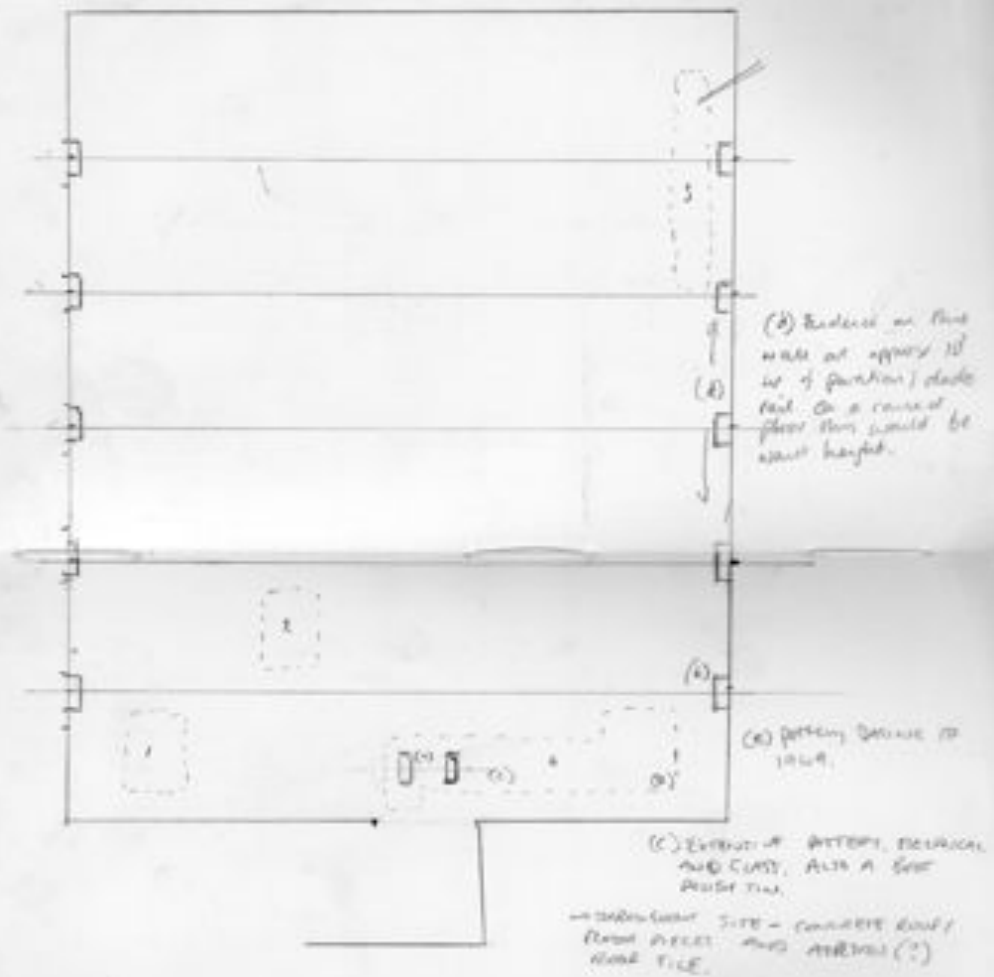


Figure 8: The remains of the RAF Regiment barrack hut (Photo: Author)



Figure 9: Excavating the topsoil of Site 33 (Photo: Author)

Site 53



TEST PIT 1

1. CEILING + SAND SURFACE
2. CEILING + SAND + FLOOR
3. CEILING + SAND + MIDDLE PIPE
4. CONCRETE BLOCK IN CEILING AND SAND COVERED BY PIPE ARCHIVE.

(C) ARE TWO BEHIND CONCRETE BLOCKS COVERED BY THE PIPE ARCHIVE, THESE WERE THE BASE OF THE STEPS BUT WOULD HAVE BEEN TOP OF THE RAISED FLOOR, SUPPORTED BY (L).

Figure 10: Excerpt from the research notebook - drawing of the archaeological dig on site.



Figure 11: Site 28, now confirmed as an Air Raid Shelter (Photo: Author)



Figure 12: Air Raid Shelter at RAF Portreath - note the intact brick escape tower at the far end (Photo: Richard E Flagg)



Figure 13: The site from the air on a 'Photographic Detail'. (Photo: Author)

4: The People of Dry Tree

When this chapter was first conceived, it took the form of a narrative of my experiences as I pursued the oral history of Dry Tree. While this was effective in my research notebook, it was wholly inadequate as a means of presenting the research. As a result, the oral histories are prefaced by a list of important characters, those that provided their histories and memories to this project. In this way, a reference list of the principle voices in the following chapter comes before the oral histories, so that the narrative of Dry Tree can be told in a linear, chronological manner.

The use of oral history in qualitative geographical research is an established technique¹⁴⁰. Adopted as a means of recording the aspects of social life that are often omitted from the conventional (written) record, oral history has its roots in anthropology, sociology and social history¹⁴¹. The oral histories that were pursued and collected for this thesis served a number of purposes; initially they began to fulfil Strange and Walley's (2007) criteria of more sensitive and nuanced tools, by informing the site historically and providing the context that allowed further reimagining in a phenomenological experience of place. The oral histories also contributed towards the swelling archive of Dry Tree that was created by the research for this thesis; in lieu of an official archive this thesis, my notebooks, photographs, sketches and experiences *became* the archive and the oral histories were essential in informing this archive with a lived history.

The official archive and history of RAF Dry Tree has been proven by this thesis to be either non-existent, or still closed under the Official Secrets Act. This loss of the history and narrative of the site has necessitated a new approach in telling the story of the site over the course of its history from functional radar station to nature reserve. This has been achieved through a series of vignettes – short, impressionistic scenes that focus on one moment or give a particular insight into a

¹⁴⁰ See for example Riley, M & Harvey, D *Landscape Archaeology, Heritage and the Community in Devon*

¹⁴¹ Jackson, P and Russell P *Life History Interviewing in The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Geography* Sage Publications Limited, 2010:173

character, idea or setting¹⁴². These vignettes have been compiled through oral histories and from them the narrative of the site is told through personal accounts at discrete moments in time. To tell the whole story from start to finish would be a formidable task that could fill many volumes, but would also be impossible given the fractured archive.

These vignettes have been drawn from the people that had an association with RAF Dry Tree, and the memories that they have curated for seventy years form another way of interacting with and relating to the research site. The oral histories are drawn from the inception of the site (in the account of Bill Penley's experience in the installation of the equipment), through the site as a functional station in the memories of Eva Capon, (a Radio Operator during the War) and the gradual decay of the site and its impact on the local community. This latter phase of the site is detailed by the memories of local residents.

Principle Voices

Dr Arnold Derrington: now retired, was a navigator during the Second World War. He had no direct contact with the radar station but it an example of wartime secrecy – he was unaware of the role Dry Tree played in guiding his aircraft back from a raid.

David Nancarrow: worked at the BT Earth Station at Goonhilly during the 1960s. A friend of my grandmother's, he is responsible for establishing some of the vital connections that filled in the blanks at Dry Tree.

William Hocking: an old colleague of David Nancarrow, who now lives in New Zealand. Hocking was born and raised on the Lizard and also worked for the GPO (BT) in the post-War period. He would provide some of the most interesting oral histories.

Desmond Burley: also born and raised on the Lizard, he farmed 'over the hill' from the radio masts up to the late eighties. He provided an alternative narrative of the site in its post-War years.

¹⁴² Lovell, WG *Memories of Fire: Eduardo Geleano and the Geography of Guatemala* Geoforum 37 (2006) 31–40. The use of vignettes in this article illustrates the experience of the Maya people and allows us to see them as survivors of three cycles of conquest.

Dr Malcolm Jones: another colleague of Nancarrow and Hocking, Dr Jones was also born and raised on the Lizard. With a scientific background, his memories of the site during its demolition were some of the most accurate and detailed. A connection to one of the other principal voices was only revealed later in the research.

Mrs. Anne Peacock: secretary of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force Association (WAAFA), she was one of my first points of contact for tracking down the former WAAFs that would have staffed Dry Tree. She also prepared an article to go into their magazine, detailing the project.

Eva Capon: a former WAAF living locally. She was my first real contact with the 'wartime' Dry Tree.

Gwenda Long: another former WAAF that I was unable to track down. Her oral history is taken from the BBC 'Peoples War' archive and it details the earliest phase of the site.

Dr Bill Penley: worked for the Air Ministry in a scientific capacity during the Second World War; he visited Dry Tree to assess its performance and to calibrate the equipment. He began his career at the beginning of the War as a radar scientist. By 1960 he was Director of the Royal Radar Establishment (RRE) and by 1976 was responsible for all Defence Research and the Defence Research and Development (R & D) Establishments.

The above notes do not provide a full history of each of the characters, but are intended as reference points to orient the reader. Further biographical information is provided in the text, and the oral histories are told in a chronological way - from construction to demolition. The story of Dry Tree is also further informed by extracts from archival documents.

The Oral History of Dry Tree

By approaching the site from a typological perspective I had made sense out of the ruins on site; mysterious and overgrown forms had given way to receiver buildings and barrack blocks. This awakening of the site and the subsequent understanding of its development throughout the War provided grounding on which to explore in greater depth. The other approaches to the site - from the air, at night and digging into the buildings provided further context and informed my personal relationship to the research site. However, the research and RAF Dry Tree were still thoroughly

grounded in the twenty first century: looking back through the lens of history and interpreting and experiencing from a skewed perspective. In order to further understand Dry Tree, to finally and comprehensively inform Strange and Walley's 'more sensitive and nuanced tools' I would have to reconnect with the past through the people surviving from the 1940s.

We begin our narrative with Dr Bill Penley, a scientific advisor to the Air Ministry during the war. Now aged 93, he was a contact that Lizzy had already made in her research into the site; my initial emails with him were dogged by technical information, and it was only when I gently guided him around to his experience of the site that he said:

'Duckworth and I spent over a week from the 20th to 30th July 1940 at Dry Tree and in the Lizard area, living at Coverack. We operated the equipment – tracking random aircraft to test the performance of the station. I do not think we could get special flights laid on. The transmission pattern was determined by the height of the aerials, 25ft or so above the surrounding flat ground, and not the height of the site above sea level which is what was required. We assumed that the site had been picked from an Ordnance map by someone who did not understand anything about radio wave propagation – not surprising at the time – we were all learning. The same had happened at Worth Matravers where we moved from Dundee in May 1940. Nothing could be done to improve the situation at Dry Tree so a new site had to be found near a cliff edge'.¹⁴³

I was astounded at the accuracy of his recall: he remembered in detail one week in July, seventy years ago. In this passage he is referring to the installation, calibration and use of the Chain Home Low direction finding apparatus. This was a rotating dish on a 20' high metal gantry - mentioned by Gwenda Long when she discusses the death of the Canadian mechanic; the mobile transmitter and the CHL are one and the same:

" I had one very upsetting thing, down in Cornwall, which I loved. They had some young Canadian mechanics come, and there was one, he was really really dishy and nice and everybody liked him. Unfortunately he went into the mobile transmitter and he didn't use a condenser (to absorb the charge, and therefore make the transmitter safe). He shot through the heavy metal screen out of this and

¹⁴³ Email from Bill Penley, 17/03/2010

was electrocuted and that, I think, was my first impact of something ghastly happening. They had a proper RAF funeral down in Cornwall, near the Lizard, and so we said we wanted to come to it. And of course the chap said 'Oh, we can't have women there, you'll just let everybody down'. We said 'No we won't, we're doing a man's job' and we insisted, and I'll never forget the RAF Regiment, when they fired their rifles – I could cry now – they fired the rifles, and that was my first reality, I think, of what goes on'.¹⁴⁴

Sadly, this was all Gwenda had to say about Dry Tree, and my attempts to trace her have been fruitless. Likewise, finding any further information about the 'dishy' Canadian mechanic has proved to be a dead end. It is unfortunate that I could not find Gwenda Long to discuss her memories in more detail as her comments about the mobile transmitter date her testament to the very earliest stages of development on site - probably to the Advanced Chain Home phase.

As the research began to draw together I remembered some of the documents I had extracted from the National Archive at Kew right at the very beginning – and with this the fractured remains of the archive were beginning to come back to life. These were telegrams and a drawing between the scientific advisors at Dry Tree and Worth Matravers describing the site as unsuitable. The letter to the Air Ministry Research Establishment (AMRE) is dated the 8th August 1940, nine days after Penley and Duckworth visited, and outlines the proposed replacement site in some detail with a site plan. Not only does this illustrate the speed at which things were developing during the war, but it also allows for a brief look into the Lizard Village of 1940:

'Fair road to within 100 yards of site; there is no public supply of water at Lizard Town. From the number of outlet pipes etc., I should imagine that house 'K' probably has a very good well. Water is apparently plentiful in the village (¼ mile) from individual wells. A public sewer runs down the cliff within 150 yards of the site, which is about 100 yards from the cliff'¹⁴⁵

Taken together Bill Penley, Gwenda Long and the PRO document begin to tell the story of the earliest phases of the site. Penley provides the details of the construction and inadequate siting, while Gwenda Long provides the lived detail:

¹⁴⁴ Gwenda Long, WW2 People's War ID: A7613255

¹⁴⁵ PRO Document Ref: AVIA 7/282

the day-to-day happenings and the remarkable events that took place at this hectic time. Two further details are illuminated by Long and the PRO document, these are the every day living conditions in the Lizard village - no mains water and open sewers and the attitude towards women during the War. Even though they were performing 'men's work', they were still seen (by this particular RAF Officer at least) as emotionally vulnerable and risky to take to a funeral. This is an example of Vanderbilt's glimpses through rarely parted curtains. It also emphasizes the decades that have elapsed since this document was composed - the same seventy years that make this site too young to be considered 'traditional' heritage also contain colossal changes both for the people and landscape.

The oral histories so far had informed my understanding of the formation of the site, from its humble origins as an Advanced station, to the failed attempt at fitting Dry Tree with the Chain Home Low equipment. My focus now began to turn to the site as it was in full operation during the war - as a Final Chain Home station. Again it was the BBC's 'Peoples War' archive that provided my first promising lead; a Mrs Eva Capon had submitted what she remembered of the site during the War:

'Sometime in 1944 - I think it was summer; I was posted again, back to Cornwall. This time to RAF Dry Tree, which is where Goonhilly Earth Station is now. Here we were issued with bicycles and we cycled all over the place - notably over to Kynance Cove - I have snaps of groups of us on the beach with wire netting in the background! I was thrilled to be back in Cornwall, as I loved it. I would come here to live in my old age. I remember officers from Predannack coming to our dances and going into Helston and Porthleven on the bus'.¹⁴⁶

This was the first oral history I had read that told a story about the site in a broader context; cycling around the locality and attending dances. A quick flick through the telephone directory found an E. Capon living in Mawnan Smith near Falmouth. I dispatched a letter outlining the project, asking if I could speak with her. While I awaited her reply, I received an email from William Hocking, formerly of the Lizard, now living in New Zealand, who contributed:

'Once, many years ago (!) on my way by train to join a ship in London I spoke to a chap who was stationed at Treleaver. He claimed that the lads used to lie naked

¹⁴⁶ Eva Capon, WW2 People's War ID: A5364100

under the aerials before venturing forth into the local dance halls on a Saturday night in the belief that they would get temporary sterilization, He laughed and said it didn't work!¹⁴⁷

This convergence of oral histories from two different sources began to tell the story of Dry Tree at its height. The lived experiences of the personnel that staffed the station, from the WAAFs who were issued with bicycles and attended the dances to the airmen of Treleaver who would try and sterilize themselves before venturing to the same dances, all conspired to tell the lived narrative of place and, in turn, inform the typological work undertaken.

I continued to correspond by letter with Eva Capon, while we discussed a date that would be suitable for us both to meet. In her letter dated the 25th March 2010 she replied to my broad question of her principal memory of her time at Dry Tree, she said:

'Getting to know and love Cornwall. Though as a young lady I never dreamt I would one day be able to come and live here. I remember we were issued with bicycles, and we would cycle all around the countryside, exploring wherever we wanted when we weren't on duty. We would also go swimming in the sea; and being here on VE Day was very special...'¹⁴⁸

Of Dry Tree itself, she said

'I don't remember anything particular about it. I was a Radio Operator and worked shifts; it was exciting and I and the other girls felt we were doing an important job...'¹⁴⁹

These were tantalizing details of the day-to-day life during wartime; it was as if I was being given tiny pieces of an enormous jigsaw puzzle, each one filling in the suggestion of a much bigger picture. Through approaching the site from a typological perspective, I had filled in much of the background and scenery of the picture; phenomenology had allowed me to imagine the site both now and as it might have been, but the people and detail that are so integral to completing the puzzle were still frustratingly absent. It also did not help that as yet I had only

¹⁴⁷ Email from William Hosking to David Nancarrow 12/03/2010

¹⁴⁸ Letter from Eva Capon 25/03/2010

¹⁴⁹ Letter from Eva Capon 25/03/2010

been able to find one surviving WAAF that had served at Dry Tree - I was certain there were more but tracking them down and making contact was proving increasingly frustrating.

On the 21st April 2010 I again telephoned Eva Capon and we arranged a time and date for our meeting. We had conversed via letter for the last few months but I felt it was now time to conduct an in depth conversation in person. We agreed on Saturday the 24th April, 'not too early, perhaps eleven' she said, and it was settled. I began to draw up a list of questions that I could start the conversation with and fall back on should the conversation falter. I also contacted Megan Westley, the deputy editor of Cornish World magazine who I had approached earlier in the research. She had expressed a keen interest in the work I had been doing and was interested by the oral history approach. She had asked if she might be able to accompany me on my visit to Mrs. Capon, and it struck me that two heads would be better than one in coaxing the history of Dry Tree out of this former WAAF.

When this chapter was conceived, I thought that the testimony and memories of Eva Capon would fit into the narrative of the site within this section, but when I undertook the interview it became apparent that it deserved a section to itself. As this thesis is as much about experience as it is about heritage, the whole event will be described in the following pages.

An Interview with Eva Capon

After countless telephone calls backward and forward, Eva Capon and I had finally settled on a date for our interview. The 24th April 2010 was to be the day, and at ten o'clock in the morning I got in the car, collected Megan from the Cornish World office, checked the map again and set off for Mawnan Smith, a linear development located not far from the University campus, it took just under an hour to get there. We turned into the cul-de-sac 'St Anne's' where Mrs Capon lives and parked the car on the drive. Complete with Dictaphone and notebooks (Figure 14), I pressed the doorbell and waited: nothing. A neighbour then appeared as if from nowhere and said:

'She has some trouble getting to the door, who are you, and I'll see if she's expecting you'

I explained, and producing a key he let himself into the house; moments later the neighbour reappeared and ushered us in. At the end of the entrance hall the first thing to confront us was an oil painting of a handsome young woman in a WAAF uniform, with her gaze fixed determinedly on the middle-distance. It boded well, I thought. I tapped on the glass of the first door on the left and a sprightly voice from inside called out 'Come In!' With a deep breath I pushed the door open and was hit by a wall of heat: the air might as well have been shimmering it was so *hot* in the front room. Each surface was piled with photographs, letters and books and in the middle of this organised chaos sat a woman with a keen light in her eyes. I introduced Megan and myself, and she invited us to sit down. At once, we each noticed the problem: there was only one spare chair in the room. Without a moment of hesitation instructions were issued:

'Megan if you would take my breakfast things out to the kitchen you may fetch yourself a chair from in there. Thank you.'

Moments later she returned labouring under the weight of what looked like a solid oak dining chair; I pitched in and carried it into the front room and we were all soon seated in a neat half circle with Eva Capon at its centre.

Catherine Degen¹⁵⁰ discusses the practicalities of interviewing older people and their method of conversation, remembering and narration of the self. According to Degen there is a unique narrative style employed by older people¹⁵¹ that moves between the past and present, seamlessly integrating the two. Indeed,

'Research participants used a much more circular form of small talk that brought in a great deal of information from the past, and was recited from a repertoire of narratives that were often strung together in long chains rather than interjected into a conversation where interlocutors alternated between the roles of speaker and listener'¹⁵²

Throughout the research I had been interviewing (either in person or over the telephone) old people that had some association with the Dry Tree site in either its Wartime role as a radar station or in the post-War years as a site of

¹⁵⁰ Degen, C Back to the Future: Temporality, Narrative and the Aging Self in: Hallam, E and Ingold, T. Berg (Eds.) Creativity and Cultural Improvisation 2007 223-229

¹⁵¹ Degen, C Back to the Future: Temporality, Narrative and the Aging Self: 226

¹⁵² Degen, C Back to the Future: Temporality, Narrative and the Aging Self: 227

demolition/occupation. In almost every conversation I had, like Degnen I found that narrative accounts would often open up for a short while without a beginning, ending or context. Stories were told like this as if the listener knew the tale already, leaving much background information unsaid and placing the listener in a potentially confusing position¹⁵³. This was one of the motivations for utilising the oral accounts as vignettes – without the context, beginning or ending, that is how the memories were recounted to me: as vivid and discrete moments, memories curated for decades and entrusted into the archive that was forming around the research.

As P.G. Wodehouse wrote, one often has the ‘dashed difficult problem of where to begin’¹⁵⁴, and this was true of the interview with Eva Capon. Where exactly does one begin? A complete transcript of the interview can be found in Appendix 1, and it quickly becomes evident that my carefully constructed plan for the interview came unravelled fairly early on. I had a list of fourteen ‘starter for ten’ questions that I thought would lead the conversation out and would allow for a comprehensive discussion of Dry Tree. Within minutes however it became apparent that Mrs. Capon would not be drawn; her answers were clipped and to the point. She responded to the questions but offered no further detail, and certainly didn’t open up and new lines of enquiry. My response to this was mixed; was she being difficult, or did she really not remember a great deal? My questions would have to be direct if they were going to get to the heart of the subject. It was almost as if when we weren’t asking her questions she was almost switched off, which generated some uneasy silences which echo on the recordings of the interview. All the texts I had read about conducting interviews for oral history went out of the window, and any structure that was planned followed suit; this is apparent in the transcript as the conversation bounds from one subject to another.

I began by asking why and how she had ‘joined up’ and where else she had served and her answers were direct. She had joined the WAAF out of a sense of duty and her service had taken her to Colchester and Lincoln. *How* she came to join up provided a far more expansive speech:

¹⁵³ Degnen, *C Back to the Future: Temporality, Narrative and the Aging Self*: 234

¹⁵⁴ Wodehouse, *PG Right Ho, Jeeves* Penguin 1999: 1

I joined up soon after I left school. Well at the beginning of the War I was in Denmark, my mother is Danish, and we were there when the War broke out, and we stayed there over the winter. In the spring, my father sent a telegram to say come back at the first instance, so we did. We got back here on the Saturday and the Germans went in on Monday night. My father had an inkling that something was happening because of movements, you know? So we came back and I suppose I was here in 1940 I suppose. I joined up in 1941. The Blitz started during the summer after we got back and so we went down to live in Devon to get away from the bombs so we were there until I joined up, which was in South Molton.¹⁵⁵

When I asked her how she had come to be a radar operator, Eva Capon replied:

Well now a friend of my fathers was in the Air Ministry and when I was joining up he said to my father 'tell us to ask to be a radio operator' which is what they called it at first because the radar was secret at the time and so that's how I got into it.¹⁵⁶

This was the first flicker of the beginning of Eva's association with Dry Tree; it was from this remark of her father's friend that began the series of events that began seventy years ago and climaxed in a sweltering front room in Mawnan Smith. After joining the WAAF as a Radio Operator, Mrs Capon undertook 'three or four weeks training', which she believes happened at Cranwell. She describes the training:

You worked shifts and did exercises; they had these things that they put into the receiver that made images that you would get if you were on a station. So you got the proper practice.¹⁵⁷

Following the discussion of her training we then began to discuss her career in the WAAF and the different stations she was posted to. There was some ambiguity around the dates of these postings, but from the mild confusion a history was beginning to emerge:

I was a year in Colchester, may have been about 1942 or three, but I can't remember now. I was a year in Colchester from 41-42, whether I came to Dry Tree after that- I think I went to Trelanvean first. So Dry Tree must have been later.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Eva Capon, 24/04/2010

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Eva Capon, 24/04/2010

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Eva Capon, 24/04/2010

Lets see, the first time I came down here I was at Trelanvean first, that must have been 1942 and then I came back later; I can't remember when I came to Dry Tree-'43? Possibly '43. But then it could have been '44. Now hold on a minute, I was down here at the end of the War so it must have been late '44 that I came to Dry Tree because I was there when VE Day was on, because I remember going into Helston.¹⁵⁸

From this slightly muddled collection of dates it was possible to chart Eva's time in Cornwall; serving first at Trelanvean (which utilised one pair of the dismantled masts from Dry Tree), moving out of the County before returning at the end of the War to be in Helston on VE Day, when 'everybody was rejoicing'. I was surprised by the revelation that she had been posted at Trelanvean, as she had never mentioned it, but then it seemed with Mrs Capon, if you didn't ask, she didn't volunteer.

I asked what she remembers of Trelanvean, and asked an unfortunately leading question: was it much the same as Dry Tree? She replied:

Oh yes, yes. Those stations were all much the same. The only difference was, when you were on duty, you were looking different ways. One looked one way and the other looked the other. I can't even remember now which was which.¹⁵⁹

When she said she couldn't remember which was which I hoped she was referring to the direction in which the stations looked, and not which station was Dry Tree. Now that her career was effectively mapped out, we began to discuss her time at Dry Tree, the living conditions, the work and the people. This made for some of the most revealing comments and for the briefest of moments brought the site back to life as a lived place again, juxtaposed to the ruined shells of buildings that stand on the site today.

Mrs Capon explained how she was billeted at the camp, and that the conditions were 'very good'. She explained that she was posted to Cornwall 'during the summer months, mostly, so when we weren't on duty there was lots of cycling down to the beach and so on'. I then asked Eva what the food was like, and whether she was affected by the ration:

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Eva Capon 24/04/2010

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Eva Capon, 24/04/2010

Well, its difficult for us to say because when you were in the services you had all you wanted any way, so the rationing didn't really impinge on us. I think people were better off down here because if you went out to tea you could get butter and cream.¹⁶⁰

Another glimmer of lived history appeared in what she was saying. It had never occurred to me before that service personnel were not affected by rationing or that the ration varied around the country: unless the butter and cream Mrs Capon eluded to was contraband in some way. As a way of jogging her memory I handed Eva a copy of the 1941 aerial photograph of the site, and asked if she could identify any of the buildings from her time there. She studied it for a moment and began:

This must be the transmitter building, you can tell from the type of aerial. That looked after itself, the mechanics worked in there. Judging by the aerials that must be the reception area, those are the receiving towers. That's where we were when we were on duty **(at this point I enquire about the early phase of the site – the ACH – and ask what she remembers these buildings being used for)**. Those were the RAF regiment buildings and stores for the radio equipment. We didn't have any cause to go there really. That's really all I can say about that.¹⁶¹

This was something of a relief; her memory of the towers was accurate and she had identified both the transmitter and receiver complexes. She also verified an assumption I had made during the typological work for Natural England: I had suggested that the RAF Regiment reused the ACH portions of the site, and this seems to have been correct. This identification of buildings began to bring the photograph of the site to life, and as Eva Capon described her duties in the receiver building, I knew that she was providing a vital testament that would inform the way I, and perhaps others, would approach the site. The gutted Type B receiver buildings began to come alive:

Well, you would have a shift of I suppose about four of us. You would have one person on the receiver and one doing the plotting and the other people would be making tea and so on, taking messages, well you took turns. You only did about an hour on receiver at a time because it was bad for your eyes to be on too long.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Eva Capon, 24/04/2010

¹⁶¹ Interview with Eva Capon, 24/04/2010

¹⁶² Interview with Eva Capon, 24/04/2010

When I asked Mrs Capon if there had been much action, she replied:

Not a lot at Dry Tree, no. It was mostly odd bits of shipping and things. I remember we had a 'Red Alert' one time and we thought we were going to be invaded but nothing happened.¹⁶³

I asked if there were a 'Red Warning', what would they have to do? She replied:

Well, it depends. If you were on duty then you just carried on working. I can't remember what we had to do if we were in the camp; I suppose we had some air raid shelter or something. I never remember anything happening.¹⁶⁴

This day-to-day narrative of the site was the missing piece of the Dry Tree puzzle. It would have been a challenge to imagine an operational radar station but instead the story was being told by someone that had been there. This is unusual in heritage terms, as the period of time between event and heritage is normally greater than a lifetime, but here I was discussing a heritage site with someone who had been posted there.

To conclude our discussion of Dry Tree itself, I enquired as to whether there had been any friction between the men and women at the site, as often there were WAAFs in charge of airmen. She replied:

Well we worked together; I had men on my shift when I was in charge. There were often say one or two men on a shift, but there were more women. I remember one time when these chaps from West Indies came in; when I was down here I had a West Indian chap on my shift. They seemed to take it as it came. Well, I never had any problems, put it that way.¹⁶⁵

I found this fascinating; was it because there was a war on, or was it the beginning of changing attitudes towards women in the workplace? Certainly there had been great gains during the First World War with the women in the munitions factories (canary girls), but in this instance the WAAFs were doing a 'man's job', as stated by Gwenda Long, and apparently had men under their command. This was something else that had never occurred to me; this conversation with Eva Capon was opening

¹⁶³ Interview with Eva Capon, 24/04/2010

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Eva Capon, 24/04/2010

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Eva Capon, 24/04/2010

my eyes to things I had never considered. More narratives had been added to the already confused mass at Dry Tree, now gender politics had reared its head.

By way of concluding the interview, after my questions were exhausted I asked Eva whether she thought sites like Dry Tree and Trellanvean should be preserved as historical sites and as heritage, she replied:

Well, there are an awful lot of them that's the trouble, all round the coast, you know. I think something should be preserved somewhere. I think there's one on the East Coast somewhere that they have preserved. I can't remember what its called now though... (*This is Bawdsey Manor*).¹⁶⁶

Her closing remark put me in mind of something that I had considered in my undergraduate dissertation: the ubiquity and sheer number of these buildings, stations and bunkers seemed to be to the detriment of their heritage eligibility. The survival of so many of these buildings in so many places around the country seems almost to lower the value of the remains themselves. In doing so, it seemed to me, the memories of people like Mrs Capon were also being reduced and sidelined for more exciting 'fighter ace' narratives. After all, 2010 is the seventieth anniversary of the Battle of Britain, the commemoration of the first successful radar test passed uncelebrated.

An hour after settling down in the furnace of her front room, I thanked Eva Capon for her time and she said if I wanted to know anything else then 'I knew where the telephone was'. I closed the front door and drove the short distance to Trebah Gardens, where Megan and I compared notes and discussed the interview over a cup of tea. We both agreed that it had been difficult, and that extracting the information had been like pulling teeth, but it had ultimately been a rewarding experience. While Eva Capon had been reluctant to divulge her memories, those that she did share enlivened the site beyond measure: life in the camp, life on site (either on or off duty) and the operations in the receiver block all slowly began to become vivid narratives of place.

There was also a sense of altruism in the collected memories of Eva Capon. While the site may be a partially ruined radar site now, in the future it has the potential

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Eva Capon, 24/04/2010

to be a celebrated heritage site, and when that time comes it seems likely to me that many of the WAAFs and RAF personnel that were stationed there will have passed away. The memories of Eva Capon however, had been captured and digitised for posterity. In this way, I had recorded the fleeting memories of experience of one WAAF living in Cornwall during the Second World War and serving on the Lizard radar stations; taken in concert with the other oral histories I had collected which are discussed in the preceding and following sections, a series of vignettes were beginning to tell the history of the site at discrete moments throughout its history. Where the official archive had disintegrated, the unofficial one I was creating was becoming partially coherent.

While it was a shame that Eva Capon was not more forthcoming in her memories, or indeed remembered any more of her time at Dry Tree, her accounts provided the every day experience of the radar station at Goonhilly. The nature of the memories that Eva Capon provided, and the way in which they were told were predicted by, and conformed to what Catherine Degnen had said; ultimately, there had been a decoupling of background information from the narrative being told, combined with 'irrelevant' information and shifting temporal frameworks¹⁶⁷. The net result of this was a series of very clear vignettes that told discrete stories within the narrative of Dry Tree. They also served to inform the less written about experiences of work on a radar station during the war.

Sitting with her in her front room was also my first (and last) personal contact with the radar station; it was a peculiar sensation to sit opposite a woman that had been in the receiver building seventy years ago where I had stood only a week ago, with both of us taking away radically different memories, and both of us experiencing completely different things. For her, it was a place of work, a place of intense activity where the War could be won or lost. For me, it is a place of study, of mystery, of light and shadow, where fiction was informed by fact. Reading through the transcript of the interview it struck me that the memories Eva Capon had imparted to me in person were more in depth reminiscences of the stories she had contributed to the BBC's People's War archive. There were a number of key events and key memories that Eva has curated for the last seventy years – the

¹⁶⁷ Degnen, C *Back to the Future: Temporality, Narrative and the Aging Self*: 228

dances, being in Helston on VE Day and the work in the receiver building. By speaking to her in person I had been given a more concise, in depth retelling of the same story; this would seem to be the way in which memory works – we only remember what we choose to remember and we keep those memories clearest and closest to ourselves.

The interview with Eva Capon and the exchange of letters beforehand formed another experiential chapter in the archive of Dry Tree – an archive that I had not only collated on paper from historical and contemporary sources, but also that I had come to embody, through the fieldwork on site and the interviewing process.

Gradually, I was compiling an archive of oral histories and memories that covered the site throughout its history. Lizzy had put me in contact with the scientific advisor, Penley, who had surveyed the site for the Air Ministry, I had spoken to the WAAFs who had been stationed there and my search for people who remembered the end of the site has drawing into focus. This search had taken my project right around the world, and slowly a complete oral history of the site from inception to dereliction was forming. I was also becoming aware of the fact that through the process of research I was generating a new archive around Dry Tree; certainly the original documentation appeared lost, and the official archive fragmented, but the archive I was establishing was regenerating the site. Typology and context were informing and were in turn being informed by the oral histories. No longer did I look clinically at the receiver site and see it simply as a Type 1 Chain Home radar complex, now it was a site of performativity, of lived experience.

The following section will continue the oral history of Dry Tree, examining the post-war years through conversations with local residents that remember the site as it shifted from radar station to satellite earth station and finally to nature reserve.

Post War Dry Tree: Oral Histories and Local Memories

While pursuing the oral history of Dry Tree I wrote to the Women's Auxiliary Air Force Association secretary Mrs. Peacock, asking her if she would be able to provide the names of any surviving WAAFs that had served at Dry Tree; I was beginning to lose hope in receiving a reply when on the 11th of March one arrived. Written in an impossibly neat hand on WAAF Association headed notepaper, Ann Peacock had written a very pleasant reply. She outlined a problem I had already

come across, that is the diffuse nature of the pool from which WAAFs were drawn: women from all over the Country, sent all around the Country on a regular basis- the problem of short posting. She did however offer:

‘The only suggestion I can put to you is to put a piece in our “mag.” asking about your request - unfortunately the next mag. doesn’t come out until late May-early June. I’ll go ahead with this and of course if I have any information meanwhile I will contact you’¹⁶⁸

This was undoubtedly a break - as far as I was aware membership to the WAAF Association was more or less automatic, so in one fell swoop I would be contacting every surviving WAAF in the country. The down side was the insufferable wait that disappointingly yielded no results; I did not hear from Mrs. Peacock again and also did not hear from any other WAAFs.

A chance remark to one of my grandmother’s friends opened up an interesting lead in my hunt for the history of Dry Tree. She put me in touch with a Dr Derrington, whom she said had been a pilot during the War, and had flown from the Lizard. Could this have been one of the RAF Officers from Predannack that attended the WAAF dances? Another letter went in the post, and his reply was prompt:

‘I did live in Marazion until 1939, and returned occasionally from college and for RAF leave- I flew as a Navigator with 2 Australian Squadron from Yorkshire and had little contact with the area’¹⁶⁹

Fascinating, and a vital piece of oral history had fallen in to my possession, but also a little disappointing. He concludes his letter by explaining his role on the aircraft:

‘I used Gee and H2S, but am not aware of any involvement with the Lizard area...’¹⁷⁰

In this one sentence, Derrington had surmised the level of secrecy that surrounded radar stations during the Second World War. The Gee and H2S systems that he refers to were navigation systems that relied on the transmission of radio signals from designated stations. Gee was a later development and required specific equipment; this was not installed at Dry Tree but can be found at RAF Sennen, near

¹⁶⁸ Letter from Mrs Peacock, 11/03/2010

¹⁶⁹ Letter from Dr Derrington, 25/02/2010

¹⁷⁰ Letter from Dr Derrington, 25/02/2010

Lands End. H2S utilized the radio signals from radar to provide accurate direction finding. Unbeknownst to Dr Derrington, it is likely that the signals from Dry Tree would have guided him home from one of his raids over Germany towards the end of the War. Although it is a system that he would have used every day, he was unaware of exactly how it worked. This level of secrecy permeates not only the physical remains of Dry Tree, but also the archives both at Kew and in people's lived experience.

Through oral history I had managed to tell some of the story of Dry Tree, from its inception and construction, right through its Wartime use, from the WAAF's that staffed the station to the navigators who were invisibly guided home by its signals. The decline of the site was the next chapter of the story to unfold to unfold.

William Hocking, who had provided the fascinating story about temporary sterilization, had been in touch with one of his former colleagues, a Dr Malcolm Jones who had lived close to Dry Tree after the War and remained on the Lizard until he finished University. He contacted me by telephone and had this to say:

'The site had become home¹⁷¹ to a group of Lithuanian fitters, who had been displaced by the Russians and were now camping at Dry Tree, working for the Air Ministry. Their job was to demolish the aerials and they did this climbing around like monkeys. The masts were easily 250' tall and they'd swing around right up at the top – they certainly weren't afraid of heights! Now there was really nothing to these masts, they were just like tree branches – thin like.

It was while they were demolishing one of the receiver towers that an accident happened- one of the fitters fell from the top platform to the next one down, must have been about 50' straight down. He landed heavily and had some broken bones. The ambulance men were called and when they arrived refused to go up and get him – well it was 200' off the ground! So his mates went up and got him, carried him down between a few of them: clinging on to the aerial with one hand, and carrying him with the other. They must have had no fear in them. I saw this myself when I was on holiday from university, and it's a memory that has stuck with me since. I remember a conversation afterwards between Mother and Father, where father described the Lithuanians as 'aliens', Mother asked what an alien was and

¹⁷¹ William Hocking was uncertain of a specific date for this, but maintains it was between 1945 and 1950. This tallies with accounts from other radar stations where the aerials were removed immediately after the War.

Father replied it was 'someone that doesn't believe in God!' To her dying day my mother believed and alien was someone that doesn't believe in God...'¹⁷²

This eyewitness account of the demolition of the aerials brings the process to life, and allows a glimpse of the site in its Post-War decline. It had become home to Lithuanian 'aliens' in the employ of the Air Ministry, engaged in the demolition by hand of the radar array. From the archive photographs we know that the bulk of the buildings were demolished with explosives and from this account we know that the aerials were removed by hand; this accounts for the absence of remains for much of the site. It was fundamentally 'cleaned away'. The later history of the site was now almost complete, apart from a chance conversation I had with a man that used to farm on the Lizard; when I mentioned Dry Tree he interrupted with: 'Dry Tree, Why do you want to go grubbing around there for?' I explained the presence of the radar station and its current remains, and the notion of putting the people back into the historical landscape. He thought for a second, then began:

'Dry Tree has been a shithole from the year I was born (1945). It was a camp for people bombed out during the war. There were two over our way. Dry Tree was the really poor one, really poor mind. They didn't have a penny to scratch their arses with. Trelowarren on the other hand was the one for people with some money. You could see them at school, the Dry Tree kids took a lot of stick, it couldn't have been easy...'¹⁷³

Where Dr. Jones had seen a moment in the latter phase of Dry Tree, Des Burley had seen the whole displacement camp from start to finish. As a schoolchild he had seen the suffering of the displaced people and in his mind that is what Dry Tree was - a camp for displaced people. He had no recollection of the radar station whatsoever. Quite remarkably I spoke to Mr. Burley again later in the research and passed on the remarks that Malcolm Jones had made concerning the site; I was surprised to say the least when Des came out with:

'Malcolm Jones? Lives in Watford? He's my cousin. Grew up with him. He's clever that boy, you should pay close attention...'¹⁷⁴

This was something I would come to term 'small world syndrome'. Two people,

¹⁷² Telephone call to Malcolm Jones, 24/03/2010

¹⁷³ Conversation with Desmond Burley, 26/03/2010

¹⁷⁴ Conversation with Desmond Burley, 26/03/2010

one living locally and the other hundreds of miles away, connected to me through a man in New Zealand. Doubtless there are comments to be made about globalization and the shrinking world, but suffice to say I was staggered by this connection.

Other sparks of lived history were forthcoming from the site itself. During my 'archaeological' (Figure 15) excavations of the Intermediate Receiver Building I uncovered a number of finds from the compacted 1940s layer. These included a great deal of electrical components and glass parts – conceivably from the valves that were essential to the operation of the radar – and a number of glass bottles. All fairly nondescript items that didn't really further the narrative of place. Right in the entrance to the building, below the accumulated topsoil was a veritable cache of wartime pottery. Shards of pottery that to my untrained eye seemed to fit together to the size of saucers; it didn't take much of an imaginative leap to then picture the WAAF or RAF officer on duty standing in the doorway, drinking his morning tea and dropping the saucer, leaving it shattered in the gravel. The larger pieces of pottery each carried the makers mark – Johnson Brothers – and were dated 1942, with the initial of George VI. There was a real thrill in holding something that conceivably had lain for seventy years untouched; it was entirely possible that the last time that saucer had been noticed by human eyes, and held by human hands was at the height of the Second World War. It was a direct and startling connection to the past.

Another such find, also just inside the door of the Intermediate Receiver Building, was a badly decayed but identifiable tin of boot polish. 'Cherry Blossom Black' was just legible under the mud and rust, and with some cleaning the colour became vivid again. Again, it was only a small step in the thought process to imagine a member of the RAF regiment 'bulling' his boots, using all of the polish and discarding the tin. I was only able to date this polish from the context in which it was found – on the 1940s layer along with the pottery shards (See Figure 15).

These sparks of something more, this hidden and to all intents and purposes lost layer of the landscape connected me directly with the Dry Tree that was operational during the war. These discarded relics, the ephemera of every day life hinted at the landscape lost, a history lost and a heritage ripe for examination. By digging through the surface layer that I had walked over countless times, I was in

direct contact with the Second World War. Certainly the buildings I had explored and identified by type were pseudo-gateways, literal portals back to the War, but the object buried in the dirt were new and unseen. Many eyes had viewed the buildings and countless feet had trudged through their insides but it seemed to me that I was the first person in seventy years to not only see, but to hold these relics. Another glimmer of a lived landscape was literally emerging from the soil, each fragment informing another minute piece of the narrative of Dry Tree.

Oral Histories of a Broader Context

It became apparent to me that to examine Dry Tree as a discrete site, extracted from the landscape and from its historical context would be folly; it was a small part of a much larger picture and narrative of landscape and place. The site itself was one of four radar stations squeezed on to the Lizard Peninsula during the Second World War, which in turn formed part of a much larger network of communication. Airfields, filter rooms and anti-aircraft batteries were all distant parts of the landscape that radar helped to form; aircraft, hanging in the air tens of miles away were dependant on the work of the radar stations. Like radio wave propagation, the effects of the Lizard radar stations increases exponentially from source, growing weaker but still present.

As it has been previously discussed, there were two Chain Home stations on the Lizard - Dry Tree and Trelanvean, each covering a Line of Shoot. There was also a Chain Home Low station at Bass Point (RAF Pen Olver); this station was built after the failure of the CHL set at Dry Tree, and as a result of the suggestions made by Dr Bill Penley. The last radar installation on the Lizard was the Ground Controlled Intercept (GCI) station at Treleaver. It is from here that the signals from the other stations were co-ordinated and the fighters would be directed to their targets.

This broader narrative of Dry Tree can be understood through the accounts of those that served in each of the other stations. Again, the BBC 'Peoples War' archive proved invaluable for furnishing the details. William Hocking had already provided a brief insight into life at Trelanvean, with the airmen lying under the transmitter array before going out to the dances. These glimmers of the lived station are invaluable if we are to approach these supermodern sites from a heritage perspective, one that can contribute to both the heritage and history of Dry Tree in a broader context. No station existed in isolation.

Our first memory from comes from the early years of the War and the very early days of radar, during the frantic construction stage the extension of the Home Chain. Written by Elizabeth Forster in 2008, she begins with her background: In 1940, after the disaster of Dunkirk, she volunteered to join the WAAF aged nineteen. Initially she was sent to the airfield at St Eval and worked as a plotter in the fighter operations room. Then, in spring 1941:

‘Three of us girls were moved to a hotel in Coverack. We were taken to a caravan in the middle of a field and shown how to operate an RDF screen. The caravan was dark and stuffy but it was very exciting to learn about this new, very secret technology. We had just a week to learn just enough and then more girls arrived to be taught by us. We soon moved from the caravan into a wooden building in the field...’

The formation of the GCI station at Treleaver, from its humble beginnings as a caravan to the wooden building is a familiar process in the story of radar. A similar series of events would have taken place at Dry Tree; sadly there is no archive of memories of this phase at the research site, the transition from Mobile Radio Unit to wooden buildings can only be imagined and inferred from this description of Treleaver. Of life off the station, Elizabeth Forster said:

‘We all lived in The Headland Hotel which was eventually taken over for the duration. It was a lovely spot for cliff walks when not on duty and in the winter for beachcombing and retrieving wood for the open fire. At one stage it was thought the Germans might attack us and we were all issued with guns and had to practice on the rocks below the headland. I wonder if any other WAAFs were armed in the UK? We found the old 303s too big and heavy so were issued with smaller Sten guns; we were supposed to carry the cartridge clip in our breast pocket, which was a bit difficult for those of us with fuller figures...’

This glimmer of just how *real* the War was, even in remote Cornwall is reinforced by Cyril Hart¹⁷⁵ in his oral history of Coverack – Cornish Oasis – in which he describes the ‘Coverack Blitz’, when a rogue German bomber emptied its load on the beach and cliffs of the village. In the chaos that followed the WAAFs billeted at

¹⁷⁵ Hart, C *Cornish Oasis: Biographical Chronicle of the Fishing Village of Coverack, Cornwall* Lizard Press 1991: 190

the Headland Hotel were instrumental in maintaining order and attending to the casualties.

The final oral history that informs the broader landscape context comes from Sheina Markham, who contributed her memories to the BBC archive in 2005. In the summer of 1945 Sheina was posted to RAF Pen Olver at Bass Point, the Chain Home Low station built at the site recommended by Dr Bill Penley, it was fitted with a 200' tower on which the paraboloid aerial was mounted. On this particular occasion her watch was on night duty and on arrival at the station they were told that a recent directive had been issued to the effect that if U-Boats surrendered they were required to surface, the Captain was to wave a white flag and the deck mounted gun was to be wound up and pointed skywards. In her own words:

'The night watch continued – then as dawn was breaking – there appeared on our screens something substantial – mainly because it was so close to the rocks which stretched along that part of the coast under the cliffs – we were concerned for 'its' safety, as there were many fishing vessels also around who needed our vigilance. The plot seemed to be steadily hugging the cliffs so the Supervisor 'volunteered' two WAAF to get as near to the cliff edge as possible and get a 'visual' on what 'it' was'

Figure 16 shows the station at Lizard Point and the sheer cliffs that surround it. Seeing the site where the mysterious contact was hugging the coastline, and the sheer drop the 'volunteered' WAAFs had to peer over brings the story to life; seeing the 200' tower visualises just how the radar stations would have dominated the skyline during the War. What happened next, in a quiet corner of Cornwall almost defies belief:

'So Jenny and I set off. When we emerged from the operations block we were met with a swirling sea mist and the dampness that it contained. This often occurred during the summer months, usually 'burning off' fairly quickly as the sun managed to penetrate. We could also hear the lighthouse warning – so it must have been pretty general – making a very murky and eerie beginning to the day. We went down the cliff grass, nearly to the edge, the first thing that we were conscious of was the sounds of a very noisy engine coming from the sea. Then out of the mist a black form broke through, under the cliffs almost beneath us and we recognised that it was a U-Boat! We were thunderstruck or paralysed with fear- I don't know which.

The Captain unfurled a white flag on seeing two figures in uniform (we all wore battle-dress at that time, so it was likely that he thought that we were men) – he then went to wind up the gun, at which point my friend Jenny almost knocked me and herself to the ground saying ‘He’s turning that gun on us, we shall be killed!’ We returned to the station and got Falmouth Coast Guard on line; they had already spotted the U-Boat and were on route- in a rowing boat! The watch ended at 0800hrs and we all walked back by the cliff path – a few of us realising that we had witnessed a small part of history...’

This incredible anecdote highlights the fact that the operations at the Lizard radar stations was not happening in isolation, but were linked to the far broader narratives of the Second World War. In the straightforward sense that the stations reported their contacts to the Filter Room at Plymouth, which contacted the relevant aerodromes, and the GCI station at Treleaver guided the fighters in to attack: this was evident from the early phase of the research. But the lived stories and histories from the other stations on the Lizard generate a narrative that steps outside of simple radar plotting. The WAAFs and RAF Officers were not confined to the perimeter of the radar stations or their billets but played a vital role in the local narratives of the Second World War. From the management of casualties following the Coverack Blitz to accepting the surrender of a German U-Boat, these events have taken on almost a folkloric element on the Lizard and in its villages. From the oral histories we are able to suggest names for some of these anonymous, unspoken heroes of the War.

A final insight into life at the radar stations on the Lizard can be seen in Figure 17. To date, this is the only image that has come to light¹⁷⁶ of the WAAFs that staffed not only the GCI station at Treleaver, but also the Lizard radar stations generally. These WAAFs are nameless, and the picture was not dated but being able to put faces to the stories and memories that are contained in the previous section. These are the faces of the people that lived the lives that have been recounted to me throughout the research; the women in Figure 17 went to dances, cycled around the Lizard and swam in the sea. This is when they were not sitting in the confined spaces of the receiver building, staring at the screens and waiting for the inevitable

¹⁷⁶ Contributed by Shaun Churchill, who runs the website www.ww2airfields.com after a query from myself.

'blip'. Who knows, perhaps one of the faces in the photograph is Sheina Markham, who accepted the surrender of a German U-Boat at the end of the War.

By looking outside the perimeter fence of Dry Tree we become aware of a landscape far larger than originally envisaged. While the oral histories in this section do not relate to Dry Tree (indeed, they make Dry Tree seem rather like a dull backwater...) they do 'part the curtains'¹⁷⁷ briefly on a colourful and lived landscape. The transience of the people who were 'short posted'¹⁷⁸ to Cornwall has the effect of only preserving the remarkable; mundane memories of the day to day seem to have dissolved into the ether. As a result, we have a sensational history of radar on the Lizard, which must be tempered with considerations of day-to-day banality.

The inclusion of other Lizard radar stations became of particular interest following my interview with Eva Capon, who had been stationed at both Trelanvean and Dry Tree. This movement of people within the network of defence buildings highlighted the fact that the stations did not operate in isolation; not only did they report over the telephone to a regional and national defence system, but the people themselves moved around within the same network – officially in the form of posting to stations and unofficially at the dances held in Helston. From this perspective I could no longer look at Dry Tree in isolation, as an island, but it should be viewed as a staging post along a long flow of people and information.

This chapter contains the voices of people that I met during my research of RAF Dry Tree; where it has been possible I have included as much biographical information about these 'voices' as it has been possible; but it is a fact that these voices are just that – *voices*, materially disembodied and emplaced within the text. These small voices form part of the new archive of Dry Tree, and through these vignettes it is possible for us to gaze into the past, albeit briefly, and experience the memory of the place. I experienced these voices during the research: at the time of interview, analysis and writing and they can now be experienced by the reader¹⁷⁹.

¹⁷⁷ Vanderbilt, T *Survival City*: 21

¹⁷⁸ Refers to the practice of posting staff to stations for a short duration; generally for security reasons the result was that RAF/WAAF personnel were moved around the country generally every couple of months.

¹⁷⁹ Lorimer H *Telling small stories: spaces of knowledge and the practice of geography* Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers Number 28 (2003) 197-217

Like the memories themselves the voices contained in the preceding pages will only come alive when they are conjured into being by another reader; in many respects, when they are read the site and the people are remembered again.

In this way, through the process of reading and remembering the site and reader enter a synthesis of becoming; in the moment of reading, thought or discussion a new archive of Dry Tree is formed as is informed by the voices disembodied in these pages. This is a living memory that slumbers in print and only comes alive when it is remembered by the reader.

In the following chapter I will look at the historic Dry Tree at a distance from a variety of sources. These include photographs from the BT archive, historic maps and a Second World War German reconnaissance photograph.

1. we are hard to do something

- Colchester - brother (mother's Daughters)
- 1st Denmark pre-war

2. the nursing - friends Father Fitzgerald
 Joined after leaving school.

6. on the camp. - very good (Bute) →
 Joined up 1941 → Land in Devon (P. Mather) Exeter

7. Red Wings. 41-42 Colchester

- 1942 - posted US.
- Freeman first: much the same all round
- only difference looking other ways
- Freeman 1942
- Dry Tree (43/44) - Last 44: Here for VE Day in Helston

→ Big camp, lots of huts. - Sep 8th 1945 married
 • Setting up home.

→ Home in the summer (cycling)

→ Recovery didn't improve.

- Shift 4 four; one on R. One plotting, making tea and so on, taking messages.
- One on R - bad for your eyes
- 3 weeks training at Cranwell? Wiltshire
- Not a lot of action - mostly shipping.
- Dull...?
- Some preservation, 1. more women than men
 • In charge of shift.

Figure 14: Excerpt from the Research Notebook - part of the interview with Eva Capon. It was a good job I had recorded the interview, as my notes were almost indecipherable.



Figure 15: Finds from the Excavation: assorted broken pottery, glassware, fuses, valves, boot polish, asbestos roofing tile... remains. (Photo: Author)



Figure 16: The CHL Station at Lizard Point (RAF Pen Olver). Mast on right of picture (Photo: Shaun Churchill)



Figure 17: WAAFs outside their billet at the Headland Hotel, Coverack (Photo: Shaun Churchill)

5: Touching From a Distance

A Photographic Archive

This chapter contains a selection of historic photographs drawn from the BT archive and a number of historic maps of the research site. These discrete moments in time, captured either by the camera or the cartographer allow us to look at the site, like Vanderbilt, through curtains that have parted only momentarily¹⁸⁰. These images and maps allow us to experience the site by-proxy in a detached and clinical manner, each however carries its own political subtext.

The archive of Dry Tree appears shattered and dispersed, or indeed may never have existed as a cogent entity in the first place. As a result, the locating of contemporary sources to provide any accurate information has proved something of a challenge. The National Archive at Kew is confined to technical details, calibration tests and telegrams between scientists complaining about the unsuitable nature of the site. Different archives were approached and the results were a little more promising. Bill Scolding, who has conducted some research into the site, donated an aerial photograph that he had extracted from the Imperial War Museum (Figure 18). This not only provided a complete image of the intact site as it was during the war, but also provided clues as to the development and phasing of buildings; ghosted out fence lines mark the early complex, made redundant as the site sprawled.



Figure 18: Detail of the 1943 RAF Aerial Photograph. (Photo: Imperial War Museum)

The far right of the site has been expertly rubbed out of the landscape; the BT

¹⁸⁰ Vanderbilt, T *Survival City*: 21

Satellite Earth Station has covered it in unrelenting concrete. This was the transmitter complex, where the radio waves were broadcast into the atmosphere. A Cornwall Archaeological Unit survey of the BT site in 1998 located a number of aerial mast bases and the concrete bases to some of the buildings. Nothing else remained. Half way between the transmitter and receiver sites is a substantial building: this was the Stand By Set House. It would have housed the diesel generator that would have supplied the station with electricity, if the connection to the National Grid failed. In line with this building is a field boundary, and it is everything to the left of this line that remains in some form or another on site.

The two 240' wooden receiver towers can be seen dominating the site, and it is these towers that were so often referred to in my conversations with local residents. Their domination of the skyline was complete, and for the first time this picture allowed me to see them in situ. The far left of the picture contains the majority of the site that remains today: the mess and ablutions block is clearly visible (now a Natural England car park), as are the footpaths, the barrack huts and the associated radar buildings. Compared to the remains in the field, there is a notable absence of some substantial buildings, visible in the 1943 aerial photograph, and completely robbed away on the ground today.

It would have been impossible to imagine the site as it looked without this photograph. Certainly there are other pictures of other sites, schematics, diagrams and measurements that could all be utilized to *conceive* how it must have looked, but this photograph illustrated it in black and white. It also proved to be more valuable than the elusive site plan. Although there are no labels on the aerial photograph, it is possible to identify a number of the buildings from their appearance alone. With this done, these types of buildings can be excluded from the list of possibilities for the unidentified sites, as there was never duplication of the same *type* of building on the same site.

In this way once the transmitter block and Stand By Set had been identified, it was possible to amend the HES site plan, which identified six buildings as 'Generator House' or 'Transmitter Block'. This was only marginally helpful; it was easy to say what some buildings were not, but very difficult to say with any certainty what they were. The use of this aerial photograph and the archive research at Kew allowed some of the blanks to be filled in.

British Telecom, formerly the General Post Office (GPO) has a long history, and an archive to match. When the Goonhilly site was selected for the Telstar Project and demolition began, someone from the GPO was on hand with a camera. For this reason the archive contained a number of photographs from the moment of destruction:



Figure 19: The Moment of Destruction - Stand By Set House. (Photo: BT Archive)

Figure 19 is the Stand By Set House in its final moments. The earth revetment removed, insides thrown outside and chaos all around. The date is rather unclear but it is believed that this was taken in 1961, upon the commencement of the Telstar Project. An indicator of scale can be seen on the far left of the picture in the form of the main doors to the building: dwarfed by the hulking scale of the concrete and brick walls, which in turn are reduced by the enormous blast tearing through it. It seems reasonable to conclude that the transmitter site received the same treatment, and it was in this way that it was so comprehensively erased from the landscape, leaving only the concrete rafts on which the buildings stood. Thankfully the BT site drew its perimeter where it did; otherwise the whole station could have been subsumed and vanished forever. As it is, we are left with a partial footprint, with a scattered memory: a memory that we are only now beginning to

reconstruct from diffuse archives around the country.

But more than this, the BT archive does not just contain images of the destruction of Dry Tree. It is full of images of the construction of the first satellite dish, Arthur, which would be invaluable to historians of the space age. It is in the background of these pictures that we see the last traces of the transmitter complex; denuded of its aerials and context, the wartime buildings stand at odds to the landscape of the future - satellite dishes, control towers and arc lights. Peering into the background of these photographs we can do two things: firstly, identify the position of some of the transmitter buildings and secondly look at them for what is very probably the last time. Unless a new, personal archive is forthcoming, these are the last images of the lost Dry Tree.



Figure 20: Intact Type B Transmitter at Dry Tree (Photo: BT Archive)

Figure 20 is the only other known photograph of the transmitter building at Dry Tree, the other is the 1941 RAF aerial photograph (Figure 18, far right). Its earth revetment removed and its aerials gone, it stands as a context-devoid hulk amongst the heath: a familiar mantra for Dry Tree. The site of the transmitter building now forms the foundations for the car park of BT's 'Futureworld'.



Figure 21: Standby Set House at Dry Tree (Photo: BT Archive)

Figure 21 shows the intact Standby Set House that would have provided the station with reserve power, should the connection to the National Grid fail. On the 1941 aerial photograph (Figure 18) it can be seen centrally located between the transmitter and receiver sites. It was also this building that provided the now iconic 'demolition' image Figure 19. It appears from this picture that in the early 1960s the Standby Set was still in use - note the electrical cables emanating from the roof, connecting to telegraph poles and arc lights.



Figure 22: Water Tower (left) and CH Sub Station (right) (Photo: BT Archive)

Figure 22 shows the last two structures to be identified from the BT archive material - the wartime water tower and electric sub station were vital to the operation of the radar station, and their identification and location complete the assemblage at Dry Tree. The substation acted as a stepping up point for the electricity entering the site from the National Grid; from here it was distributed to the transmitter and receiver complexes. From the chart of underground service cables, it seems likely that most of the 'personnel' buildings at Dry Tree were supplied directly from the National Grid, and the operations buildings were supplied via the substation.

In the following section I will approach Dry Tree from a cartographical perspective, through historic Ordnance Survey maps dating from the 1930s – 1970s.

From Historic Maps and German 'Bomb Plots'

With the inclusion of historic and contemporary maps it important to discuss the nature of maps, mapping and their political intent before examining the maps themselves. Produced by the Crown as the Ordnance Survey or the War Office, the historic maps contained in the following pages are deliberate in what they include, and what they exclude. The primary reason for this is the sensitivity of the site – tactically, militarily and in the post-war years under the terms of the Official Secrets Act. The objectivity and accuracy of maps cannot be divorced from the issues surrounding the politics of representation¹⁸¹. Indeed, Black argues that maps have played, and continue to play a major role in both international and domestic politics¹⁸². Roger Kain¹⁸³ has made a study of historic maps and the practice of map creation and has highlighted from examples the content that maps display, and what they obscure.

The site as one finds it today is fragmented and incomplete. All of the buildings are denuded of their original fittings, and with them their purpose has been lost. Equipped with the HES plan it was possible to walk the site and identify the sites of

¹⁸¹ Black, J *Maps and Politics* University of Chicago Press, 2000.

¹⁸² Black, J *Maps and Politics*: 10

¹⁸³ Kain, R *Maps and the assessment of parish rates in nineteenth-century England and Wales Imago Mundi: the International Journal for the History of Cartography* 50 Number 1 (1998) 156-173 and *The Role of Cadastral Surveys and Maps in Land Settlement from England Landscape Research* 27 Number 1 (2002) 11-24

buildings, and in some places the gaps where the buildings should have been. This survey, while useful in orienting oneself is incomplete and narrow in its scope - something that caught me out in the research. By confining myself to the HES survey I was missing a number of buildings. The site plan is a palimpsest of all the activity at Dry Tree; there is no indication of phasing, which buildings came first, or how the site developed into such a sprawling complex. The fact that the BT complex has subsumed half of the site did nothing to assist in analysis. It was for this reason that an alternative approach of consulting historic maps was utilised through the Edina Digimap. This in itself was also fraught with difficulty as a number of the maps from the War years were either not drawn, or are still withheld.

The first available map that was of any use was the National Grid 1:10560 1st Imperial Edition, dated 1963:

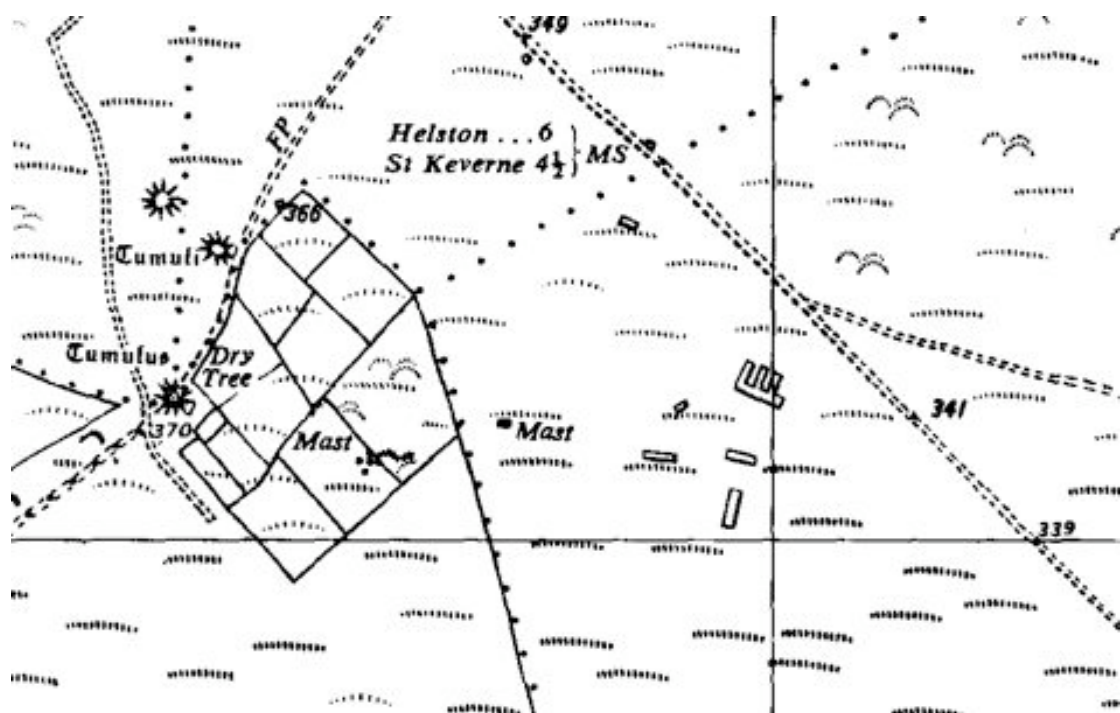


Figure 23: Dry Tree Site 1963 (Crown Copyright)

Figure 23 was drawn after the demolition of the buildings, but before the construction of the BT complex. It seems reasonable to assume the two 'masts' marked on the map are not associated with the radar station, as these were demolished in the immediate post-war period. What this particular map does demonstrate is the position, orientation and footprint of the building that has now become the Natural England car park. Also visible on the map are what would later

be identified as the barrack buildings. Notably absent from the map are the large Transmitter and Receiver buildings. Whether this is because of the sensitive nature of the site or some lack of attention to detail it is impossible to say. Clearly marked, and now lost to the 'Telstar Café and Garage' is the WAAF accommodation:

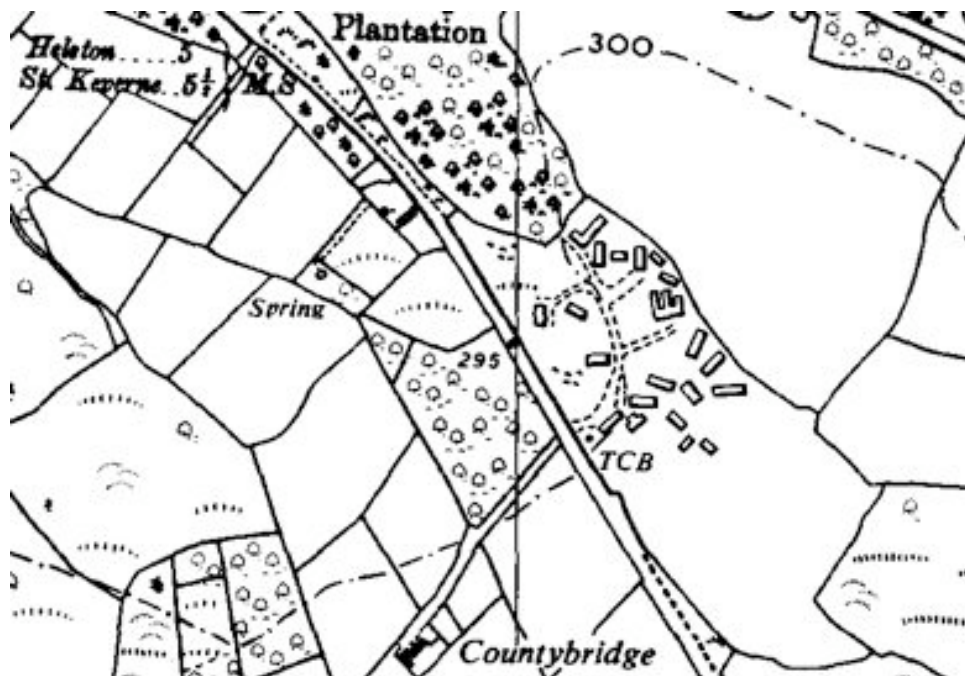


Figure 24: WAAF Accommodation on the 1963 map (Crown Copyright)

The collection of buildings (Figure 24) that can be seen in the centre of the image would have housed the WAAFs, RAF Officers and part of the technical contingent of the radar station. Its location was known before the research began, but its exact layout had been lost to the later buildings. It is interesting to note the same peculiar capital 'F' shaped building at the centre of the accommodation complex as the same building can be seen at the Dry Tree site proper; it has been concluded from the research, contributions from surviving personnel and an examination of other sites that the building located at Dry Tree was the barrack and ablutions building for the RAF Regiment posted to the site.

There was only one other map in the Digimap Historic Archive that contained the Dry Tree site in any detail. This was the National Grid 1:2500 National Survey 1943-95; this particular sheet was published in 1976. The level of detail is far greater and many more of the buildings are visible. The most striking change is the development of the BT Satellite Earth Station: the entire landscape has been altered by its inclusion and the BT fence line cleaves the old Dry Tree site in two.

Dry Tree is now referred to as 'Camp Site(disused)', and the RAF footpaths that thread their way between the buildings are now clearly marked on this series of map, where they were missing before. The increase in detail can be attributed to the increased scale of this particular map, but the exclusion of some of the buildings on the earlier sheet is difficult to reconcile.



Figure 25: Research Site on the 1976 National Survey (Crown Copyright)

Figure 25 is a good indication of the site as it is today. It has remained startlingly unchanged since 1976. After the tremendous building activity over the transmitter site (BT), the radar station has slumbered almost without change for thirty-four years. Certainly some of the field boundaries may have shifted around the site, but the buildings themselves have been suspended within the landscape, gradually becoming subsumed. What is noteworthy on this map is Site 26 on the HES plan is shown as still having a roof; this is indicated by the grey shading within its walls. This is of interest because when one visits the site today it is a comprehensive ruin, similar in dereliction to Site 33 on the plan. What took place between 1976 and the 1991 aerial survey remains a mystery.

This examination of historic maps provided a little more detail in the latter years of the site. It also identified the WAAF accommodation, and confirmed the identification of the ablutions/mess building on the main site. This can be deduced

from the footprint alone. It also highlighted the persistent secrecy that surrounds the site: the absence of detailed maps from the war years right into the post war period speaks volumes about the sensitive and vital nature of the work that took place here. The fact that the site was held on stand-by through the 1950s also goes some way to explaining the 'blank spot' on the map.

This blank spot was filled in by a most unlikely source: a German reconnaissance camera in 1940. Throughout the war, both axis and allies regularly made flights over the others territory to assess conditions and identify targets. In 1940 (Figure 26) one such flight was made by the German air force over Dry Tree, identified as a 'Sendeanlage' or 'Transmitter'. The resulting photograph was analysed by German Intelligence and a number of assumptions were made, and these annotate the photograph¹⁸⁴.

The annotations, translated from the German read: 1 Mast 2 Mast Under Construction 3 Broadcasting Centre Under Construction 4 Three Small Radio Masts 5 Transmitter and Premises 6 Sites for the Construction of Transmitter 7 Power Line. This photograph was taken in 1940 when the station at Dry Tree was in the intermediate stage; from it we can identify the early advanced site and the primary complex - this is nestled in the far right of the highlighted area. Moving towards the left the Receiver Block and aerials are under construction and in the far left the transmitter site.

From this piece of German espionage it is possible to define the early site and the early buildings. While the Ordnance Survey maps may not be available there are other sources that can be utilised to begin to build up a picture of the development of the site. With the early layout of the site clarified and understood, and the later Final Chain Home phase evident from the 1943 aerial photograph (See 'A Photographic Archive'), the palimpsest nature of the HES plan becomes more manageable and the distinct phases of building and operation are defined.

¹⁸⁴ The photograph was extracted from the Imperial War Museum Archive by Bill Scolding when he was preparing the original interpretative material for the site. He handed it to me, along with his other research when I began the project along with Lizzy for Natural England.



Figure 26: German Bomb Plot Card of Dry Tree (Source: Imperial War Museum)



Figure 27: Detail from BT Aerial Photograph c.1965 (Photo: BT Archive)

This (Figure 27) is the final photograph from the BT archive that gives an overview of the entire receiver site. Taken in the mid 1960s it shows the entire site that remains on the ground today. What is interesting to note is the state of decomposition and ruination - the buildings appear to be in exactly the same condition that one finds them today, suggesting that much of the damage happened in the immediate post-war period. The buildings and paths, indeed the whole site shown in this picture reflect the site as it is today, as seen in Figure 28, with the exception of the Natural England car park that covers the site of the ablutions block - demolished in Figure 28.



Figure 28: Detail of aerial photograph taken in 2010 (Photo: Author)

In the case of the maps there are deliberate inclusions and exclusions: whether this is due to the inherent secrecy that surrounded the site, or a question of scale is unclear. What is apparent and revealing is the absence of the map sheets from the years 1939-45. These maps were drawn and are still held in an archive, but have not been sanctioned for general release. This cartographic blank suggests that detailed mapping took place, but the site was considered sensitive enough for the sheets to remain unreleased.

The value of these maps and images is that they allow us to look at the development of the site in a fragmentary way. From the empty fields to the construction of the radar station, the missing sheets of the map, to the demolition – caught both in the BT images and the historic maps – the built narrative of Dry Tree is told in this disjointed way. In many respects these maps and photographs are analogous to the experience of the site in general: there is never a clear narrative, never just one narrative that reads in a linear form. Dry Tree is always fragmentary, always partial, always political and never straightforward. The experience of these maps and images was one of visceral thrill; the slow reveal of another piece of the puzzle and the mystery of missing maps, and the frustrating camera angle that never quite takes in the whole view.

The following chapter continues the theme of encountering the site from a distance by examining the Happidrome project; then, by returning to the site for another experiential experiment we can further inform RAF Dry Tree through the experience of others.

Chapter 6: Alternative Approaches

The Experience of Others

The following section will discuss an experiment of experience that took place during the research for this thesis. The intention of the experiment was to inform my own experiences of the site – and to add to the growing archive I was beginning to accumulate – with the experiences of others.

On the 2nd April 2010 I assembled as diverse a group of people as I could manage to embark on a phenomenological experiment at Dry Tree. The group consisted of a paramedic, a photographer and an author (as varied a group of people as I could arrange as I thought to draw on just one group of people may skew the resulting experience), and with very little idea of what we were going to do, or in what form the experiment would take place - or if it would even work, we met at Dry Tree on a surprisingly clement Friday afternoon. I provided the participants with paper and pencils and set them free amongst the heath to explore the site however they wished, and the initial results were a little surprising. The overwhelming consensus that the ruined parts of the site were exactly that - ruins amongst the landscape, and were simply not of interest. It was only the photographer, Philip that gave a positive response:

‘The way that the trees have crept into the interior space is a metaphor for the site being returned to nature...’

He wrote, of site 26. Indeed, of all the ruined sites at Dry Tree it was only sites 26 and 33 that generated any real response from the participants at all. The extreme level of decay and ruination, coupled with the forceful return of nature and the absence of context made these buildings fascinating. Of the air raid shelters, it was like watching children at a zoo - they stuck their heads inside, as one complained ‘oh, we can’t go in’ and trooped out again. The foundations of the barrack huts produced much the same response, walk in, quick turn round and out again.

Cynically I had saved what I thought to be the best until last, and when each of the buildings had been looked into and dismissed, I opened the padlocked gate on the Type B receiver building and ushered them inside. Immediately each of them went in a different direction to look at one thing or another. Kris, the paramedic,

bombarded me with questions - what went here? And is this where the receiver was? And how many people worked here? And I guess these were the toilets? For the first time that day he had shown a genuine interest - these were tangible, conceptualized remains that could be understood in terms of their original purpose, and Kris appeared hungry to understand.

Philip's photography lit this whole exchange between Kris and myself; the shutter opening and closing accompanied the unmistakable white flash of an SLR. He was photographing everything - from the ties in the ceiling that once carried the air conditioning ducts to Kris and myself in lively exchange. Indeed, following this Philip went on to say that the history of the space was not of interest, but the space itself was fascinating. He attributed this to the fact that it was an unusual space, stripped of meaning, with traces of the installation art that had preceded us, and he said, there was a hint of trespass. That the building was barred and padlocked made it exciting to be in, indeed he said 'if we had just been able to walk in, it would have been like any of the other buildings we've seen. It's a space of transgression, or something?' Throughout all this exchange, Richard had disappeared - no mean feat in a building that had been gutted to three large rooms: it's not as if there was somewhere for him to hide.

We found him in the far corner of the GPO Room - the large, pitch-black space at the end of the Receiver block. He was standing facing the wall, hands in pockets and looking very much like a statue. Kris picked him out with the torch and asked exactly what he thought he was doing. He explained that in the complete darkness, silence and coolness there was a feeling of sensory deprivation, and that the whole building began to take on new and slightly alarming proportions. Hard to quantify he said, but there were endless new sensations developing in the darkness; sensations that we had ruined by turning up and interrupting. This was intriguing, as my own experiments in the dark at Dry Tree had ended in dread and a need to get back into the light; clearly Richard was not perturbed by the complete and oppressive darkness.

We left the Receiver Block and there was a genuine thirst for more - were there any other intact buildings or was that it? I led the willing group off the main site, past the water reservoir and over the barbed wire fence that separated the Dry Tree site from the wider Downs. Pushing through the stand of trees they were

confronted with the hulking form of the 'recently discovered' Type C receiver building. With none of the trepidation I had when I came across it, they all bundled inside and explored room by room. Here, they said, was a building where the original purpose could be seen and understood: the extant fittings and scattered broken remains of electrical components told their own stories. Again, the camera flash lit much of the exploration. According to Philip this was a 'real space of imagination. It could be anything - it would make an awesome film set. Or a stage for a Gregory Crewdson photograph...' The elaborate patterns of use and reuse became apparent as we explored each room, from the daubing of 'building now in agricultural use' inside the doorway to the discovery of burned candles (Figure 29) in the Air Conditioning room.

In all, we spent a good hour in the Type C building, exploring each room and discussing its original use and its later re-use. Philip found the presence of candles quite sinister, echoing Hoskins' lament in 'the Making of the English Landscape' - who knows what kind of devilment has gone on here? Richard, who is no stranger to exploring twentieth century ruins (indeed he has been my accomplice many times) seemed particularly moved by the remains of the Type C receiver:

'Its like something you imagine you'd find in Eastern Europe somewhere. Its strange, abandoned as it is. Like everyone just got up, walked out and shut the door and its just decayed. And those candles- what sort of weird shit has been going on in here? Is it heritage? Should we be venerating it, or are we trespassing? Should it be left as it is as a place to experience like we have, or should it be preserved and restored? Lots of questions, how would you answer them?'

That last question was directed at me, and I simply opened my hands and smiled. They were all questions I had been confronted with throughout the course of the research; he had hit the proverbial nail right on the head. What was to be done with buildings like this, and had the experience of others informed the site, or simply muddied the picture? We retreated from the cool darkness of the Type C and made our way back to the car park, for a concluding discussion in lighter surroundings.

I approached the issues head on and asked how the site should be managed? What would make it worthwhile and interesting? And did the oral histories I had shared while we were exploring add anything to the picture? Immediately suggestions

were made: buildings should be numbered and a site plan provided in the car park, one that could be carried around. Intervention with the buildings should be kept to a minimum: maintain but not to modify. Signs and information boards should also be kept to a minimum - a simple numbered plaque should be sufficient and all the interpretative material should be provided in the leaflet. The ability to explore the site in one's own way was considered important to the participants: a structured 'tour' would 'ruin the adventure of the place'. The real interest of the site came from the intact buildings; the fact they were out of bounds made them exciting, and it was from these buildings that the most startling responses came. Richard also pointed out that devoid of its aerials and other fittings the site is difficult to imagine 'scale-wise': he suggested a composite image of the receiver aerials in situ alongside the Receiver Block would be of interest, and would put the context of scale back into what is a very low site.

In the next section I will look at the artist led platform known as the 'Happidrome Project' that is currently entering its third year of residence at RAF Dry Tree.

Happidrome

I now want to examine the alternative approaches and uses of heritage sites. In 'Change and Creation: historic land character 1950-2000', English Heritage outline the various techniques that would be employed in the research and representation of twentieth century sites, these include: film, photography, artistic interventions, oral histories, interviews, participant observation and public involvement, alongside archaeological fieldwork and more traditional studies of maps and aerial photographs¹⁸⁵. Through my own research I had largely drawn the same conclusions as to how Dry Tree should be approached, that is to say in such a comprehensive way as outlined by English Heritage. Of particular interest is the inclusion of 'artistic interventions', as this has already taken place at Dry Tree and is continuing to do so under the name of 'Happidrome'.

In its own words Happidrome is:

'...An experimental artist-led project platform, located at a disused WW2 radar base on Goonhilly Downs, Cornwall, UK. Since 2007 artists Sue Bowler and

¹⁸⁵ Buchli, V and Fairclough, G et al *Change and Creation: historic landscape character 1950-2000* English Heritage, 2004: 2

Elizabeth Masterton have been working with the support of the land manager, Natural England, to devise and present new work by invited artists in the 50+ extant radar buildings (some of which are intact, others open to the elements), on the Downs and online.

Inspired by the technological pioneering of previous inhabitants, HAPPIDROME is a space for free roaming artistic inquiry; a place to work together, to experiment, take risks, succeed and fail. It's a field laboratory for experiments in light and magic, stealth and shadow, noise and silence, infrared and ultraviolet, channelling the pioneering spirit of WW2 radar science and the stratospheric ambitions of the satellite era...'

This experimental artist led platform has run for three consecutive years (2007-9) and has hosted numerous artists, installations and experiments of experience. Utilising the Internet as a permanent display space, owing to the fleeting experience of some of the pieces, a complete catalogue can be found at <http://www.happidrome.org.uk>.

RAF Dry Tree, via Happidrome, has hosted various different installations and exhibitions, from Paul Carter and Alexandra Zierle's 'In Search of the Other' performance event to Nicholas Wootton's 'The Essential Guide to the Meaning of Life (Vol. 1)', an installation of stacked reference books relating to religion, theoretical physics and philosophy in the corner of the Type B receiver building. In this way the site is used as an exhibition space and as a theatre for performance. 'The 17', brainchild of Bill Drummond (see <http://the17.org/about.php>) has also performed at the site; sound, experience and vitally it seems, to share this experience are central to the way in which Happidrome has utilized the site. More simply, photography has been instrumental in capturing not only the performance events as they took place, but also the eccentric displays of nature and the built form that manifest on the site, from corrugated moss to creeping ivy on brickwork, Dry Tree offers unique and fleeting moments.

The success of the Happidrome project at Dry Tree seems to rest on the ambiguity of the space that is found there, and the uncertain nature of the heritage and history aspect. Spaces view as devoid of meaning, or only slightly understood encourage imaginative thought and make it an ideal site for performative art and installations. In my own experience, the more I learned about the site and the more

context and history that became apparent, the less I viewed the site as a backdrop for night photography. RAF Dry Tree became a radar station with multiple meanings; context and a historical narrative that made my earlier forays seem almost inappropriate.

It struck me as rather remarkable that English Heritage had produced the Change and Creation document in 2004, and as I began work on this thesis in 2009 I began to draw largely the same conclusions as to how the site should be approached. I given the document by my supervisor in early 2010, and it seemed to validate the work I had undertaken regarding Dry Tree. The criteria they list – film, oral histories, interviews, participant observation – were all activities that I had undertaken at the site, and the ‘artistic intervention’ had happened (and is continuing to happen) at Dry Tree. I began to see the research site not as somewhere that I was experimenting with contemporary heritage, but as a proving ground for the work of English Heritage, even if it was by proxy. The very fact that these heritage sites are new (relatively), contested and difficult to manage or quantify has meant that the modus operandi of ‘traditional’ heritage simply will not do, which is why new approaches are being examined by the arbiters of official production and consumption.

Concluding from a Distance

The preceding two chapters have dealt with a number of diffuse ideas and themes: from historic maps and photographs to the experimental artist platform known as Happidrome. The historic maps and images are valuable in tracing the development of the site; from the earliest construction detailed (in part) in the Ordnance Survey maps, the missing sheets of the War years and the last glimpse of the site found in the background of the BT photographs all form part of the narrative and contribute to the new archive of Dry Tree.

Experiencing these maps and photographs and the process of their discovery is analogous to the fieldwork at the research site itself; the gradual peeling away of layers and the momentary flash of revelation with each discovery. Like the work in the archive at Kew and the oral histories I gathered, the historic maps and photographs offered momentary glimpses into the history of the site and generated new narratives of secrecy, inclusion and exclusion. The maps were also representative of the frustrating nature of Dry Tree: the sheets that may contain an

accurate wartime site plan are still closed under the Official Secrets Act. It seemed that at each point when I may be drawing close to a new discovery about the site, it would flit away and remain illusive.

From a research perspective and as an experiential practice the historic maps and BT photographs form alternative vignettes to those created by the oral histories. The maps allow a brief look at the incomplete site and expose alternative narratives of power and secrecy, whereas the historic photographs allow us to look at the research site after it has been decommissioned; the photographs in the BT archive are the only images of the transmitter complex at Dry Tree, and as such are vital to the experience of the site 'on the ground', and its future reimaging. These sources 'from a distance' allow us to know the site in a different mode. Utilising RAF Dry Tree as both an exhibition space and inspiration has generated an eclectic mix of artworks; from sculpture to sensory experience to photography of the natural competing with concrete.

These alternative 'ways of knowing' generate sparks of knowledge and of insight at discrete moments in time that can be used to inform the fuller history of RAF Dry Tree.

In the following chapter I will draw together the research and present it in terms of the tensions that were outlined in the literature review. The tensions of approach, decay and production/consumption will be discussed in terms of the research site, the empirical data and the literature, before being finally concluded.



Figure 29: Candles and Philip in the Air Conditioning Room (Photo: Author)

7: The Tensions at Dry Tree

Chapter 2 identified and explored a number of tensions within the contemporary notions of heritage, as it is currently constituted. These were tensions and conflicts in regard to the approach to heritage sites, and in particular our new heritage of the recent past. As an emerging period of study, still within the reach of living memory it represents a challenge to heritage practitioners and academics alike, because of its tangible nature. Utilising RAF Dry Tree as a case study this thesis has approached the site from the different directions that the identified tensions dictated. This chapter will review the site in terms of these conflicts.

Approach

The initial tension was that of approach, and was defined by two practises - typology and phenomenology¹⁸⁶. Each approach provided its own valuable contribution to the evaluation of the site; indeed, the typology was vital in identifying the extant remains at Dry Tree, in providing a starting point from which it was possible to begin to compile an accurate site plan. The approach of phenomenology, of experience was able to operate outside the constraints of typology. It began as soon as one set foot on the site and it could be argued that it began before, with the anticipation. Certainly it continued long after leaving the site, in recollections and photographs, noticing new things on the negative and remembering the subtle plays of light on the broken ruins.

Experience, therefore, can be said to operate independently of typology. One does not need to understand what one is looking at to experience it; the typology simply informs the experience and generates new and deeper understandings. This is apparent at Dry Tree, a site that I have been exploring and photographing for the last five years – simply as an interesting subject. While I was aware of what it was, the nature and context of the buildings were not of interest to me then. The shapes, the light and the shadow, the natural colliding with the artificial: these visually interesting and occasionally emotive scenes were captured on film and recorded.

¹⁸⁶ Utilising Davis (2008) approach of an autoethnographic/phenomenological walk-through and narrative of a site, coupled with the ambiguity of the typology at Orford Ness. Equally English Heritage and Natural England (see commissioned work for Dry Tree) seem overly concerned with identifying by type.

The meaning behind this scene was disregarded, it was not of importance. It was only after I began to approach the site in a typological way, with expressed intent of identifying the buildings and understanding Dry Tree in the context of its wartime narrative that I began to develop a new appreciation of the site. The visceral thrill was still present when I looked at the ruins, and exploring the intact buildings was still as exciting, but a much larger narrative of place and of people was becoming apparent.

No longer were these shattered ruins; or just mysterious buildings - they had become named *things*. Site 33, one of my favourite buildings to photograph in earlier years because its entire interior space was filled with writhing nature, was no longer Site 33: it was an Intermediate Stage Receiver Hall, and one of the earliest buildings to be constructed on the site. From this point on it ceased to be a ruin, and became a named building with a function and a history. Where before I had had to imagine what it might have been, what I was photographing and exploring I now knew, and this generated new narratives, experiences and imaginings.

This became true for the rest of the site, with the exception of a handful of buildings that defied positive identification. With each fresh revelation, the story changed marginally, fractionally, until the old experiences of the site – pre-typology – began to fade into insignificance. The new experiences, informed by type opened up new avenues of inquiry: knowing what a particular building was, its history and its usage allowed more diverse experiences of place to develop. Indeed, we had moved beyond categorisation into practice¹⁸⁷. Like Tilley¹⁸⁸ suggested, I documented my own physical engagement with the spaces at Dry Tree, as I moved around and through them and utilising a personal narrative and reflective practice it is hoped that the sensations of experience have been conveyed through this thesis¹⁸⁹.

While a typology was not essential to the experience of Dry Tree – as proven by the people that interact with the site in a casual way, dog walkers, photographers etc –

¹⁸⁷ Strange I, Walley, E Cold War Heritage and the Conservation of Military Remains in Yorkshire: 116

¹⁸⁸ Tilley, C A Phenomenology of Landscape:73

¹⁸⁹ Like Wylie's encounters 'on foot' 2002 and 2005

it did facilitate the generation of a deeper and richer narrative. It also provided the research site with a context, something that was missing in earlier interactions; this context then provided the buildings and ruins with historical meaning and invested them with a narrative of their own. Certainly they were still places in which our own stories and imagination could be played out, but now they had recovered their own identification and history. Towards the end of the research I began to see the site much like a recovering amnesiac: the scattered fragments of a life lived before were slowly coalescing back together to form an almost coherent whole.

Decay

When I began the research for this thesis I was firmly of the opinion that the neglect of twentieth century defense sites – Royal Observer Corps Posts, radar stations, airfields, pillboxes etc – was absolutely criminal and that the heritage organisations involved, be it the National Trust, English Heritage or the HES of Cornwall should be ashamed of themselves. Naively this was largely the subject of my undergraduate dissertation, perhaps best described as an angry photo essay. The further I immersed myself into the history of Dry Tree, and the remains on the site the more tempered my opinions became; certainly Jackson¹⁹⁰ was being perhaps overly clinical when he declared a ‘necessity for ruins’, but the more I experienced the site and the longer I spent examining possible approaches to heritage management the more I agreed with him.

I no longer saw these ruins as a criminal neglect of cultural heritage (!), nor did I see their ruination as a precursor to restoration and veneration. More, that in their ruined form they carried far more gravity, more honesty¹⁹¹ and provided a more fertile breeding ground for experience and the imagination. Certainly there is a tension between decay and preservation, but is there no space between the two? I am not advocating a state of suspended decay, so that future generations may visit the same Dry Tree that I know (structurally at least, for to continually patch it up would be to preserve a tissue of fabrications) and feel the same conflicting bundle of emotions and reaction as exhibited by the participants in my phenomenological experiment. Could we not maintain the access, keep the vegetation in check and

¹⁹⁰ Jackson, JB *The Necessity for Ruins*:102

¹⁹¹ Gough, P *Commemoration of War*

allow the site to decay gracefully into nothing? As the aerial photographs from the 1960s demonstrate, the site has remained suspended as it is with no intervention for fifty years: why should we start interfering now?

Edensor¹⁹² discusses the multifaceted sensory experience of ruins that fundamentally disrupt normative aesthetic conventions. This is particularly evident at Dry Tree, where nature and the manmade clash and compete for supremacy; the clash of natural decay and crumbling ruins have the potential to evoke powerful responses - even in the most thick skinned of paramedics. This is Dry Tree as we find it today in the autumn of its life, decaying gracefully back into the landscape. Perhaps Churchill was right, and that ruins could provide an ossified commemoration of what came before, that they are more articulate than any carved memorial or reverential monument¹⁹³. Perhaps we could go further, and say that in the context of Dry Tree the ruins convey far more than any museum or interpretative display.

DeSilvey¹⁹⁴ discusses the notion of an 'entropic heritage'¹⁹⁵ in the conclusion of her article 'Observed Decay', she states that:

'If the homestead were to perform as a truly ephemeral monument, for example, the processes I have been describing would be allowed to consume it altogether. This kind of interpretive work is more likely to occur with materials that lie at the fringes of conservation practice, or with things held in a state of limbo before more formal arrangements around preservation and public access take hold...'¹⁹⁶

Dry Tree lies somewhere between the fringes of conservation practice and the formal arrangements of preservation; if it was left untouched the processes of decay would consume it altogether, but the input of Natural England dictate that it will be preserved (to a degree) and public access will be maintained and improved. Things decay and disappear, reform and regenerate, shift back and forth between different states and always teeter on the edge of intelligibility¹⁹⁷; Natural England's

¹⁹² Edensor, T *Sensing the Ruin*: 271

¹⁹³ Gough, P *Commemoration of War*: 215

¹⁹⁴ DeSilvey, C *Observed Decay: telling stories with mutable things* *Journal of Material Culture* 11 Number 3 (2006) 318-338

¹⁹⁵ DeSilvey, C *Observed Decay*: 335

¹⁹⁶ DeSilvey, C *Observed Decay*: 335

¹⁹⁷ DeSilvey, C *Observed Decay*: 336

interventions will halt this process of decay and suspend the point at which Dry Tree exists.

The National Trust at Orford Ness seem to have struck the right note in the management of a difficult, supermodern site. By allowing the buildings to become 'more evocative as they ruin'¹⁹⁸, they are effectively side stepping the need to maintain and make sense. They are also dodging the issues of context, presentation and preservation, as previously discussed with the ephemera of every day life. This is also partially driven by the ambiguity and uncertainty about the exact activities that took place on the site during its military history. Uncertainty in history: uncertainty in presentation. The opposite is true for Dry Tree as we are reasonably certain of its history, we have populated it with people and we understand that nature of the buildings and the work that took place there, yet it still seems reasonable and right that the site should be allowed to remain ruinous and quietly fade: perhaps the National Trust have struck the right balance between preservation and decay at Orford Ness and similar management strategies could be employed at other sites from the supermodernity.

Production and Consumption

The production and consumption of heritage at Dry Tree has been a complex and difficult subject to unravel. Approaching the site first as an unofficial consumer, producing my own narratives through photographs of eerie buildings then secondly to be approaching the site in an *almost* official capacity, performing a typological survey and later writing up the report and the interpretative material. It is from both of these approaches that the different experiences of Dry Tree begin to manifest themselves: unofficially consumed in the dead of night, or indeed at lunchtime whilst walking the dog; visiting the site because it is a radar station and this is of interest to you, or because it is a convenient recreational space, or simply that the scenery makes cracking photographs. The site is riddled with multiple layers of meaning, of use, of re-use, absence and imagination and each visitor to the site will interact with this skein of heritage in varying ways.

Like a stone skipped across a pond, those that use Dry Tree as a recreational (dog walking, rambles, etc) space will touch on the heritage and history as they pass

¹⁹⁸ Davis, S *Military Landscapes and Secret Science*: 6

through. Whether simply walking along the wartime RAF track ways, or a more deliberate engagement with the remains themselves, fleeting associations and impressions form the predominant production and consumption of heritage at Dry Tree. The absence of an accurate typology, or any extensive and deliberate interpretative material has reduced the capacity for any deeper associations to be formed on site. Alternative production and consumption can be seen in the Happidrome project that has enabled new and unprecedented experiences of place; Dry Tree is a heritage space, where the history takes something of a backseat to the experience and use. This free, anarchic interpretation at Dry Tree *works*. By being able to choose one's own level of engagement with the site, there is no dictation of what and where, and the unmediated spaces allow a genuine freedom to explore, quite at odds to the more traditional modes of heritage consumption. In this respect the other tensions outlined and discussed in this thesis come together and play out; by allowing the site to decay and remain as ruins the experiential, phenomenological approach becomes more domineering. Coupled with this, the completion of an accurate typology allows the intact structures to begin to convey their histories: no longer contextless concrete monoliths, but receiver buildings and air raid shelters.

The coalescing of these seemingly at-odds approaches of preservation/decay and typology/phenomenology, allow for the generation and liberation of new and unmediated ways of experiencing the site. Each approach and tension is co-dependent on the other and together they allow for a truly unique heritage experience. Like the National Trust at Orford Ness, where maintenance is kept to a minimum but the interpretation and access to the site is heavily controlled, Dry Tree should be allowed to remain as it is: perhaps, to become even more evocative as it ruins. Discrete interpretation should be provided in a low-key way to allow those that want to engage with the site to do so, and for those that just want to continue using it as a recreational space can continue to do so, unimpeded. The freedom of Dry Tree is one of its greatest assets.

After Dry Tree

A further tension that emerged after the research at RAF Dry Tree was that of knowing the site. It seemed that no matter how the site was approached, it was always reached at a distance and always at arms length. The Second World War

site was always encountered at a distance through the archive at Kew, the oral histories and the historic photographs. The contemporary site could be, and indeed now is known in intimate detail – buildings identified with their original uses restored to them – but the historical site is frustratingly and always distant.

After the almost frantic vitality of Dry Tree while I was there - making measurements, taking photographs and experiencing the site, it has now returned to its patient slumber. Apparently dormant within its own historical and landscape context but the processes of decay, of nature and the steady creep of time are continuing their actions on and around the site. Physically I have left no trace of my encounter with Dry Tree on the site itself; I have however taken away a vast amount of information, photographs and site plans, which have formed (between notebooks, digital documents and audio recordings) a new archive of RAF Dry Tree. This thesis is the ‘front end’ of that archive, and like the site itself it sits patiently for the next reader to open it, to experience it and to once again bring life back to the research site. Life in the form of the memories of people that knew the site, and life in the way that knowing the site can generate new meanings.

This thesis does not tell the whole story; the site plan and building identification provide the theatre for the history of the site to perform. The vignettes of oral history are like a discordant collection of scenes - they do not tell the whole narrative, but the scenes we can see portray a rich and lived history. From an experiential perspective we (as the theatre goer) are privy to the whole performance: we see the theatre in the form of a site plan and experience it room by room. The scenes unfold and further our knowledge of the site further and all the while we are experiencing the site, the history and our own responses to this. The research contained in this thesis is contingent: the archive of experience that was generated by, with and for it are with me and no one else. What this thesis does do, however, is provide the starting point for future experiences of Dry Tree, for future readers and perhaps, future archives.

In the following section I will conclude the thesis, drawing together the tensions and literature and suggesting a possible future for RAF Dry Tree.

By Way of Conclusion

Strange and Walley’s call for more sensitive and nuanced tools with which to ‘pursue, uncover and interpret the remains and traces of activities of the recent

past¹⁹⁹ has hopefully been answered by this thesis. Where the current typological approach fulfils some of the criteria for understanding sites from the supermodernity, it does not offer any deeper insight into the buildings or the people that are associated with them. Fundamentally, it is a tool of identification, but it is also vital in the construction of our new heritage toolset. By first and foremost utilising a typological approach we can generate a foundation onto which the more sensitive and nuanced tools can be applied. The heritage of the recent past is becoming increasingly popular, both with the agents of official heritage production and consumption and within the lens of academic scrutiny²⁰⁰. How we manage, respond to and interpret these sites will have far reaching effects into many different futures: the future of the sites themselves and the future of the narrative that we are writing for ourselves. While the traditional typological approach²⁰¹ has been demonstrated to be of vital importance in this thesis in the action of providing contextual foundations, it has also been shown to fall short in the interpretation, experience and understanding of sites from the supermodernity.

Utilising the typological approach provided the foundations in fact that allowed for the interpretation of buildings at the research site; typology enhanced the understanding of place, and told us what it had once been. Utilising other diverse approaches began to open doors to new ways of knowing, and new ways of experiencing this emerging heritage, and it was through this experience that we can begin to construct a new heritage toolset that can be rolled out and applied to new heritage sites.

If tradition provided our first tool of interpretation, typology, then Sophia Davis provided the next – the use of phenomenology and autoethnography: the personal recording of the site and sensations associated with it. These fleeting sensations experienced on the ground could all too easily be forgotten, but by accurately recording them during the typological phase of assessment, we can provide ourselves with sensational watermarks throughout the site. A phenomenological

¹⁹⁹ Strange I, Walley, E *Cold War Heritage and the Conservation of Military Remains in Yorkshire*: 167

²⁰⁰ Strange and Walley, 2007; Cocroft, 2002 and 2005; Davis, 2008; Herscher, 2008; Hughes, 2004 and Schofield, 2009.

²⁰¹ As utilised by English Heritage and by Natural England – it was after all the stated aim of the Dry Tree Building Identification Project.

approach informs our experience of place, and experience is central to the management and interpretation of our twentieth century heritage. Extremely difficult to quantify and contextualise in terms that can be easily digested, the typology and historical *fact* must take a back seat and assume an informative role in partnership with experience. After all, most of the unofficial production and consumption of these sites is not performed through pure altruism, but for the visceral thrill and excitement of discovery and exploration. By drawing in the unofficial production and consumption and synthesising it within an official framework – much like the National Trust at Orford Ness – the process of experience within an officially managed site can occur.

Emily Orley²⁰² provides the caveat for this experiential approach:

‘By documenting our individual encounters with place, we are documenting one possibility amid many...’

This reminds us of the question of validity surrounding sites from the supermodernity, like Dry Tree. The subjective nature of experience and response make the remains at Dry Tree and sites like it, arenas for debate, of contestation and of disagreement. Through my own experience and research I have drawn the conclusions outlined in this chapter; another person conducting the same research and fieldwork may conclude the opposite. This one possibility amid many is no more valid than any other, and as this thesis was prefaced – these were my experiences and are as such, subjective.

Through a typological examination of these sites, informed by the processes of experience in the form of phenomenology, our new heritage toolset is almost complete. From the clinical analysis of type and the subjective notion of experience we have developed a new understanding and approach to the built form. A built form that was unpopulated. It is at this point that the lived history of the site, the oral histories of the men and women that built, operated and demolished it become so vital. The more complete a picture that can be created through oral histories, the richer and more vivid the living site will become. This is evident at Dry Tree; where the buildings had been identified by type and my own experience of place had given me a further understanding and appreciation for the site, but it was still just a site.

²⁰² Orley, E *Getting at and Into Place: writing as practice and research*:160

Unpopulated, barren, ruined, overgrown and devoid of people: these are words that feature heavily in my research diary. Pursuing oral histories through contacting former WAAFs, Air Ministry engineers and BT staff gradually began to fill in the blank human canvas at Dry Tree.

This thesis has utilised vignettes to tell these stories and to illuminate the lived history of the site for two reasons. Firstly, the shattered nature of the archive has made vignettes necessary; there is no complete narrative of the site available in either the historical archives or in living memory; in this way, a certain symmetry manifested itself between the fractured history and the incomplete oral narrative. Secondly, even if the whole narrative and history of Dry Tree had been available, for the purposes of this thesis it would have told us no more than the selected memories contained in the vignettes. It was deemed better to look into the narrative in greater depth and in a more vivid way at discrete moments than to tell the whole narrative in a grey uncertainty.

A vital question that must be answered in this conclusion is for whose benefit are we developing this new heritage toolset? Their application by researchers like myself would seem to be the first logical use. By approaching the research site in three different ways: from typological, phenomenological and oral historical perspectives a comprehensive (but still incomplete) study has been carried out. Typology allowed for identification, oral histories allowed these identified buildings to live, and phenomenology allowed me, the researcher, to become involved with the site and to personalise the research.

Forming a relationship to the site and not approaching Dry Tree from a purely typological perspective has elicited far more meaning from the remains. The oral histories provide a lived narrative to the site and inform the relationship I have formed. The two are almost co-dependent. This practical, worked example of typology informing experience is being worked in the real world outside of academic debate at the Orford Ness site under the auspices of the National Trust. By keeping their presence out of the landscape and holding the interpretative and historical material segregated from the greater site itself, the National Trust are allowing the visitor a far more subjective experience. As this thesis has

demonstrated, in the absence of a full history and of firm facts²⁰³ (what took place here?), experience is central to these twentieth century remains.

Jackson argues that society has a 'necessity for ruins' as a precursor to restoration and veneration, and subsequently a 'born again landscape'. It is argued here that in the case of twentieth century military ruins there is a necessity for ruins, and for these ruins to remain as such. Provided in context they represent better the activities and history of the War than any marbled plinth; these ossified remains can fulfill both the typological criteria of the heritage industry and the vital phenomenological approach. The inclusion of oral histories to provide a lived narrative is also central to the future memory of these sites; this is due to the unique nature of the period of study: it is distant enough in time to be considered history and the relics to be considered remains, but recent enough for there to be a living link that can be consulted, interrogated and recorded. There should be preservation where it is possible, and where it is not we must let go. It goes without saying that these sites should be safe for visitors, but where the decay has taken hold extensive repair would generate a 'Country House' effect - a preserved example composed of a tissue of repairs and facade; historical integrity is lost.

The ubiquity of these sites makes any large-scale preservation exercise rather redundant. As ruins they carry far more gravity than sterile museum spaces and given the construction materials and techniques employed by the Air Ministry, they will survive for some decades yet. By the time the last surviving site reaches a state of total collapse, it is anticipated that we will have achieved a history for each and an archive of oral histories - preserved for posterity.

To preserve 'as ruins' and to halt decay would be to preserve an idea, a deception for future generations: the suspended decay typical of the Cornish Engine House is a scene that has become iconic of the county as a whole, but why are they held at this state somewhere between building and collapse? Is this the form of logic that will one day extend to concrete military sites of the twentieth century, to patch up and preserve and hold in a state of perpetual ruination? This thesis has led me to this final conclusion: let them go, and let us learn as they decay.

²⁰³ Davis, S Military Landscapes and Secret Science

More than this – let us experience their history and passing as minutely as we can. Like the last transmission from Dry Tree, these sites should be allowed to echo on into silence.

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Appendix 1: Interview Transcript, Eva Capon 24/04/2010

What motivated you to join the WAAF?

The war was on, and one had to do something.

Where else were you posted, apart from Dry Tree?

Near Colchester and near Lincoln.

How did you become a radar operator?

Well now a friend of my fathers was in the Air Ministry and when I was joining up he said to my father 'tell us to ask to be a radio operator' which is what they called it at first because the radar was secret at the time and so that's how I got into it.

When you were at Dry Tree, where were you billeted?

I was on the camp there.

And what was it like?

Very good, yes. No problem.

Did anything out of the ordinary ever happen, anything remarkable?

I don't think so. I think we had one or two what they called 'Red Warnings', when they thought they'd seen enemy aircraft, but nothing really happened.

In that instance, what did you have to do?

Well, it depends. If you were on duty then you just carried on working. I can't remember what we had to do if we were in the camp; I suppose we had some air raid shelter or something. I never remember anything happening.

Are you in contact with any of the people you served with?

Not now. I was for many years but it gradually died off – and people died off.

The people you served with, did you know them before hand?

No, no, I went in on my own and just took things as they came.

I've heard quite a lot about the dances that happened in Helston, did you go to those?

I think I did once, yes.

And what were they like?

Good fun, I think.

Were there a lot of people, was it just service personnel?

No everyone attended, as far as I remember. It's a long time ago now.

Have you been back to Dry Tree since you've lived in Cornwall?

I went past there, but I haven't been inside. There was somewhere over there that turned out to be a café, but I can't remember which one that was.

Was that the Telstar Café?

I think it was, yes. Where the camp was. Yes that's right, I know I've been there once.

When were you posted to Dry Tree?

Oh golly. I was a year in Colchester, may have been about 1942 or three, but I can't remember now. I was a year in Colchester from 41-42, whether I came to Dry Tree after that- I think I went to Trelanvean first. So Dry Tree must have been later.

What do you remember from Trelanvean, was it much the same as Dry Tree?

Oh yes, yes. Those stations were all much the same. The only difference was, when you were on duty, you were looking different ways. One looked one way and the other looked the other. I can't even remember now which was which.

How long were you posted in Cornwall?

Lets see, the first time I came down here I was at Trelanvean first, that must have been 1942 and then I came back later; I can't remember when I came to Dry Tree- '43? Possibly '43. But then it could have been '44. Now hold on a minute, I was down here at the end of the War so it must have been late '44 that I came to Dry Tree because I was there when VE Day was on, because I remember going into Helston.

What were they doing in Helston for VE Day?

I can't remember now, I suppose everybody was rejoicing.

(At this point I showed Eva the 1941 aerial photograph to see if she can identify any of the buildings)

This must be the transmitter building, you can tell from the type of aerial. That looked after itself, the mechanics worked in there. Judging by the aerials that must be the reception area, those are the receiving towers. That's where we were when we were on duty (**at this point I enquire about the early phase of the site – the ACH – and ask what she remembers these buildings being used for**). Those were the RAF regiment buildings and stores for the radio equipment. We didn't have any cause to go there really. That's really all I can say about that.

On a more personal level, did you have a job before you joined the WAAF?

No, no because I joined up soon after I left school. Well at the beginning of the War I was in Denmark, my mother is Danish, and we were there when the War broke out, and we stayed there over the winter. In the spring, my father sent a telegram to say come back at the first instance, so we did. We got back here on the Saturday and the Germans went in on Monday night. My father had an inkling that something was happening because of movements, you know? So we came back and I suppose I was here in 1940 I suppose. I joined up in 1941. The Blitz started during the summer after we got back and so we went down to live in Devon to get away from the bombs so we were there until I joined up, which was in South Molton.

You joined up in South Molton?

Yes. I had to go to Exeter to join up.

Were there a lot of people there when you did that? Were a lot of people joining up?

Oh there were quite a few, yes.

After the War, did you have a job again?

Well I didn't because I had just been married just before the end. I was married on September the eighth, and the War finished soon after and I got out. So I never had a job.

Did it feel strange going from being a radio operator to not having a job again?

It did in a way, yes. But then it was all so new, you know? Setting up home and things like that, it filled things in. Yes, quite busy really.

I find Dry Tree quite difficult to imagine as a working place, as I have only seen it recently and find it quite bleak...

Oh well we had quite a big camp there, lots of huts, you know.

It wasn't as cold and awful as it is now?

Oh, no. I was here in the summer mostly so, lots of cycling down to the beach and so on.

Were there a lot of you on the site?

Quite a few yes, but of course some were on duty at one time and some were sleeping or something, so mainly you were just with the people off your watch as we called it.

Why did you decide to move down to Cornwall?

Because my daughter was down here, she married a Cornishman, yes. She was teaching music in Devon and met this serviceman there and she came down here. So that's why I came here to live. When I was here during the War I never thought I'd come here to live.

What was the rationing like in Cornwall?

Well, its difficult for us to say because when you were in the services you had all you wanted any way, so the rationing didn't really impinge on us. I think people were better off down here because if you went out to tea you could get butter and cream.

What was the work like in the receiver building, on a day-to-day basis?

Well, you would have a shift of I suppose about four of us. You would have one person on the receiver and one doing the plotting and the other people would be making tea and so on, taking messages, well you took turns. You only did about an hour on receiver at a time because it was bad for your eyes to be on too long.

What training did you have to have, did you get very much?

We had three or four weeks training, yes. When I first joined up I went to Cranwell I think, but I'm not sure. I did go to Cranwell at one time. I was in Wiltshire for a time too. I think the actual training for receiving was three or four weeks. You worked shifts and did exercises; they had these things that they put into the receiver that made images that you would get if you were on a station. So you got the proper practice.

Was there much action at Dry Tree?

Not a lot at Dry Tree, no. It was mostly odd bits of shipping and things. I remember we had a 'Red Alert' one time and we thought we were going to be invaded but nothing happened.

Was it quite boring then?

It could be, it could be yes, if there was nothing happening at all. Sometimes you got local activity, exercises and things like that. It could be quite boring yes, especially at night.

You never nodded off?

Tried not to.

Do you think sites like Dry Tree and Trelanvean should be preserved as historical sites and as heritage?

Well, there are an awful lot of them that's the trouble, all round the coast, you know. I think something should be preserved somewhere. I think there's one on the East Coast somewhere that they have preserved. I can't remember what its called now though...

Bawdsey Manor?

Yes, that's it.

When you were at Dry Tree, were there a lot of men compared to women?

There were mostly more women than men on radar, yes.

Were you kept fairly apart or...

Well we worked together; I had men on my shift when I was in charge. There were often say one or two men on a shift, but there were more women. I remember one time when these chaps from West Indies came in , when I was down here I had a West Indian chap on my shift.

Were you ever in charge of the men?

Oh yes. When I was in charge of a watch I was in charge of the men.

How did they respond to being..?

Oh they seemed to take it as it came. Well, I never had any problems, put it that way.

Is there anything else you would like to add about Dry Tree?

I don't think there is really. I know I was very happy there.

When you weren't working, what did you do?

We had bikes and we used to cycle around, you know in the area. We used to go to Helston and do a bit of shopping. Helston is pretty well the same now.

Appendix 2: Extract from Natural England Report

Site Gazetteer

This document aims to identify selected structures on the new walking route and is not a comprehensive history of the entire site. It is important to emphasise at this point that the identification of many of the buildings are informed speculations, as the condition of the site and the archive that accompanies it is so deteriorated. The structures selected by Natural England for identification, using the reference numbers ascribed in the 1999 HES Survey are:

Site 18: Current car park

Site 20: RAF Regiment Barracks/Stores

Site 26: Intermediate Transmitter Hall (Style 2)

Site 28: Unidentified: Air Raid Shelter, Ammunition Store

Site 27: ICH building

Site 4: Identified as 'small barrow' in HES survey

Site 32: Unidentified: ' Air Raid Shelter, Ammunition Store

Site 33: Intermediate Receiver Hall (Style 1)

Site 34: IFF Cubicle

Site 51: Type B Receiver Block

Site 52-56: Receiver Aerial Base

Site 45-49: Receiver Aerial Base

Site 58: Uncertain: Store/Shelter/Cable Run

Site 59: Uncertain: Store/Shelter/ Cable Run

Site 16: Air Raid Shelter

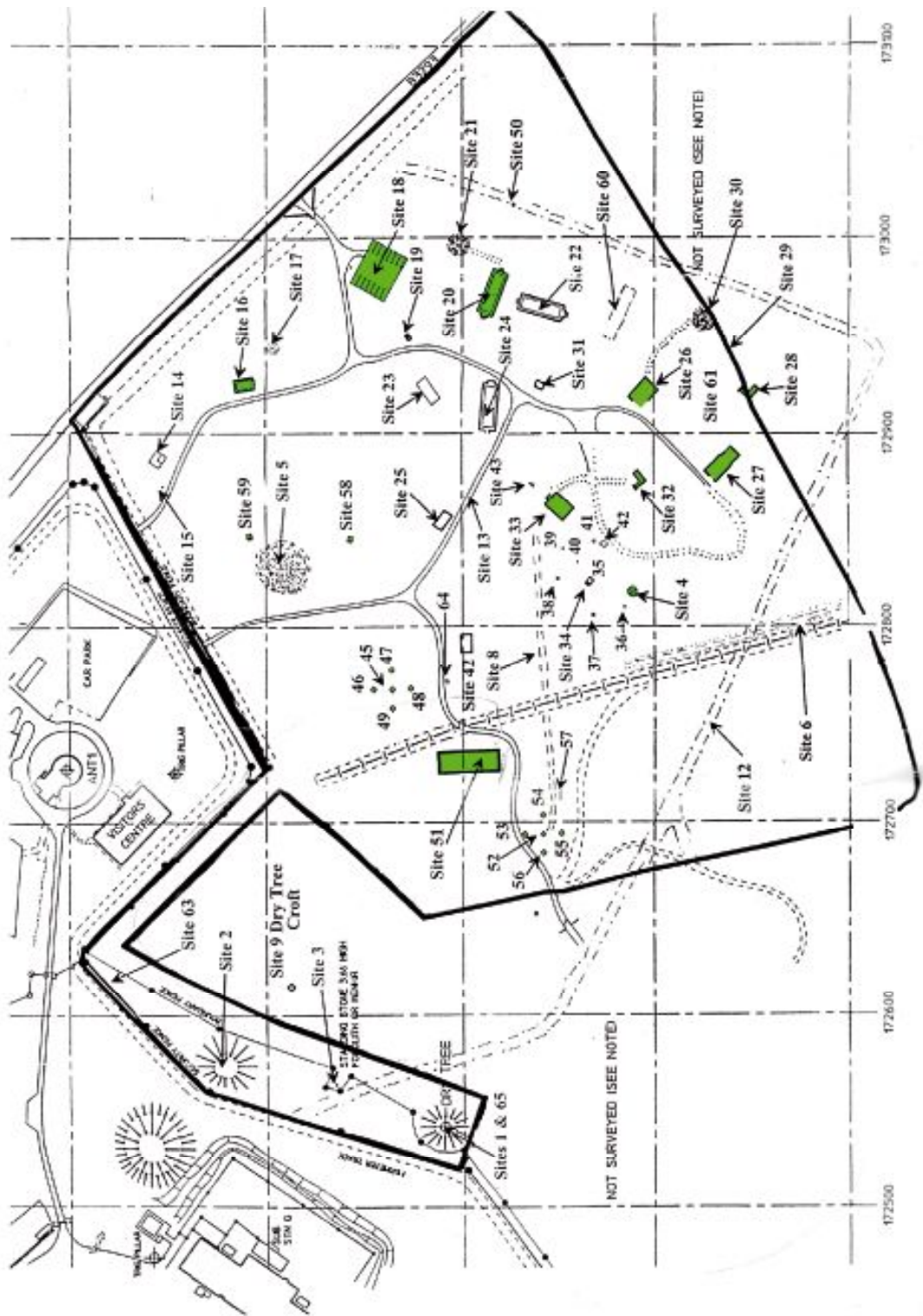


Figure 7: Location of buildings on new walking route identified by Natural England for Interpretation (Map taken from 1999 HES Assessment, Original (C.) British Telecommunications Plc 1996)

Inventory of Buildings

Site 20: RAF Regiment Accommodation/Stores/Workshops



Figure 8: Detail of Site 20 'Bays' visible. (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)

HES citation:

“Double skinned brick structure, earth mound around exterior, external dimensions c .24.0m (78ft) long by c9.0m (29ft) wide. Roofless, walls stand to a height of c1.0m, entrances with steps at either end. Traces of original metallic paint on outer face of inner wall...probably a transmitter (Tx) block”.

Our research has identified this structure to be of a standard type utilised by the Air Ministry on radar sites. Generic in construction- a concrete raft with blast walls protected by an earth revetment, it would have fulfilled a variety of functions. Given that there are a maximum of four similar buildings on site, one would have been barracking for the RAF Regiment, and one would have been a store and the others workshops for the radio gear. These had an 18' span and were 70-80' long, depending on the number of bays (Manx Archaeological Report). They were also equipped with blackout porches, which you can see the ghosted remains of if you look at the entrances.

An examination of the HES survey reveals a faint outline of one of these buildings 'not identified on the ground', this falls within the perimeter of the intermediate site, and I would suggest this was one of the earliest barrack/accommodations buildings on site.



Figure 9: Overgrown portion of the Barrack Hut (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)



Figure 10: Extant RAF Regiment Barrack Building- RAF Scarlett (Photo: Manx Heritage Foundation)

Site 26 ICH Transmitter Hall (Style 2)

HES Citation:

An impressively large, roofless, concrete blockwork structure, external dimensions c.18m long b c.10m wide, part of the SW wall has been demolished and two large granite boulders have been placed in the gap. Outside the NE and SW walls are L-shaped concrete slabs, possibly for mounting generators.

This large, ruinous building is likely to have been the ICH Transmitter Hall, not the 'Emergency Generator House' as identified by the HES. Its size and layout configures with the plan extracted from the PRO (Figure 4), and the presence of the concrete slabs on the outside walls conforms to this diagram.

Its alignment on the ground also conforms to the ICH 'Line of Shoot' of 131 degrees (Pers. Corres. Mike Dean to Bill Scolding 2008); 'Line of Shoot' determined the alignment of the antenna with respect to the coastline- simply the direction in which the sky the station covered. This building can be considered one of the earliest on site after the MRU had been put into a reserve capacity.

It is also worth noting that this building, and Site 33 had suspended floors: the piers for which can be seen on the inside face of the walls. Raised to c. 1 meter off the ground, it is thought this is because of the waterlogged nature of the site.

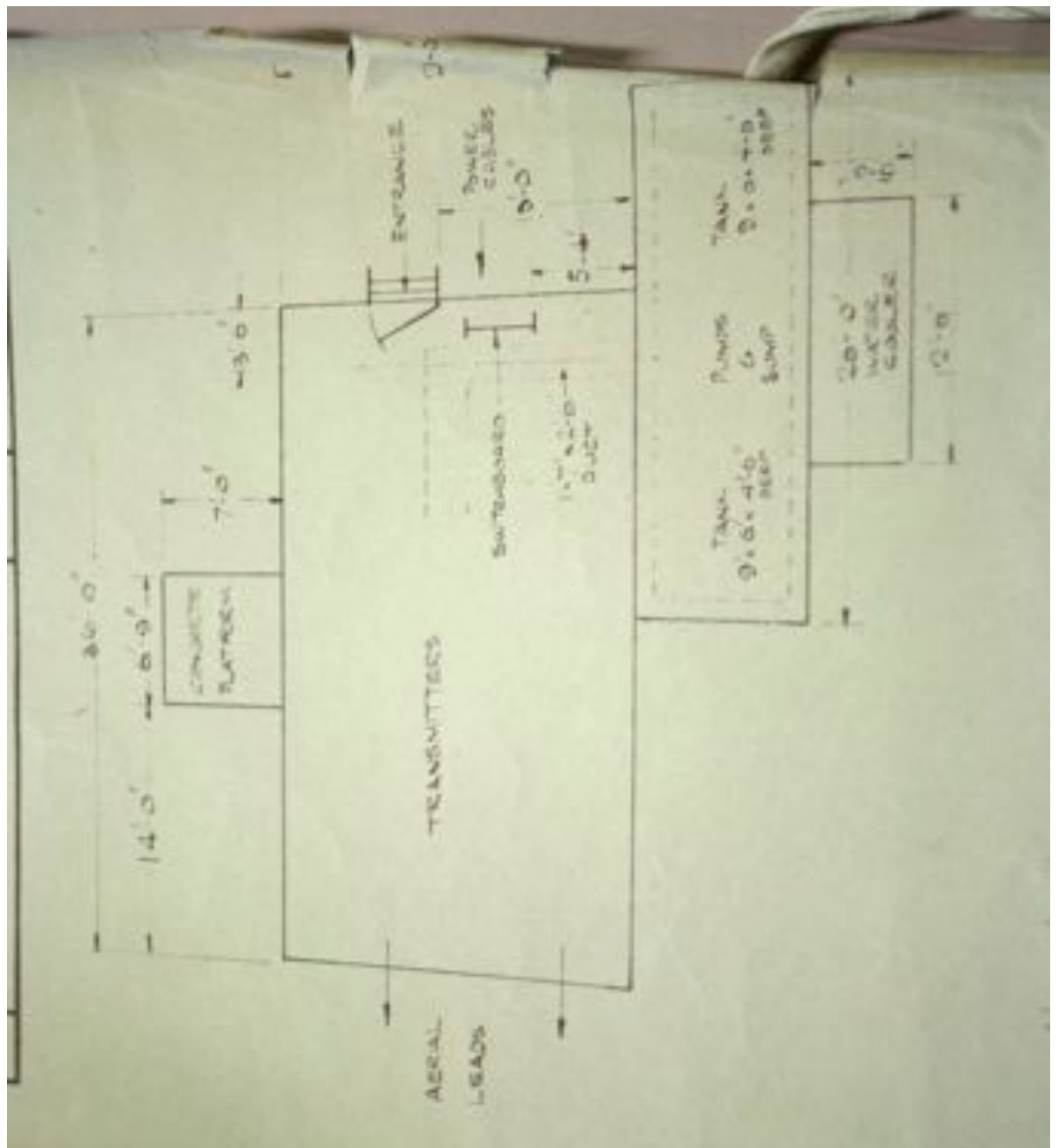


Figure 11: Plans for ICH Transmitter Hall (Style 2)



Figure 12: ICH Transmitter Hall at Dry Tree (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)

The chequered blockwork present on this building and the two other ICH sites is intended to provide camouflage. The HES report suggests the external faces would have been painted.

Site 28: Probable Air Raid Shelter

HES Citation:

An L-shaped bunker covered with gorse etc. Concrete blast wall protecting the entrance on the NE side and a corridor with galvanised steel sheet lining the roof, leads to a room. Wooden doorframe with green paint: Interior dry.



Figure 13: Unidentified 'L' Shaped Building (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)

This site, along with Site 32 has defied definite identification throughout the research phase of this project. There have been a number of speculations, ranging from air raid shelters, to ammunition stores. Site 28 is constructed from concrete block, has a blast wall protecting the entrance and an earth revetment, inside is a single room with niches in the wall at ceiling height; there is an open 'vent' at the far end, and traces of a ladder affixed to the far wall, providing roof access.

There is the potential for these buildings to be air raid shelters, as there are *similar* examples extant on other wartime sites – i.e. RAF Portreath – but other examples are of a much larger size. It is possible that these are the FCH shelters for the receiver site. See Site 32 and Figure 10.



Figure 14: Interior of Site 28 (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)

Site 27: ACH/ICH building

HES Citation:

A substantial, roofless, sub-rectangular and concrete block structure with walls surviving to a height of c.2.2m.



Figure 15: ICH Building at Dry Tree, Flooded. (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)

Research suggests that these walls are all that remain of the building that housed the ACH/ICH transition equipment. A poured concrete raft would have formed the foundations for a wooden 'hutted' facility. The extant walls were the blast protection that surrounded this building. Again, the alignment of the building is consistent with the Line of Shoot of 131 degrees. It is also possible that this is from the very earliest phase of building at Dry Tree where there could have been a combined Transmitter/Receiver facility while the construction of independent sites was underway. (Mike Dean, DT Annotated Survey)

Site 4: Identified as 'small barrow' in HES survey

HES Citation:

This feature is a low gorse-covered mound, circa 5m in diameter and 0.7m high. Its appearance suggests it might be a small barrow.

Site 34: IFF Cubicle

HES Citation:

Small brick building 3m Square and 2.5m high; protected entrance on NW side, flat concrete roof, metal doorframe fittings survive. Window vents high in walls, two salt glaze pipes in floor. Built almost on top of radar mast base (35).



Figure 16: IFF Cubicle at Dry Tree: one of a pair (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)

The term 'IFF' derives from the words 'Identification Friend of Foe'. IFF allowed radio operators to identify friendly aircraft. Initially aircraft were fitted with aerials incorporating motor-driven tuners that caused the reflected signal received by ground radar stations to vary in amplitude. Later models employed an electronic unit that detected the presence of friendly radar and then transmitted a coded signal, causing the ground radar display to indicate a friendly aircraft on the PPI display (SubBrit). Figure 9 shows one of the two IFF Cubicles extant at Dry Tree, the remains of the aerial anchor

points and foundations can be seen all around. Both still have their doorframes and various electrical conduits etc.



Figure 17: IFF Cubicle and Aerial, RAF Sennen (Photo: John Wootton)

Figure 10 is a detail from a photograph passed to Benjamin Oldcorn from John Wootton, taken from the top of the receiver aerials it shows much of the RAF Sennen site in detail. The IFF compound is clearly visible, complete with guyed aerial.

Site 32: Probable Air Raid Shelter

HES Citation:

An L-shaped bunker covered with gorse etc. Concrete blast wall protecting the entrance on the NE side and a corridor with galvanised steel sheet lining the roof, leads to a room. Wooden doorframe with green paint: Interior dry.



Figure 18: Second 'L' Shaped Building on Site (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)

There have been a number of speculations, ranging from air raid shelters, to ammunition stores. Site 32 is constructed from red brick and has a blast wall protecting the entrance and an earth revetment, inside is a single room with niches in the wall at ceiling height; there is an open 'vent' at the far end, and traces of a ladder affixed to the far wall, providing roof access.

There is the potential for these buildings to be air raid shelters, as there are *similar* examples extant on other wartime sites – RAF Portreath – but other examples are of a much larger size. It is possible that these are the FCH shelters for the receiver site.



Figure 19: Similar Extant Air Raid Shelter at RAF Portreath (Photo: Richard E Flagg)

Figure 10 shows an extant air raid shelter at RAF Portreath, complete with blast wall, vents in the roof (probably connected to the niches in the walls) and an ‘observation’ turret at the far end- this tallies with the ladder for roof access found at Dry Tree. It seems reasonable to assume that Sites 28 and 32 were potentially air raid shelters, but the dilapidated condition and incomplete nature of the remains makes it difficult to say with any degree of certainty.

Site 33: Intermediate Receiver Hall (Style 1)

HES Citation:

Large, rectangular concrete blockwork structure with external dimensions 14m by 10m with entrance to the NE. Roofless, the walls survive to a height of 5 meters.



Figure 20: Intermediate Receiver Hall (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)

This building was identified on the HES survey as an emergency generator building, and attention is again drawn to the chequered block laying. Research in the PRO has located a plan that potentially identifies this building as an ICH Receiver Hall (Style 1). The measurement of the long axis and the general dimensions seem to confirm this. It also aligns with the ACH/ICH 'Line of Shoot', along with the other buildings identified as early (ACH/ICH). Figure 13 is a photograph of this plan, giving dimensions and internal layout. Further confirmation of this was sought by digging into the accumulated mulch/soil on site to locate the floor; this was unsuccessful as there is evidence to suggest that the ICH

buildings had suspended floors on one meter high piers- many of which are still surviving in Site 33. This has been attributed to the waterlogged nature of the site.

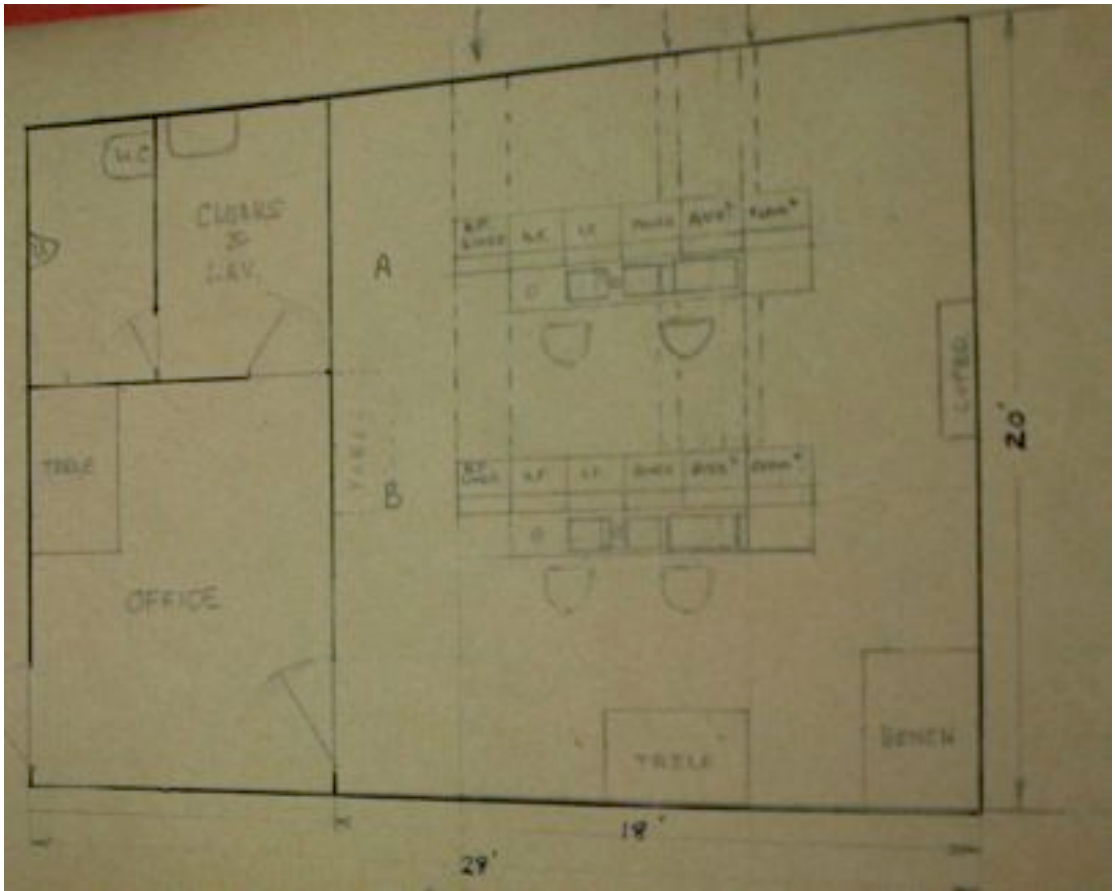


Figure 21: Receiver Hall Style 1 (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn, document at PRO)

Site 51: Type B Receiver Block

HES Citation:

This is the best preserved of the buildings, a massive rectangular structure some 34m long by 12m wide by 5m high; the outer wall and inner wall are both standing and the roof stands proudly of the protective earth mound around the outer walls. Entry is through two staggered narrow doorways in the West and East sides.



Figure 22: Intact Type B Receiver Building at Dry Tree (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)



Figure 23: Extant Type B Receiver- RAF Scarlett (Photo: Manx Heritage Foundation)

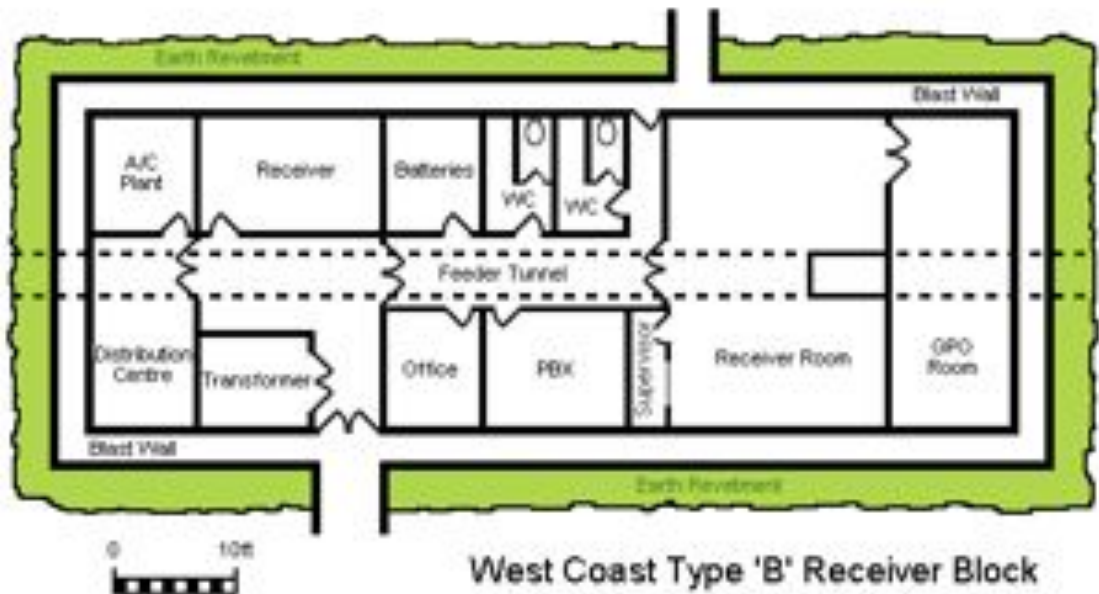


Figure 24: Floor Plan of West Coast 'Type B' Receiver Block, with rooms identified (Photo: SubBrit)

This is the best-preserved and most intact building on the main Dry Tree site. While the interior has been completely denuded of internal partitions and fixings, tantalising clues remain. The original floor plan is visible from the ghosted foundations, and this tallies with the Subterranea Britannica diagram.

During the War this would have been the nerve centre of the station, WAAFs would have manned the Receiver Room and waited for the inevitable return signal from an approaching aircraft.



Figure 25: Typical West Coast Receiver Room (Photo: SubBrit)

Site 52-56: Receiver Aerial Base

Site 45-49: Receiver Aerial Base



Figure 26: Receiver Aerial Bases visible adjacent to the Receiver Block (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)



Figure 27: Receiver Aerial Bases seen at ground level. Brick structure is the cable guide. (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)

These concrete plinths were the footings for the 240' timber receiving towers that were present at Dry Tree. These towers, clearly visible in the 1941 aerial photograph (Figure 18) would have dominated the skyline during the Second World War. These towers were connected to the Type B receiver via cables, that would have later also been run to the

Type C receiver, located behind the covered reservoir on the site today. This Type C building is not included in the NE survey, but represents one of the most complete and intact buildings on the site.

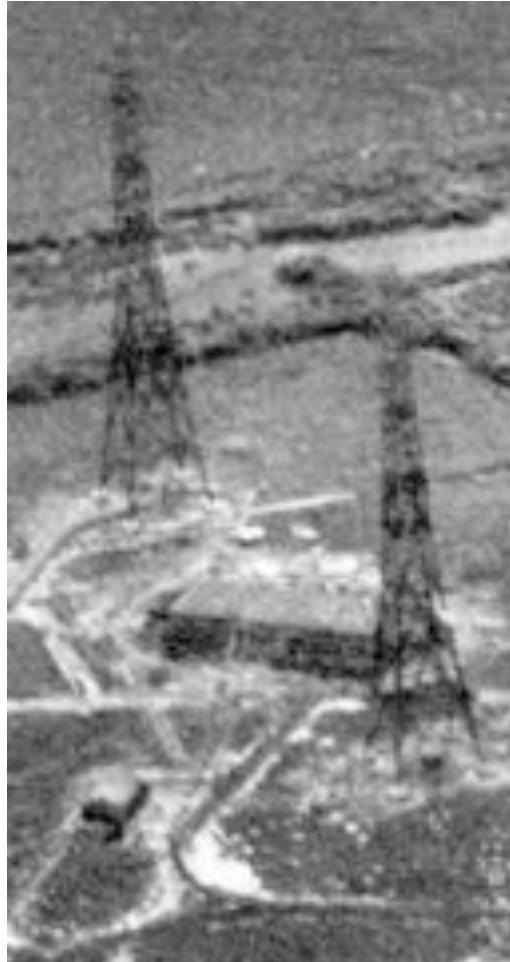


Figure 28: 240' Wooden Receiver Towers at Dry Tree (Photo: Imperial War Museum)

Site 58: Uncertain: Store/Shelter/Cable Run

Site 59: Uncertain: Store/Shelter/ Cable Run



Figure 29: Low Lying Concrete Block Structures, Usage Uncertain (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)

These two structures lie between the Receiver site and the Transmitter complex; several uses have been speculated at from emergency shelter, stores and cable runs between the two sites. It has also been suggested that these buildings would have provided 'fields of fire' for the defence party (Richard Harvey on site visit in February 2010), but again, this is speculative.

There has been no satisfactory identification, but similar structures have been found on other sites. Constructed of double skinned concrete block with an air gap between the two courses, they are substantial and dry inside, usage still uncertain- but possible/probable magazine. Another can be seen behind the BT fence line.

Site 16: ICH Air Raid Shelter

HES Citation:

A rectangular brick structure, external dimensions c11m by 7m, with entrance to the South; the building is roofless and the walls stand to a height of c1.4m, standing slightly proud of a protective earth mound. Inner wall and outer blast wall are extant; concrete floor with internal partition footings.



Figure 30: The internal floor plan of the 'Guard Hut'. Note the two 'stove bases' (Photo: Benjamin Oldcorn)

From what Mike Dean has said (DT Survey, Annotated), it seems likely that this was air raid shelter provision during the ACH/ICH wooden hut stage of building. Located a reasonable distance away from the main site this conforms to the policy of dispersal. Concrete raft footings with external blast wall, with internal partitions still visible this was a small space. Two stove bases in close proximity to each other confuse the picture slightly- perhaps there was segregation between the ranks. It seems unusual that two

stoves would be fitted to such a small building when the Barrack buildings only had one centrally located.