

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.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	II
TABLE OF FIGURES	V
ABBREVIATIONS	VI
1: INTRODUCTION	1
HISTORICAL CONTEXT	6
WITHIN A BROADER LANDSCAPE	9
2: LITERATURE REVIEW	16
INTRODUCTION	16
THE TENSION OF APPROACH	17
THE TENSION OF DECAY	26
THE TENSIONS OF PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION	30
MATERIEL CULTURE: BY WAY OF CONCLUSION	37
3: RAF DRY TREE	41
INTRODUCTION	41
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ENQUIRY	45
THE ROLE OF PHOTOGRAPHY	54
FROM A TYPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE	57
RETURN TO THE NATIONAL ARCHIVE	65
A CHANGING RELATIONSHIP	68
4: THE PEOPLE OF DRY TREE	78
PRINCIPLE VOICES	79
THE ORAL HISTORY OF DRY TREE	80
AN INTERVIEW WITH EVA CAPON	85
POST WAR DRY TREE: ORAL HISTORIES AND LOCAL MEMORIES	94
ORAL HISTORIES OF A BROADER CONTEXT	99
5: TOUCHING FROM A DISTANCE	108
A PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE	108
FROM HISTORIC MAPS AND GERMAN 'BOMB PLOTS'	113

CHAPTER 6: ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES	121
THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS	121
HAPPIDROME	124
CONCLUDING FROM A DISTANCE	126
7: THE TENSIONS AT DRY TREE	129
APPROACH	129
DECAY	131
PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION	133
AFTER DRY TREE	134
BY WAY OF CONCLUSION	135
8: BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES	141
APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT, EVA CAPON 24/04/2010	148
APPENDIX 2: EXTRACT FROM NATURAL ENGLAND REPORT	153
SITE GAZETTEER	153
INVENTORY OF BUILDINGS	155

Table of Figures

<i>Figure 1: Nature finds a way (Photo: Author)</i>	15
<i>Figure 2: Typical East Coast RDF Station (Photo: Durness Community Archaeology)</i>	15
<i>Figure 3: The Ossified Remains of Coventry Cathedral (Photo: Andrew Walker)</i>	40
<i>Figure 4: RAF Dry Tree site plan. Taken from the HES Survey, Copyright BT PLC (1996)</i>	44
<i>Figure 5: The interior of the Type B Receiver Block (Photo: Author)</i>	72
<i>Figure 6: The Receiver Room of the Type C Building (Photo: Author)</i>	72
<i>Figure 7: The interior of the 'newly discovered' Type C building in the undergrowth.</i>	73
<i>Figure 8: The remains of the RAF Regiment barrack hut (Photo: Author)</i>	73
<i>Figure 9: Excavating the topsoil of Site 33 (Photo: Author)</i>	74
<i>Figure 10: Excerpt from the research notebook - drawing of the archaeological dig on site.</i>	75
<i>Figure 11: Site 28 (Photo: Author)</i>	76
<i>Figure 12: Air Raid Shelter at RAF Portreath (Photo: Richard E Flagg)</i>	76
<i>Figure 13: The site from the air on a 'Photographic Detail'. (Photo: Author)</i>	77
<i>Figure 14: Excerpt from the Research Notebook - part of the interview with Eva Capon</i>	105
<i>Figure 15: Finds from the Excavation (Photo: Author)</i>	106
<i>Figure 16: The CHL Station at Lizard Point (RAF Pen Olver) (Photo: Shaun Churchill)</i>	106
<i>Figure 17: WAAFs outside their billet at the Headland Hotel, Coverack (Photo: Shaun Churchill)</i>	107
<i>Figure 18: Detail of the 1943 RAF Aerial Photograph. (Photo: Imperial War Museum)</i>	108
<i>Figure 19: The Moment of Destruction - Stand By Set House. (Photo: BT Archive)</i>	110
<i>Figure 20: Intact Type B Transmitter (Photo: BT Archive)</i>	111
<i>Figure 21: Standby Set House (Photo: BT Archive)</i>	112
<i>Figure 22: Water Tower (left) and CH Sub Station (right) (Photo: BT Archive)</i>	112
<i>Figure 23: Dry Tree Site 1963 (Crown Copyright)</i>	114
<i>Figure 24: WAAF Accommodation on the 1963 map (Crown Copyright)</i>	115
<i>Figure 25: Research Site on the 1976 National Survey (Crown Copyright)</i>	116
<i>Figure 26: German Bomb Plot Card of Dry Tree (Source: Imperial War Museum)</i>	118
<i>Figure 27: Detail from BT Aerial Photograph c.1965 (Photo: BT Archive)</i>	119
<i>Figure 28: Detail of aerial photograph taken in 2010 (Photo: Author)</i>	119
<i>Figure 29: Candles and Philip in the Air Conditioning Room (Photo: Author)</i>	128

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.