

Graffiti Survey Record Fan Bay Battery Deep Shelter

Client: The National Trust



Analysis & Interpretation

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Fan Bay Battery Deep Shelter, Dover, Kent

Project Summary

The results of a raking light scaled photographic graffiti survey of the interior of Fan Bay Battery Deep Shelter, on behalf of the National Trust.

Location:

Fan Bay, Dover, Kent

OS Grid Ref:

TR 35534 45222 / TR 34 NE

Designation Status:

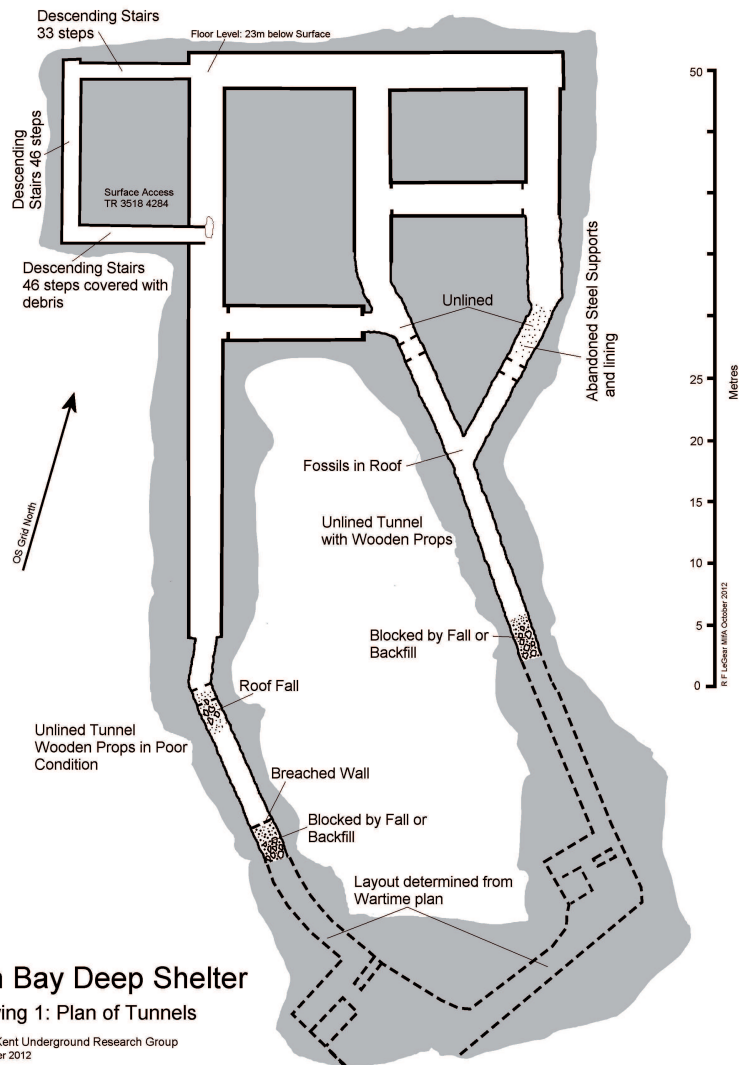
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HER No TR34 SE356

Background: Fan Bay Battery Deep Shelter

The Fan Bay Battery was planned as part of the coastal defence network in the months after the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from the beaches at Dunkirk. Designed to house medium range guns the battery was to protect the northern approaches to Dover harbour and prohibit enemy ship movements in the English Channel. The site had been in use during the First World War, when two sound mirrors were constructed in the upper cliff face, and its geographical location made it an obvious choice for refortification. Construction of the battery began in November 1940, with the site becoming fully operational the following Spring. The battery eventually consisted of three six-inch guns, associates magazines, radar control and accommodation blocks and was heavily camouflaged from both the sea and air.

As part of the battery complex a Deep Shelter was constructed. This consisted of two large drift tunnels excavated into the cliff behind the area of the existing sound mirrors and, at their deepest point, lying over 20 metres below ground. The tunnels were connected by a series of short communication tunnels, with a total floor area of approximately 325 square metres. The Deep Shelter was initially constructed by members of the 172nd Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers, who began work in November 1940 and completed the initial construction phase



Fan Bay Deep Shelter

Drawing 1: Plan of Tunnels

Survey: Kent Underground Research Group
7th October 2012

over the winter, although some sources state that the Deep Shelter was not fully completed until the end of August 1941. The Deep Shelter was designed to house up to 190 men, with the two main drift tunnels apparently being lines with two tier bunks for accommodation, as well as administration and office areas, a stores area and a fully equipped medical bay. Power was supplied from a dedicated generator room, with toilet facilities located near the sound mirrors; the whole complex being the largest Deep Shelter constructed during the period.

The tunnels today are formed of two principal drift tunnels, bored into the cliff face from the area behind the sound mirrors. The whole tunnel system was originally ventilated by a system of galvanised ducting running along the length of the ceilings, held in place via steel supports. This has now been dismantled, or collapsed, in many of the tunnels. The main drift tunnels are partially lined with steel shuttering, held in place with steel supports, at the northern end, away from the cliff face, and connected via a series of short linking tunnels. The southern section of the tunnels are unlined, with short section of the western tunnel still containing degraded timber pit props. At the time of visiting both drift tunnels had collapsed at their southern ends, filling the tunnels with chalk and soil debris. Access to the main battery was via a stairway running from the north western corner of the complex (see plan). The main drift tunnels were designed to form accommodation area for the garrison and were reportedly lined with two tier bunks. Water tanks were located at the southern end of each of the steel lined sections of tunnel. The linking tunnels were reportedly used for a variety of ancillary purposes including a medical facility, storeroom

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and administration area, and there is evidence that some of these areas were lined with timber (no longer present). The eastern drift tunnel had the steel supports and shuttering partially dismantled at some point. However, the shuttering and supports themselves remain stacked in the tunnel.

Fan Bay Battery was initially garrisoned by members of the 203 Coastal Battery, Royal Artillery, later becoming the 540th Coast Battery under a unified command with the South Foreland Battery. The Battery and associated Deep Shelter were visited by a number of senior figures from the period, including both Winston Churchill and the US Secretary of State for Defence. However, surviving testimony from the Officer Commanding the Battery in the latter stages of the war, Lionel Strange, suggests that the Deep Shelter was never used for accommodation as originally intended. The tunnels only regular use was to act as communications tunnels between the main battery and searchlights located beyond the sound mirrors, and that “we used the tunnels to store our supply of emergency rations”. Although decommissioned at the end of WWII the site remained in military ownership until the 1956, subsequent to which it was handed back to the landowner.

Condition of the inscriptions

The graffiti inscriptions fall into four distinct types; those carved into the exposed chalk of the tunnel walls, those created in chalk on sections of the steel shuttering or brickwork, those inscribed in pencil and those created in pigment. All the different types of graffiti are, in different ways, currently suffering forms of degradation. Those inscribed into the chalk tunnels of the walls, which are also the most historically significant in the fact that many of them were created during the period of military occupation, are suffering damage and degradation to varying degrees. The fact that many of these are located at the furthest point from the tunnel entrance has meant that this is the furthest into the complex that explorers can reach, and it is here that they have been carving their modern graffiti to commemorate their visits. In several cases these, largely crudely executed, inscriptions have cut through and partially obliterated earlier inscriptions. In addition, the soft surface of the chalk is subject to rapid erosion from abrasion caused by visitors to the site coming into contact with the walls.

The pencil graffiti inscriptions are largely located on the steel support shuttering in the area of the main accommodation tunnels. The shuttering, which was painted after insertion, is generally in very good condition and the pencil graffiti is in a remarkable state of preservation. However, the

Below: The high moisture levels and condensation were clearly visible in all areas of the complex.



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steel shuttering is also subject to high levels of moisture and condensation, with moisture clearly visible in all areas, and it is clear that any pigment graffiti applied in these areas has suffered serious deterioration. The moisture and condensation in these areas is also likely to have a long term detrimental effect upon the chalk graffiti inscriptions applied to the walls. However, as most of these inscriptions have only been created in the last decade they currently appear to be in good condition.

In a few places within the Deep Shelter recent graffiti has been applied to the walls using modern spray paint. The scale and colour of the inscriptions are unfortunate and strongly detract from the overall visitor experience. Unfortunately two of the main modern inscriptions are located on sections of the unlined tunnel walls, directly on to the chalk. Both inscriptions are sadly in very good condition and positive intervention may be required to assist in their removal.



Above: Recent red paint applied on a large scale in the unlined sections of the tunnels.

Distribution

The graffiti inscriptions are unevenly distributed throughout the complex, with a number of areas of high concentration for all types of graffiti. In terms of the earlier graffiti inscriptions it was noted that there were areas of marked concentration at the southern ends of both the principle drift tunnels, particularly close to the areas that had now collapsed. These areas of the tunnels were unlined and the majority of these inscriptions were incised into the soft chalk of the tunnel walls. The graffiti also appeared to extend beyond the areas of collapse. These areas also contained high levels of recent urban explorer graffiti, left to commemorate their visit and prove how far the explorers had penetrated the complex.

Other areas of high concentration are the brick partition walls inserted to separate sections of the tunnel and originally containing wooden doors. Although little historic graffiti was located on these partitions they are heavily covered with recent visitor inscriptions, largely executed in chalk.

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The steel lined accommodation tunnels contain little historic graffiti. What is present tends to be in pencil and applied to the paintwork of the steel shuttering and, with the exception of one small group of inscriptions by the same individual, is evenly distributed along the length of the tunnels. However, there are a number of extremely badly degraded pigment inscriptions in this area, whose content suggests they are from the period of military occupation, but the high levels of water condensation may have destroyed others and thereby distorted any recognisable distribution patterns.

What is very noticeable is that the short connecting tunnels between the principle drift tunnels contain very little historic graffiti, with no obvious areas of concentration. Whilst this may be the result of access being limited to these areas, with restricted access to the medical facility and store rooms, evidence suggests that at least some of these areas originally had a timber lining applied to the steel shuttering. This timber lining has now been lost, taking whatever graffiti inscriptions were present with it.



Above: Section of the northern communications tunnel, looking eastwards.

Individuals Identified

A great number of the inscriptions recorded in the Deep Shelter appear to belong to military personnel from the period when the site was actively garrisoned. Many of these inscriptions are nothing more than single names, or collections of names, and a date. The majority of the dates fall into the earlier part of the war years, most particularly 1941, and the fact that, of the few that specifically mention a Regiment, many are from either the Royal Engineers or the Pioneer Corps would suggest they relate to the construction of the main tunnels themselves. Such memorial inscriptions are not uncommon on military installations constructed in wartime, and are to be

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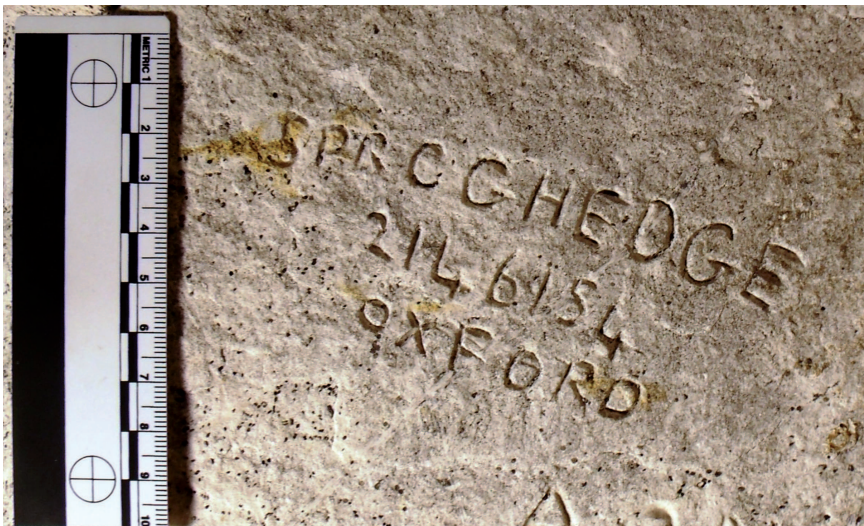
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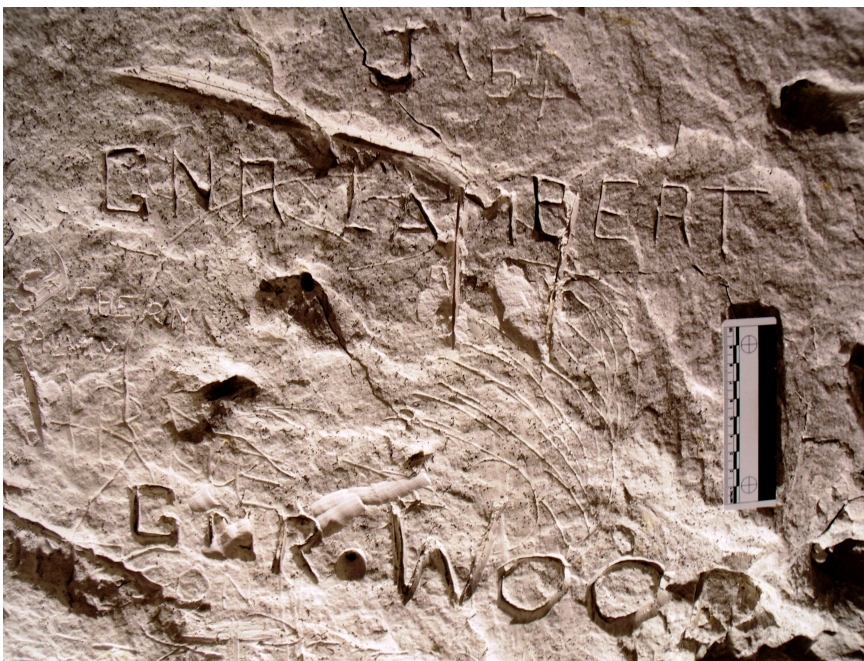
found as far back as the later Middle Ages. The majority of these inscriptions are also located at the far end of each tunnel, where they would once have exited in the area behind the sound mirrors. Only a small number of these inscriptions are found within the steel lined tunnels, and with no obvious areas of concentration.

This distribution pattern suggests that men were regularly to be found near the cliff face entrances to the tunnels, where they had the time and opportunity to create the inscriptions, whilst the steel lined sections of tunnel, although supposedly used for accommodation, may have seen far less activity. This finding is supported by the fact that the finished Battery also had considerable above ground accommodation and the statement of the Officer Commanding the Battery in the latter part of the war (see above). The concentrations of graffiti in the unlined sections of the tunnels may, it can be argued, be the result of the fact that carving an inscription into the soft chalk was relatively easy using any implement that came to hand. However the unlined sections of tunnel showed a marked decrease in the number of early inscriptions the further away you move from the cliff face entrances. This rather suggests that individuals were loitering in the tunnel mouths and areas immediately behind them; most likely to shelter from the elements rather than enemy action - which would have encouraged them to go deeper into the tunnels.



Left Top: Sapper C G Hedge, Serial number, 2146154. The reference to Oxford may well be his home town. Hedge's serial number suggests that he first enlisted with the Royal Engineers.

Left Below: Gunner's Lambert and Wood were probably part of the garrison, although nothing more is known of them.



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Although the majority of the small number of inscriptions that can be linked to particular regiments or units appear related to the construction phase of the tunnels there are several that are likely to have been created by members of the garrison. At least two individual inscriptions refer to the 'R.A.', or Royal Artillery, and in common with most of the named inscriptions these are located towards the cliff face entrances to the tunnels. The principle named inscriptions are:-

D. Simpson, Staffs, R.A.

J. Unstall, Staffs, R.A.

Gunner Wood

Gunner Lambert

Sapper L. Banks (most probably Royal Engineers)

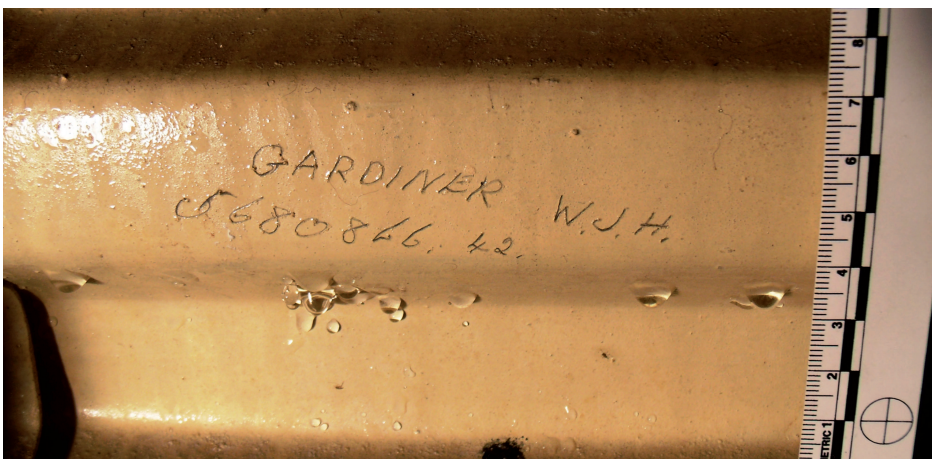
Sapper C. G. Hedge, Oxford, Serial No. 2146154 (the serial number indicates that he first enlisted with the Royal Engineers)

W. J. H. Gardiner, Serial No. 5680866 (the serial number indicates that he first enlisted with the Somerset Light Infantry)

Pioneer Nick, 238 Pioneer Company, Thursday 14th of August 1941

Pioneer R. A. Foyle, 238 Pioneer Company, Thursday 14th of August 1941 (see appendix 1: Foyle's War)

Establishing the identity of these individuals has not been possible at the present time, despite the detailed information contained in some of them, except in one case. All WWII records for service personnel are held by the Ministry of Defence and access to them is limited to close personal



Left Top: W J H Gardiner, serial number 5680866, left this inscription in 1942. Although his serial number denotes that he first enlisted with the Somerset Light Infantry the date of the inscription suggests he was a member of the garrison.

Below: Pioneer Reginald Arthur Foyle left this inscription on Thursday the 14th of August, 1941; most probably marking the completion of this section of work on the tunnels.



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relatives. As a result it has only been possible to attempt to trace these individuals via regimental records and associations, unit War Diaries and external records. It is possible to state that it appears unlikely that any of these individuals subsequently became casualties, when tracing them would have been a relatively simple operation via the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The fact that we have been able to even partially trace one individual, Reginald Arthur Foyle, is due in no small part to the exemplary records kept by the historians of the Pioneer Corps Association.

Pre-World War Two inscriptions

Although one of the objective of the survey was to try and identify and inscriptions that might relate to the pre-WWII period the survey results were disappointing in that respect. Although many undated inscriptions may well relate to that period it is impossible to firmly ascribe any of them to the pre-1939 period. Only one dated inscription was initially thought to have been created in this period. However, further analysis of the images has subsequently cast doubt upon the initial findings, suggesting that the inscription is either an amalgam of two or more WWII period inscriptions or a damaged single inscription from the period. If any earlier graffiti inscriptions were once present it appears likely that they have been covered over or lost due to the mass of later inscriptions.



Above: the one possible pre-1939 inscription located in the tunnels. Further analysis suggests that, along with the inscriptions nearby, it was actually created in 1941.

Inscriptions from the Toilet Block

The toilet block was originally located in the area near the sound mirrors at the cliff entrance to the two main drift tunnels. It would appear that this wasn't the main toilet block for the whole Fan Bay complex, but rather a secondary site specifically designed to service those personnel stationed at the sound mirrors, search-light positions and the Deep Shelter. It is assumed that the toilet block was demolished at the time that the rest of the site was slighted, with many of the bricks being re-used to block the entrances to at least one of the drift tunnels. These bricks contain the remains of numerous graffiti inscriptions, largely created in pencil, that appear to have been created when the bricks formed part of the toilet facility.

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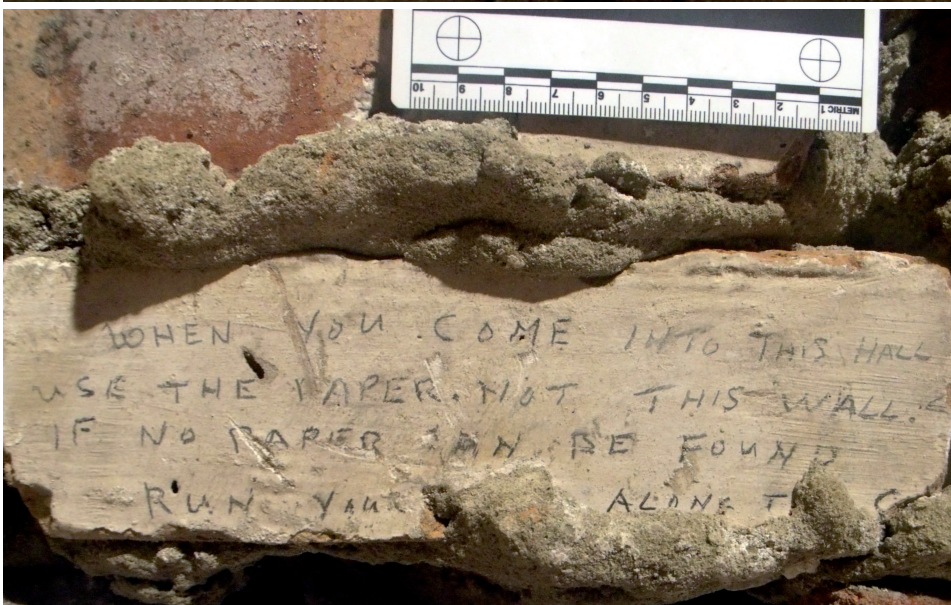
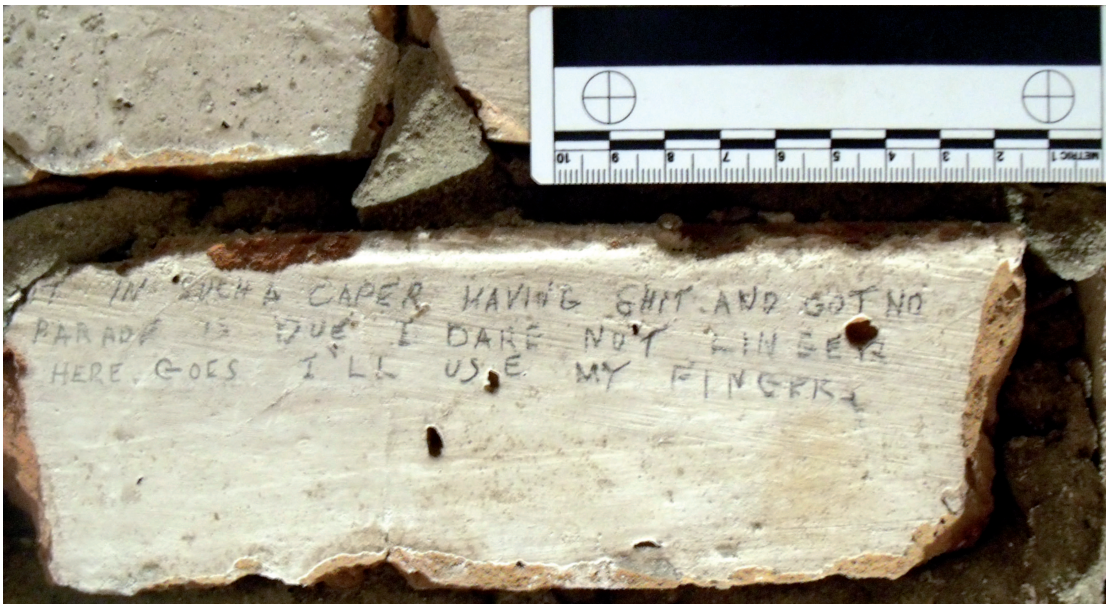
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The subject matter of the inscriptions can be considered fairly typical of 'latrinalia' from the twentieth century. The late Alan Dundes, a folklorist at the University of Berkeley, coined the term *latrinalia* in 1966 to refer to graffiti found in latrines, toilets and restrooms. Dundes preferred it over the term 'shithouse poetry', as not all *latrinalia* is in verse or poetic form. The word is derived from the compounding of *latrine* (or *toilet*) and the suffix *-alia*, which signifies a worthless collection of something - in this case bathroom writings. The tradition of *Latrinalia* has a long history, being recorded back in to the Roman period at the very least. Graffiti inscriptions recorded in the Roman city of Pompeii, albeit in Latin, would not have looked out of place on the walls of the Fan Bay toilet facility, although phrases such as "Apollinaris, the doctor of the emperor Titus, defecated well here" are unlikely to have been found amongst the WWII inscriptions.

Although the inscriptions in the bricks from the toilet facility wall do contain a number of initials and dates there is no detailed information allowing the identification of individuals. The majority of the inscriptions take the form of short sections of rhyming text referring to using the lavatory, or a lack of toilet paper. These particular texts can be regarded as adding little to the detailed information concerning the Fan Bay Battery or its garrison and can be considered fairly bog standard.



Left and Above: examples of *latrinalia* located on the re-used bricks from the toilet block.

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The Running Man

Located at the southern end of the easternmost tunnel, and partially obscured by the debris from the roof collapse, is an unusual graffiti inscription undoubtedly dating from the period of military occupation. Inscribed into the chalk wall is a stick figure of a running man, whilst above his head is what appears to be an artillery shell. The figure is shown running from the entrance into the tunnels. Although a crude depiction the graffiti would appear to reflect the actions of the garrison during times of enemy shelling, pointing them in towards the shelter of the cave. As the area around the site was shelled from heavy guns on several occasions, as recorded in several unit diaries (see appendix 1) it is impossible to tie this inscription in to any particular period of the military occupation of the complex. However, the immediate nature of the inscription would appear to reflect the worries or concerns of the troops stationed at the Battery; albeit in a humorous manner. The location of the graffiti, partially obscured by the debris from the tunnel collapse, would also suggest that the point of collapse was not far from the original entrance to the tunnel. This observation was reinforced during the survey work when sounds from the surface could clearly be heard at this point; suggesting the debris field from the collapse is only a few metres in depth.



Left: Re-worked image of the Running Man graffiti located near the southern end of the easternmost tunnel.

Political

Politically inspired graffiti inscriptions, particularly those created by 'other ranks', are common finds amongst WWII graffiti. They appear particularly common in barrack areas and garrisons, where large numbers of men would have been stationed for relatively long periods of time, and far less common amongst front-line units. However, the distribution may simply be the result of a lack of time on the part of front-line troops, or additional external pressures, rather than reflecting any true differences in the nature of graffiti inscriptions. Only one inscription was recorded within

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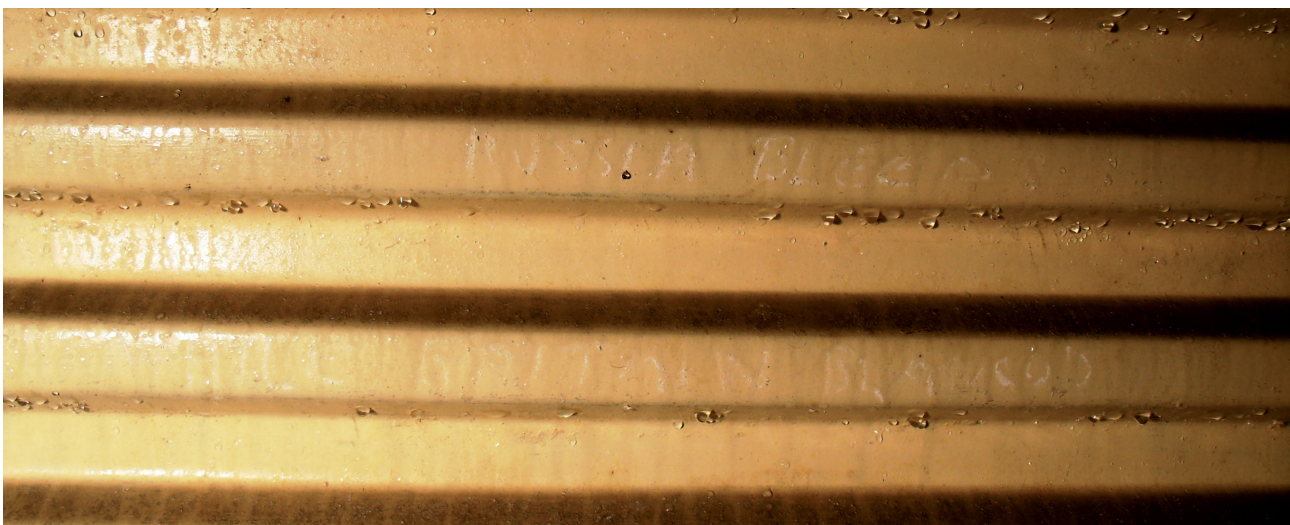
the Deep Shelter that appears political in nature. This inscription was created in chalk or a white pigment and is located on the western wall of the westernmost drift tunnel, applied to the surface of the steel shuttering. If, as is suggested, this area was originally lined with two tier bunks then the inscription would have been situated on the wall behind a lower bunk.

The inscription is a variation on a common wartime slogan, made popular at the period of the German invasion of Russia from 1941 onwards, which read “Russia bleeds whilst Britain Feeds”. This slogan was a reference to the acute suffering of the Russian people during the early part of the German attack, which was being contrasted unfavourably with the apparent stagnation of the allied war effort in the West. The slogan was regarded as something of a rallying cry of the socialist left wing movement in Britain, and called for further support and practical aid for our beleaguered Russian allies. However, the Fan Bay inscription is a variation upon this slogan - and originally read “Russia bleeds while Britain Blanco’s”. Blanco was a compound used by soldiers to whiten their equipment, particularly before inspections, and ‘blancoing’ was seen by many as a particularly pointless activity and one of the great complaints of garrison troops.

The slogan reflects a very specific point in the course of the war, and is actually a direct quotation from a headline produced in the Daily Mail. The headline was, in turn, referring to recent political events. In early July 1942 a debate was held in the House of Commons upon the progress of the war. Retreats in North Africa and the increasing losses being suffered to shipping in the Atlantic from the German U-Boat fleet led to serious questions being raised concerning the leadership of both the country and the army. These were vocalised by Aneurin Bevin M.P. who stated that “the army had never had better material, but it was badly led and needed purging at the top... people could not stand that Sebastopol had held for eight months and Tobruk had fallen in twenty-six hours”. This was a view of many soldiers within the service, particularly those on garrison duties, who found themselves carrying out seemingly pointless routine tasks whilst their Russian allies engaged in a life or death struggle with the Axis forces. The result was that the Daily Mail headline soon became a slogan adopted by disaffected soldiers throughout the army.

The inscription is now in a very unstable and poor condition, and can barely be made out without the use of specialist lighting. The chalk or pigment with which it was created appears water soluble and the high levels of moisture and condensation in this area of the tunnels has severely degraded it.

Below: Now very faint; the only political graffiti identified in the tunnel complex. ‘Russia Bleeds Whilst Britain Blancos’



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Boredom/Entertainment/General

There are a number of inscriptions that simply reflect the many hours that individuals would have spent within the tunnel complex with time on their hands. The majority of these inscriptions reflect the wider distribution patterns found within the graffiti and occur in the areas towards the cliff face entrances to the tunnels, in the area behind the sound mirrors. For the most part these inscriptions are simply games of 'noughts and crosses', crudely played out on the chalk walls of the tunnels themselves. Whilst most appear to be finished games, there are a number of incomplete boards, suggesting games that were never completed or were disturbed. This again supports the idea that it was in these areas that individuals were to be found waiting or loitering.

Other inscriptions distributed through the complex include a small carved face, quite possibly a portrait, and a number of small cartouches containing initials and a date. A number of these cartouches have been deeply carved into the chalk, suggesting that they took some time to create.



Modern 'urban explorer' graffiti

In recent years the tunnels have become subject to the creation of a large amount of modern graffiti. Some of these inscriptions were created in chalk, most probably taken from sections of the unlined tunnel walls, but a large number have been created using spray paint and applied to a variety of surfaces. In many cases these surfaces were of historic interest, some containing earlier graffiti inscriptions, and the modern inscriptions have undoubtedly damaged examples of historic graffiti. Whilst these modern inscriptions can now themselves be regarded as forming part of the

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historic record the sheer quantity and size of these inscriptions makes them both unsightly for potential visitors and intrusive to the historical context of the site.

A number of these post-war inscriptions appear to have been created by local people during the years when the site had limited access. It would appear that the site was a popular location for local youngsters to explore and, in common with graffiti sites elsewhere, all felt legitimate in leaving their mark upon the fabric. In addition, the number of inscriptions relating to couples would suggest that the site was popular as a 'romantic' destination. These inscriptions appear to have been created on an infrequent but regular basis over a number of decades. However, the most damaging and intrusive inscriptions would mainly appear to have been created in the last decade and are the result of numerous visits by underground urban explorers.

The urban and secret places explorer phenomena is not a new one. It regards itself as a sub-culture dedicated to seeking out and exploring forgotten and abandoned structures. In some cases the objective is to explore and record these sites before they become totally inaccessible to future generations. However, a large number of these explorers simply wish to visit these sites with the aim of adding them to a list of personal achievements. Whilst this phenomena has been taking place for decades the numbers of those involved has increased significantly in the last decade, largely due to the availability of information about sites being more easily shared on the internet. A number of websites dedicated to this activity have significantly increased in popularity and the publication of access details to previously unknown sites has led to a large increase in visitor numbers. Whilst any abandoned site might be of interest to such explorers there is a particular cache attached to the exploration of underground sites, most commonly those associated with the military and with an increasing interest in structures associated with WWII and the Cold War period.



Examples of graffiti inscriptions left by modern urban explorers within the tunnel complex.

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It is also a noted phenomena that the visitors to these sites like to leave graffiti inscriptions, most usually either near the entrance or at their point of furthest penetration into the complex. These inscriptions are then sometimes photographed and uploaded to personal websites, blogs and internet forums as visual 'proof' of the visit and achievement. With many of the visited sites being officially 'closed' or private property it is clear that some of those who take part in this activity are aware that they face possible prosecution for trespass and damage. As a result some of these explorers use pseudonyms for their graffiti (spaceinvader, silver rainbow, etc), allowing themselves to be identified to other members of the fraternity but not to the authorities that might take action against them.

Whilst the increase in the popularity of this activity might well account for some of the increase in the level of recent graffiti activity at Fan Bay Deep Shelter it is unlikely to be the sole contributing factor. The dates of the inscriptions make it clear that there was a significant increase in visits immediately prior to the site being sealed by the National Trust. It therefore appears likely that the National Trust's advertising of their intention to seal the site encouraged an increase in visitor numbers by those wishing to explore the complex prior to it being closed off to them. The Trust's announcement placed a finite time limit upon potential explorers, further advertised through their own blogs and internet forums, and resulted in a significant peak in both visitor numbers and resultant graffiti.



Above: one of the very many examples of modern graffiti created in the months leading up to the site's official 'closure' by the National Trust.



Recommendations

The graffiti inscriptions present in Fan Bay Deep Shelter are subject to a number of conservation threats. An increase in visitor numbers over recent years has already led to noticeable abrasion of the soft chalk surfaces into which many of the wartime inscriptions are inscribed. On the surface of the steel shuttering the pencil inscriptions are in a particularly vulnerable position. With high levels of condensation and general moisture in the complex these inscriptions are in very real danger of simply being wiped from the surface. In addition the regular temperature and micro-climate present within the all but sealed complex has undoubtedly enhanced the preservation of all the inscription types. It is unclear as to re-opening the tunnel entrances behind the sound mirrors will change this, and what effect this might have upon the graffiti inscriptions. It is therefore recommended that on-going monitoring of the inscriptions take place, to determine any further abrasive damage, and that care be taken during the access phase of the project to create a stable climate within the tunnel system.

The distribution patterns of the graffiti would suggest that there are likely to be many further inscriptions buried at the southern end of each of the two main drift tunnels, beneath the material from the collapses. This is further supported by the fact that the 'Running Man' inscription was almost totally covered by loose material from the roof collapse when first identified. It is therefore recommended that great care be taken when removing the loose material from the ends of the tunnels to ensure that the walls are not subject to excessive abrasion that may damage any further graffiti inscriptions.

Appendix 1: Foyle's War

Of all the personal graffiti inscriptions recorded at Fan Bay it has only been possible to link one of these with a known individual. Although a number of other inscriptions contain significant personal details, including in some cases their name and army number, there are distinct limitations as to how much personal information can be made publicly available by the Ministry of Defence. At the present time the MoD will not release records concerning servicemen and women from the World War Two period unless it can be proved that they were/are a close relative. Even in cases where a great deal of information has been recorded, such as that of Sapper C. G. Hedge from Oxford (Army serial number 2146154), it has not been possible to identify exactly who he was. As the main army records have been unavailable for research this has meant that it has only been possible to try and trace individuals via the rather laborious route of regimental associations, unit war diaries and veterans groups. It is a disappointment that only one individual, Pioneer R. A. Foyle, has been traced.

The 'Foyle' graffiti inscription is located on the steel shuttering at the northern end of the most westerly of the two main accommodation tunnels. The graffiti is written in pencil and is part of a larger inscriptions. The whole inscription reads - (upper line) "Pioneer Nick. 238 Coy, 1941" (lower line) "Pioneer R. A. Foyle. 238 Compy, Thursday Aug 14th 1941". The fact that the inscriptions are located at the very end of the steel shuttering for the tunnels, and were created by pioneers, would suggest that they were placed there at the completion of construction or reinforcement works in this area of the complex - which is fully supported by the documentary evidence.

The Pioneers Corps had its origins in the First World War, when the military realised that there was a need for specialist units that could deal with major construction projects in support of front line troops. Known as the 'Labour Corp' this specialist branch of the military undertook

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a number of roles in support of the combat troops, reaching a strength in excess of 300,000 by the end of hostilities in 1918. The Corp soon developed specialist sub-units, formed into companies, including special road construction teams, railway layers and tunnelling companies. Although officially non-combat unit many members of the Labour Corp served in forward areas and suffered significant casualties. At the end of the war the military authorities saw a reduced need for construction services and officially disbanded the Labour Corp in late 1919. The Corps was reformed at the beginning of WWII, but renamed as the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps. To begin with the units were regarded as non-combat battalions and were recruited from those medically unfit to join active service battalions, over-age volunteers and Enemy Aliens - with over 10,000 anti-Nazi Germans, Austrians and Italians being enrolled.

The pioneers units regularly operated on a Company basis, undertaking works in various sectors as required, and by the end of 1940 had become fully armed regular units. Each Pioneer Company was commanded by a Major and usually consisted of approximately ten sections of twenty-five men, each led by a Sergeant - with a Lieutenant for every two sections. Each Company also included a small headquarters element, including cooks, stores and administration staff, with the average company strength numbering in the region of two hundred and twenty-eight men.

The author of the Fan Bay graffiti, Private Reginald Arthur Foyle (serial number 13077143), was born on the 12th of February 1912. Foyle enlisted in Reading, joining the No. 4 Centre Pioneer Corp on the 28th of November 1940 for basic training. Upon completion of training Foyle was assigned to 238 Company on the 30th December 1940. 238 Pioneer Company spent much of 1941 moving from site to site along the south coast, working on military installations and underground emplacements, and appear to have been particularly assigned to underground works and bunker construction. The Company were also called upon to assist the Civil Defence Service in dealing with damage caused by enemy action and associated rescue work. In August 1941 238 Company were deployed in the area around Dover, with the specific task of strengthening the existing defences and constructing bomb and shell proof shelters. The unit War Diary records that the Company was employed on "Coastal Defence work at St Margarets Bay and Fan Hole" from the 1st August 1941, and it is assumed that they were engaged in adding to works undertaken by No.172 Tunnelling Company of the Royal Engineers in the construction of the Deep Shelter (November 1940 - 28th February 1941), most probably the insertion of the steel lining. However the work appears not to have continued uninterrupted, with the unit War Diary recording on the 17th of August that "shelling from the French Coast and aerial bombing almost daily". The shelling and bombing of the town of Dover were particularly troublesome, with the War Diary recording on the same day that "Cpl East, LCpl Redding and Pte Mann



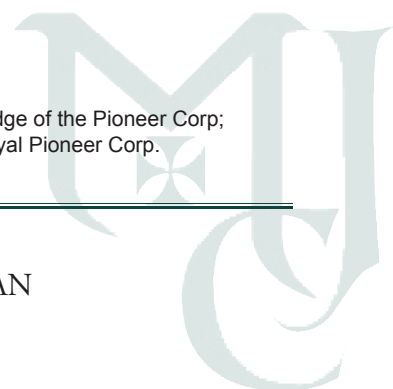
Left: the badge of the Pioneer Corp;
later the Royal Pioneer Corp.

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assisted civil authorities in rescuing casualties from a wrecked house". On the 4th of September the War Diary states that "Pte Andrews (was) slightly wounded by shrapnel when a bomb hit the Burlington Hotel". 238 Pioneer Company completed works at the Fan Bay Battery late in 1941 and on November 27th the unit War Diary records that they handed over their accommodation (exact location unknown) to the Anti-tank Regiment and moved to new billet in Folkestone and Dover. However, Foyle had already left the unit, being transferred to the 184th Pioneer Company on the 26th of September.

Whilst with the 184th Pioneer Company Foyle was stationed at Sherfield Upon Loddon to work at Central Ammunition Depot, Bramley in Hampshire. He was further posted to 61st Pioneer Company on the 13th of April 1942, stationed at Ascot and detailed for work at No.2 Army Stores Depot. A few months later, on the 22nd of September 1942, Reginald Foyle transferred to the Royal Engineers; his subsequent war record remains unknown.

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