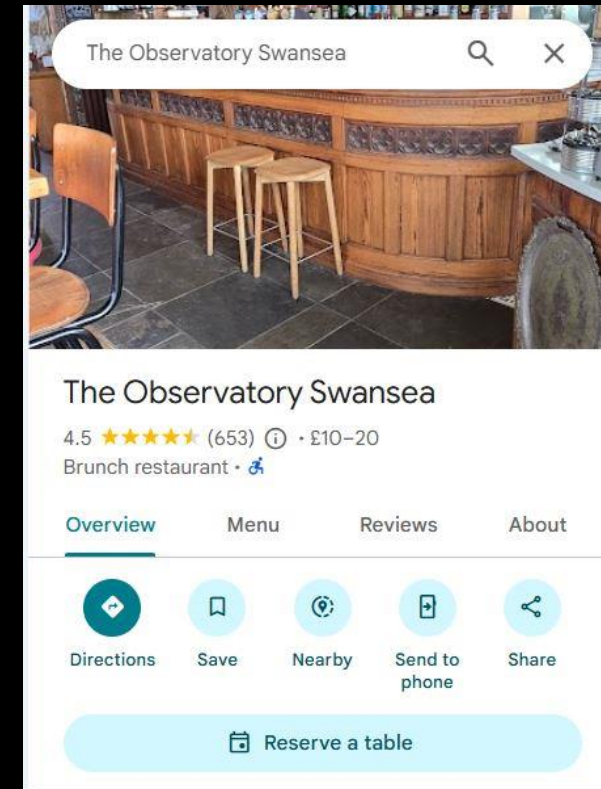
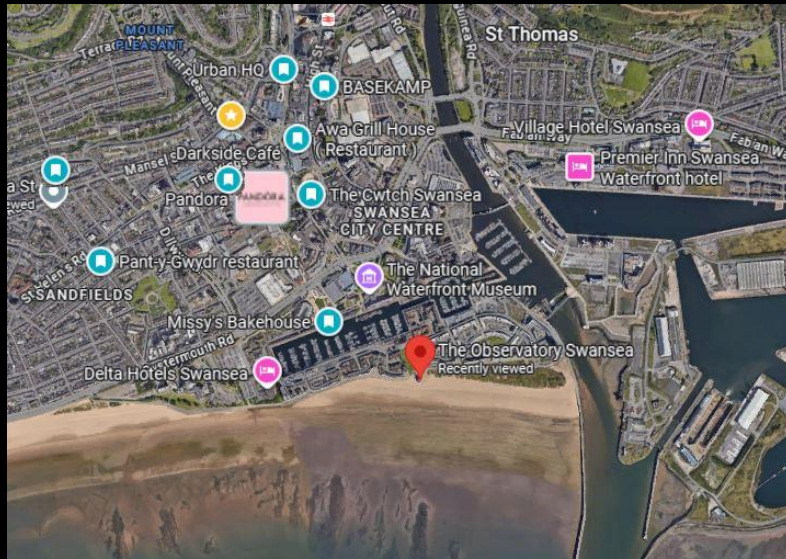


Visual Enquiry 1

The Observatory in Swansea Images



The Observatory - Report on site specificity

I am interested in creating a site specific exhibition focused on The Observatory in Swansea, using the space itself as both the subject and the display. The restaurant would function as an active part of the work rather than simply a venue, with its architecture atmosphere and daily routines shaping how the photographs are made and experienced. The project would document the history of The Observatory, considering how it has evolved over time and the role it plays within the local community.

I would explore the physical and emotional qualities of the space, focusing on details such as changes in the interior, signs of wear, light at different times of day and the traces left by people who pass through it. These images would suggest the presence of past and present occupants without relying on direct portraiture. By blending archival references with contemporary photographs, the work would create a sense of continuity and emphasise the idea of the building as a container for memory and shared experience.



The Observatory - Report on site specificity

Rather than exhibiting the work in a traditional gallery setting, the photographs would be integrated directly into the restaurant experience. The images would be printed and placed inside the menus, turning an everyday functional object into a subtle exhibition space. This approach keeps the work informal and accessible, allowing customers to encounter the photographs naturally as part of their visit rather than as a separate event. It also strengthens the site specific nature of the project, as the work can only be fully experienced within the Observatory itself.

By placing the photographs inside the menus, the exhibition becomes closely tied to the rhythm of the restaurant. The menus move through the space, are handled by different people and are encountered at different moments, reflecting the way the restaurant operates on a daily basis. The photographs sit alongside food conversation and social interaction, reinforcing the idea of photography as something embedded within everyday life rather than removed from it.

Ultimately, the project aims to encourage viewers to slow down and look more closely at a familiar space. By presenting the history and atmosphere of The Observatory through subtle photographic interventions, the work invites reflection on how places hold memory and meaning over time, and how photography can reveal the quiet narratives that exist within ordinary environments.

Task 2

How can site-specific artwork transform a site itself?

Site specific artwork can change how a site is understood, used, or valued. By drawing attention to overlooked features or histories, the work can make people see the space differently. For example, turning a forgotten alleyway into a place of reflection or conversation. Sometimes the artwork alters how people move through the site, encouraging them to slow down, look closer, or interact with the space in new ways. In some cases, the work can give a site cultural or emotional significance, temporarily or permanently reshaping its identity. Rather than just existing in a place, the artwork becomes part of how that place is experienced.

What strategies are effective in researching a site?

Effective site research usually starts with actually spending time in the space. This could mean visiting it at different times of day, watching how people move through it, and picking up on things you might not notice straight away, like sounds, light, textures, smells, and the overall atmosphere. Talking to people who use or look after the site can reveal hidden stories or emotional connections that you wouldn't get just from observing. Looking at old maps, photos, or news stories can help show how the site has changed over time, while sketching or taking photos lets artists respond more instinctively, not just analytically. The best research usually mixes factual information with personal, sensory experience.

Swansea Airport (online research)

Swansea Airport started during World War II as RAF Fairwood Common. Back then, it was a fighter base used to train pilots and help defend Britain. After the war, the military didn't need it anymore, so it slowly started being used for civilian flying.

By 1949, private pilots and local flying clubs began using the airfield. In 1957, it officially became Swansea Airport. At that time, people could take regular flights to places like Jersey and Guernsey, which was exciting for a regional airport. For a while, there were also flights to London and other cities. However, by 1969, regular scheduled flights stopped. After that, the airport mainly focused on general aviation, which includes private flights, small charter flights, and pilot training. It became a popular place for flying clubs, private pilots, and emergency services like air ambulances.

In the 1990s, Swansea Airport started offering helicopter training, adding more variety to what happened at the airfield. In 2003, a company called Swansea Airport Limited took over the airport and managed it for the next couple of decades. In 2023, the airport ran into safety problems, and its operating licence was suspended. This meant it couldn't officially handle certain flights. By August 2024, a group called the Swansea Airport Stakeholders' Alliance stepped in. They started fixing the safety issues and managing the airport to plan for its future. Today, Swansea Airport is mostly used for private flying, flight training, helicopters, and community events. While there are no regular commercial flights, the airport is safer and better managed than before. It continues to be an important place for pilots, flying clubs, and local services.

Visiting Swansea Airport

I went to Swansea Airport to begin my research for our group exhibition. We went as a group, with our lecturers arriving a couple of hours later. We were shown around by a guide and a few airport workers who took us through different parts of the site, including the general airport buildings, the hangars, planes, and the old RAF buildings.

I was especially drawn to the RAF buildings. What interested me most was that the hangars and the RAF buildings were built around a similar time, yet the hangars are still actively used and full of purpose today, while the RAF buildings have been left vacant. I loved this contrast. Buildings that were clearly designed with strong intent, now sitting unused. I spoke to one of the airport workers who mentioned that since he's worked there, the RAF building has only been used once, as a film set. This made the space even more intriguing to me.

Because of this, I became really interested in photographing these buildings and exploring them further through a site-specific exhibition, focusing on their history, atmosphere, and sense of abandonment.





RAF Buildings Online Research

The RAF buildings at Swansea Airport come from when the site was known as RAF Fairwood Common during the Second World War. A few of these buildings are still standing today. The most important one is the old RAF watch office, which was used to control flying operations during the war and later became part of the civilian airport's terminal and control tower. There is also a Bellman hangar, a large steel hangar built to a standard RAF design, which is one of the few original hangars left on the site. Some smaller RAF buildings, like old offices, have also survived but have been altered over time. These buildings are reminders of the airport's RAF past.



The flight office complex at Fairwood Common, 2012. © Copyright GGAT HER Charitable Trust/Cadw



The Second World War watch office at Fairwood Common, 2012. © Copyright GGAT HER Charitable Trust/Cadw

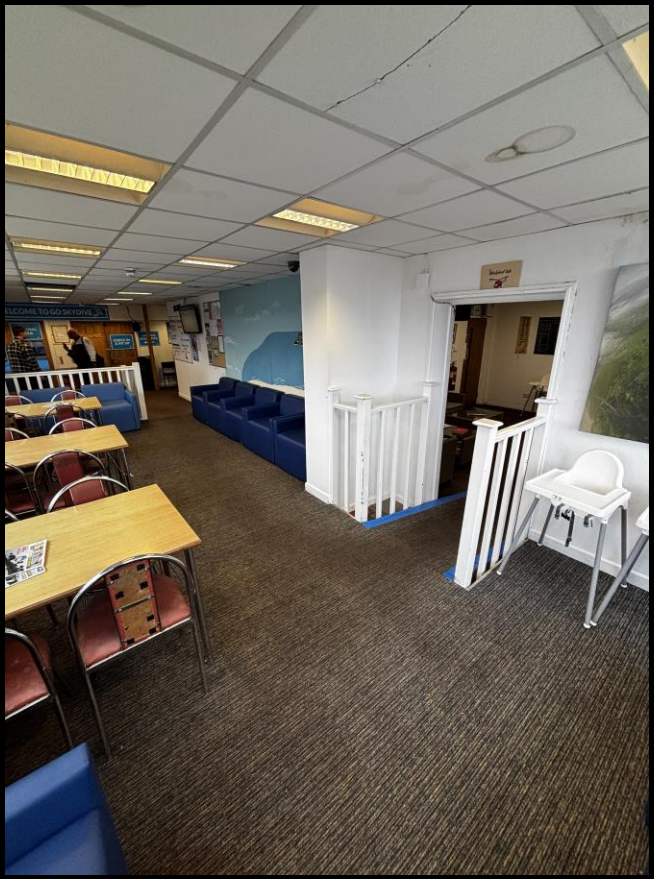
Prepping

I'd really like to use the old abandoned RAF building to display our work for the exhibition because it fits the history of the place and would create a strong atmosphere. It sounds like a great idea and would make the exhibition feel more interesting and connected to the site. However, it wouldn't be possible because the building isn't accessible to the public, so people wouldn't be able to visit or view the work safely. Because of this, the idea wouldn't work in practice, even though it makes sense creatively.

As a group, we decided to display our work in the cafe building instead because it's much more accessible to the public. It also works well with the cafe as a business, as having the exhibition there would help draw people in. Visitors would be able to experience thoughtful art pieces about Swansea Airport while they're on their way to get a coffee, which makes the exhibition feel more natural and inviting.

While we were there as a group, we spent some time deciding who would use which location. I chose a wall by the coffee table near the entrance to the cafe. I also planned to have my timelapse projected onto the ceiling above that area. We also came up with Foxtrot Hotel as the name for the exhibition. We chose it because it comes from the Swansea Airport aircodes, which ties in nicely with the theme and history of the site.





Planning

Timelapse

I'm displaying a timelapse on the ceiling to show how much time has passed since the RAF buildings were in use. The buildings themselves are displayed on the wall below the timelapse, so together the two pieces show the contrast between their past and the present, highlighting the passage of time.

Photo Display

I'm thinking about taking the photos I've captured and overlaying material from the archive on top of them to create a layered effect that mixes past and present. I'm planning to experiment with this in the darkroom, using traditional printing techniques and working with negatives to create prints that bring together the archival material and my own photographs of the RAF buildings. This way, the work will visually show the connection between the history of the site and how it looks now.

While keeping time in mind, I know I don't have much of it, so I always make sure to have an alternative that's just as good if needed. Worst case, I could always overlay the archive material in Photoshop if I'm short on time or need to make quick adjustments. The downside is that this comes at the cost of the photos feeling less significant, because working in the darkroom really helps to tell the story and gives the images more depth and presence.

timelapse

Display
photos



Idea generation

My initial idea is to make a piece of work at Swansea Airport that brings together things I found in the archive with physical and photographic elements. I want to make paper aeroplanes and cover them in documents from the archive, such as planning permission papers, records of costs, signatures from people who worked at the airport in the 1940s, and a map I found. I'm interested in how these documents hold traces of real people, decisions, and labour, and by wrapping them around paper aeroplanes they become fragile objects that reference flight, movement, and ideas that were once active at the site.

I also want to make a time-lapse of the sky directly above the airport and project it onto the roof. Placing the projection on the roof is important to me because it connects the moving image back to the site itself. The time-lapse would show slow changes in light, weather, and cloud movement, making the passing of time visible. By projecting this onto the roof, I want to highlight how much time has passed since the buildings were last in use, and how the sky continues to move regardless of what is happening on the ground below.

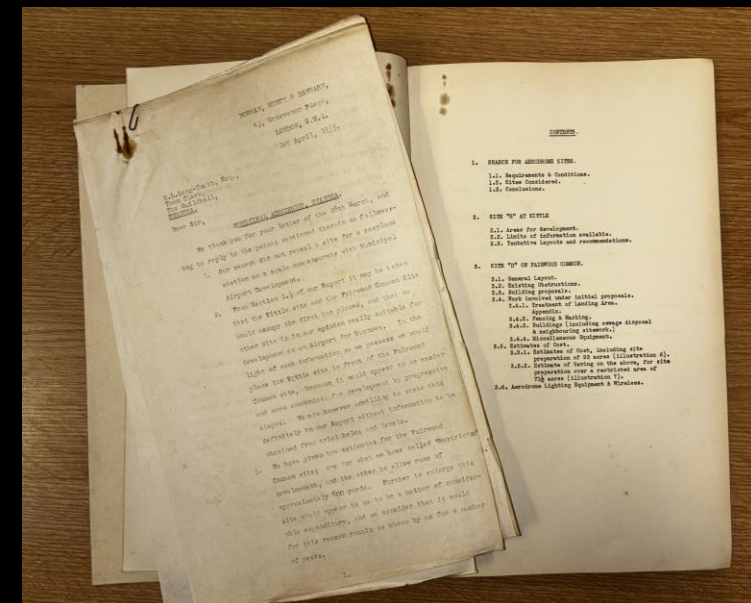
Alongside this, I want to photograph the abandoned RAF building. I have always found it intriguing, and photographing it feels like a way of acknowledging the layered history of the site without trying to explain or define it too much. Overall, this is my initial idea, and it focuses on using archival material, photography, and time-based imagery to reflect on memory, absence, and the ongoing presence of time at Swansea Airport.

Viewing Swansea Archive

When we visited the Swansea Archive as a group, without our lecturers, we were informed that the archive was in the process of being relocated. This made tracking down specific materials about the airport a bit tricky. However, we uncovered some great resources. Among the finds were numerous maps, detailing the airport's layout over the years, as well as planning permission documents that included cost records and other essential details.

We also uncovered some fascinating video interviews with people who had worked at the airport during the 70s and 80s, and even some more recent footage from around 2008 or 2009. These personal accounts added a rich, human dimension to the material.

All of these discoveries have really helped to shape and refine my ideas. They've given me a deeper intuition about how the airport evolved and how it impacted the community. It's one thing to see documents and maps, but hearing those firsthand experiences truly brings everything to life.



Viewing Swansea Archive

3.5.2.

22.

	Brought forward	£6,756	£57,880
Yards, including walls and gates, lump sum	...	90	
Parking space, paths, etc. with allowance for preparing and levelling off adjoining surfaces 1,000 yards super @ 6/-	...	300	
Access road 18 feet wide. 920 feet run @ 30/-	...	£1,380	
Sewage disposal, lump sum	...	500	£9,006.

Work indicated under section 3.4.4.

Wind Indicator. Medical Requirements and "Crash" Equipment (excluding ambulance, but including allowance for vehicle suitable as fire tender). Petrol Pumps and Storage. Purvising and Miscellaneous.	£1,500.
Add 10% for contingencies, to include fees and expenses.	£47,856 7,179
TOTAL ESTIMATE OF COST	£58,035

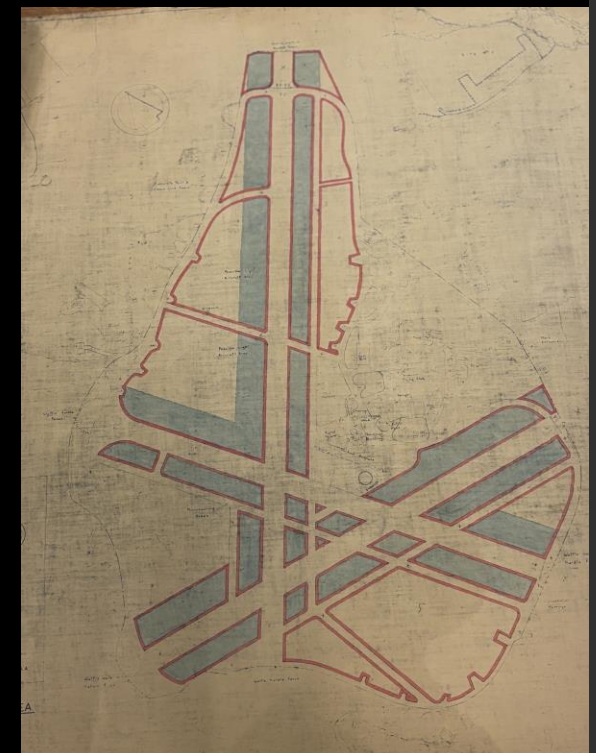
3.5.2. Estimate of Saving on the above, for site preparation over a restricted area of 7½ acres (illustration 7).

In view of the great cost of site preparation we indicate below the approximate saving on the total estimate of £58,035 given in 3.5.1. if a restricted area of 7½ acres is developed initially and considerable cut-and-fill thus avoided.

Estimated saving

2½ acres of under-drainage @ £70 per acre	£1,506
29,000 cubic yards to areas cut and filled, @ 3/6	5,076
21 acres: strip off vegetable soil, lay aside and afterwards spread over areas cut or filled @ £120	2,520
21 acres surface preparation on areas cut and filled @ £35 per acre	735
Half-an-acre of full surface preparation on untouched areas @ £50 per acre	25.

R. A. F. FAIRWOOD COMMON
Xmas, 1943
MENU
BREAKFAST
Cornflakes. Porridge. Steamed Wheat Egg and Bacon Tea. Coffee Bread. Butter. Marmalade
DINNER
Roast Turkey. Roast Pork Roast Potatoes. Boiled Potatoes Benedict's Sauce. Green Peas Bread Sauce. Apple Sauce
Studding Xmas Pudding Brandy Sauce Mince Pie Biscuits. Cheese Beer. Cigarettes. Minerals Fruit
TEA
York Ham. Ox Tongue Sauce. Pickles Xmas Cake Tea. Bread. Marmalade. Jam
The Commanding Officer and Officers wish you a Merry Xmas
0/0 2 1075/1



Timelapse

Due to my personal schedule, I had to check when the sunrise would be, and it actually works in my favor that it's the end of the year. Sunrise is at 7:52, which gives me a clear start time to capture the light. Sunset is at 4:02, so I have a solid chunk of daylight to work with.

The best way to do it is to film the timelapse on my phone. It's compact, portable, and ideal for this kind of setup, plus the quality is really good these days. I can set it up somewhere stable and just let it capture the light gradually changing across the sky. Once I have the footage, I can project it onto the ceiling so it stretches over the space, making it feel like the room itself is slowly moving with the sun.

Filming on my phone also gives me flexibility. I can experiment with angles and positions, and if something doesn't work, it's easy to reset and try again. Because the phone is portable, I can also test it in different spots before committing to the final setup. In the end, it's a simple, low-tech way to create a really striking effect that connects the timelapse to the natural rhythm of the day, while still being easy to manage on my own schedule.

Idea generation

I don't have a lot of time to make this exhibition, so I can't afford to waste a single moment. I expect that not everything will work exactly as I plan, and part of the process will be learning to adapt and go with the flow. I see this as a chance to develop skills in problem-solving, quick decision-making, and responding to the site and materials in the moment. Working under these constraints feels valuable, as it mirrors the themes of time, change, and impermanence that I'm exploring in the project.

My main focus is on the photographs I'll be taking, because I think they will have the strongest impact compared to the other elements of the work. While the paper aeroplanes and projections are important, it's the images I capture that will carry the weight of the project and spark more conversation and personal responses. I want the photographs to encourage viewers to bring their own ideas and reactions, making the work feel alive and open to different perspectives.

Planes

One thing I'm planning to do is take the paper I'm displaying, fold it into planes, and hang them from the ceiling. I'm thinking I can use fish wire or thin string so the planes look like they're floating in the air. I can tie the wire to the ceiling or to hooks and adjust the length so some planes fly higher and some lower, which will make the display feel more dynamic.

Another idea is to use inflatable planes you can buy online. They're cheap and already have a shape, so I can cover them with paper. I'm planning to use the old papers with signatures from the 40s and 50s, wrapping them around the inflatable forms. The signatures will show through and make the planes feel like they're carrying history. I might attach these bigger planes with the same fish wire or string, so they float above the folded ones or even move slightly if there's a little breeze.

I can also mix both approaches. I could hang some smaller folded planes close to the viewer and have bigger wrapped planes higher up. I'm imagining using clear tape or little loops on the paper to hold the string in place without damaging it. Shadows from the lights can make everything feel alive, like the planes are actually in motion.

For me, the main goal is to make the paper itself interesting and playful, while also showing the history. People can walk through it, look up, maybe even reach out and interact with some of the planes. It's simple, visual, and brings the old signatures and stories into the space in a really tactile way.

Planning/time management

Due to a lack of communication on my part, I had to change where I was displaying my work. There weren't many solutions, and in the end, there was really only one option: a small wall in the walkway into the cafe. It's not a huge space, but it does give me three little sides of the wall to display on.

Because I didn't have a lot of time, this made things even trickier. Displaying the paper airplanes and the timelapse became difficult because the wall is right in the way of people walking into the cafe, which could interfere with the cafe's business. Most of the customers there are elderly, so I had to be really careful not to block their path or make it awkward for them. For that reason, I couldn't go ahead with the planes and timelapse like I first imagined.

On the bright side, it actually feels like a bit of a blessing in disguise. Not being able to do everything made me focus on the main part of my work: the images I really wanted to display. I measured the wall carefully to make sure the layout would work and started thinking about the best way to show the images within that smaller space. It helped me simplify and refine what I was presenting, which actually makes the display stronger in the end.

New walls to display



RAF Building

I went to the airport to photograph the old RAF buildings, wandering around the abandoned structures and looking for interesting angles. I was using my 18–55mm camera, trying to capture the textures and the feeling of the place. I'm planning to bring the photos into Photoshop, turn them monochrome to really bring out the mood, and then overlay some material from the Swansea Archive on top. It's going to be cool to mix the old material stuff with my own shots.

I tried to frame and position the shots in a way that would leave enough space for extra imagery to sit on top without feeling cramped. I paid attention to flat areas, open space, and strong shapes so the overlays would work better and not clash with the main image. Shooting with this in mind made the editing process smoother and helped the final images feel more planned and intentional rather than forced.

4 Raw Images:

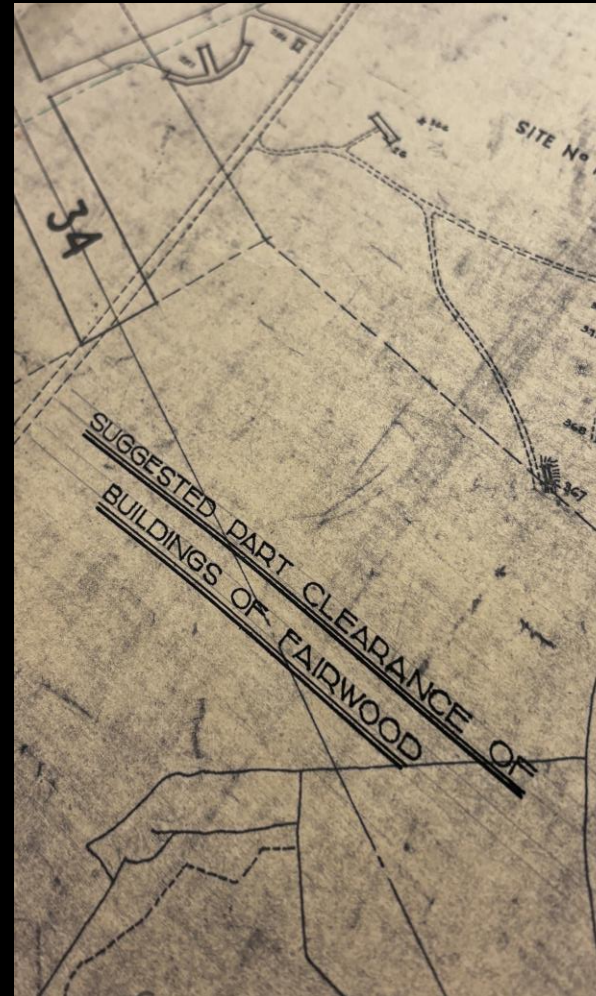


Material to be overlaid:

P.B. Dyer
P. Scott
Anthony Wm (Wae)
Sacco
Marion Eric
Bismarck
J. Meikle.
Amwell.
Rish
Blaskie
E. Arthurton.
Pittman
E.M. Ellis
K. Grant R.H.T.
M. Hunter.

J.B.
Bill Mley
Theo J. Lamer U.S.A.
W. Johnson
A. Baule

Drinkle Bell



R. A. F.
FAIRWOOD COMMON

Xmas, 1943

MENU

BREAKFAST

Cornflakes. Porridge. Shreaded Wheat
Egg and Bacon
Tea. Coffee
Bread. Butter, Marmalade

DINNER

Roast Turkey. Roast Pork
Roast Potatoes. Boiled Potatoes
Bussels. Serrouts. Green Peas
Bread Sauce. Apple Sauce
Stuffing
Xmas Pudding
Brandy Sauce
Mince Pies
Biscuits. Cheese
Beer. Cigarettes. Minerals
Fruit

TEA

York Ham. Or Tongue
Sauce. Pickles
Xmas Cake
Tea. Bread. Marmarine. Jam

The Commanding Officer and Officers
wish you a Merry Xmas

010 2 1075/1



Material to be overlaid:



3.5.2. 22.

Brought forward	£6,736	£37,360
Yards, including walls and gates, lump sum	90	
Parking space, paths, etc. with allowance for preparing and levelling off adjoining surfaces 1,000 yards super @ 6/-	300	
Access road 16 feet wide. 920 feet run @ 30/-	£1,380	
Sewage disposal, lump sum	500	£9,006.

Work indicated under section 3.4.4.

Wind Indicator. Medical Requirements and "Crash" Equipment (excluding ambulance, but including allowance for vehicle suitable as fire tender).
Petrol Pumps and Storage.
Furnishing and Miscellaneous. £1,500.

Add 10% for Contingencies, to include fees and expenses. £47,856
7,172

TOTAL ESTIMATE OF COST ... £55,035

3.5.3. Estimate of Saving on the above, for site preparation over a restricted area of 7½ acres (illustration 7).

In view of the great cost of site preparation we indicate below the approximate saving on the total estimate of £55,035 given in 3.5.1. if a restricted area of 7½ acres is developed initially and considerable out-and-fill thus avoided.

Estimated saving

21½ acres of under-drainage @ £70 per acre	£1,506
29,000 cubic yards to areas out and filled, @ 3/6	5,075
21 acres: strip off vegetable soil, lay aside and afterwards spread over areas out or filled @ £120	2,520
21 acres surface preparation on areas out and filled @ £35 per acre	735
Half-an-acre of full surface preparation on untouched areas @ £50 per acre	25.

After Overlaying and editing:



What I like about this image is the vintage feeling it has. Turning the background into black and white makes the space feel older and more atmospheric. It also helps the textures, shadows, and shapes in the building stand out more, which makes the image more interesting to look at. I like how the signatures layered on top in Photoshop add extra meaning to the image. They look almost like memories or traces left behind, which fits well with the abandoned space. I think I edited it well and the signatures work nicely with the background without taking too much attention away from it.

I'm happy with how this image and the other examples have turned out. Using sticky vinyl to put them on the wall is the best option because of limited time. This process has helped me work faster and improve my editing skills, which will help me raise my standard in future projects.

After Overlaying and editing:



What I like about this image is how the black-and-white edit makes the building feel empty and forgotten. The lack of colour helps show how worn down and abandoned it is, which fits the mood of the space. It feels quiet and still, like the building has been left behind.

The overlaid image comes from an archive and is a map from before the airport was built. The map shows areas that needed to be cleared so this building could be put there. I think it's ironic because the map explains the purpose of building the site and planning where everything would go, but now the building itself is completely vacant and unused. Something that was carefully planned and built is now empty.

I think overlaying the map onto the outside image of the building was a clever decision. It connects the past and present and shows the contrast between what the building was meant to be and what it has become. I'm happy with how this edit turned out and how the archive material adds more meaning to the image without overpowering it.

Editing:

To make these photos, I brought the archive map into Photoshop and layered it over the original photo. I started by trying the map at around 80% opacity, but it felt too strong and distracted from the building, so I kept lowering it until it blended in better. I also tried out different blend modes to see what worked best with the image. Some of them made the photo too dark or made the map stand out too much, so I didn't use those. I then adjusted the contrast and levels so the map was still visible but didn't take over the image. It took a lot of trial and error, but experimenting like this helped me understand how small changes can really affect the final look.

I also tried using a few different images as overlays, but I didn't like how they turned out. Some of them didn't look striking enough, and others felt unpolished or unfinished. In some cases, the images just didn't work well together and felt forced rather than natural. Because they didn't mesh properly with the original photo, I decided not to use them and stuck with the overlay that worked best visually.

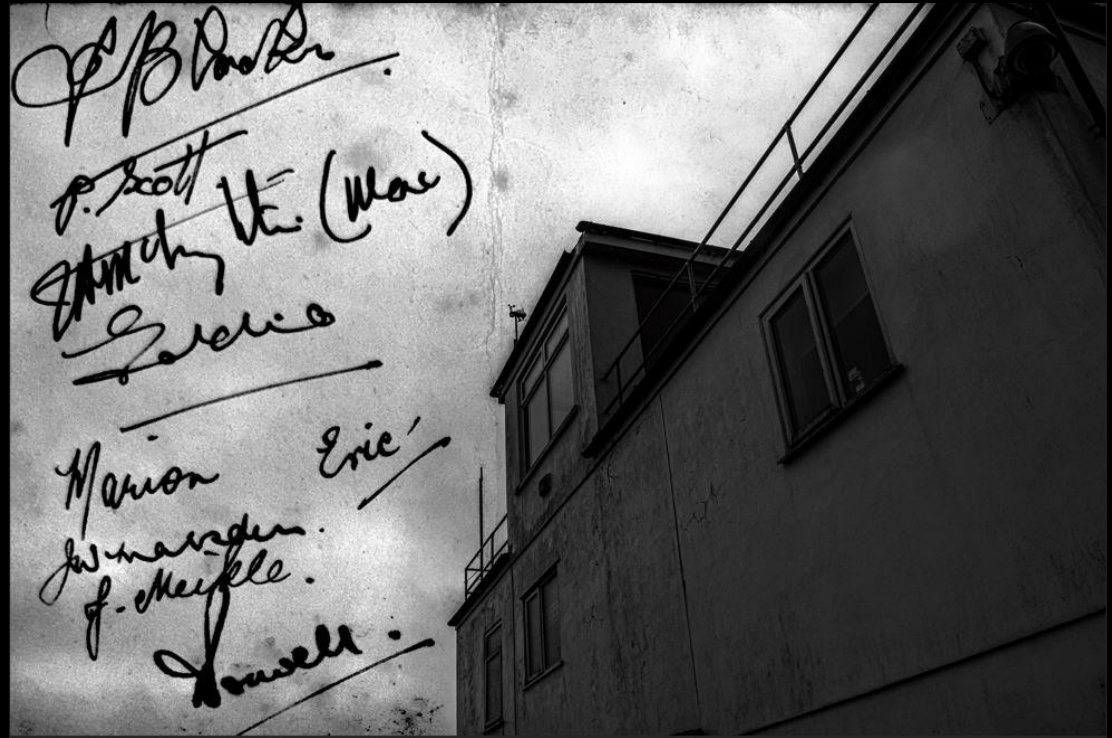


Editing:

I also experimented with using different images as overlays before choosing the final one. Some of the images didn't look striking enough and didn't add much to the original photograph, while others felt messy or unpolished. In a few cases, the images didn't mesh well together and looked like they were just placed on top rather than blended in. I tried adjusting opacity and blend modes with these images, but even after making changes, they still didn't feel right. Because of this, I decided not to use them and focused on the overlay that worked best both visually and conceptually. This process helped me be more critical of my choices and understand when an idea isn't working, even if time has already been spent on it.

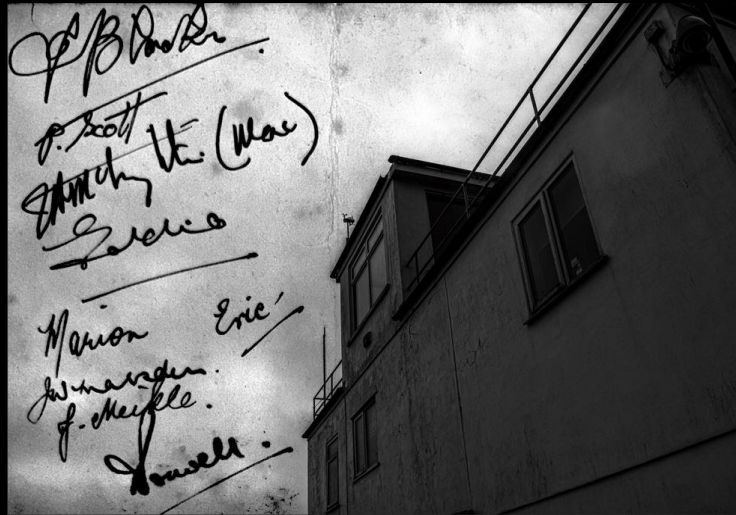


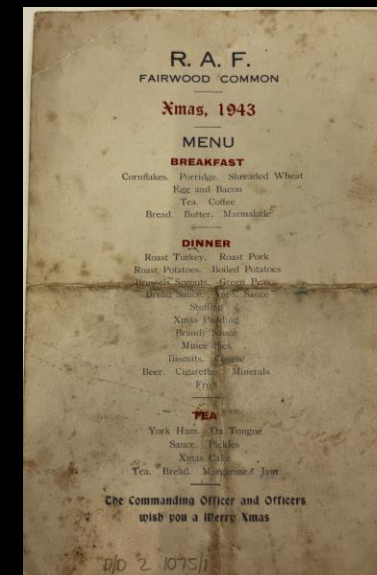
Raw vs Edited



Raw vs Edited





[illegible]

Chosen Images to display

I also want to use the vintage coffee material, the old cafe menu, and the signatures as part of the final display. I've decided not to overlay these onto photos and instead use them as they are. I'm going to scan them in and display them alongside the edited images that use overlays. I think this works best because it keeps those materials authentic and easy to read. It also adds a nice touch, especially with the café menu being placed near the entrance or on the way to the present café, where the menus are quite similar. This helps link the past and present in a simple but effective way and makes the overall display feel more thoughtful and connected.

I've chosen these two images because I think they work best together and fit the idea of the project the strongest. I'm using the photo of the outside of the building on the outer wall facing the window, and on the other side of the wall I'm placing the image from inside the RAF building. Between these, I'm putting the raw archive images so they act as a link between the two photos. This layout feels right for my preferences and how I want people to experience the work. I think placing the images this way will encourage more conversation and different opinions, as viewers move between the outside, the inside, and the archive material in the middle.

Evaluation

I'm really happy with how the final outcome turned out, especially considering the obstacles I had to work through and the amount of quick thinking involved. What I liked most was seeing how much conversation my work started compared to some of my peers. While we were waiting for lectures, I noticed a lot of people stopping to look and talk about my images. I think the location played a part in that, as many of the people who viewed the work already knew about the abandoned RAF building behind the hangars. Regardless of the grade, I'm glad that my work got people thinking and talking, because that was the main goal from the start. Art is meant to provoke thought, and I feel like my work succeeded in doing that.



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