Archaeology of Destruction
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Edited by

Lila Rakoczy

Cambridge Scholars Publishing
For Michael, my favourite Apprentice Destructionologist, and Neal, whom I respect and admire more than words can say.
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This volume is based on themes and discussions that arose from the *Archaeology of Destruction Conference* held by the University of York in May 2006, an event which would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the Department of Archaeology. I am also grateful to Michael Hoogterp, Brian Kerr, and Shaun Richardson for all their help and encouragement during the compilation of this book. Most of all, I am indebted to Eva Fairnell who provided invaluable expertise and good humour to this project.
This book is—and is not—about archaeology. It is also about destruction, although notions of what “destruction” means will no doubt vary considerably from reader to reader. This ambiguity is deliberate and was first piloted at the Archaeology of Destruction Conference hosted by the University of York in May 2006, the purpose of which was to unite archaeologists and non-archaeologists in a discussion about the importance of destruction in human affairs. The questions that arose were varied and complex, and this volume is an attempt to celebrate and explore some of those questions in more depth. In essence, this collection of fourteen essays—some explicitly archaeological, some not—highlights the many ways that we as human beings identify, negotiate, ignore, and understand destruction in its various forms. Each of the viewpoints represented here serves as a catalyst for asking broader questions, some of which we are already familiar with, and others which will certainly provoke debate and discussion.

The most prominent question is, in many ways, perhaps the most difficult to answer: What is destruction? It is a question which, on the surface at least, appears to have easy and automatic answers. After all, as archaeologists we recognise its constant spectre and various incarnations: the destructive nature of many archaeological practices, the natural degradation of artefacts and structures, and the damage caused by past human agency, both on contemporary and ancient structures. Arguably, however, destruction as a concept is much more complicated than this, and much more difficult to recognise and agree upon. What, for example, were the economic, religious, political, and social factors that influenced the form and extent of past episodes of destruction? What is the demarcation line between destruction and progress, and who gets to decide? What are the value judgements that underpin our ideas about destruction? These questions are far from just academic, as even a cursory evaluation of our own destructive times soon reveals.

This, of course, addresses the underlying question of why the concept of destruction needs to be examined and debated at all. Perhaps the most compelling answer is the sheer complexity of destruction. It can be ephemeral or tangible, transient or long lasting. It means different things to different people, and yet inevitably brings with it an emotional force that
must be reckoned with. For all of our notions about being civilised, destruction—be it of bodies, landscapes, structures, objects, or an idea or experience—speaks to a primal side of us that both courts and fears it. Consequently, we all participate in, react to, and ignore evidence of destruction, just as our forebears have done since prehistoric times.

It is this universal relevance and the inherent role destruction plays in the constantly changing human condition that makes it a particularly important subject for archaeologists to explore. For that reason, the essays contained here cross several time periods and consider a variety of cultural perspectives. In doing so, they prompt vital questions about whether human reactions to destruction are the same everywhere and always have been, or if they are tempered by cultural and temporal considerations that need to be investigated and debated. This debate is a two-way mirror: in discussing destruction in the past in all its complexities, we not only enrich our understanding of the past, but we gain insight into and contextual understanding of the destruction still occurring around us today, especially in areas long torn apart by ethnic or religious strife. We are also awakened to the more subtle acts of destruction that occur quietly around us and which erode (or enhance) our sense of identity, belonging, and community. As archaeologists, we are in a privileged position to ask these questions about past societies, and to apply our skills to the task of interpreting the role destruction played in their lives.

Despite this privileged position, however, we should not overlook the contribution that other disciplines have to offer. This can take the form of specialist knowledge or skills that fall outside the traditional realm of archaeology, providing much needed clarity on specific destruction processes. Just as crucial, however, are the alternative theoretical perspectives or methodological approaches they offer. These rich viewpoints illustrate that the question of what destruction is—as a concept and as a reality—is too multifaceted and complex a question to be answered by just one discipline.

For obvious reasons, a volume dedicated to such a broad subject will have essays which differ widely in scope and content, and which defy easy categorisation. Consequently, rather than make arbitrary temporal, geographical, or disciplinary divisions, the format chosen for this book is a loosely thematic one, with chapters grouped more for their broader arguments than for the time period or culture they centre on. The advantage of this arrangement is that it discourages us from making linear interpretations about destruction throughout history; instead, we are prompted to see the similarities and common issues that link these seemingly disparate cultures, time periods, and events.
One of the strongest threads to emerge from several papers is the importance of memory and values, and the issue of who has control over the “story” of destruction. In his paper on German World War II bunkers, Shaun Richardson explores this by looking at the role they played in aerial bombardment, as well as the contentious issues surrounding their continued preservation. Similarly, Lucienne Thys-Şenocak and Carolyn Aslan examine how the destruction at Gallipoli Peninsula has been presented and argue that the full complexity of its history has been neglected. In both papers, questions are asked about whose “story” should be prioritised, and the role archaeology and oral histories can play in determining the many “values” of a site.

These issues are brought into sharp relief by Olivia Muñoz-Rojas Oscarsson in her examination of the destruction (and subsequent reconstruction) of Spain’s cities in the Spanish Civil War. Of particular interest are the values underpinning Franco’s urban redevelopment projects, as manifested by the self-promotion of the state and the demonisation of “enemy” values. Moving from the city to the landscape, Timur Tatlıoğlu similarly explores how destruction and militarism were used to project social status through the medium of eighteenth-century landscaped gardens. Much like the papers before, both are concerned with how destruction relates to issues such as national identity, elite values, and control over how past histories should be “told” through architecture and the landscape.

Our next two papers serve as a reminder of the often intangible qualities of destruction, and the sense of loss that a community can experience when values are imposed from the outside. Using the political upheaval of seventeenth-century China as a backdrop, David Pattinson reveals the literary response to the fall of the Ming dynasty and the cultural destruction that accompanied it. Significantly, he argues that the destruction of buildings was less traumatic than the overall loss of cultural identity brought about by new “alien” rulers. A similar theme is explored by Emma Waterton through the modern context of a Yorkshire community whose sense of “place” has been eroded by the prescribed values of outside, protective agencies. Here, too, the concept of destruction rests not on the tangible fabric of buildings (in this case an ancient scheduled monument), but on a community struggling to assert its own identity in the face of cultural opposition.

Another strong theme to emerge out of several of the essays was the importance of archaeological practice, both in reacting to and understanding periods of destruction. Taking a legal perspective, Kevin Smith stresses the crucial role that archaeologists play in modern conflicts
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such as the cultural genocide that took place in the Former Yugoslavia. In particular, war crimes tribunals rely on the skills and expertise of archaeologists to identify and interpret patterns of destruction, and in the process provide a voice for those whose culture has been systematically erased. Similar skills are required when faced with unintentional destruction, as Brian Kerr highlights in his paper on the fire of Windsor Castle in 1992. The salvage operations and archaeological response to the disaster directly influenced the reconstruction choices made in the aftermath of the fire, and illustrate the enormous power that archaeology has on how we react to destruction. As both chapters demonstrate, archaeologists are uniquely placed to provide expert guidance not only in interpreting destruction, but also in the responses that emerge from it.

At an even more fundamental level, the application of archaeological practice to the study of past acts of destruction provides an opportunity to rethink enshrined truths about periods of intense change. As James Gerrard notes, this is especially true for the transitional period that accompanied the end of Roman Britain. His use of archaeological evidence from Late Roman sites suggests a variable pattern of demolition and survival, and cautions against broad generalisations about how destruction manifested itself in a post-Roman Britain. Similarly, Martin Brown uses the “pulverised” Western Front to argue that even the most destroyed landscape has stories to reveal, and that extreme destruction results in a variety of new landscape uses and adaptations, as well as a continuity of old ones.

Drawing on several of these themes, the last essays in this volume critically examine some of the common misconceptions and assumptions attributed to destruction. In their paper on the disfiguration of tomb façades in the Necropolis of Cyrene, Igor and Luca Cherstich challenge us to see the creative aspects of destruction rather than to dismiss such acts as cultural vandalism. In this context destruction is presented as a form of funerary “dialogue” that utilised old stylistic elements even as it added new ones to cater to changing tastes. Anthony Masinton presents a similarly nuanced view of the Dissolution of England’s monasteries, revealing a complex picture of selective destruction that was at least partially driven by new ideas about sacred space. Just as significant as the destruction, however, is the often overlooked evidence of conscious preservation, adaptation, and continued development of former monastic sites. As both chapters illustrate, destruction can mask a powerful underlying desire for continuity, albeit in altered forms that suits the priorities and needs of later generations.
This issue of motivation is explored still further in the last two essays, both of which highlight the benefits and drawbacks of destruction as a form of policy. Using the dismantling of Pontefract Castle in the English Civil War as a discussion point, Lila Rakoczy challenges the dominant narrative which presents castle slightings as a predominantly military act. Instead, a more complex picture is presented of power and profit, with far-reaching repercussions for local and regional communities. And finally, as Kelly DeVries reminds us with a comparison between Mongol and Ottoman warfare, a deliberate strategy to not destroy provides clues about the long-term objectives of “conquerors vs. invaders”. Both chapters paint a picture of a controlled approach to destruction that clearly factored in the goals and ambitions of the victors.

Collectively, the essays in this volume challenge us to reconsider what we “know” about destruction. This includes what destruction is, how we interpret it or react to it, and why it is too important a subject for archaeologists to ignore. Above all, this volume is an invitation to examine the subject of destruction more critically: to ask more questions of the nature of the evidence, and even more questions about the assumptions and prejudices we bring to that evidence. It is hoped that the ideas and arguments presented here serve as a gateway to further discussion, debate, and investigation, and that they reveal just a few of the varied roles that destruction has played—and continues to play—in the lives of people.
CHAPTER ONE

DESTRUCTION PRESERVED:
SECOND WORLD WAR PUBLIC AIR-RAID
SHELTERS IN HAMBURG

SHAUN RICHARDSON

Refuges

The Winterhuder Marktplatz, located within a north-eastern suburb of Hamburg, is a pleasant place to while away a Saturday dinnertime in late November. Alighting from the U-Bahn at Hudtwalcker Straße, one passes a selection of small shops, already swathed in fir branches, candles, and the other essentials of a German Christmas. The compact but busy marketplace offers stalls stocked with meats, flowers, bread, and honey, whilst the adjacent modern shopping centre provides an opportunity to purchase cheap beers and wines. However, as one emerges from the shopping centre, one’s eye is wrenched upwards to a mass of almost featureless stained concrete that intrudes rudely into Barmbeker Straße between flanking apartment blocks (Fig. 1-1).

A foreign visitor might walk past it a dozen times without realising its former function; the author spent most of the 1990s with the vague idea that it was the remnant of some spartan 1960s cinema. It is in fact a Bunkerhaus, a type of Bunker or public air-raid shelter, and not even the colourful window displays of the furnishing store now housed within can disguise its ugly form. However, towards midnight on 27 July 1943, the aesthetics of the urban street scene were of little interest to a six-year-old boy waking up in an apartment block on Buchenstraße, a hundred metres or so to the north, and making his way with his mother and father to an underground shelter on nearby Grasweg:
“It was utterly dark because of the blackout restrictions, and pretty warm. I thought it was exciting to trip about the streets in the middle of the night and didn’t worry at all. I don’t know how my parents felt as they appeared calm and collected on the surface. When the alarm was over, we would leave the shelter in the usual way. But something was different. The eastern horizon from south to west was glimmering in a reddish hue caused by the fires in the eastern part of the city and there was a smell of burnt paper and wood in the air. At home, at Buchenstraße, almost all of the window panes of the windows facing the street were broken and there were lots of pieces of glass strewn over the front room floor; this also destroyed my little orange tree which I had carefully grown from seed. About fifty metres away from our apartment, a petrol station at the Winterhuder Marktplatz had been hit, causing the underground petrol tanks to explode, and this was the reason for the broken windows. My room and my parents’ bedroom remained untouched as they were facing away (from the street), and so we managed to get some sleep” (Klaus Brüning, pers comm.).

The Brünings had sought refuge in one of over a thousand shelters of various types to be built in Hamburg between the mid 1930s and the end of the war. By 1943, there were officially 166,000 places available in the city’s public shelters, although when circumstances required perhaps as many as 400,000 people were accommodated. In addition to these, there were a further 378,000 places in less well protected sites; for example, the cellars of over 60,000 apartment blocks had been equipped with reinforced...
ceilings (Heitmann 1990, 3). In total, out of a population of 1.7 million, 47% had access to some kind of protection from air-raids (Schmal and Selke 2001, 13), a higher proportion than other large cities such as Leipzig, Dresden, and Berlin (Friedrich 2006, 351).

The fires noted by Klaus Brüning on the eastern horizon were the result of the second night of bombing undertaken by the Royal Air Force (RAF) as part of “Operation Gomorrah”, a series of raids carried out by the RAF and the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) between Saturday, July 24th and Monday, August 2nd 1943. The definitive account of the raids in English has been given by Middlebrook (1984) and all subsequent accounts have drawn heavily on this, as does the following summary. Although Hamburg was bombed over two hundred times during the course of the Second World War, the greatest destruction took place during the 1943 raids, much of it produced by the firestorm that developed as a result of the July 27th/28th raid. The firestorm was concentrated on the Billwerder, Hammerbrook, Borgfelde, Hamm, and Wandsbeck areas, which comprised largely residential working-class districts characterised by six-story apartment blocks. By about 1:15 A.M., within fifteen minutes of the first bombs falling, smaller fires were already burning out of control. These began to combine, creating larger fires, which sucked in hot air, sparks, and burning debris. By 3 A.M., a firestorm had developed, consuming some four square miles of the city centre, with a temperature rising to about 800 degrees centigrade and generating winds that sucked in air at hurricane speeds. When the air-raid sirens sounded, some people had made for the public shelters but others had gone down into the cellars of their apartment blocks. As the apartments above them caught fire, these cellars began to fill with smoke and hot air and those within then had to decide whether to stay or to risk the streets outside. Amongst the first group, the predominant cause of death was asphyxiation by carbon monoxide poisoning. For those who took their chances in the streets, survival was more often than not a matter of sheer luck. Survivors described a “blizzard of red snowflakes” and a noise like “an old organ in a church when someone is playing all the notes at once” (Middlebrook 1984, 264, 269). There were much worse things to see, hear, and smell, such as the screaming people trapped in the melting asphalt on Eiffestraße or the remains of small children lying like “fried eels on the pavement”. By 7 A.M., when the firestorm began to subside, up to 40,000 people were dead (Middlebrook 1984, 259-77, 356, 379). A series of rapidly made chalk sketches drawn by Hans Leip on the morning of July 28th convey well the chaotic scenes in the aftermath of the firestorm and some of the images that frequently occur in survivors’ accounts, such as the removal of
belongings from bombed houses, the removal of the dead from the streets, women remonstrating with the authorities, and those who simply sat and stared, unable to comprehend what had actually happened (Leip 1961).

Although the vast column of smoke rising from the burning city was clearly discernible in Winterhude, the district itself was relatively untouched by the July 27th/28th raid. However, the RAF returned on July 29th/30th, this time targeting neighbouring Barmbeck, which was severely damaged. Once again the Brüning family were forced to take shelter underground at Grasweg:

“We could feel the whistling of the bombs and the following detonations in our shelter very well. You could tell by the sound whether it was an incendiary or a blast bomb. The blast bombs came down with an initially quiet and then more piercing whistling. Strangely, the detonations followed one or two seconds later. Or sometimes not; Blindgänger (‘a bomb that doesn’t know where to fall’), the adults would say. The incendiaries made a quiet rushing sound, which increased more and more. Then there was a short crack when they hit the ground and then nothing. We were sitting in our shelter when suddenly someone shouted ‘Everybody get out’!; one of the candles which we had lit after the electricity failed had gone out, indicating low oxygen levels….and then we learnt that we couldn’t leave via the main entrance as it had been hit by an incendiary and was burning away. We had to use the emergency exit, which was as narrow as a tank door, and which led to a small park. I found it difficult to step onto the ladder designed for adults but I was pushed upwards by the people following behind. The small park was surrounded by burning houses or houses that were about to go up in flames. In the hot air, one could see hand-sized pieces of burning particles, for example, glowing pieces of paper, which threatened to land on hair or clothing. Somebody had put up two big metal containers filled with water, which we used to wet towels to extinguish the pieces of paper on our clothing; somebody else wrapped a wet piece of cloth around my head like a turban to protect against these pieces. And that’s how we spent the night in the little park with the bombs still falling. I can’t really remember much of the following days. I have only memories of the still faintly burning debris and the disgusting smell of burnt wood, paper, cement, and dead bodies; I only realised much later that part of the smell came from corpses…after the experience with the emergency exit, my father decided that these shelters weren’t safe and as a result we now used the Bunkerhaus in the Barnbecker Straße” (Klaus Brüning, pers comm.).

Subsequently, when the air-raid sirens sounded, the family sometimes failed to get up in time to reach the Bunkerhaus before the doors were shut, and so were forced to return to the cellar of their apartment block. On
some occasions, Klaus and his father even remained in the street to watch. There was usually much to interest a small boy, as the target markers, flak shells, and searchlights lit up the night sky. However, the novelty of the experience wore off very suddenly when, during the observation of one raid, a bomb hit a garage only thirty metres away; fortunately for father and son, it failed to explode.

By the time that bombing ceased on August 2nd, 8,344 tons of bombs had been dropped, 598 Allied and American airmen had been killed, and perhaps 45,000 German civilians were left dead. An estimated 1,200,000 inhabitants left the city during the bombing (Middlebrook 1984, 243-277, 322-328). As a result, the city authorities enacted the Hamburg Major Catastrophe Plan. The firestorm zone was declared a prohibited area and the streets leading into it were sealed off by brick barriers. Over the following weeks, units from the police, the army, and prisoners from Neuengamme concentration camp undertook the clearance of bodies from streets and cellars, and removed them to mass graves at Ohlsdorf cemetery (Middlebrook 1984, 174, 356). Despite this, Hamburg was plagued by huge clouds of flies which swarmed thickly around cellar entrances until October (Sebald 2003, 34-5), and parts of the firestorm area remained sealed off until the end of the war. In his powerful account of the bombing, written soon after the event, the novelist Hans Erich Nossack (2004, 8) described what happened to the city as *Der Untergang* ("The End"). When interviewed about his experiences some forty years later, a Hamburg policeman gave a more pithy description: "*Nun haben wir die Scheisse*" ("Now it was our turn to be in the shit") (Middlebrook 1984, 352). Most citizens came to refer to the event simply as "*die Katastrophe*". However, the scale of destruction implied by the word was too much for some; on December 9th, 1943, less than six months after the bombing, Goebbels ordered the word "catastrophe" in the Hamburg Major Catastrophe Plan to be replaced by "extreme emergency" (Middlebrook 1984, 11, 174).

**Ruins**

When the British Army entered Hamburg early on the morning of May 3rd, 1945, they took over a city of ruins, rubble, and 1,051 *Bunker*. The state to which Hamburg had been reduced is best represented in the early colour photographs reproduced by Hanke et al. (1993), which portray destruction in a hundred different hues of black, brown, and grey; to some, the city seemed to be “broken for all time” (Leip 1959, 19). In some areas, as virtually the only surviving standing buildings, the shelters stood alone amongst seas of rubble, as seen, for example, in a photograph taken of the
junction of Max and Auerstraße in Eilbeck (Hanke et al. 1993, 139). Also prominent in the same photograph are the rows of Nissenhütten lining the recently cleared roads, a familiar site around the city for many years after the war. The Nissen huts, and many of the former shelters (by then known as Wohnbunker or Bunkerhotels) provided much-needed accommodation for the bombed-out population, especially during the exceptionally harsh winter of 1946/7 (Luft 2005, 147-9; Schreiber 2006).

As rubble, ruins, and bomb sites began to be cleared, the normal rituals of life resumed, although not always in the same manner as before, nor in the same surroundings. The writer Wolfgang Borchert’s ex-soldier spending Christmas in a Wohnbunker fantasises about a girl he has seen in the street. He imagines that she has a Christmas tree and perhaps even fried potatoes to eat, contrasting this with the chill damp of his shelter accommodation, the pervasive smell of tobacco, and the fact that the only place where they might have sex with any degree of privacy would be on the staircase; others are singing Christmas songs in the shelter, but he cannot bear it (reproduced in Klessmann 1999, 194-8). Former armaments became playthings. In the little park where Klaus Brüning had sheltered during the bombing, a disused searchlight emplacement took on a new function as a make-shift and rather dangerous merry-go-round for local children; one boy, perched on the edge, fell into the gearing and lost both his legs. Old ammunition was also readily available and it was possible for a child to amass an impressive collection (Klaus Brüning, pers comm.). As reconstruction continued, shelters which had survived the Allied bombing began to fall to either demolition by the British Army or redevelopment. In 1950 there were 1,026 left (Schmal and Selke 2001, 14), and the numbers have decreased slowly but steadily ever since, although even today there are still over 700 shelters surviving within the city.

By 1953, the majority of the rubble and bomb damage had been cleared away and in 1955 Leip (1959, 25) was able to state that “hardly anyone still lives in a Nissen hut”. As the shelters were also no longer needed for accommodation, they began to be turned to other uses. Some were permanently converted into housing, whilst others were used for storage (Schmal and Selke 2001, 117-8); one example became a Fernseh-Bunker (“television shelter”) during the 1950s, housing the broadcasting facilities of North-West German television (Diercks 2000, 4, 14-5). Some, such as that beneath the central railway station, were upgraded during the 1960s for Cold War usage, and even today the city of Hamburg still maintains 84,000 public shelter places (K. Pinker, pers comm.). Others have been put to more exotic uses, one of the largest examples housing a disco in 2003 (Hage 2003, 311). Some now stand empty, whilst one of the
smaller underground shelters in Hamm was converted into a museum in 1997; the original 1940/41 interior has been recreated using fittings salvaged from other shelters, and houses an exhibition describing the experiences of those who lived through air-raids in Hamburg and London (www.hh-ham.de; Gunnar Wulf, pers comm.). The group Hamburger Unterwelten also offer organised tours around several of the city’s surviving shelters (www.hamburgerunterwelten.de).

The stimulus for selecting a number of shelters for statutory protection or Denkmal status came in the mid 1990s, when a review of the cultural heritage of the Eimsbüttel area of Hamburg carried out by the Denkmalschutzamt (the body responsible for dealing with cultural heritage within the city) included an assessment of two shelters in government ownership. Several years later, in 1998/99, the government planned to sell one of the shelters, and there were fears that it would be demolished after transference to private ownership. As a result, the Denkmalschutzamt began to prepare the legislative paperwork necessary for statutory protection to take place. There was initially some nervousness at state governmental level about the implications of protecting such a structure, and it was decided that before protection could be enacted, a systematic and thematic study of all surviving shelters within the city should take place (Schmal and Selke 2001, 14). The results of this study were then publicised within the city by a number of events, such as open days, and through extensive local and national press coverage. Despite official apprehensiveness, the proposals were generally favourably received by the public and newspaper reporting appears to have been relatively balanced, although some sub-editors were unable to resist vaguely punning headlines such as “More protection for Hamburg’s old shelters”. The study was subsequently published in book form (Schmal and Selke 2001), and describes in detail the eight broad types of civilian air-raid shelter identified within the city. Where possible, a representative selection of each type was proposed for protection and, as of September 2005, of the twenty one shelters put forward, eleven had been accorded Denkmal status (H. Schmal, pers comm.). It should also be noted that the preservation in Hamburg was not carried out in isolation, but against a background of similar work on other wartime structures in Germany at the end of the 1990s (Schmal and Selke 2001, 10) although it is probably true to say that the Hamburg survey was the most comprehensive undertaken of air-raid shelters. A summary of the shelter types covered by the survey is given below, drawing heavily on the information given by Schmal and Selke (2001). For the purposes of this summary, the shelters have been grouped
roughly by the author into below and above-ground forms, although some of the below-ground forms are in fact only partly buried.

Turning to the below-ground shelters first, perhaps the simplest forms are the Deckungsgräben ("trenches to shelter in"). These took the form of part-sunken rectangular structures, divided into a number of compartments internally and with a scarped concrete or earth bank around. They were of simple design, could be erected quickly, and could accommodate between 50 to 200 people; over 141 had been built in Hamburg by the end of the war (Schmal and Selke 2001, 62-4). Far more numerous were the Röhrenbunker ("tube shelters"), of which 363 were built between 1939 and 1943. These varied significantly in size, measuring between 18 metres to 80 metres in length, and comprising one or more parallel concrete "tubes" with a broad concrete barrel vault over, either part-sunken or set completely underground and given further protection by an earth roof between 1-2 metres thick (Schmal and Selke 2001, 65-9). The most substantial below-ground shelters were the Tiefbunker ("deep shelters") and of these the largest was that on Reeperbahn/Spielbudenplatz, now used as an underground car park. The shelter, 200 metres long, 21metres wide, and set out over two storeys, had seating for 5,000 people, although during bombing raids perhaps as many as between 15,000 and 20,000 people sought protection there (Schmal and Selke 2001, 64). The shelter is also of interest in that it retains contemporary wall paintings by Hans Förster and Walter Pöhls (Fig. 1-2). Similar paintings by other artists survive or are known to have existed in a number of shelters throughout the city, all portraying scenes of everyday Hamburg life or illustrations taken from popular stories. None make reference to the war or contain political imagery, but were designed to reassure those sheltering within by reminding them of “normal” life (Schmal and Selke 2001, 112-4), rather like the series of murals painted by Olga Lehmann in the underground munitions complex at Corsham, Wiltshire (Cocroft et al. 2006, 114-20).

The least complex above-ground shelters to be erected in Hamburg were the Betonformstein-Unterstände ("concrete block shelters"). As the name suggests, they were built from prefabricated concrete blocks, which were filled with sand once in place. These rectangular shelters had concrete slab roofs (sometimes turfed over) and small walls placed across the entrance to protect those inside from shrapnel. Initially they were built with walls 0.60 metres in width and, although they offered limited protection in comparison to the larger shelters, they had the advantage of being quick to build; the smallest kind, designed to accommodate seven people, could be put up in less than a week (Schmal and Selke 2001, 104-105). Of slightly larger capacity but also relatively small were the
Rundschutzbauten ("round protection buildings"). These came in two forms, both of single-storey circular plan; the larger examples were designed to be bomb-proof and so had proportionally thicker walls, but the smaller ones offered protection against shrapnel only. Over 350 examples were built, with a particular concentration in the areas of the city south of the river Elbe (Schmal and Selke 2001, 70-3).

Despite their relatively small size and simple form, the round and concrete block shelters were not the earliest such structures to be built in Hamburg. The first above-ground shelters (and indeed the earliest form of air-raid shelter overall) were the Rundtürme ("round towers"), which began to appear during the late 1930s. As with other shelter types, these varied in form and specification but were typically provided with several entrances, as well as emergency exits above ground-floor level, and internally concrete ramps fitted with seating rose upwards in a spiral through the building. Externally, they are often faced with brick, sometimes having rusticated stone plinths and corbelled eaves. A feature was made of the main entrance, sometimes by a rusticated stone surround incorporating a date-stone or Nazi symbolism (Fig. 1-3). In their form and detailing, they evoke earlier defensive architecture, having the appearance

Fig. 1-2 1943 painting of Hamburger Dom by Walter Pöhls in Reeperbahn Tiefbunker (copyright of Denkmalschutzamt Hamburg Bildarchiv and reproduced with their permission).
of medieval German castle or gatehouse towers. This was done deliberately, the intention being to soften their appearance and to suggest that the civilian population should consider them necessary measures for defence against attack, rather than preparations for aggression (Schmal and Selke 2001, 58, 73-83). However, they were not popular with the public, as they took a relatively long time to enter and tended to sway violently when large bombs exploded nearby (Foedrowitz 2004, 15-6).

Fig. 1-3 Rundturm, no 7 Wiesendamm, looking north (November 2006).

Far more utilitarian in appearance are the Bunkerhäuser (“shelter houses”), the most common surviving form of above-ground shelter, or Hochbunker, found throughout Hamburg. They are usually of rectangular or sub-square plan form, four to seven storeys in height, built of concrete with flat roofs, and with at least two entrances fitted with gas-proof doors and sealable internal staircases (Schmal and Selke 2001, 84-7). With the exception of a single case of a direct hit from a heavy bomb (killing two
people out of the estimated 2,000 inside) (Heitmann 1990, 24), they generally provided excellent protection, and those who sought refuge inside them in July 1943 fared far better than those who remained in cellars or were forced to risk the streets. The austere appearance of most of the surviving examples is somewhat misleading. As with other shelters, regulations regarding capacity, technical specifications, and wall and roof thicknesses came from the Reichs Air Ministry in Berlin. However, *Bunkerhäuser* were supposed to be integrated into the existing urban townscape, and the design of their external appearance was left to the tendering architect, who had to produce a plasticine model for the approval of the city planning authorities. Examples of these models and contemporary architects’ drawings show similar decorative schemes to those used in the round towers, with brick cladding, rusticated masonry at a low level, and architectural detailing which highlighted the main entrance (Schmal and Selke 2001, 84-7). In reality, such considerations were often overtaken by events, with stone and brick cladding being abandoned for economic reasons and to increase the speed of construction.

The best preserved examples of *Bunkerhäuser*, such as that built in 1942 and still surviving within the hospital complex at Eppendorf in the northern suburbs of the city, retain not only external brick cladding but also internal fittings. The Eppendorf *Bunkerhaus* was one of twenty-six shelters, the majority below-ground, that originally existed around the hospital. The square *Bunkerhaus* is of seven storeys internally, with concrete walls and a roof between 1.10 and 1.40 metres thick. The expanse of external brickwork is broken only by purely decorative semi-circular blank arches. The main entrance at the base of the south side leads into a *Gasschleuse*, a small chamber fitted with gas-proof doors at either end. This was also provided with small hand-operated valves in the walls used to offset the effects of pressure waves generated by large bomb blasts. Beyond the *Gasschleuse*, surviving features include the original diesel-engine-driven generator equipment, air filtration plant, water supply pump, painted wall signs, and tiled floors to the first floor x-ray rooms and operating theatres. Given that the shelter’s main function was to accommodate hospital patients, an ambient internal temperature was required, which was provided by a coal-fired heating system located in the basement; the chimney flue, needed to vent smoke, was an obvious point of entry for falling bombs and so a thick raised circular concrete cover was placed over the chimney opening. Finally, if the internal lighting failed, those sheltering within were not completely disorientated as fluorescent guide strips were painted along stairs and around doorways; even after sixty-five years, these still glow gently in the darkness⁵.
As large as they are, even the *Bunkerhäuser* are dwarfed by the *Gefechtstürme* (“battle or flak towers”). Two such buildings survive in Hamburg, on the Heiligengeistfeld, north-west of the city centre and in Wilhelmsburg, to the south of the Elbe. Strictly speaking, these are military buildings but they also fulfilled a public shelter role, and so were included in the *Denkmalschutzamt* survey. The towers were originally built in pairs, one tower housing flak batteries, and the other, the command tower, housing the radar used to direct the flak; the latter have been demolished at both sites. The flak towers are gigantic structures; that at Heiligengeistfeld measures just over 70 metres square in plan, while the corner towers rise 39 metres to the projecting platform with its “swallows’ nests” for 37 mm flak, and upper pentagonal 128mm flak positions; the walls are over 2.5 metres thick while the roof reaches nearly 3.5 metres (Fig. 1-4).

Fig. 1-4 *Gefechtsturm*, Heiligengeistfeld, looking south-east (November 2006).

The entire structure was formerly painted dark grey in an attempt to camouflage its huge bulk (Foedrowitz 1998b, 25-32; Schmal and Selke 2001, 105-8). The Wilhelmsburg tower belongs to the second generation of flak towers. Although more than sixty years old, with its circular flak positions rising above the upper platform, it still projects a futuristic, even alien appearance, recalling H. G. Wells’ (1898, 821) description of the
dead Martian tripod on Primrose Hill, “the huge fighting machine that will fight no more forever”. It is in a poor structural condition as a result of the British demolition of the interior using explosives in 1947; when the smoke from the explosion cleared and the tower emerged apparently unscathed, the assembled crowd are alleged to have shouted, “Made in Germany!” (Foedrowitz 1998b, 36-7).

As stated above, the towers also provided shelter accommodation for the public and the one on the Heiligengeistfeld may have housed as many as 18,000 people during air-raids (Foedrowitz 1998b, 25). Their presence was also meant to reassure the public of the Third Reich’s ability to protect its citizens; after the war, their designer, the architect Friedrich Tamms, described the flak towers in Vienna as “carriers of an idea, an elementary feeling for power, stability, and will to live” (quoted in Foedrowitz 1998b, 38). Following the expected German victory, the Heiligengeistfeld tower was to be given a Neo-Classical makeover as part of the Third Reich’s plans to redesign Hamburg (Schubert 1985; Schmal and Selke 2001, 107), whilst those in Vienna were to be restyled as medieval Hohenstaufen castles (Foedrowitz 1998b, 38). As a result, the preservation of such structures not only informs as to past events but also gives an idea of a future that might have been, but thankfully never was.

**Reminders**

It has been noted many times before that, for the archaeologist, both the main problem and potential of Second World War sites are their connection to living memory although, perhaps with the exception of air-crash sites (Holyoak 2004, 10-5), the response to the archaeological study of British Second World War sites appears to have been largely positive. For example, in the conclusion of his survey of English anti-invasion landscapes, Foot (2006, 631) notes the considerable interest in this aspect “of ‘people’s history’, not least for the symbolism evoked of 1940—‘Britain’s finest hour’, and her last-ditch resistance to Nazism”. In his foreword to the same, Professor Richard Holmes (Foot 2006, xxxv) states that Foot’s work is “not simply archaeology, but is eloquent testimony to a generation that braced itself for invasion that never came”. Such positive responses, and a sense of pride in what the archaeology represents, are obviously absent from any German consideration of the monuments of the same period, as is evident by the terms coined to describe them: Denkmäler einer Un-Kultur ("monuments of anti-culture"), Denkmalwert des Unerfreulichen ("valuing the monuments of unpleasantness") and even