Britain from the air – 1945-2000

Tom Spencer, Martin Millett, Bob Bewley and Huw Jones

• The origins and early history of the Collection

• CUCAP and Archaeology

• CUCAP and the Changing British Environment

• Digitising the CUCAP Collection and future visions
The origins and early history of the Collection

Dr Robert Bewley, Director Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa project (EAMENA)

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Apologies for not being with you in person today
John Kenneth Sinclair St Joseph CBE, FBA
(13 November 1912 – 11 March 1994)
‘Particular sites stand out from the late 1940s photography for me, the Roman Fort at a place called Beckfoot on the Solway Plain, Cumbria, a possible Iron Age hillfort called Swarthy Hill on the same coast (excavated by me and dated to c500 BC) – and finally a D-shaped enclosure – visible as a cropmark, which helped me identify the neolithic settlement pattern of the Solway Plain, Cumbria – at the beautifully named Plasketlands, as part of research for my PhD on the Prehistoric and Romano-British settlement of the Solway Plain’

(R. Bewley, September 2019)
• the unique and world-leading archive of aerial photographs now held by Cambridge University

• the stimulus for the creation of the aerial reconnaissance teams (still in existence today) in England (Historic England), Scotland (Historic Environment Service Scotland), and Wales (RCAHMW) – and more widely

• the transformation in knowledge that his work brought about
Voyage of discovery and documenting damage and destruction
CUCAP and (Roman) Archaeology

Professor Martin Millett
Laurence Professor of Classical Archaeology
New archaeological discoveries

Neolithic Henge monuments

Thornborough

Ferrybridge

Regular publications of new discoveries
Identifying new types of archaeological site

Early medieval timber halls
Yeavering, Northumberland
Understanding Roman Britain – countryside & villas

Lidgate, Suffolk, Spring 1971

Chignall St James, Essex, Summer 1976
Contributions to Roman Britain – the context of known sites

Housesteads, Hadrian’s Wall, Winter 1971
Contributions to Roman Britain – mapping military campaigns

Stracatho, Angus
CUCAP and the Changing British Environment

Professor Tom Spencer
Professor of Coastal Dynamics
Director, Cambridge Coastal Research Unit
English Heritage’s ‘Monuments at Risk Survey’ (MARS) 1995-1998 showed that:

1. Since 1945, 48% of land with archaeological monuments revealed evidence for destruction of archaeological remains. Among these monuments, 9% of land revealed a pattern of total destruction, and 39% of land showed a pattern of piecemeal destruction.

2. The key causes of destruction were identified as cultivation, natural processes, development and urbanisation, mineral extraction, and road-building.
Loss of lowland woods, hedgerows, heaths and wetlands

Felshamhall Woods, Suffolk, May 1975

Madmarston Hill in Oxfordshire

1961

1968
Afforestation – lowland and upland

Breckland near Brandon, March 1955

Rochester, The Cheviots, July 1967
Extractive industries: rise, fall and re-use: the case of Cornish china clay mining

China clay pit, St. Ender, June 1948

‘Cornish Alps’, Carnsmerry,
June 1949
Industrialization, de-industrialization and regeneration

View of the Greenwich Peninsula from One Canada Square, May 2000 (photo: James Gibbons)

East Greenwich Gasworks, May 1972

Clearance of the Greenwich Peninsula, October 1980
The Transport Revolution

Gravelly Hill Interchange, Birmingham,
September 1978

Building the ‘London Orbital’, Thurrock
June 1979
Coastal Change

PLATE IV

Site of the 1963 break through on Salt Hill Island, photographed on 2 August 1962

Photograph of the same area taken on 26 January 1958, after the storm surge
Digitising the CUCAP Collection and future visions

Huw Jones

Cambridge Digital Library
Creating Digital Content

• High-resolution archival photography
• Automated stitching to create massive composite images
• Generation of standard TEI metadata from existing catalogue
Surfacing Digital Content

• Images and metadata put on Cambridge Digital Library
• Freely available on the internet
• Huge zoomable images
• Keyword and place searching
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Future developments

• Addition of new content
• Alternative visualisations by theme, date or place
• Integration with e.g. historical map collections
• Aggregation with other collections of aerial photography
• Machine processing with IIIF
Manchester Docks and Ship Canal, 1983

Salford Quays, 2019