**Grace Halden**

**Birkbeck, University of London.**

**Private Access. Rejecting Tourism and Exploring Lost Sites of World War II**

Ruins are monuments to history and the unique destructive event which rendered them ruined. Ruins are products of nostalgia and monuments of time; to look upon the ruin is to engage in mnemonic process. Drawing on the theoretical work of Anthony Vidler, Tim Edensor and Jonathan Veitch I apply the philosophy of ruination to ‘lost’ or ‘forgotten’ World War II structures not available to tourists.

In a rather unconventional, interdisciplinary paper, I will be exploring the idea of urban exploration (the act of civil trespass in order to explore and document places and spaces barred to the public). Through photographs (taken by the author as well as sourced from urban exploration hobbyists) I will examine the ‘lost’ monuments which have not been converted into tourist spaces and are often ‘hidden’ amongst new builds or blanketed by nature. I ask why many people wish to explore these ‘lost’ or hidden places when tourist locations do exist.

Most of my paper will revolve around a ‘lost’ World War II structure near Coal House Fort in East Tilbury (Essex) which has been completely swallowed by nature and is largely unknown to the locals and even to the workers at the local, tourist centred fort.

I will argue that part of the want to civilly trespass on these spaces is an act of exploration, remembrance and as a desire to ‘inhabit the past’. I also suggest that this can be a sign of a rejection of commercialized sights of memorial. However, I do not avoid the ‘darker’ aspects of vandalism and the forceful penetration into forbidden spaces which is less about documenting and remembering the history, and can be more about wilfully disobeying established rules of trespass.