Preliminary description

And this is the reason why it is impossible in a visitation to prevent the spreading of the plague by the utmost human vigilance: viz., that it is impossible to know the infected people from the sound, or that the infected people should perfectly know themselves.

Daniel DeFoe, *Journal of the Plague Year*.

With the city of Newcastle identified as a layered site of contagion and execution, a leaky processor, Symptoms proposed a revealing of materiality and message, of self-evident signal and carrier within the landscape of the plague city.
Methods of revelation were not limited to the esoteric (EVP, ITC, dowsing), the scientific, aesthetic, forensical (as a science also), archaeological, epistemic, and the fetishistic or psychoanalytic. The crypt and cryptographic (decoding) refer to a certain inscription and digging; divining a diagram of execution.

Activities included the dowsing, scrying and divining of buboes on the skin of the city, the rubbing, tracing and excavation of these sites (inscription and playback of the stone tape using self-built apparatus) towards the collective production of a strange hybrid of archaeologists/forensics report, an essay in self-observation and social questionnaire.

Symptoms could also be described as a series of three layered walks identifying, examining and overlaying visibility and enclosure in the city of Newcastle comprising:

- the in-visibility of symptoms (incubation)
- the in-visibility of contagion (atmosphere, comets, rats, insects)
- enclosure against the plague

Symptoms was part of Invisible Architectures Newcastle upon Tyne, 9th 11th September, 2011.
The first day was marked by the distinct aim of scrying for electromagnetic buboes (visible and divined) for investigation and skin layering during the following days walks. This aim was explained briefly to participants as we met at the Invisible Architecture stand at Monument at midday. As a key background activity within the day’s walk, both the newer skrying device (logging internal temperature, and both high and low frequency electromagnetic emissions against location via GPS module) and the recently developed (for Symptoms) entropy scrying device, were attached to batteries, and GPS signal was awaited (indicated by a flashing LED on each device).

The entropy scrying device will provide the equivalent of tossing 200 coins every second as we walked through Newcastle. The results (say a count of the number of heads) are logged for each GPS recorded location. The scrying device samples white noise from internal transistor avalanche breakdown. To form each hardware driven coin toss 166 samples are taken, a count taken of the number of samples which AND with 1 (ie. the last bit is a 1). If the result ANDs with 1 we have 0 (say heads), if not then we have a 1. This bit is exclusive ORed with a flipping pattern of 1,0,1,0 and so on within a process (after Von Neumann) designed to reduce any environmental influences or bias. We then accumulate
the 200 random bits for later plotting of entropy to location.

Perhaps six or seven people set off from Monument pulling a large, low metal trolley for the transport of equipment (measurement, scrying and test) and a battery-powered practice amplifier attached to either low or high frequency emission conversion units (in the first case rendering a low frequency signal in the electromagnetic domain audible by way of detection and amplification, in the second case demodulating a high frequency signal to become audible through envelope detection and amplification).
Fighting Friday’s shopping crowd in a narrow roofed passage close to Monument, marking in white chalk (with a quickly improvised \(((p))\) symbol) sites of particularly intriguing low frequency emissions, coupled with visible buboe signs; signs of revealing or a wilful exposure of something hidden. This marking as a program, a quickly adopted strategy of trolley reversal, listening and re-rolling, of the breaking out of dowsing rods or a simple compass at each such site to further investigate anomalies; approaching and establishing a standard scrying practice. As we travel, a few participants also winding coils on found objects, to attach en route to pre-made LM386 amplifiers and plug in to the practice amp, injecting EM noise into the walled shopping lanes.
From St Andrews Street we followed the course of the old wall of Newcastle as a potential site of enclosure; tracing an invisible possible wall extrapolated from the solid, present wall remains; a distinctly dark and sticky journey dragging trolley through a narrow passage between the high wall and the backs of kitchens of various Chinatown restaurants; escaping ducted fumes, air conditioning units, pipes, drains, rubbish bins.
A perhaps too hasty identification of the first plague site where the wall remains end, a break in the wall meeting the rear of an abandoned church-like building (close to Westgate Road) adjoining a yellow-signed music instrument shop. We can peer into another open air enclosure (walled, green, discarded bottles, shoes, clothes) between the derelict church and the entry from an open space into the plague site enclosure formed by wall, church walls, backs of empty barred buildings...
Interesting signals are registered by five individuals at several locations
within this enclosure (and marked in chalk), presence of exposed and dripping vents and pipe-work, boarded windows and entrances (further enclosure), expanded dirty orange foam buboes in places.
From here to Castle Keep, a near vertical trolley speeded descent towards
the quayside in search of a potentially intriguing antenna array (antenna as visible presence of invisible conspiracy or plague, as buboe itself) spotted that same morning by one participant (Ben Waddington). En route, gridded scaffold structures demodulate broadcast radio close to the papier-mache shark’s head chip shop masthead.

Fruitful signals were registered close to buboe-laden television broadcast vans (a peer inside, a cycling competition transmitted).
After repeated mazed attempts to gain trolleyed access to the antenna, we
soon identify it solely as a now defunct support belonging to a TV station studio, abandoned.

We return to the river side close to Gateshead Millenium Bridge, crossing past a head-shaking busker, aiming to visit the elevated church of St Marys as potential historical plague burial site; a fact confirmed by the presence of a glass cabinet packed with stuffed felt rats within the church. A curious brick/sandstone enclosure in the graveyard provided a focus for intriguing dowsing results. Exhausted by the climb to the church, we re-crossed the river by way of the high Tyne bridge to slowly find a way back to Monument.
Later that evening, sharing the hotel lounge with after-shave doused stag-nighters, I plotted the results from the new skrying module and entropy scrying module presented below with an outline of the route for the first day’s walking and scrying.
results

Map of route with HF as elevation
Map of route with entropy as elevation
3D landscape plot of LF
3D landscape plot of HF

9th September 2011 Maxima symptoms high frequency
3D landscape plot of entropy
3D landscape plot of cumulative entropy/RNG

9th September 2011 Newcastle symptoms cumulative RNG
The second day was outlined to focus on activities of rubbing, tracing, scratching, scraping, of city skin surface playback and inscription at key sites (dragging an outsized record-player needle, a symbolic severed tape head now attached to a chopstick and ad-hoc amp for mobile playback).
Again meeting at Monument to commence the now dreaded trolley dragging
operation, but an early start for an Asian music festival driving us to discuss and assemble further down Grainger Street en route to yesterday’s site of low entropy close to the station. Some distance down the street we began to attach equipment to the trolley, beginning with the oversized needle head construction. We gaffer taped another chopstick to a plastic film can preglued to the cone of a small 8 ohm speaker, further gaffering needle to chopstick and again the whole assemblage to the edge of the trolley. The speaker connections were wired straight to the practice amp to commence playback of our Grainger Street descent.

Arriving at the first of the revealed sites, a site of low entropy, a traffic island and locale of various potted plants and a statue to engineer George Stephenson near Central Station at the intersection of Westgate Road and Neville Street.
The second site (revealed via a previous evening’s email from Sneha Solanki),
outlined as a further site of potential historic plague burial, apparently with
plague pit directly beneath the landscaped bronze statue of Queen Victoria
outside St Nicholas Cathedral on Mosley Street.
The following reports were produced in the two locations, with investigation and description driven by, and according to the draft protocol of the psychogeophysical report template pre-printed and available for review at: 
http://www.psychogeophysics.org/wiki/doku.php?id=template
These two reports now take the place of this after-the-fact reportage.

Two psychogeophysical reports

Low entropy site

- detail
  
  - date and time of report commencement:
  
  10/9/2011

  - where is the site? (GPS co-ordinates)

  N54.58.180 W001.36.886

  - names of investigators
Eweline Aleksandrewicz, Andrzei, Ben Waddington, Nick Winston, Lowri Bond, Bob Winslow, Martin Howse

- weather
  
  Hot and sunny

- how was the site divined?

  Low entropy measurement from 9/9/2011

- were there any immediate anomalies associated with the site?

  smell of drains, sun came out on arrival, no people, digging of water pipes

- a rough description of the site

  grey box over a metre high and to the East of the monument

- impressions and intuitions of the site
– grey box, rhythmic LF EM emissions recorded
– sense of an island in a stream, big roads either side
– all the characteristics of a nice civic space, walled lovely buildings, dumped flowers
– gridded paving in line with Stephenson monument
– sign related to monument separated by 10 feet
– potential enclosure
– midpoint between two cathedrals
– broken flowers, trench, unpleasant
– nice space

• impressions of the observer and act of observation

– exposed in midst of flow
– focus on objects

• objects/items of note found at the site

– physical evidence

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<th>object</th>
<th>description</th>
<th>bag number</th>
<th>date/time</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>glass</td>
<td>shattered/shard</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1.58PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lump</td>
<td>concrete loose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earth</td>
<td>dry/crumbling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unreadable</td>
<td>from cracks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sticker</td>
<td>stuck to xxx/free corky’s shot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>butt</td>
<td>next to statue sign</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flower</td>
<td>geranium with blood red leaf</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coin</td>
<td>harp/dragonfoot onepenny 2009 jigsaw</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flower</td>
<td>yellow spray crysanthemum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feather</td>
<td>white + bug</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(recorded: 2 of team left the location)
Report ended at this point after short, inconclusive bowsing and dowsing sessions.

Queen Victoria

• detail

  – date and time of report commencement
10/10/2011 14:30PM

  – where is the site? (GPS co-ordinates)
N54.58.216
W001.36.702

  – names of investigators
[empty]
- weather

grey, light rain

• how was the site divined?

  suggestion of plague pit location

• were there any immediate anomalies associated with the site?

  very fast focus on dead sleeping child faces on statue (unusual Edwardian device)

• a rough description of the site

2 sketches
• impressions and intuitions of the site

star as focus dictating layout and enclosure
contrast small/large streets busy/calm drinking/cathedral, close to balmbras historic music hall, losing history, not sitting easily, foreign non-belonging carlisle stone (reddish colour)

• impressions of the observer and act of observation

not so excited, more about history than what is here now, on the side observing, more invisible as observers

• objects/items of note found at the site

  – physical evidence
<table>
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<tr>
<th>object</th>
<th>description</th>
<th>bag number</th>
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<td>chain</td>
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<td>/</td>
<td>14:50</td>
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<td>cathedral</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pink feather</td>
<td>flamingo</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pebble</td>
<td>perfectly round</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paint</td>
<td>light blue scrapings of scrapings</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lid</td>
<td>of coffee cup</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mushrooms</td>
<td>unknown species</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sachet</td>
<td>of brown sauce, open, leaking</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WELCOME

CELEBRATION
DISCOVERY
CHALLENGE

to this place of
• studies/surveys conducted at the site?

low frequency in soil, closed loop cathedral system, broadcast radio reception

• surveys revealing substrates or objects for further investigation?

  – list of substrates

  – what interventions were made on this substrate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substrate Identifier</th>
<th>Substrate Intervention</th>
<th>Results of Intervention/Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>soil by statue</td>
<td>crumbling</td>
<td>stiff, clay, slightly clumpy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glass pieces</td>
<td>scratching Carlisle sandstone</td>
<td>lightly scratched surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carlyle sandstone</td>
<td>scratched with glass</td>
<td>as above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The third day

Again commencing at Monument, thankfully sans trolley and speaker with a more direct aim to quickly return to the Westgate wall enclosure identified as an anomalous site during the first day’s scrying for further investigation of electromagnetic anomalies and the casting of inverted and straight silicone buboes from all surfaces for skin application.
Given high winds and low temperatures potentially effecting the setting time of the chosen silicone special effects materials, we chose to commence with casting straight into the first selected, inverse buboe, a hole formed in flint by the constant dripping of water from a broken pipe on the side of an empty, green building. The process is described below in more detail. Slowly further buboe sites were probed, appealing to the chalked marks from Friday’s research to locate further buboes.
As the silicone buboes were left to dry over several hours, playback of the wall surface stone tape was attempted, both using the speaker apparatus assembled on yesterday’s walk, and with a pre-assembled laser/photo-amplifier device. Results were inconclusive with internal noise and windy conditions hampering playback. Recordings were made.
The speaker/chopstick/needle apparatus suggested itself as a means to overlay two buboe surfaces - the material surface of the plague enclosure, here, and the electromagnetic in-evident surface (not here). The speaker/needle playback mechanism now employed as a way to inscribe local signals on the skin or wall substrate. Unfortunately, the simple EM detector/amplifier/speaker/chopstick/needle apparatus assembled ad-hoc suffered from a distinct lack of power (small 9v batteries), although able to render a perceptible skin tickle. Again a pre-constructed inscription device, based on a primitive EM tattooing machine, was rolled out, and quickly detected magnetic anomalies (confirmed with a simple compass) close to the barred, further casketted (wooden) window holes and small entrances in the wall of the leaked pipe green building.
Buboe casting process

Dragon skin FX-Pro ordered from Bentley Chemicals was used, together with (black) So Strong pigment (polyurethane) and Skin-tite (silicone adhesive/appliance builder). Dragon skin comes in two bottles (part A and part B) which are mixed in 1:1 (by volume or weight) ratio. We weighed a cup with part A and another cup with part B (to be mixed with some drops of pigment). I think around 6 grams of each weighed using a small digital pocket scales (Maplins). The mix was stirred very thoroughly for several seconds before it was ready for use.
With site selected and dust brushed away the black liquid silicone was poured into a mould of the stone itself with some modelling clay making a neater lip or edge around the stone’s top.
The silicone (we mixed several batches) could also be applied to vertical indentations using a perhaps 1cm across brush to apply and push the silicone into the hole. Moulds of extruding buboes were also made using the modelling clay to make an impression and then pouring into this mould. Drying time was very much dependent on the thickness of applied silicon, ranging from perhaps one hour to two hours. Once dry, the silicone buboes were extracted very carefully, and the skin tite (also mixed 1:1 parts A and B) was used to attach buboes to the skin.
Resulting buboes
Credits and resources

With thanks to Will Schrimshaw, all volunteers from the Invisible Architectures festival, and all participants across the three days.

resources: