
Death, Landscape and Memory

Norbert Fischer

(Hamburg University/Landschaftsverband Stade e.V.)



Maritime Death and Coastal Landscape

- Maritime death has left symbolic traces in the coastal landscape: monuments and reliefs, flood marks and shipwrecks recall the effects of disasters. Through such sites the history of the coast is inscribed into the landscape. They are placed at central locations, for example at the harbour, on the promenade or on viewing points. They are narratives of a very specific regional history.
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„Memory Landscape“ as a symbolic condensation
of the tragic past

- Maritime relics and memorials describe the regional past as well as reflection about it. This can be perceived as a "memory landscape", if a social consensus has been established about the cultural symbols. Then, memory landscape can be seen as symbolic condensation of the tragic past. It is part of the cultural heritage of the coast.
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Maritime Death and Memory - examples from abroad: Memorial for a drowned girl, North Berwick

- Died aged 19 years, while rescuing a drowning boy on July 27th, 1889
- Beach of North Berwick (Scotland, East Lothian)



The Thousla Cross, Sound of Man, Irish Sea



Memory Landscape 1: Remembering storm surges and inundations (below: Flood of Febr. 16./17., 1962, in Cuxhaven)



- Flood level indicator
- Bremerhaven





- St. Peter-Ording (Eiderstedt peninsula)

Inundation Memorials on the beach of Dangast (Jadebusen)



Flood-62-Memorial, Francop (Lower Elbe):

two people died because of dike breaking, numerous houses and fields destroyed in the marshland

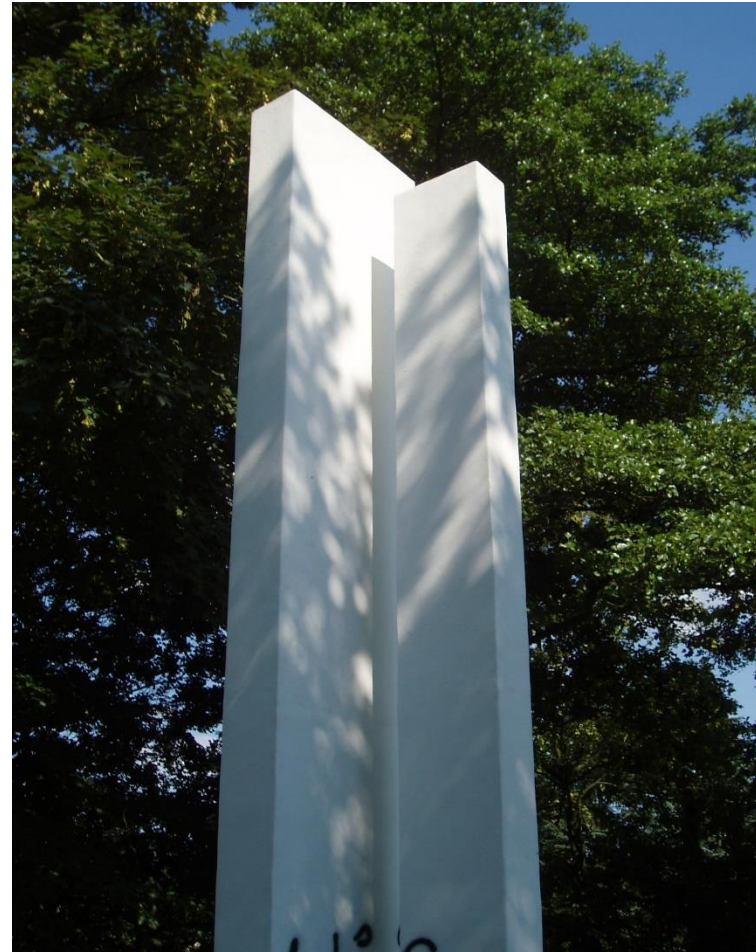


Memorial of dike breaking 1962, Isle of Wangerooge, „Dorfgröndendeich“



Flood-1962-Memorial in the tidal area of Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg

- Here, more than 300 people died in the night of Febr. 16./17., 1962



Stade/Elbe, Flood-62-Memorial

(Photo taken on 50th anniversary, Febr. 16th, 2012)



Memory Landscape 2: Shipwreck - Waiting and Mourning



„The Death and the Sea“, installation & photography by Anja Jensen
(taken on Isle of Amrum, beach, 2012);
motive of shipwreck after Théodore Géricault: „The Raft of the Medusa“, painting, 1819



Cross of Memmert: Shipwreck of the “Annemarie”, 15 Borkum Men died in a storm 1931

- Cross on the Isle of Memmert (near Borkum), remembering „Annemarie“ shipwreck 1931.
- The cross was erected two years later



Sculptures symbolizing Waiting and
Mourning:
„Madonna of the Seas“,
Hamburg-St. Pauli, Harbour Area



Hope – Grief – Remembrance:
„Waiting for the Fishermen“; Sculpture in Brake, near harbour (1990)





The motive in the arts: Waiting for the fishermen

- „Fisher's Wife Waiting“,
- Painting of Heinrich Tank, around 1840
- Altonaer Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte



„For those who left their lives on sea“ –
a modern sculptural fountain in Elsfleth/Lower Weser, Nicolai Place (2004)



Memory Landscape 3:

Places of remembrance for unknown seaman

- Memorial for an unknown seaman at the north sea coast near Cuxhaven, 1864

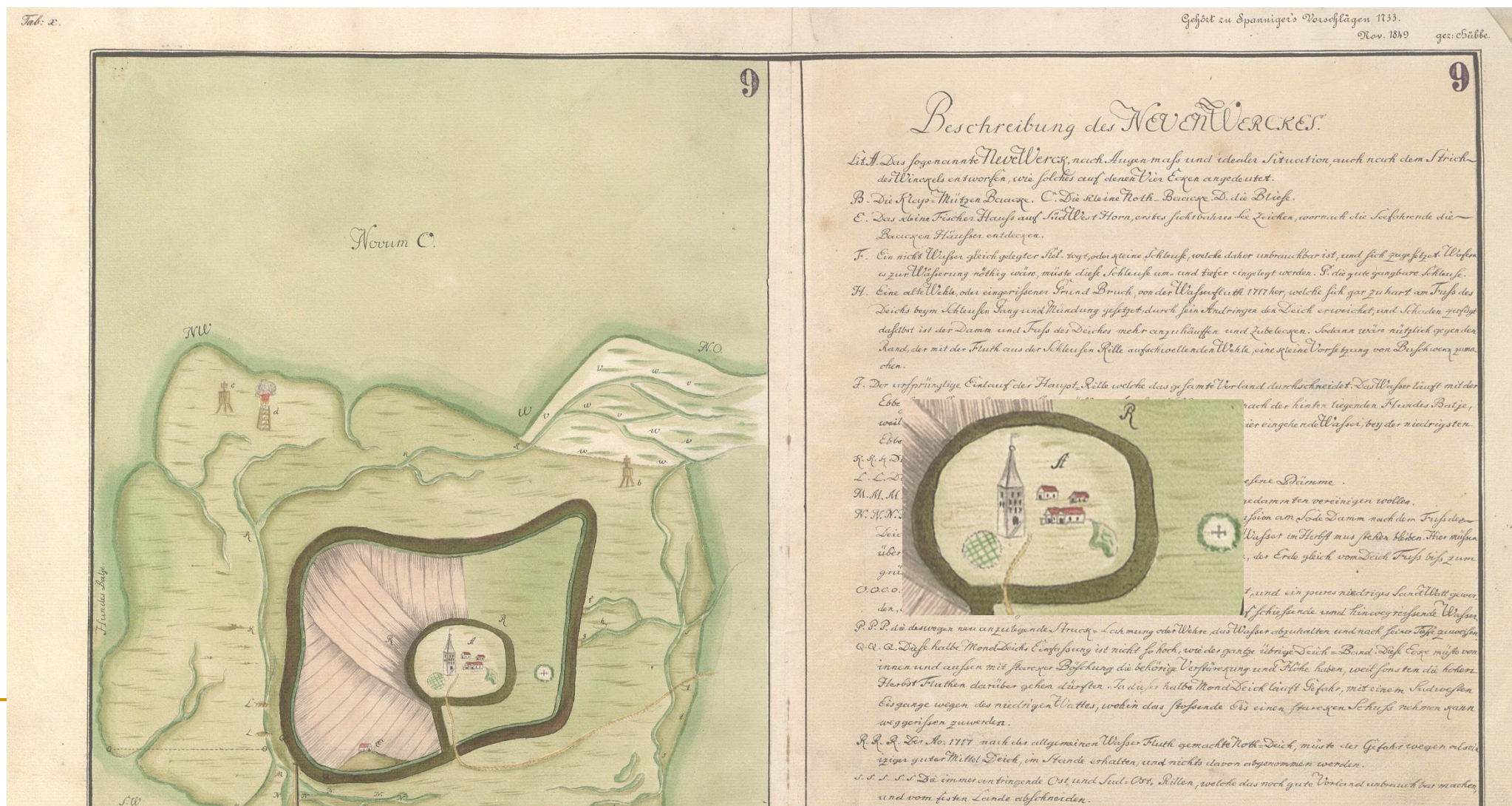


Burial Places for the Unknown

- Isle of Helgoland



Isle of Neuwerk, chart from 1733 (J. G. Spanniger):
Burial place for nameless corpses, within the new dike





Isle of Neuwerk, nowadays



Keitum/Sylt, around 1930



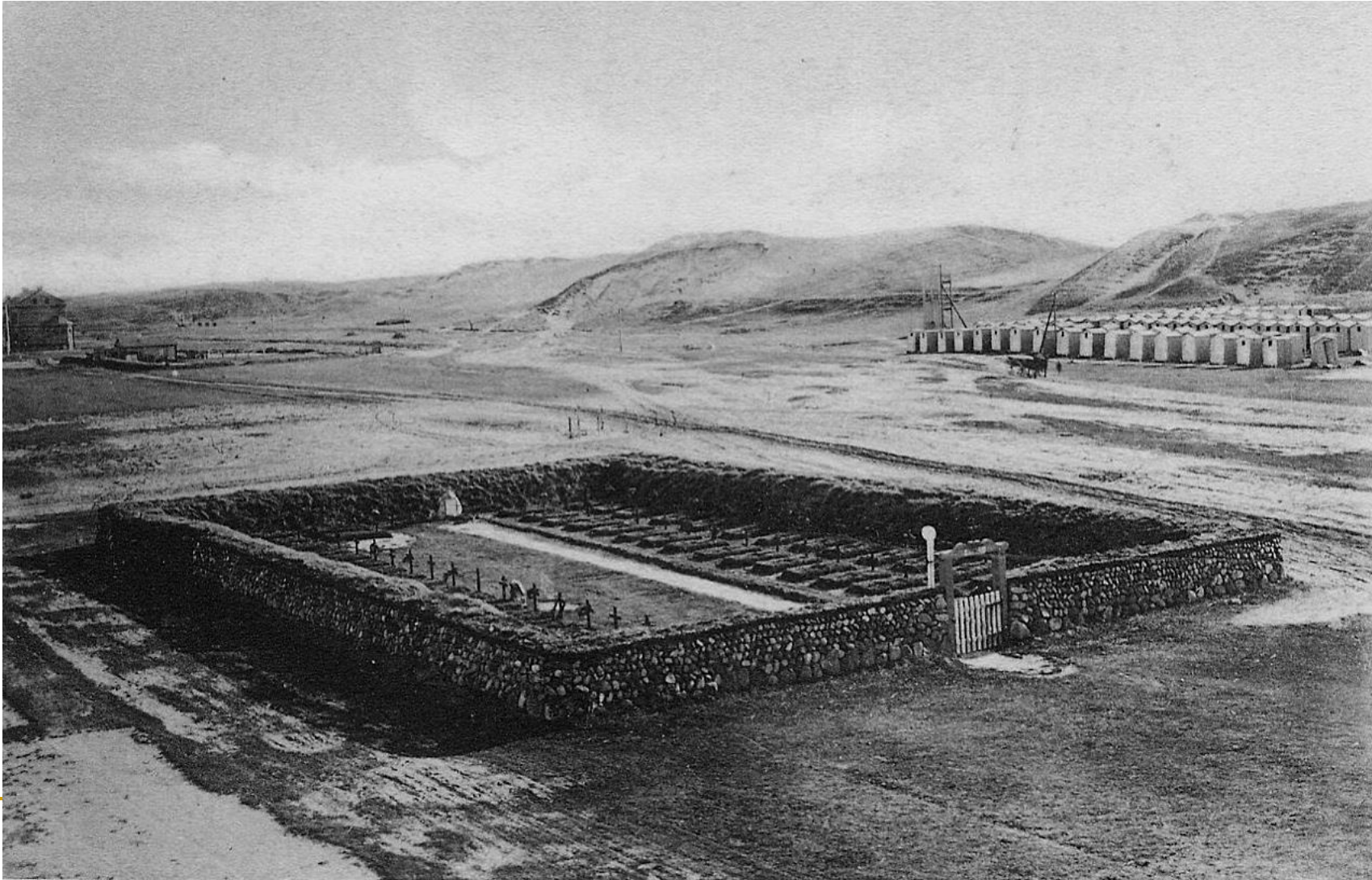
„Seamen's Graves“:
(painting Magnus Weidemann, 1933, Husum -
Nordseemuseum)



Keitum, nowadays



Burial place for the unknown, Westerland (Sylt),
since 1854; photo: late c. 19th



In the background: Buildings of upcoming sea resort of Westerland



Isle of Spiekeroog, in the 1930s



Burial Ground of the Unknown, Nebel, Isle of Amrum,
with maritime and religious sculptures (after redesigning 2012):
A maritime cultural heritage



Conclusion: The Maritime Memory Landscape as a Cultural Heritage

- *In the landscape of the North Sea coast, maritime death is reflected in numerous artefacts and relics from different historical periods. These are cultural symbols that, together, can be seen as a distinctly maritime “memory landscape”. This memory landscape is based on the historical experience of shipwreck, storm surges and inundations. As the experiences of death and grief were passed on, reflected and materialized in memorials, they gained historical importance. Under these conditions, the coastal landscape has been repeatedly reconfigured through the interaction of culture, mentality and society. Taken together, the different stages have produced a maritime memory landscape which can be regarded as a specific cultural heritage.*