

Charles Darwin Foundation

The slides of Alfred Croneis

- part III -



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Pictures by Alfred Croneis

Introduction and edition by Edgardo Civallero

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Between late 1941 and 1946, the Galapagos archipelago hosted a U.S. military base. The base was part of a series of regional geostrategic moves to protect the Panama Canal during World War II, and was built following the signing of the *Treaty of Occupation of South Seymour* between Ecuador and the United States on January 24, 1942.

The site was located on Baltra (or South Seymour) Island, a dry, flat islet located north of Santa Cruz Island, across the Itabaca Channel. The native flora and fauna were virtually wiped out, and above their remains were built huts, sheds and other buildings; a harbour for large ships; and the first airport in the territory — now the main arrival point to the Galapagos.

The Americans did not limit their activities to Baltra. They built an aqueduct from El Junco to El Progreso, on San Cristobal Island, to supply drinking water; set up radar stations at Albemarle Point and Webb Cove on Isabela Island and on the south side of Española Island; and located several machine gun nests on the north coast of Santa Cruz Island.

Their presence was recorded in documents now preserved in U.S. military archives, and in the memories, stories and photos of the soldiers who were stationed at *The Rock* — their nickname for that isolated place.

A number of these photos, belonging to Dr. Alfred Croneis and taken in 1943, were donated by his widow, Catherine, to the CDF Library, Archives & Museum. Croneis appears to have served as a medic at the base on Baltra. His collection includes cardboard-framed slides, and the only metal-framed slides preserved in the CDF archive: frames sadly remembered for mismatching projectors with their excessive weight and thickness.

Among the contents are black & white images of life at the base, especially next to large airplanes, and color photos showing aerial views of different parts of the islands (taken from those same planes), and visits by troops to other parts of the archipelago.

The images are significant for showing the social interactions of the troops stationed on Baltra, their aerial reconnaissance work, and their attempts to get to know and relate to the territory and its population, beyond the narrow limits imposed by military life and the local geography itself.

This document includes all the photographs of the Croneis collection related to aerial surveys. Some of them are not in good condition, are out of focus, or are too dark. However, they represent unique documents, being the first images taken from an airplane in Galapagos.

Unfortunately, none of Croneis' slides contains annotated information in the frames. Therefore, one of the research tasks that remains open for the future is to identify the points of the island's geography that were captured in the snapshots.

Edgardo Civallero | Charles Darwin Foundation



23.17.0073

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986.
Well preserved.



23.17.0074

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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23.17.0076

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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23.17.0080

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23.17.0081

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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23.17.0082

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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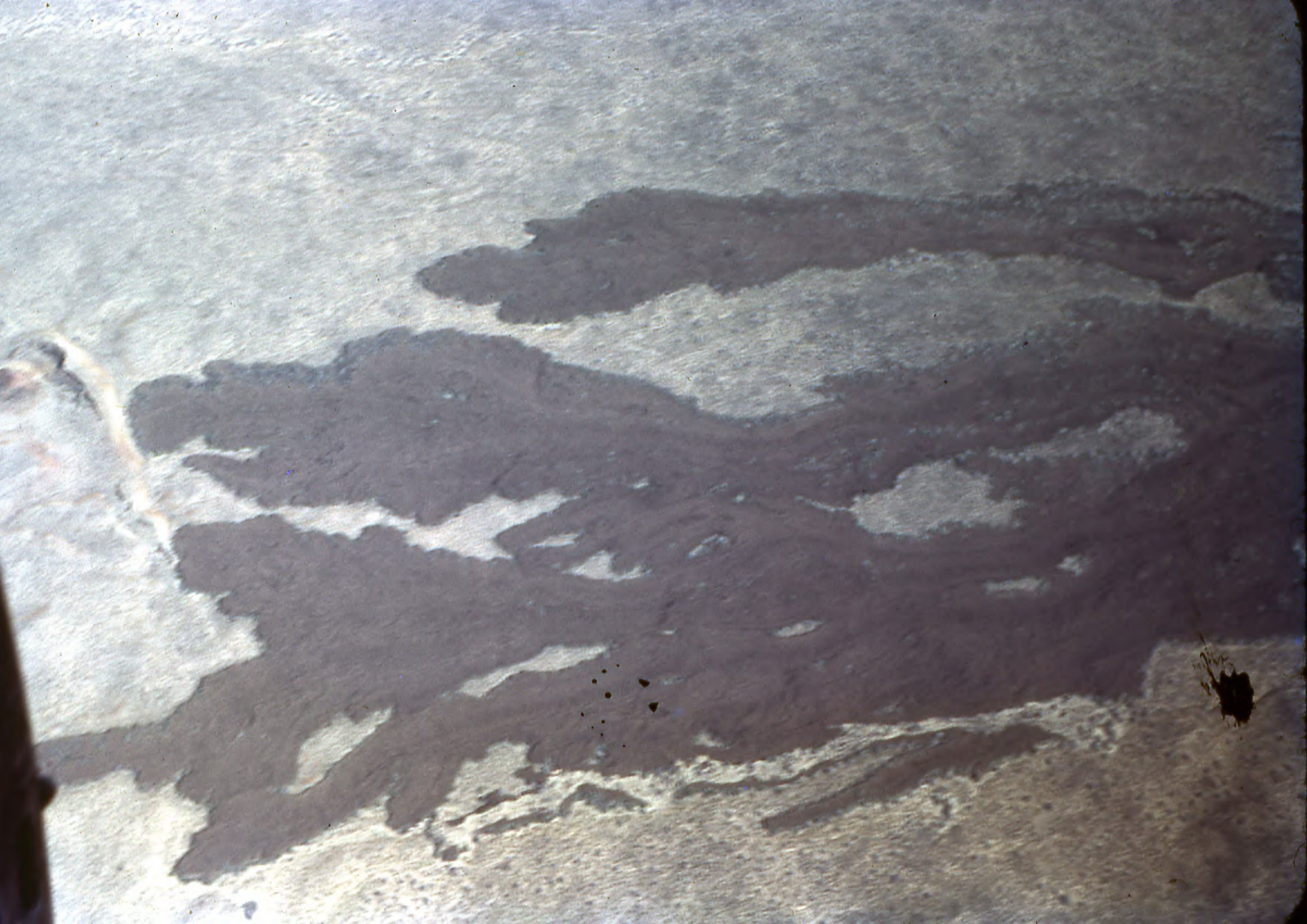
23.17.0083

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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23.17.0084

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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23.18.0085

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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Well preserved.



23.18.0086

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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Well preserved.



23.18.0089

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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23.18.0091

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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23.18.0092

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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23.18.0096

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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23.18.0099

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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23.18.0100

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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Well preserved.



23.18.0103

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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23.19.0107

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986.
Well preserved.



23.19.0108

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986.
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23.19.0110

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986.
Well preserved.



23.19.0118

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986.
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23.19.0120

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986.
Well preserved.



23.19.0122

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986.
Well preserved.



23.19.0124

Croneis, Alfred. [*Aerial photograph*]. [Slide]. Baltra :
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