The Paddock Information Collection – the most comprehensive source of information about Paddock

About *The Paddock Information Collection* (Bill Ridgeway)

Introduction
Paddock is the codename of the Standby Cabinet War Room bunker in the former Post Office Research Station in Dollis Hill (north-west London) from which Winston Churchill and the War Cabinet would have run Britain if the Cabinet War Rooms in Westminster became unusable. The *Paddock Information Collection* is a compilation of information from many sources and documents the history of Paddock and the surrounding area from country farm through design, construction and various uses of the structure through to the present day. The *Paddock Information Collection* is a comprehensive and valuable single source research tool.

Research
I started to research Paddock in 2001 when members of Subterranea Britannica first entered Paddock. Information available at that time came from *Willesden at War Part 2 – Secret Citadels of WW2* (Ken Valentine). There was an urban myth that spoil from the excavation for Paddock was taken away in bakers vans to the Welsh Harp Reservoir seemed to be implausible. This became the catalyst for my research into the design, construction and uses of Paddock.

Many members of Subterranea Britannica have been to Paddock many times. Each time I have been asked questions like "How does that work?", "What is that?", "What was that cable, pipe or trunking for?", "When was that changed?", "Where does that go to?", "Who occupied that room?", "Why is that there?". Also Tour Guides have recounted 'facts' for which there was little or no support. I had my own questions. The answer to these questions was often "Don't know".

I did not know at the outset how much information was available from so many sources but soon concluded it would be advantageous to compile all information into a comprehensive and valuable single source research tool. Volunteering at Paddock for all but a few public and private open days has given me the opportunity to study and research Paddock – and the Internet is very useful. I first concentrated on collating historical information and compiling an *Inventory of physical features and usage of Paddock* – which took quite a few visits.

Eventually Joan Ridgeway and I teamed up with Hugh Ainsley (who as a Chartered Engineer knows about the design and construction of buildings) and we made a very detailed structural survey of Paddock from which Hugh Ainsley drew detailed floor plans (which are much more detailed and reliable than those on the Subterranea Britannica Web site). Hugh Ainsley encouraged me to look for and record detailed information and to question everything and accept nothing without verification before coming to a conclusion. Whilst Hugh Ainsley has concentrated on design and construction Joan Ridgeway and I have concentrated on physical features and usage. Each visit to Paddock provided an opportunity to investigate outstanding queries and I determined to answer as many queries as possible. The detailed structural survey added even more questions to the ever growing list!

The internal structures (walls and partitions) have been modified both during and between each phase of use. Paddock has succumbed over the years to dry rot and wet rot, much of the original woodwork has rotted to almost nothing and much of the retrievable metal has been stripped out. What remains is a dilapidated and decaying shell of its former self which masks what has gone before and makes it difficult to interpret with confidence what we see: Although the plant in some rooms identifies the use of those rooms others are devoid of clues as to their original designated use. However, it is possible to piece together what we know and deduce the most probable (or least improbable) scenario.

It is strange how things became lost and found at Paddock. There are artefacts and structural details of which I am aware but cannot find again. In contrast even on my last visit I found artefacts and structural details 'for the first time' which must have been there all the time but just viewed in a different light or at a different angle. An example of the reverse of that process came when looking at images of the Defence Telegraph Network to find that part of the network was located in Dollis Hill. I realised the floor markings in the images were more-or-less identical to ones about which I had wondered for many years and that I had resolved a question.

Presentation
Other than minor editorial changes all objects are 'as received' and without enhancement. This gives the reader the opportunity to decide whether or not an object is relevant and whether or not to make enhancements. It also avoids subjective preconceived idea of the author.

The Paddock information collection includes all available objects (documents, images, maps, plans, publications and recollections) up to the year 1996 and a specially selected sample of objects thereafter. New information continues to become available so this is not a definitive collection.

The Paddock information collection has an intentionally very wide range of information
- geographical: looking outside the immediate area of Dollis Hill
- historical: the wider political situation
- structural: comparisons with other bunkers
- technical: product research and development at the Post Office Research Station some of which was carried out in Paddock.

The Paddock Information Collection has been published on the Internet in several editions since October 2013. It currently includes 549 objects (2,247 pages) of documents, images, maps, plans, publications and recollections. Some objects are not included in the 'public' version of *The Paddock Information Collection* for legal reasons.

Note
The Paddock information collection has been compiled as a personal project and should not be construed as being either coming from or being on behalf of either Network Homes or Subterranea Britannica.

More information from *The Paddock Information Collection* is available at www.bunkers.org.uk/paddock.htm

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