

# **The Paddock Information Collection – The most comprehensive source of information about Paddock**

## **Recollections of Paddock (Robin Daniel)**

### **Paddock**

My memory of Paddock itself is its use in 1965-1966 as the Tool Club for the staff of the Post Office Research Station, where tools too large or expensive for people to own themselves could be borrowed. The main stock – tools one person could carry – was kept in a room on (I think) the lower floor towards the end on the left. It was large enough to have someone sitting at a table across the doorway doing the paperwork and others behind accessing the stock. It looks from the plans more likely that that would have been one of the rooms on the upper basement, so perhaps my memory of the Sub Basement is just of going down to wander around. I certainly remember seeing the sumps being open and full to near floor level.

There is a confusion, however, in that the open space around what is now Hawarden Hill was called the paddock' or sometimes 'the paddock site' and had one building on it. The group using that building changed during 1966, and the new occupants received much sympathy for having to occupy an isolated concrete block. I do not know whether its name was intentional disinformation after the event, or whether Paddock was named after this site to assist its deniability, or whether 'the paddock site' had some covert function associated with Paddock itself, or indeed whether my memory is at fault. But the 1945 view in Google Earth shows a normal military set of three linked pairs of huts on 'the paddock site', confirming my view that the site was part of the 'Post Office Research Station' until it was sold off to build Hawarden Hill. (Far too many paddocks, with also the road to the side of Brent Town Hall / SR51 and the side road off Brook Road just by Paddock itself! I gather it's all Tattersalls' fault.)

### **Post Office Research Station**

The site of the GPO's (and later Post Office Telecommunications') Research Branch (later Research Department) consisted of the main block, T-shaped with offices along the top of the T running east to slightly north of west, and the canteen and kitchen at the bottom (slightly east of north) of the main stroke. It appears that only the east-west run now remains. To the north and west were a dozen or so separate buildings, including Paddock. My office and lab being in the main block, I had no reason to go elsewhere except to the stores, which was just to the north of the kitchens. And from the open day after which I applied to join R Branch, and an orientation tour before I was allocated to RF Division (Switching) I remember only the peculiar labs like aerial testing, on the roof of a building to the NW of the pond, where no metal was allowed above knee height to avoid false responses from the receivers.

My section, under Winston Duerdoth (Assistant Staff Engineer, RF1), was the team which designed and built the Colossus machines under Tommy Flowers (Staff Engineer, RF), whose sudden departure from the GPO the year before I joined caused considerable resentment. I have no idea where the machines were sited, but the team clearly had very great regard for the people at the outstations of Eastcote and Stanmore, so they could have been there rather than – or as well as – in the main building or on 'the paddock site'. The Elliott 803 computer in the mid 1960s was in a room next to the Maths Group in the main building.

The camouflage is mentioned. Over the main building this was painted to make it look like five or so brick houses with trees or shrubbery between. This was visible in the mid-1960s by the paint which remained on the brickwork.

### **Telecomms**

Incoming telephone lines were from Cricklewood exchange, L/GLA, whereas outgoing lines were to Willesden, L/WIL. *[Ed: Possibly to provide redundancy should cables or exchange equipment become unusable.]* The Dollis Hill PABX may well have been, as the Headquarters exchange in the City of London L/HEA certainly was, not a PABX at all, but a non-director exchange (with no meters, which saved a lot of space). Dialling codes from Dollis Hill were 9 for an outgoing line to L/WIL, and 7 to L/HEA (and in turn Headquarters, as a non-director exchange adjacent to London, dialled 7, not 9, for other London exchanges). From Headquarters to Dollis Hill the code was 81, and other two or three-digit codes reached the smaller outstations. By the mid-1960s L/HEA was functioning as a non-director linked numbering scheme, for example Proctor House being on level 2xxx.

### *Water Supply*

There was a need for a pond to supply water in case of fire, once the LFB pumps' own tanks were empty, for the 5 minutes it would take to run hose up from the 5 inch main in the North Circular. The nearest hose-layers in 1966 were G24 Hendon and the Divisional Headquarters at Wembley. There was clearly – from idle conversation – some secure involvement with 'Cricklewood Tank', but whether that was the service reservoir at TQ 228 858 just before the 48inch main from Kempton Park (which blew and closed the NCR near the canal aqueduct a good few years ago now) started to be pumped up through The Vale and Hampstead Garden Suburb to Muswell Hill Service Reservoir I have no idea. The poor supply to the area around the Post Office Research Station was no doubt why Thames Water in 2003 put in Dollis Hill SR with its 1000mm main directly across the road from Paddock.

### *Road Transport*

There was a twice-daily internal bus for people and packages to and from 'the City', which in PO parlance included the West End.

### **Nearby Locations**

TQ 225 873 Staples Corner: Slightly OT, but the 60 MHz high-capacity cable route from London to Birmingham passed in deeply buried duct along the Edgware Road, and crossing the River Brent was sufficiently difficult – requiring diversion of a concrete-entrained river with suddenly variable flow – to be written up in the IPOEE Journal.

TQ 228 869 Oxgate Lane: Admiralty citadel during WW2, also Hydrographer of the Navy, now a carpet warehouse – SubBrit article refers.

TQ 230 870 Cricklewood Sidings: Underground Warehouse – the location of this warehouse is unclear – basically it could have been anywhere on the Up side of the railway, but it suffered a serious fire in the 1950s which was sufficiently fierce to cause buckling in the tracks above and the line to be closed. I can find no reference on line to this, but I know I had a newspaper article from the local paper which said very little.

TQ 231 875 Brent Building: Containing Brent Radio Telephony Terminal – during WWII cable routes avoiding central London included a run following the North Circular Road, allowing Brent RTT (coded L/RTT I think) to be built as a Repeater Station handling all trans-Atlantic telephony traffic, as well as much else. Each call (via radio circuits) would have a telephone operator at Faraday or the like, and also an engineering operator at the RTT monitoring and adjusting the technical quality. Needless to say, the location/function of this building was treated as extremely secure while it was in use. The building was defunct by the time the Brent Cross Shopping Centre arose around it, and was demolished when they did their first large car park extension. I mention this because during the demolition there was a small access shaft with tripod and dangling bucket across the road at TQ 232 875 for the whole period of the works, and I wonder whether it was a gas sampling point for something below.

TQ 232 891 Hendon Post Office: Listed in the PO List of Exchanges as 'miscellaneous', under (I think), the E-in-C 1141 code of YHEN, which would suggest a radio use, and indeed it is at the top of the hill. Co-located with a PO sorting office and Hendon Police Station (with its very prominent roof-top scaffold siren), now demolished and part of the land sold after a long time for housing/car park.

TQ 236 866 Claremont Road: In its own compound next to primary school, from its slatted vents, shaft-head building, now demolished – new houses (owned by Barnet Council) have strangely prolific ventilation (12 9 inch-square ventilators in one end of a 12m-wide loft) – surely not!?

TQ 268 819 Edgware Road: Marble Arch station to Maida Vale exchange L/MAI – boreholes GPO BH7 to GPO BH11 deep-level tunnel was built.

TQ 258 831 Shoot-Up Hill: Maida Vale exchange to North-West Telephone Manager's office – boreholes GPO BH12 to GPO BH16 – believed not built but now covers the route of the National Grid tunnel from Maida Vale to Borehamwood. BH17 not shown

TQ 237 860 Cricklewood Broadway: Cricklewood exchange L/GLA to Admiralty Citadel – boreholes GPO BH18 Hendon, BH19 Willesden, BH20 Willesden – as above.

TQ 226 873 Edgware Road: Staples Corner to The Hyde PO sorting office – boreholes GPO BH21 Hendon to GPO BH25 Hendon – as above, but some tunnelling may have been done when Colindale Sector Switching Centre was opened in the late 1960s at TQ 215 887.

TQ 201 897 Stag Lane: Idle thought – so if no deep-level tunnel was built how was PO Telecommunications able to cable (before the days of fibre-optics) to two large International Switching Centres (Mollison and De Havilland) built as an emergency measure when Mondial House in Lower Thames Street would not be ready in time?

(30/12/2013)

More information from *The Paddock Information Collection* is available at [www.bunkers.org.uk/paddock.htm](http://www.bunkers.org.uk/paddock.htm)

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