

RGHQ 9.1, Swynnerton Staffordshire

Wayne D Cocroft, drawings by Allan T Adams

COLD WAR PROJECT
SURVEY REPORT
REGIONAL GOVERNMENT HEADQUARTERS 9.1

Swynnerton
Staffordshire

NBR No: 96045
NMR No: SJ 83 SW 10
NGR: SJ 8453 3324
Hob UID: 1091423

July 1997

Investigated by Wayne Cocroft
Report by Wayne Cocroft
Drawings by Allan Adams
Photography by Wayne Cocroft

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Cambridge office: RCHME, Brooklands, 24 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge, CB2 2BU
Tel: 01223 324010 Fax: 01223 311203 e-mail: Cambridge@rchme.gov.uk

Headquarters: RCHME, National Monuments Record Centre, Kemble Drive, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 2GZ.
Tel: 01793 414600 Fax: 01793 414707 e-mail: info@rchme.gov.uk World Wide Web: <http://www.rchme.gov.uk>

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SUMMARY

Regional Government Headquarters (RGHQ) 9.1 Swynnerton is a semi-sunken, heavily protected bunker, from where it was envisaged that in the event of nuclear war central government administration of the region would be conducted.

DESCRIPTION

Introduction

RGHQ 9.1 is located within the former Second World War Royal Ordnance Filling Factory at Swynnerton (SJ 83 SW 9) which is now used as an army training area. It is about 12 km (7½ miles) northwest of Stafford and overlies Keuper Marl (BGS 1974). The bunker is sited on the northern side of Valley Road, an internal training area road, at the southwest end of what were the Group 9 explosives storage magazines. The bunker was probably constructed in the late 1960s or early 1970s (Laurie 1970, 112-3; Campbell 1983, 221) and was maintained until the early 1990s.

The Bunker

The function of the RGHQ was to provide a heavily protected refuge against the effects of a nuclear attack, for a regional commissioner and representatives of various government departments. In the event of a nuclear strike Home Defence Region 9.1, covering the eastern part of the west midlands, would have been governed from this bunker. Within the bunker there was accommodation for the regional commissioner and his immediate support staff, representatives from government departments and military liaison officers. The bunker was designed to be self-sufficient, and contained facilities carry out its functions for a number of months. Ancillary services required to keep the bunker functioning included; fuel and food stocks, a diesel generator, air filtration plant, radio communications, dormitories, lavatories, a kitchen and restaurant.

The RGHQ comprises two separate bunkers joined together by an underground link corridor. Each of the bunkers occupies the position of a semi-sunken explosives magazine. The retention of the pre-existing configuration of the magazine area may have been an intentional strategy to camouflage the bunkers from the air.

Subsequent to the abandonment of the bunker by the Home Office in the early 1990s, it has been sealed, and due to health and safety considerations an internal investigation of the bunker was impossible. This description will therefore restrict itself to the visible surface features. A diagram showing the internal arrangement of the bunker in the late 1980s is appended at the end of the report.

The main entrance (A) is located on the southeast corner of the southern bunker on the site of the former magazine entrance. Adjacent to entrance is a small L shaped single storey building constructed of brick laid in English bond with closers used to finish the corners. It is roofed by a flat concrete slab. It is entered through a single door which gave access to a small lobby. On the eastern and western elevations are two rectangular openings immediately below the roof, each had a projecting, sloping brick sill. It is uncertain whether these were window or ventilator openings. It is also impossible to establish if this building belonged to the factory or was built subsequently.

The southern entrance block is fronted by a double storey reinforced concrete structure. In common with all other exposed concrete surfaces it is painted emerald green. The main entrance (A) into the bunker is through a ground level steel blast door 1.21m (4ft) wide, 2.16m (7ft) high and 13mm (½ inch) thick. This entrance block also contained the plant to maintain services within the bunker. At ground level in a room projecting

forward of the main entrance is the Generator Set House, this room is entered through a steel blast door, 1.37m (4ft 6ins) wide by 2.15m (7ft) high on its southern elevation. Also on this elevation are two downward facing cowls, probably the exhaust vents. On the western elevation are two steel blast plates, probably placed over the air intakes for the generator. The Fan Plant Room to control the air circulation in the headquarters is located at mezzanine floor level above the main entrance. The external entrance to this room is by means of a steel staircase on the eastern elevation which gives access to a small concrete balcony and steel blast door 1.25m (4ft) wide, 2.15m (7ft) high. The air intake for the Fan Plant Room is on the southern elevation where there is another steel blast plate. Exhaust was extracted through a single downward facing cowl positioned to the north of the upper door.

The only other visible feature of this bunker is the emergency escape staircase (B), this emerges from the southwest corner of the bunker. As the stair rises above the ground it is protected by a reinforced concrete exit 2m x 6.85m in plan. All the exposed concrete is painted green but may have originally been mounded over with earth. The exit is sealed by a single steel blast door 1.25m x 2.14m high. On the western side of the entrance is the base section of a dismantled radio mast. To the rear of the exit is a covered manhole cover.

The southern bunker is connected to the northern bunker by an underground link corridor, which is invisible on the surface. Like the southern bunker it is placed on the site of a former explosives magazine and its double storey entrance (D) is also placed where the magazine entrance had been sited. This entrance block is 5.31m wide and has a single door, 1.21m wide and 2.15m high, on its southern side. Above this is a steel blast plate and on the eastern elevation a steel staircase leads up to another steel blast door. Adjacent to this is a downward facing cowl. This suggests there may also be an upper Fan Plant Room to serve the northern bunker. The emergency exit (C) for this bunker, which is identical to exit (B), is located on its northwest corner and still retains its earth covering.

Associated with the headquarters is a tall radio mast enclosed by a post and wire mesh fence, west of the southern bunker (SJ 8446 3323).

Site Archive

No archival material is held on site relating to the bunker, except for an unscaled fire exit plan which has been redrawn.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are grateful to Lieutenant Colonel (rtd) Brynolf, training area Commandant, for allowing access to the bunker.

SOURCES

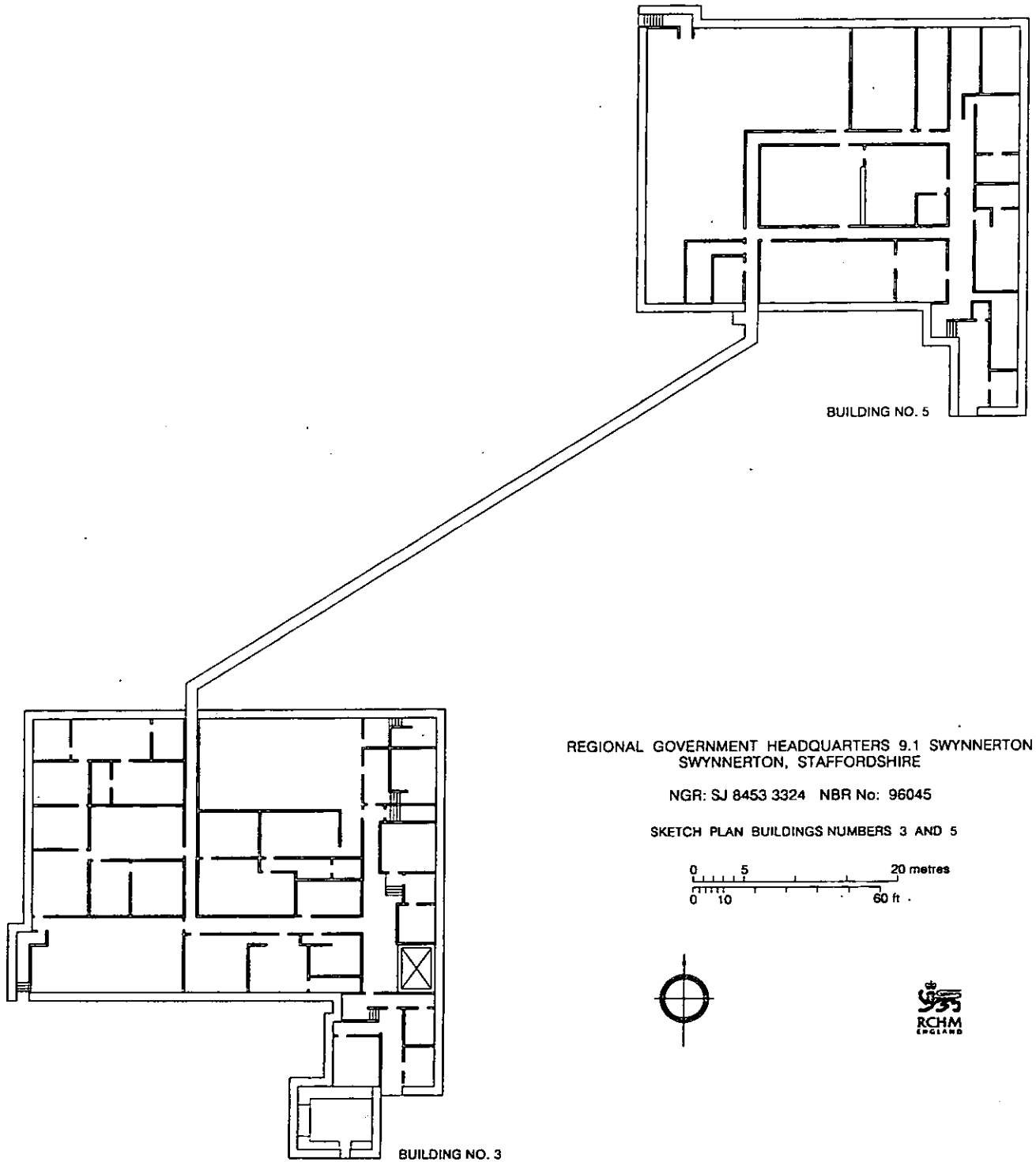
BGS, 1974. British Geological Survey, Stafford Sheet 139 Drift Edition

Campbell, D. 1983. *War Plan UK* Paladin

Laurie, P. 1970. *Beneath the city streets* Penguin

Drawing consulted on site

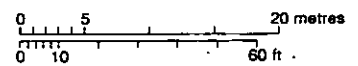
Floor plan showing fire alarm system and exits, undated and unscaled

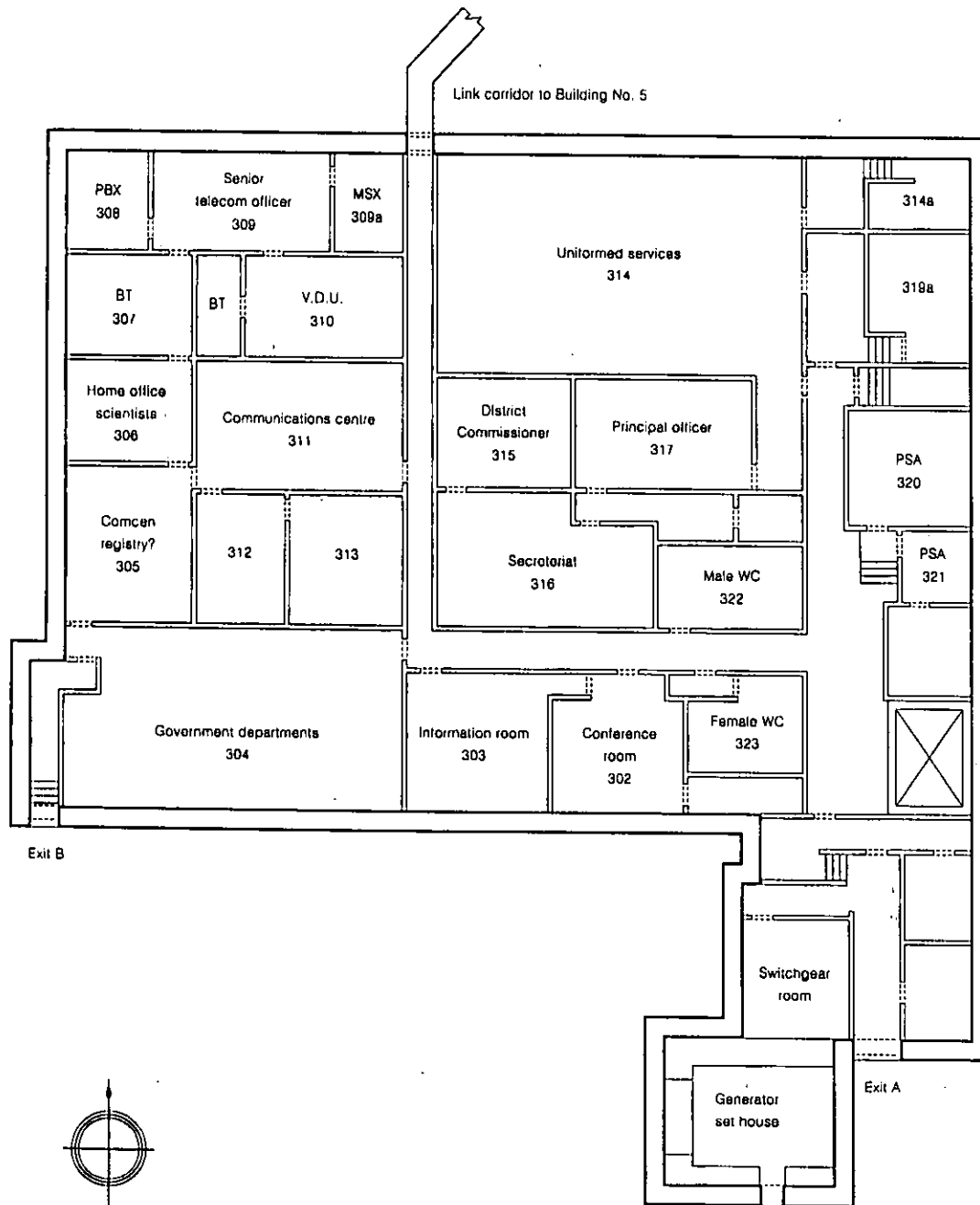


REGIONAL GOVERNMENT HEADQUARTERS 9.1 SWYNNERTON
SWYNNERTON, STAFFORDSHIRE

NGR: SJ 8453 3324 NBR No: 96045

SKETCH PLAN BUILDINGS NUMBERS 3 AND 5

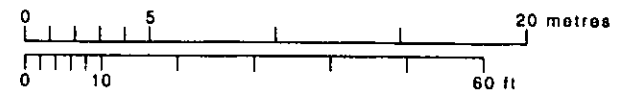




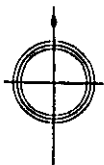
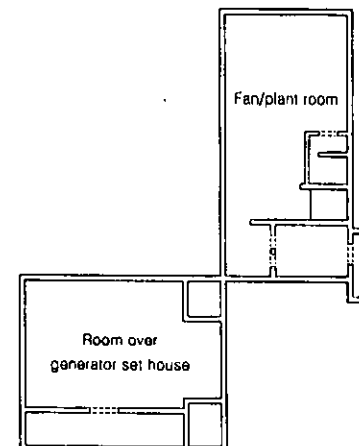
REGIONAL GOVERNMENT HEADQUARTERS 9.1 SWYNNERTON
SWYNNERTON, STAFFORDSHIRE

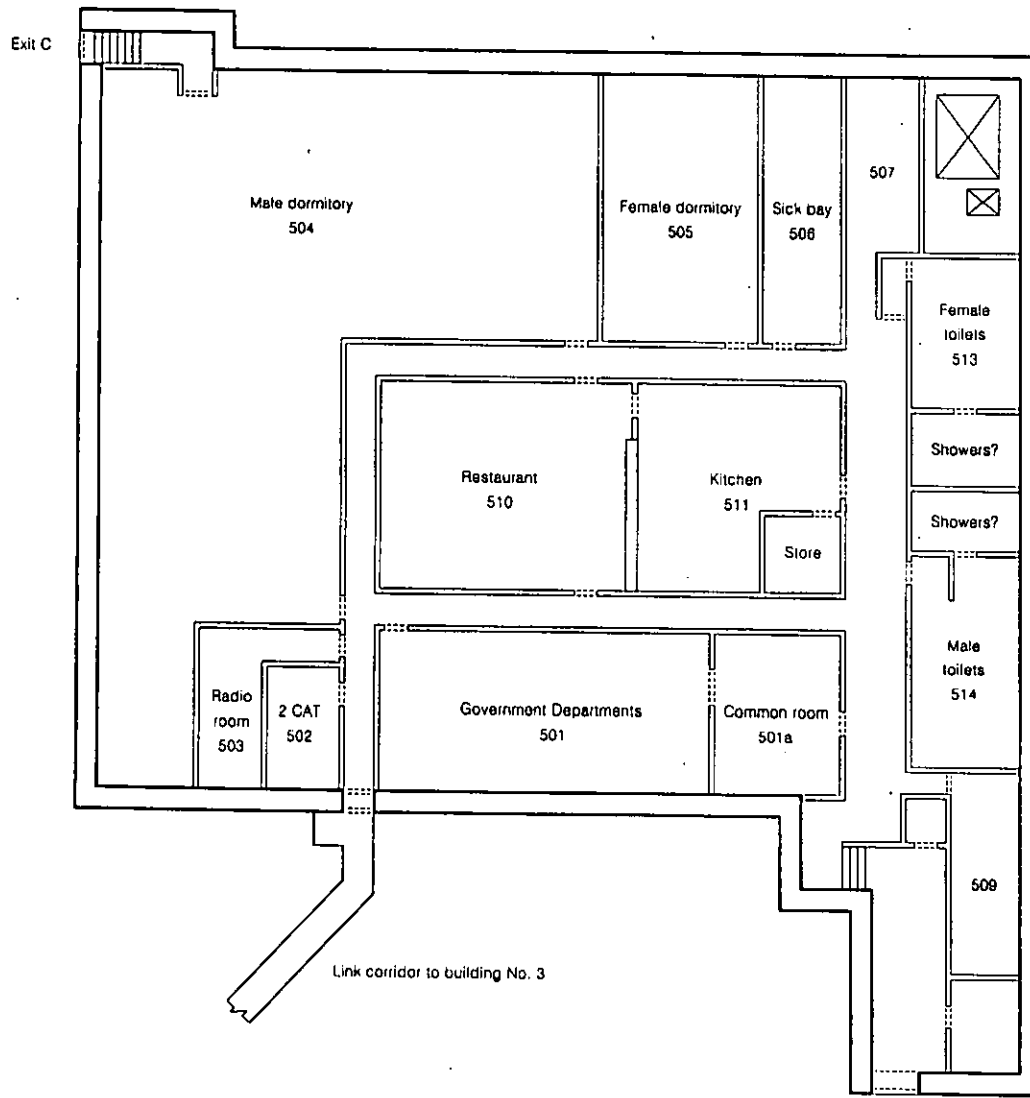
NGR: SJ 8453 3324 NBR No: 96045

FLOOR PLAN, BUILDING NUMBER 3



PLAN OF MEZZANINE FLOOR





Exit D

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SWYNNERTON, STAFFORDSHIRE

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FLOOR PLAN, BUILDING NUMBER 5

