



## CODENAME : Paddock

WINSTON CHURCHILL'S SECRET BUNKER

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**CODENAME : PADDOCK****VIRTUAL TOUR 1****You'd never know it was there**

Brook Road, a sleepy suburban street in Neasden, north-west London, hides a historic secret... A steel clad door is the only clue to Churchill's secret wartime bunker, code named Paddock. Families live next door in homes built by Stadium Housing Association.



## VIRTUAL TOUR 2

**Hard hats on and down we go**

Stadium Housing Association spent £15,000 to make the bunker safe but hard hats are essential protection for visitors.

Built in 1938, the bunker is 40 ft below ground with six feet of concrete above and below, designed to withstand the largest World War Two bombs. The heavy outer and inner doors are gas proof



**CODENAME : PADDOCK****VIRTUAL TOUR 3****Mind the puddles**

Now we are on the first underground floor in puddles of water an inch or so deep. When the bunker was first reopened, the water was waist high. Stadium Housing Association installed water pumps to make the bunker accessible.

The bunker was damp in Churchill's time, one of the reasons why he disliked the place, but not this wet.



**CODENAME : PADDOCK****VIRTUAL TOUR 4****How big is it?**

The bunker has two levels with long spine-like corridors leading to 40 rooms. We don't know what all of them were for but the Cabinet War Room Museum has identified some, which we will show you on this tour.

Hundreds of tons of rubble were removed during building, under the cover of darkness. It cost £250,000 to build the bunker in 1938 – that would be about £80 million now.



**CODENAME : PADDOCK****VIRTUAL TOUR 5****Power and air**

An enormous diesel generator made by Crompton Parkinson of Chelmsford provided electricity. The generator may look like a rusting hulk now but it is in surprisingly good condition, as is the galvanized metal ducting for the air-conditioning.



**CODENAME : PADDOCK****VIRTUAL TOUR 6****Look at the stalactites**

Threads of long thin stalactites hang from the ceilings.

They are hollow calcite straws caused by calcium leaching out of the concrete. In some places stalactites on their way down have met stalagmites on their way up and fused together.



**CODENAME : PADDOCK****VIRTUAL TOUR 7****Spiraling down**

A rusting spiral staircase takes us down to level two. This is not the route Churchill would have taken. He would have used the much wider main stairs but this is more fun.



**CODENAME : PADDOCK****VIRTUAL TOUR 8****The nerve center**

The bunker was built to accommodate the entire War Cabinet and 200 staff in the event that the Cabinet War Rooms in Whitehall were destroyed.

Here, in the control room (sometimes called the map room), commanders would have planned military manoeuvres and worked out their strategies. You can see the original lamps that lit the wall maps. Windows from three surrounding rooms let the army, navy and airforce get a glimpse of the action.



**CODENAME : PADDOCK****VIRTUAL TOUR 9****Churchill's war cabinet room**

This is the War Cabinet Room. There was dry rot fungus up to two feet deep hanging from the walls and ceilings when the room was re-opened. It's been cleared but it's growing back here and in most of the other lower level rooms.

Churchill held just one meeting here on 3 October 1940 with twelve other ministers and three chiefs of staff. He is believed to have slept in the room next door where a rotting bed was found in one corner.



**CODENAME : PADDOCK****VIRTUAL TOUR 10****Charge the phones**

At the time telephones were run on batteries somewhat bigger than the ones in our mobile phones today. The floor is different, here in the battery room . The red tiles protected the concrete floor from corrosive battery fluids. There are no air-conditioning ducts because of the horrible smells the batteries emitted.



**CODENAME : PADDOCK****VIRTUAL TOUR 11****Tea and biscuits**

Here's the kitchen where staff would have made tea and coffee and light snacks.

The facilities in the bunker were basic and there were no toilets so staff took most of their meals and used the facilities in the single storey building above ground.

Accommodation was provided in nearby Neville's Court where flat numbers 18 and 27 were made ready for Winston Churchill.



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## VIRTUAL TOUR 12

**Back to the light of day**

*"We held a Cabinet meeting at PADDOCK far from the light of day, and each Minister was required to inspect and satisfy himself about his sleeping and working apartments. We celebrated this occasion with a vivacious luncheon, and then returned to Whitehall."*



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The war cabinet in 1940

## ABOUT THE BUNKER

Churchill's secret bunker was really secret throughout World War Two (1939-1945). There are War Rooms under Whitehall, where Churchill held cabinet meetings and slept but he also had another bunker, 40 ft below ground in sleepy Brook Road, Neasden in north-west London.

The bunker, codenamed Paddock, was an alternative to the Cabinet War Rooms at Whitehall, which would not have survived a direct hit. This bunker was deep enough to be completely bombproof. Paddock was meant to be Churchill's last refuge if the World War 2 Battle of Britain had been lost. It was designed to accommodate the entire war cabinet and 200 staff.

Paddock was so secret, that Churchill only described it as "near Hampstead" in his memoirs. But he used it just once for a war cabinet meeting because he thought it was too far away from the city and he found it rather damp.

## Stadium Housing Association and the bunker

The bunker was sold to Stadium Housing Association (then called Network Housing Association) in 1997 and we built social housing on the land above. We installed electricity and pumps, without which the bunker would be knee-high in water, and made it safe. These works cost £15,000.

As a housing association our priority is developing good quality homes that people can afford, so it is not possible for us to recreate the bunker as it would have been in Churchill's day or open the bunker to the public more than twice a year, as required as a condition of the land transfer.



**CODENAME : PADDOCK****CHURCHILL & WORLD WAR II**

The English statesman Sir Winston Churchill successfully led Britain through World War Two. He described this achievement as his “walk with destiny” – a destiny for which he believed he had spent all his life in preparation.

He was born son of a prominent Tory politician, Lord Randolph Churchill, at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, and attended the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, before embarking on an army career. He saw action in 1897 with the Malakand field force, which he described in *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*, and also in 1898, with a Nile expeditionary force, when he famously fought hand-to-hand against the Dervishes. During the Boer war he was ambushed while reporting for a London paper, *The Morning Post*, but he escaped – and a price of £25.00 was put on his head.

His political career began in 1900, when he became Conservative MP for Oldham, a seat which he had previously failed to win. When he became disaffected with his party he migrated to join the Liberals in 1906. His presence in the House of Commons was notable, marked particularly by his rehearsed rhetorical method (meticulously prepared) – and this was despite a speech impediment, which never left him. Although he styled himself on his father, his concerns were somewhat different. He was an arbitrator who fought for peace in the Boer war, and he believed in effective military management and in modesty of ambition.

In 1917 he was appointed Lloyd George’s minister of munitions, and was involved in the mass production of tanks, believed to have played a large part in Britain’s subsequent victory in World War One. Then from 1919 to 1921 he acted as secretary of state for war and air, and in 1924 he became chancellor of the exchequer.



The next decade saw a decline in his status, as political turmoil prevailed. But when war loomed in May 1940, and Neville Chamberlain lost power, Churchill came into his own – face-to-

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Stadium Housing Association thanks the BBC for this extract from the Historic Figures section of their website.

For more information about Stadium Housing Association, visit our website at [www.stadiumha.org.uk](http://www.stadiumha.org.uk)

face with his 'destiny'. His national spirit and unflinching determination in the face of Germany and Italy's warmongering won massive support across the country. Even though he promised nothing more than 'blood, toil, tears and sweat', he mobilised and inspired courage in an entire nation. Throughout the war he worked tirelessly, and built good relations with President Roosevelt at the same time as maintaining an alliance with the Soviet Union.

Churchill, however, was regarded with suspicion by some, for his ability to change parties at regular intervals. He was also hated by many trade union members, and sections of the working class, as he was instrumental in helping to break the 1926 General Strike. After the war, even though he was seen as a great leader who had not given an inch to the enemy, he was not considered necessarily to be the man to establish a better Britain during peacetime.

Suspicious and doubts about him may have been compounded by his delay in the implementation of the Beveridge Report, which outlined plans for a national health service. Even though Churchill lost power in the 1945 post-war election, he remained a vital leader of the opposition, voicing apprehensions about the Iron Curtain and encouraging European and Atlantic unity, finally conceived as NATO.

A final stint as Prime Minister came at the age of 77, and Churchill continued as a back-bencher into even older age. His contribution was rewarded with a string of decorations, including an honorary US citizenship and accolades listing him among the greatest living Englishmen. As well as his many political achievements, he left the legacy of an impressive number of publications.

## LINKS

### Sir Winston Churchill

BBC historic figures, including Winston Churchill

[www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\\_figures/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/)

Imperial War Museum: The Churchill Museum

[www.iwm.org.uk/cabinet/churchill/](http://www.iwm.org.uk/cabinet/churchill/)

Churchill Online

[www.iwm.org.uk/cabinet/churchill/](http://www.iwm.org.uk/cabinet/churchill/)

Churchill Archives Centre

[www.iwm.org.uk/cabinet/churchill/](http://www.iwm.org.uk/cabinet/churchill/)

### World War II

BBC World War II

[www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwtwo/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwtwo/)

Imperial War Museum

[www.iwm.org.uk/](http://www.iwm.org.uk/)

Imperial War Museum – Cabinet War Rooms

[www.iwm.org.uk/cabinet/](http://www.iwm.org.uk/cabinet/)

Imperial War Museum: What was it like in the second world war?

[www.iwm.org.uk/education/lifeinww2/](http://www.iwm.org.uk/education/lifeinww2/)

Imperial War Museum: Children of the second world war

[www.iwm.org.uk/education/ww2children/](http://www.iwm.org.uk/education/ww2children/)

### Secret bunkers: Paddock

Subterranea Britannica: Standby WW2 Cabinet War Room

[www.subbrit.org.uk/rsg/sites/d/dollis\\_hill/](http://www.subbrit.org.uk/rsg/sites/d/dollis_hill/)

Showcaves: Churchill's secret bunker

[www.showcaves.com/english/explain/Subterranea/](http://www.showcaves.com/english/explain/Subterranea/)

Cities of Science: The Bunker that Churchill hated

[http://www.citiesofscience.co.uk/go/London/ContentPlace\\_1983.html](http://www.citiesofscience.co.uk/go/London/ContentPlace_1983.html)

BBC News: Secret wartime bunker unveiled

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/1932976.stm>

Churchill's Secret Wartime Bunker Revealed

<http://networkhg.org.uk/templates/news/groupDetail->

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nhg.cfm/467

**Secret bunkers: Other secret bunkers**

Subterranea Britannica: The UK's cold war defences

<http://www.subbrit.org.uk/rsg/index.shtml>

Showcaves: Secret bunkers

<http://www.showcaves.com/english/explain/Subterranea/SecretBunkers.htm>

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