

Cold War Exhibition ideas and images

The National Archives holds a wealth of fascinating material relating to the cold war from spies and espionage, international negotiations and the Berlin wall to Britain's preparations for a possible nuclear attack. We have three ideas that we have been scoping which are set out in this document. The idea that we have worked up the most is option 2.

Option 1: Cold War Gaming

Background context

Wargaming originated in Prussia in the 1820s, and by the mid-twentieth century was in common use by the armed forces of most nations.

Transition to war exercises in the UK were designed to stimulate and test as many aspects as possible of the central 'Government War Book' which recorded all of the decisions which were required to take the nation from peacetime to wartime.

NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (established 1949) was pledged to defend the frontiers of Central Europe against a potential invasion by the forces of the Soviet Union. In the event of an attack by the Soviet Union, the US would undertake massive retaliation against on the Soviet Union using nuclear weapons. This strategy was altered in 1957, so that retaliation (by US/NATO) using nuclear weapons would be limited to strategic targets (this became known as 'flexible response' policy).

Exercises using scenarios leading to war involving the use of nuclear weapons date back to the 1950s – for example, NATO exercise Carte Blanche was played out on the airfields and skies of Western Germany in June 1955.

In 1962, NATO began its annual FALLEX exercises, which took place each autumn. In the 1970s, these exercises were replaced by WINTEX, which took place in the winter.

Wintex-Cimex- 'Winter Exercise - Civil-Military Exercise'

The UK's Wintex-Cimex exercises (1979-1989) were biennial transition to war exercises, which involved civil servants playing the parts of ministers. The 1981 and 1983 exercises imagined scenarios in which the ORANGE Bloc (the Warsaw Pact – the Soviet Union and its allies) became increasingly militarily aggressive, culminating in attacks on BLUE alliance countries (The West and its allies – roughly equivalent to NATO) using conventional and chemical weapons. Faced with a collapse of BLUE defences in central Europe, and aerial bombing attacks on Britain, the British Prime Minister and his/her Cabinet are faced with a decision about whether to release British nuclear weapons to attack ORANGE military targets - so that ORANGE leaders can be dissuaded from further escalation and brought to the negotiating table.

The scenarios which were played out, step by step, in these war gaming exercises are recorded in volumes, comprising of several hundred pages each, held by The National Archives.

Key documents

CAB 130/1169 WINTEX-CIMEX 81 Committee, 1981 Mar 05 - 1981 Mar 20

CAB 130/1249 WINTEX-CIMEX 83 Committee, Meetings and Papers, 1983 Feb 18 - 1983 Mar 09

Continued

Highlights of the documents

There is a tradition behind these documents, but they also products of their time. The scenarios are set in the early 1980s, and so they mention, for example, Mrs Thatcher, the Solidarity Trade Union in Poland, Lech Walesa, Cruise missile installation, and Greenham Common. They are interesting 'time capsules' in their own right.

The documents contain a high level of imaginative input, including fake (but very real looking) Cabinet documents, imagined headlines from the press on a daily basis, even an imagined speech that the Queen would make on the eve of nuclear war, which received considerable attention by the press when the document was released in 2013. The degree of ingenuity, the attention to detail (and the elements of black humour), in the documents is remarkable.

The scenarios which unfold read as gripping stories – there is, of course, much grimness but the content is fascinating and thought-provoking.

Possible scope around the theme

Because the scenarios reference other aspects of Britain's 'Cold front' such as the 'Protect and Survive' leaflet, nuclear shelters, and the Wartime Broadcasting Service (See Option 2), one can see how these documents could be used as a springboard to explore these concepts in more detail – the story could then act as a unifying thread through the exhibition.

Visitors could imagine themselves in the scenario – through simulation/interactive/game playing elements of the cold war gaming exercise.

SECRET

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4 March 1983

CABINET

WINTEX-CIMEX(83) COMMITTEE

EXERCISE

EXERCISE

EXERCISE

Text of a Message to the Nation broadcast by
Her Majesty The Queen at Noon on Friday 4 March 1983

When I spoke to you less than three months ago we were all enjoying the warmth and fellowship of a family Christmas. Our thoughts were concentrated on the strong links that bind each generation to the ones that came before and those that will follow. The horrors of war could not have seemed more remote as my family and I shared our Christmas joy with the growing family of the Commonwealth.

Now this madness of war is once more spreading through the world and our brave country must again prepare itself to survive against great odds.

I have never forgotten the sorrow and pride I felt as my sister and I huddled around the nursery wireless set listening to my father's inspiring words on that fateful day in 1939. Not for a single moment did I imagine that this solemn and awful duty would one day fall to me.

We all know that the dangers facing us today are greater by far than at any time in our long history. The enemy is not the soldier with his rifle nor even the airman prowling the skies above our cities and towns but the deadly power of abused technology.

But whatever terrors lie in wait for us all the qualities that have helped to keep our freedom intact twice already during this sad century will once more be our strength.

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SECRET

Imagined Queen's speech
from WINTEX-CIMEX, 1983

125

Option 2: Britain's Cold Front, 1945-1991

The most frightening aspect of the Cold War was the threat of nuclear war. This theme explores the impact of this threat on Britain, in political and social terms, through three key themes: Britain and the Bomb, Civil Defence, and Protest.

(a) Britain and the Bomb

Two key sub-themes run through this: firstly, the possession of nuclear weapons was linked with perceptions of Britain's great power status; and secondly, the question of whether Britain's nuclear deterrent was truly independent.

In 1946 the US Congress prohibited any exchange of nuclear secrets, which was a significant blow to Britain's plans to develop its own nuclear weapon, but the British nuclear programme went ahead in secret, despite worries about the cost. Referring to the bomb, Ernest Bevin stated 'We've got to have the bloody Union Jack on top of it'. Britain carried out a test of the atomic bomb in the Monte Bello Islands in October 1952. Shortly after this, the US tested their first thermonuclear hydrogen bomb, which was hugely more destructive than the A-bomb.

Churchill had deep concerns about the H-bomb but his view was Britain must have it: 'it's the price we pay to sit at the top table'. The first British hydrogen bomb test was at Christmas Island in November 1957 (it was fraudulent to some extent: a very large A-bomb with hydrogen fuel). Politicians and the press claimed at this time that the British nuclear deterrent was independent, but this was not the case. Under a deal with the US in 1957, British Vulcan bombers (stationed in the UK) carried US Thor intermediate ballistic missiles - but these missiles were controlled by the US. The British rocket project Blue Streak was cancelled; the US Skybolt missile was not a success. Eventually, in 1962, Macmillan succeeded in buying Polaris from the US (Polaris missiles fired from nuclear submarines) – this proved reliable. It was still a US dominated deterrent in many ways. The replacement Trident system using Vanguard Submarines began operations in 1994.

Key documents

CAB 130/3, GEN 75/1: The Atomic Bomb: Memorandum by the Prime Minister (Attlee), 28th August 1945: 'We should declare that this invention has made it essential to end all wars...I believe that only a bold course can save civilisation'. Earlier that month atomic bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This was a highly dramatic appeal by the Prime Minister for a new world order.

PREM 11/747 Letter from Churchill to the Queen, 16 July 1954: 'It is my duty to inform Your Majesty that the Cabinet are considering whether it would be right and Advantageous for this country to produce the hydrogen bomb'. The letter is notable for its conciseness in view of such a weighty subject.

WO 320/4 Operation Mosaic: Monte Bello Atomic Tests, 1956 – contains a picture of the bomb

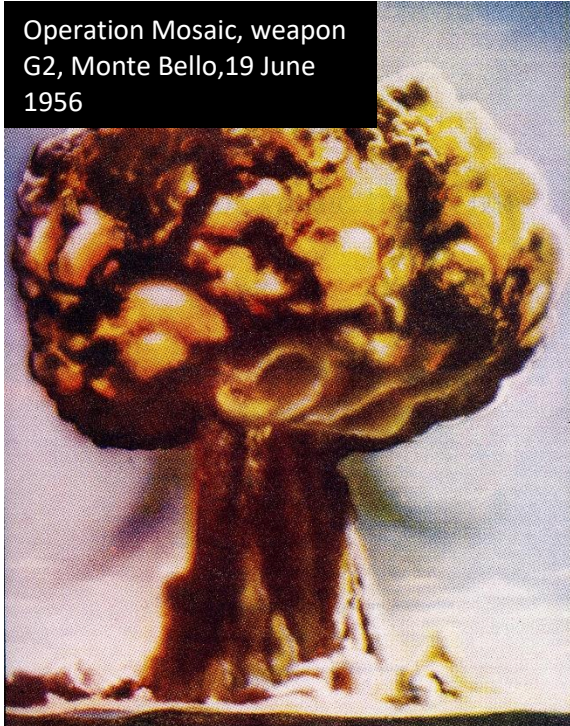
ES 18/118 Operation HURRICANE, Monte Bello Islands: photographs 1952 Jan 01 - 1952 Dec 31

ES 18/120 Operation GRAPPLE: photographs 1957 Jan 01 - 1957 Dec 31

ES 18/121 Operation GRAPPLE, mushroom cloud: photographs, 1957 Jan 01 - 1957 Dec 31

INF 13/281 Pt B: a very striking poster concerning the H-bomb

Operation Mosaic, weapon
G2, Monte Bello, 19 June
1956



Operation Mosaic, weapon
G1 crater, Monte Bello,
1956





Government plans for Britain after it had been attacked by nuclear weapons involved the setting up of twelve regional seats of government. These regional organisations would have a wide range of powers: they would communicate with survivors, and attempt to provide for them, as well as maintaining law and order, and some sort of administrative government. The Prime Minister and his War Cabinet, and various military and intelligence officials and support staff would have taken shelter in the underground command bunker known as 'Turnstile'.

We would need to research in greater depth to find out when certain elements of civil defence preparations became obsolete. For example, it appears that the air raid sirens system was largely dismantled by 1990 (there is more work to do on this).

Revelations in the archives

The 'public relations' aspect of government contingency planning was particularly interesting, as it included the production of leaflets 'Advising the Householder on Protection against Nuclear Attack'. Copies of this handbook were made available to members of the civil defence, police and fire services, and were intended for the consumption of the general public in the event of impending disaster. The tone of the leaflets strives to be as reassuring as possible, using strangely 'cosy' illustrations, yet the overall effect is chilling and disturbing. The 'Protect and Survive' leaflet of 1980 was, in many ways, an updated version of this advice, and included plans for building your own 'inner refuge' (using items such as furniture, bags of sand and earth) in your 'fall-out room' within your own home.

In the mid-1980s, a Home Office working group looked at updating the designs of 'do it yourself' nuclear shelters and 'Igloo' shelters against chemical attack. Plans of these shelters are striking because of the mundane nature of the materials needed for their construction, including plastic sheets, sandbags, and pliers; and also for the claustrophobic conditions depicted.

The Government and the BBC held secret discussions in the early 1970s as to how a new 'Wartime Broadcasting Service' would operate in the event of a nuclear conflict. A file contains the script of a pre-recorded message for public broadcast in the event of Armageddon – the message is stark and chilling: 'This is the Wartime Broadcasting Service. This country has been attacked with nuclear weapons...stay calm and stay in your own homes. Remember there is nothing to be gained by trying to get away'.

Key documents (including films)

HO 338/57 Home Office Manual of Civil Defence: pamphlet advising the householder on protection against nuclear attacks, 1963-1967

INF 6/2531 Protect and Survive: civil protection in the event of nuclear attack; on behalf of the Home Office, 1975 Oct 01 - 1984 Aug 08

Public Information Film: 'Protect and Survive – Action after warnings' (4 mins, 10 secs), 1975

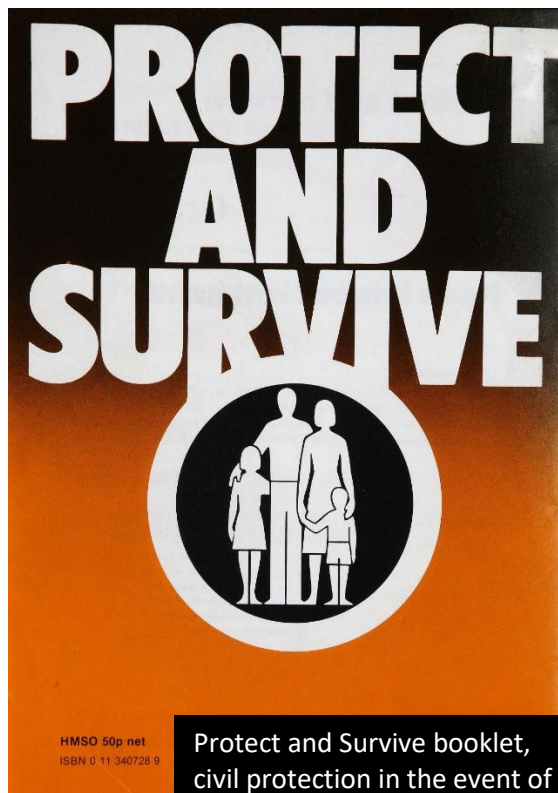
Public Information Film: 'Protect and Survive': Casualties' (1 min 25 secs), 1975

HO 322/1073 Domestic nuclear shelters (With drawings), 1985 Jan 01 - 1985 Dec 31

HO 322/775 Wartime broadcasting service: recorded announcements. Former reference - CDA 71 92/1/2, 1973 Jan 01 - 1975 Dec 31

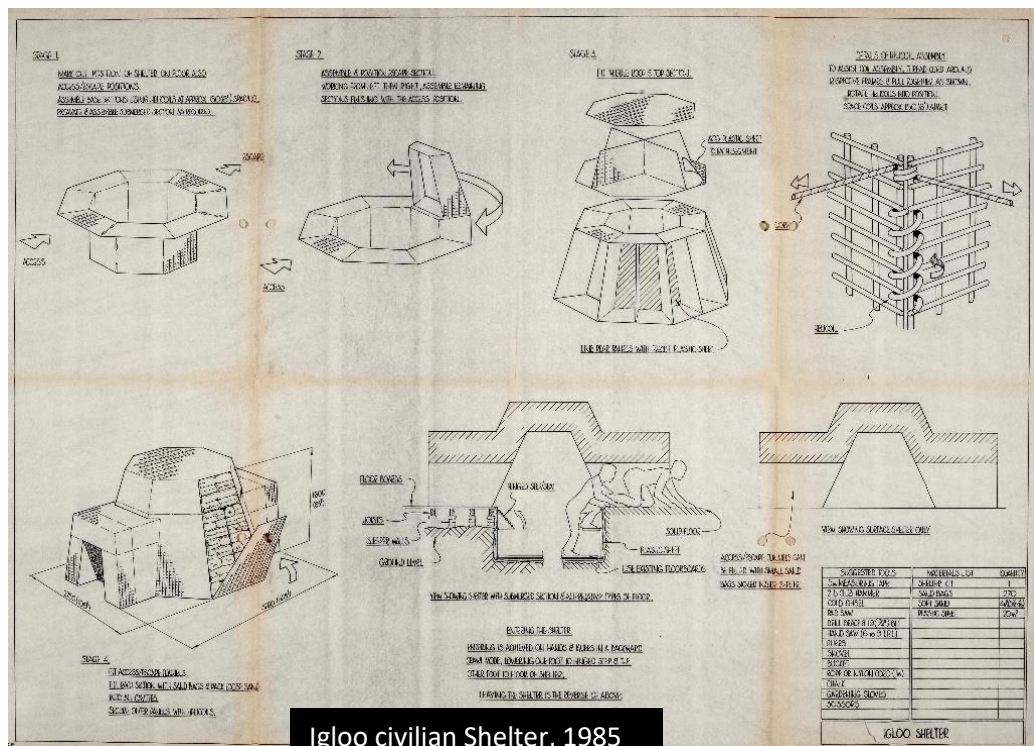
Yet to be investigated: various files concerning 'The War Game', the banned pseudo-documentary of 1965

Popular culture: nuclear threat is reflected in the apocalyptic theme of science fiction – John Wyndham's novels, for example.



Protect and Survive booklet, civil protection in the event of nuclear attack 1980

Home Office manual advising on protection against nuclear attack 1960s



Igloo civilian Shelter, 1985

(c) Protest concerning nuclear weapons

Background context

This theme has political and sociological aspects: looking at the reasons why people get involved in collective action in relation to nuclear weapons issues, and the appeal to certain strands of society. We could also explore the impact of these movements, and attempt to evaluate their failures and successes.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was founded in 1958, a year after the Suez crisis. This period conjures up images of students on the annual Aldermaston marches wearing duffel coats. The movement had a powerful appeal to young people and there was a strong association with folk music. Many intellectuals and celebrities supported CND: it was largely a middle-class movement.

CND favoured unilateral nuclear disarmament – on the basis that Britain should lead by example in giving up its nuclear weapons, regardless of the nuclear stockpiles held by other countries. The issue caused arguments within the Labour Party. CND peaked in popularity in 1960, and then declined; however, from 1980 onwards, it underwent a dramatic revival. This was linked to deteriorating relations between the superpowers, NATO plans to install cruise missiles in Europe (including Britain); and the portrayal (by some) of President Reagan as a 'gun toting cowboy'. A Women's 'peace camp' was established around the perimeter of Greenham Common airbase (one of the stations where Cruise missiles were installed). The early origins of this camp go back to September 1981. For many of the women involved it was a profound experience.

The nuclear war related movements which emerged in the 1980s were not exclusively focused on unilateralism. There was a Youth for Multilateral disarmament movement set up by the National Young Conservatives which countered CND.

The Nuclear Free Zone movement had some impact, in terms of publicity, in the 1980s – this was at local authority level: the first 'nuclear-free zone' in the UK was Manchester City Council in 1980. The Greater London Council (GLC) advocated this approach.

Key documents

HO 325/149 Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND): march from London to Aldermaston on Good Friday, 4 April 1958 against nuclear weapons; picketing was to take place for one week, 1958 Jan 01-1958 Dec 31 (contains leaflets)

BS 20/98 Southwark BC: nuclear free zone, 1985: Poster: 'The government has a Christmas present for you. Tell them you don't want it'

FCO 46/2744 Unilateral disarmament and public attitudes to nuclear weapons, 1981 Jan 01 - 1981 Dec 31 – includes Youth for Multilateral Disarmament anti-CND poster

To be investigated:

DEFE 24/3020 Nuclear public relations: Greenham Common Peace camp, 1983 Mar 01 - 1983 Aug 31

HO 287/3094 Police: Greenham Common Protest, 1982 Jan 01 - 1982 Dec 31

Popular culture: the Folk movement, Bob Dylan's early albums

Option 3: Cold War Spy Scandals

Background context

The theme of espionage has always had a strong appeal to the imagination of the British public, both before and after the First World War. People are fascinated by 'cloak and dagger' machinations! Stories about secret agents and traitors have long been popular. The success of the James Bond films (and Ian Fleming's associated novels) from the early 60s onwards (still a popular franchise today) is evidence of this. The fascination extended to Bond's penchant for the good life and his extensive use of gadgets. And, in the Cold War era, the public wasn't only engrossed in fictional spy stories; they were also fascinated by a series of real-life spying scandals in the 50s and 60s.

The most notorious scandal involved the **Cambridge Spies**, who were recruited by Soviet intelligence at Cambridge University in the 1930s. This network passed important information to the Soviet Union during the Second World War and the early part of the Cold War. The membership of this spy ring emerged gradually from the 1950s onwards, beginning with the sudden defection of two Foreign Office diplomats, Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, to the Soviet Union in May 1951 (news of their defection was broken by the press in 1955). Other members of the ring were Kim Philby, Anthony Blunt, and John Cairncross.

Fears about homosexuality were very present in the 1950s – so were fears about espionage, and the two became interlinked, because Guy Burgess was homosexual, and Maclean was said to be bisexual (though a recent biography by Roland Philipps has discredited this, arguing that his orientation from the age of 20 was towards women).

In May 1961 **George Blake** was tried in camera for spying for a potential enemy and was given a sentence of forty-two years in prison. At least forty British agents were thought to have died as a result of his treachery. The extent of his betrayal shocked the British public. In October 1966 he escaped from Wormwood Scrubs using a ladder which consisted of clothesline and knitting needles, was eventually smuggled out of the country and reached Moscow and was awarded the Order of Lenin.

Also in 1961 the intriguing story of the **Portland Spy ring** hit the headlines, which centred on a suburban bungalow in Ruislip; this was followed in 1962 by the case of **John Vassall**, a homosexual who was blackmailed into passing secrets to the Soviet Union; and in 1963 by the **Profumo** scandal, which had sexual, political and intelligence elements; the accumulative effect of these security scandals contributed to the defeat of the Conservative party in the 1964 election.

In addition to the above, another notable case was the **Commander Crabb** case: Buster Crabb was a Royal Navy frogman who vanished during a MI6 reconnaissance mission around a Soviet cruiser which had docked at Portsmouth Dockyard in 1956. A body was found a year later, which was thought to be that of Buster Crabb.

Highlights of the documents

The Security Service released hundreds of documents concerning the Cambridge spies in 2015. Highlights include:

KV 2/4101 Concern expressed about aspects of Burgess' lifestyle, including his alcoholism and homosexuality

Detailed reports and intercepted correspondence giving insights into Burgess and Maclean's lives after their defection:

KV 2/4113 includes a sketch by Burgess mocking the MI5 agents who he knew would be looking through his correspondence

KV 2/4142 includes Donald Maclean's telegrams home

CAB 301/124 Includes diagram of Portsmouth Dockyard from the enquiry into the disappearance of Commander Crabb, Royal Navy frogman, showing the route he took and when he was last sighted, 1956

MEPO 2/10736 Inquiry into the escape of George BLAKE alias George BEHAR from HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs on 22 October 1966. With photographs and plans

HO 278/7 Police Reports which include photographs of the ladder which George Blake used to escape from Wormwood Scrubs, 1966

TS 58/665 W J C Vassall: confession (File CEV 4), 1962 - as well as the serious subject matter, this includes reference to spycraft techniques, such as innocuous opening remarks that were used when starting a secret conversation, and other secret means of communication, some of which are actually rather amusing.

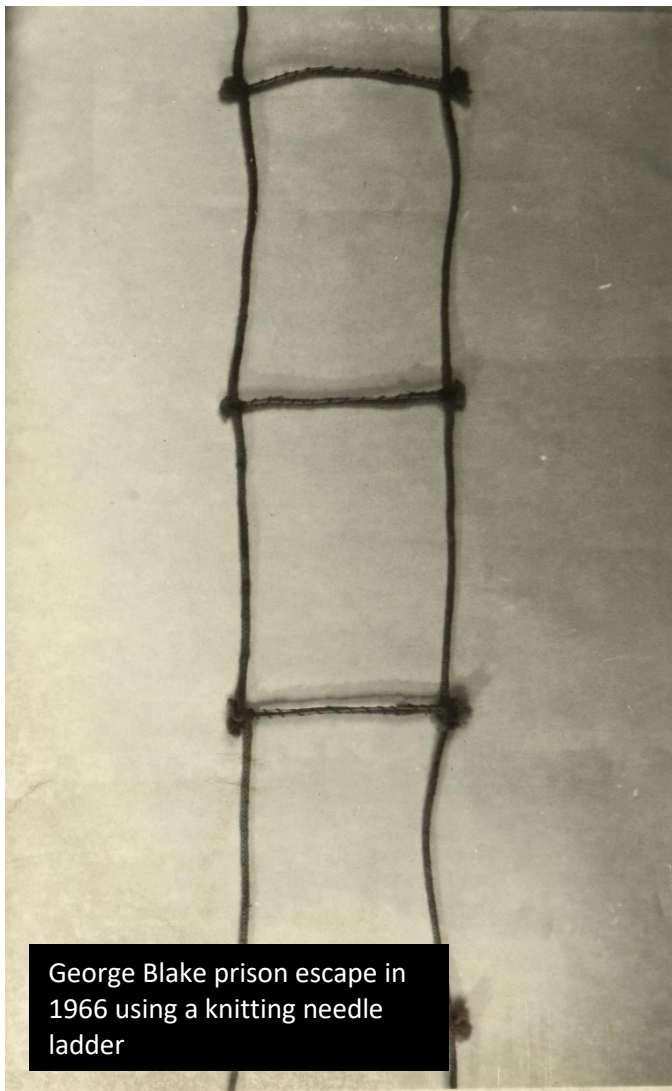
Further examples of spycraft can be found in the diaries of Guy Liddell, Deputy Director General of MI5 during the early Cold War – see KV 4/471 and KV 4/472.

Gadgets aspect: Vassall files refer to his use of a Minox miniature camera

PREM 11/4368 Prime Minister's Office: Resignation of John Profumo, Secretary of State for War, 1963

Popular culture

Ian Fleming's novels, James Bond films, John Le Carre



George Blake prison escape in 1966 using a knitting needle ladder



D.D. MACLEAN



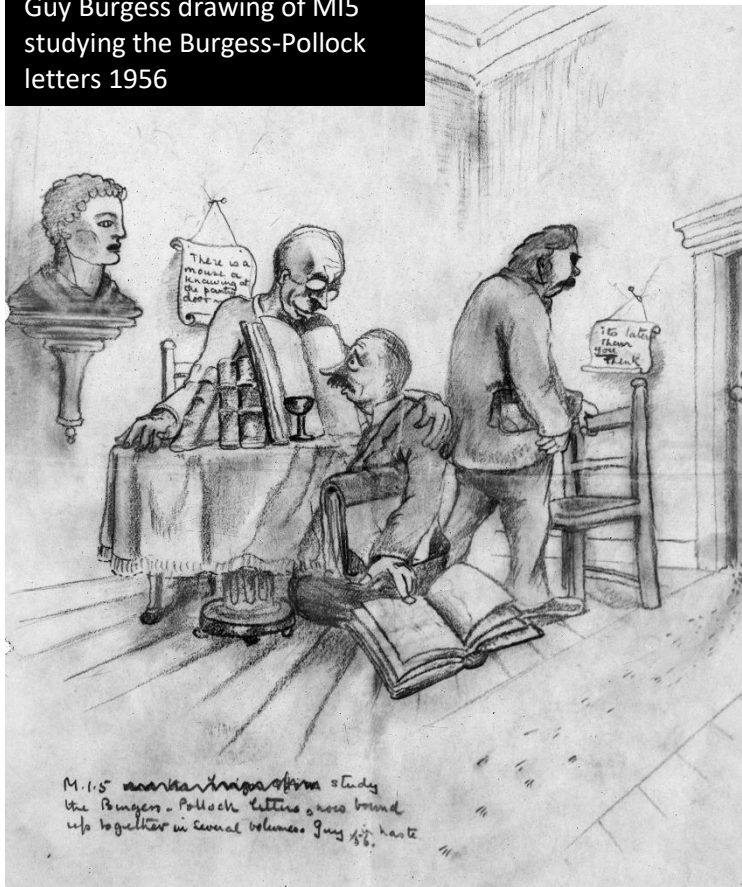
D.D. MACLEAN



G.F. de M. BURGESS

Burgess and Maclean,
photographs from post
disappearance papers 1951-
1953

Guy Burgess drawing of MI5
studying the Burgess-Pollock
letters 1956



MODULARIO
C. - Tel. - 46

Mod. 25 (ed. 1950)

Tassa principale ...

Tasse
accessorie

TOTALE

Bollo
a
data

TELEGRAMMA

Trasmesso il
ore

Circuito
di trasmissione

Trasmittente

Qualifica	DESTINAZIONE	PROVENIENZA	NUMERO	PAROLE	DATA	ORE	Via e altre indicazioni di servizio
	Mrs Parodi		957202		28	7	10.50

NOTA. - Indirizzo completo (via, piazza e numero dell'abitazione). Se il destinatario ha il telefono la consegna del telegramma può essere accelerata, apponendo prima dell'indirizzo la formula: = TF... (numero telefonico) =.

INDIRIZZO
(in caratteri
maiuscoli)

MRS BASSETT FLAT 14
Arlington House - Arlington Street
Piccadilly - London

TESTO
ed eventualmen-
te firma scritti
con chiarezza

Terribly sorry for my silence - Am now
embarking on long mediterranean holiday
Do forgive all love
Guy boy

Nome e domicilio del mittente (ad uso d'ufficio)

Walter Parodi albergo Flora - Roma

L'Amministrazione non assume alcuna
responsabilità civile in conseguenza
del servizio telegrafico.

Stampato Roma - 1950 - 1.000.000 - G. C. 10.000.000