

2022.3.26 Westbury Beacon... What to do with the Green Shed.



Image 1. Green shed

The Green Shed is what was built by Thales/EMI/Phillips or whatever as supporting a site at which they tested radar capabilities – on aircraft and on tracking mortar shells.

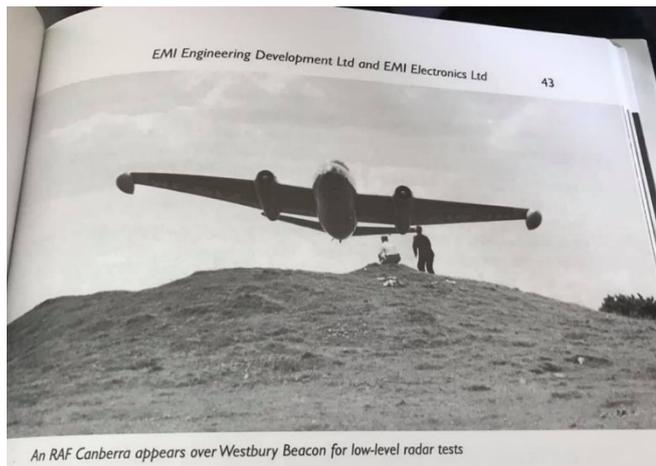


Image 2 Canberra bomber over Beacon.

The Westbury Beacon Site was purchased by Butterfly Conservation in 2015 and its primary purpose is as a butterfly reserve – particularly for Chalkhill blue, Dingy Skipper, and Dark Green Fritillary, along with Wall, and Grizzled skipper.



Image 3 Chalkhill blue, Dingy Skipper and Dark green fritillary

The shed has a timber frame covered with corrugated iron panels. Inside is lined with fibreboard. It has an electricity supply and an elemental lighting circuit with only one fluorescent strip currently working. The electricity supply is costing at least £100/year which, presumably, will more than double in the near future.



Image 4 Inside shed looking towards the door.

The shed has been used, in the 7 years of BC ownership, as shelter for a Butterfly supporters party inaugurating the stone bench, and it has sheltered two groups of volunteers working on the Beacon in March. It has been broken into several times and on one occasion the fence posts were used as darts into the fibreboard walls. The old door was replaced by a substantial new door and fitted by John Davis. The hinges for this door have broken so that the door is held shut by two padlocks – the second one fitted by John Ball just recently.



Image 5 Door and padlocks.

The corrugated iron is corroding slowly and will presumably deteriorate more and more. It has been variously held together.



Image 6 Corrugated iron pop rivets, hole and

support fixing

The roof leaks and the walls have holes in which will add to the rate of deterioration.



Image 7 Bit fallen off, lights' switch and hole in fibreboard.

As the building is at this minute, it has no useful function for BC, and is not used by anyone else. Indeed, it is not really safe proposition for anyone to use. It has no water supply and only very limited vehicle access.

The Westbury Beacon site, around the Green shed area has a lot of interesting history but there is no interpretation available for those passing through on the informal footpath that goes through the site from Broad Road to Stoke Camp and New Road that comes up from Draycott. Such interpretation could include the Bronze Age round barrow (the Beacon itself), the grade II listed cold war Observation Corps Posts – one above ground and the other an underground bunker, the view to the south with Exmoor, Hinckley Nuclear Power Station, Glastonbury, Pen Hill mast etc, the Trig point, ancient boundary marker stone in

the wall, as well as the current Butterfly Conservation objectives and management (adders and butterflies)



Image 8 Cold War ROC Observation post above ground ?? 1960?? Grade II listed



Image 9 Cold War ROC Observation bunker. ??1963?? Inside, reconstruction of similar. Grade II listed

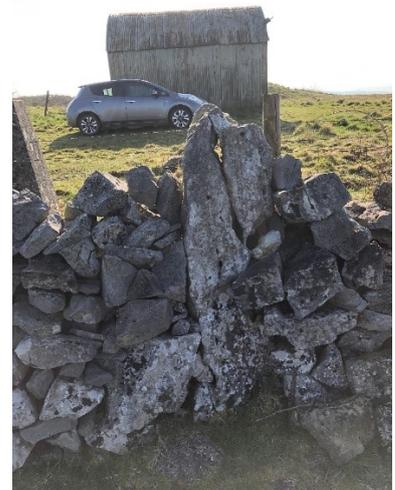


Image 10. Trig point and Boundary Stone in stone wall



Image 11 current BC board

**Given this situation I propose that the best thing to do is to take the building down and remove all the debris from the site. Shut off and make safe the electricity supply.**

**On the footprint of the removed building put in interpretation panels for some or all of the items listed above as interesting history for the site.** More stone benches could be added as time and opportunity offer from which to appreciate the view and the interpretation. I hope there would also be an opportunity to **make a soil scrape down to bare rock to establish a patch that could be colonised by horseshoe vetch and or kidney vetch as providing a site for Chalkhill and Small blues to colonise or spread into.** It is possible that the filling of the underground bunker is with limestone chippings which could be spread on the scrape so would not need removing from the site. It is the kind of experiment that is going on in other parts of the country and would be part of the Butterfly Conservation interpretation for its use and development of the site. It is in a similar vein to wanting to convert the underground bunker to become accessible for a bat roost but not human accessible.

**At the moment the Green Shed is a liability and a cost to Butterfly Conservation. Its isolated position means it is always going to be at risk of being broken into again and again.** If BC wish to run a moth trap the Somerset and Bristol Branch have two portable generators which would enable that to be done easily and on any part of the reserve. If the Green shed were to be converted to become a useful building it would involve taking it down and putting up a new one anyway. I hope that the AONB would object to such a new

building appearing in such a prominent position in their area. The Green Shed is not listed and was described as a building of no merit when the bunker and other ROC buildings were listed. The Beacon bell barrow is a scheduled monument. Arguably the removal of the Green Shed would improve the curtilage of the Ancient Monument which is the Beacon.



Image 12. Westbury Beacon bell barrow.



Image 13. The Green Shed in question.

*This consultation document is aimed at the Somerset and Bristol Branch Committee of Butterfly Conservation, Butterfly Conservation HQ, the Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council, the AONB, the Westbury Society in the Village of Westbury, Mendip District Council, Heritage Department at MDC and anyone else with an interest.*

Views are being sought from all interested parties.

Please respond to Peter Bright one of two Hon. Wardens Westbury Beacon.

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as at 26<sup>th</sup> March 2022.