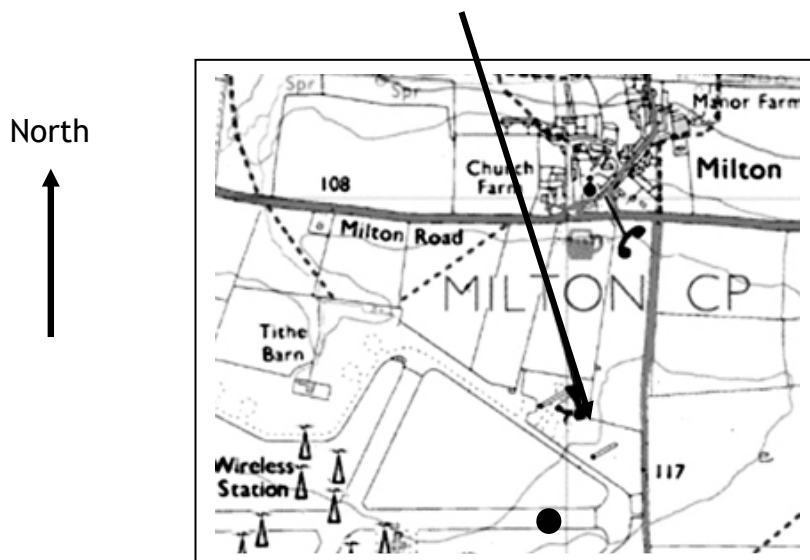


Royal Observer Corps' Nuclear Monitoring Bunker

Deddington's WWII Observation Post (OP) (see map p.73) was only equipped for aircraft spotting. In the late 1950s at the start of the Cold War, a new underground bunker was built at RAF Barford St John airfield, equipped with nuclear radiation monitoring equipment, in location P451345 and was renamed Bloxham, OXF/17.

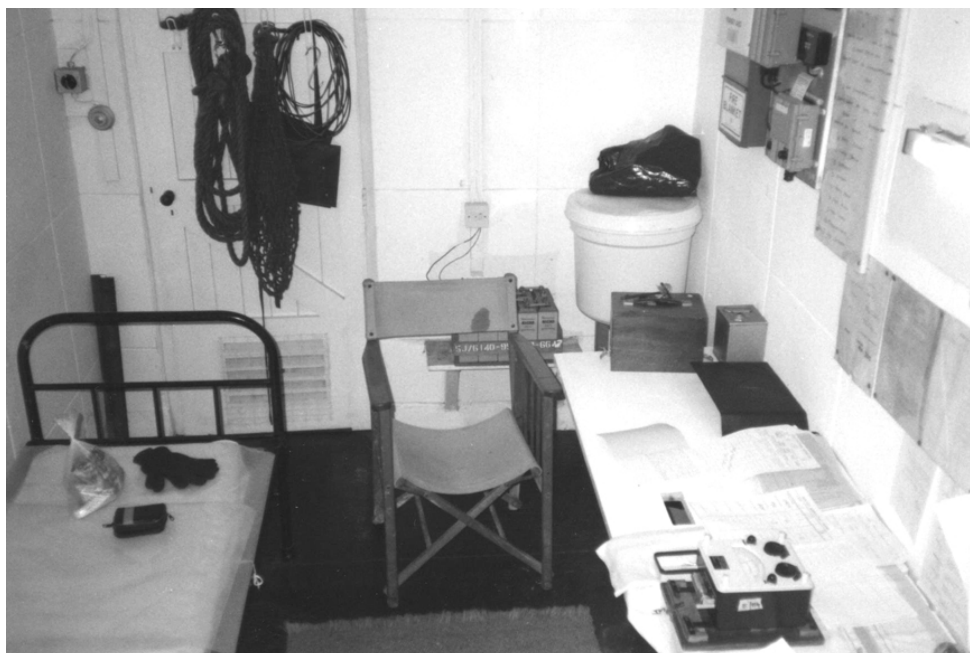


RAF Barford St John

Access was via a metal hatch lid set in concrete then down a vertical ladder in a narrow concrete shaft that led to the bunker about 100ft down. There were two small rooms about 20 x 20 ft square - each with a bed - and a small kitchen and chemical toilet.



Room 1



Room 2. The white-faced instrument on the desk is a meter to measure gamma radiation levels.

The bunker was linked to a secret underground location in Wiltshire created for the purpose of providing a nuclear shelter for the government in case of all-out nuclear war. There were 25 Observer Groups in the UK at that time and over 800 monitoring positions. The Bloxham one came under No 3 Group HQ based at Cowley Barracks in Oxford. The crew's main role would have been to report the extent of devastation in the north Oxfordshire area in the event of an exchange of missiles with Soviet Russia - always supposing any one was left alive to report this!

One of the crew who manned the bunker was Andrew Bell. He enrolled for duty in the rank of Observer in July 1982 and served until 1989. This photograph was taken in 1986.

He recalls that local training evenings were held regularly and weekend exercises took place on a national scale. A highlight of the annual programme was attending a voluntary training camp for a week at a selected RAF Air Station.



Andrew Bell