

NOTE

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Directorate of History  
National Defence Headquarters  
Ottawa, Canada  
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July 1986

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Canadian Military Headquarters, London:  
Description.

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Date: NOV 13 1986

Canadian Military Headquarters,  
2 Cockspur Street, S.W.1,  
London, ENGLAND.

The Director,  
Historical Section,  
General Staff,  
National Defence Headquarters,  
Ottawa, CANADA.

Sir,

I have the honour to present a  
further report.

2. This report deals with Canadian Military Headquarters, London, where I have now spent about three weeks. Its object is not to describe the organization and functions of this Headquarters, as this material can be found in files (see, e.g., the memorandum "Organization and Responsibilities of Canadian Military Headquarters", dated C.M.H.Q., 10 Jun.40, of which a copy was furnished me by the Historical Section before my departure from Ottawa) or in the War Diaries maintained by the "C", "A", and "Q" branches of C.M.H.Q. The aim is, in the main, to supplement these documents by providing a record of the physical aspect of this establishment as it now exists. I have consulted the C.M.H.Q. War Diaries to some extent, but chiefly with a view to avoiding duplication.

#### GROWTH OF CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

3. Since its inception soon after the outbreak of the present war, this Headquarters has necessarily steadily increased in size and has required increased accommodation in proportion. The strength of the original group of military personnel brought from Canada to establish it was 9 officers and 14 other ranks, the whole being at first accommodated in one office on the first floor of the Sun Life Building. On 16 Dec., 1939, the Headquarters moved to offices on the third floor, which (with others) are still

occupied. (For this move, see War Diary of G.S.O.1, C.M.H.Q.- then Lt.-Col. E.L.M. Burns, O.B.E., M.C.- under this date). As of 31 Dec., 1939, the personnel strength of C.M.H.Q. was 23 officers, 28 other ranks, 36 civilians: grand total, 87. As of 31 Dec., 1940 (one year later), the strength was 124 officers, 518 other ranks, 58 male civilians, 200 female civilians: grand total, 900. (For these statistics, and those for intermediate periods, see C.M.H.Q.files 22/Strength/1 and 22/Strength/1/2.).

4. The figures for 31 Dec. 1940 comprehend all personnel on the strength of C.M.H.Q., and must be understood as including many people not employed in the Sun Life Building. They include the Records, Postal, Pay, <sup>and</sup> Printing and Stationery establishments at ACTON, the Auxiliary Services office at 17 Cockspur Street, the M.T. Garage which serves C.M.H.Q., and the Medical Services establishment at WELWYN; in addition to a large group of Ordnance personnel at BORDON, some Postal Corps personnel at BOURNEMOUTH and ALDERSHOT, and the section of the Pay office now situated at LANCASTER. The figure 900 also includes 49 civilians on the medical staff, chiefly at Canadian hospitals, employed as stokers, cooks, maids, and in a few cases (at Welwyn) as stenographers; and one Dental Services stenographer at ACTON. The approximate number of persons actually employed by C.M.H.Q. in the Sun Life Building, as worked out for me by the Statistical Section of the Adjutant-General's Branch, C.M.H.Q., was, at 31 Dec. 1940, 71 officers, 140 other ranks, 37 male civilians, and 69 female civilians: grand total 317. These figures are set down here merely with a view to making the general situation clear.

5. It may be worth while to record here that the original advanced party of military personnel for C.M.H.Q., referred to in para.3, landed at LIVERPOOL on 13 Nov.1939. The first officer ashore was Colonel (now Major-General) P.J.Montague, C.M.G.,D.S.O.,M.C.,V.D. Colonel Burns was already in LONDON

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making preliminary arrangements, and had at this time office accommodation in Canada House (C.M.H.Q. Secret file 6/1 Div/4, folio 10A). It should be added that Brigadier (now Major-General) H.D.G.Crerar, D.S.O., had proceeded to the United Kingdom about a fortnight before the advanced party, in company with the Hon. T.A. Crerar, Minister of Mines and Resources.

#### THE SUN LIFE BUILDING

6. As already indicated, Canadian Military Headquarters is located in the building owned by the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada at numbers 2, 3 and 4 Cockspur Street, London S.W.1. This building is the central and the largest and loftiest unit in a block which in plan forms, roughly, an isosceles triangle, the base being Trafalgar Square and the sides Cockspur Street and Pall Mall East. At the Trafalgar Square end of the block are Canada House (the offices of the High Commissioner for Canada in the United Kingdom) facing Cockspur Street, and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons facing Pall Mall East; these two buildings, as seen from the Square, form one continuous structure. At the point of the triangle is Oceanic House, which houses commercial and banking firms. Between stands the Sun Life Building, a modern office building with six floors in addition to the ground floor, a basement and two sub-basements. The situation is ideal from the point of view of its proximity to Canada House (which can be entered from the Sun Life Building either on the third floor of the latter or through the basement) and to the War Office and other British government departments.

7. A large part of the Sun Life Building (but not the whole of it) is now occupied by C.M.H.Q. and other offices of the Canadian Government. The front of the ground floor is occupied by the Sun Life Company's local office (on the side nearest Trafalgar Square) and on the other side by the West End Branch of the Royal Bank of Canada. The fourth floor is chiefly occupied by the Department of Pensions and National Health, Canada,

and the fifth by the Overseas Headquarters, Royal Canadian Air Force. The top (sixth) floor appears to be little used at present; top floors are not popular with tenants in London under existing circumstances. There are still some private tenants in the building, and the Sun Life Assurance Co. still uses the first floor. Canadian Military Headquarters occupies at the present time the whole of the second and third floors, also the rear of the ground floor and those sections of the three basement levels not required by the building staff.

#### ARRANGEMENT OF ACCOMMODATION

8. There is perhaps no great object in describing the arrangement of accommodation for C.M.H.Q. in full detail, as with changes in organization and the progress of expansion it has altered fairly rapidly and will probably continue to alter. The general situation, however, may be outlined.

9. On the third floor is the office of the Senior Officer (Major-General P.J. Montague, C.M.G., D.S.O., M.C., V.D.). Adjacent to it is that of the Brigadier, General Staff (Brig. M.A. Pope, M.C.) and most of the other offices of the General Staff Branch. The office of the Deputy Quartermaster-General (Brig. G.P. Loggie) and a number of the other "Q" Branch offices are also on this floor, as is the stationery depot. On the second floor the Deputy Adjutant-General (Brig. F.R. Phelan, D.S.O., M.C., V.D.) has his office, with most of the other offices of the A.G.'s Branch nearby. Here also are the Central Registry, Signals Dispatch Office, and Postal Section. In the rear of this floor is the Branch of the Judge Advocate-General, and also the Chaplains (and the Historical Officer). On the ground floor, rear, are additional "Q" offices, including that of Mr. Ellis (Technical Adviser, M.T.), accommodation for the Medical Officer stationed at C.M.H.Q., and the Guard Room. In the basement are quartermaster's stores and a canteen for the benefit of C.M.H.Q. personnel; in the first sub-basement is a small officers' dormitory

and also a dormitory for those members of the female civil staff who may be prevented by enemy air raids from going to their homes after finishing work. In the lower sub-basement are air-raid shelters, sufficient to accommodate about 400 persons.

10. Many of the smaller offices have been formed by installing temporary wall-board partitions. Not a great deal of work in the building is now done by natural light, as window-glass blown out by bombs has been replaced by wall-board and a good many windows have been blocked with brickwork for protection against blast. The result has been to increase the security and necessarily also the drabness, of the offices. The building, incidentally, has central heating, though in really cold weather this has to be supplemented by oil stoves.

#### OUTSIDE PREMISES

11. As noted above (para.4) personnel on the strength of Canadian Military Headquarters are found in many other buildings besides the Sun Life Building, and even outside the London area altogether. The Senior Officer Auxiliary Services has his office at 17 Cockspur Street, close by. The Records Branch, part of the Pay Office, the H.Q. Canadian Postal Corps, and the Printing and Stationery Section, are in the Government Building, Bromyard Road, Acton; the establishments here will be made the subject of a special report. The Deputy Director of Medical Services has his office at Digswell Place, Welwyn. The M.T. Garage is situated in Dilke Street, S.W. 3 (Chelsea). Part of the Pay Office was evacuated to Lancaster (along with the Treasury Office, which of course is not under C.M.H.Q.); while as noted in para.4 there are also C.M.H.Q. personnel at Bordon, Bournemouth, and Aldershot, and at the Canadian hospitals. No.6 Provost Company, stationed in London, is not a part of the C.M.H.Q. establishment.

ENEMY AIR ATTACKS

12. During the heavy enemy air attacks on London which took place during September, October and November, 1940, the area in which the Sun Life Building is situated was repeatedly bombed, and while the building itself was not actually struck it suffered damage from the effect of bombs landing close by, and there were minor casualties to personnel. Judging from the C.M.H.Q. War Diaries which I have inspected, the most serious damage was caused by a bomb which fell in Pall Mall East, close to the North side of the building, about midnight on the night of 10-11 Oct. Windows and glass partitions were blown out; flying glass caused seven casualties to military personnel, none serious; the lower sub-basement was flooded by a broken water-main; and the elevators were out of service for a considerable time, as was also the heating system. (See D.Q.M.G. War Diary, C.M.H.Q., under 11 Oct., and the <sup>con</sup>solidated "Q" Branch Diary under 8 Nov.; also "G" Branch Diary for 11 Oct.). A couple of the enemy's incendiary bombs, I am told, have landed on the roof of the Sun Life Building but been extinguished without causing damage; no mark is now to be seen.

13. There have been other bomb-hits, more or less serious, in the close vicinity of the Sun Life Building. On the morning of 7 Nov. there was a hit on the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons on the north-east corner of the block, but fortunately the damage was limited. On the night of 14-15 Nov., the well-known furniture store, Hamptons Limited, in Pall Mall East between the National Gallery and Whitcomb Street, immediately across the street from the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Sun Life Building, was struck and burned out; the remains of this building have now been demolished. The Carlton Hotel, a short distance to the westward on the corner of the Haymarket, was struck the same night. (On these hits, see "Q" Diary, C.M.H.Q., under the appropriate dates.) In addition, the National Gallery appears to have been hit at least twice, apart from

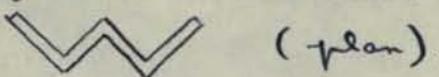
further damage to the wall in front of it; and there has been a bad hit on the Trafalgar Square Underground Station (in the close vicinity of the statue of King Charles I, south-east of Canada House), which is reported to have killed a large number of people.

14. A little further afield, there has been a certain amount of damage in Whitehall. The wing of the Horse Guards housing the Paymaster-General's Office has disappeared, and a neat sign announces that this office has "removed to Somerset House". A bomb has landed between the corner of Downing Street and the Cenotaph, without apparently doing much damage except to the roadway. At the Houses of Parliament, the chief visible damage is to St. Stephen's Porch, adjoining Westminster Hall; this appears to have suffered severely from fire. St. Margaret's Church, across the road, has had its windows blown out.

#### PRECAUTIONS AGAINST AIR ATTACK

15. The German attacks on London have necessitated the adoption at C.M.H.Q. of a careful system of Air Raid Precautions. During "alerts" spotters are stationed on the roof; an officer of the R.C.A.F. performs this duty in daytime, personnel of C.M.H.Q. are allotted to it at night. An electric alarm system enables these watchers to give notice to the occupants of Canada House, the Sun Life Building and Oceanic House of the close approach of enemy planes. Standing orders require all personnel of C.M.H.Q. to repair to the air-raid shelters on this warning being given. The maintenance of the roof-watch also ensures incendiary bombs being promptly dealt with; C.M.H.Q. personnel are allotted to this duty both day and night. Steps have been provided making it possible for the watchers on the Sun Life Building's roof to reach the roofs of all other buildings in the block for this purpose. During the period of heavy daylight raids, the danger of bombing interfered materially with the work of the staff of C.M.H.Q. However, in the time since my arrival here (26 Dec.) there have been

almost no daylight alerts and there has been no occasion for the staff to take shelter.

16. The threat of heavy bombing led the Senior Officer to take measures for increasing the security of the building. (See Diary of Supply and Transport Branch, C.M.H.Q., for Sept., 1940, and D.Q.M.G. Diary for Oct.). The front of the building, facing Cockspur Street, has now been carefully protected with brickwork reinforced by steel. A wall about 6 feet high covers the whole lower front, except at the entrance, where a protective canopy and screen of brickwork, steel and concrete (loopholed) shields the doorway from the effects of blast. In addition, the windows of the Sun Life and Royal Bank offices on the ground floor are covered by lofty brick shields built in the form of double right angles  (plan).

The whole effect is to give the building, as seen from Cockspur Street, something of the aspect of a medieval fortress.

17. Actual construction on the protective work began at the beginning of October, and was already well advanced when the building was damaged ten days later. The D.Q.M.G. War Diary records that at this time the brickwork in Pall Mall East (evidently a wall similar to that already described on the Cockspur Street side) was only "some 48 hours old" but that it resisted the blast. Additional measures were taken after this incident; the basements were strengthened and many windows bricked up; and the Pall Mall East entrance to the Sun Life Building, in front of which the bomb had fallen, was abandoned and blocked up. It can, however, be immediately re-opened and used in emergency.

18. A protected spotting post covered with corrugated iron and concrete, proof against shrapnel-fragments and splinters, has been constructed on the highest part of the Sun Life Building roof (a point which, incidentally, commands a fine view of this section of London). Inside the post are the buttons which actuate the alarms on the various floors of the Sun Life Building

and in Canada House and Oceanic House.

19. Official photographs taken by the Public Relations Officer's staff afford a more graphic representation both of the damage which the building sustained on the night of 10-11 Oct., and of the appearance of the building following the protective measures which I have described, than can be given in words. Incidentally, it may be noted that these pictures give a more accurate idea of the nature of the damage than can be gleaned from the brief references in the various C.M.H.Q. War Diaries--an interesting example of the historical value of photographs.

DEFENSIVE MEASURES IN  
THE REGION OF TRAFALGAR SQUARE  
AND WHITEHALL

20. The important section of London in which Canadian Military Headquarters is situated bears many marks of the threat under which England has lived since the German invasion of the Low Countries and the collapse of France (May-June 1940). Defensive precautions, directed particularly against the possibilities of attack by parachute troops or of "fifth-column" activities, are almost everywhere in evidence, in addition to measures for protection against bombing from the air. Almost directly opposite Canada House, the little passage known as Spring Gardens (leading to the Mall) has been obstructed by huge blocks of concrete supplemented by barbed-wire entanglements, leaving only a narrow thoroughfare for pedestrians. At the Admiralty Arch are further entanglements and obstacles watched by sentries; though traffic is allowed to circulate freely, this passage leading towards the Admiralty and St. James's and Buckingham Palaces could be speedily blocked in emergency. A light anti-aircraft gun is mounted on the Arch itself. The whole Whitehall region is similarly organized; brick or concrete pill-boxes or sandbagged posts have been constructed in positions giving good fields of fire; the War Office and other government offices have been protected by belts of barbed wire designed to prevent access to their lower windows, which are also covered by heavy wire screens; on the Victoria Embankment and

in other places trestles with barbed wire are in readiness to block the roadways; and sentries with fixed bayonets are on guard at many points.

21. At C.M.H.Q. itself a guard armed with revolvers is always on duty in the entrance-hall, but sufficient rifles to arm the military personnel are kept in the quartermaster's stores not far from the guard-room. The guard is found by No.6 Provost Company. Additional measures for protection were taken during the period when the "fifth-column scare" was at its height during the summer of 1940.

22. The Senior Officer, C.M.H.Q., has very kindly read this report in draft and made a number of corrections and emendations.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant

C.P.S.

(C.P. Stacey) Major,  
Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q.

DUPLICATE



The Director,  
Historical Section,  
General Staff,  
National Defence Headquarters,  
Ottawa, CANADA.

Addendum to Report No. 5  
(dated 17 Jan 41)

25 Mar 41

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1. The following addendum is presented for attachment to Report No. 5, dealing with Canadian Military Headquarters, London.
2. Constant changes in the allotment of accommodation are in progress as this Headquarters expands, and the tendency is for it to absorb more and more of the accommodation available in the Sun Life Building, as well as to acquire other office-space in buildings nearby. There is perhaps no object in rehearsing all these changes, but it may be mentioned that C.M.H.Q. has now taken over from the Sun Life Company the office formerly used by it in the front of the ground floor (see para. 7) and that this is to be occupied by the Public Relations Officer (formerly accommodated on the top floor of Canada House) and the Historical Officer.
3. With respect to para. 20 (Defensive Measures in the Region of Trafalgar Square and Whitehall) it may be added that the approach of spring has seen some of the sandbagged posts in this area replaced by works in concrete. Special efforts have in some cases been made in the way of camouflage. A pill-box at the corner of Downing Street and Whitehall has been designed to blend neatly with the wall of the Colonial Office against which it stands (this is an expedient very generally adopted); and a large sandbagged post at the angle of Parliament Street and Great George Street, commanding a field of fire towards Westminster Bridge and Whitehall, has been replaced by a concrete pill-box which by a remarkable piece of scene-painting has been made to appear as a W.H. Smith bookstall, complete with posters and stock-in-trade.

C.S.

(C.P. Stacey) Major,  
Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q.