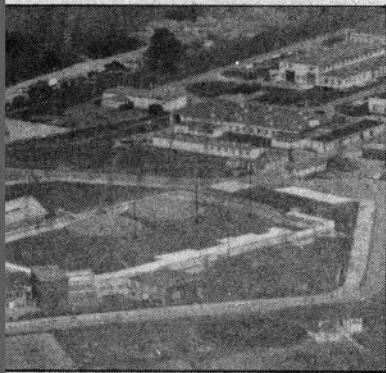


Duncan Campbell on 'revisionist geography' whereby maps are purged of awkward places

# The disappearing bomb factory

**WORRIED** government officials have begun an urgent investigation to track down television and other journalists whom they believe to have evidence of the continued existence of a nuclear weapons factory — a factory that officially doesn't exist. The centre at Burghfield, just south of Reading is in fact the home of Britain's expanding nuclear weapons programme. But, since 1980, its existence has been officially purged from maps (see right).

This secret revisionist attack on the geography of Britain has now been threatened by a number of flights by private aircraft over Burghfield in the last six months. There are very few 'prohibited airspace' zones and military training areas which light aircraft are ordered not to fly over. Anywhere else in the countryside, they can fly as low as 500 feet if it is safe to do so.

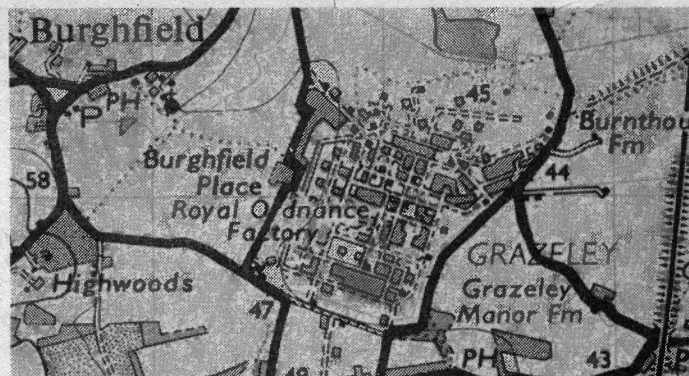


The nearby Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Research Establishment is protected by a ring of prohibited airspace. But, *à la* Thatcher's revisionist geography, you can't prohibit flying around an establishment that isn't there in the first place.

Reliable and well-informed gossip has it that, last autumn, a number of flights proved on film that the Burghfield Royal Ordnance Factory not only continues to exist, but has expanded as well. The film is thought to be part of a major documentary on the Bomb to be shown by Central Television later this year.

Investigator Gregory of the Civil Aviation Authority, which polices Britain's airspace, has this week been endeavouring to discover the whereabouts of the mystery film. He and the Ministry of Defence are aware that it is not just Burghfield that is at stake. Over the last few years, MoD establishments have been officially disappearing from maps at an increasing rate.

Since filming Burghfield is in fact perfectly legal (provided you aren't a Soviet spy, in which case you do it from space), the Ministry of Defence has invented some unusual circumstances to justify the investigation now being mounted. Staff at Burghfield have claimed that a helicopter which flew over the site in September, film camera slung out of its door, was well be-



In the 1973 (first edition), above top, of the 1:500,000 Ordnance Survey maps, the Burghfield Royal Ordnance Factory is clearly marked. In the 1980, Revised Second Edition, below, it has disappeared, to be replaced by two tasteful, and wholly non-existent streams flowing down to the Thames. In fact, Burghfield has expanded, and in particular the huge concrete caverns in which the bombs are finally assembled. The 1981 view (bottom left) shows the new nuclear weapons assembly building.

low the 500 feet legal limit. Moreover, it is said, the helicopter came within minutes of instant fiery death as Rapier anti-aircraft missiles were brought to bear on it from the ground.

In fact, there probably wasn't a Rapier missile to be found within 150 miles. No matter. Certainly, the Cruise Missile base at Greenham Common was only a short distance away. But using a Cruise

on a helicopter and its innocent Central TV film crew might just be a little too enthusiastic a manner of taking revenge for the new TV company's unpatriotic lack of moral fibre so blatantly displayed each week on OTT.

As a public service, the *New Statesman* herewith provides the full evidence of the continued existence of Burghfield and its nukes. □