

REPORT BY PUFFIN BOOKS ON PREPARATION OF THE TIME CAPSULE

The specially treated books

Most paperback books are printed on a kind of paper called 'mechanical newsprint', which is not unlike the paper used for newspapers. The chief advantage of this paper is that it is cheaper than most other papers, but it does have the disadvantage of deteriorating faster than the more expensive papers. This is because it has a high water content and is fairly acid (pH), which means that over a period of about 20 - 50 years, the paper will go brown and crumble.

The reason that paperback publishers use this paper is because paperback books are not expected to last very long. They get steamed in the bath, get taken on holiday, get coffee spilt on them, get thrown across the room in rage and so on. If paper is kept in ideal conditions, away from the light and in a dry place, it will last longer than it would normally, but we still couldn't guarantee that the books buried in the Time Capsule will last for the full hundred years, so we decided to try a couple of preservation methods in use now.

1) Lamination

Six books were treated in the same way. Their covers were removed carefully, and each page was washed with a special solution to reduce the acid content. Each page was then carefully laminated, using Lamatec Tissue, which was kindly donated by Ademco Ltd. Lamination is done by sandwiching the page between two layers of lamination tissue, and heat-sealing it. This means that, even if the paper crumbles, it will be held together by the tissue.

2) Xeroxing

Two books also had their covers removed carefully, but were treated in a different way. With these two, we photocopied each page carefully on to some very special paper called Archive Long-Life Text, supplied by P. F. Bingham Ltd. This paper is much heavier than mechanical newsprint, and has a very low water and acid content. It should last easily for the hundred years.

All eight books were then re-bound, and then shrink-wrapped in polythene before placing in the Capsule. As special preservation is quite a long process, we could not treat all the books, but the Untreated books were also shrink-wrapped before being put in the Capsule.

The Time Capsule

The Time Capsule is a box made of plastic coated board, covered and sealed with lead. Lead is an ideal metal to use as it does not rust at all.

The Chamber

The Chamber is six feet underground in a man-made mound. It measures 3'x3'x3', and is made of a double layer of engineering bricks. It is covered with a slab of marble. As it is above normal ground level, it should be very dry.