

# Summer Visit to Bawdsey

By Colin Smith G0LIN

Last August, on Bank Holiday Monday, I took up the open invitation from the Bawdsey Radar Group to visit them at the Transmitter Block, Bawdsey. Bawdsey was the site of the first Chain Home Radar Station - the Chain Home network gave vital support to the RAF during WWII. Bawdsey is situated on the northern bank of the Deben River Estuary in Suffolk.

Living in Felixstowe, which is on the opposite bank of the Deben River, I had often seen the structures and ground works through the boundary fence, so the chance to see inside was too good to miss. Admission is £2.50, noon to 1600 (Open Sundays to October end).

The most direct route from home to the Transmitter Block involves using the little passenger foot-ferry across the Deben. Then there is about one mile to walk from the ferry on the other side so I decided not to walk but to drive all the way round going via Woodbridge - a 25 mile drive

I keyed-in IP12 3AX (Bawdsey Quay Postcode) and my Satnav calculated a journey of 3.5 miles - wrong - this route required an amphibious vehicle as the nearest permanent river crossing is at Woodbridge.

Approaching the site along the B1083, banners proclaim the entrance to the car park for the Transmitter Block - albeit through a 'No Entry' sign.



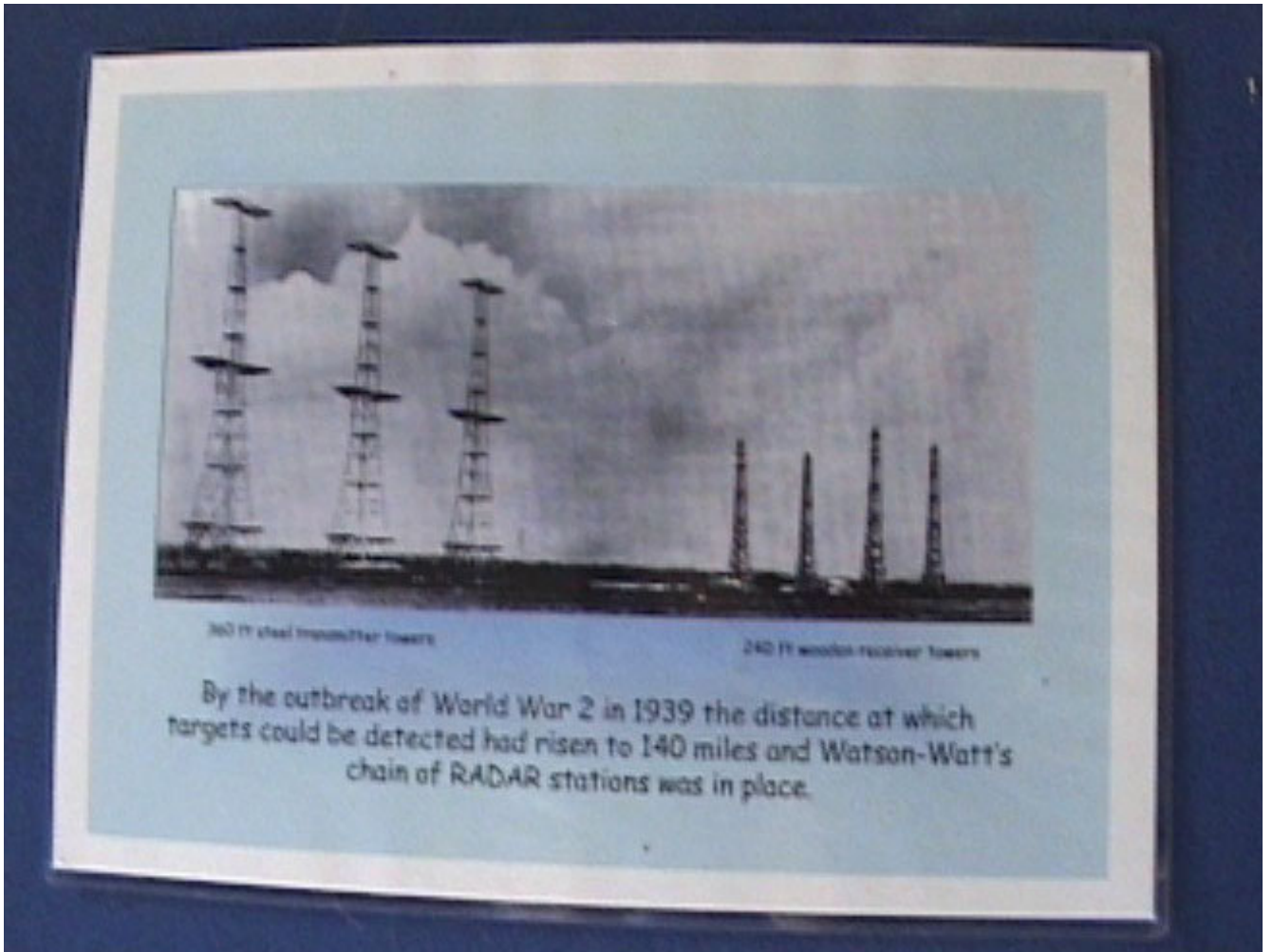
The Transmitter Block is an earth covered concrete/brick building with blast-proof entrances. None of the original radar masts remain but there are two mast bases visible near the car park and a small mast labelled "Remote Radio Mast" beside the Block possibly occupying a third mast base.



**Bawdsey 2007 (Above and right)**



## Bawdsey 1939 (below)



Inside there is a large room with many large, well prepared wall boards detailing every step in the development of Radar - there is a lot of reading but the boards also contain lots of pictures to aid the explanations.

There are two audio-visual units - an early short training film on how to read the radar signals received and a much longer film.

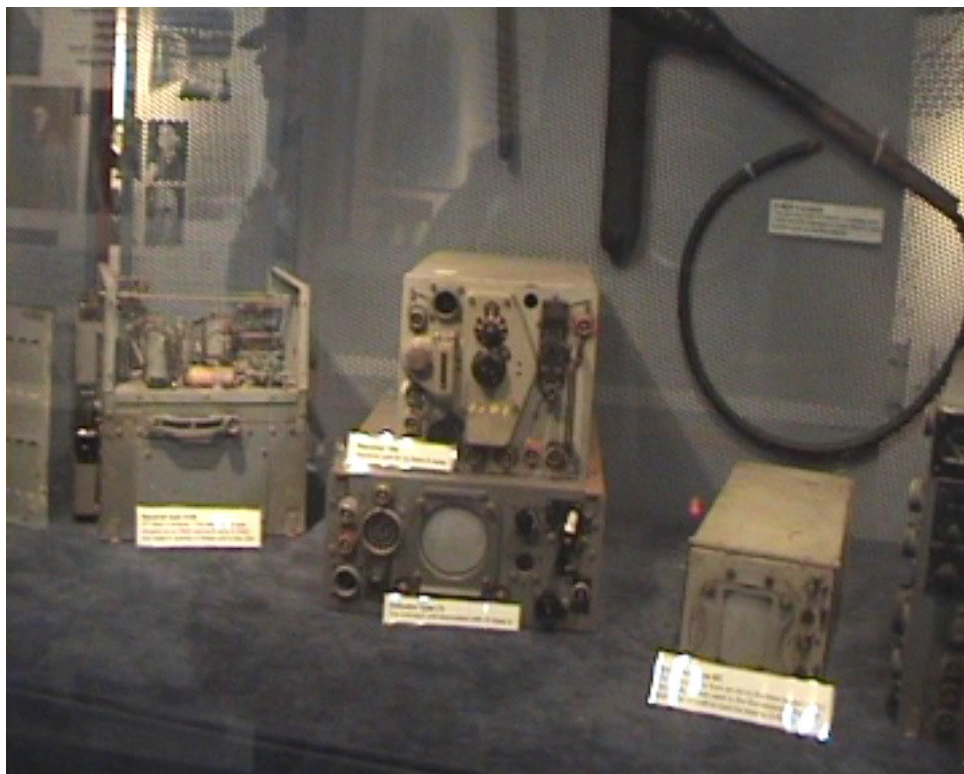


A short passageway between the rusting air conditioning plant on one side and a small room (with a computer - for playing the DVD) and latrine on the other side. The passage leads into a room full of old equipment. Dominating the space is the original massive power switching unit - now sadly heavily rusted.



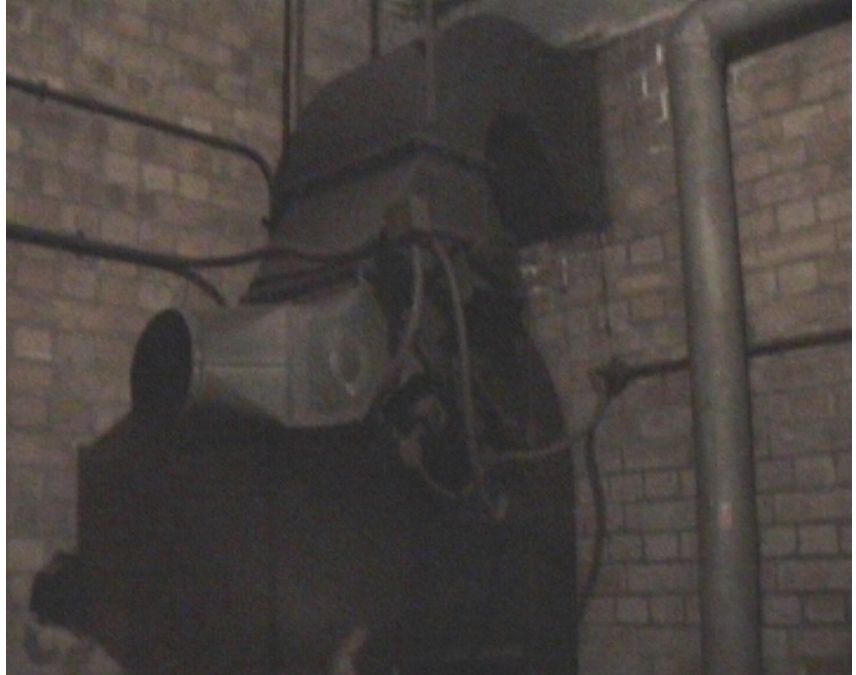
Laying about are various receivers, transmitters, 'scopes and devices that I have no knowledge of. Most are identified with a suggested probable use.

A small pile of kit apparently defy identification as a request for help is attached.





The general condition of the building interior is pretty much as it was left - the preservation group are not permitted to clean or paint the surfaces as it is Grade 2 listed. Apparently just getting permission to bring the toilet into working condition was a minor miracle. Worth a visit to soak up the historic past and to support the preservation group (Further up the main road is the busy Bawdsey Quay).



Bawdsey Manor (the big House) was not open to the public. It is usually in private use but is open infrequently for viewing by previous appointment - you must apply for a timed visit in advance.

73

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Want to help?

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