

Bawdsey Radar Group Oral History Project

Shout and Whisper

Report for the BRG AGM, 10th November 2007

The oral history project, called 'Shout and Whisper' and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, began in July 2005 with the principal aim of recording the memories of people who were involved with radar at Bawdsey. This aim has broadened in several ways.

The people interviewed were not all directly involved with radar; some were support staff to the RAF – hairdressers, cooks, security staff, maids etc. Not all were war-time, almost 60% were at Bawdsey before or during the war, the rest were at Bawdsey between 1946 and March 1991 when the site formally closed. A small number were not at Bawdsey but had relevant (usually wartime) experiences with early radar. In all we have now interviewed 51 people, about 30% of whom are female. 50 of these interviews have been stored on CD and DVD and archived. A complete set occupies 15 disks and we have produced 6 sets so far. Three of these sets have been lodged with Essex Record Office, Suffolk Record Office and 'War-Experience' in Leeds.

The scope of the project broadened in other ways. Some 11 of the interviewees were recorded on video and the intention is to make a short 'talking heads' DVD. Also short written extracts from the interviews will be put into a booklet or pamphlet with extracts from the text of the Magic Ear exhibition to give them context. The booklet is due to be completed by the end of November.

A further expansion of the project was the major overhaul of the BRG web-site to include 50 extracts of the interviews, some 2 dozen photographs and several pieces of text provided by the interviewees. The first part of this expansion has been completed and the second part - the last 6 or 7 interviews - will be added at the end of November. This makes parts of the project available to everyone on the internet rather than being available only to those people who can access the Suffolk and Essex Record Offices and War Experience in Leeds.

The final part of the project is to produce a 'schools educational pack'. The function of this is to use some parts of the material collected to give primary school children information about a particularly important time in our country's history at the start of the Second World War, and an outline understanding of radar. This is being produced by a person who has experience in producing educational material for primary school children. We hope to complete the first version of this by the end of the year and trial it soon afterwards.

David Heath, 7th November 2007