

The US Navy base, next to RAF Brawdy in Pembrokeshire, was officially an "Oceanographic Research Station", though it has long been known that it was a processing centre for a network of underwater microphones, some of which were submerged off the British coast, listening to submarine movements in the Atlantic.



S.O.S.U.S., or Project Caesar was begun in 1954 and comprised of several bases designed to track Soviet submarine movements via their propeller sounds. Brawdy was its biggest station, opening in 1973 and closing in 1995, when its function was transferred to another UK site, either St. Mawgan (Cornwall) or a Corsham (Wiltshire) site. The 7.6 acre NAVFAC (Naval Facility) has since been turned into the Brawdy Business Park, with office and workshop space being rented out in the former admin blocks of the base. The 58,000 sq foot 'Terminal Building', built to minimise static throughout, was still in the condition it was left in by the US Navy when visited in the summer of 2001.

This was a major intelligence facility with 22 US Navy Officers, 278 other ranks and 7 civilians working there in 1980. Its budget was \$20m between 1978-1984, 80% of which was spent on electronics or computer equipment. \$3.6m was spent on doubling the size of the operations block in 1981.

Some have suggested the hydrophones it used were located in St. Brides bay (the large semi-circular bay on which Brawdy is located), others suggest (and a look at a map appears to agree) that on their own, hydrophones in St Brides bay would have a limited 'field of view' (due to Ireland blocking off most of the north Atlantic) and that Brawdy was the landing site of a much larger network that stretched hundreds, if

not thousands of miles out into the Atlantic, covering the areas through which all Atlantic Soviet submarines would pass on their way towards the US coast.

Little is known for certain about the base, though details of its role may have partially been revealed in 1993 when a whale researcher obtained recordings of whale song from the base, he was told that once, US Navy technicians were able to track an individual whale for 40 days by which time it had reached Bermuda - rather impressive technology.

The US area is sited next to the Brawdy airfield which was originally a WWII RNAS station, then an RAF base and since January 1996 an Army camp: Cawdor Barracks. The 14th Signal Regiment (Electronic Warfare) are housed there, though it would appear to just be coincidence that a regiment who would benefit from Elint facilities have occupied the site. A letter on behalf of the Commanding Officer of the Regiment states "we do not utilise anything that may have been left by the US Navy and I doubt very much that they left anything anyway". The Navfac was included under the RAF station bye-laws, despite being geographically separate. Although only several hundred metres from the British base, relations were not always that good: The fire alarm system of the Navfac was linked to that of RAF Brawdy, it is reported that on at least one occasion when the British fire control team raced round to help the Americans they were told at gunpoint, that they did not have permission to enter, and that the US personnel would deal with it themselves.

The base is discussed in some depth in a UFO book by Peter Paget - 'The Welsh Triangle', and seemed to have an unusually great suspicion of vast underground areas attached to it. These appear to be complete myth with no underground areas or protected accommodation to be found.

The site was subject to several anti-nuclear protest actions, the biggest of which being a march by 'Women for Life on Earth' (who formed the nucleus of the Greenham Women) from Cardiff in 1982.

The Terminal Building (now St. Davids House)

After entering through the heavy metal external doors, you enter an inspection 'air lock' with a full length window, a smaller one and pass hatch from the Guard Room on the right. Going through another set of doors takes you to a corridor with an entrance to the Main Ops Room straight ahead.

Turning to the left takes you to a suite of four carpeted offices and an air conditioning plant room. To the right is the entrance to the Guard Room, the external window of which contains bullet proof glass which has been 'tested' with at least half a dozen rounds. To prevent guards being 'jumped' on moving from their room into the interior corridor of the building, a mirror was placed opposite the spy hole, to reveal anyone standing next to the door.

The Guard Room doubles as the telephone exchange, the last of which was a BT Monarch system with SE440 exchange. The system held 5 private wires on US Navy cables, an extension to the home of

Captains Residence as well as links to 'QBWU US Navy Cunningham Site'.

Continuing to the right of the guard room are toilets and a wood-panneled recreation room with US standard 120v sockets. The corridors and main spaces are all panelled with plastic-backed perforated metal squares - possibly for sound damping, or an attempt to make the building TEMPEST-proof (against electro-magnetic snooping). Further along, this corridor takes you to a storage area/plant room which originally had a doorway to the now gutted and exposed main plant room. The room housed a water fountain and a standard Royal Mail red pillar box (not its original home) and gave access to a further set of toilets.

Another doorway leads you into a side room of the main operations room, which itself gives access to two further rooms with four-fifth height partition walls of the same panelling material. To the right of these is a void containing switch gear which marks the joint of the single story and double story sections of the building. This is approx 1m wide and uses the same corrugated cladding found on the exterior, possibly having formed part of it until the expansion of the early 1980's. Further to the right there is a room with RF filters placed on the phone lines entering it. This gives access to another room towards the rear of the building, this one being the first mentioned without wall shielding. An adjacent area holds a large amount of air conditioning plant, including two large Spencer Tubular Bag Separators.

To the left of this, moving along the back (southern) face of the building takes you through a pair of heavy security/fire doors, locked with a 'Cipher Lock' requiring a code for entry. Further along are a set of lockable store rooms and a generator room, separated from the main Ops space by two sets of doors. Moving to the left end of the main Operations space takes you through to a hanger like hall, presumably for equipment servicing. This has it's own roller door entrance on the front on the building. Further along again, are a set of storage areas/workshops.

Returning to the main floor-space of the building, the Ops room contains a controllers platform near its left hand (eastern) end. On the wall next to this is a frame capable of holding a set of sliding boards.

Many of the fittings of the building, not removed by the USN had been sold off over the years, but a few less re-usable pieces remained, including equipment cabinets with lifting perspex inspection covers and several desks and cupboards. Most of the lower floor is built above 2ft deep cable space, with a similar space above the ceiling.

The only set of internal stairs lead up from the next to the room housing the post box. A board at the top of these tells you of the rooms of the '2nd Deck': a training suite with several class rooms, security offices (a sticker on the door reads "Marine Corps Security Force, 13th Atlantic" and has "Bye!" scribbled on it), a First Class lounge containing a small kitchen, a Royal Navy & RAF liaison office and various offices for data processors. These are arranged around an 'L' shaped corridor which emerges on to a spiral staircase which leads from the ground, up to the roof. The guard turret on the roof is equipped with a telephone and a single swivel-chair.

Exterior

A large plant room, possibly for heating boilers was located on the NW corner of the building, though this has been totally gutted.

On the south (back) side of the Terminal Building there is a sunken water tank (Room 36), several foot deep with no obvious purpose. A platform gives access to near the water level and a ladder leads into the tank. The room cannot be accessed from the main building area, though part of the structure, and is protected by a secure door with access phone and magnetic locks. This could possibly be for 'soak testing' submarine equipment, though could also be associated with building services in some way.

A duct containing two water pipes runs into small semi-sunk building still labelled 'PSA Plant Room' in the SE of the site, seemingly the only pre-70's building in the US area.

Photographs by Joseph Rabaiotti

Updated 10/4/02



Larger view of the whole site



From the opposite hill, to the north of the site



The entrance gate



Looking back out with the admin block on the left and vehicle store on the right



The Terminal Building entrance



Bullet marks on the Guard Room window



The same from the inside, looking out



Three sets of doors separate the outside from the Ops room



The guard room inspection window



The main Ops Room, looking from the right hand end



From the main entrance



Looking ahead/right



Operations Room



Secondary Ops space



Controllers platform



Operations board frame



Phone exchange indicator lights



Air conditioning plant



Workshop space



Void joining two sections of building



Switch gear



Switch gear



Switch gear



Sunken tank room



Gutted plant room



Gutted plant room



2nd deck directory



From the roof



From the roof



Guard turret



From the roof, overlooking the
base car park



The Generator House



The Generator House



Back of Terminal Building



West side of building with guard
turret



Water pump house



Admin block



Site formerly held an anchor





















































2ND DECK
DIRECTORY

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 201 TRNG SUP | 208 RN/RAF LO OFF |
| 202 FIRST CLS LOUNGE | 209 3 M |
| 203 CLSRM | 211 QA/SPC OFFICER |
| 204 CLSRM | 213 TQL OFFICE |
| 05 SEC OFF | 215 ASF RM |
| 206 CLSRM | 217 STATISTICAL PROCESS |
| 207 SEC OFFR | CONTROL |





















