



KLAXON

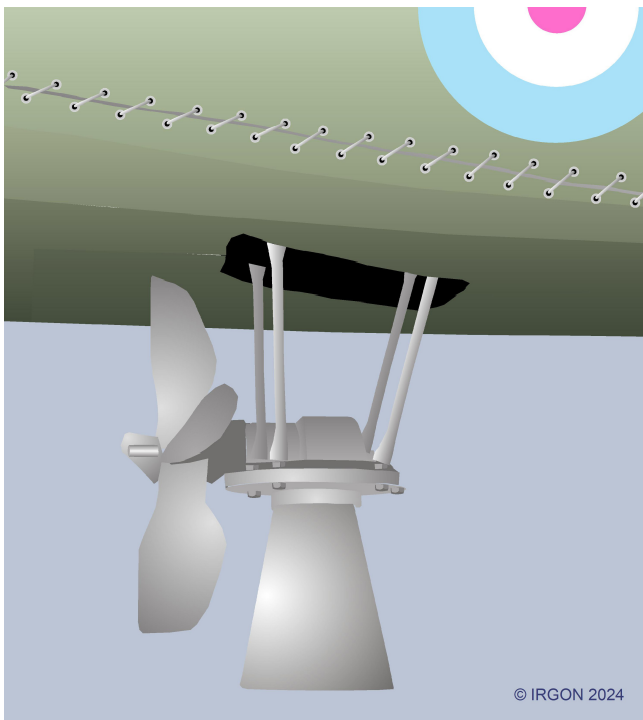
February 2024

Newsletter of the Independent Research Group Orford Ness

This second edition of the IRGON newsletter provides a mere hint of the breadth of activities carried out on Orford Ness during more than five decades of service to the UK armed forces. IRGON researchers each specialise in areas that we find particularly interesting, but much of the now-declassified history is still waiting for someone to explore and publish. Why not join us and be the first to discover top secret projects that made this world what it is today!

Olaf Kirchner, Chairman

Why Klaxon? – A klaxon is an alerting device, which makes it a very good name for our newsletter, but there is an even stronger connection to Orford Ness. During World War 1 klaxon horns were used to communicate between the pilot and the observer in flight, and between the aircraft and the ground. Considerable research was undertaken at both Orford Ness and Butley to establish the most appropriate klaxon, e.g. steam whistle, organ pipes or electric horns, and the most suitable communication codes.



An air-driven klaxon mounted on a WW1 aircraft

With the advent of radio communication klaxons were no longer used in aircraft, but they were still used on the Ness to warn of bomb ballistic experiments. So the title of our newsletter not only remembers a forgotten, but extensive research programme, it also commemorates later research.

World War 1 Research at Orford Ness -

Our understanding of research undertaken on Orford Ness during World War 1 has been informed by the books of Paddy Heazell and Gordon Kinsey, or articles on leading researchers such as George McKerrow.

Recently we have identified the National Archive files containing reports of most studies carried out by the Armament Experimental Station from June 1916 to April 1919. More than 600 reports have been collected, with at least a further 100 still to be located. These have now been photographed and transferred to a database which will be available on our website. Each report is identified by date and author and, where possible a short description is included. This provides a rich picture of the breadth, depth and frenetic pace at which research was undertaken and reported.

Future work will improve our understanding how the Station was tasked, and by whom, and how it was exploited. We intend to also explore connections between work undertaken during World War 1 and that during the interwar years and World War 2.

Lifeboat Drop Trials in 1952 - Ballistics tests on Orford Ness not only featured hundreds of bombs of various types, but also ... lifeboats! Providing a greater chance of survival than the ubiquitous rubber dinghy, wooden air-dropped lifeboats saved many a crewmember of ditched aircraft in World War 2. The improved aluminium Mark III lifeboat was designed by Saunders Roe in Anglesey after the war. Between November 1951 and April 1952, specially modified Avro Shackleton MR 1A WB835 was based at Martlesham Heath and carried out air-dropping trials with this lifeboat off the coast of Orford Ness. A full article is in preparation for publication on the IRGON website soon!

Nuclear explosion detection from Orford Ness – A new article has been released on our website, “Nuclear Detection: phase 1”. We explain the story behind early efforts to detect nuclear explosions from Orford Ness, culminating in the successful detection of the first French atomic tests in the Sahara.



Further information on COBRA MIST – Since the last Klaxon edition, IRGON has published a new introductory article to the Anglo-US over-the-horizon radar system COBRA MIST. We continue our research on this subject, and have uncovered details of an elaborate scheme for calibrating this enormous radar. Ground stations were built in Turkey and Norway under the code name COBRA KEY. An article is in preparation on this subject.

Publicity Leaflet – Look out for the new IRGON leaflet helping to raise awareness with the public of the work that IRGON is doing.

X - formerly Twitter - IRGON has now resumed posting on X. You can follow us and receive updates by searching @IRGONON2021

National Trust Collaboration – Most of Orford Ness is managed by the NT. IRGON is sharing its research and discoveries with the National Trust, so together we can help more people discover and understand what an important role Orfordness played in our national military history.

Want to know more or join us? – If you have an interest in military history, if you have a personal or family connection to the work carried out on Orford Ness or access to information that may help us further document this history, you will find our contact details on www.IRGON.org.

Thank you!

Website – Our updated website now has new articles, visit us to find the most up-to-date information and discoveries made by IRGON.



www.IRGON.org