



An entertaining guide to using
Internet-based research tools
OS maps, aerial photos, Google Earth
to reveal the UK's "hidden"
MoD facilities and military sites
Featuring covert spy bases,
underground bunkers and more

The website that caused
Media Hysteria
but with a Twist in the Tale

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2nd December 2018

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"Secret Base" locations revealed – Part 5 of 5

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Bing Maps (OS 1:50K) ▼

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RESEARCH TOOLS

The 1999 "GCHQ / BT / BNFL Capenhurst" story

 [Permalink](#)

In Summer 1999, [Duncan Campbell](#) helped to break to an astonished world an original investigation by Richard Lamont which revealed that GCHQ had hidden top secret telephone intercept equipment within a curious tower on the site of British Nuclear Fuels Limited's (BNFL) uranium enrichment plant at [Capenhurst](#), Cheshire. The tower (pictured below), which looked like a cross between an industrial chimney and a children's helter-skelter

without the slide, was over 150ft tall and was built in the late 1980s. The Capenhurst Tower was installed by GCHQ to scoop up all telecommunications between the UK and the Irish Republic from 1989 until 1998. The microwave beam from the BT cable under the Irish Sea, originated at BT's microwave towers at [BT](#) Holyhead on the Isle of Anglesey.

MORE

It continued through the BT towers at Gwaenysgor near Prestatyn in North Wales, Pale Heights near Kelsall in Cheshire on the edge of Delamere Forest and at Sutton Common near

GCHQ Irtton Moor, Scarborough / Project Omega and GCHQ Bude[!\[\]\(cbe2492b119e39e02a1dab2af4a4b296_img.jpg\) Permalink](#)**Updated November 2018****New Google Earth imagery reveals major expansion at GCHQ Scarborough**

Another very important spy centre can be found at the unassuming location of [BT](#) Irtton Moor, near the quaint seaside town of Scarborough. Back bench MPs in successive governments have failed gloriously in trying to find out precisely what goes on at this base, which MI5/6 operatives refer to as simply "Scarborough".

The [BT](#) 1:25000 OS map gives the full detail and labels it with the rather romantic title "Wireless Station". It dates back to the very early pre-WWII days of GCHQ, when that was known as the Government Codes and Ciphers School (GC&CS). Irtton Moor is sometimes referred to as a Composite Signals Organisation (CSO) station.

Irtton Moor spy base opened in 1943 on the site of the old Scarborough Racecourse. It replaced an earlier naval wireless station at nearby [BT](#) Sandybed Lane in Falsgrove, which is where St. Augustine's Roman Catholic School is now sited. In 1941, the Sandybed station intercepted secret signals between the German battleship The Bismarck and its HQ in Berlin. This enabled its position to be calculated and British forces

then attacked. Prime Minister Winston Churchill sent a personal message of thanks to the Sandybed staff for their efforts that contributed so greatly towards sinking The Bismarck.


In the 1980s and 1990s, GCHQ Irton Moor was upgraded significantly and the Bird's Eye view below reveals a new hardened underground bunker on the base's north east side.

On Google Street View imagery from 2011, you can spot a **military mobile microwave communications van** parked outside the main gate. This is a Mercedes Benz van with a microwave dish attachment and telescope mounting pole on view. But you can't see what's hidden behind those rear doors. It is likely to be based at a Royal Signals Establishment and was no doubt at Scarborough being kitted out with equipment for test and/or deployment.

During 2016, the GCHQ Scarborough site is being significantly expanded under Project Omega. This involves provision of a new visitor reception centre, vehicle inspection bay, delivered goods store, guardhouse kiosk, vehicle entrance and exit points, and parking facilities.

The purpose of the scheme is to provide modern and secure facilities for receiving visitors to the site, consolidated in one location to the south of the existing main buildings. The scheme incorporates the visitor reception building with meeting rooms and office space, plus internal traffic management and parking facilities for staff and visitors. All documents for the **planning application** can be downloaded (63Mb ZIP) from Cryptome.

Before leaving the bracing Scarborough seaside air behind, take a look at some "farmers' fields" a few miles to the south of the Irton Moor spy base. Click on the OS 1:50000 scale map of the location (pictured below) to zoom into the fields. Click again to try the more detailed 1:25000 map and keep on clicking to check out the aerial photos.

What emerges from those fields turns out to be  RAF Staxton Wold, claimed to be the oldest radar facility in the world. Today, it still forms a

key part of the UK's airspace defence network. If you want an even closer look, the main gate to the radar site sits right on the path of the famous Yorkshire Wolds Way walking route.

Another old UK airspace defence radar site hiding in farmers' fields can be spotted in Norfolk at [RAF Neatishead](#), near the popular Norfolk Broads town of Wroxham.



Bird's Eye view looking east over GCHQ Irton Moor, Scarborough revealing hardened underground bunker (top left)

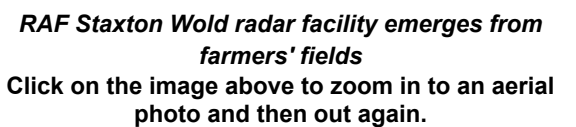
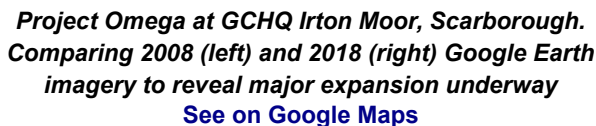
Aerial photo data:

www.bing.com/maps © Microsoft Bing Maps

www.blomasa.com © Blom ASA



A Mercedes-Benz mobile military microwave communications van parked outside the main gate at GCHQ Irton Moor, Scarborough
[See on Google Street View](#)



<https://www.secret-bases.co.uk/secret5.htm?permalink=scarborough#scarborough>

Aerial photo data:
www.getmapping.com © Getmapping plc

Still in the North East of England, most people in the area will be familiar with the helicopter search and rescue (SAR) base at [RAF Boulmer](#) near the historic town of Alnwick in Northumberland.

However, take a step back, consult the 1:25000 map (pictured below) and consider the little village of Lesbury just south west of the helicopter SAR base. On the northern outskirts of the village, you'll stumble upon yet another of those high security [SIGINT](#) enclaves that you'll now be an expert in spotting.

The Lesbury site houses one of the United Kingdom's Air Surveillance and Control System (ASACS) Centres and also the RAF's School of Fighter Control. An additional Remote Radar Head (RRH) is located high up on Alnwick Moor at [Brizlee Wood](#) (also pictured below).

If you travel north on the trains along the east coast main line between London King's Cross and Edinburgh, the big white radome at the centre of the Lesbury SIGINT site can be spotted high up on the hill over to the right, as you pass through Alnmouth Station.

But the Boulmer ASACS facility also has two remote outposts nearby that are much harder to spot from the train windows. They are the UHF/VHF [transmitter](#) and [receiver](#) stations at High Buston near Shilbottle, to enable Boulmer controllers to communicate with intercept aircraft from within their bunker underneath the Lesbury countryside. Look a little to the north of the Boulmer UHF/VHF transmitter station and you'll see a hill called Spy Law.

Further north on the same train journey, look out to the right again for another radome alongside the train tracks – this time at the "disused airfield" at [Brunton](#). This signals unit liaises with the Electronic Counter Measures and Warfare Tactics Test Range at RAF Spadeadam.

A similar Remote Radar Head also performing an ASACS role can be found at [RAF Trimingham](#) at Beacon Hill near Cromer on the Norfolk coast (pictured below in one of my exclusive Pilot's Eye Views). It is a very old radar station originally dating back to 1941 and is now connected into the air defence network between Boulmer and Neatishead.



**Map and aerial view of RAF Boulmer's ASACS
SIGINT enclave and Remote Radar Head (RRH) at
Brizlee Wood**

Map image generated from the [Get-a-map](#) service
with permission of [Ordnance Survey](#)

Aerial photo data:
www.getmapping.com © Getmapping plc



*Pilot's Eye view: Looking south west over RAF
Trimingham's Remote Radar Head*
[Click for more Pilot's Eye Views of Secret Bases](#)



*Pilot's Eye view: Looking north west over GCHQ
Bude (formerly CSOS Morwenstow)*
Click on the image above to view the full high
resolution version
[Click for more Pilot's Eye Views of Secret Bases](#)



GCHQ Bude's new Torus SATCOM antenna (centre)
[Copyright © Kieran Doherty / Reuters](#)



GCHQ Bude's new Torus SATCOM antenna site next to the main gate



GCHQ Bude's new Torus SATCOM antenna at the south east corner

**Aerial photo data:
www.terraserver.com**

Following on from Irton Moor, the Composite Signals Organisation (CSO) has two other important outposts. One is on the rugged coastline of Cornwall, just south of [\[link\]](#) Morwenstow at Lower Sharpnose Point near Bude. This "Wireless Station" provides extra intercept capability for GCHQ. Go to Multimap's site to view the [aerial photo](#) of GCHQ/CSO Morwenstow. In more recent years, the intercept station has been renamed **GCHQ Bude** and a new **Torus SATCOM** [PDF, 5.7MB] (satellite communications) antenna has been built at the south east corner, next to the main security gate.

The other CSO site is deep inside English cider country, south of Taunton, Somerset, at the tiny hamlet of [\[link\]](#) Culmhead near Churchstanton and has been apparently closed down. Again, this "Wireless Station" has provided additional intercept capacity for GCHQ. Go to Multimap's site to view the [aerial photo](#) of GCHQ/CSO Culmhead. Most of the aerial mast assemblies at Culmhead have now been removed but it is

believed that a few *remotely controlled* listening antennae remain. The address search facility on the Royal Mail website discreetly lists the secret base as simply "Cipher House, Culmhead, Taunton".

Cipher House and other buildings in the centre of the Culmhead SIGINT site have now been converted into the Culmhead Business Centre. One company operating from there is an inkjet printer cartridge supplier. All the CSO sites at Irton Moor, Morwenstow and Culmhead have been inextricably entwined with the US Government's NSA.

Before leaving that scenery in the South West of England, consider the airbase at [RAF St. Mawgan](#) near Newquay in Cornwall. This base is under threat of closure due to defence budget reviews which would also impact on Newquay's civilian airport next door, which relies on the military presence for fire cover and air traffic control.

RAF St. Mawgan has a major Cold War secret hidden underground in a huge bunker network, partially camouflaged by the airbase's secondary runway routes. The OS 1:50000 map of the area (pictured further below) shows nothing of particular significance but the 1:25000 series map shows some mysteriously empty fields. The [1:10000](#) map, courtesy of the Government's MAGIC service, reveals the true detail including what appears to be a blast door entrance to a bunker.

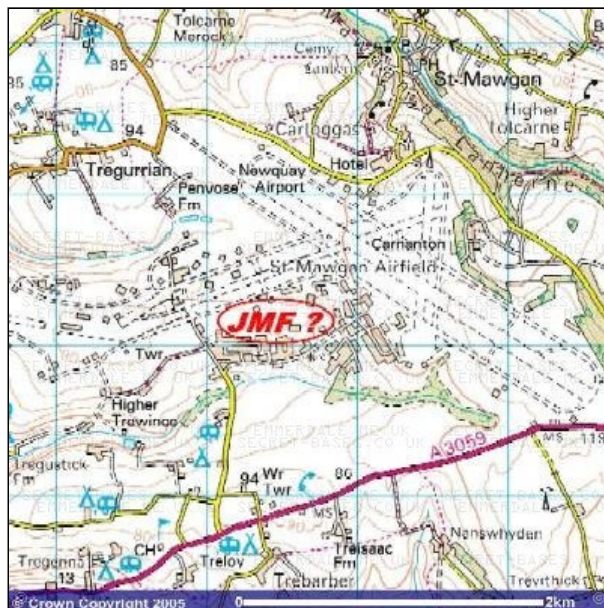
Further research reveals an interesting entry under RAF St. Mawgan's post code of "TR8 4HP" – an address simply listed as "JMF". The modern aerial photos corresponding to that address entry, seem to confirm the position of the bunker blast door entrance.

Click on the map image below to zoom into the highlighted area and you'll be presented with RAF St. Mawgan's Joint Maritime Facility (JMF) – a huge underground US/UK Navy "listening" bunker, which has been responsible for tracking submarines and surface ships out in the North Atlantic ocean. The JMF is sometimes also referred to as the Terminal Exchange Building (TEB).

Another interesting address entry for that post code is ["US Navy Weapons Facility"](#), whose position is marked at the base's high security entrance on the south side of the runways.

Another Cold War [US Naval Facility](#), similar to RAF St. Mawgan's JMF, tracking Atlantic ship and submarine movements, was until 1995 based on the Pembrokeshire heritage coastline in South Wales next to [RAF/RNAS Brawdy](#). That old Royal Navy Air Station (RNAS) at Brawdy is now described on OS maps as a "disused airfield". It is no surprise therefore that the base still has significant military presence, now in the form of the Army's Electronic Warfare Unit – No. 14 Signals Regiment at Cawdor Barracks.

Since the US Navy's departure from the tracking station at Brawdy, their site has been turned into the Brawdy Business Park. The site's buildings have been rented out to various small businesses. The US Navy's large high security Terminal Building (allegedly fitted with "electromagnetic eavesdropping" counter measures) has apparently been cleared of all its technical equipment and has been renamed St. Davids House – earmarked for future development.



RAF St. Mawgan's Joint Maritime Facility (JMF)
underground bunker

Click on the image above to zoom in to an aerial photo and then out again!

Map images generated from the [Get-a-map](#) service with permission of [Ordnance Survey](#)

Aerial photo data:
www.getmapping.com © Getmapping plc




***Pilot's Eye view: Looking north west over Cawdor
Barracks at RAF Brawdy***
[Click for more Pilot's Eye Views of Secret Bases](#)

Cold War nuclear command bunkers get a new lease of life

 **Permalink**



An old MoD bunker from the Cold War era in rural Kent was disposed of following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The specially protected rooms deep beneath the old radar station at  RAF Ash – actually in the adjacent village of Marshborough near Sandwich – were purchased by the mysterious AL Digital Telecoms company.

The "AL" turned out to be Adam Laurie, the entrepreneur behind the development (with brother Ben, the original writer) of Apache SSL – one of the world's most famous Internet server systems. It utilises the Secure Sockets Layer technology used for web-based financial transactions.

Adam and Ben Laurie have transformed their telecoms company into The Bunker™, which provides a secure data centre underground. The RAF Ash facility is utilised to keep their clients' sensitive data safe from natural disaster and also terrorism threats such as TEMPEST and Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) attack, as described in one of my **[UK Secrets series](#)** of

articles for Eye Spy Magazine. Clients are likely to include airlines, banks and government departments in many countries worldwide, not just the UK.

MORE

It is strategically located on the crossroads of the main Internet fibre routes leaving the UK for Europe, Asia and the USA. The corporate brochure warns that while London is the second

Virgin on the ridiculous!

With everyone in the UK desperate to get a fast broadband internet connection, Virgin Media have gone to extraordinary lengths to install their switching gear in more and more bizarre locations. In particular, consider the south west cities of Bath and Bristol.

You can find communications equipment lurking in old churches and mission halls. Have a look at the abandoned congregational chapel at Bloomfield Road / Frome Road in Odd Down, Bath across from the still active Rush Hill United Reformed Church. Before the communications plant was installed, the chapel had been used as a furniture depository.

MORE

Then check out the old mission hall next to the Page Institute on Soundwell Road in Staple Hill, Bristol. Also in Staple Hill, very close to the mission hall, a more expected location is the



Virgin Media in the old public toilets at the main lodge entrance to Southern Cemetery, Manchester
[Google Street View](#)

Secret Data Centres

including GCHQ's Tempora and NSA's PRISM projects



Perhaps with greater significance in our everyday lives, underground bunkers are also used by huge banking corporations to store backups of customer records and daily financial transactions. One magnificent example can be found between Sheffield and Barnsley in the former mining community of Tankersley. Take a look at HSBC's (formerly Midland Bank) [South Yorkshire National/Group Data Centre \(SYNDC/SYGDC\)](#) within Tankersley's Wentworth Business Park.

The secure ring-fenced hardened computer centre – completed back in 1981 at a cost of £40 million – is mostly hidden underground with just the surface entrances showing. The numerous ventilation funnels surrounding the site have led the locals to nickname it "Teletubbyland", as they resemble the voice trumpets on the children's TV show. It can be seen on Google Earth at high resolution but even better, it is available on Windows Live Local as a superb Bird's Eye view (shown further below). Still in Yorkshire, another example can be found built into a hillside between Halifax and Sowerby Bridge. It is known as the Halifax Bank of Scotland's (HBOS) [Copley Data Centre](#).

MORE

Take a look near junction 31 of the M62 at Normanton near Wakefield. There's plenty going on around the north side of the village of Ackton. One site at Loscoe Lane roundabout off Havertop

BBC TV Horizon experiments: sensory deprivation bunker

Just in case you were wondering where those bizarre psychological experiments were carried out on **BBC TV's Horizon documentary "Total Isolation"** in January 2008, here's the answer.

It was all filmed back in Summer 2007 deep underground within the old decommissioned [RAF Bentley Priory bunker](#) to the east of the main mansion, at Stanmore Common,

Middlesex near London.



MORE



New Typhoon Eurofighter weapons arming compound

 [Permalink](#)

In late 2007, many excited readers and forum message board members contacted me convinced that they'd discovered a previously uncharted Cold War nuclear bunker also in Lincolnshire (previous section above). After some routine research I came up with even more interesting findings.

Discussions had centred on a very high security  fenced-off area on the south west side of RAF Coningsby – new home to the Typhoon Eurofighter jets. I noticed that it isn't marked on ANY Ordnance Survey map scales, even the most detailed  1:10000 data.

Then I compared Getmapping's imagery from 1999 and 2004 (below). Bingo. The earlier imagery just showed an empty farmer's field. The newer imagery (now also seen on Google Earth) confirmed that the facility is a "new build". It is a special compound that has been built OUTSIDE the previous established perimeter line (the fence now having been extended and diverted).

MORE



Project PRIDE and DIS – Defence Intelligence Staff

 [Permalink](#)

Defence Geospatial Intelligence Fusion Centre (DGIFC)

Sometimes, "Secret Bases" are right under your nose in the most obvious locations – like on industrial estates in the middle of cities. Consider Elmwood Avenue in Feltham, South West London. Right in the middle of all those industrial units, you'll find the [Defence Geographic and Imagery Intelligence Agency \(DGIA\)](#) which "does exactly what it says on the tin".

At DGIA Feltham, experts in both traditional and digital cartography and aerial photo interpretation provide essential backup to all military services but especially the RAF. The HQ of the Agency (plus the Intelligence Collection Group, ICG) is at that industrial estate in Feltham but there are important outposts at [RAF Brampton](#) in Cambridgeshire and at [Denison Barracks](#) at Hermitage near Newbury, Berkshire (often spelt Dennison). Brampton houses the RAF's Joint Air Reconnaissance Centre (JARIC – also known as the National Imagery Exploitation Centre), while Hermitage is home to Headquarters Joint Aeronautical and Geospatial Organisation (JAGO) and 42 Engineer Regiment (Geographic).

MORE

In April 2009, it was announced that the various Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) facilities at Brampton, Feltham and Hermitage were to be consolidated onto a new purpose built site within

Royal Navy shore establishments around Portsmouth

[Permalink](#)

Two of the UK's most secretive Government research laboratories are to be found at [Fort Halstead](#) in Kent and at [Porton Down](#) in Wiltshire.

These two bases are part of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) network. Certain other research facilities, which have been transferred to the commercial sector, have been collected together under the umbrella organisation QinetiQ – pronounced "kinetic". As mentioned earlier, DSTL and QinetiQ were formed in July 2001 out of the old Defence Evaluation and Research Agency

(DERA), which controlled all of the UK's MoD test ranges and research establishments.

MORE

In November 2003, DSTL announced a rationalisation programme whereby its staff would be focussed down to three core "centres of excellence". Namely, Porton Down (the DSTL



Portsmouth Technology Park
[See on Google Maps](#)

Special Communications Units (SCU) – Leydene, Garat's Hay and Beaumanor

 [Permalink](#)

Picture this. The quintessential English countryside. The country estate with a stately home set in acres of parkland. The surrounding affluent stockbroker belt. The gentle walking route, called the South Downs Way, which runs through the whole area. An idyll. Surely no signs of a Secret Base here. Wrong. Take a fresh look with Windows Live Local's Bird's Eye. Out from the lush verdant pastures emerges a once top secret Royal Navy shore establishment involved in covert signals interception. Stark 1940s buildings, laid out in a curious crescent shape, incongruently nestle next to ancient architectural splendour.

MORE

It ran from 1941 and throughout the Cold War until its final decommission in 2001. It was mentioned on the most recent "Sensitive Sites Register", finally scrapped only in 2006 due to the

UKCMRI – Biohazard Laboratory at St. Pancras Eurostar Terminal

 [Permalink](#)



UKCMRI now known as the Francis Crick Institute

Consider the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) and its wish to collaborate with Cancer Research UK, the Medical Research Council (MRC), the Wellcome Trust and University College London (UCL) in building a 21st Century state-of-the-art centre for studies into cures for human diseases. Very worthy.

But the Level 3 Bio-Safety Laboratory (BSL-3) needed to ensure biocontainment of materials under examination is a problem. The materials being examined (samples of Avian Influenza [Bird Flu], Malaria, Tuberculosis and even perhaps Anthrax) are the very same ones that would be sought for use in bio-terrorism. The risk of accidental atmospheric release has to be considered too.

So it is somewhat surprising to learn that NIMR wants to move from its well established high security site at [Mill Hill](#) in North West London, to a tightly packed location in the middle of council housing estates and within a few yards of the new St. Pancras International Eurostar Terminal. Madness? The local residents certainly think so. Scaremongering media coverage has even drawn comparisons with the cult film 28 Days Later and book The Hot Zone.

MORE

A pressure group Stop Camden Danger Lab has been set-up to oppose the plans for the [UK Centre for Medical Research and Innovation \(UKCMRI\)](#) (known as the Francis Crick Institute)

Aug/Sep 2007 "Foot and Mouth Disease Laboratory Incident"

In August 2007, the spectre of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in farm animals reared its ugly head again after the devastating effects of the infamous 2001 outbreak. But this time it was suspected that a Government Research Laboratory developing vaccines for the disease had accidentally released a strain of the virus into the surrounding countryside.

The initial area of concern was some fields used by grazing cattle around [Westwood Place](#) in Westwood Lane, Wanborough, Normandy near Guildford, Surrey. Amazingly, the nearby country house [Wanborough Manor](#) was actually used during WWII as a top secret training establishment for agents of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) "F" Branch, destined to work on covert assignments in German occupied France. Strange but true.

MORE

The Institute for Animal Health's (IAH) Pirbright Laboratory, deep within Ministry of Defence country near to the traditional military town of Aldershot in Surrey, was put under scrutiny after

Porton Down, CDE Nancekuke and CDE Sutton Oak

[Permalink](#)

Many test veterans from the 1950s, seeking compensation from the Government for their illnesses, believe they were stationed at the Germ Warfare research facility at [Porton Down](#). In fact they were based at the neighbouring Defence Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Centre (DNBCC) at [Winterbourne Gunner](#). On its official website, the Government announced that, "unfortunately, records at Winterbourne Gunner were routinely destroyed some years ago".

It was known formerly as the Joint School of Chemical Warfare and is marked on maps as simply "barracks". It has now been renamed again to the Defence Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Centre (DCBRNC). The test ranges on the land to the east of these sites are marked on all maps as Danger Zones. The Winterbourne Gunner site also houses the Police National CBRN Centre (PN-CBRN-C) for

training officers in so-called "dirty bomb" terrorist incidents.

MORE

Before reaching the main DSTL Porton Down site (beyond an armed guard sentry point), just on the left of the approach road you'll find the CAMR site - the Centre for Applied Microbiology and



RAF Portreath – Main gate on south side (left) and UK Airspace Defence Control and Reporting Post (CRP) underground command bunker in secure enclave (right)

[See on Google Maps](#)

The 1994 "Boscombe Down Incident"

[Permalink](#)

Almost within walking distance of both Porton Down and Winterbourne Gunner, you'll find the UK's miniaturised answer to America's Edwards Air Force Base and Area 51 at [Boscombe Down](#) airbase. It is where all the RAF's new toys are put through their paces and where US "black projects" are also tested and evaluated. Although modest by US standards, it's no accident that it boasts one of the longest military runways in the UK. Boscombe Down is larger than the neighbouring town of Amesbury and is also close to the Army's massive training ranges on Salisbury Plain.

Local UFO clusters were probably explained by regular visits by the top secret F-117 stealth aircraft during its development phase, rather than the excessive consumption of particularly potent Wiltshire ale at Midsummer Solstice parties being held at prehistoric [Stonehenge](#), just a few miles to the north west.

MORE

On September 26th 1994, the Boscombe Down airbase hit the headlines when a serious incident occurred on the main runway. So serious was this incident, that the UK's Special Forces – the SAS

Fort Halstead



Permalink

Whilst the Chemical and Biological Warfare research base at Porton Down, near Boscombe Down airbase (discussed earlier), is well known throughout the world, the activities of [Fort Halstead](#) (below) are cloaked in the highest levels of secrecy, but are thought to include the latest research into laser and stealth technology. What is certain is that Fort Halstead is staffed by graduates in every conceivable scientific discipline, many at "PhD" level. In the past, part of the site has been involved in the evaluation of materials used for explosives, under the title of the Armaments Research Establishment.

Significantly, in 1947, Britain's first nuclear weapons project – a plutonium bomb – was started at Fort Halstead in a secret area within the base, hidden away from other research activities. It was known as "HER" – High Explosives Research. This top secret "base within a base" was masterminded by Sir William (and later Lord) Penney, a scientist who had formerly worked at the US Los Alamos site.

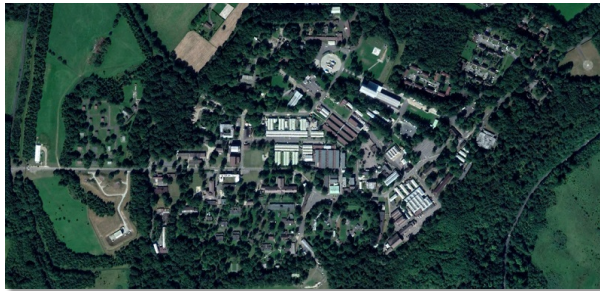
The Fort Halstead base is located on the site of an ancient Napoleonic fortification at the tiny village of Halstead near Sevenoaks, Kent and is hidden away in a wood, tucked into the South East corner of the M25 orbital motorway encircling London. However, when viewed at [1:25000](#) scale, Fort Halstead suddenly emerges from all those leafy branches and gets that classic label "Works". Significantly, in early 2005, Ordnance Survey finally cleared away all that foliage and revealed details of Fort Halstead's buildings at [1:50000](#) scale for the first time.

View Fort Halstead once again, at [street map level](#) and a jolly handy helicopter landing pad is revealed on the approach road. Very interestingly, that street level map includes a label "Restricted Area" – could this refer to the former plutonium bomb development area? Another [helipad](#) can be spotted from the air *within* the perimeter fence, to the west of Armstrong Close.

In June 2007, in a major update to Google Earth's UK imagery, Fort Halstead finally became available at high resolution. Better still, take a look at my exclusive Pilot's Eye Views further below taken by my regular contributor in September 2007. They were formally cleared for publication by the Ministry of Defence / MI5.

MORE

The original fort location in the centre of the site has since been converted into underground bunker facilities. Over at the rear perimeter security gate on Star Hill Road, to the south west



DSTL/QinetiQ Fort Halstead
[See on Google Maps](#)

GCHQ, FORDE, OFCOM, PSDB, HOSDB and CAST



Permalink

Close to Fort Halstead, described above, you will find another tiny Kent village hiding a secret. Have a close look at the OS maps around [Ivy Farm](#) in Knockholt. The maps show an aerial symbol at this location. "OK", you think, "it's obviously a TV/radio mast". Well yes, it's a telecom tower with mobile phone masts and microwave dishes.

Consider the farm itself. Maybe if you're told that Ivy Farm once housed operatives seconded from GCHQ in the WWII/Bletchley Park years, performing signals interception and analysis work across London, you'll see the full picture. In the late 1940s, it was designated the Foreign Office Research and Development Establishment (FORDE).

MORE

Over on the other side of London, just north east of Baldock in Hertfordshire you can spot a

substantial "wireless station" in some fields. This is one of the Government's Office for

Clearings in woods – Ammunition Compounds



Permalink

Sneaky planning application stunt fails to fool locals

Very close to Fort Halstead discussed earlier, you may be able to spot something else of interest hidden in the middle of Jenkin's Neck Wood at the amusingly named village of [Badgers Mount](#), not too far away from another village which causes sniggering, Pratt's Bottom.

By switching between my various Map Link Options, try studying Getmapping's aerial photo (below) in conjunction with the OS maps of the area. The 1:50000 and 1:25000 OS maps just don't label the site at all, but at least it does show up. Try the Government's own MAGIC interactive mapping service and zoom into the [1:10000](#) scale. Bingo. Up pops a rather coy label – "Depot". Take a Bird's Eye look from the west (also below), using Windows Live Local.

MORE

You can use all the classic signs to piece together the clues: the clearing in the middle of a wood; the buildings laid out in a regular pattern; the adjacent main train line; the train tunnel

Lockerbie Pan Am 103 scrap site turned into holiday homes



Permalink


An almost identical ammunition compound to the previous Chelsfield example, south west of Farnborough Airfield in Hampshire, is also visible on stunning new high quality imagery used on both Google Earth and Google Maps.

Take a look at another mysterious clearing in a wood at [Puckridge Hill](#), just across Fleet Road and opposite the main gate of the Army's Royal Logistics Corps (RLC) [Long Valley](#) driver training unit at Eelmoor Hill. Note that the high security depot is within easy reach of numerous military barracks, firing ranges and training areas around Aldershot – the home


town of the British Army. Puckridge Hill was also the site of a WWII Prisoner of War (PoW) camp. The ammunition compound at Puckridge Hill is now used by Aldershot's Buller Barracks as a **military working dog unit**.

MORE

Take a further look just a little to the north east of AC Puckridge Hill described above, on Farnborough Airfield's south side, in yet another clearing in the woods at the airfield's Puckridge

 97 KB

***Remains of Lockerbie Pan Am Flight 103 cockpit section (left)
within Roger Windley scrapyard, Tattershall,
Lincolnshire
[See on Google Maps](#)***

 185 KB

***Ammunition Compound AC Puckridge Hill in 2004
(left) turns into
Aldershot Buller Barracks Military Working Dogs
Unit in 2013 (right)
[See on Google Maps](#)***

From English Civil War battlefield ... to the Global War on Terror

 **Permalink**

As featured in
**BBC's Britain
from Above**

Before we leave that vast Kineton munitions depot mentioned in the previous section above, I can reveal that it is keeping a very strange

secret. Can you spot something very odd in the top left corner of the Pilot's Eye view below? What is a brand new [📍](#) urban street doing in the middle of all those explosives storage bunkers in the countryside near the Warwickshire village of Temple Herdewyke? The houses don't seem occupied and the street is deserted. Just as well really, as it is a new training range for use by Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technicians – of Officer and Senior Non Commissioned Officer (SNCO) rank – at the Army School of Ammunition (ASA) in the adjacent Marlborough Barracks.

The mock-up street was constructed during 2006. It is known as the Felix Centre – a reference to EOD technicians needing nine lives like cats. The multi-million pound specialist UK training facility is used by international NATO forces from all services. Counter-terrorism courses are given in the disposal of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) using the famous remotely controlled robots known as Wheelbarrows.

MORE

When in use, the street is filled with parked cars containing suspect devices to search for and defuse. Play "Spot the Difference" by comparing the "before" and "after" aerial imagery.

NATO's Kineton IEDD Felix Centre
Click for more Secret Bases on
Google Maps, Google Earth and Google Street View

Yet more clearings in woods

If you've had your appetite whetted for all these suspicious clearings in woods, then RAF Wittering near Peterborough in Cambridgeshire will "press all your buttons".

Right in the middle of innocent-looking [📍](#)

Collyweston Great Wood nearby, you'll find a large remote weapons storage area for the airbase. The depot (below) is not marked on any OS maps, not even at 1:10000 scale. Furthermore, check out the [\[map\]](#) former nuclear weapons area at Wittering along with more clearings, concealing other weapons areas, at [\[map\]](#) Vigo Wood and [\[map\]](#) Rogue Sale. They are all situated to the north east of Collyweston Great Wood, alongside the A47 main road. See if you can spot them on Google Earth by panning around.

MORE

Next, pop over to RAF Marham near Kings Lynn in Norfolk and take a very close look to the east of the airbase. There's nothing on 1:50000 OS maps, but at 1:25000 and 1:10000 scales you'll


Summary and Conclusion

You can have great fun by using the [Internet research tools](#) to search for Britain's "secret sites". As I've outlined throughout this website, it is always worth remembering that OS maps don't always tell the whole story, depending on which version and scale you're viewing. In the case of top secret sites, OS maps don't even tell the truth sometimes. Shocking.

MORE

In November 2004, I noticed that Ordnance Survey had started to revise the online mapping data on their Get-a-map site. Suddenly, "Secret Bases" such as HMS Forest Moor (next to RAF

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 19 KB

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