PIONEERS' WORKSHOP

THE DISMANTLING and removal of Hut No. 1 at Baddow arouses nostalgic thoughts in those who have worked at Baddow Research from the early days; but something not generally known is that it is mildly famous for the pioneering work carried out within its walls. This large wooden hut, the first building on the site, was erected early in 1937, on the open fields near Major Inchbald's house, now a S.S.A.F.A. home. The only approach was along Vicarage Lane and through a five-barred gate, and the only source of power was a point in the Major's house.

It was here, in these rather primitive surroundings, that C. Austin carried out suppressed carrier receiver tests for G. M. Wright; and D. L. Plaistowe and D. J. Fewings worked on some of the earliest experimental television receivers under R. J. Kemp. At the same time Mr. Kemp was himself developing a cathode ray direction finder for one of our earliest classified contracts for the Government. Members of this group were to be found working in the hut every night until the B.B.C.'s television programme closed down, and more often than not at the weekends.

In 1938 others joined the television group, including F. W. Garrett, who installed his experimental TV aerials at one end and worked, among other things, on broad-band amplifiers. Another inhabitant was J. Burrows, engineer under J. G. Robb, who had a desk in one office and was concerned with the supervision of the new laboratory buildings which were then going up.

When the war started, television work stopped, and the group turned over to research into echo reception on a wavelength of one metre. However, when it was discovered that without knowing it they were experimenting in what was in

The first building erected on the Baddow site was Hut No. 1, recently removed to make way for future development. The contractors to whom it was sold were photographed in the process of dismantling. The new building can be seen in the background

New laboratories and drawing offices at Baddow now completed for Research

fact the country's greatest secret—radar—their activities were promptly stopped, and thereafter they worked for Air Ministry Intelligence, with R. J. Kemp on spaced-frame D.F. and automatic D.F. The early stages of this too were carried out partly in Hut No. 1.

Meanwhile the new building was completed and the black-out people under J. E. H. Pallemaerts set up in the hut, which now became the headquarters for emergency repairs and general maintenance. The chargehand there was Brian Saunders, one of the Coggeshall carvers, who was later chosen to do carving for the House of Commons when it was restored. One end was divided off and used by Bill Warner of the electrical department for Stores, and various other people, including Nobby Clark the carpenter, and riggers Johnny Redhouse and Albert Post seem to have been based there.

After the war, the hut was the centre of activity for the general clearance of war measures, until it was taken over by Peter Hopkins, to do work for J. F. Ramsay and E. N. Wells. It was here that the first millimetre metal tube lenses and prisms in the world were made—a unique development whose value is still to be realised.

About five years ago manufacture of this type of lens ceased, and L. E. Q. Walker's section moved in, to do glass laminate and other resin work. This again was a pioneering venture, based on the view that plastics would replace metal in the making of aerials, and that the Company should be in the forefront. Though Hut No. 1 housed this early work on plastics, it was destined never to see it through. The erection of the new building at Baddow and the prospect of further development made its siting inconvenient, so Mr. Walker's section was transferred to another hut, and this one scheduled for removal. Too old to be worth setting up somewhere else, it was sold to contractors, who dismantled and took it away on Thursday, 17 July. The hut that had seen a number of Marconi 'firsts'—in television, radar and direction finding before the war, and afterwards in microwave lenses and the use of plastics—had done good service.