

HORSHAM AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

HARCNEWS

Coming Shortly

Jan 5th Club Evening: 80m Contests/ How to use Data modes? by G4LRP and M0GJH

Feb 2nd Club Evening: The WS38 set and Arnhem,
by Wally Blanchford G3JKV.

Mar 2nd Club Evening Junk Sale.

January 2006

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Second HARC Grand French Day Out

On Saturday 22nd October a small contingent of HARC members crossed the channel to Calais. Adrian G4LRP, Paul, G4TMC, Robin G3OGP and his wife Pat went across the channel by ferry and enjoyed a full English breakfast on board! Andrew M0GJH and his wife Janet were joined by Ian 2E0FRZ and Gerald M3GER went under the channel by tunnel with only an expensive coffee and croissant for breakfast!

We all met up at the Calais ferry terminal car park in the drizzle, and then headed off to our first destination, Cite Europe shopping centre, to drop off the ladies for an enjoyable day of shopping (since when has shopping ever been enjoyable!!!), whilst the hardy amongst us continued on to our first real destination, Mimoyecques.

Andrew consulted his Tom

Tom satellite navigation system for the correct directions, I consulted my Paul Paul navigation system (well at least mine was human and could read a map, and you could argue with him!).

We arrived at Mimoyecques some 10 miles or so to the southwest of Calais just inland from the sea in the chalk down lands, where during the later part of WW2 the German forces started building an extensive underground complex to launch small missiles (the V3 vengeance weapon). Like the V2, this was one of Hitler's "secret weapons" a last-ditch attempt to reverse the impending defeat of Nazi Germany in 1943-44.

The V3's were to be delivered to London by 25 enormous gun barrels, 130 metres long, and with a calibre of 150mm. They would have been the biggest guns in the world. Between them, they could

have fired a barrage of rocket-assisted projectiles capable of reaching London, one every 12 seconds. The V3's were a small shell like missile that were about 2m long and 150mm in diameter and contained a high explosive war head.

The 130m long cannons had multiple ports along their length, where charges were timed to go off as the projectile went past, which accelerated the V3 on its way to London. These big guns were buried deep into the chalk with only the very end protruding above ground. The guns were serviced by tunnels and shafts that were cut into the chalk by foreign forced labour and prisoners.

A longitudinal tunnel some 2 km long with a railway line and platforms was dug to service the complex of side tunnels and chambers where the weapons were to be stored and prepared for firing. As the complex was also to house the operational personnel required

operate the site, many levels of tunnels and shafts were dug many meters underground.

This was to prove very costly in prisoner lives when on the 6th July 1944 the RAF delivered many tons of ordinance onto the site including Barns Wallis' Tall Boy Earthquake bomb to penetrate the rocks to devastating effect, causing much of the complex to collapse and cave in.

Fortunately the site never became operational and was abandoned by the Germans as the bombing raids continued. Soon after the liberation of the area in late 1944, the Royal Engineers blew up the entrance of the complex and it was left to decay.

But after many years of neglect a large section of the main service tunnel some 2000 feet long, and many side tunnels and chambers have been opened as a museum to the public. Multi lingual audio commentaries along the tour route within the complex give much detailed information

about the site, where one can gain some insight as to what it must have been like when the complex was built, and what it could have been like if the complex had ever become operational. All in all this is a most fascinating location and well worth a visit.

Our second destination for the day was 'Le Blockhaus' to the south east of Calais, just on the edge of the Eperlecques forest near the village of Watten, but on the way, we being true HARC members, called in to a typical French bar in the nearby village to sample the local brew as one does.

Once at Le Blockhaus we discovered a huge concrete bunker with sides approximately 150m long and 40m or so high. This was where the Germans again built with forced labour, a factory for manufacturing liquid oxygen rocket fuel, and for assembling, fuelling, and launching V2 rockets.

The site was chosen in early 1943 by the Nazi Todt Or-

ganisation that looked for somewhere with a good electricity supply for the oxygen compressors, and that could be supplied with materials by railway and canal barge.

The V2 was Hitler's "retaliation weapon" - Vergeltungswaffen. - was to be aimed at Britain. It could have changed the course of the war, if Allied bombing raids had not been able to put it out of action in September 1943 - thanks to intelligence tip-offs from the French Resistance.

You are guided around the site to various locations where you can press a button to select a multi lingual audio presentation that explains the history of the site and how it was built. As the tour progresses you enter the still standing bunker and can watch an audio visual presentation that explains in further detail the purpose, construction and demise of the site.

Once again thanks to the allied forces bombing efforts and more Tall Boy bombs, the

site never became operational. But when there, even in its ruined state, the bunker is an impressive sight.

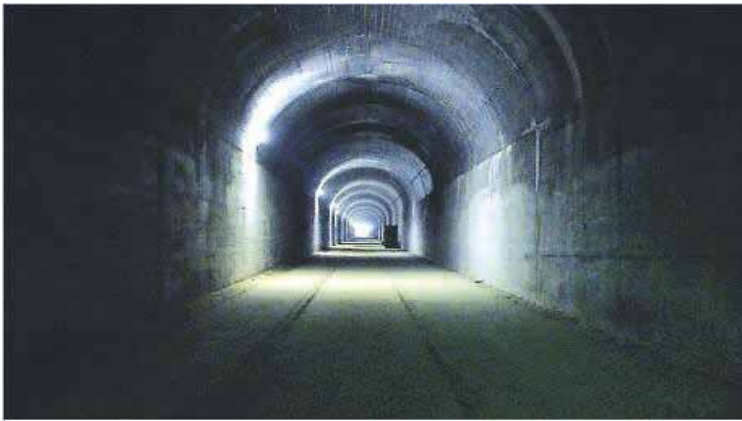
Time came to leave the bunker and head off back to Cite Europe to meet up with the ladies, stock up on liquid supplies, and enjoy an evening meal before heading off to the tunnel and ferry terminal respectively. Our party had a pleasant ferry crossing and

once back in Dover a rapid drive home. Just as we were leaving the M23 at Pease Potage we were able to catch up with M0GJH/M and those on the Club 2m Saturday evening net for a quick chat on the air before getting home. My thanks to all that joined the trip and I hope that you found it a fun day out (shopping and all).

Adrian G4LRP.



Part of the 130m long cannon



Main Service Tunnel



Le Blockhaus



After a visit from the RAF