



COALHOUSE FORT NEWSLETTER

June 2013

ISSUE No.3

Registered Charity
No. 289952

EDITORIAL

We are still very short of volunteers to assist in the running of the open days and participating in the regular Wednesday work days, in spite of editorial columns being placed in the local press.

We have had one new member Ron join us, and has become a regular on our Wednesday work days, we also had a further member join us but has since left for reasons we do not know. We are still desperately in need of more volunteers to help us out on the open days to run the fort efficiently, so all of us must continue to put the Fort's name out there and at least recruit a new volunteer.

It was with regret that due to irreconcilable differences that seem to have occurred we have had to say goodbye to Marie Revell. We have also seemed to have lost one of our key volunteers and workers in John Pumfrett, who we sincerely hope will return in the near future as his enthusiasm and hard work are very much missed.

The 2013 season is now well underway and opened at the end of March the annual Motor Bike Day, which thanks to the weather turned to be very successful with many visitors and cyclists in attendance. The Bank Holiday Monday, although not themed was also a success with number of interesting people availing themselves for the very first time of the fort's history.

This year we held at the end of April our two day Military History weekend. This was another successful event, and I should like to take this opportunity to offer our sincere thanks to Samantha Coats for her hard work and effort in putting together this event. Together with many military vehicles on display and re-enactments by our friends the 10th Essex WW1 group together with a WW2 group and the 40's singers and dancers which were very entertaining there were a number of display stands with Home Front, Carrier Pigeons, Munitions and Help for Heroes etc. It is hoped that we can continue and build on the success of this weekend.

It is sad to report that in the early hours on Sunday 21st April three persons broke into the fort damaging some of the new doors stealing drinks and boxes of chocolate and a sum of money from the canteen. As a result of this incident our security has been reviewed and further procedures have now been put in place in a hope that it will deter future would be intruders.

By the time this reaches you we will be looking forward to the Classic Car Day on Sunday 28th July 2013, subject to the good old English weather a large turnout is expected. A new display of slot car racing will be an added attraction in the education room.

GRUMBLES AND GRUNTS

Once again only one person has deemed to send something for the newsletter so 'extractus digitus' and let me have some article, comment or point of interest to publish. For those who do not have my Email address it is:- kenle@tiscali.co.uk . DON'T BE SHY HAVE A TRY Ken Levy

THAMESIDE AVIATION MUSEUM

Open days have been very good to date this season, with more visitors coming from the Castle Point and Southend areas. The largest attendance was on the Military History weekend with a number of new artifacts being donated which are always welcome as they help to educate the next up and coming generation. The World War II room is always popular with the landmine size comparison with the diminutive incendiary bomb. The Dam Busters display will stay in place for the rest of the season, which will later make way for the anniversary of the Normandy Landings anniversary. A display will be created later this year for 'Big John' the last Aviation Traders ATL-98 Carvair to fly from Southend Airport, following a recent visit from the pilot of the aircraft.

FORT MILITARY MUSEUM

This year has seen the reorganisation of parts of the museum with four new display cabinets helping to illustrate and show off some of the exhibits in a more professional form. One cabinet illustrates a display complimentary to the Remembrance Park Statue with a better understanding of Sergeant Eric Atkinson's emergency landing in Meegen, Netherlands. In the Naval section is a display dedicated to Christian Lamb, a WREN who served at the fort in World War II in the degaussing operation and illustrated by her book 'I only Joined for the Hat'.

PARANORMAL INVESTIGATIONS

The running of the Paranormal Events has been taken over by Jamie Robertson and a new team of enthusiasts who have already booked a large number of events for this year and even I believe early next year. They have already made an excellent start by doing tunnel visits on our regular open days with much interest being shown by the public.

With the enthusiasm being shown it all bodes well for the forthcoming Halloween Evenings later this year following on from the success of last year's event which hopefully will be an even better one this year.

MEMBERSHIP

Once again I want to seek your help in recruiting more members to act as volunteers for both the open and working days. We can only continue to operate efficiently with a regular group of willing volunteers. Do please come along and help as we have lost a number of members who gave their services in the past and it is now becoming more desperate to serve the public efficiently on our open days. ANY assistance on the open days is most welcome, but it would be of great help if members who cannot attend on the open days could give prior notice so we can make arrangements and reschedule the workload to be as efficient as possible and not leave it to the few regulars. One urgent requirement is to train and recruit new guides as due to health and other concerns we are now down to two and therefore have to take less tours and with a greater number of persons in each group which is neither practical nor fair to the visitors.

FORT LEASE

I am now in possession of a draft of the lease passed to me by Scott and intend to review it with other concerned officers of the committee and it will be signed, if satisfactory, by our trustees so that we may at last have some sort of control of our environment. It is hoped that all will be resolved when the next newsletter is issued.

TOILET BLOCK

The toilet block adjacent to the entrance will be refurbished later this year to incorporate a tearoom which we fervently hope will not be detrimental to our own tearoom revenue on open days. There has been much discussion that we will not lose revenue over this, but we will only be able to judge when all this revamp is operative. If all things plan out, as is advised then it could be of benefit to the fort as some of the overall grant of money being applied for with the HLF will find its way into the fort for even more assets and restoration.

FORT WEBSITE

There has been many comments made about the inadequacy of the current one and accessibility, this is a concern that we are trying to rectify as poor information put out to the public is a bad advert for us and in turn loses revenue, but it is hoped that we can remedy it as soon as possible. After many trials and tribulation Peter Appleton with assistance of Chris, his son, has secured control at last of the website which will be revisited and revised to ensure it will serve us well in the future.

COMMITTEE NEWS

Since our last newsletter we now have Health and Safety/Security member co-opted in Lloyd Wells who we give a warm welcome. We do not have as yet a dedicated member to be events organiser, but Samantha will cover the Military events and Halloween and to say the least we will give her a hand, as it is a big task and a lot of responsibility to take on.

OUTSIDE EVENTS

It is intended to have a display stand in the Thurrock Council Marquee at the Orsett Show on Saturday 7th September. It would be great assistance if any members could come along to assist in manning it for a period of time. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

Ernie Headren our own Flight Lieutenant has been doing sterling work in promoting the fort at a number of displays with his stand drawing in the kids with his uniform and equipment dressing up show and it is hoped he will be at the Orsett Show.

The Coats clan Sam, Steve and Family are scheduled to be at the forthcoming War and Peace Show and raise our fort banner and possibly assist in promoting next years Military History Day.

INSIDE THE FORT

Over many months now a dedicated trio of Gerry, Norman and Tony have slaved away to strip down and refurbish our 40mm mobile gun which is now nearing completion. They are now turning their attention to the 25 Pdr. and to date have got down to the bare metal of its many components. They are doing a sterling job which I am certain will be much appreciated by all our visitors.

The military vehicle boys Dave and Nick have refurbished their two Bedford RL trucks which I understand are to be on display at the forthcoming War and peace show.

I am also given to understand that our other military specialist has been very ill, so we wish him well and hope to see him again in the not too distant future.

We have purchased a metal cabinet so that in future the plastic refuse bags can be placed inside before disposal so that the crows or other animals don't tear them open.

It is intended that in one of the rooms above the gatehouse complex will be set up as an archive room to enable us to have the records on site and hopefully ensure reference material will be accessible instead of being dispersed in numerous locations. We have also purchased two filing cabinets and shelving in the future to have a computer and printer installed.

ANNIVERSARIES

THIS YEAR has seen a number of anniversaries celebrated which included the one in May for Operation Chastise when 617 Squadron RAF bombed the three major dams in the Ruhr Valley namely the Mohne, Eder and Sorpe Dams with the Barnes Wallis ten ton mine codenamed Upkeep.

Two other anniversaries also occurred this year The Royal Navy's success in overcoming the U-Boat menace in the Battle of the Atlantic when the convoys were at last able to sail with our vital supplies at last with a much greater degree of safety. A great deal of this success must be attributed to Mr. Alan Turing at Bletchley Park with the Navy's contribution to the Russian Murmansk convoys in the most cold and arduous conditions in which the famous HMS Belfast participated was originally repaired after breaking her back on a magnetic mine in 1939.

NEXT YEAR we have some of the most momentous anniversaries being celebrated firstly in June the 70th anniversary of the greatest invasion 'D-Day' to free Fortress Europe (Festung Europa) from the Nazis. In September is the anniversary of Operation Market Garden the airborne landings for the taking of the bridges at Grave, Nijmegen and the fateful one at Arnhem, so our remembrance statue will be all that more poignant. In November we will have the one hundredths anniversary of what was termed The Great War or World War One when there will be many displays around the borough and county. It is felt that we the fort should in some way mark these occasions with the open days or displays, so let's get together. and make it happen. — useful suggestions please!!!!

THIS YEAR also saw the raising from the English Channel the only example of the German Dornier DO17Z-2 (Flying Pencil) bomber of 1940 Battle of Britain, and the decommissioning of the last of the Royal Navy's type 42 destroyer HMS Edinburgh, which is hoped will be preserved near the Royal Yacht Britannia.