

Brixham Battery Heritage Centre Group

Battery Banter

Registered Charity No. 1082171

Summer 11 Newsletter

Farewell Old Friends

The summer months have been very sad ones for members of the Battery with two of our dearest members passing away. Fred Sayer and Jim Winfield have been great supporters for many years and the Battery would not be what it is today without their hard work.



Left: Fred Sayer



Right: Jim Winfield

In early July one of our staunchest members, Mr Fred Sayer passed away. Fred had been a member for over 6 years and had become our unofficial 'meet and greet' gate guard officer. He would call to people passing by the museum 'come and see our World War II museum it's free!' Thousands of visitors have been 'encouraged' into the museum after chatting to Fred at the gate.

Fred was a true character telling some of the worst jokes we had ever heard but that's what made them so funny!

He was an excellent time keeper and very reliable, always on time at the museum ready to open at exactly 2pm and collecting in the outside information boards minutes before closing.

He enjoyed our educational school visits entertaining and informing the children of his own wartime memories from the East End of London and of his two years National Service in Malaya during the early 1950's.

As a testament to Fred's character over 120 mourners gathered to remember him at his funeral service on Wednesday 13th July at Stockman's in Brixham.

If the loss of Fred wasn't enough, on Thursday 11th August we lost another 'founder member' and dear friend of the Battery, Jim Winfield.

Jim was a World War II veteran, serving with the 'Ox & Bucks' Light Infantry. Early in the war he was shot and taken prisoner by the Germans, spending 5 years as a Prisoner of War.

Jim was always ready to pick up a shovel and get his hands dirty, helping dig trenches and restore the Heritage Centre back in 2000, dislocating his knee in the process. He was a great character and a good man.

Jim's pay book and the bullet that shot him into his 5 year POW captivity!



Both Fred and Jim really will be missed at the Battery but we will carry on the work they helped establish, conserving and interpreting the history and fabric of Battery Gardens.

Commemorating D- Day

Our weekend commemorating D-Day started off well with a 'Coffee Morning' on the Saturday held at the Community Christian Hall in Fore Street, Brixham, raising £190.



Gordon 'Jigger' Smith



Meine Damen und Herren



MPs inspecting a jeep outside the Heritage Centre

Sunday 5th June was our 'living history' event remembering the events on 6th June 1944. Battery regular, Gordon 'Jigger' Smith, entertained visitors during the afternoon. Many people also went on guided tours of the 14 acre Battery site as well as enjoying barbequed baps and burgers. A big thank you goes to Scott of David's Fish and Chips in Bolton Street, Brixham for donating the barbeque food and 'sponsoring' the day's event.

It was another excellent day at the Battery which raised a further £190 to add to the funds raised at the 'Coffee Morning'. Thanks to everyone who supported the weekend events and

for the re-enactors who turned out in 'kit' on the Sunday, adding that extra realism for visitors.

Back in Action at Berry Head



Left: Keith, Ryan and Charles 'on guard' at the entrance to the Royal Observer Corps cold war bunker

The sun shone brightly in a bright blue sky for World War II day 'Back in Action' at Berry Head on Sunday 21st August. The event was well supported as always by 'uniformed' members from the Battery. Ian brought along his Norton 500cc Motorbike and sidecar, with mounted Bren Gun. What made the day even more special was

our friends from Galmpton Military Vehicle Club who brought along a White Scout Car and two World War II Jeeps.

Right: Pete's White Scout Car half track

It was a great day and our thanks go to Berry Head Ranger Chris Smallbones and all the staff there for another great event.

Below left: Ian's Norton and 'Winnie'.

Below right: Battery members alongside a jeep and White Scout Car



Photographs kindly provided by Bev and Phil.



Fundraising Update

Monday 15th August saw over £150 raised for our ongoing War Shelter Restoration project. Group member, Rob White had organised a table top sale at the Battery selling all kinds of militaria. Our thanks go to Rob for this great event with the money raised going towards 'sand blasting' and painting the 2 RSJ's in the gun crew rooms.

Please continue to support the Battery by either making a donation or by joining our group. Membership costs just £5 for adults and £2 for under 16s per annum. For further information please telephone Phil Trayhorn on 01803 752239 or email hiightres@tiscali.co.uk.

Weapons of World War II

2 – MP41 Submachine Gun

The subject of our first article, in last quarter's Battery Banter, was one of World War II's most well known and iconic weapons, the Bren Light Machine Gun. For this second article we feature the German Maschinenpistole (MP) 41 Submachine Gun, one of the rarer and lesser known weapons of the war.

As with all German weapons in World War II the number in the name indicates the year the weapon was first produced, in this case 1941. The MP41 is a combination of designs from two other German Submachine guns. The wooden stock and fire selector are similar to the MP28/II with the front half (the receiver and action) originally designed for the most well known German weapon of the war, the MP40. This is the reason the MP41 may seem familiar even if you have never seen one before.



The development of the MP41 still has an air of mystery about it with reliable information being very scarce. Looking at official German documents such as the Geratliste (the list of weapons and equipment) it would appear the MP41 was neither requested nor officially adopted by the German Army. The most likely reason for the MP41 being manufactured was to supply one or more of Germany's allies with Romania being the number one contender.

What is known is that the MP41 was manufactured by C.G. Haenel in Suhl and was the real 'Schmeisser' as Haenel's management consisted of Herbert Haenel, Hugo and Hans Schmeisser. A total of 27,500 MP41s were produced and while there is evidence showing Germany's allies using the weapon in Romania and Greece not all were sent outside of

Germany. Pictures also exist of German civilians with the MP41 preparing for the final defence of the Reich in 1945.

Step Back in Time

Monday 29th and Tuesday 30th August were Dartmouth Castle's two day living history event, 'Step Back in Time'. Members of the Battery entertained over 1000 visitors, re-enacting the air raids made against the town, shipyards and vessels from 1940 – 1945.



Battery members entertain visitors to Dartmouth Castle



The Likely Lads

Restoration Update

Torbay Council have agreed to repaint the two gun-floors later this year. As Battery Gardens is a scheduled Historic Monument before any work of this nature can start official assent has to be sought from the Secretary of State.

The colour scheme will remain the same as now with grey interiors and brown exterior. The photographs below and right show internal and external views of the gun floors as well as a period image of one of the gun floors in use



Brixham Neighbourhood Challenge

Brixham Battery has been successful in gaining a place in the local YES neighbourhood challenge 2011



The World War II memories project - '**The Cromwell Alert**' started on Sunday July 17th and runs for 6 months. The aim is to create a multi media exhibition of both local and national World War II memories - photos, documents, written oral histories, music, film, propaganda, Home Guard, Civil Defence, Evacuees, rationing in fact anything that relates to Brixham, South Devon and further afield.

Material collected will be displayed in Brixham Town in February 2012. Copies of the exhibition will be on CD/DVD and will be distributed to all schools, libraries colleges etc in the South Devon Area.

If you or your family have a memory/photo/story or are interested in getting involved contact: Phil Trayhorn via email hiightres@tiscali.co.uk.

Donated Items

Again during the summer months we have been very fortunate to have a number of excellent items donated to the Heritage Centre all of which can be seen on display during normal opening hours. Our thanks go to all of those who have donated items to the Battery, they are gratefully received.

Mothers Cross

Firstly we have been donated a Ehrenkreuz der Deutschen Mutter (in English: Cross of Honour of the German Mother), more simply known as the Mothers Cross. This was a state decoration and civil order of merit conferred by the government of the German Reich to honour a mother for exceptional merit to the German nation.

The decoration was established by Adolf Hitler on 16th December 1938 to promote Aryan purity and increase the 'Master Race'. The first award was made on 21st May 1939 continuing until 1945. There were three classes of the order, which was given to mothers who exhibited probity, exemplary motherhood, and conceived and raised at least four or more children.

The three classes were as follows:

- 1st Class Order, Gold Cross. – eligible mothers with eight or more children
- 2nd Class Order, Silver Cross. – eligible mothers with six to seven children (this is the class of cross we have been donated, see picture, right)
- 3rd Class Order, Bronze Cross. – eligible mothers with four to five children



A number of small financial benefits including various privileges were bound to the honour, one example being preferential treatment, precedence and priority service within society and public services. As one recount recalls "...they were always given the best of everything: housing, food, clothing, and schooling for their children. Old people even had to give up their seats on the bus or streetcar. They were treated like royalty with the greatest respect. No standing in line for them. At the butchers shop the best cuts of meat would go into their baskets. A helper or nurse was assigned by the government to help them take care of the brood and arrived first thing in the morning". Members of the Hitler Youth organization were also instructed; a wearer of the Mother's Cross was to be honourably greeted (saluted) when encountered.

The cross can be found in our Axis cabinet display.

REME Uniform



Left: REME SEAC uniform on display at the museum

Battery member Rose has kindly donated her father's REME (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) SEAC (South East Asia Command) Battledress blouse and trousers. The battledress is the 1940 style of uniform. In the close up picture you can plainly see the REME SEAC shoulder flashes and lanyard.

The uniform was worn by Rose's father Denis Noble Furness when he was posted to 25 Advance Base Workshops REME India Command.

Rose also donated a number of accompanying badges. The Anti-Aircraft badges (the red ones) are believed to be that of Denis' wife Vera Margaret Furness (nee Robinson), service number W/281046.

Vera enlisted at Harrogate on 18th June 1943 and was assigned to A&S Group on 26th November 1943. She became a Qualified Wireless Operator W/6.

Denis and Margaret married on 11th December 1944.



Left: Close up of the detail on the shoulder flashes and lanyard of Denis Furness' battledress.

Right: Other badges donated by Rose.



Mike Goodearl and Jeff Savage donations

In August Mike and Jeff donated some great items that can now be seen on display in the Heritage Centre.

Mike donated a World War II service gas mask and World War I Trench Periscope, the latter being a vital piece of kit to watch the enemy without getting shot by a sniper.

Jeff also donated a World War II service gas mask along with a Plymouth Police helmet, French Army helmet and a German helmet (a relic from the Loire), all from the same era as the gas mask.

*Right:
World
War I
trench
Periscope*



French Army Helmet



German Helmet



Plymouth Police Helmet



World War II service gas mask

Calendar of Events

December

Saturday 3rd – **Brixham Christmas Parade**

Battery members will be taking part in the annual Christmas Parade through the town.

Heritage Centre Opening Times

Winter Opening

Sunday, Monday and Friday 2.00 – 4.00pm

Other times by appointment including group bookings, to arrange please telephone Phil Trayhorn on 01803 752239 or email hiightres@tiscali.co.uk. **Admission is free.**

Membership Details

Would you like to help preserve one of the country's last remaining Coastal Defence Battery's? Then why not become a member of the Brixham Battery Heritage Centre Group.

To become a new member, or renew your current membership, costs just £5 for adults and £2 for juniors per annum. For further information please telephone Phil Trayhorn on 01803 852449 or email hiightres@tiscali.co.uk.

Find us at www.brixhambattery.org

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