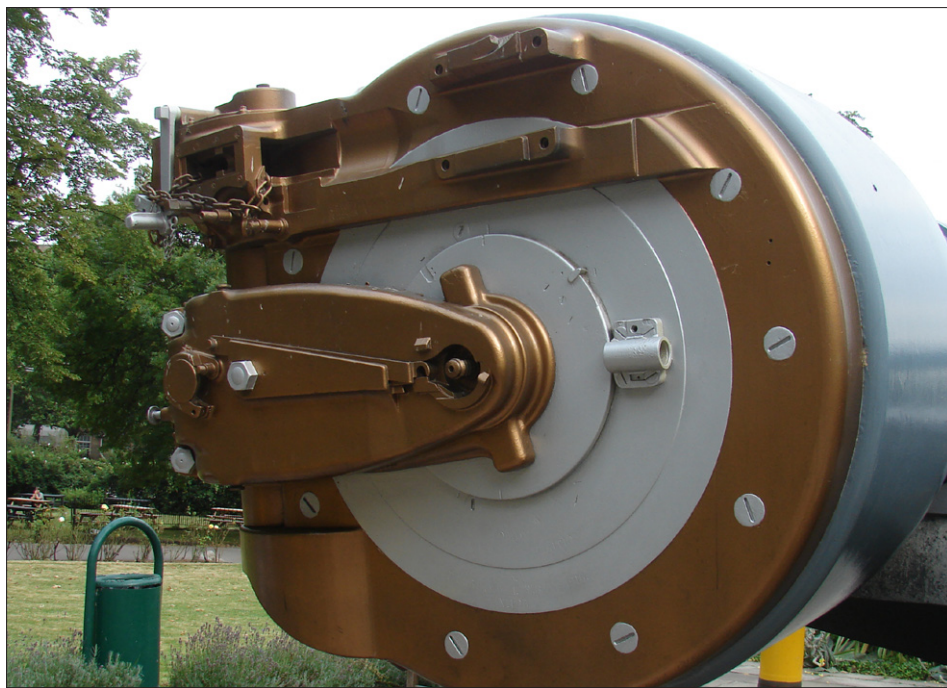


The War Tourist

A random Pamphlet for the Fortification and Battlefield Aficionado • August 2008

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In this issue: A visit to the Imperial War Museum • A brief history of the museum
Fully equipped German WW2 bunkers unearthed in Denmark



A visit to the Imperial War Museum

The visitor to the Imperial War Museum in London is greeted by two huge 15 inch battleship guns, creating a magnificent entrance to the exhibition. The guns date back to the pre-WWI Queen Elizabeth class of vessels, and each have an honourable service record. The left gun (depicted above) was installed in the HMS Ramilles in 1916 and saw action in the Greco-Turkish war and was later used against Italian forces in 1940. The gun to the right was first installed in the HMS Resolution and later refitted in HMS Roberts where it pounded the beaches of Normandy during D-Day, engaging German coastal batteries.

The great Hall

Once you are inside (and note; admission is *free!*), you step into the central hall. Rising five storeys high - enough to accommodate an original V2 rocket and a Polaris missile standing upright, and with several fighter aircrafts hanging suspended from the ceiling, this is an awesome sight! The Hall is sprawling with goodies for the aficionado of military

history, including General Montgomery's original tank, a German Jagdpanzer, a fine Russian T34 and a charming specimen of a British WW1 Mark V tank.



Several of the vehicles are cut-through, giving you an understanding of the technology and the conditions the crews had to work under. The only thing I missed in armored vehicles was a King Tiger, but I suppose they are hard to come by these days.

Werner von Blitz

As mentioned, the exhibition embraces several missiles, most notably a genuine V2 rocket, which is also cut open for closer inspection. The dreads that this

A brief history of the museum

The history of the IWM dates back to the late years of WW1 as the British Cabinet in 1917 decided that material related to the Great War should be collected and displayed to the general public. As Dominion governments also showed great interest to the idea, the title Imperial War Museum was eventually chosen.

Today the IWM comprises several branches, but the original exhibition was situated in the Crystal Palace and inaugurated by King George V on June 9th, 1920. Since 1936 the museum has resided in its present location apart from the war years 1940 to 1945, where vulnerable collections were evacuated to storage facilities outside. This action forced the museum to close its doors for the public for the duration, but preserved most of the exhibits unharmed except from isolated cases.

For instance, on January 31st 1941, a bomb fell on the Naval Gallery and a Short seaplane which partook in the Battle of Jutland in 1916 was destroyed. Alongside, a number of ship models were damaged.

At the outset of the Second World War the Museum's terms of reference were enlarged to cover both world wars and they were again extended in 1953 to include all military operations in which Britain or the Commonwealth have been involved since August 1914.

Once a hospital

The building in which the Imperial War Museum London resides today was formerly the central portion of Bethlem Royal Hospital, commonly known as Bedlam. Bethlem Royal Hospital dates back to 1247, when Simon Fitz-Mary, a wealthy alderman and sheriff of London, founded the Priory of St. Mary

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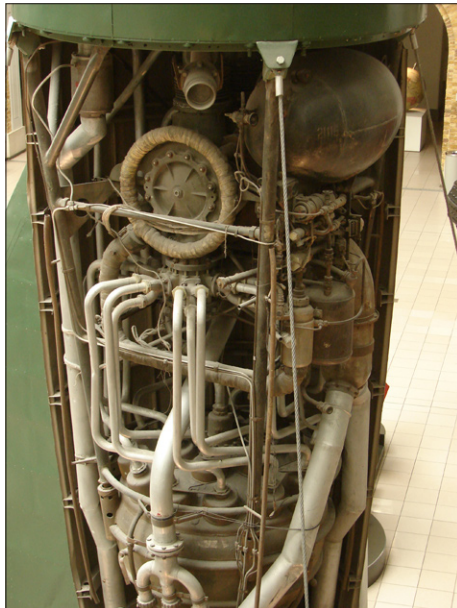
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Nazi terror weapon imposed upon the people of London not forgotten, this marvel of German technology also paved the way for space exploration and ultimately - in the shape of its creator Werner von Braun - helped the Americans putting a man on the Moon in 1969.



Looking inside its complicated interior - and yet simple, I guess, by today's standard - where so many components must work together, it suddenly becomes so much clearer why the path to the stars is littered with faulty trials, launch pad explosions, technical mishaps, tragic accidents and subsequent fatalities.

The guns

Naturally IWM also has a large selection of artillery and shells, from the modest horse-drawn six-pounder of the Great War over the famous German "88", feared both in its anti-aircraft role as well as a formidable tank-buster, to the massive grenade for the "Dora" and "Gustav" siege guns.

Standing nine feet tall, with a diameter of 31 inches (and thus dwarfing even this articles somewhat bulky author), this seven metric ton warhead was originally designed to break open the fortifications of the

Maginot Line. As the battlefield scenario unfolded with the daring dash through the Ardennes, the mighty guns never saw the intended action here, but was later put to use during the siege of Sevastopol - and became known as the Sevastopol Gun.

As the inevitable collapse of German defenses drew closer, these huge artillery pieces were eventually destroyed by their crews to prevent them from falling into enemy hands.

The tanks

As stated, Monty's tank is here. Awkward looking with its high profile and two turrets - one of them looking like a barrel, but apparently proficient in its role (since he won).

We also see a T-34, the simple, robust yet highly efficient Russian surprise to the German invaders. A tank that was ranked among the best of its period. "We had nothing comparable", Generalmajor Friederich von Mellenthin, a veteran panzer specialist later said, and the T-34 certainly gave both the German army and the Führer himself some bad dreams.

The renown Sherman tank is there too, of course. Although nicknamed "The Ronson" because it had a tendency to burst into flames at the slightest occasion, this mass-produced fighting

vehicle has certainly earned its place in history.

The Jagd Panzer or Tank Killer Mk IV was the most successful of its kind and the



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of Bethlehem on the site which is now part of Liverpool Street Station. In the fourteenth century the priory began to specialize in the care of the insane. In 1547 Henry VIII granted the hospital to the City of London.

Patients included Mary Nicholson who tried to assassinate George III in 1786; Jonathan Martin, committed in 1829 after setting fire to York Minster; the painters Richard Dadd and Louis Wain, famous for his cartoons of cats; Antonia White, author of *Frost in May* and *Beyond the Glass*; and the architect A W N Pugin who designed the Houses of Parliament and St George's Roman Catholic Cathedral opposite the Museum.

But there is much more to the IWM, and since I cannot describe it any better than the museums themselves, here follows a short intro of each location, picked from the website:

Imperial War Museum Duxford

Duxford retains its wartime atmosphere and many of its planes still fly. Biplanes, Spitfires, and an SR-71 Blackbird are among the 180 historic aircraft on show, complemented by our annual Air Shows.

Imperial War Museum North

The award-winning Imperial War Museum North is located at The Quays, two miles from Manchester city centre, and offers dynamic displays reflecting on how people's lives are shaped by war.

Churchill Museum & Cabinet War Rooms

The Churchill Museum is the first national museum dedicated to Sir Winston Churchill. It is housed in the unique setting of the Cabinet War Rooms, the underground complex where Churchill and his government met as bombs rained down on London in 1940.

The HMS Belfast

A cruiser, moored on the River Thames. She served throughout the Second World War, playing a leading part in the destruction of Scharnhorst, and the Normandy Landings.

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cut-open canopy delivers a fine view into the cramped conditions of the tank crew.

The fighters

The jewel in the crown is quite obviously the Supermarine Spitfire Mk. IV, a renowned veteran from the Battle of Britain. For some reason, the Spitfire has always been my favorite fighter plane, representing to me not only the state-of-the-art technology of the day, but also the most elegant, sleek design - ever! Probably, I have just read too many Biggles books ;-)



But there are other fine machines too; e.g. the cute Sopwith Camel (can't help thinking of Snoopy here) with its twin Wickers machine guns mounted on the upper wing, or the grim and efficiently looking Focke Wulf 190, one of the best fighters of its time, and also the self-



assured North American P51 Mustang with its checkered nose and forty victories painted on the fuselage, hovering high above the others as it would have back then. Truly a fighter with an attitude.

German ingenuity

One particular interesting experience is the late-war jet plane (no, not the Me 262), known as the Volksjäger - the Peoples Fighter. With a stunning development time of only 90 days, this simple and efficient He 162 fighter was intended for distribution to Hitler Jugend pilots to stem the allied air assaults on Nazi Germany.

Although still on an experimental stage and undergoing tests with the Luftwaffe, this BMW-powered machine was produced by the hundreds in early 1945, and only the rushed development time, leaving the plane prone with many flaws that needed modification prevented it from attaining any real service record.



Flying more than 520 mph and sporting two 20 mm machine cannons, this jet-kite might otherwise have given the B17's and the Avro Lancasters a bit of a headache. After the war, eleven captured He 152's were taken back to Britain for tests and evaluation, of which this specimen is the only surviving.

On the bomber side, two cockpits are on display, one from a Handley Page, and one from a B17. Even fairly large machines like these seem to have offered their crew surprisingly little space and comfort.

Normandy landings

D-Day has its own room with maps, photo documentation and a video show. As far as I could tell, every step is covered. One problem may be that you simply don't have the time nor the patience to listen to it all, no matter how interesting it is.

Also Monty has his own room, being one of Great Britain's military masterminds, and with typical British fairness, his number one adversary Erwin Rommel has been granted his portrait hanging there.

Most people have seen the live footage where the Nazi insignia are blown from the front of the Berlin Reichstag, but I was surprised to find that Swastika-clawing eagle here. Allegedly it is the very same bronze bird, given as a present to an allied officer by a Russian colleague during those hectic days in May 1945.

The children's War

A whole section concerns itself with the impact that the hostile actions; the nightly raids and the fear had on the children of war. The separation from parents as they were sent to refuges in the countryside and daddy perhaps were already gone for war, the death of loved ones etc. I did not manage to see this exhibition, but it is definitely on the list.

Holocaust

One thing I deliberately avoided was the Holocaust story. I am absolutely no Holocaust-denier, but the whole issue is so horrible, so tragic, so getting-close-to-you that I could not take it in on top of the more boyish experiences the IWM has to offer. I reserved it for another day.

WW1

The Great War has its own floor, and is a grim reminder of the 20,000,000 souls - primarily soldiers - who died from 1914-1918. Horrible conditions in the trenches, intolerable losses at every attempt to advance - and nothing gained in the end.

The rest

You cannot finish the IWM London in one visit. I tried, but ran out of energy and

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concentration; there is simply so much to see, to take pictures of and to touch (if you are allowed). My comfort is that it constitutes a second visit... and a third ;-)

Hand-on experiences

However, you should not miss the **Blitz Experience** nor the **Trench Experience**. Both are sort of hands-on where you in the first instance are taken back to a London air raid shelter, that will rock and tremble as the 500 pound bombs hit the buildings above you. After the "all clear"

The Cafe

A break is a must as there is much to see and your feet will need some rest. The Cafe provides various warm and cold dishes, drinks and coffee. Not too cheap, but then again, the admittance was free ;-)

The Shop

All conceivable gadgets are available in the museum shop, replicas, posters, toys, games (bought a deck of cards myself), chocolate, tea - and of course a reasonable selection of books and music. A fine place to end your visit.

Atlantic Wall, Denmark: Fully equipped Nazi bunkers resurface after 64 years

During the five year occupation of Denmark, some 8000 concrete bunkers of various size were constructed along the Danish shoreline and inland to form part of Hitler's Atlantic Wall. After the war the bunkers were emptied by the authorities who removed all weaponry, followed by scrap yards who took most of the metal; doors, embrasures, ovens, etc., and finally by local residents who took the furniture and teared down the wooden wall lining to burn in the cold winter of 1945-46.

Sixty four years on, in May this year, four of these bunkers resurfaced during a punishing storm. That in itself is not such an unusual thing, as the west coast of Denmark is prone to coastal erosion and sand drift. In fact, the coast changes shape all the time, but in this case a unique discovery was made; the bunkers were fully furnished as they were left in 1945!



has sounded, you are taken through the burning streets, filled with rubble and debris, and where trapped people cry out from the ruins for help. Fairly realistic, I believe, but not too scary - except maybe for small kids.

In the Trench Experience you are out there in the front line with the boys. You prepare for an assault on enemy lines and listen to the sarge as he tell you how to take cover in a shell crater if you are hit by enemy fire, use your first-aid kit and wait for the paramedics to find you. You see, hear and smell the war first hand.

Pretty unnerving, that is ;-)

The Hard Facts

Place:

Imperial War Museum, London
Location: Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ

Phone:

+44 (0)20 7416 5000

E-mail:

mail@iwm.org.uk

Web:

www.iwm.org.uk

Opening hours:

Daily 10:00 am - 6:00 p.m.

Admission:

Free

Nearest Tube station:

Lambeth North or Elephant & Castle

RATING: ● ● ● ● ●



The first discovery was done by two young boys who wormed into one bunker, where the entrance was partly accessible, compelled to do so after they found an old bucket in front of the entrance. Their findings, reported by a local newspaper, immediately triggered action from local history buffs as well as archeologists and museum authorities, and an organized excavation was initiated, spearheaded by Jens Andersen, Denmark's leading expert on German WW2 fortifications.

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First on the scene was Tommy Cassoe, a local electrician and aficionado of bunkers since childhood. He was stunned; *"It was like entering the heart of a pyramid with mummies all around. I dug a tunnel through the sand that was blocking the entrance to the bunkers and what I saw blew me away: it was as if the German soldiers had left only yesterday,"* he said.

Experts and archaeologists also hastened to the scene, and, working together with Cassoe, emptied the structures within a few days of boots, undergarments, socks, military stripes, mustard and aquavit bottles, books, ink pots, stamps featuring Hitler, medicines, soda bottles, keys, hammers and other objects.



It was a race against the clock because of the risk of looters. Genuine WW2 artifacts can bring home a lot of money, so initially, the experts deliberately lied to keep raiders at bay, saying that there was only one furnished bunker and that it was guarded around the clock, which wasn't true. But even so there were two attempted break-ins before the goods were removed.

"What's so fantastic is that we found them completely furnished with beds, chairs, tables, communication systems and the personal effects of the soldiers who lived inside," says Jens Andersen, who is curator of the Hanstholm museum that specializes in Nazi fortifications.

The intense coverage in both Danish and European media has rendered the beach a popular attraction this summer. Although the bunkers are now completely emptied and the objects brought to a nearby museum for conservation, thousands of tourists have had a peek into the massive

concrete shelters to see for themselves how the soldiers lived.

One such tourist is 81 old Gerhard Saalfeld who have held family holidays in this area through many years and often sought for the bunkers in the dunes without being able to locate them. The interest for the Second World War is generally increasing these years, but Mr. Saalfeld have had a special reason for his tenacity; for four months in 1945 he was stationed here as a soldier in the Wehrmacht (German Army) and had his quarters in one of the now rediscovered bunkers.



Upon revisiting the bunker where he lived, the elderly gentleman was clearly moved; *"I had never thought things would be this*



well preserved", he said as he was pointing out the

various installations including his very own bunk still hanging in its rusty chains, adding; *"Everything is almost as we left it."*

He has no explanation as to why these bunkers were never discovered until now, but recall that the battle against the drifting sand was a daily nuisance; *"We had to clear the entrances for sand each and every day, it was a drag!"*

It is not yet determined what to do with all the relics and objects, but a qualified guess would be an exhibition of all the objects at a major museum, followed by dispersal to the various bunker museums that Denmark can pride itself of. Some people believe that the bunkers that are



Gerhard Saalfeld's bunker

scattered over the beaches of the west coast of Denmark should be blown up and removed (and indeed, a few attempts were done post-war), but apart from the tremendous and costly task that would be, one local newspaper puts it all in the right perspective by stating that; there is no denying that the Second World War *did* take place and thus these buildings form part of our common European history.

Which is exactly why they need to be preserved.

How to find Houvig

The map on Google Earth is now outdated in the sense that the bunkers in question were still hidden when the photo was taken. However, finding the spot is easy enough. Simply go to coordinates:

56° 09' 38.49" N - 8° 07' 03.79" E

which puts you on top of the 636a fire control bunker. The excavated bunkers are a few (50 - 75) meters north of this.



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The War Tourist Newsletter is totally apolitical and does not intend to glorify war or neglect the suffering or hardship brought upon mankind as the result of war, but strive to bring articles and information of interest and use for the battlefield and fortification tourist of today.

The Rating System

Each location visited will be rated using the following gradient, where five white dots constitute the best possible score and five black dots - well, not so good.

- (5) An absolute must-see
- (4) Absolutely worth your while
- (3) An OK experience
- (2) A tad stale, perhaps
- (1) Make no detours to see this
- (0) Read a book instead

Rating represent authors private opinion.

The Featured Website

In each issue a website will be featured. Readers are encouraged to suggest candidates. To nominate a website to be a War Tourist Featured, send URL to kingpin@wartourist.eu along with reasons for nomination. Basic admittance criteria are:

- Apolitical
- Non-racial, non-sexist
- Serious and informative (or amusing)
- Related to (war) tourism
- Preferably non-commercial

War Tourist Featured Website • August 2008



This months choice was an easy and obvious one since there were no other candidates (because this is the first issue of TWT ;-).

This is my English language website: www.wartourist.eu which concerns itself with the remnants of the mighty Atlantic Wall, focusing

on Denmark - and to a more modest extend - also on Norway. Like all viable websites, it is under constant construction and frequent update. My long-term goal is to embrace more and more locations, starting in the two present countries, but gradually expanding to others too.

In next issue:

- Norway; A coastal battery on a fairytale island - a real must-see
- A Coastal Battery in Denmark; Traveling along the Danish Atlantic Wall in a series of articles
- Visiting Varde Artillery Museum.
- Houvig update (if any news).

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- You are a devotee of Europe's battlefields and great fortifications - from Hastings to the Cold War.
- You may have your own relevant website or forum, or you are a contributing member to one or more forums.
- You are a history buff, looking for like-minded people to exchange words, photos, links and hints.

If you can relate to this, you may find it worth to check out The War Tourist group on Plaxo Pulse:

<http://bunker.plaxogroups.com>