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The Coalhouse Fort Project was started in the 1980's to maintain, restore and promote Coalhouse Fort. The Fort was built between 1861 and 1874 and remained in service until 1956 when Coastal Defence was abolished.

[Open Days For 2007](#)

This page lists the open days for 2007, opening hours and admission prices.

[How to Find Us](#)

This page shows directions to Coalhouse Fort, East Tilbury, Essex, RM18 8PB. Directions are shown by road, rail and bus.

[Membership Information](#)

How to join the Coalhouse Fort Project Team.

[Fort Plans](#)

Plans of the fort showing magazines, casemates and roof positions.

[Recommended Reading List](#)

This list, although not exhaustive, lists some of the books that cover Coastal Defences in England and Wales. Some are out of print due to their age but they can be found in libraries and second hand book shops.

[Recommended Booklets](#)

As with the reading list it is not exhaustive. Most forts such as Nothe in Weymouth, Newhaven in Sussex and Landguard in Suffolk all produce their own leaflets and books about themselves. ISBN numbers are shown where available.

[Links Page](#)

This page includes links to other sites I have found useful in studying forts and associated defences.

[Guided tour](#)

These pictures follow the

V1 (flying bomb) Vengeance weapon site, Hazebrouck

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Sometimes finding [parking at an airport](#) is impossible...I hate driving around [JFK airport parking](#) lot and not being able to find a spot...Making [parking reservations](#) is the perfect solution to this problem! Before you head out for a trip make [discount airport parking reservations](#). It's so easy and it will save you a ton of time when you get to the airport [parking](#) garage!

The descriptions and plans of buildings have been taken from the signs that guide the visitor around this remarkably well preserved site hidden in the woods.

[Click Here to see map of the area](#)

From 1942, the German Air Force, The Luftwaffe, developed an unmanned aircraft, a flying bomb known as the V1. This was one of two weapons being developed, the other being a stratospheric rocket. This was to be the V" and Hitler hoped it would be used to destroy London, force the UK to surrender and enable him to concentrate his efforts on attacking the USSR.

In order to launch the V1, the Germans begin the construction in the spring of 1943 in France of four large bunkers and 96 bases. These were located from the Cotenin region to the Belgium border. The site at Bois des Huit-Rues was chosen for one of the bases. The construction sites employed German specialists, paid French and Belgium volunteers as well as slave labour on several sites. Prisoners were also used from the Buchenwald concentration camp.

Informed by the Resistance network about the creation of a new weapon, the British photograph suspect sites and then in November 1943 launch a vast bombing campaign, called Operation Crossbow, on the bunkers and 96 bases.

The Germans realize that these bases can be located to easily. They decide to abandon them and use them as a decoy to attract allied bombers; only a few of them were to be used in operation. Around a hundred new bases, comprising few permanent and easily camouflaged buildings, are built during the spring of 1944.

Delayed by the allied landings in Normandy, the flying bomb campaign against London begins on the 13th June 1944. the aircraft was christened V1 (Vergeltungswaffe eins, retaliation or vengeance weapon no 1) by the Nazi propaganda department. During the 80 days (June 13th to Sept 1st 1944) 8,892 V1's are catapulted from the North of France towards London - 2,300 reach their target. The number of victims is high (6000 people killed), destruction is considerable and yet the British do not succumb to panic.

The liberation of Northern France by the allied forces at the beginning of September 1944 puts an end to the great V1 offensive against London.



Le Bois des Huit-Rues houses a group of buildings connected by concrete tracks. The Bois is one of the 96 first generation sites built by the Germans in 1943 to launch V1's against London. The peculiar shape of the three large storage buildings as seen from the air, led the British to christening them "ski sites". Despite heavy bombing by the allies, the site remains in very good condition and most of the buildings

route taken by the guided tour. The tours take about an hour, during which you will hear an abridged history of the fort from its conception until 1956 when coastal defence was abolished.

Pictures From 1983

This gallery contains pictures of the fort from 1983 when the restoration was begun. It also includes comparison pictures from 2006 and will include photos of various events throughout the year.

Pictures From 1984

These pictures show the progress made after one years work by a dedicated group of volunteers

Pictures From 1985

These pictures were taken in December 1985 and show further improvements made in the previous year.

Pictures From 2005

These pictures were taken during my first year as a guide at Coalhouse Fort. They show the various defences installed during the Victorian Period, WWI and WWII.

Victory in Europe Day 2005

Pictures taken during our VE Day commemorations in 2005. A number of military vehicles attended along with re-enactment groups from both allied and axis units representing some of those who fought during WWII.

Victory in Europe Day 2005 (page 2)

More pictures of vehicles and volunteers that took part in the commemorations.

Classic and Vintage Bike Meet 26th March 2006

The first open day of Coalhouse Fort for 2006 was accompanied by the Classic and Vintage Bike Meet

Fort Open Day April 30th 2006

During the open day, a number of military vehicles made an appearance along with their owners or operators who were on hand to answer questions and show off their vehicles.

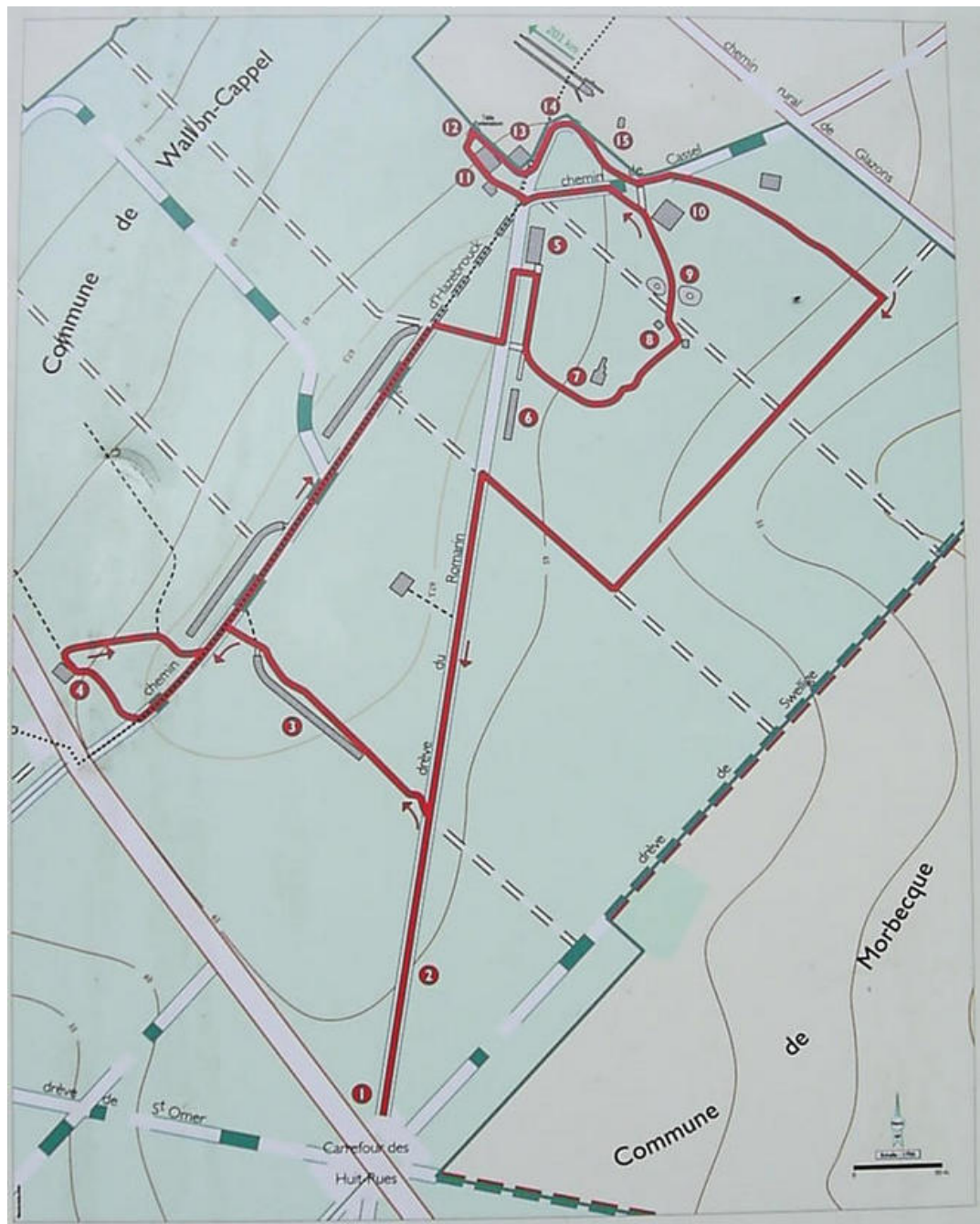
Classic and Vintage Car Day 30th July 2006

Coalhouse Fort hosted its annual Classic Car Day on a fine summers day, and included cars from Anglias to Zephyrs, via Jaguars, Rovers and a Skoda!

Classic and Vintage Bike Show 8th October 2006

A few pictures of some of the bikes that attended this ever

survive.



The plan above shows the layout of the V1 launch site.

popular event.

Halloween Event 2006
Coalhouse Fort is once again hosting its annual Halloween event. On the 27th and 28th October the fort will be home to ghosts and goblins so come along and have a frightfully good evening. Be there and be scared!!! The longest ghost walk in Essex???

Classic Vehicle Day 29th July 2007

Our annual event proved to be our best open day of 2007. The vehicles turned out immaculate as always and even the sun shone, a rare site in 2007!! A group of Triumphs were shown together with Morris Minors, Ford Escorts and even a Rolls Royce.

Shoeburyness Gunnery School

The Shoeburyness Gunnery School was closed down a number of years ago to make way for a housing estate. Some of the emplacements that were, for many years on MOD land can now be reached.

Shoeburyness Heavy Quick Firing Battery

This battery would have mounted two 6" breech loaders and two 12lb quick firing guns. The guns were served with two shell lifts, one for each gun feeding from magazines below. Both guns were served by a common cartridge lift.

Shornemead Fort, Kent

These pictures show the remains of Shornemead Fort, one of the sister forts to Coalhouse. It is similar in size, but a mirror image being on the other side of the Thames. It was largely destroyed with explosives used by the Army School of Demolitions.

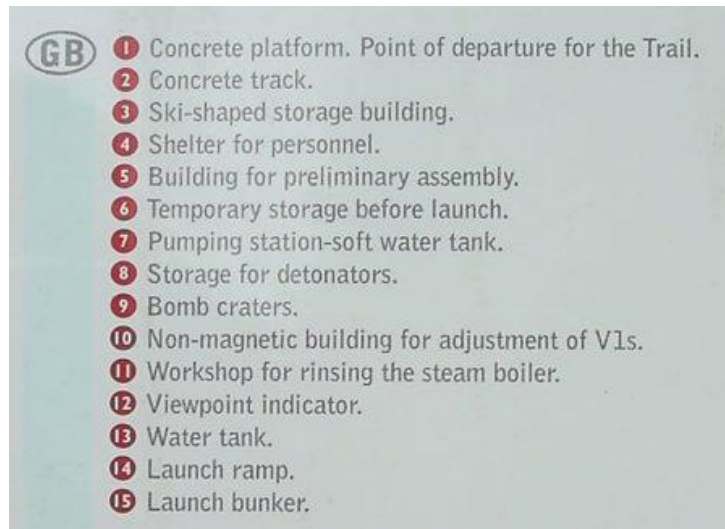
New Tavern Fort, Gravesend, Kent

New Tavern was built to protect London from invasion by an enemy using the River Thames. Henry VIII had a blockhouse built nearby c1539 to cross fire with others at West Tilbury, East Tilbury, Milton and Higham.

Maunsell Army Sea Forts
These pictures were taken on the 21st September 2003 from the Pocahontas out of Tilbury Riverside.

Satellite pictures from Google Earth.

These pictures show a number of Forts and Batteries on the Isle of Wight



The list above relates to the plan of the site. Numbered boards are located at key points around the area and explain the different buildings and structures.

1. concrete platform at the beginning of the concrete track that leads around the site.



3. Ski shaped storage building.



This large building was intended for the storage of a dozen V1's placed on transport carts without their wings attached. The curve of the entrance was to enable the reduction of the destructive blast effect of an explosion in the event of bombing.

As seen from the air, the construction of this building has the shape of a ski placed on its side. The British therefore nicknamed the first generation V1 launch bases "ski sites". Three buildings of this type existed at

and around Portsmouth viewed from space illustrating the various layouts and forms these structures take.

More satellite pictures
These Google Earth satellite pictures are of the Forts and Batteries in the Plymouth area.

Landguard Fort
Landguard Fort is situated at the mouth of the River Orwell opposite Harwich Redoubt in Essex. As Felixstowe is an important deep water terminal the area has always been well defended

Newhaven Fort, East Sussex
Newhaven is a Palmerston fort built as a result of the 1859 Royal Commission and was the first to use a large amount of concrete in its construction. It is run by Lewes Council and is open to the public for a number of weeks each year.

Newhaven Fort, East Sussex
With so many things to see at Newhaven, I have decided to include another page of pictures,

Newhaven, East Sussex, Emergency Battery
These three gun emplacements lie approximately 800m to the West of Newhaven Fort. They were installed during WWII to mount 3 x 6" breech loaders. The battery is in very good condition with most of the original buildings intact but bricked up.

Puckpool Mortar Battery, Isle of Wight
A large and well preserved battery looking out across the Spit Banks between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. Built between 1863 and 1865. Re-worked in 1889 and again between 1901 and 1945.

Brean Down Fort, Somerset
Brean Down Fort, Near Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset. One of 'Palmerston's Follies' built as a result of the 1859 Royal Commission.

High Angle Battery, Portland, Dorset
The High Angle Battery, Portland is situated outside Verne Citadel overlooking Weymouth Bay. The Battery was built to mount 9" Rifle Muzzle Loaders firing high angle shots to penetrate the thinner deck armour of the enemies ships

Wormhoudt Massacre Site
On Tuesday 28th May 1940, a number of young soldiers -

each launch complex and all three survive within the woods.



mostly British - were massacred in cold blood by the SS of the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler.

V1 (flying bomb) Vengeance weapon site, Hazebrouck

In the woods near Ebbingham to the West of Hazebrouck, Northern France are the remains of a V1 fixed launching ramp. The V1 (flying bomb) was launched against London and resulted in the deaths of over 6,000 people

Corton, Suffolk defences

As the East Coast was so heavily defended during WWII, a large number of structures have survived. Several pillboxes, a tank trap and an anti-tank gun emplacement can be found along the Corton Beaches.

Pictures of Coalhouse Fort

Photographs of Coalhouse showing: Depression Position Finder (Battery Observation Post): WWII Gun houses: Degaussing monitor position: 1943 Bofors position: Loop-holed firing position:

Green Goddess at Coalhouse Fort

Coalhouse Fort has taken delivery of a Bedford Green Goddess. This Goddess is fully servicable and will be added to the resident vehicles based at the fort throughout the year.

East Essex Aviation Society

The EEAS has been housed in the historic Martello Tower at Point Clear since it's first opening to visitors in 1986. The collection formed around the recovered wreck of a P51 Mustang of the U.S. 479th Fighter Group

Coalhouse Fort, East Tilbury Halloween Charity Event 2007

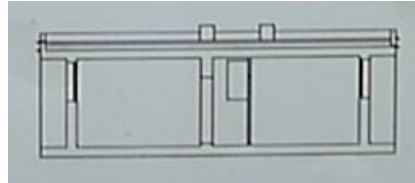
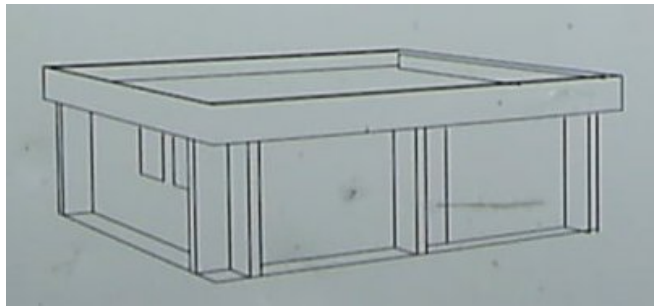
On the 26th and 27th October 2007, Coalhouse Fort will be hosting its annual Halloween Event. This has proved popular in the past and we are looking forward to a good weekend this year. If you run a charity stall would you like to take part.



The picture below shows clearly the marks left as a result of an allied bombing raid.



4. shelter for personnel.

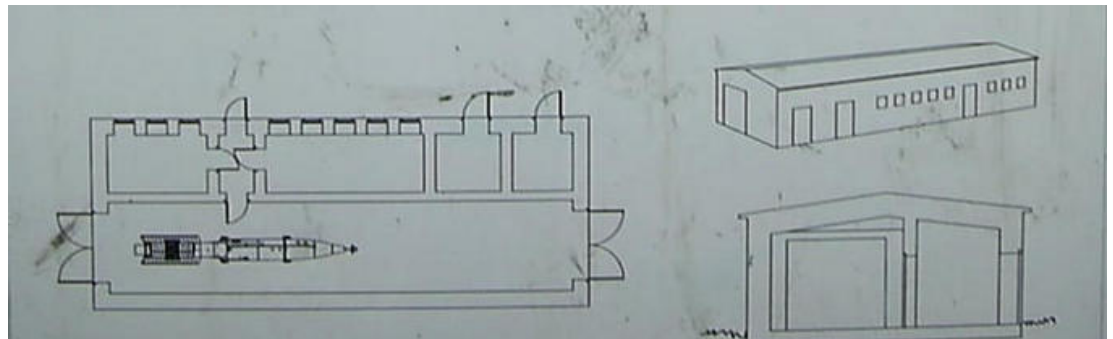


Each launch site included three or four half-buried shelters protected by a concrete slab, which would be used as barracks for the troops in charge of launch preparation and firing operations. Three completed shelters and one in the process of construction exist in the bois des huit-rues. Each shelter included two rooms capable of housing a command post, a dormitory, a canteen or an infirmary. Soldiers in charge of the implementation of the V1's belonged to a special regiment of the Luftwaffe, the 155 anti-aircraft regiment.





5. building for preliminary assembly



A vast concrete platform enabled unloading of V1 trucks on arrival in the launch complex. Provided with two wide doors at each end, this building contained workshops. It was intended for operations concerning the assembly of parts of the V1, with the exception of the wings that remained on the side of the transport cart. Once the assembly had been completed, the V1's were directed to the ski-shaped storage buildings (already seen at point 3) awaiting launch.



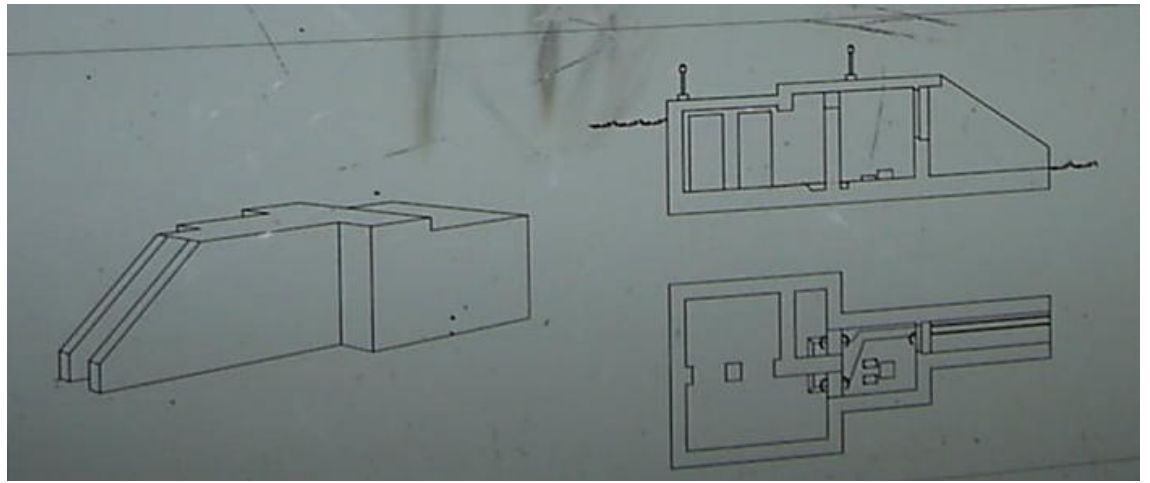
6. temporary storage before launch.



Whilst awaiting dispatch to different buildings in the launch site, this building enabled the temporary storage of either transport carts or V1's after having been unloaded from the trucks.



7. pumping station soft water tank.

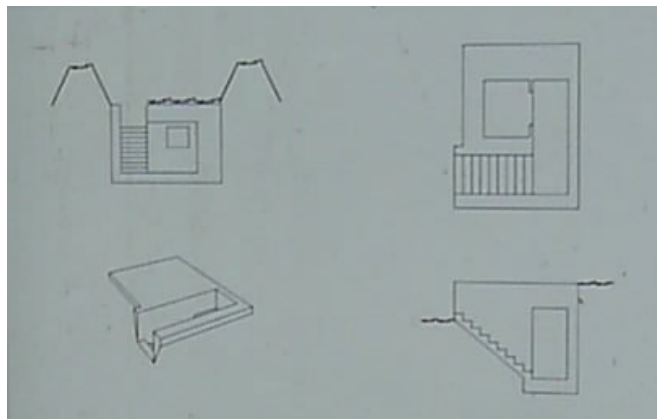


This half-buried construction is a pumping station. Each V1 site was equipped with a soft-water tank to avoid scaling the the machinery used for rinsing the launch ramp after a V1 launch if hard water had been used. This water was used in the building that can be seen at point 11.





8. storage for detonators



two small half-buried constructions enabled the storage of the detonators for the V1's explosive charge.



10. non-magnetic building for the adjustment of V1's

These are the ruins of a vast square-shaped building, the Richthaus. The V1 came here from one of the storage buildings to undergo final adjustments before being launched: attaching the wings, fitting of detonators for the explosive charge, adjustment of the flight guidance system to a precise route. This final operation could not be carried out in the presence of magnetic disturbances. This is why the structure of

the Richthaus contained no metal components. The door hinges were made of wood or non-ferrous metals. The foundations of the building included part of the heating, part of the pipes are still visible. The Richthaus was established on precisely the same axis as the launch ramp.





11. workshop for rinsing the steam boiler

The floor of this building/workshop comprised an extremely sophisticated system to evacuate fluids. It included three rooms:

- one- for washing the catapults steam boiler (the dampferzeuger) with large quantities of water, after each launch. The purpose of this was to eliminate all residuals of chemical products used in the operation(hydrogen potassium permanganate). The steam boiler, placed on a cart, was attached to the base of the ramp at the moment of launching.
- one- housing a compressor for a high pressure water hose to clean the boiler and around the ramp.
- one- used for pressurising the compressed air spheres loaded on the V1 and enabling functioning of its guidance instrument.





14. launch ramp

After its arrival in the launch complex, the V1 was placed on a cart. When it came out of the Richthaus, the V1 then had to be placed on the launch ramp. Made up of metal elements and 48m in length, this ramp was tilted to 6 degree from horizontal. The function of the breezeblock walls, still visible today, was to shield from debris; they are positioned in the direction of the centre of London.

In the ramp, a tube enabled the movement of a piston fixed by a hook to the body of the V1. The piston was projected along the tube with considerable acceleration due to extremely high-pressure steam obtained by chemical reaction between hydrogen peroxide and potassium permanganate.





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