

CERN Visit (1st – 4th May 2016) Report

by Stewart Coulter, visit organiser

22 REMS members and 18 guests visited CERN between 1 and 4 May. The official visit took place in the afternoon of Tues 3 May and consisted of an introductory talk (1h) followed by visits to SM-18, the superconducting magnet test facility and the CERN Control Centre. The former involved a lot of physics, engineering and cryogenics, the latter is relatively new and is where all stages of the beam are now controlled from a single room allowing controllers to talk to each other.

That same morning an extra visit was arranged to ATLAS through UCL contacts (where the group photograph was taken) and a talk was given to the group by a former Sixth Form student of the organiser. This was a well pitched general introduction to Particle Physics, well pitched since not all participants were familiar with the field. Participants had time to visit The Globe and Microcosm exhibitions over an extended lunch break. In the evening we went to Edelweiss restaurant in town for a convivial, celebratory fondue to the sound of cow bells, the Alpine horn, saw and other unexpected instruments!

The following morning Mick Storr, the former Head of Visits and one-time office mate of Tim Berners-Lee offered a walk around the ancient heart of CERN to about half a dozen persons. We saw the first stages of the beam and LEIR which was then where the first anti-hydrogen was made. A similar number accepted an invitation to hear talks on the medical applications of particle physics and on accelerators. Mick also explained future plans at CERN - CLIC and the proposal for a 100km electron-positron ring which the LHC would feed into, an idea that is being given more attention after a period when the idea of a linear collider seemed to dominate. A decision should be made within 5 years.

On the Monday about half the group took the morning boat up the lake to Yvoire, one of the top 100 villages in France, lunch and back on a Belle Epoque steamer. Others visited Geneva itself, Europe's top City Break destination in 2014 and 2015.

The beam was off during our stay due to the well publicised rodent intervention! This meant screens were blank but otherwise the incident had little effect on the visit.

The accommodation was at the on-site hotel and was very comfortable. This gave us access to the restaurant - the networking and communication heart of CERN.

In the past a visit could be booked 6 months in advance and accommodation 3 months. New policies this year meant both had to be booked simultaneously and we were limited to a 3 night stay. At one point this was reduced to 1 night but we had agreed 3 nights. In fact the visit we were offered was a cancellation the day following our original request, such high priority is now given to visiting students. This is a sound policy, even if it makes it hard for groups like us. I did offer a 2017 visit for those who could not make it this year - we shall see. To ease any future visits, I spoke to both CERN and the hotel reception but to little avail. In fact since starting on this I have heard from the hotel. Any such visit, if it happens, is likely to be subject to taking a cancellation with time at the hotel limited, though by making extra visits official I hope to justify a longer stay. To be decided.

The visit was very well received by participants, several of whom had worked at CERN in the past, for some it was a first visit.

One final thought - if a brief item was written for *Physics World* with a photograph or two, it could provide some very positive and free publicity for REMS. I think it could be justified.