

Institute of Physics – London & South East Branch – Retired Members Section

Visit to Battle of Britain Bunker, Uxbridge and Denham airfield Wednesday 9 September 2015

This visit has been organised by Stewart Coulter.

NB: Please be warned - the bunker lies 60' underground and access is by 76 steps, there is no elevator. Offers of lifts from and back to Hillingdon tube station to whoever needs them would be much appreciated.

THE VISIT

This visit complements Tony Manning's visit to Bentley Priory (BP) in March of this year nicely. BP is where overall air defence of the nation was controlled. No. 11 Group – the Battle of Britain Bunker (BoBB) controlled London and the SE. Much of the technical information will be common to both visits. After the 2h visit and in keeping with the aviation theme, we will then drive 15 minutes to Denham Airfield for lunch at Biggles restaurant. After lunch we will take a brief tour of the airfield, before finishing at about 16:15.

THE BUNKER

This is where, during Churchill's visit on Sept 15 1940, he asked Parks "What other reserves have we?" to which Parks shot back "There are none." It was by chance that Churchill visited on the day that history later recognised as the turning point in the battle. A few days later in the Commons Churchill gave his famous *Never was so much...* speech. What a wordsmith he was. The bunker also acted as control centre during the Dunkirk Evacuation and the Normandy Landings.



We will be given a 1h guided tour of the Bunker where the plotting board is set as it was that day. We will hear about the Dowding system and the role of early radar, observers etc. After the introduction we will have another hour to view the large exhibition by ourselves.

Our choice of dates was limited since the bunker is frequently used for filming.

See: <http://www.raf.mod.uk/battleofbritainbunker/> and <http://friendsof11group.co.uk/> for more information.

GETTING THERE

The bunker is at UB10 0RN off Vine Lane on the site of the former RAF Uxbridge Base where T E Lawrence served. Just like Bentley Priory, the base was sold for development recently. There are signposts to the bunker once at Vine Lane. After you enter the site, turn left at 100m or so. You will see a Hurricane and a Spitfire next to the ample parking with plaques beneath describing their histories.

If travelling by public transport, Hillingdon station (no mainline, map wrong) on the Metropolitan and Piccadilly Line is your destination. The Oxford coaches stop there – the [Oxford Tube](#) and the [X90](#). If offering a lift there is plenty of waiting space next to the station, 5 minutes from the M25/M40 junction.

From the station turn right onto the far carriageway then turn right again at the traffic lights followed a very quick left turn. After 1km or so turn left at the end of a sweeping long right bend and ascend Honey Hill. Go straight over the 3 mini roundabouts and a bent sign beyond the third points to the entrance on the right.

If driving from London on A40 exit at Hillingdon, after Northolt airport. Go over lights followed by a very quick left turn, then follow from *After 1 km...* 3 lines above.

If driving via M25 take M40 direction London which becomes the A40. Take second exit B467 Uxbridge. That takes you up the ramp and you take 3rd exit. You pass between Uxbridge Common and Cricket Ground. Straight over the rndbt, past Uxbridge College and turn left at lights at end of bridge. At bottom of hill, as road sweeps left turn right into Honey Hill which becomes Vine Lane at the top of the hill. Go straight over the 3 mini roundabouts and a bent sign beyond the third points to the entrance on the right.

Refreshments will be available in the hut adjacent to the bunker from 10:30 and the visit commences at 11:00.

BIGGLES RESTAURANT

<http://www.bigglesrestaurant.com> which describes itself as *continental* is at UB9 5DE about 15 minutes drive away. The route is below. It is charmingly Italian with table service and a dessert trolley. Founded in 1985, little has changed since. We will stick to the set menu @ £19.95 + 10% for 3 courses excluding drinks and coffee which we can take outside on the lawn, watching aircraft movements if the weather is fine. When finished we will drive over to the other side of the airfield, a couple of minutes away for a brief tour of the hangars. Pre-ordering for the menu is not required. Whilst more expensive than normal, it is worth it.

PROGRAMME

10.30	Arrive, refreshments in hut adjacent to the bunker
11:00	1h guided tour of the Bunker followed by 1h free visit.
13:00	Depart for Denham airfield
13.30	Lunch at Biggles restaurant
15.30	Visit to airfield
16.15	Finish

COST £7:50. Pay for your own travel and food. This includes a small donation to the BoBB. If you wish to be more generous there is a collection as you leave.

CONTACTS

Before the visit: Stewart Coulter 01895 255576 / 07747 800837 stewartcoulter.rems@gmail.com

On morning of visit: Stewart Coulter on 07747 800837 or Tony Colclough on 07930 171307



BoBB to Biggles: A magical mystery tour on today's aviation theme:

- Turn left back into Vine Lane. I used to live off right. We bought from the Director of the RAF Central Band during the war years. His Anderson bomb shelter made building a patio very difficult.
- Turn right at the 3rd mini roundabout into Blossom Way
- At T jctn at bottom of hill turn left into Sweetcroft Lane (I now live off right here!)
- At end of road turn left into Hercies Road. *Your sat nav would have cut the corner missing...*
- **Look out for the feature on the lhs of the drive at the last house on the lhs before the junction!**
- Continue to T junction (at top of hill) controlled by traffic lights, turn right.
- Carry straight on over rndbt, past Uxbridge Common and cricket ground unto A40 junction
- Turn left onto A40 below but keep left since you will take the first exit at the bottom of the hill.
- At end of slip road turn right under the now M40 and follow signs for the A40: 2nd rndbt, 2nd exit.
- After 1km on the A40 turn right at the lights onto the A412.
- Take left turn into Tilehouse Lane shortly after (peak-time only) traffic lights.
- After 2km and after Denham Golf Club look out for the signpost on the lhs which includes Biggles.

Incidentally, as you enter Tilehouse Lane you pass the sports ground of Martin Baker on the rhs whose factory is at the end of the turn at the (peak-time) traffic lights. M-B are world leaders in aircraft ejector seats. They also made the famous ejector seat for James Bond's DB5 and more significantly provided the landing system for ESA's (Cassini-) Huygens mission which made a soft landing on Saturn's moon Triton in 2005. Cilla Black lives off Tilehouse Lane but to return to our theme, Richard Baxter, WWII Supermarine Spitfire pilot and presenter of what should be *Today's World* by now, lived down the MB road in the very big house on the left.

I requested a visit to MB but their maximum was 8 and the proposed visit did not sound of great interest.

When returning to M40, turn left into Denham before the road returns you to the A40. The house before the church in this very pretty village is where John Mills, actor of many WWII parts, lived at the end of his life.

REPLY

How many lifts do you require (answer 0 if n/a)

If able to offer lifts, to how many persons?