

## Secretary's Annual Report 2006/07

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I submit my first report for the year just ended.

During the year we held 10 regular meetings and 2 special visits:-

**April 2006** - Martin Walton gave a very informative illustrated talk entitled "German Artillery in Jersey" and brought along some large ordinance to demonstrate the principles.

**May 2006** - Michael Ginns MBE led 40+ members of the CIOS on a ramble around the Esplanade area.

**June 2006** - Paul Burnal led 40+ members of the CIOS on a ramble around La Corbière.

**July 2006** - Michael Ginns MBE led 35+ members of the CIOS on a ramble around the north of St Ouen's Bay.

**Sept 2006** - An illustrated talk on Sark during the Occupation by Richard le Tissier.

**Oct 2006** - An excellent Annual Dinner at the Ommaroo attended by 40+ members including Chris Davies from the UK. Peter Tabb gave an entertaining after dinner talk.

**Nov 2006** - Jeremy Hamon gave an illustrated talk "Norway – it's not just the big guns".

**Dec 2006** - Simon Dodkins arranged his first Archives Evening. It was a great success with 50+ members reviewing a selection of our files.

**Jan 2007** - David Maindonald gave a comprehensive slide show comparing fortification photographs taken 25 years ago to the same locations today.

**Feb 2007** - A very interesting talk by Chris Addy at the War Tunnels Research Centre.

In addition, by special permission of property owners Mrs. Marion Pitt and Mrs. Jean Gavey we visited the L403 Bunker at Mont-à-l'Abbé (uncovered for the first time since 1951), and towards the end of the year paid a short visit to the former mushroom tunnels in St. Peter's Valley. Thanks to Matthew for organising the L403 visit and to Ian and Alan Chatterley for the tunnel trip.

As usual all the indoor meetings were followed by refreshments ably provided by Dave and Odette Gardner, with helpers, to whom all thirsty members are extremely grateful.

The CI Occupation Review for 2006 was published in Guernsey and *on time!* These were promptly hand-delivered or posted to members. I have met with Jerseypost, accompanied by a well-known local politician, to complain about the removal of surface and small packet postal services (still available in the UK and Guernsey!) Unfortunately, Jerseypost is not very interested in addressing these concerns, and seems to be adopting a "take it or leave it" attitude to its local customers. Consequently, to save money we will be posting this year's Review from the UK – ironically, it is even cheaper to post to a Jersey address *from* the UK than locally! To further help with costs, some will still be hand-delivered (and I would take this opportunity to thank all those who helped with this task in 2006).

We also re-published Archive Book No. 8. "The Organisation Todt and the Fortress Engineers in the Channel Islands" and sales have been very brisk, with over 100 being sold via the flyer sent to members during the year. Thank you to Matthew and Michael for the update and revision.

We have also seen articles published from members in 39/45 and The Armourer magazines during the year, amongst others. In May 2006 Richard Le Tissier published his book "Island Destiny", the story of Sark's Werner Rang.

At the start of 2006, Tourism had intimated that we were not opening the Noirmont Command Bunker often enough. During 2006 we have re-focussed on this, our flagship site. Openings have been made every week during the season, either on a Saturday/Sunday by the regular teams or on a Monday to coincide with Martin Walton's guided Blue Badge fortification walks. This, together with the dedication of members who open the other sites in our care, has seen a stabilisation in our income from bunker openings. If you would like to help in restoration or manning the door or bookstalls, please speak to any member of the Committees or members involved. All those that open our fortifications will confirm how rewarding it is to speak with tourists, locals and other visitors about their favourite hobby!

Whilst mentioning visitors we were extremely surprised to have a visit for the first time since 1945 by Herr Engelbert Hoppe, the last commander of the M19 bunker at La Corbière. Engelbert was very impressed by the Society's efforts, and is returning in May this year. Other visitors have included Rene Roede (from Fortress Books) with 20 "bunkerfans" whom we exhausted during a weekend visit. Martyn Garnier and Paul Burnal have entertained various Forces groups and other organisations – we even had a visit to La Corbière by a Police Social club from the UK! Specialist holidays are being organised more and more, we need to be able to cater for them in a professional and informative way.

In January 2007 further excavations took place at Noirmont – of ammunition bunker number "VI" (as the revealed inscription shows) and a barrack hut position, under Paul's guidance. In February 2007 further excavations at the Sechsschartenturm bunker at La Corbière took place under Malcolm Amy's supervision.

During 2006 a number of fortifications were "threatened" by development. The first was the 4.7cm Pak K36(t) mounting of R.N. Richtfeuer, on the Island Site, which was removed even though we had been assured it would be preserved in situ. Only quick thinking by Matthew Costard, who saw the jackhammers knocking it down on his way to work in February, saved the day. An immediate halt was called to the demolition and after close co-operation between Planning, the architects and the Society, involving several on-site meetings, a satisfactory compromise was reached. The wall was taken down, but the stones were carefully numbered, and the mounting renovated. It was back in the rebuilt wall outside the new tourism office by August – very close to its original position – and the adjacent observation slit was also reinstated. Also under threat has been observation post M3 at Plemont. We responded to the initial development plans for the area, by requesting its protection, and although those plans have now been withdrawn, we are keeping a watchful eye on any further developments. Also during the year a scheme to turn the 606 searchlight bunker at La

Corbière into a café was proposed. The Society made detailed representations to Planning, and the scheme has been rejected on both historical and environmental grounds.

Following last year's AGM your Committee has looked at working closer with the Guernsey CIOS. However, whilst some links have been established we have decided not to participate in any direct joint initiatives, such as the newsletter they produce.

I have also tried to increase the information for members, and have started a monthly meeting reminder and news service via e-mail. Unfortunately, there are insufficient resources to supply this solely via the postal service (cost being a major factor!). Those members who do not have access to a computer will continue to receive posted circulars, but I would urge those who do use e-mails to supply me with their contact details with this year's membership renewal so that I can add you to my email list. I hope to extend this to the UK and worldwide members during 2007.

**Donations** – During the final weeks of 2007 we were very fortunate to have donated a large memorial shield relating to MG Btn 16. Other donations include a binocular case.

We have also started a photobank initiative with the aim of having photographs available to researchers and members wishing to give talks. So far we have over 1,000 pictures mainly from the 1960's-1980's, and more are welcome, especially if you have any taken during the 1940's/50's. Thank you to the following people who have contributed: Billy Goode, Geoff Burbridge, David Maindonald, Phil Davis and Michael Ginns. We will need to look at mechanisms for accessing these pictures as the project grows.

Membership peaked at 500 during the year but fell back slightly as a few did not renew (41). However, these have largely been replaced by new members and we end the year with a total of 486. Your Committee is recommending that the annual subscription remains at the following levels: Single member £15 p.a., Couple £22.50, Junior (under 16) £11.25, Family £22.50 (plus £6.00 for each child), Overseas Members EUR30/US\$30/£20.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has helped during the past year, and who may not have been mentioned by name. We have great plans for 2007, including a special Noirmont weekend in June to mark 30 years of bunker preservation, and we hope to see you at our planned events throughout the coming year.

Jeremy Hamon  
Secretary  
01 March 2007