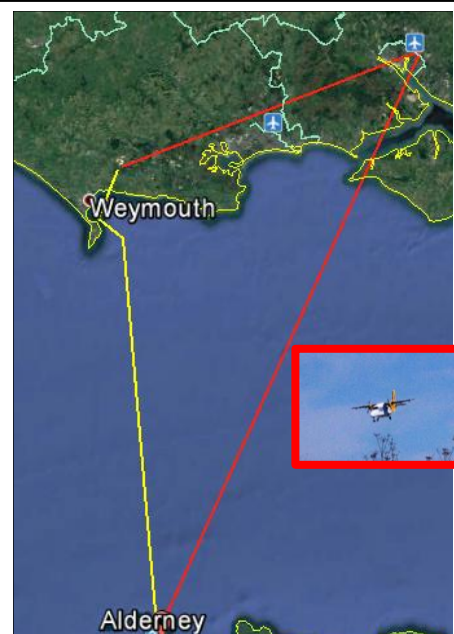




# Lunching in minefields Alderney 2016



In 2015 Louie (my canine cabin boy) joined me in a cross Channel cruise, Portland to Alderney. We had a great time finding about the World War 2 Nazi Occupation and really enjoyed the peace and laid back pace of our nearest Channel Island, only 65 miles away. So, in 2016, with a genuine interest in military history, it was a no brainer to return, this time with my super wife Laura giving Louie a separate holiday in his favourite kennels.



**Day 1 – The Channel Crossing.** Cast off from RNSA (Portland) mooring single handed at 0800hrs having loaded up and slept aboard the previous night. Bob's departure was 2 days prior to Laura's who planned to join the boat at Braye flying across with Alderney's own "Aurigny" airline from Southampton airport to avoid the mal de mer.

The day time Channel passage was comfortable, benefitting from good weather and a good westerly breeze enabling a good constant speed with both sails unfurled for most of the 10 hour journey.

The weather was forecast to deteriorate later that evening and was forecasted to be uncomfortably windy for the next few days thus the 2 day early departure for Bob and yacht Moonlight.

Good visibility contributed to a very safe, uneventful crossing of the shipping lanes and so Moonlight arrived at Braye (Alderney's harbour) early evening.



Moonlight was anchored in the **east** of the harbour for the first 2 nights.

**Day 2 – At anchor** The wind had picked up over night but Moonlight was anchored well and holding securely.

Food is quite expensive in Alderney so we took a week's rations over in the boat which included 4 days fresh/frozen in the cool box. Additional fresh food and ice was purchased as necessary and we ate out twice.

The "Braye Chippy" less than 100 metres from the sailing club pontoon is really good and a worth a visit . Eat in or eat outside on the garden tables with a great view.

Bob tidied up the boat, cleaned the dinghy in preparation for Laura's arrival and waited for the wind to drop.



**Day 3 – On mooring waiting for Laura.** After 2 nights, "Moonlight" was moved from the anchorage to a sheltered visitor mooring in the **west** of the harbour to await for the incoming flight at 1900hrs. The tidal range at that time was 9 metres so 60 metres of rode was deployed, Bob being so pleased he'd fitted a new powered windlass in 2015!

Braye's harbour master RIB crew are always on hand around the moorings and kindly assisted Moonlight onto the mooring as the permanent mooring warp was quite short and the wind was still fresh making a single handed connection slightly difficult.

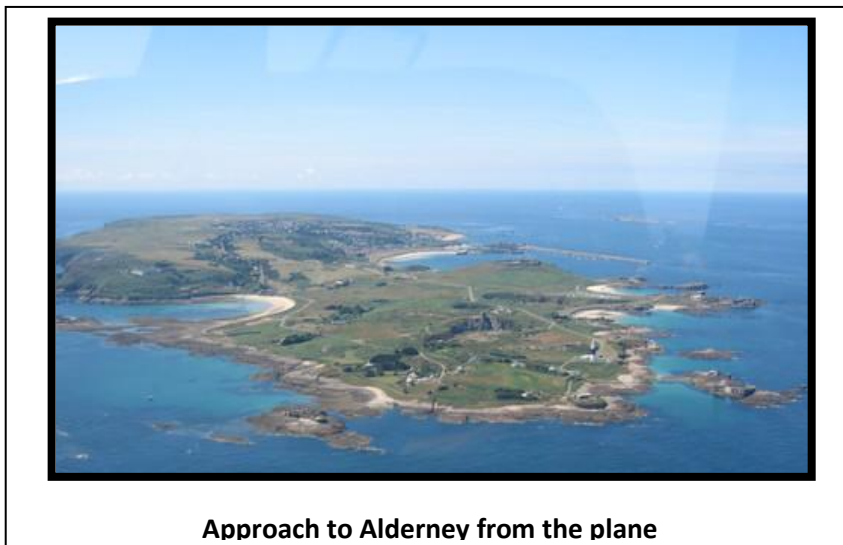
The harbour master advised Bob that it was possible to pay harbour dues on leaving rather than in advance which was quite useful as Moonlight's departure date was weather dependant once Laura returned to Southampton.

Bikes were stowed aboard for the crossing and both bikes fitted comfortably in the saloon tied down with rag ties.

**Lesson learnt: Lower the sprayhood and remove the bike's front wheel for easy loading and unloading.**

The bikes were taken ashore in the tender (one at a time) and chained to the metal fence at the top of the Sailing Club pontoon ramp. This gave us excellent, secure access and saved us local bike hire charges. (although the local electric bikes looked like good fun ☺)

1900hrs, a happy Laura flew in on time. Great flight – only 25 minutes from Southampton (£140 return).



**Approach to Alderney from the plane**

10 minutes in a taxi brought Laura to our pre arranged Sailing Club rendezvous where we paid our compliments, supped some ale and chatted with Tracey, one of the club's bar ladies. We gleaned lots of useful information which served us well for our adventurous week together. Tea and homemade cake each afternoon on the club's sunny promenade deck became part of our laid back, daily routine. The club doors are open 24/7 just in case visitors cannot make it back to their yacht late at night.

A scan of the many dozens of visiting club burgees hanging in the club bar didn't find a RNSA (Portland) burgee which seemed a bit strange as Alderney and Weymouth have close ties back to World War 2 when fleeing Alderney evacuees landed at and returned from Weymouth for resettlement elsewhere in the UK.

**Must ask the Branch Captain to second a proposal to present Alderney Sailing Club with our burgee in 2017!**

After a few wets we needed feeding so about 2100hrs we excused ourselves and set off to the nearest pub, "The Divers." Sadly, the kitchen had just closed ☹ but fortunately they took pity on us and made our supper while we had another few wets. "The Divers" is a popular sports pub near Braye harbour with a lovely sunny terrace in the morning which overlooks the super sandy, Braye beach.







The long day was catching us up so we powered up the tender and headed back to Moonlight for a good night's sleep. A water taxi runs till closing time (£1 per person each way) but we like to take our tender. Not only does it save a few quid on taxis but it allows us to explore when anchored. A dinghy pontoon is conveniently positioned just below the Sailing Club and gives access to the dustbins, showers, toilets, launderette, drinking water resupply, harbour master and Mainbrayce Chandlers (fuel etc)



**Day 4 Cycling / sightseeing east end of island. 6 mles round trip. Mostly level, Occasional slight gradient.**



After a hearty full English breakfast and time taken to make packed lunches, we took the gash ashore and while Laura unlocked the bikes Bob missed the skip opening and managed to spill ketchup all over the front of his WHITE



polo shirt!!

Now unwearable, there was little choice but to nip into the angling shop across the road that very fortunately had some XXL polo shirts on sale for £4 ☺ ☺ ☺ **RESULT!!!**

We headed east towards the island's best beaches taking an anti clockwise route, skirting the north side of the golf club, first stop at Longis Bay and the "Nunnery".



Longis has a standing Roman dwelling of significant archaeological importance. Until relatively recently its origin and purpose remained a mystery, the local population referring to it as the "Nunnery". It has recently been partly excavated. It is pre-dated by find evidence of megalithic or early stone age occupation sites within the Longis Common area.

The adjacent nature reserve is the largest nature reserve on the island, with an area of 103 hectares.

Longis Bay Beach is a popular tourist spot. It has an anti-tank wall from the Second World War. This massive, concrete structure curves right around the bay above the high-water mark and was built by the Germans during the Occupation of the early 1940s. There is provision for an anti-tank gun in the middle of its length (long since gone).

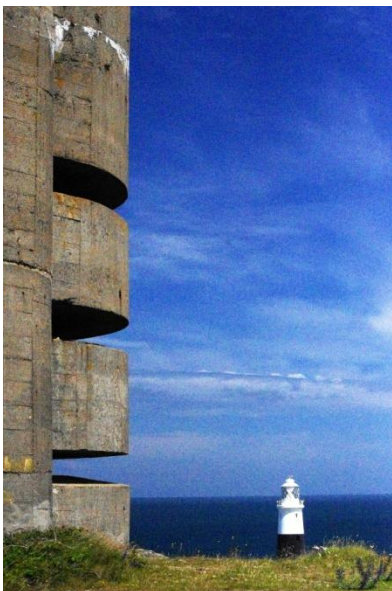
For many years it was believed that Alderney's main harbour was located within Longis Bay (as opposed to Braye). A line of boulders was said to point to evidence of a Roman breakwater.



Raz Island, on the Eastern arm of the bay, is connected to the rest of Alderney by a causeway, concreted over by the Germans during the Second World War. It is almost entirely covered by a fort which in recent decades has been used as a house, tea rooms, and as a base for an oyster farm.

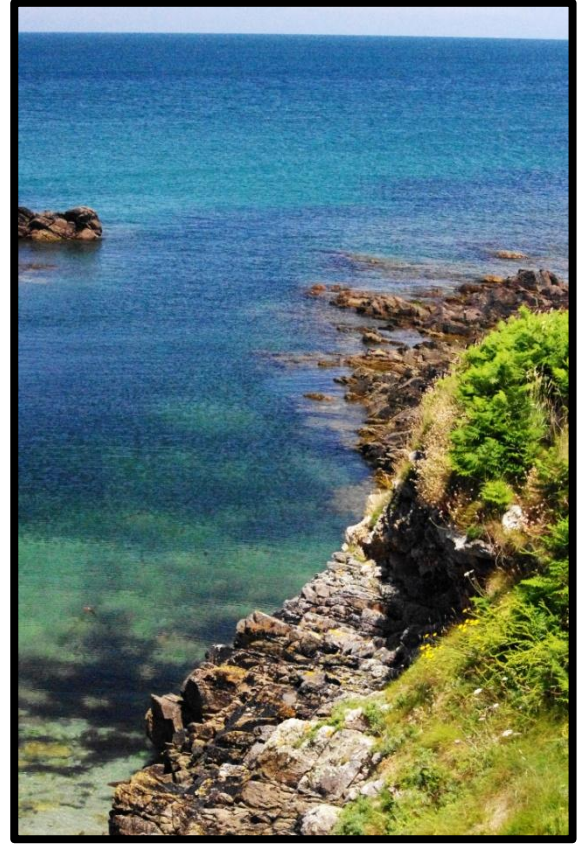
Off we cycled inland to the next stop at Mannez WW2 German fire direction bunker, perched on a high quarry cliff, adjacent to the old German flak battery. The remains of both can be explored but a torch should be taken as it's dark inside!

France (and the Alderney Race) to the east can be clearly seen from this high vantage point.



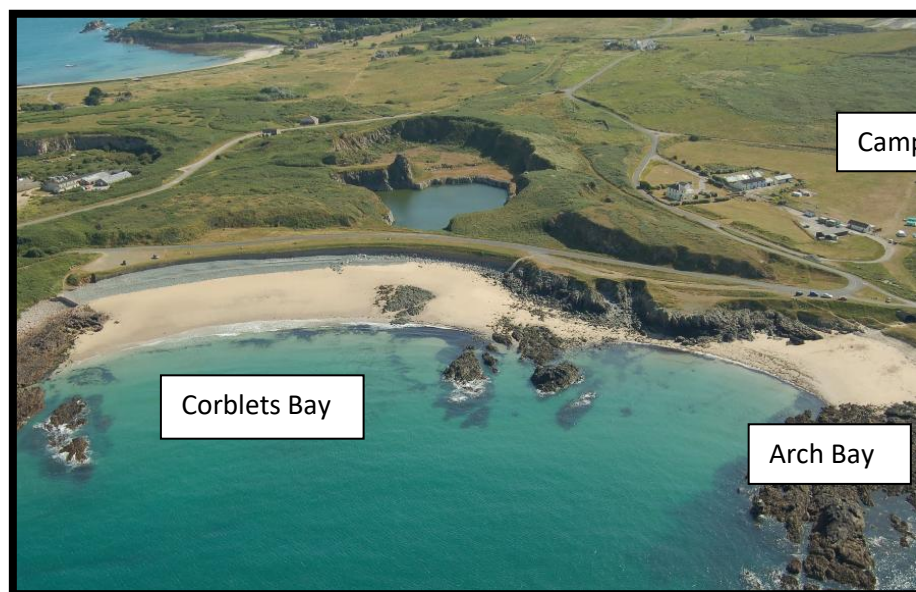


The sun shone brightly all day and cycling in shirt sleeves was extremely pleasant so by lunch time we were ready for our picnic lunch in the dry grass (once a minefield!) not far from Alderney's eastern lighthouse.

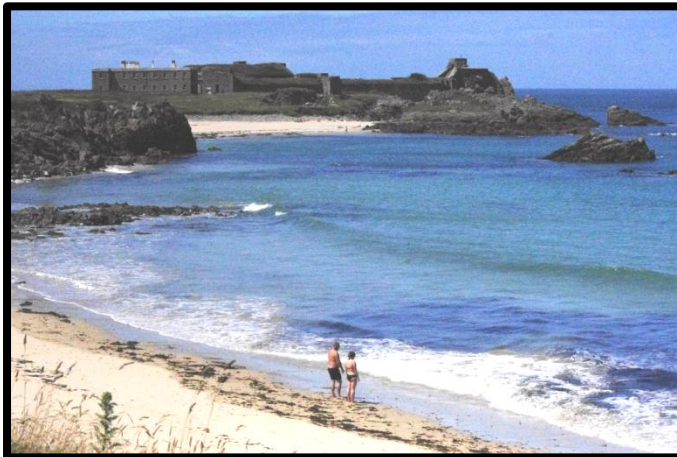
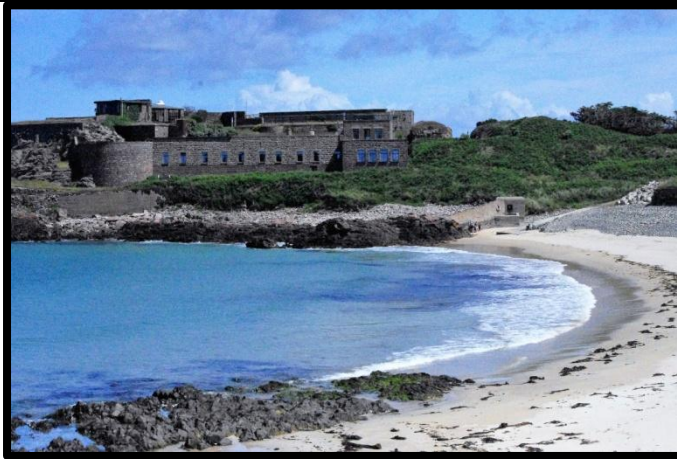


Full of the joie de vivre and now rehydrated we were now at the furthest point from Braye so our circuitous route would now lead us back quite nicely by simply following the coastline.

Stunning Corblets Bay with its turquoise water and white waves, ideal for body surfing, came into view. The beach has super soft sand and plenty of seating above the high water mark on which the magnificent bay can be admired. We parked the bikes up and took a short break in another old minefield at the top of the beach.





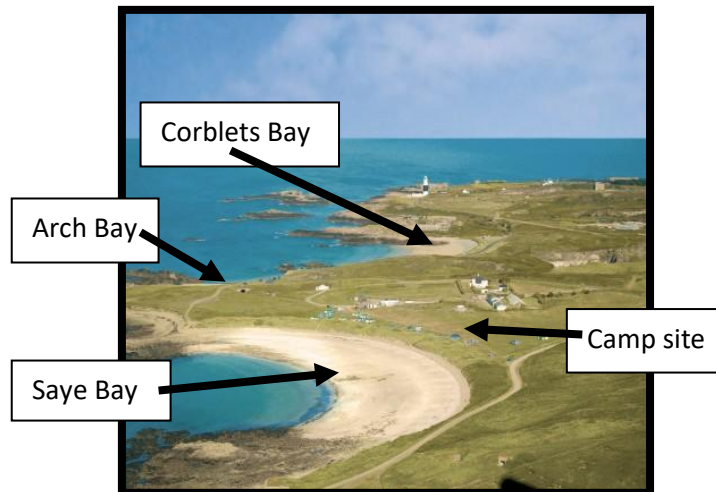


**Shout it out!** Soft, sandy, near **EMPTY** beaches around this end of the island

On we cycled, past the location of Norderney slave labour camp during the war . The labour camp's perimeter remains intact and is today used as a recreational camp site with campers now pitching their tents on the sites of the former barrack huts! The kitchen block for the modern campers apparently incorporates the German camp kitchen which was the site of murder and beatings.



Situated in a superb location behind the sand dunes of the unrivalled Saye Bay, the camp site is just two minutes from the exciting surf of Corblets Bay and the family-friendly crescent of Arch Bay.



The pre-war farm house from which the modern recreational camp site is run was the Commandant's House.

The infamous tunnel to the beach on Arch Bay still exists, where labour camp inmates were threatened with mass death in case of an Allied invasion.



Further up the road, we passed the Hammond Memorial which is a privately constructed memorial created by the Hammond family, which stands at a Y junction on Longis Common and is one of the main focus points for acts of individual and corporate commemoration for all of the main prisoner groups on Alderney.

Here can be found memorial plaques representing the main victim groups and memorials to Russians, Ukrainians Poles, Algerians, Moroccans, Belgians, Spanish, French, Two Chinese, Jews of many nationalities, some Channel Islander and even some Germans who did not agree with Hitler's regime . The main plaque at the memorial reads:

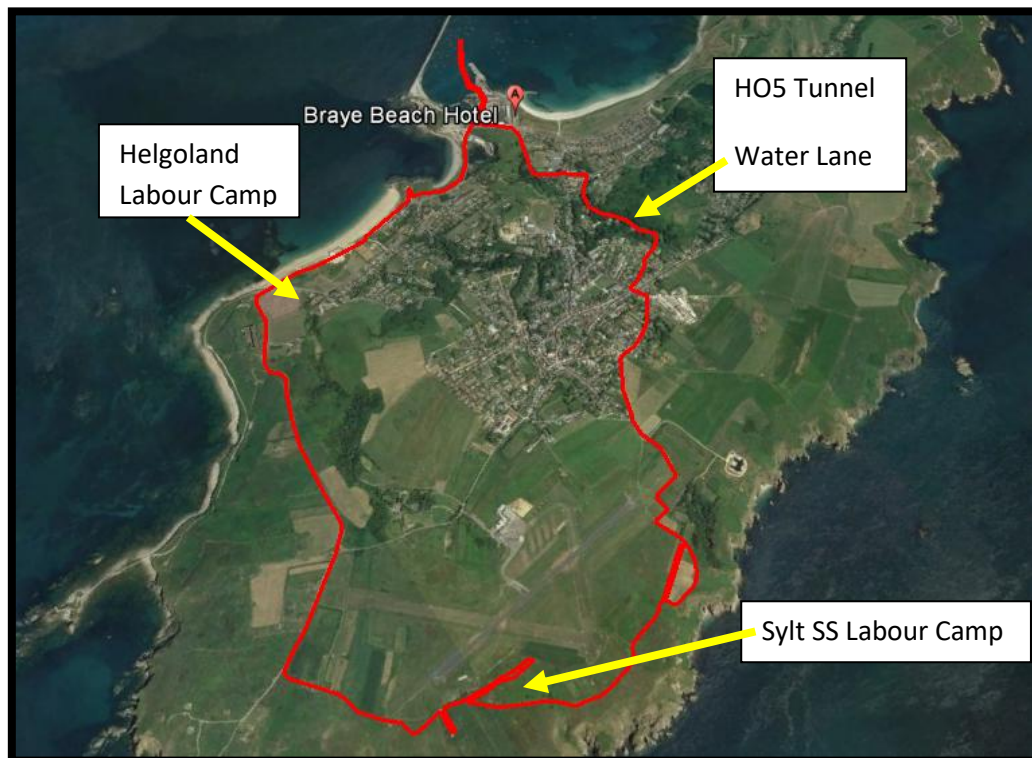
'IN MEMORY OF ALL FORIEGN LABOUR WHO DIED IN ALDERNEY BETWEEN THE YEARS 1940 – 1945. THEY ALSO SERVED'

A poignant reminder that all the military sites were built (or upgraded) by forced labour during the war.

An easy bike ride followed, all downhill back to the Sailing Club for tea and scrumptious cake on the balcony overlooking the harbour.

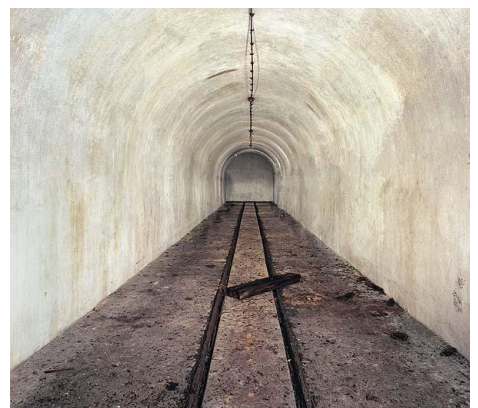
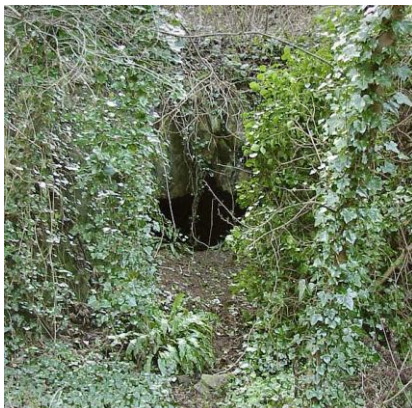


**Day 5 Cycle ride around the airfield, taking in two WW2 labour camps and a tunnel storage facility.**



This day was another of exploration following the Tourist Office's "Walk 7" to Sylt SS Labour Camp. We found Water Lane which rises southwards through a very dense wooded vale and hoped to find an old German Tunnel Storage Facility although we weren't sure of its exact position.

The lane was sometimes steep and bikes had to be pushed but we followed our noses which seemed to be leading in the right direction at least. A narrow, nearly overgrown track could have easily been missed but Bob's curiosity thought it worth a little attention. After about 50 metres some soil disturbance at the base of a cliff was seen and that turned out to be the HO5 German Storage facility!!!





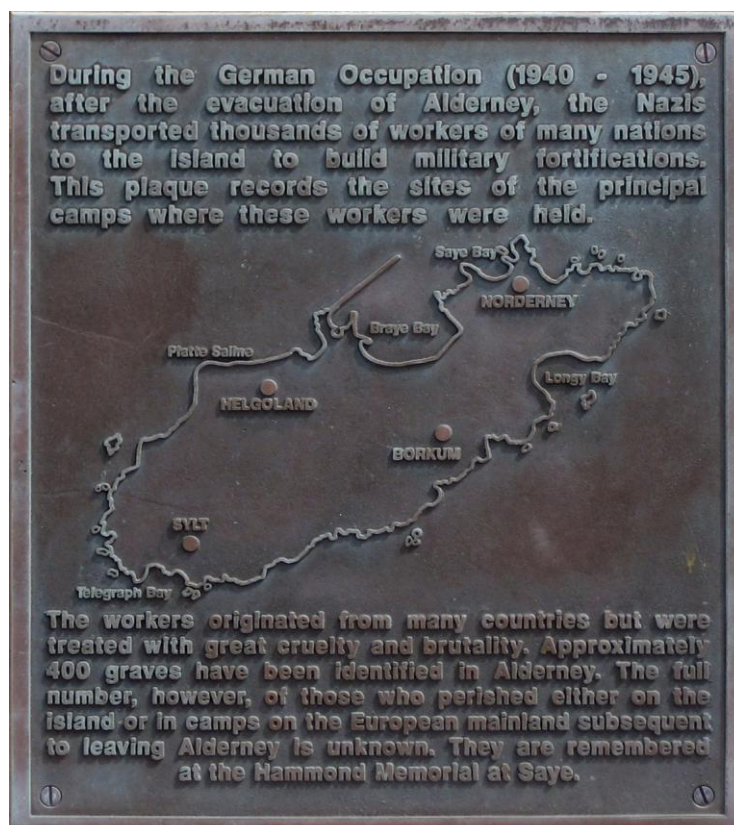
The entrance was 90% obscured by a mound of earth but access would be possible by crawling over the mound wearing a helmet and carrying a good torch. Later, research recommended NOT going in for safety reasons....

Back onto the main track we continued uphill along a mostly overgrown track, pushing the bikes for most of the way until the intrepid explorers re entered the east end of St Anne, very close to the Longis road

Not quite sure where we were, a close study of the map was necessary to get back to our planned route. This took us south to the sea cliffs at the south east point of the airport. By now we were due a tea stop so we sat on the edge of yet another old minefield and had a cuppa!

We were now on the lookout for the remains of Sylt SS Labour Camp and only had an approximate position about an half mile further along the minefield edge which ran along the top of the cliffs.

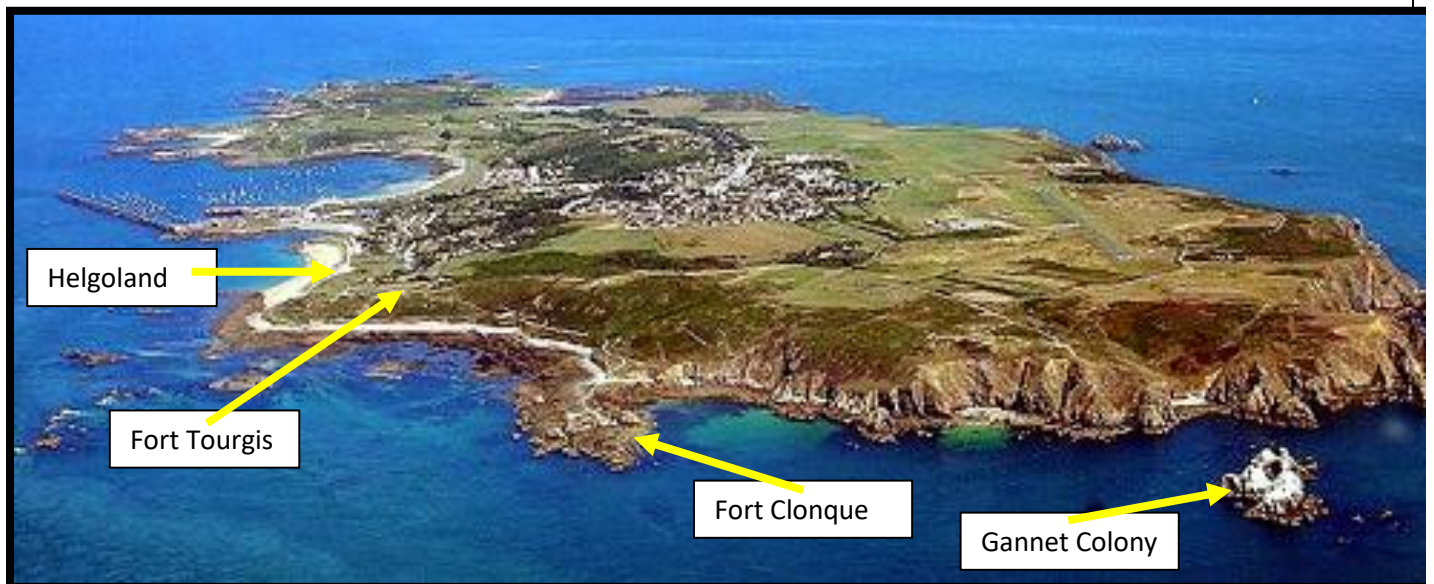
We looked around for the remains of the camp gates which we knew still existed and eventually our search was rewarded by their appearance. On one of the posts was a plaque telling walkers about the war time labour camps.



## Day 6 – North west shore to Fort Clonque



Well rested and now acclimatised to life aboard we set off for a cycle ride westward along the coast road avoiding the town centre of St Anne, passing the site of the Helgoland labour camp.



The coastal track to Fort Clonque on the west side of Alderney goes around the north side of the derelict Fort Tourgis.

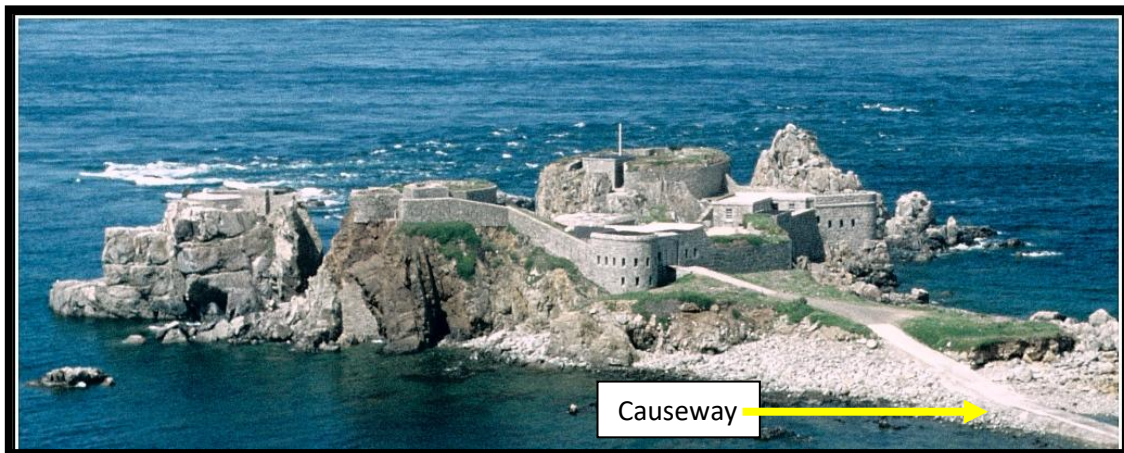




The single lane track meandered its way around the jagged, rocky coastline and allowed us to see clearly out to Caquets and its lighthouse on this calm, sunny day



Fort Clonque in the distance



The fort is cut off from the mainland at high tide but has a causeway built by prisoners of war. Access to the causeway was down a steep turning from the coastal track followed by an equally steep ascent to the fort entrance.

Fort Clonque is the most remarkable of Alderney's great harbour defences, begun in 1847 and designed for ten 64-pounder guns in four open batteries, manned by two officers and 50 men. However, the rapid increase in range of steam ships made Clonque redundant in purpose almost as soon as it was completed and it was left disarmed but intact. The Germans, briefly, again sought to exploit the Fort's strategic possibilities in the 1940s.

Marine views second to none

There are spectacular views of the other islands, rocks and stacks and two great colonies of gannets, which fish round the fort.

These days, the fort is an holiday retreat run by the Landmark Trust and visitors are not encouraged. However, Bob was able to clamber to the top of the main gun battery and liaise with a very informative Landmark Trust member.



We had considered visiting the gannet colony further south but the track up and over the high cliffs didn't look particularly appealing so we decided to cycle back down the causeway and see where we ended up.....

Eventually we found a track which was less steep than the one to the gannet colony so we followed our noses and pushed the bikes up the hill towards some bunkers near the top of the hill. One of the bunkers had been taken over by a local and was full of horse tack, saddles and all!!

Later we learned that this was the German "West Battery / Giffoine" and deserves a revisit on another sortie.

The cliff summit was reached after a water stop in the local minefield and we were able then to free wheel down the front of Tourgis Fort to the beach path, past the tennis club before taking a small detour to explore the Paddy castle area which once protected the Saline beach area.

The Braye Chippy was open as we entered Braye so we just HAD TO stop and have our tea meal there. Mmmmmm, fish, chips and mushy peas – what more could one want?

We'd had yet another good day out, all was going well and we were already talking about what we would do on a return visit in 2017,

### **Day 7 – Alderney Museum and St Anne**



Another hearty breakfast was enjoyed aboard Moonlight before we packed our knapsacks with water and snacks for a laid back day inland.



We now had the measure of the very steep, long road from Braye and knew exactly where to dismount and push the bikes uphill!!!

St Anne has its own pace and you're very lucky if you find all the shops open at the same time. However, that is part of its charm.



The main street (Victoria Street) is cobbled and rises from north to south until a T junction right turn takes you to the museum which is next to a bright yellow phone box.

There is a very good Tourist Information office in Victoria Street and lots of shops sell postcards for those old fogies who remember what they are used for!



The Museum is well worth a visit. Its book shop has some very interesting local history books .



Outside the temperature was rising so we popped around the corner to "Le Coqs" supermarket and bought some necessities (chocolates, biscuits, ice cream and wine)

Once replenished we were off again, this time for a gentle ride out of town towards the north coast of the island which (without a map) brought us out at Saline beach next to the Helgoland labour camp.

We were becoming oriented by now and didn't need a map to follow the coast road back to the Sailing Club where Cream teas for two were waiting for us (yum, yum!)

We had a little water replenishment system where we brought a 10 litre water container ashore each morning , chained it with our bike chain while we were out and returned it to the boat refilled each afternoon. This allowed us to keep the main water tanks full whilst on the mooring.

This was Laura's last night at Alderney before a Sunday morning flight back to Southampton. We had booked a taxi from the Sailing Club which arrived on time and allowed us to have sausage sandwiches and tea whilst waiting for the call to the departure lounge.

It was sad to be splitting up, albeit for only a couple of days until Moonlight was returned to her home port. Laura

was especially emotional as Alderney was a special place for her (and Bob).

She confessed later to shedding a tear or two after take off and will no doubt repeat the performance next year.

**BRING IT ON!**

PS Don't forget the burgee for Alderney Sailing Club

PPS Full sails all the way back to Portland. Great , comfortable, sunny , sun tan passage.