

Visit To La Coupole - 13th September 2003

By Maurice Wilson

Those of us of a certain age clearly remember V1's and V2's although, fortunately, we did not have to suffer the V2's in Dover - only the shells, bombs and a few doodle-bugs that went astray on their way inland. But, even those in the prime of life, have heard of the German 'terror' weapons and so it was with great interest that on the

tons of concrete topped by solid concrete dome 42 metres above, 72 metres in diameter and 5.5m thick. Railway trucks brought the materials straight into the workshops and deportees from concentration camps, under SS guards, worked to complete the rockets. When they were ready, they were trundled out on a railway



13th September, thirty members of the Dover Society went to France for the day to visit La Coupole.

This was built by the Germans inside a chalk hill adjacent to a quarry so that the rockets could be assembled in workshops built inside the hill, protected by 55,000

into the quarry and then fired, the target being London. The original intention was to fire every hour throughout day and night but fortunately this target was never reached. Not only were the operations under constant bombing by the RAF but there were also difficulties and failures in

the launching of the rockets. Nevertheless, there were enough fired to cause much damage in the capital and as there was then no way to fire them accurately, it was sheer luck where they landed.

When the site was captured in 1944, one of the first actions taken by the Allies was to dynamite the railway lines and plat-

up to the top of two exhibition floors. Here there are working models of the site as it was when it was in action, many static exhibitions covering many aspects of the war as well as different rockets to show you the development. There are also two cinemas which continuously show films about the period and Peenemunde, where the Ger-



World War II Tank

forms, but in recent years the site has been developed into a very interesting museum. You walk into one of the tunnels, past a German WWII tank, which still looks impressive and worrying. There are many rooms and corridors hacked out of the chalk for storage and working spaces, reading the informative signs as you approach the centre before taking an automatic lift

mans developed rocketry. It is ironic that after the war the chief developers, including Werner von Braun, were taken by the Americans to continue the building of rockets which resulted in the trip to the Moon, satellites and the Space Age.

As usual, our trip had been well organised by Joan Liggett but as so often happens, she had a very worrying time. All the ar-

rangements had been made many months ago with La Coupole who also arranged a restaurant for us, sending us a menu for our choices, but 48 hours before our trip, Joan was advised 'Sorry, the restaurant is full and can't take you, you'll have to go elsewhere.' They did give her an address in

was a typical French village restaurant, very clean and comfortable, obviously used by the locals as well - always a good sign - with the not uncommon (in France) uni-sex toilets. Our coach, from Gilles, was also very comfortable and the driver sympathetic and helpful - taking the 'scenic' route



La Coupole Restaurant

Wizernes, a nearby village, but all Joan's carefully laid plans for the meal were wasted. However, on arrival at the restaurant, strangely enough, also called La Coupole, we were warmly welcomed and served a very good three course meal with introductory aperitif, wine and coffee. It

on the way there so we could all see something of the countryside.

Before we caught our P & O ferry back a short visit was made to Cité Europe where many of us made good use of the local Tesco and Carrefour shops.