

BBAA - Fassberg /Wunstorf Visit 23rd to 29th August 2009 – Report.

The visit went very well. No major problems at all. The travel arrangements made by Grey's Coaches of Ely went as planned. The weather for the whole week was excellent.

Sunday 23rd

The pick-up at Peterborough 7am – no problem.

The pick-up at the Union Jack Club, London – no problem.

Dover/Calais ferry. – It was arranged that the coach would be parked near to the Lift to give the group easy access to the upper decks

Meal on the ferry – A good selection at reasonable prices.

Overnight stop - Louvain, Belgium – Holiday Inn Hotel – City centre hotel – Excellent evening meal, ready as arranged at 7pm.

A walk around the city later in the evening revealed a medieval city with remarkable buildings, all floodlit. Many people were sitting outside eating at local restaurants.

Monday 24th

A day of travel to Celle and the Cellerhof Hotel, with a stop at Hamelin to follow the route of the famous Rat-Catcher.

The Cellerhof Hotel, was right in the town centre adjacent to the Schloss (Castle).

For our evening meal, we sat at outside tables in one of the many restaurants.

Tuesday 25th

Morning at leisure in Celle for shopping etc.

At 12 noon we set off to visit the former RAF Stations of Wunstorf, Bückeberg and Bad Elsen. At Wunstorf we were met by the Base Deputy Commander and Hptn Manfred Pickel and given a guided tour of the former RAF Base. We were able to lay flowers at the Airlift Memorial Stone.

Peter IZARD & his wife Norma joined us here, having driven over from the UK and were staying in Fassberg.

Wednesday 26th

This was a full day tour to Goslar, Bad Harzburg & Braunlage in the Harz Mountains.

At Goslar which is in the State of Lower Saxony we were in time at 12 noon to see the famous clock in the town square with it's moving figures which depict the local Silver Miner's of former times.

The town is also famous for it's museums and many churches, Protestant-Lutheran and Catholic.

At Bad Harzburg the former British Military Leave Centre we had a 2 hour stay to tour the many shops and cafés before setting off to visit Braunlage, a holiday centre where 150 BBAA members stayed at the Maritim Hotel more than ten years ago.

Then it was back to Celle for our evening meal where we were joined from Fassberg by Paul Hicks, Rainer Kruppik, Karl & Rosemarie Rosenkranz, Peter & Norma IZARD, plus Dale Whipple the American BAVA Vice-President. He stayed with us in the Cellerhof Hotel and travelled with us to Fassberg the next day.

Thursday 27th

We all set off for the visit to Fassberg and were met at Müden by a Luftwaffe soldier who was detailed to guide us to our parking slot in Fassberg. Due to the amount of traffic expected, access to the town centre was restricted.

Outside the Town Hall there was allocated seating with names on seats for all the BBAA group.

The church service and re-dedication of the memorial stone began at 10.00hrs with the Band of the Luftwaffenmusikkorps No.3 playing the first hymn. The service was jointly conducted by Military Padre Torsten Alming, Pastor Christian Berndt, Military Dean Rainer Stahlhacke and the Reverend Heather Rendell, Padre from the British Army barracks at Bergen.

At 10.30hrs after the church service a speech of welcome was made by Chief of the German Airforce Lieutenant General Klaus Peter Stieglitz.

Further speeches were made by Geoff Smith for the BBAA, Sir Michael Arthur KCMG the British Ambassador and Karen E. Johnson representing the U.S. Ambassador.

Then followed by the wreath-laying ceremony with wreaths for Fassberg, Germany, United States of America, United Kingdom, France and the BBAA.

Following this the Town Hall Square in Fassberg (Rathaus Platz) was renamed Luftbrücke Platz.

At 11.30hrs everyone moved to the Soldatenheim to meet the local people from the area and for the veterans to sign autographs for the many schoolchildren who were waiting and a British Military Band the Band of the Adjutant General's Music Corps, Winchester were playing.

Food and drink was available for all the visitors.

At 12.30hrs everyone moved to the Fassberg Airlift Museum where a band from the American Airforce Europe was playing music of the Forties.

Welcome speeches were made here by the Commander of the Air Force Base No 3 and the Chairman of the Fasssberg Airlift Museum, Paul Hicks.

Josie Cottle presented the Museum with a cross-stitch sampler she had made for them.

Members of the BBAA group were then invited to visit the homes of the local community in Fassberg and Müden before retuning for the evening concert by bands of the American Airforce Europe, the Luftwaffenmusikkorps No 3 and the British Adjutant General's Corps. Each band played for one hour with food and drinks being provided for all of our group.

The concert finished at 21.00hrs. Thanks and farewells were made and we returned to our hotel in Celle.

It had been a truly memorable day for all of the BBAA group who had fully appreciated the friendship and hospitality shown by everyone.

Friday 28th.

We left the hotel in Celle at 09.00hrs to start the journey back to Bruges in Belgium.

A short stop was made at the Möhne Dam and we arrived at the Park Hotel, Bruges in Belgium at 19.15hrs where the hotel staff was ready and waiting to serve the evening meal.

Saturday 29th.

A 12.00 noon departure gave us time to look around the huge Saturday Market in the centre of Bruges and also to go for a guided boat trip on the waterways around the city.

Then it was back to Calais for the short sea crossing to Dover, arriving at the Union Jack Club in London at 16.30hrs and finally we arrived back in Peterborough at 19.15hrs.

All the members on the tour said that as it was a small group and everyone was able to mix and be together they were of the opinion was one of the best visits that they had been on and the hospitality shown by the German people was most memorable.

Geoff Smith
BBAA.