

Case Study... Ramsgate Tunnels

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One of the latest historical attractions in the UK is using an innovative radio system to provide communication between its team of volunteer guides. Ramsgate Tunnels, the only civilian tunnels used in the Second World War is using a radio system with an innovative 'leaky feeder' that provides radio communication throughout its underground tunnel system.

Shelter for 26,000 people

The Ramsgate Tunnels lay just sixty feet underneath the town of Ramsgate and extends for three and a half miles.

The tunnels were dug in just nine months during World War Two and became a secret underground town, providing shelter from air raids for 26,000 people! Famous visitors included Prime Minister Winston Churchill who came to Ramsgate to inspect bomb damage but was forced to descend into the tunnels for shelter during an air raid.

Come peacetime, the whole network was sealed up and apart from a brief plan for a Cold War bunker, the tunnels were simply forgotten...until now when the Ramsgate Tunnels Team has brought them back to life as a historical attraction.

"It's amazing to think they could have got the whole town down here with room to spare," says Phil Spain, 64, a former policeman. Having written a book on the tunnels and the battle to get built, Phil points out that Ramsgate was very lucky to have just the right kind of chalky geology for this sort of project.

On bringing the magic of the tunnels back to life, Phil said, "originally it was the Mayor of Ramsgate who was looking for projects to stimulate tourism in the town. He had heard about the tunnels and got a working group together to work on the feasibility of reopening the tunnels."

The Journey

The journey to open the tunnels began in 2011. The team had to go through various processes of finding funding as well as the logistical barriers were to opening the tunnels.

Phil said, "One of the main hurdles to getting the attraction open to the public was the asbestos from fly tippers back in the 1970s. But thanks to local government funding, this was dealt with very quickly. The only other Health & Safety issue was proving a point that the shelters for 60,000 Ramsgate residents were still intact today."





Established business

“One issue we did have to solve was enabling two way radio coverage in the tunnels...predominantly for the guides to use, but also to make sure that everyone is safe and sound in the tunnels. Two way radios are important to us because if something happens behind us, you need reassurance that you can contact a colleague at base for assistance.”

He added, “The guides predominantly use the Icom IC-F3002 VHF handportables radios. Each tour has at least two guides... one at the front and one at the rear. Both radios are connected to our IC-FR5100 VHF Repeater base radio and other radios on the scheme such as at the entrance.

“Being tunnels, the site required an unusual radio system to encourage coverage. Throughout the project we were looking for an established business close to home, with a good reputation and Smye Rumsby kept coming up. They suggested a leaky feeder solution to allow radio communication throughout the tunnels. It is a very effective solution.”

Full coverage everywhere

So how is the radio system working? Phil said, “The radio system is performing very well, we now have full coverage everywhere. Our guides would not be without their radios.” And the reaction to the attraction? Phil said, ‘The reaction to the tunnels has been overwhelming and has far exceeded any preconceived expectations. We have a group of volunteer guides who really bring the story together and alive...the historical story is as important as the tunnels. We are massively over the visitor numbers we expected.’

The Ramsgate tunnels were reopened to the public again the 27th May 2014. The tunnels were reopened by his Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, almost 75 years after his father opened them in 1939!

This system was installed by Smye Rumsby Ltd, founded in 1948 have provided communications to business and other commercial organisations across the UK.

The Radios

The IC-F3002/F4002 series of entry level handportable radios offer simple operation, outstanding audio, high performance and strong commercial build. The series, divided into the IC-F3002 (16 channel) for VHF and IC-F4002 (16 channel) for UHF, are ideal for a wide range of business and industry sectors that are searching for a simple yet dependable communication solution.

Simple operation for instant communication

Simplicity is the key behind the design of the IC-F3002 series. The IC-F3002 series is so easy to use there's no special training required. The few knobs and buttons are generously sized for easy operation and are designed to provide non-slip, positive action — even while wearing gloves. This simple interface makes it ideal for high turnover environments and shift work where the radio is constantly passed from person to person.

Lone worker function

When the radio is not operated for a preset period, any radio operation is required with a beep sound. If the radio is not operated within that preset time, an emergency signal automatically transmits and alerts your co-worker or dispatcher to any potential trouble.

