



BRIEFING PAPER

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'D-Day 75' Commemorations

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Summary

The 75th anniversary of the Normandy Landings – also known as D-Day – will be on 6 June 2019.

A series of major commemorations is planned to mark this historic occasion, with events planned in the UK and at various locations along the Normandy coast.

This briefing outlines the Government's plans for the D-Day commemorations to date, including plans for 300 D-Day veterans to visit Normandy as part of a fully funded tour through a partnership between The Royal British Legion and Arena Travel.¹

This briefing will be updated to reflect further announcements ahead of the 'D-Day 75' anniversary.

¹ The Government has a dedicated [D-Day 75](#) website which includes the latest news and announcements on the forthcoming commemorations.

1. Normandy voyage

The Government is working with The Royal British Legion and other organisations to plan significant commemorations to mark the 75th anniversary of the Normandy Landings: 'D-Day 75'.

The centre-piece of the D-Day 75 programme will be a specially-chartered ship which will carry D-Day veterans to key commemorations in Portsmouth and Normandy in June.

The ship – MV Boudicca – has been chartered with funds from The Royal British Legion and a LIBOR grant from HM Treasury and will provide a fully funded tour for 300 D-Day veterans, each of whom will be able to take one carer at no cost.

Welcoming the announcement, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

75 years ago the forces of 13 Allied countries gathered in Britain before launching the historic operation to liberate Europe. Winston Churchill rightly said that D-Day was “undoubtedly the most complicated and difficult” operation that had ever taken place. This June we will show our veterans that the debt to them is never forgotten for the price they paid for the freedom and peace we now enjoy.²

Priority will be given to veterans who participated in the D-Day Landings, with the remaining spaces allocated to Normandy Veterans via a ballot.

To apply for a place on the MV Boudicca, veterans are asked to download and print the following three forms:

[Eligibility Form](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Fred.Olsen General Mobility Policy](#)

Once completed, the Eligibility Form should be sent to Arena Travel at:

Arena Travel
Explorer House
2 Betts Avenue
Martlesham Heath
Ipswich
Suffolk IP5 3RH

The deadline for applications is Monday 4 March 2019 and any further queries should be directed to Arena Travel on (01473) 660 800.

Once an application has been received, veterans will receive a telephone call from a Royal British Legion representative who will confirm their eligibility.

² ['D-Day 75: events to mark 75th anniversary of Normandy Landings announced'](#), Ministry of Defence, 16 January 2019.

This telephone call does not automatically entitle applicants to a place on board the MV Boudicca, but to a place in the ballot. The results of the ballot will be confirmed by Arena Travel via post from the end of February.

Any veteran that is unsuccessful in the ballot will have the option to remain on a reserve list, in case a place subsequently becomes available.

1.1 MV Boudicca itinerary

The Royal British Legion has provided an itinerary of the MV Boudicca³:

Day 1: Sunday 2 June 2019

Embarkation

Depart Dover

Day 2: Monday 3 June 2019

At sea familiarisation and safety briefings

Day 3: Tuesday 4 June 2019

Arrive in Poole Harbour for MoD-linked events

Day 4: Wednesday 5 June 2019

Arrive in Portsmouth for Ceremonial Services and events

Day 5: Thursday 6 June 2019

Arrive in La Havre and transfer by coach to Legion sponsored events in Bayeux

Day 6: Friday 7 June 2019

Coach visits to the Op OVERLORD beaches, SWORD & GOLD; the British Normandy Memorial and the Arromanches Military Museum

Gala dinner on-board ship

Depart Le Havre

Day 7: Saturday 8 June 2019

Arrive in Portsmouth for a day of Civic events

Day 8: Sunday 9 June 2019

Arrive in Dover

Disembark

³ [‘D Day 75’](#), The Royal British Legion [accessed 20 February 2019].

2. Official commemorations

2.1 Events in the UK

Portsmouth will be the focal point of the UK commemorations and will host the UK national event on 5 June 2019.

The city's Council is planning a series of events over five days, to reflect the city's significant role in the preparation of one of the most audacious operations in military history.

These official commemorations will include a military parade along the seafront and a flypast featuring period aircraft. There will also be music – including performances by military bands – and the Normandy commemorations will be broadcast on large screens.

The Portsmouth commemorations will culminate in a Sunset Concert for Heroes, which will include performances by the Military Wives Choir and the D-Day Darlings.

The leader of Portsmouth City Council, Cllr. Gerald Vernon Jackson, said:

This June the city will be the focal point for reflection on the events of 1944. Veterans, military personnel and civilians will commemorate those lost and celebrate the achievements of the operation that sailed from Portsmouth 75 years ago. It's fitting that we're revealing the programme of events for D-Day 75 at The D-Day Story - the museum which has captured the human stories of those involved in that epic event.⁴

In addition to the main events in Portsmouth, there will be commemorations across the country, including a D-Day 75 Commemoration Event at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

A brief outline of some of the commemorative events is below. This will be expanded as more events are announced and further details provided.

- 5 June: The main UK D-Day 75 Commemoration Event on Southsea Common including a military ceremonial event, flypasts, gala lunch for Veterans, Vintage Fair (until 9 June), screenings and much more
- 5 June: MV Boudicca Sails Portsmouth to Normandy, escorted by a Royal Navy vessel and flotilla
- 6 June: Music to awake the city at Portsmouth/Southsea
- 6 June: Screens at Southsea Common and Portsmouth Guildhall Square relaying events in France
- 6 June: D-Day 75 Commemoration Event at National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire
- 7 June: MV Boudicca sails from Normandy to Portsmouth overnight
- 8 June: MV Boudicca returns to Portsmouth for a Veterans Welcome Home Reception

⁴ Op cit.

2.2 Events in Normandy

Key 'D-Day 75' commemorative events include the inauguration of the British Normandy Memorial and The Royal British Legion's services at Bayeux Cathedral and the Commonwealth War Grave Commission's Bayeux Cemetery, before an evening of music and entertainment beside the beaches in Arromanches.

Throughout the commemorations, around 2,000 current serving personnel will offer support to veterans – both in the UK and in France – while also taking part in the various ceremonial events.

The anniversary will also see military parades, firework displays, airdrops, giant picnics and military camp re-enactments.

The official international ceremony will take place on 6 June on one of the landing beaches and will be attended by many Allied Heads of State and government representatives.

A brief outline of some of the commemorative events is below. This will be expanded as more events are announced and further details provided.⁵

- 5 June: MV Boudicca Sails Portsmouth to Normandy, escorted by a Royal Navy vessel and flotilla
- 5 June: Daks Over Normandy parachute display: about 250 men and women will board aircraft in the UK, fly across the English Channel and then jump into the historic drop zones of Normandy⁶
- 6 June: Inauguration Ceremony of the British Normandy Memorial at Vur-Ser-Mer
- 6 June: Remembrance Service at Bayeux Cathedral
- 6 June: Bayeux Cemetery Remembrance Ceremony
- 6 June: A reception for veterans in Arromanches
- 7 June: Veterans from MV Boudicca visit Sword and Gold Beach and the military museum at Arromanches
- 8 June: D-Day air show over Arromanches
- 9 June: Bayeux Liberation Parade
- 9 June: Several firework displays will take place from 11:30pm on the D-Day Landing Beaches

⁵ The Normandy Tourism website has details of further [commemorative events](#). The Normandy D-Day Festival, organised by the tourist offices in Bayeux and several of the D-Day Landing Beaches, also has a considerable [programme of events](#).

⁶ The [full programme](#) for the Daks Over Normandy commemorations is available online.

3. British Normandy Memorial

One of the key D-Day 75 commemoration events is the inauguration Ceremony at the site of the Normandy Memorial Trust's [British Normandy Memorial](#) at Vur-Ser-Mer, to take place on 6 June 2019.

The UK Prime Minister Theresa May and French President Emmanuel Macron are due to lay the foundation stone.

While all the other Allied nations involved in the Normandy Landings have a national memorial in Normandy, there is currently no permanent British memorial.

The Normandy Memorial Trust charity was formed in 2016 to realise the dream of Normandy Veterans to finally to have a British Normandy Memorial.

A donation of £20 million was received from the government (the money coming from LIBOR fines levied on the banking industry), but donations are encouraged to raise the £9 million needed to complete the project.

On 7 February 2019 the Prince of Wales was announced as the Royal Patron of the Normandy Memorial Trust and he expressed his "great pride" in offering his "wholehearted support" to the project and urged others to do the same.⁷

The Prince of Wales said:

I have long been concerned that the memory of these remarkable individuals should be preserved for generations to come as an example of personal courage and sacrifice, for the benefit of the wider national – and, indeed, international – community.

I was therefore delighted to learn of the plans by the Normandy Memorial Trust to create what I believe is a long overdue British Memorial in northern France to the 22,500 service personnel under British command who gave their lives in Normandy in the summer of 1944.

The memorial itself is to be built on a 47-acre site overlooking Gold Beach, one of those on which the British forces landed.

It will list the names of the 22,442 men who gave their lives during the D-Day landings and the Normandy Campaign and will include a bronze sculpture of three British soldiers landing on the beach.

The French government supports the memorial, but there has been some local opposition who have expressed concerns about the expected volume of tourists and the environmental impact.

The chairman of the planning inquiry is due to make a decision in the next few weeks. If approved, the memorial is expected to be finished in 12 months.⁸

⁷ ['Prince of Wales to become Royal Patron'](#), Normandy Memorial Trust [accessed 26 February 2019].

⁸ ['Prince Charles says memorial to D-Day fallen is overdue'](#), The Times, 8 February 2019.

4. Légion d'Honneur

In 2014, in conjunction with events to mark the 70th anniversary of D-Day, the French government announced it would award the Legion d'Honneur to all surviving veterans of the Normandy Landings, as well as the wider campaigns to liberate France.

Requests for the award should be made using the [Application form for the D-Day 70 award of the Legion d'Honneur](#). This application form will be processed by the Ministry of Defence (MOD), with the details forwarded to the French authorities who will then make all final decisions on the awards. In the section headed "reasons justifying the proposal", applicants should give brief details of service in France.

The application form can be submitted electronically to the following email address: people-dssec-ceptmailbox@mod.gov.uk; or by post to:

Legion d'Honneur Team
Floor 6 Zone C
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
London
SW1A 2HB

In the five years since the scheme began, more than 6,000 medals have been awarded by the French government.⁹

In an open letter published ahead of the D-Day 75 commemorations, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson encouraged veterans of the Normandy Landings to apply for the medal, writing:

Five years ago, the President of France advised the Ministry of Defence that it wished to award the Légion d'Honneur, their highest honour, to all surviving Normandy veterans. Since then, we have processed 6,000 applications. If there are any of you who have not yet applied, then please do in order that you too can wear the medal with pride.

⁹ ['D-Day 75: Légion d'Honneur presented to D-Day veterans on HMS Belfast'](#), Ministry of Defence, 26 February 2019.

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