



2019

Future Events

Normandy 2020

Plans are in place for the annual commemorative events in Normandy this year. The Spirit of Normandy Trust will be holding their usual service in front of the statue of Monty in Colleville Montgomery at 11.00 on 5th June.

The Royal British Legion are planning to hold a service of commemoration in Bayeux Cathedral at 10.00 on 6th June, followed by a commemorative event in Bayeux Military Cemetery at 12.00. People wishing to attend will need to register with the Royal British Legion. A web site system is to be established by mid February. If you are travelling as part of the Spirit of Normandy group, we will automatically register your details.

British Normandy memorial

The Normandy Memorial site at Ver-sur-Mer will be available for veterans to visit during the afternoon of 5th June 2020. If veterans wish to visit, they should register their names with the Normandy Memorial Trust by emailing register@normandymemorialtrust.org as soon as possible

VE75

The Royal British Legion are running a series of commemorative events in London over the weekend of 7th to 10th May 2020. All WW2 veterans are invited, registration required. Details can be found on the RBL web site: <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/remembrance/remembrance-events/ve-day-75> or by telephone on 0203 053 7627

D DAY 75

What a year 2019 turned out to be! The profile of the Normandy Veterans and the Spirit of Normandy Trust has remained high throughout the year.

We started the year with a meeting in Normandy with the Deputy Mayor of Colleville Montgomery as we wanted the event there planned for 5th June to be special.

January also saw us starting the accreditation process for the Normandy commemorations. That turned out to be a little challenging with delays and a last minute change of requirements but we got there in the end.

The events of the year then started in earnest in February with an event at St John's School in Gravesend. A history afternoon and a book launch provided some fascinating insights into battles of the First and Second World Wars. Veterans present for the event had an enjoyable time.

Planning for Normandy then continued at an accelerating pace as we tried to put everything in place to get the best experience for veterans. During that time we received a significant number of media requests. Our thanks go to all of the veterans who responded positively to our appeals for media interviews.

The next event took place in May with a ceremony in Exeter on Sunday 12th May with a commemorative event at the bridges in Countess Wear. The bridges, which closely resemble the

bridges over the Caen Canal and the Orne River were used by the Ox & Bucks to practice their attacks on Pegasus and Horsa bridges in Normandy. The event, originated by Philip Mussell was managed by Exeter City Council. Attendees included the Lord Lieutenant of Devon, the Lord Mayor of Exeter, Penny Bates (daughter of Major Howard), General Sir Robert Pascoe and Lieutenant Colonel Andy Pearce Commanding Officer of 6 Rifles. A number of SONT Trustees were present and the Chairman was one of the speakers at the event.



From Left to Right: Lt Col Pearce, Philip Mussell, Richard Palusinski, The Lord Lieutenant of Devon, The Lord Mayor of Exeter, Penny Bates, The Lady Mayoress of Exeter, General Pascoe

Normandy

The Spirit of Normandy Trust, in partnership with the Mairie of Colleville Montgomery, held the annual commemorative service at the statue of Montgomery at Colleville Montgomery on Wednesday 5th June.

The event was very well attended by veterans, their families and supporters and residents of the local community. We were delighted that our Patron, General The Lord Dannatt was able to be present this year and read the Lesson. Also present were The Honourable Henry Montgomery (grandson of Monty), General Swift GOC 3 Div., two Senators from the French Parliament and senior officers from the French Military and Gendarmerie. The Band of the RAF Regiment provided the music, Emma Brown sang

and the service was led jointly by Rev Mandy Reynolds and Fr Francois Quillet. Soldiers of 3 Div. paraded as did the officers and cadets of 2359 (Woolton) Sqn. Air Cadet Unit.



Band of the RAF Regiment plays at Colleville Montgomery

As in past years the service concluded with a march to the Sea Front, followed by a Vin d'honneur and a light lunch for the veterans and their families hosted by the Community of Colleville Montgomery. At the Vin d'honneur all of the veterans present received a commemorative badge issued by the Comité du Débarquement.



Service at Colleville Montgomery

The main Royal British Legion commemorative events in Normandy were held in the Cathedral and Military Cemetery at Bayeux. Both Services were well attended.

The day started on 6th June with a 10.00 a.m. Service in Notre Dame Cathedral in Bayeux. The Service was opened with a poem written by Cyril Crain, a Canadian veteran of D Day and read by Veteran Ken Hay JP MBE Leg d'hon. The Kohima Epitaph was read by Veteran Len Hobbs Leg d'hon.

Following the Cathedral Service, veterans, families and carers paraded from the Cathedral to the CWGC British Military Cemetery where they gathered for a commemorative service at midday.



The Cemetery was packed with veterans, families and supporters for a poignant and very moving ceremony. This year the service began with a personal reflection by Veteran Frank Baugh Leg d'hon who gave a vivid and emotive account of his experiences bringing troops in by landing craft in the first wave on D Day. The Chairman read an account written by Robert Nawarski, a Polish pilot who helped provide air cover on D Day. The Exhortation was read by Veteran Ray Lord Leg d'hon and the Kohima Epitaph was read by Veteran Alan Harris Leg d'hon.

The Service at the Cemetery was attended by HRH The Prince of Wales, accompanied by HRH the Duchess of Cornwall, both of whom circulated amongst veterans and their families afterwards.

Earlier that morning the inauguration of the British Normandy Memorial on the headland at Ver sur Mer took place. Normandy veterans, Trustees of the Normandy Memorial Trust and invited guests were present to hear the Rt Hon Theresa May, British Prime Minister, describe those who served in 1944 as belonging to a very special generation. M. Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic of France, paid tribute to the young men who had landed on the beaches of Normandy at dawn under German fire.

This important memorial will bear the names of the 22,442 under British Command who gave their lives on D Day and during the ensuing battles in Normandy which paved the way for the liberation of France and Europe.

Later that day those veterans who managed to get in to Arromanches gathered for a parade and Service, which was held on the sea front by the D Day Museum. General The Lord Dannatt took the salute at the Parade.

National Memorial Arboretum

Whilst many veterans were gathering in Normandy, others met closer to home. A Service of Remembrance was held at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas on 6th June. Peter Lloyd had assisted the Royal British Legion in setting up the event. Flaminia Martin, Trustee of the Spirit of Normandy Trust participated in the event. Veteran Don Sheppard Leg d'hon laid a wreath at the memorial.



Veteran Don Sheppard Leg d'hon (left) lays a wreath

Sheffield

Trustees attended a commemorative dinner at the very impressive venue of the Cutlers' Hall, Sheffield on Friday 14th June at the kind invitation of Graham Askham and the Sheffield Normandy Veterans. The following day they attended a commemorative Drumhead Service in the Norfolk Heritage Park. Ian Stewart, Vice Chairman of the Spirit of Normandy Trust laid a wreath on behalf of Canada at the ceremony.



Stockport

Richard Palusinski, Chairman of SONT, attended an event in Stockport to launch the Stockport Normandy Veterans Legacy, a schools based project encouraging local schools to engage with surviving veterans and learn of different elements of war experiences, both military and civilian. The event, held in the Ballroom of Stockport Town Hall was very well attended, with many schools exhibiting the work they had undertaken. The children had learned a great deal and were enthusiastic about the projects that they had undertaken. Many were dressed in period costume and a group dressed as evacuee children sang popular songs from the 1940s.

Westbourne, Bournemouth

On Saturday 22nd June, the Chairman together with Trustee WO Baz Firth MBE and Veteran Wally Beall Leg d'hon went to Westbourne Post Office to receive a cheque for £1,700.00 arising from their magnificent fund raising efforts on behalf of the Trust.

HMS Victory

Saturday 20th July was a very special date in our calendar. A fundraising dinner was held on the lower gun deck of HMS Victory in Portsmouth, courtesy of the Second Sea Lord. Prior to the dinner the Corps of Drums from the Royal Marines performed in front of HMS Victory. Guests were then given a guided tour of the ship before sitting down to dinner. Brigadier (now Major General) Darren Crook was the after dinner speaker.



Veteran Len Hobbs Leg d'hon, Richard Palusinski and Veteran Alan Harris Leg d'hon on HMS Victory

Reunion

The weekend of 6th to 8th September saw the Trust hold its most ambitious reunion event ever.

The weekend commenced with a Gala dinner on the Friday evening at the Royal Maritime Club in Portsmouth. This was attended by the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, the Lady Mayoress, and a number of senior military figures.

Saturday saw the first of two days of public events at the Historic Dockyard, Portsmouth. The day opened with a parade of veterans through the dockyard to the arena that had been set up in front of HMS Victory. Throughout the day stage and arena events were held providing entertainment.

The Pipes and Drums of the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue provided music for the parades and performed in the arena.



Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue lead the veterans' parade

The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Portsmouth attended the events on Saturday and met with some of the veterans.



The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Portsmouth meet Veteran Len Hobbs Leg d'hon

The Historic Dockyard was filled with displays and exhibitions including military vehicles and equipment that would have been used during D Day and the campaign for the liberation of Europe. Vehicles on display included a Daimler Dingo Scout Car, Bren Gun Carrier and a Sherman Tank. Many of the organisations with whom we work had displays in gazebos throughout the Dockyard



Vehicles and equipment on display at the reunion

Refreshments were provided for veterans and their carers, including a hot meal at the close of the day.

A vintage coach supplied by Lodge Coaches transferred veterans from their hotels to the Dockyard and returned them to their hotel in the evening. The coach also undertook trips to and from the D Day Story.



Sherman Tank



Veterans and their families enjoying the entertainment

We also presented prizes to the winning entrants in our annual schools competition, which we run in partnership with the Young Historians Project. Prize winners attended from as far afield as Belgium to receive their awards..



The Lord Mayor of Portsmouth presents a Young Historian's Prize

Sunday saw the veterans back on parade as they marched to a service of remembrance at St Ann's Church, which is part of the Royal Navy Establishment in Portsmouth. The service was led by Rev Mandy Reynolds and Rev Adam Gay RNR, Chaplain to HM Naval Base Portsmouth and St Ann's Church. Lunch was provided for veterans and carers after the service.

We were very fortunate to receive a significant grant towards the reunion weekend from the Veterans' Foundation as well as receiving help and sponsorship from Kia Cars, Colas, Northcott Global Solutions, UK Fliers, Award Productions Ltd and The National Museum of the Royal Navy.

Stone, Staffordshire

The following weekend the Spirit of Normandy Trust took part in an event for Military Charities in Stone, Staffordshire, organised by SSAFA. This provided an opportunity to publicise the work that we undertake and to make new contacts.



Richard Palusinski meets members of the public at the SSAFA event in Stone, Staffordshire

Poppy Appeal Launch

October saw a number of veterans across the country supporting the launch of the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal for 2019. The Wiltshire event was held at Bowood House, hosted by Lord Lansdowne, who has been a long time supporter of Normandy veterans. The Lord Lieutenant, Mrs Sara Troughton, attended the event. Lunch was provided in the restaurant in Bowood House following the launch. A plan to have poppies delivered to Lord Lansdowne and the Lord Lieutenant by parachutists had to be abandoned due to low cloud.



Veterans Allan Gullis, Bob Conway, Ivan Harrison and Wally Beall attend the Wiltshire launch of the Poppy Appeal, which was presided over by Lord Lansdowne and Mrs Sarah Troughton, Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire (picture courtesy of Royal British Legion)

Remembrance Weekend

Veterans of 1944 were invited to participate in the Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance at the Albert Hall on 8th November. Having arrived in London on the Friday, veterans then took part in a rehearsal and two performances of the Festival of Remembrance on the Saturday. Following the evening performance a number of veterans were introduced to the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson MP,



Veterans in the dressing room at the Albert Hall waiting for their time to take part in the Festival

Some of the veterans stayed on over Saturday night and took part in the Remembrance Parade at The Cenotaph in Whitehall on Sunday 10th November. After a very wet Saturday, the weather stayed fair for the Cenotaph Service and Parade.



The Spirit of Normandy Trust contingent led the Cenotaph parade in recognition of the role that the veterans played in D Day 75 years ago. Our contingent was ably marshalled and managed by WO1 Baz Firth MBE, Trustee of the Spirit of Normandy Trust and Base Warrant Officer at RNAS Yeovilton.

On Monday 11th November the Chairman represented the Trust at a ceremony at the National Memorial Arboretum, which was hosted by the Royal British Legion.

Birmingham

Saturday 23rd November saw the Spirit of Normandy Trust Standard being paraded alongside the local NVA Standard leading the Parade of Standards at the Birmingham International Tattoo. Peter Lloyd had made strong representation to the organisers and they agreed that, as it was the 75th anniversary year of D Day, the NVA and SONT Standards should take their rightful place at the head of the parade.



The two performances over the weekend were held in front of packed audiences at the Arena, Birmingham.

Other News

Normandy Veteran and long-time supporter of the Spirit of Normandy Trust, Hector Duff achieved 100 years of age on 15th October 2019. Hector asked not to receive gifts for his Birthday but for money to be donated to establish a Hector Duff Prize for Isle of Man schools entering the Young Historians competition.

Hector Duff MM, BEM, TW, Leg d'hon served in North Africa and Italy before landing in Normandy as part of 7th Armoured Div. He fought through to Germany and took part in the Victory Parade in Berlin. He regularly visits schools to talk of his experiences and has always been an active member of his community.

Fittingly Hector was awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours list at the end of 2019. Our congratulations go to Hector for this well deserved award.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship and fund raising are vital for the Spirit of Normandy Trust, enabling us to continue our work and to ensure that Normandy Veterans can attend the events that we set up, or their pilgrimage visits to Normandy without cost. We have been very fortunate this year with the number of major organisations with whom we have had the privilege to work and who have supported our aims through their generosity.

Throughout this year we have received support from Award Productions Ltd, Royal Mail, Isle of Man Post Office, Kia cars, Colas, Northcott Global Solutions, UK Fliers and the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

We have also been very fortunate to have received a grant from the Veterans Foundation, which enabled us to meet some of the key costs involved in the veterans reunion.



Brigadier (now Major General) Darren Crook undertook a sponsored run across North Wiltshire, visiting a number of War Memorials and finished his run at the Melksham War Memorial. This was a massive effort and he raised just over £7,000 in aid of the Spirit of Normandy Trust and Melksham Remembers.

Many individuals have undertaken sponsored activities raising money for our work.

We wish to thank ALL of our supporters and sponsors who contribute in small and large ways to enable us to continue working for the benefit of the veterans and the memory of Normandy.

Welfare Support

The Spirit of Normandy Trust, from time to time, receives requests to help provide assistance for Normandy Veterans. This can be for a variety of things that help to make their latter years more comfortable and assist a veteran to remain living in their own home.

Examples of the assistance we have provided include making contributions towards the cost of adjustments to a veteran's home to assisting towards the cost of respite care to allow a carer to take a short holiday and regain their strength to continue in a caring role.

We are not experts in this field and rely on the good offices of SSAFA to undertake an assessment and advise us of the true need. SSAFA also contact regimental associations to seek contributions towards the total costs.

British Normandy Memorial

Following the inauguration in June the site at Ver-sur-Mer has been closed to the public as construction work on the Memorial has progressed.

On the West site – where the Memorial sits – Eiffage and their construction partner, Spie Batignolles, have finished pouring the foundations for the Memorial Pergola and the French Memorial, so the work is well and truly visible above ground level and provides a true sense of progress..

Hidden within the scaffolding at the centre of the site sits the Memorial Court. Master stonemasons S. McConnell & Sons have made excellent progress on the heart of the Memorial and they have now erected more than half of the stones. The wall sits more than 5 metres high and Richard Kindersley's hand-carved extracts from speeches by King George VI, Sir Winston Churchill and Charles De Gaulle look magnificent.

Outside the scaffolding, the East Pergola is complete, while the first stones for the pillars on the West Pergola are now in place. It is expected that by the end of March the whole Pergola will be complete.

The landscape design from architects Philip Cave will begin to take shape over the coming weeks. The trees and hedges have been selected and planting will begin shortly across the whole site, with the majority of this work to be completed by the end of Spring.

Plans are in place for veterans to view the construction site during the afternoon of 5th June 2020. Veterans wishing to attend this viewing should ensure that they have informed the Normandy Memorial Trust.

A veterans opening of the completed Memorial is planned for 4th September 2020. The Normandy Memorial Trust is planning a three day visit to Normandy for veterans and immediate carers to enable them to attend the opening. If you wish to be a part of that organised trip, you should contact the Normandy Memorial Trust. It is also important to let them know if you are planning to take veterans over on an independent trip so that total numbers likely to attend the event are known and appropriate logistical planning can be put in place.

A formal opening is also planned for 2021. Details of this event will be announced when they have been finalised.