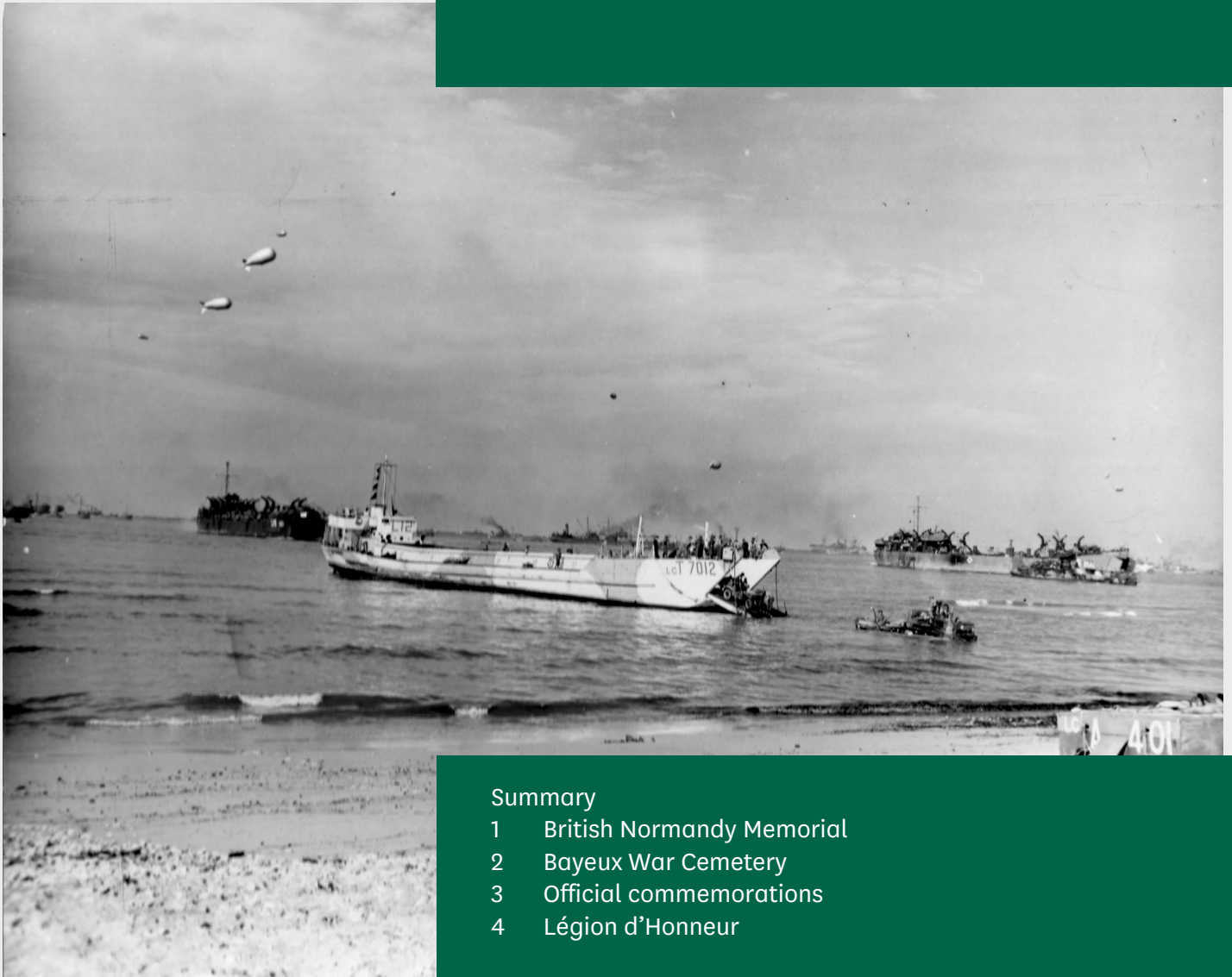


Research Briefing

28 May 2024

By Nigel Walker

# D-Day 80: Commemorations for the 80th anniversary



## Summary

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## Summary

The [80th anniversary of the Normandy Landings – also known as D-Day](#) – will be on 6 June 2024.

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

This briefing outlines the plans for the official D-Day commemorations.

## UK commemorations

The UK's National Commemorative Event will be held in Portsmouth, while the UK's main commemorative event in France will take place at the British Normandy Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer, overlooking Gold Beach.

It is the first time, during a major commemorative year, that this event will take place at the memorial following its official opening in 2021.

## Other commemoration events

Events will also take place at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Bayeux War Cemetery in Normandy, the final resting place of 4,144 members of British and Commonwealth service personnel who died during the Normandy Landings.

More information about the 80th anniversary of the Normandy landings and commemorative events is provided on the [D-Day 80 website](#).

# 1

## British Normandy Memorial

In July 2015, George Batts, a veteran who served in the Royal Engineers on D-Day, met the BBC broadcaster Nicholas Witchell and explained that the UK was the only major Allied power that did not have its own national memorial in Normandy.<sup>1</sup>

The following year the Normandy Memorial Trust was founded to establish such a memorial.<sup>2</sup>

The British Normandy Memorial was inaugurated by President Emmanuel Macron of France and the then UK Prime Minister, Theresa May, on 6 June 2019 during events to mark the 75th anniversary of D-Day. The Memorial was officially opened two years later, on the 77th anniversary of D-Day.<sup>3</sup>

The Memorial records the names of the 22,442 people who were killed on D-Day and at the Battle of Normandy under British command.<sup>4</sup>

The 80th anniversary of the Normandy Landings in 2024 is the first time this new memorial will be at the heart of major anniversary commemorations.

## Standing with Giants installation

To mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day and in collaboration with the community project, Standing with Giants, the British Normandy Memorial offers an opportunity for the public to remember a loved one or commemorate the fallen with a tribute plaque that will be displayed at the Memorial.<sup>5</sup>

This is part of an installation of 1,475 silhouettes ('giants') across the wild meadow fields of the British Normandy Memorial, with each giant reflecting a serviceman who died serving under British command on D-Day itself.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Making of the Memorial](#), British Normandy Memorial [accessed 24 May 2024]

<sup>2</sup> [The British Normandy Memorial](#), Normandy Tourism [accessed 24 May 2024]

<sup>3</sup> [Find out more about D-Day 80 at the British Normandy Memorial](#), Ministry of Defence, 13 October 2023

<sup>4</sup> Mary O'Connor, [British Normandy Memorial unveiled in France to honour D-Day and Normandy fallen](#), BBC News Online, 6 June 2021

<sup>5</sup> [Sponsor a tribute plaque at the Memorial](#), British Normandy Memorial [accessed 24 May 2024]

<sup>6</sup> [D-Day 80: Standing with Giants Installation](#), British Normandy Memorial [accessed 24 May 2024]

For a £150 sponsorship, the public can dedicate a plaque attached to a 1.2 metre stake that will stand in the wildflower meadow of the British Normandy Memorial throughout the summer.

Orders for plaques that are placed by 10 June will be installed by 1 July; orders placed between 10 June and 15 July will be installed by 1 August; and orders placed between 10 July and 15 August will be installed by 1 September.

The Standing with Giants installation will be de-installed on 1 September, but plaques will remain in a designated and visible area in the grounds of the British Normandy Memorial for a minimum of five years and can be visited all year round.

## 2

# Bayeux War Cemetery

The [Bayeux War Cemetery](#) is the largest Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery of the Second World War in France. It contains the graves of men originally buried on the battlefields and those who died in military hospitals in Bayeux.<sup>7</sup>

The cemetery, which was completed in 1952, contains 4,144 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War, 338 of them unidentified. Also buried there are some 500 servicemen of other nations.<sup>8</sup>

Opposite the cemetery stands the Bayeux Memorial, which bears the names of more than 1,800 men and women of the Commonwealth land forces who fell during Operation Overlord and have no known grave.

Both the cemetery and memorial are cared for by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

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<sup>7</sup> [Bayeux War Cemetery](#), Commonwealth War Graves Commission [accessed 24 May 2024]

<sup>8</sup> [Bayeux War Cemetery](#), Commonwealth War Graves Commission [accessed 24 May 2024]

## 3

# Official commemorations

A brief outline of the key commemorative events taking place on both sides of the Channel, including the official international ceremony, is below.<sup>9</sup>

More information about commemorative events is provided on the [D-Day 80 website](#).

## 3.1

### Events in the UK

#### 5 June

A National Commemoration on Southsea Common, Portsmouth, with an audience of 4,000 and a live television broadcast on BBC One.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will lead tributes at this event, which will involve 500 military personnel, a 79-piece orchestra and include testimonies from military personnel and veterans.<sup>10</sup>

The Red Arrows are also due to appear and a light show will close the event.<sup>11</sup>

#### 6 June

At 2pm, the Royal British Legion (RBL) will host a Service of Remembrance at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire.<sup>12</sup>

Alongside the service, the RBL will welcome eligible D-Day and Normandy veterans and their families in a dedicated VIP area.

The Arboretum will be open to the public and visitors will be welcome to watch the D-Day 80 Service of Remembrance in the grounds.

Further information is available on the [National Memorial Arboretum website](#), or by phoning (01283) 245 100.

In the evening, the Royal Albert Hall will host: D-Day 80 – Remembering the Normandy Landings, which the organisers say will be “a unique evening of

<sup>9</sup> Information on the key commemorative events was obtained from Parliamentary Questions, the Ministry of Defence, the Royal British Legion, Normandy Tourism and the British Normandy Memorial

<sup>10</sup> [Prime Minister and Red Arrows to lead D-Day 80 commemorations](#), Ministry of Defence, 16 May 2024

<sup>11</sup> [D-Day 80: 'Stunning' light show plan for Portsmouth commemoration](#), BBC News Online, 16 May 2024

<sup>12</sup> D-Day 80 Remembrance Service, National Memorial Arboretum [accessed 28 May 2024]



music-led, multi-generational storytelling, reflecting on the beginning of the end of the Second World War.”<sup>13</sup>

Any remaining tickets are available on the [Royal Albert Hall website](#).

## 3.2 Events in Normandy

### 1 June

At nightfall, over 20 large firework displays will simultaneously erupt over the five landing beaches. This event is free, family-friendly, and is aimed at those who have little or no access to official ceremonies.<sup>14</sup>

### 5 June

#### Saint-Lô

An international ceremony in tribute to the civilian victims.<sup>15</sup>

#### Sword Beach

Around 200 musicians from 13 different nations will parade along the beach for the international Pipers Parade.<sup>16</sup>

#### Bayeux War Cemetery

A Royal British Legion service of commemoration in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission’s (CWGC) Bayeux War Cemetery, with up to 50 Normandy veterans present and 1,500 guests.<sup>17</sup>

#### Bayeux Cathedral

A CWGC-led service in partnership with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) for 1,000 guests.<sup>18</sup>

#### Bayeux War Cemetery

A CWGC and MOD partnered event, when all 4,144 graves will be illuminated. This event will be broadcast live on BBC One.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> [D-Day 80 Concert at Royal Albert Hall](#), British Normandy Memorial, 9 November 2023

<sup>14</sup> [1944-2024: 80th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy](#), Normandy Tourism [accessed 28 May 2024]

<sup>15</sup> [1944-2024: 80th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy](#), Normandy Tourism [accessed 28 May 2024]

<sup>16</sup> [D-Day festival in Normandy 2024](#), Mary Anne’s France, 9 May 2024

<sup>17</sup> PQ 25475 [on [D-Day Landings: Anniversaries](#)], 9 May 2024

<sup>18</sup> PQ 25475 [on [D-Day Landings: Anniversaries](#)], 9 May 2024

<sup>19</sup> PQ 25475 [on [D-Day Landings: Anniversaries](#)], 9 May 2024

## 6 June

### British Normandy Memorial, Ver-sur-Mer France

A National Commemoration with up to 50 Normandy veterans present and an audience of 2,500. This event will be broadcast live on BBC One and will be attended by King Charles and Queen Camilla.<sup>20</sup>

More than 1,600 members of the UK Armed Forces will lead the commemorations in France. The commemorations will also “involve contributions from a Royal Marines landing craft, five Royal Navy patrol vessels, minesweeper HMS Cattistock and the British Army’s Red Devils parachute display team.”<sup>21</sup>

### Omaha Beach

The official international ceremony, where many heads of state, veterans and officials will commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day. The Prince of Wales will attend this international ceremony.<sup>22</sup>

### Other events

Franco-American and Franco-Canadian Ceremonies will take place at Colleville-sur-Mer.<sup>23</sup>

## 7 June

There will be a ceremony with US President Joe Biden in Cherbourg.<sup>24</sup>

There will also be the Bayeux Liberation Ceremony with French President Macron in Bayeux.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Sean Coughlan, [King Charles to attend D-Day commemorations in France](#), BBC News Online, 18 May 2024; [British ceremony in Ver-sur-Mer](#), Prefect of Calvados, 3 May 2024

<sup>21</sup> [Prime Minister and Red Arrows to lead D-Day 80 commemorations](#), Ministry of Defence, 16 May 2024

<sup>22</sup> Sean Coughlan, [King Charles to attend D-Day commemorations in France](#), BBC News Online, 18 May 2024; [The international ceremony at Saint Laurent sur mer - Omaha Beach](#), Prefect of Calvados, 3 May 2024

<sup>23</sup> [1944-2024: 80th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy](#), Normandy Tourism [accessed 28 May 2024]; [American Ceremony in Colleville-sur-Mer](#), Prefect of Calvados, 3 May 2024; [Canadian Ceremony in Courseulles-sur-Mer](#), Prefect of Calvados, 3 May 2024

<sup>24</sup> [1944-2024: 80th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy](#), Normandy Tourism [accessed 28 May 2024]

<sup>25</sup> [1944-2024: 80th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy](#), Normandy Tourism [accessed 28 May 2024]

## 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 Légion d'Honneur to all surviving veterans of the Normandy Landings, as well as the wider campaigns to liberate France.<sup>26</sup>

The award is available for living veterans, including those who operated in support of the landings during June 1944 and who have not already received the award from the French Government. The medal cannot be awarded posthumously.<sup>27</sup>

UK veterans can apply for the award using the [application form for the D-Day 70 award of the Légion 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 their service in France.

The application form can be submitted electronically to the following email address: [People-DSSec-DMETMailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:People-DSSec-DMETMailbox@mod.gov.uk). Postal applications are accepted, but it is recommended that applicants submit an electronic form as emailed applications will be dealt with immediately and applicants will receive confirmation of receipt. If submitting a postal application, the address to send it to is:

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

In the decade since the scheme began, the French Government has awarded more than 6,000 medals to British veterans.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> [Légion d'honneur for British World War II veterans](#), French Embassy in London, 17 January 2023

<sup>27</sup> [MOD, Application form for the D-Day 70 award of the Legion d'Honneur](#), [accessed 28 May 2024]

<sup>28</sup> [Légion d'honneur for British World War II veterans](#), French Embassy in London, 17 January 2023; Jo Makel and Chloe Laversuch, [East Yorkshire veteran, 100, to get France's highest honour](#), BBC News Online, 5 December 2023

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