



WWII Allied landings in Normandy

80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

# **Operation Neptune**

## **Service**

### **of**

# **Commemoration**

Thursday 6 June 2024

10:30am

Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton, Somerset

**D DAY 80**

Operation NEPTUNE, part of Operation OVERLORD and often referred to as D-Day, remains the largest seaborne invasion in history. The Allied forces involved the coordinated efforts of an estimated 156,000 troops supported by 11,600 aircraft and 6,900 naval vessels in the assault on five Normandy beachheads: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword.

Fundamental to its success were years of planning, intelligence gathering and deception campaigns. Operation NEPTUNE began the liberation of occupied France and the rest of Western Europe, laying the foundations for the Allied victory over Nazi Germany.

### **Fleet Air Arm:**

Some disembarked naval air squadrons participated in pre D-Day tasking as early as April 1944. By the spring, numerous naval air squadrons were stationed at Royal Air Force bases along the south coast in readiness for the invasion. These naval air squadrons, for the most part, came under the control of the General Reconnaissance Wings of Royal Air Force Coastal Command.

Four Fleet Air Arm Grumman Avenger squadrons operated with Coastal Command from Hawkinge, Kent (854 and 855 Naval Air Squadrons) and Perranporth in North Cornwall (849 and 850 Naval Air Squadrons) carrying out what was described as 'Channel Stop' operations, designed to prevent enemy shipping from entering the English Channel. They also escorted assault convoys and participated in many night attacks on E-boats and German Minesweepers that could have interfered with the beach landings.

Three escort carriers were directly involved in Operation NEPTUNE supporting Anti-Submarine Warfare forces countering U-boats:

HMS EMPEROR had 20 Hellcat Mk I aircraft embarked (800 and 804 Naval Air Squadrons), HMS PURSUER had around 20 Wildcat Mk V (881 and 896 Naval Air Squadrons) and HMS TRACKER had 12 Avenger Mk I (846 Naval Air Squadron).

The black painted Swordfish of 819 Naval Air Squadron were tasked to lay a smokescreen over the Allied invasion fleet on D-Day.

Normandy 1944 battle honours were awarded to 17 Naval Air Squadrons:

800, 804, 808, 816, 819, 838, 846, 848, 849, 850, 854, 855, 881, 885, 886, 896 and 897.

### **Royal Marines:**

Five Royal Marine Commando units (41, 45, 46, 47 and 48) assaulted the beaches on 6 June 1944, alongside three Army Commando units, formed into two Special Service Brigades. Two thirds of all landing craft on D-Day were

manned by Royal Marines carrying British, American and Canadian troops ashore. The ring of steel drawn around the invasion fleet, plus Allied air cover (including Fleet Air Arm 'Channel Stop' patrols) largely protected shipping from the German Navy, but losses in the attacking waves of landing craft were heavy: one fifth of 47 (Royal Marines) Commando was wiped out in the initial assault wave at Gold Beach. Along the coast at Juno Beach, fellow Royal Marines also suffered heavy losses as they stormed and captured the seafront village of Langrune-sur-Mer.

Some 133 Royal Marines were killed on D-Day, but the high price bought success: most commandos were ashore by 9:00am on 6 June and by the small hours of the next day they had reached their initial objectives. Historian Major General Julian Thompson CB OBE wrote of 47 (Royal Marines) Commando's subsequent action at Port-en-Bessin that it was, in his opinion, '*one of the great feats of arms of any unit, Royal Marines, Army, Navy or Air Force of any nation in the Second World War*'.

### **The Glider Pilot Regiment:**

In 1942, Winston Churchill announced the establishment of a new branch of army aviation - the Army Air Corps. The Corps initially comprised the Glider Pilot Regiment and the Parachute Battalions (subsequently the Parachute Regiment), Air Landing Regiments, and the Air Observation Post squadrons. One of their most successful achievements during WWII was the capture and holding of the Caen Canal and Orne River bridges in the very early hours of 6 June 1944, just before the Normandy landings. The infantry was transported to Normandy in six Airspeed Horsa gliders, piloted by 12 Non Commissioned Officers of C Squadron, Glider Pilot Regiment. Each glider had space for the two pilots, 28 troops or a mixture of two jeeps, artillery guns and trailers. It was vital that the bridges were taken intact as they provided the only exit eastwards for British forces from their landing on Sword Beach.

The Allies launched a second invasion from the Mediterranean Sea into Provence, southern France once a tenuous foothold had been gained in Normandy. This second landing was codenamed Operation DRAGOON and was initially intended to be executed in conjunction with Operation OVERLORD, but a lack of available resources led to a delay until 15 August 1944. The liberation of Paris followed on 25 August and the enemy forces retreated east across the Seine bringing Operation OVERLORD to a close on 30 August 1944. Victory for the Allies came at a huge price, and for the Germans and French civilians too. The total estimated number of those killed, wounded and missing exceeded half a million during the period 6 June 1944 - 31 August 1944.

# Welcome by Captain Duncan Thomas Royal Navy

Commanding Officer Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton

*Please stand*

## Opening Hymn

**I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above,  
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love:  
The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,  
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;  
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,  
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.**

**And there's another country I've heard of long ago,  
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know;  
We may not count her armies, we may not see her King;  
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;  
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,  
And her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace.**

Sir Cecil Spring Rice (1859-1918)  
THAXTED, Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

*Please be seated*

## D-Day veterans' recollections

*Please stand*

## Act of Remembrance

Let us remember before God, and commend to his sure keeping:  
All who have died for their country in war;  
All whom we knew and whose memory we treasure;  
All who have lived and died in the service of humankind.

## **The Exhortation**

Read by Rear Admiral Anthony Rimington  
Royal Navy Director of Force Generation and Rear Admiral Fleet Air Arm

They shall grow not old, as we who are left grow old,  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn;  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

From the poem 'For the Fallen' by Laurence Binyon

*Please say*

**We will remember them.**

## **Last Post**

**The two minute silence is observed.**

## **Reveille**

## **Kohima Epitaph**

Read by Air Engineering Technician Jessie Massey  
One of the youngest members of HMS HERON's Ship's Company

When you go home, tell them of us and say,  
For your tomorrow we gave our today.

## **Laying of Wreaths**

led by

Rear Admiral Anthony Rimington

## Fleet Air Arm Roll of Honour

Sub Lieutenant (A)	Ronald	Ankers		Aged 21
Sub Lieutenant (A)	John Mark	Barber		Aged 20
Sub Lieutenant (A)	Anthony Hastings	Bassett		Aged 21
Sub Lieutenant (A)	Geoffrey Roy	Blake		Aged 22
Sub Lieutenant (A)	Edward Thompson	Clark		Aged 23
Sub Lieutenant (A)	Hugh Alan	Cogill		Aged 20
Lieutenant (A)	James Benjamin	Cook		Aged 30
Sub Lieutenant (A)	James Anthony	Gleeson		Aged 22
Petty Officer Airman	Richard Crawford	Grapes		Aged 22
Leading Airman	Leonard Charles	Green		Aged 19
Sub Lieutenant (A)	David James	Hanson	MiD	Aged 22
Lieutenant (A)	Anthony Dennis	Hawkins-King	MiD	Aged 28
Sub Lieutenant (A)	Leslie Frank	Hayward	*	Aged 24
Sub Lieutenant (A)	Alan	Horstead		Aged 21
Sub Lieutenant (A)	William Desmond	Hughes		Unknown
Sub Lieutenant (A)	Robert Welsh	Irons		Aged 21
Sub Lieutenant (A)	Reginald Gordon	Kennett		Aged 24
Sub Lieutenant (A)	William Redfern	Millington		Aged 20
Sub Lieutenant (A)	James	Murphy		Aged 22
Leading Airman	Stanley William	Norman		Aged 22
Petty Officer Airman	Albert	Rockley		Aged 19
Leading Airman	Brian Lambert	Rowntree		Aged 19
Petty Officer Airman	Harold Cecil	Selby		Aged 26
Sub Lieutenant (A)	Stanley Frederick	Such		Aged 23
Sub Lieutenant (A)	Raymond Douglas	White		Aged 20
Sub Lieutenant (A)	Ian Lewis Ruxton	Wilson	*	Aged 23

This Roll lists the Fleet Air Arm men in alphabetical order who lost their lives supporting Allied forces in the English Channel, covering the landings in France 6 June 1944 - 3 July 1944 and various Operation OVERLORD tasking up until the end of August 1944 following the liberation of Paris.

The (A) annotation after the officers' rank denotes 'Air Branch' of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

\* Denotes Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve

## Glider Pilot Regiment Roll of Honour

Sergeant	Henry	Beveridge	Aged 25
Staff Sergeant	John Pascal	Brabham	Aged 23
Lieutenant	John Lee	Bromley	Aged 25
Sergeant	Ronald	Chadwick	Aged 31
Staff Sergeant	James Frederick	Coddington	Aged 23
Sergeant	Peter	Foster	Aged 23
Sergeant	John Henry	Fuell	Aged 24
Sergeant	John Robert	Gibbons	Aged 27
Sergeant	Ernest John	Goodchild	Aged 28
Sergeant	Victor	Haines	Aged 25
Staff Sergeant	Colin Harold	Hopgood	Aged 26
Staff Sergeant	William Richard	Howe	Aged 28
Sergeant	Eric	Lightfowler	Aged 24
Staff Sergeant	Roy Samuel	Luff	Aged 23
Staff Sergeant	William Kenneth	Marfleeet	Aged 24
Lieutenant	Eric	Martin	Aged 25
Sergeant	James Harry	Nash	Aged 24
Staff Sergeant	Ronald George	New	Aged 30
Staff Sergeant	Herbert Victor	Ockwell	Aged 27
Sergeant	Stanley Wood	Perry	Aged 22
Sergeant	Daniel Francis	Phillips	Aged 27
Staff Sergeant	George Edward	Philpott	Aged 28
Sergeant	Barry	Powell	Aged 22
Staff Sergeant	Leslie	Ridings	Aged 23
Sergeant	Alexander	Rigg	Aged 27
Staff Sergeant	Christopher Bruce	Robinson	Aged 28
Staff Sergeant	Victor Charles	Saunders	Aged 28
Sergeant	Alec Hugh	Sephton	Aged 18
Sergeant	Edward	Stanley	Aged 23
Staff Sergeant	Alan Trevor	Stear	Aged 23
Sergeant	William Henry	Stonebanks	Aged 29
Sergeant	Eric Manley	Taylor	Aged 25
Staff Sergeant	Percy Pemberton	Turvey	Aged 24
Staff Sergeant	Duncan Frank	Wright	Aged 25

This Roll lists the Glider Pilot Regiment men in alphabetical order who lost their lives on 6 June 1944.



*Please be seated*

## **Prayers**

### **A Prayer of Remembrance**

Almighty and eternal God,  
From whose love in Christ we cannot be parted,  
Either in life or death,  
Hear our prayers and thanksgivings  
For all whom we remember this day;  
Fulfil in them the purpose of your love;  
And bring us all, with them, to your eternal joy.

### **A Prayer for Peace**

God, our refuge and strength,  
Bring near the day when wars shall cease  
And poverty and pain shall end,  
That earth may know the peace of heaven

### **For The Leaders of The Nations**

Go before us, O Lord,  
With the blessings of your goodness  
And guide all those you call to authority  
In the way of your justice,  
The knowledge of your liberty  
And the wisdom of your gentleness.

**Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one,  
Let us pray with confidence  
As our Saviour has taught us.

*Please say*

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name;  
Thy kingdom come;  
Thy will be done;  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
The power and the glory,  
For ever and ever.  
Amen.**

*Please stand to sing*

## **Hymn**

**Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,  
Pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but thou art mighty;  
Hold me with thy powerful hand:  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,  
Feed me till I want no more,  
Feed me till I want no more.**

**Open now the crystal fountain  
Whence the healing stream doth flow;  
Let the fiery cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through:  
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,  
Be thou still my strength and shield,  
Be thou still my strength and shield.**

**When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
Bid my anxious fears subside;  
Death of death, and hell's Destruction,  
Land me safe on Canaan's side:  
Songs of praises, songs of praises,  
I will ever give to thee,  
I will ever give to thee.**

William Williams (1717-1791)  
Tr Peter Williams (1727-1796)

*Please be seated*

## **The Shores of Normandy**

Written and performed by 'Jim' Radford (1 October 1928 - 6 November 2020)

Copyright BBC

Jim became a member of the Merchant Navy aged 15 and later joined the Royal Navy on turning 18 years old. He was the youngest known participant in the Allied invasion of Normandy.

Jim performed his song, 'The Shores of Normandy', at the Royal Albert Hall in London in the 70th anniversary year of the invasion.

## **Closing Reflections**

### **Closing Prayers**

#### **The Naval Prayer**

O Eternal Lord God, who alone spreadest out the heavens, and rulest the raging of the sea; who hast compassed the waters with bounds until day and night come to an end: Be pleased to receive into thy Almighty and most gracious protection the persons of us thy servants, and the Fleet in which we serve. Preserve us from the dangers of the sea and of the air, and from the violence of the enemy; that we may be a safeguard unto our most gracious Sovereign Lord, King Charles, and his Dominions, and a security for such as pass on the seas upon their lawful

occasions; that the inhabitants of our Islands and Commonwealth may in peace and quietness serve thee our God; and that we may return in safety to enjoy the blessings of the land, with the fruits of our labours; and with a thankful remembrance of thy mercies to praise and glorify thy Holy name.

### **The Royal Marines Prayer**

O Eternal Lord God, who through many generations has united and inspired the members of our Corps, grant your blessing we beseech you, on Royal Marines serving around the globe. Bestow your crown of righteousness upon all our efforts and endeavours and may our laurels be those of gallantry and honour, loyalty and courage.

We ask these things in the name of him whose courage never failed, our redeemer, Jesus Christ.

### **The Fleet Air Arm Prayer**

O God, who dwells above the water and has the power to still the raging of the sea, accept the prayers of all your servants who commit their lives to the dangers of the sea and the air. In all their ways, enable them to serve you in a godly and faithful way, and in their lives reflect your glory throughout the world. Through all their journeys, watch over them that they may overcome evil, temptation or anything that harms their souls, so that through all the changes and chances of this life, you will bring them by your mercy to the sure promise of your everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **The Army Air Corps Prayer**

Almighty God, who maketh the clouds thy chariots, and who walketh upon the wings of the wind; have mercy on all who serve in the Army Air Corps that they may have thy guidance in all their work on land and in the air; and in their moment of need they may have the assurance of thy presence with them and find thy hand to support and strengthen them; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*Please stand to sing*

## Closing Hymn

**Eternal Father, strong to save,  
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,  
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep  
Its own appointed limits to keep:  
O hear us when we cry to thee  
For those in peril on the sea.**

**O Christ, whose voice the waters heard  
And hushed their raging at thy word,  
Who walkedst on the foaming deep,  
And calm amid the storm didst sleep:  
O hear us when we cry to thee  
For those in peril on the sea.**

**O ruler of the earth and sky  
Be with our airmen when they fly;  
And keep them in thy loving care,  
From all the perils of the air.  
O let our cry come unto thee  
For those who fly o'er land and sea.**

**O Trinity of love and power,  
Our brethren shield in danger's hour;  
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,  
Protect them wheresoe'er they go:  
Thus evermore shall rise to thee  
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.**

William Whiting (1825-1878)  
The Airmen's Hymn, Verse Three - anonymous

**The Final Blessing**

**The National Anthem**

## D-Day Prayers aboard HMS SCYLLA

HMS SCYLLA was one of two Dido class light cruisers fitted with an Action Information Organisation Room to co-ordinate radar and intercept information. The Action Information Organisation function was considered vital to all shipping and naval movements in the area, particularly that of coastal Royal Navy Motor Torpedo Boats and enemy E-boats, to prevent 'blue on blue' incidents.



On D-Day, HMS SCYLLA was stationed off Sword Beach, tasked with bombarding German positions in the Ouistreham area. HMS SCYLLA also served as flagship to the Eastern Task Force for 18 days before being severely damaged by an underwater mine in the English Channel on 23 June 1944. Declared irreparable, the ship was towed to Portsmouth, Hampshire.

Image supplied by the family of former Lieutenant Freddie Greenop Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve who served as a Fighter Direction Officer on HMS SCYLLA during D-Day.

Today's service was led by the Reverend Doctor Steve Cosslett Royal Navy

**D-DAY 80**

Musical support was provided by the HMS HERON Volunteer Band



The National Museum of the Royal Navy is a registered charity that was established in 2008. It is a collaboration of naval heritage that includes the Royal Naval Museum, the Fleet Air Arm Museum, the Royal Navy Submarine Museum with HMS Alliance, Explosion! The Museum of Naval Firepower, the Royal Marines Museum, HMS Victory, HMS Caroline, HMS M33, HMS Warrior and NMRN Hartlepool (including HMS Trincomalee).

[www.nmrn.org.uk](http://www.nmrn.org.uk)

## FLEET AIR ARM MEMORIAL CHURCH

Remembering and celebrating all who serve in the Fleet Air Arm

[www.fleetairarmmc.org](http://www.fleetairarmmc.org)



Navy Wings combines airworthy historic naval aircraft, people and stories associated with flying from warships at sea, hoping to inspire future generations and to create a tangible focus for remembrance. Their collection of fixed and rotary wing aircraft fly regularly at UK air shows, showcasing the impressive story of naval aircraft development as well as paying homage to those who flew and maintained the aircraft, often in hostile conditions.

The Navy Wings Mk I Swordfish, Serial Number W5856, is the oldest surviving airworthy aircraft of its type in the world.

[www.navywings.org.uk](http://www.navywings.org.uk)