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RUSHDEN BRANCH: D-DAY 80 NEWSLETTER - MAY 2024

Editor: Jake Baker

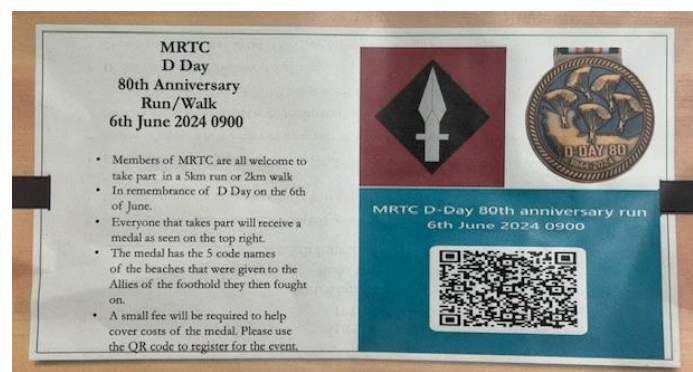
INTRODUCTION

Much of this special edition for D-Day 80 is put together from two main sources, the WW2 National Museum and enthusiastic RBL Members from other Branches across the UK sharing their knowledge. Firstly, let's see what we're doing on these shores:

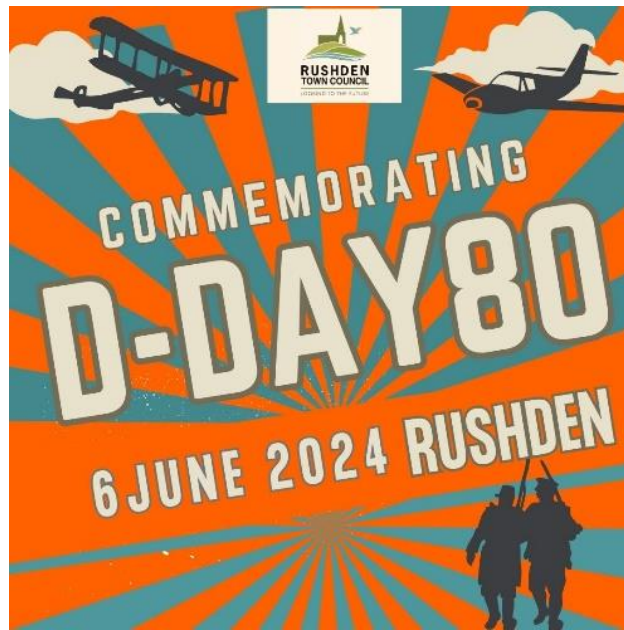
D-DAY 80TH ANNIVERSARY RUN/WALK AT MISSION READY TRAINING CENTRE (MRTC) BASSINGBOURN - THURSDAY 6TH JUNE 2024 – by Branch Standard Bearer Mark Taberner-Stokes

I am taking part in a 5km Run/2km Walk at the Mission Ready Training Centre in Bassingbourn, Cambridgeshire on Thursday 6th June 2024 as part of the 80th Anniversary D-Day activities. I am currently employed as a Sergeant in Full Time Reserve Service at Bassingbourn, Cambridgeshire where I work in the Mobilisation Cell bringing civilian personnel into full time mobilisation service for activities in the United Kingdom and worldwide. I have completed a full Regular Service of 24 years, and I am currently in my 4th year of Reserve Service. Bassingbourn is famous for being the airfield where the 'Memphis Belle' was stationed in World War 2 and for the film 'Full Metal Jacket' where various scenes were filmed using the camp facilities.

The event has been organised by a colleague who works in the Individual Training Wing and all the proceeds raised will be donated to the Royal British Legion. The event is open to all Regular/Reservists personnel and civil servants who work at MRTC Bassingbourn. All personnel taking part will receive a medal (see photo) which has engraved in the 5 code names for the beaches that were given to the Allies.



RUSHDEN 80 D-DAY: 6TH JUNE 2024



- 8.00am The D-Day 80 Proclamation read at Rushden War Memorial by Councillor David Coleman, Rushden Town Mayor
- 8.05am Exhortation – by David Hawker, President, RBL Rushden Branch
Last Post – Bob Crick, RBL Bugler
Two minutes silence observed.
Reveille – Bob Crick
Kohima – David Hawker
- 8.10am Laying of wreaths at Rushden War Memorial
'Lamp Light of Peace' lit by Cllr David Coleman, Rushden Town Mayor
Attendees to be given candles to light.
- 1.00pm Ringing Out for Peace – bells toll at St Mary's Church
- 7.15pm Rushden Hall Park open for Fish and Chips Picnic Supper
- 8.00pm Choir and Wartime music
- 8.55pm Standards march in
Welcome address from Cllr David Coleman, Rushden Town Mayor
Event History – David Hawker, President, RBL Rushden Branch
Reading and Prayers
Exhortation
Last Post
Two Minutes silence observed
Reveille
Kohima
The Tribute – Deputy Lord Lieutenant
- 9.15pm Beacon Lighting – Cllr David Coleman, Rushden Town Mayor

THE D-DAY LANDINGS - 6TH JUNE 1944

Operation's Overlord & Neptune

It was the largest amphibious invasion in the history of warfare. On 6th June 1944, more than 150,000 soldiers from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Commonwealth nations stormed the beaches of Normandy, France in a bold strategy to push the Nazis out of Western Europe and turn the tide of the war for good. In planning the D-Day attack, Allied military leaders knew that casualties might be high, but it was a loss needed to be paid in order to ensure our freedoms and to establish an infantry stronghold in France. Days before the invasion, General Dwight D. Eisenhower was told by a top strategist that paratrooper casualties alone could be as high as 75 per cent.

The vast majority of the men who died perished in the very first waves of the attack. The first soldiers out of the landing craft were gunned down by German artillery. Once those pillboxes were destroyed and the machine guns silenced, the later waves of troops faced far better odds.

The first Allied cemetery in Europe was dedicated just two days after the D-Day invasion on 8th June 1944. Since that day, military officials and memorial organisations have attempted to come up with a definitive count of Allied D-Day deaths to properly honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice for the free world.



The Nazi's built a 2,400-mile line of the defences called the Atlantic Wall including bunkers, landmines, beach & water obstacles to slow or stop any invasion.

Supreme Allied Command was established to manage the multi-national force bound for Normandy. US General Dwight Eisenhower was the Supreme Commander, overseeing all air, land and sea units involved. He was ultimately responsible for planning and supervising the invasion.

British General Bernard Montgomery commanded all the land forces taking part, in excess of 150,000 service personnel.



British troops landing at Sword Beach and an aerial view of the Normandy invasion.

DECEPTION

The Allies put in place elaborate deception plans to convince the enemy that the main landing would be in Calais. Their aim was to reduce the flow of German reinforcements into Normandy.

These plans included double agents spreading false information, heavy bombing of the Calais area and a dummy 'army' being set up in eastern England.

PLANNING

Extensive training took place in the UK in the months leading up to D-Day, ranging from divisional exercises to individual training to prepare soldiers for the assault.

At the same time, a huge build-up of materiel took place, with the south of England beginning to resemble a huge military camp packed with vehicles, tanks, supplies and soldiers from many nations.

Thousands of air reconnaissance photographs of the German defences were taken. Special forces teams landed on the coast to gather information. Others worked with the French resistance to gather intelligence on German troop positions and carry out acts of sabotage against transport and communication networks.

5th June - 10pm: To the air - the first Allied transport planes and gliders carry the airborne invasion force to France.

5th June – Midnight: Green means go - British airborne troops seize Pegasus Bridge and other key objectives ahead of the amphibious invasion. American paratroopers also take the strategic town of Sainte-Mere-Eglise.

6th June - 2am: Bombs away - the first Allied bombers and fighters head to France to soften German defences. Throughout the day they attack the beach heads and key towns like Caen.

6th June - 5.23am: Open fire. Naval forces begin to bombard German defences along the Normandy coast.

6th June - 6.30am: H-Hour. The American invasion force arrives at their landing zones. An hour later, British and Canadian troops arrive at the other beaches.

BEACHES

A fleet of over 5,000 ships and landing craft crossed the Channel. Heavy bombing, along with a massive naval bombardment, destroyed many of the German defences. Assault troops then landed on five beaches. Airborne forces were dropped behind the beaches and on their flanks to slow down German counterattacks. Bridges, road crossings and coastal batteries were seized to help the amphibious forces advance inland. To maintain secrecy, the beaches were given codenames: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword.

The US Army was the western invasion force, landing on Utah and Omaha beaches. Omaha was the most heavily defended of all five beaches and the Americans suffered high casualties there during the invasion.

The eastern invasion force was made up of British troops, landing at Gold and Sword beaches. The Canadians, landing at Juno.

These beaches were closer to Caen, which the Allies planned to liberate. The British met with relatively weak defences and succeeded in meeting up with the paratroopers dropped earlier. This was not the case for the Canadians at Juno, heavily

fortified defences and rough seas meant that they suffered many losses.

Gold Beach ranged from Lion-sur-Mer to La Riviere, five miles long and included Arromanches where the Mulberry Harbour was established. British 2nd Army, 30th Corps landed here and by nightfall, 25,000 troops had landed and pushed the Germans six miles inland. We had just 400 casualties.

Sword Beach stretched five miles too, from Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer to Ouistreham at the mouth of the River Orne. Nine miles north of Caen, it was a major route hub of Northern France. With help from French and British Commandos, we landed 29,000 men.

IMPACT

The Allies' deception plans had worked brilliantly. The destination of the landings remained a secret and the Germans were convinced that a second, larger attack would take place elsewhere. Much needed German troops were held back in other regions awaiting an invasion that never took place.

The initial German response was slow and poorly co-ordinated. The generals couldn't move their armoured reserves without Hitler's approval.

The Allies suffered at least 10,000 casualties on 6th June 1944, ten times the number of German losses. And many of the immediate strategic objectives of the landings were not achieved, including the failure to capture any of the key towns.

But D-Day was still a huge success. More than 150,000 Allied troops and 6,000 vehicles had crossed the Channel and established a foothold in France. Their task now was to drive the Germans into retreat.

THE NATIONAL WW2 MUSEUM - FACT SHEET

Invasion Date: June 6, 1944 - The D in D-Day stands for "day" since the final invasion date was unknown and weather dependent.

Allied Forces - More than 150,000 Allied troops from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Free France, and Norway.

Invasion Area - The Allied code names for the beaches along the 50-mile stretch of Normandy coast targeted for landing were Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword. Omaha was the costliest beach in terms of Allied casualties.

The Armada - 6,000 ships and landing craft

50,000 vehicles

11,000 planes

Commanders: United States - Dwight D. Eisenhower & Omar Bradley

United Kingdom - Bernard Law Montgomery, Trafford Leigh-Mallory,
Arthur Tedder, Miles Dempsey & Bertram Ramsay

Germany - Erwin Rommel, Gerd von Rundstedt & Friedrich Dollmann

Casualties: Numbers represent total killed, wounded, missing or captured: United States - 8,230 - United Kingdom - 2,700 - Canada - 1,074 - Germany - Estimated between 4,000 and 9,000

The Outcome: By June 11, with the beachheads firmly secured, more than 326,000 Allied troops had crossed with more than 100,000 ton of military equipment. Paris was liberated on 25th August. Germany surrendered on 8th May 1945 (Victory in Europe Day or VE Day)

Veterans Today: The number of remaining WW2 veterans is estimated at just under 500,000. There is no official resource for how many D-Day Veterans remain with us today.

THE D-DAY 44 CHALLENGE

In honour of our forefathers as well as current servicemen and women who have bravely fought to protect our way of life, Branch Chairman Jake Baker and Committee Member Steve Miller will be taking on the D-Day 44 Challenge to raise vital funds for life changing mental health treatment for veterans. The D-Day 44 Challenge commemorates the 1944 Allied invasion of occupied France. On 5th June they will be heading to Normandy, to race across its picturesque beaches, finishing at the historic Pegasus Bridge on the 80th Anniversary of D-Day, on 6th June 2024.

Combat Stress is the UK's leading charity for veterans' mental health. For a century, they've helped former servicemen and women deal with issues like trauma, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Today, they provide support to veterans from every service and every conflict.

On the morning of their challenge, Branch Schools Liaison and Branch Secretary Lynne Baker will be at Alfred Lord Tennyson School supporting an Assembly and, technology permitting, intends to phone Jake and Steve whilst actually walking on the Normandy Beaches. This will not only be an exciting moment for the pupils but will help them understand just how important D-Day was and why we commemorate it.

Their team name - **The Rushdenites** - has literally captured the attention of a good few donors including many members from RBL Rushden Branch; they say a huge **"Thank You"** – having raised over £5K so far! Please do help and donate - if you can - to this very worthy cause by clicking the link to take you to <https://events.combatstress.org.uk/fundraisers/therushdenites>

