



VER SUR MER CHOSEN AS SITE FOR BRITAIN'S D-DAY MEMORIAL

GOLD BEACH SITE IS THE CHOICE OF VETERANS

An imposing site overlooking "Gold Beach" in the town of Ver-sur-Mer has been chosen as the location for the British D-Day/Normandy Memorial.

Ver-sur-Mer was the overwhelming choice of Normandy Veterans who responded to the consultation exercise mounted by the trust last April.

Typical of the responses received from Veterans was this comment from Denys Hunter, formerly of the Hertfordshire Yeomanry and later the Royal Artillery. He wrote: "The Ver-sur-Mer site, with its unobstructed views of Gold Beach and the distant remains of the Mulberry Harbour off Arromanches, would be a fitting location."

Joe Cattini, formerly of the Royal Artillery told the trust: "The Memorial needs to be at one of the locations where troops landed: Ver-sur-Mer is an ideal location."

Several Veterans also noted with approval that the Ver-sur-Mer site is close to the spot where CSM Stan Hollis of the 6th Green Howards won the only Victoria Cross awarded for the events of D-Day.



Veterans being briefed at the Ver-sur-Mer site by architect Liam O'Connor

A group of about 40 Veterans visited the site on 7th June. Their response to the choice of Ver-sur-Mer was extremely positive.

Bob Laverty, formerly of the South Staffordshire regiment, said: "I think it's ideal, fantastic. This is where so many British troops landed. We couldn't wish for better."

Bob Ridgway, a former Royal Engineer said: "It's taken 70 odd years to do it. It's time Britain had a memorial."

The Memorial plan has been strongly endorsed by the then Secretary of State for Defence, Sir Michael Fallon. Speaking after the 6th June remembrance service at Bayeux Cathedral Sir Michael said:

"The Normandy Memorial is so important because it will provide a clear focal point for Veterans, their families, their children and their grandchildren.

"They will now be able to see in one place the enormity of what was done here, the scale of the invasion and its significance as the first step to the liberation of Europe."

Contracts have now been exchanged for the purchase of the land where the memorial will be situated and negotiations are well-advanced for the purchase of an adjacent site for vehicle parking and service buildings.

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Veterans Bob Ridgway (left) and Bob Laverty

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THE NORMANDY MEMORIAL - PREPARING THE GROUND

D-DAY SCULPTOR APPOINTED



Architect Liam O'Connor and sculptor David Williams-Ellis (right)

The British sculptor David Williams-Ellis has been commissioned by the trust to create the “D-Day Sculpture” which will occupy a prominent position on the forecourt of the memorial against the backdrop of “Gold Beach”.

Mr Williams-Ellis’ father was a wartime lieutenant in the Royal Navy. He commanded a motor torpedo boat which supported the Normandy operation.

Mr Williams-Ellis said: “The opportunity to create a sculpture as part of the Normandy Memorial project resonates on both a

sculptural and personal level. Having grown up surrounded by my father’s generation who fought in the Second World War, including a number who were involved in the D-Day landings, I understand the poignancy of this memorial.

“It is a huge honour to be asked to commemorate the landings and I will use my four decades of experience to create a memorial that will enable those who visit the site to reflect upon and contemplate the bravery and sacrifices made by those in June 1944.”

GENERAL RICHARD DANNATT JOINS THE TRUST

General Lord Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff between 2006 and 2009, has joined the board of trustees.

He joins another former head of the British army, General Sir Peter Wall.

General Dannatt is a former member of the Green Howards, the regiment of the D-Day VC holder CSM Stan Hollis.

General Dannatt said: “Having been closely involved with the Green Howards’ project in 1996 to erect our Regimental Memorial in Crepon where CSM Stan Hollis won his VC, I am delighted to be involved with this new British Memorial in Ver-sur-Mer near to where Stan Hollis’s first action took place on 6th June 1944. This new memorial

will be a fitting tribute to all those who lost their lives in the Normandy Campaign, and an appropriate acknowledgement of all the French people who gave their lives for the liberation of their country.”

Generals Dannatt and Wall are part of a board of trustees headed by chairman Lord Peter Ricketts (former head of the Foreign Office and British Ambassador to France 2012-2016); the other trustees are Lord Robin Janvrin (former Private Secretary to Her Majesty the Queen and an ex-Royal Navy officer); Sir Michael Rake (most recently Chairman of BT Group), David McDonough, Andrew Whitmarsh and Nicholas Witchell.



General Richard Dannatt (above): Stan Hollis VC (right)



Courtesy of the Green Howards Trust

NAMES RESEARCH NEARS COMPLETION

The task of compiling a master-list of the names of those who lost their lives on D-Day and in the Normandy Campaign is nearing completion.

The research has been carried out by the trust’s Lead Historical Researcher Jane Furlong, formerly of Imperial War Museums. The list of names for inscription

on the Memorial is an original piece of historical research. Jane Furlong explained: “While there are other lists in the public domain, this is the first time research, using a range of different primary sources, has been carried out to assess and confirm the names of all those killed in the Battle of Normandy while fighting under British command.”

The latest findings suggest that the total number of names for inscription on the Memorial will be around 22,500.

It is hoped to place the completed schedule of names on the Trust website early in the New Year to seek comments and verify its accuracy.



Above: Gold Beach on 7 June 1944

Courtesy of National Army Museum

GOLD BEACH THEN AND NOW

Two photographs of Gold Beach taken from the Ver-sur-Mer memorial site on 7th June 1944 have been found in the records of the National Army Museum.

The viewpoint is a few yards to the east of the position where the memorial will stand, close to the Mount Fleury battery.

The photographs show the heavy concentration of naval traffic off Gold Beach and, in the foreground, tanks parked in a “Tracked Vehicle Transit Area” removing their waterproofing.

The photographs underline how special the Ver-sur-Mer site is with its viewpoint across these fields to one of the most evocative locations of D-Day.



View today from the proposed site looking towards Gold Beach

MEMORIAL DESIGN FINALISED

The design of the D-Day Memorial is being finalised by the trust’s architect Liam O’Connor and his team.

At its heart will be seven separate walled gardens bearing the Names of those under British command who lost their lives between 5 June and 31 August 1944.

The sacrifice of French civilians will be remembered in a separate stone pavilion.

The task of cutting the approximately 22,500 names will be under the supervision of the stone letter carver and sculptor Richard

Kindersley whose previous work has included commissions for the Armed Forces Memorial and St Paul’s Cathedral. He’s designing a special typeface for use on the memorial.

Detailed survey work of the site has taken place in recent months. One particular concern has been the danger of unexploded ordnance left over from 1944. Ground radar is being used to check the underground topography.

The memorial design will be imposing to those who visit it but unobtrusive within the

Normandy coastal landscape and attuned to the sensitivities of the local environment. Vehicle parking and support buildings will be set back a short distance from the memorial itself.

Liam O’Connor said: “We are creating a memorial design which will take full advantage of this magnificent setting above Gold Beach. My hope and belief is that this stone memorial in this carefully landscaped setting will create a compelling place of beauty where people will come to remember and reflect.”

BACK PAGE - MESSAGE FROM TRUST CHAIRMAN PETER RICKETTS

MESSAGE FROM THE TRUST CHAIRMAN, LORD PETER RICKETTS

After a very busy six months for the Trust, this newsletter brings you bang up to date. We have made real progress in turning the vision of our Patron George Batts and the other founder-members of the Trust into a reality.

Thanks to the generosity of the Government, we have the funding. After careful review of all the possible sites, we have now made the choice of a wonderful position overlooking Gold Beach – a site that has enthusiastic support from the veterans who visited it last June. We have a dignified and fitting design for our National Memorial.

We have also been delighted to welcome two new Trustees. General Lord (Richard) Dannatt will be well known to many veterans as a former Chief of the General Staff and as Patron of the Spirit of Normandy Trust. Sir Mike Rake brings a huge range of experience as a business leader, most recently

as Chairman of BT, and in many charitable activities including chairing the Committee which organised HM The Queen's 90th birthday celebrations. We are very fortunate to have them.

What we now need most urgently is the approval of the French authorities so that construction work can begin. We are working flat out to secure this. There is a lot of enthusiasm for this project at high levels in the French government which is helpful. But we also have to meet the planning requirements for what is a site in a very special area of the coastline. Everyone is very conscious of how little time remains before the 75th anniversary commemorations on 6 June 2019.

There is one other important development: the appointment of the sculptor David Williams-Ellis who will deliver what I'm sure will be a stunning D-Day Sculpture.



Trust Chairman, Lord Peter Ricketts

So thank you to all those Veterans who've offered their views and encouragement. Thank you too to the Mayor of Ver-sur-Mer, M. Philippe Onillon, to the members of his council and to the landowners at the site, all of whom have given us help and support.

We will keep you up to date over the crucial months ahead.

Peter Ricketts.

GOLD BEACH SITE IS THE CHOICE OF VETERANS CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE



A major focus now is to secure building permissions from the French authorities. There have been meetings with the Prefet of Calvados, M. Laurent Fiscus, the sous-Prefet of Bayeux, M. Vincent Ferrier and French departmental officials.

The trust's architect and chief consultant Liam O'Connor said: "We are very fortunate to have found such a remarkable site and to have had its choice ratified so clearly by the Veteran Community"

"We are now working very hard to satisfy the various requirements of the planning authorities and French ministries so that construction can commence at the earliest opportunity."

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