



BRITISH
NORMANDY
MEMORIAL

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D-DAY80



D-DAY
80

Remembering the
Normandy Landings

Teacher Resource Pack

Introduction

“On 6 June we remember those who gave their lives in the summer of 1944 in the cause of freedom.”

**General Lord Dannatt, Chairman of Trustees,
Normandy Memorial Trust**

This education pack commemorates the 80th anniversary of D-Day. It contains information and resources to help pupils in both the UK and France develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of key historical events and their impact on the people and places involved in D-Day and the Battle of Normandy. This eventually led to the successful liberation of German-occupied Western Europe.

Front cover image: © IWM B 5246
Commandos of 47 (RM) Commando coming ashore from LCAs
(Landing Craft Assault) on Jig Green beach, Gold area, 6 June 1944



Introduction

The information and activities in this pack can help your pupils to find out about the sequence of events leading up to D-Day, the roles played by the British and Allied forces, French Resistance, and the Intelligence Services along with the impact of the campaign on French civilians, particularly in the Normandy village of Tilly-sur-Seulles.

They can investigate primary sources including photographs, letters, and documents, carry out research and commemorate the brave people involved in the conflict. They might also have a go at practising their language skills, codebreaking and a creative writing activity inspired by the part played by animals in these wartime events.

The resources are designed to be flexible and adaptable. They can be used as starting points for individual lessons or activities, or form part of a larger cross-curricular project with a partner school overseas. Teachers will know best how to adapt these activities for their pupils, and there are many opportunities to provide additional support or extend the activities for the pupils in your classes. Remember that this topic may be sensitive, particularly for children who have experienced war and displacement within their families.



British Normandy Memorial, opened 6 June 2021

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Grateful thanks to Edward Knowlson's family (daughters Brenda Connelly and Patricia Spencer and grandson David Connelly), George Boucher's nephew, Mike Boucher and Reg Rumbles' children (Brian Rumbles and Pamela Houghton) for permission to use family documents and letters

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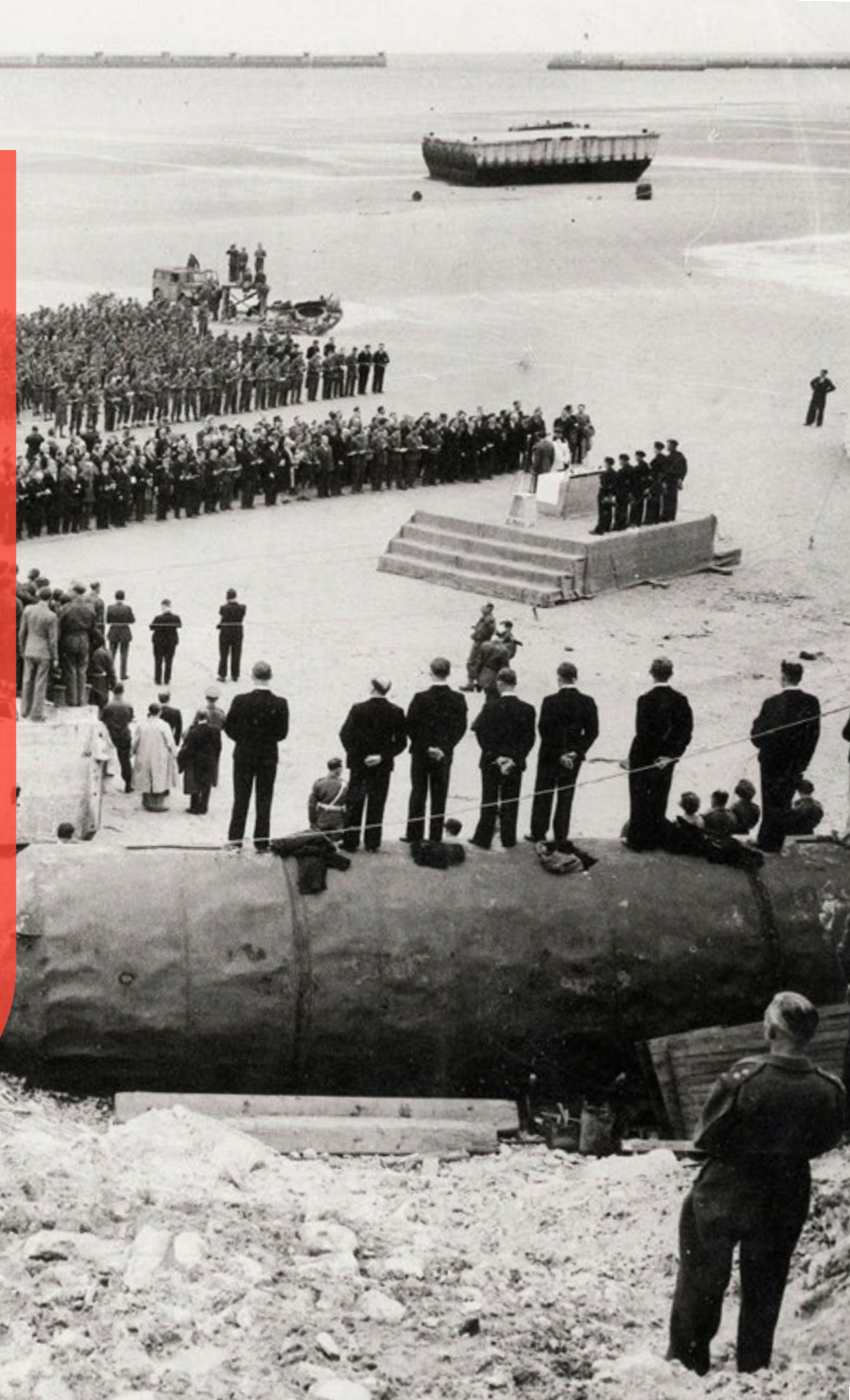
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Indicates background information for teachers



Shows activities to carry out with your pupils



France and Britain commemorate the first anniversary of the D-Day landings on the beach at Arromanches, Normandy



Background information

for teachers and pupils



Information about the events leading up to D-Day including the role played by British forces

On 3 September 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany following the German invasion of Poland. By 1940, Germany occupied most of Europe. America joined the fight in December 1941 after Japan bombed the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The global conflict was to last six years, but the Allied Nations agreed they would first work to defeat Germany before turning their attention to Japan.

So, in the Spring of 1943, the Anglo-American Allies agreed to carry out an attack across the English Channel into France. But they realised it could not happen until 1944, due to commitments on other operations and the fact that the preparations would take time, as it was a huge planning and logistical effort.

Planning the Assault

The Allies first had to identify a suitable landing site in France. It needed to be within range of southern England and have beaches suitable for prolonged support operations and adequate exits. The Normandy coast between Caen and Cherbourg was chosen for this. The Allies then developed plans to land troops and supplies in France from which further offensive operations could be developed.

The American Dwight D. Eisenhower was appointed Supreme Allied Commander in December 1943. Allied troops and logistics were then planned for the greatest naval, air and ground assault ever undertaken. The codename for this was **Operation Overlord**.

Defending the Assault

The Germans expected an Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe would be launched but they didn't know when or where it would be. So, from 1942 they began to build large coastal defences and fortifications, known as the *Atlantikwall*, which stretched along the whole of the French coast and as far up as Scandinavia.



Background information

for teachers and pupils

The Assault Force

The assault force was made up of naval, airborne and ground troops and was divided into Eastern and Western sections. The American Western force was to land on two beaches codenamed Utah and Omaha. The British and Canadian Eastern Task force was to land on three beaches, codenamed Gold, Juno and Sword. British and American Airborne forces would also drop behind the German lines to the west and east of the landing area.

It was a united international effort with more than 2 million troops from over 30 countries preparing for the invasion. They primarily came from the US, UK, and Canada but other countries including France, Australia, Belgium, Czechoslovakia (now Czechia and Slovakia) The Netherlands, Greece, New Zealand, Norway, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Poland also provided support.



The French Resistance and coded messages

To prepare for **Operation Overlord** in France, the BBC's **Radio Londres** agreed some secret signals with the **French Resistance**. **Radio Londres** was a radio station broadcast from 1940 to 1944 by the BBC in London to Nazi-occupied France. It was entirely in French and was operated by members of the **Free French** who had fled France's occupation by Germany. One of its key functions was to send coded messages to the **French Resistance**.

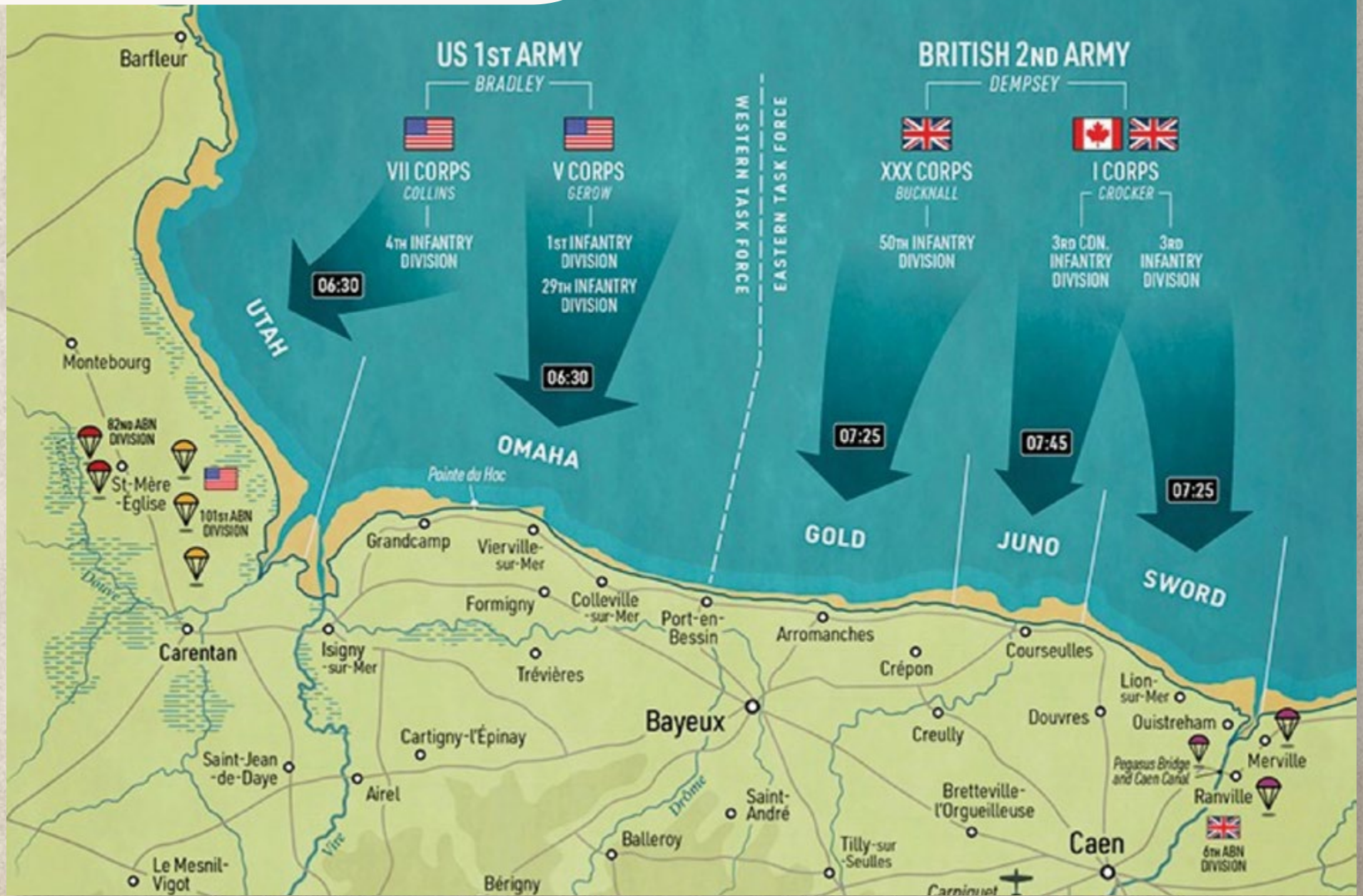
The French Resistance (*La Résistance*) was a collection of small groups who fought the Nazi occupation of France during the Second World War. In Normandy there were approximately 10,000 resistance fighters whose main activities were collecting intelligence and rescuing Allied airmen. They also wrote and printed secret newspapers and leaflets.

When the opening three lines of the poem "Chanson d'Automne" was played on the radio "Les sanglots longs / des violons / de l'automne" ("Long sobs of autumn violins"), it signalled that **Operation Overlord** was to start within one month. This was broadcast on 1 June 1944.

When the next lines were played, "Blessent mon coeur / d'une langueur / monotone" ("Wound my heart with a monotonous languor"), it meant that **Operation Overlord** would begin within 48 hours and that the Resistance should begin the code green plan to carry out sabotage operations on the French railway system and bridges. These lines were broadcast on 5 June 1944 at 23:15, meaning the call to action had begun!

Libraries and Archives Canada
3525863_Royal Berkshire Regt
disembarking from HMCS PRINCE

Map of Normandy in northern France showing where Allied Forces landed on D-Day in 1944





Background information

for teachers and pupils

This was planned with the **Special Operations Executive (SoE)** – a secret Second World War organisation formed in 1940. Its purpose was to conduct spying, carry out sabotage and help local Resistance movements. The operation was a success with 98 trains destroyed in just two days by **French Resistance** sabotage actions.



1.



2.



3.

Photography credits:

1. © IWM HU 56936 Resistance member setting an explosive charge on a railway line 2. © IWM B 9836 Original wartime caption: George Murch, in foreground, born in Hampshire, married and settled in the village after the 1914-1918 War and is the FFI interpreter, takes notes as Andre Mousset, Chief of the Resistance Movement occupies position 3. Commemorative plaque of Radio Londres in the cemetery of Asnelles, Calvados



Background information

for teachers and pupils

Mulberry Harbours

When planning for D-Day, much thought was given to how to supply the invasion force. Without a means of supplying the troops with the material needed to fight the battle, it was highly likely the invasion would fail. A temporary port was needed that could be constructed in a few days.

It was decided the best way would be to take one over, and the ingenious Mulberry Harbours were born. The structures would be built in the UK then sailed or towed across the Channel and put in place. They needed to be able to withstand bad weather and create sheltered areas of water, known as Gooseberries. Each harbour was formed of ten main elements.

Building these elements was a massive feat of civil engineering. More than 55,000 men were involved in their construction, which began in December 1943. Surveys of the Normandy shore and seabed ahead of the landings were used to inform the location of the harbours.

Mulberry A would deal with material landing on the American beaches and Mulberry B would deal with the material landing on the British and Canadian beaches.

On the afternoon of D-Day and for the next 48 hours, the sections of the harbour sailed or were towed across the Channel and then men of the Royal Engineers and American construction battalions began the immense task of assembling the units at Arromanches. Both harbours were almost fully operational by 19 June.

The Great Storm

But then, a Great Storm hit the English Channel and Normandy coast on 19 June 1944. Whilst Mulberry B was able to withstand it, with some damage, Mulberry A was made inoperable by the storm. Parts of Mulberry A were used to repair Mulberry B and the Americans reverted to unloading from landing craft.

Success of the Mulberries

Despite this setback, the Mulberries proved effective at landing personnel, stores and equipment in the weeks following D-Day. Two and a half million men, half a million vehicles, and four million tons of supplies landed in Europe through the artificial harbour at Arromanches. Sections of Mulberry Harbour can still be seen today along the Normandy beaches.



The remains of the Mulberry Harbour at Arromanches



The Battle of Normandy

The Battle of Normandy, codenamed Operation Overlord, was one of many battles which led to the liberation of Europe in 1945. It describes the fighting that took place in Normandy from D-Day, 6 June 1944, until the end of August 1944 as part of the opening of a second front against Germany, to relieve pressure on the Soviet Union in the east. The period from September 1944 marked the start of the next phase as the Allies regrouped before their advance from Paris towards Germany to meet up with Soviet troops moving from the East.

Image top left: © IWM C 4846 An aerial view of the Mulberry harbour at Arromanches, which clearly shows the effectiveness of the breakwater – outside the sea is rough, whilst inside ships are at anchor in calm water.

Image bottom left: © IWM A 24371 Lorries on the spud pierhead as Britain's Mulberry Port at Arromanches begins to operate as a harbour. Several small vessels are tied up to the pierhead.

Countdown to D-Day

Just after midnight, on 6 June 1944, over 23,400 Allied airborne forces landed on drop zones behind the German lines. **Operation Overlord** had begun. Then, at dawn, the Allied troops of many nationalities under British, Canadian, and American commands landed on the Normandy beaches. The size of the invasion was unprecedented. The Allies used almost 7,000 ships and landing craft to land around 156,000 troops in total (23,400 airborne and 132,600 on the 5 beaches) and equipment on the five beaches on the Normandy coast, backed by naval and air support.*

* Statistics from <https://thedaystory.com/>

D-Day veteran, 98-year-old Albert Price, was a tank driver during the Second World War and landed on Gold Beach on 6 June 1944 at the age of 18. He recalls:

“I can still remember driving the tank onto the beach in Normandy and having to zig zag to avoid mines and shells flying straight at us. I will never forget that day, scrambling for safety after our tank got hit.”

Operation Overlord marked the beginning of the liberation of France, and alongside Russian efforts in the East, the eventual defeat of Nazi Germany. Victory in Europe Day (VE Day) was declared on 8 May 1945.





Tilly-sur-Seulles

The fighting took a heavy toll on both soldiers and the local French population. One of the first villages in Normandy devastated by the fighting was called Tilly-sur-Seulles. It was taken and retaken 23 times over a period of nearly a month. Seventy percent of the village was damaged and nearly a tenth of its population was killed. Hundreds of soldiers also died breaking through or defending the Tilly front. The British battalions lost an average of 200 men per day during this period.

One local eyewitness, Paul Jehenne, described what happened at the time: *“Houses are collapsing, walls are falling like houses of cards, roofs are flying, the earth is shuddering, we feel as if we are being lifted off the ground. The air becomes unbreathable, filled with dust rising from the rubble and smoke from fires lit here and there.”*

German counterattack against British forces in Tilly-sur-Seules

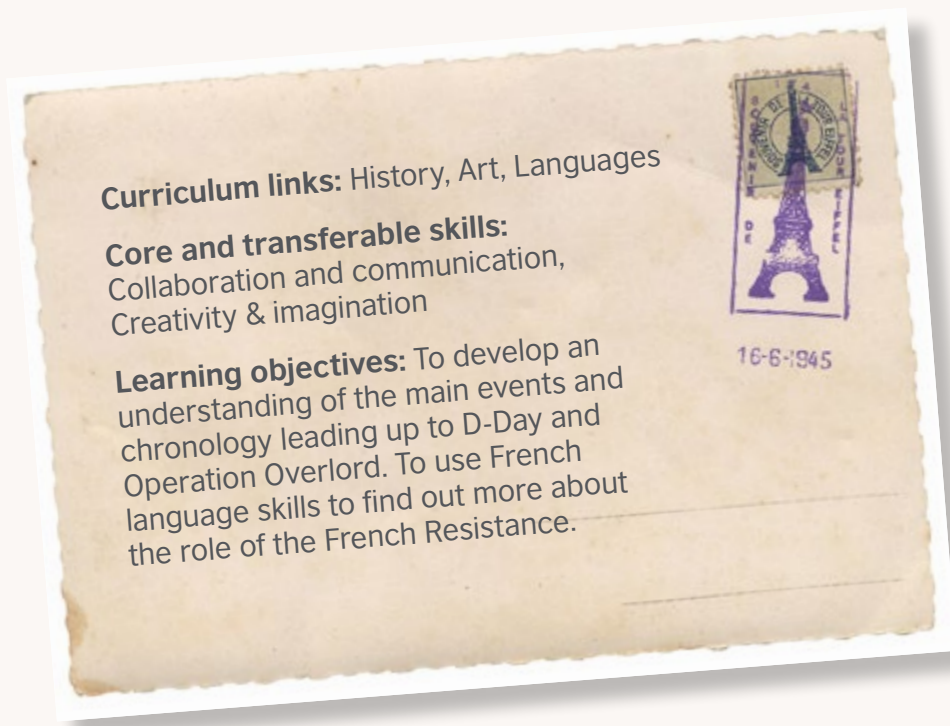
Photographs showing the aftermath of D-Day in Normandy 1944



© IWM B 6591 One of the inhabitants of Tilly salvaging his belongings from the wreckage of his house



© IWM B 5775 Views of the much battered buildings in Tilly-sur-Seulles which were occupied by British troops after much enemy opposition



Assess your pupils' prior knowledge

Before sharing information about the events leading up to D-Day and **Operation Overlord** with your pupils, ask what they already know or think they know about the **Second World War** and what happened on D-Day. Explain that this was the start of the largest naval, air and land operation in history, during which thousands of troops and their equipment crossed the **English Channel** to liberate **German-occupied Western Europe**.

They can record what they already know, along with thoughts and questions, in pairs or small groups on a large mind map and continue to add to this in different colours as their knowledge and understanding grows throughout the project. They could also come up with their own topics they would like to investigate such as how their community was affected by D-Day and the Battle for Normandy or aspects of social history such as the role of women in the war effort.

Create a D-Day glossary and timeline

Display the following key vocabulary and definitions from the background information sheet on a working wall in your classroom. Ask the students to add any other new words or phrases that they come across related to the topic to the display and create their own definitions to go with them.



D-Day – The first day of a military operation. The most famous D-Day was 6 June 1944. In France this is known as *le jour J* or *le débarquement de Normandie*.

Allied Nations – A coalition of countries fighting with Britain who opposed the Axis powers (led by Germany, Italy and Japan). Its principal members were Britain, the United States and Russia.

Operation Overlord – The codename for the Battle of Normandy in the Second World War.

Free French – French movement, led by General Charles de Gaulle, to continue warfare against Germany after France's 1940 defeat in the Second World War.

The French Resistance – A collection of groups that fought the Nazi occupation of France.

Radio Londres – A radio station broadcast from 1940 to 1944 in French by the BBC in London to Nazi-occupied France.

The Special Operations Executive (SoE) – A secret British organisation set up in 1940 to carry out spying, sabotage and help local Resistance groups.

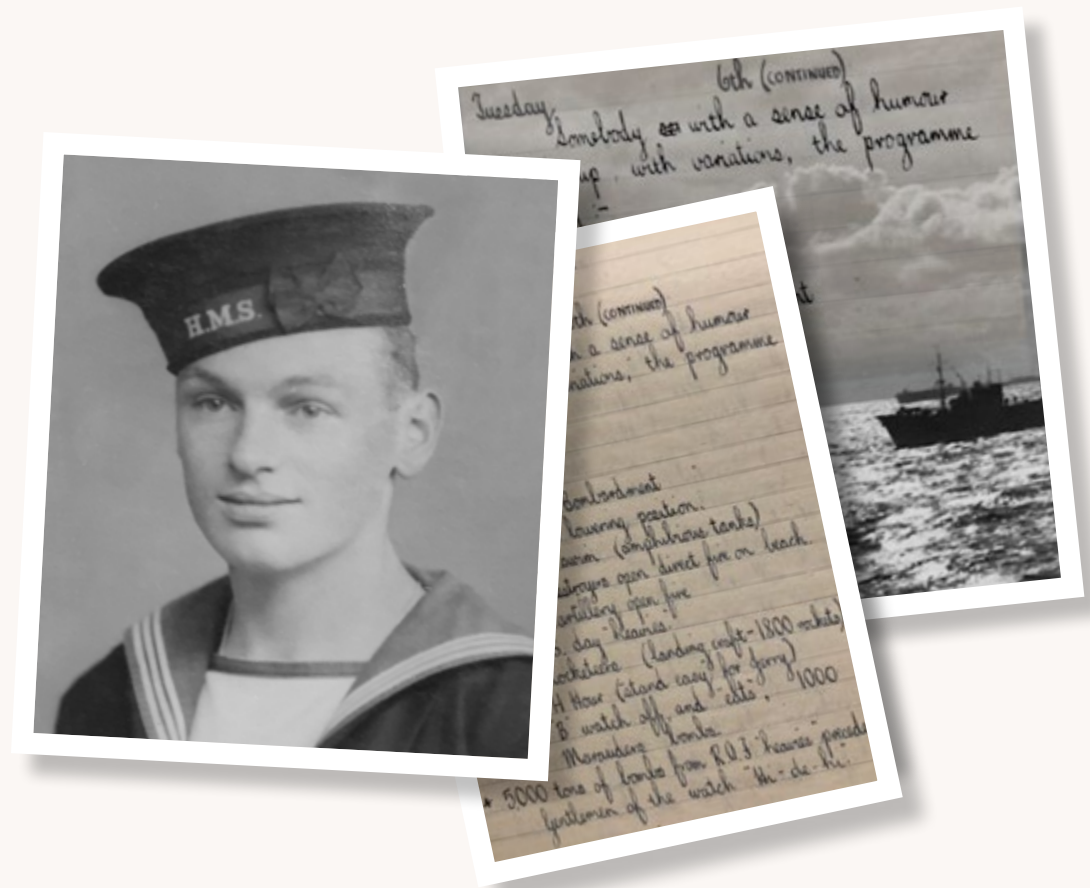
Mulberry Harbours – Temporary portable harbours developed by the British to help deliver men and supplies onto the beaches during the Allied invasion of Normandy.

Timeline

To help your pupils understand the chronology of the significant events, invite them to use the following information to create an engaging visual timeline. Give each pair of students one of the pieces of information listed on the next sheet to illustrate, and then combine them all in chronological order to create a large class display. This could be a line of posters displayed or hung as a washing line, or a chain link timeline linked together across a corridor. Alternatively, your students could create a storyboard or a digital timeline using free software.

Whichever medium you choose, share pictures of your illustrated timelines and working walls with your partner school if you have one.

Your students could also find out about the role played by one particular British serviceman on that day, by clicking on the following link to Reg Rumbles' D-Day diary, who watched events unfold from HMS Largs: <https://www.britishnormandymemorial.org/veteran-stories/reg-rumbles-diary/>



Activities

31 May 1944

Troops and vehicles begin to load onto the ships and landing craft

1 June 1944

Coded message broadcast on Radio Londres warns operations will start within a month

5 June 1944

Second coded radio broadcast alerts the French Resistance to begin sabotage operations

5 June 1944

The Allied fleet sets sail to cross the English Channel

6 June 1944

D-Day



00:15 Parachutists and gliders start to land



06:30 First landings at Omaha and Utah beaches by US forces



07:25 Landings at Gold and Sword beach by UK forces



07:30 Landings begin on Juno Beach



12:00 First contact made with parachutists



21:00 By the evening of D-Day a firm bridgehead had been secured and a number of villages liberated

7 June 1944 Battle of Normandy begins



19 June 1944 Tilly-sur-Seulles is liberated



August 1944 Paris liberated by Allied troops



French translation activity

To find out more about the French Resistance and their role in D-Day ask your students to read aloud and translate the following information from French to English .

Qui sont les résistants?

L'histoire indique une majorité de jeunes personnes, mais aussi des personnes âgées de 30 à 45 ans.

Les résistants sont principalement des hommes (80%-90%) et ils travaillent pour la PTT (Postes, télégraphes et téléphones) ou la SNCF (Société nationale des chemins de fer français). Il n'y a pas beaucoup de travail en France sous l'occupation.

Il y a aussi des chefs d'entreprise qui résistent.

Il y a combien de résistants en Normandie ?

Il y a certainement au moins 10.000 résistants en Normandie, sur une population de 2.000.000 d'habitants.

Cette proportion est semblable dans le reste de la France.

Les collaborateurs sont moins nombreux.

La Résistance n'a pas beaucoup d'impact avant 1944.

Un événement décisif est la nouvelle loi sur le STO (Service du travail obligatoire) en février 1943. La loi oblige les jeunes Français (de 21 à 23 ans) d'aller travailler en Allemagne. C'était obligatoire.

Les jeunes qui refusent se cachent, ou cherchent de faux documents. La Résistance protège ces jeunes.

Le nombre de résistants explose en 1944.

En 1944 aussi les préparatifs du débarquement inspirent la participation dans la Résistance.

L'activité des résistants en Normandie a beaucoup de risques, car l'occupation allemande dans la région est très dense.

Les troupes allemandes sont vigilantes sur le territoire; ils anticipent un débarquement allié dans ce secteur.

Et le débarquement arrive! – le 6 juin 1944.

Activities

Quelles sont les actions des résistants pour soutenir le débarquement du 6 juin 1944?

Les Alliés inventent des missions résistantes pour perturber la contre-offensive allemande vers les plages de Normandie.

Le plan vert – le sabotage des chemins de fer.

Le plan bleu – coupure des lignes électriques à haute tension.

Le plan violet – coupure des lignes téléphoniques.

Le plan rouge – la pratique de la guérilla contre les ennemis. Les résistants s'attaquent aux véhicules allemands.

Le plan tortue – le sabotage des routes. Les résistants coupent des arbres, ou changent les panneaux.

Le travail des résistants est plus précis que les bombardiers.



Glossary

La Résistance – the Resistance

Les résistants/résistantes – the people in the Resistance.

PTT (Poste, Télégraphes et Téléphones) – Post Office, telecoms

SNCF (Société nationale des chemins de fer français) – French national railway company

chefs d'entreprise – bosses

Les collaborateurs – collaborators: people who worked with, or helped, the Germans either directly or indirectly

Loi – law

STO (Service du travail obligatoire) – obligatory work service

Débarquement – the French name for D-Day – the disembarkation

Soutenir – to support

Tortue – Tortoise

Investigate primary sources to become a historical detective!



Curriculum links: History, English, French

Core and transferable skills:
Collaboration and communication, creativity and imagination, critical thinking and problem solving.

Learning objectives: To investigate primary sources of evidence related to the D-Day campaign. To develop historical skills, ask perceptive questions, think critically and weigh up evidence. To describe what they can see in a photograph in French.



16-6-1945

Photographs

Photographs and letters are very evocative and useful primary sources of evidence to gather information about this period of history. The following photographs show the arrival of troops and nurses on Normandy beaches and the effects of bombing on the village of Tilly-sur-Seulles and its inhabitants.

The letters are from a British soldier called Edward Knowlson sent to his wife Violet and eldest daughter, Brenda.

Activity

Give large copies of the photographs and questions to groups of your students. Ask one member of each group to write down their group's ideas and another member to feedback their thoughts and observations to the rest of the class, before revealing the photograph captions.

You can choose which questions and photographs to use depending on the age of your pupils and model some answers first in English or French, perhaps using the sentence stem "I wonder who/why...or Je me demande qui/pourquoi..." Your students could also use the photographs and letters as a stimulus for descriptive or creative writing.

Activity sheet



Scan the photograph for first impressions and then look closely at the details and discuss the following points and questions:

- Describe what you can see in the photograph. List as many details as you can.
- Where do you think it was taken?
- What evidence do you have to support your views?
- Who do you think is in the photograph?
- What might the people be thinking?
- What might have happened before and after it was taken?
- Discuss who could have taken this photograph and why?
- What questions would you ask the people in the photograph if you could?
- What do you think photographs can tell us about historical events that written descriptions cannot?

Photograph 1



Troops come ashore on Gold Beach IWM B5246

Activity sheet



Photograph 2

Personnel of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service were the first women to arrive at the Normandy beachhead, seven days after the landings, to set up a hospital with the assistance of the Pioneer Corps and Royal Army Medical Corps. Two nurses, Sisters Dorothy Field and Mollie Evershed, lost their lives while saving 75 men from the sinking ship, Hospital Carrier Amsterdam. You can find out more at <http://www.britishnormandymemorial.org/stories>



National Army Museum NAM. 2006-12-103-18

Photograph 3



British soldiers keep watch for snipers in Le Bijude during the fight for Caen in France. NAM. 2006-12-103-13

Activity sheet



Photograph 4

Civilians from the village of Tilly-sur-Seulles trapped in the middle of the fighting, (From left to right: Pierre Lechevalier, Jeanne Lepoitevin, Annick Lechevalier, Louise Leroy).



IWM via Musée de la bataille de Tilly-sur-Seulles and Stéphane JACQUET collection.

Letters

Background information

Lance Corporal Edward “Ted” Knowlson (nicknamed “Tiny”) served in the 5th Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment, which was part of the 43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division. His grandson gave the following information:

My grandfather had signed up for the Army in 1942. On 21 July 1944, Ted sent a Field Service Post Card to his wife Violet, who had just evacuated from London to Yorkshire with her two daughters, Brenda, who is my mother and was then aged six, and Pat (then aged three months). The postcard noted that a letter would follow at the first opportunity.

The following day he sent a longer letter and tucked inside a note to his daughter Brenda which reads:

Dear Brenda,

I hope you are getting along alright at school and are being good and helping Mummy. Kiss sister Pat for me and I hope to see you both soon.

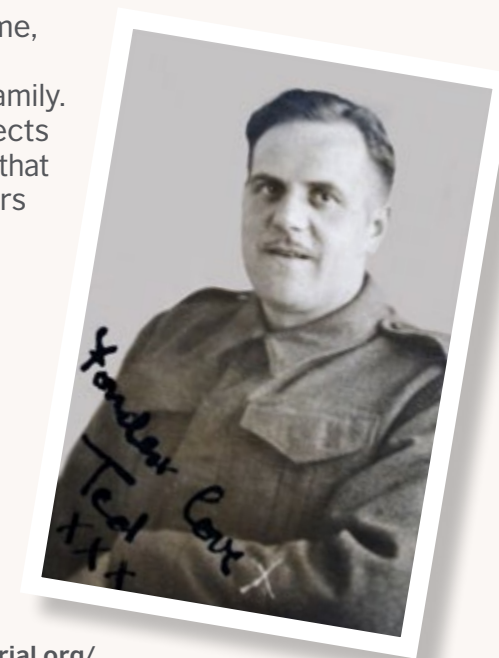
Lots of love, Daddy xxxxxxxx

Sadly, this was his final letter home as he was killed on the same day the letter was written.

Activity

Things to discuss with a partner:

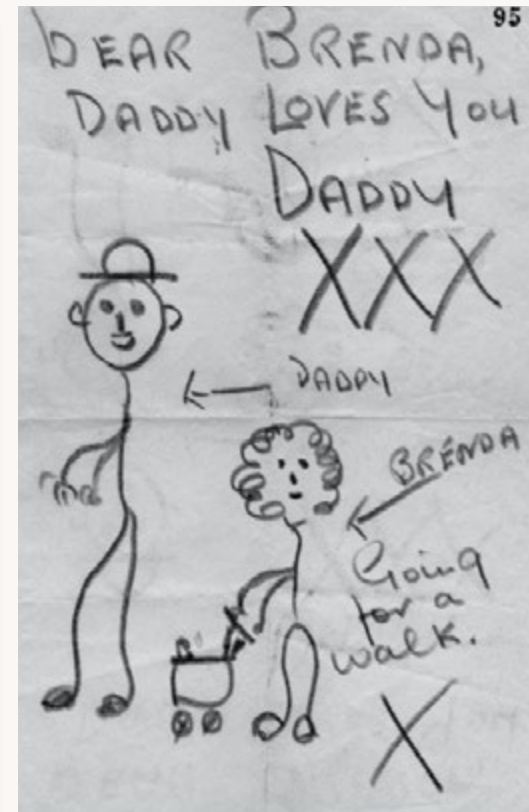
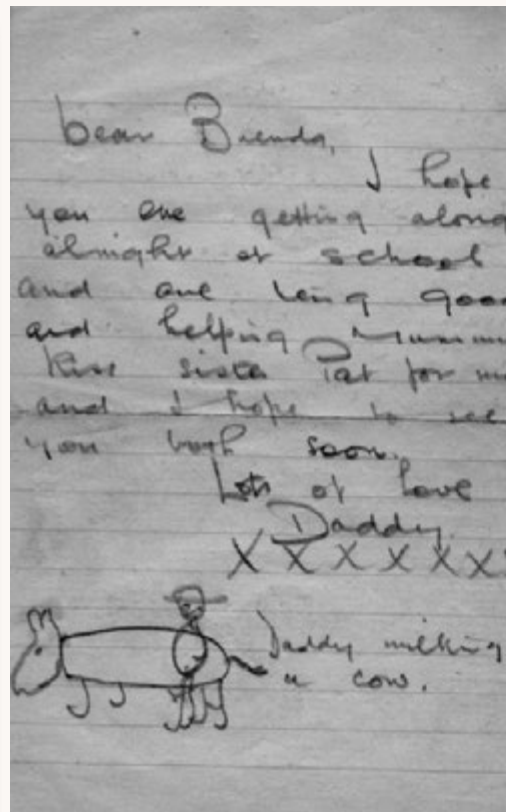
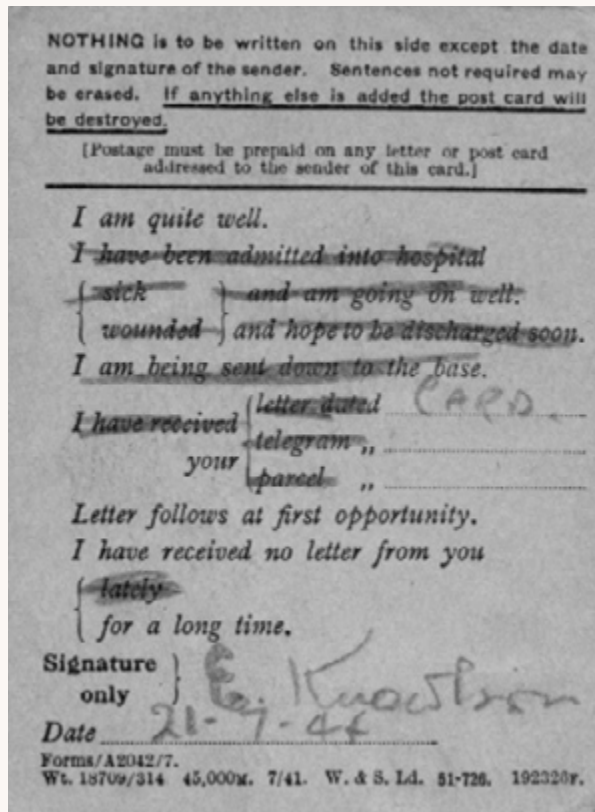
- Read the postcard and note sent by Edward Knowlson in 1944 which you can see on the next page.
- What was the date on the postcard?
- Why do you think the postcard that Edward sent to his wife was in this format?
- How would you describe the difference between the official postcard he sent and the note to Brenda.
- As this was his last letter home, the note was obviously very precious to Brenda and her family. Do you have any letters, objects or photographs in your family that remind you of family members who are no longer with you?



<https://www.britishnormandy.com/normandy-story/edward-ernest-knowlson/>

Letters

Letters sent by Ted Knowlson to his wife Violet and six year old daughter Brenda in 1944.



Documents

The following letter was written to a British family by a French resident after the war to describe what had happened to their son.

Ask your students to read the letter either in English or French and discuss with a partner how George's family might have felt when they received this letter?

On Saturday 5 August 1944 towards 8.30 the plane came down in flames in a field of beetroot. The pilot, however, had time to jump by parachute, but without doubt too near the ground for it hardly opened. Living about 500m from the site of the crash, I went immediately within 100m or so of the plane and saw the body of the pilot which was surrounded by about 100 Germans, who were searching his papers. I succeeded in obtaining the name of your relative, but they would not give me his address. Eventually, after a lot of negotiation, I obtained his identity disc which I still possess giving the name and number of your relative. When night came the Germans left leaving the pilot's body. I carried him in a hand cart and brought him to my parent's house.

The next day - Sunday - we were able to have a coffin of oak made by a local carpenter to bury him in a dignified manner. Around 100 people were present at the funeral at 3pm a score or so of wreaths were placed there, some by the Anciens Combattants, and some by members of the resistance in the area. A small wooden cross bearing his name was erected and at the other end of the grave one of the propeller shaft of his plane.

If your pupils would like to find out more about George's amazing career, follow the links below:

<https://www.britishnormandymemorial.org/normandy-story/george-boucher-1/>

<https://www.britishnormandymemorial.org/normandy-story/george-boucher-2/>



Documents

Le samedi 5 août 1944 vers 8h30 du soir, l'appareil est tombé en flammes dans un champ de betteraves. Le pilote avait cependant eu le temps de sauter en parachute mais sans doute trop près du sol, car il ne s'était à peine ouvert; habitant à environ 500 mètres du point de chute, je suis parti aussitôt, à une centaine de mètres de l'avion, gisant le corps du pilote qui était entouré d'une centaine d'Allemands, qui le fouillaient et lui prenaient tous ses papiers.

J'ai néanmoins réussi à obtenir le nom de votre parent, mais ils n'ont jamais voulu me donner son adresse. Enfin après bien des pourparlers j'ai eu une plaque matricule que je possède encore portant nom et matricules de votre parent. Comme la nuit venait, les Allemands sont partis laissant le corps de votre parent. Je l'ai transporté dans une brouette et amené au domicile de mes parents.

Le lendemain dimanche nous avons réussi à lui faire un cercueil en chêne par un menuisier du pays pour l'inhumer dignement. Une centaine de personnes assistaient à l'inhumation qui a eu lieu vers 3 heures du soir. Une vingtaine de gerbes ont été offertes tant par les Anciens Combattants que par les membres de la Résistance du pays. Une petite croix en bois avait été également offerte et portait ses noms, à l'autre extrémité de la tombe nous avons planté une des pales de l'hélice de son avion.

L'appareil – the plane

Un champ de betteraves – a beetroot field

Fouiller – to conduct a search of something

Les papiers – identity documents

Les pourparlers – negotiations

Une brouette – a wheelbarrow

Un cercueil en chêne – an oak coffin

Un menuisier – a carpenter

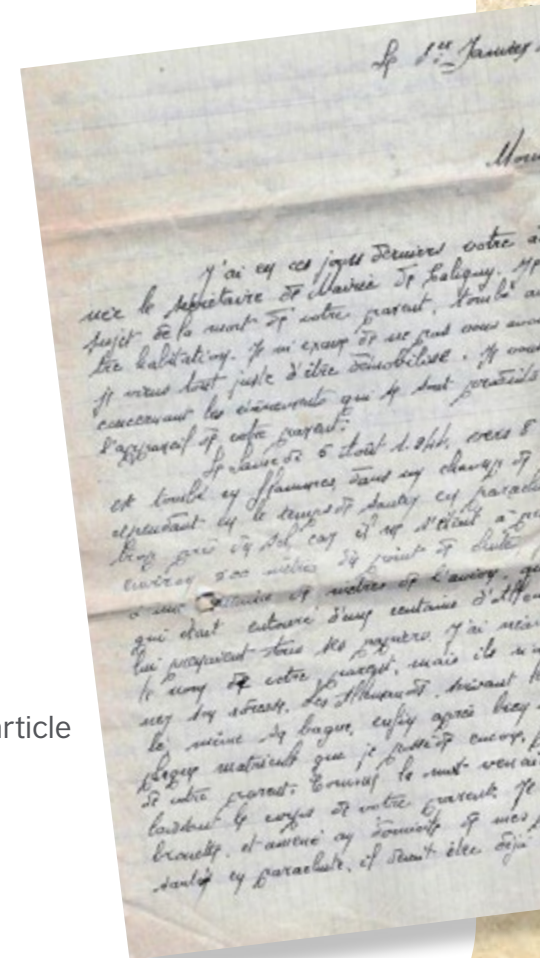
L'inhumation – the burial

Les gerbes – wreaths

Les Anciens Combattants – *veterans' association

https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/veterans_associations

Une pale de l'hélice – a propeller blade



How did intelligence help with D-Day planning?



Curriculum links: History, Languages

Core and transferable skills:
Collaboration and communication, Critical thinking and problem solving.

Learning objectives: To find out about the role of the Intelligence Services in the D-Day campaign and practise language and code breaking skills in immersive wartime scenarios.

Resources: You will need a torch and copies of morse code and the coded messages.



Bletchley Park – gchq.gov.uk

Background Information

The soldiers who fought in the Normandy campaign were being supported by staff at Bletchley Park, whose job it was to find secret intelligence about where the German armed forces and weapons were located in Normandy and what their plans were. This information helped the Allies to plan their attack and keep their troops safe.

Bletchley Park was the centre of Allied codebreaking during the Second World War. It was the home of the Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS), which later became Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). Alongside Bletchley Park, a network of sites across the UK and the world collected signals intelligence to find out more about what the German armed forces were doing.

Ciphers and codebreaking

Getting at the information meant breaking many different codes, the most famous of which is probably the Enigma cipher. Alan Turing and his team broke Enigma by building on the work carried out by Polish and French codebreakers before the Second World War. The intelligence gained from breaking the German Enigma code was also shared with other countries. At the height of the Normandy campaign after D-Day, approximately 18,000 German messages a day were being deciphered at Bletchley Park.

How did intelligence help with D-Day planning?



The importance of learning languages

Even after the codes were broken, the messages needed to be translated from German and other languages into English. This meant recruiting staff who had learned these languages at school or university, when serving in the armed forces or diplomatic service or had grown up speaking these languages.

After Japan joined the war in 1941, Bletchley Park also had to train a lot of its staff to speak Japanese as quickly as possible. At the time, there were very few people of Japanese heritage living in the UK, and they weren't allowed to work in intelligence. There were also some restrictions for people of German and Italian heritage due to them being nationals of a country we were at war with.

Translating Japanese was not easy – the messages contained a lot of codewords, cover terms (words used to conceal the real meaning) and words that weren't in normal dictionaries.





Ambassador Oshima's report

Hiroshi Oshima was the Japanese Ambassador to Berlin before and during the Second World War, and a close confidante of Hitler. Between 24 October and 3 November 1943, he went on a tour of the Normandy defences, hosted by German forces. On the morning of 10 November 1943, he sent a coded message to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo, reporting on what he had found out. This report was 16 pages long and gave extensive information on the fortifications and defensive strategy in Normandy, right down to the measurements of tank ditches and gun turrets. It also outlined in detail where German forces in the region were located, and how they were organised.

Oshima's report was encrypted and transmitted in sections, many of which were deliberately placed out of sequence. It was collected in fragments by different UK and US intelligence stations (including Bletchley Park). It took until 9 December 1943 for a US team to piece the report back together, translate, analyse, and share the information.

Meanwhile, the Japanese Military Attaché in Berlin, Admiral Ito Seiichi, had been on his own tour of the Normandy defences at the end of 1943, and sent an even more detailed 32-page report back to Tokyo, using a machine cipher called Coral. This report was deciphered, translated, and analysed over a 6-month period by the Japanese Military Section at Bletchley Park, and the intelligence was sent out just before D-Day.

These reports were incredibly important for D-Day planning and let the Allies know that German preparations for an Allied invasion were focused on Calais and not on Normandy.



Scenario 1 Use your French and Morse Code skills to decode secret messages

Remind your students about the poem that was broadcast on Radio Londres prior to D-Day and the code green sabotage plan carried out by the French Resistance.

Explain that Morse code uses dots and dashes to represent letters and numbers. It can be sent using light, sound (such as beeps, clapping or tapping), or other methods such as a blinking torch. The most famous Morse code message is the SOS distress call of dot dot dot/dash dash dash / dot dot dot that is used in emergencies.

Share the Morse Code sheet with your students and perhaps show them one of the short films listed in the find out more section.

Encourage them to try writing their names and short messages in Morse Code and sending them to each other using tapping or torches. When they have mastered this, put them into small groups and give them the following scenario.

Scenario

It is 23:30 on 5 June 1944. You are an SOE agent based in Normandy, code name RENARD ROUGE. You are responsible for liaising with the French resistance in the run-up to the D-Day landings, to ensure the Allied Forces have as much support as possible. You have just heard the Verlaine poem (the call to action) broadcast on Radio Londres.

You need to check:

- whether your contact in the French resistance, code name CHAT NOIR, has also received the call to action; and
- find out what they plan to do to assist the Operation OVERLORD.

But you must be careful: you don't want the Nazi forces to intercept your communications!



Task 1 – Morse Code

CHAT NOIR is based in a village across the valley from you.

Each night at 23:30, **CHAT NOIR** chooses a different radio frequency to communicate on.

They send you this frequency made up of 3 numbers by torchlight using morse code.

This is the code you see tonight:



- Using the international Morse Code sheet, what is the frequency you need to tune your radio to?
- You need to let **CHAT NOIR** know that you have received the message. Use the International Morse Code sheet to work out the Morse Code for **MERCI**.

Answer to 1a: The frequency you need to tune your radio to tonight is 250 MHz.



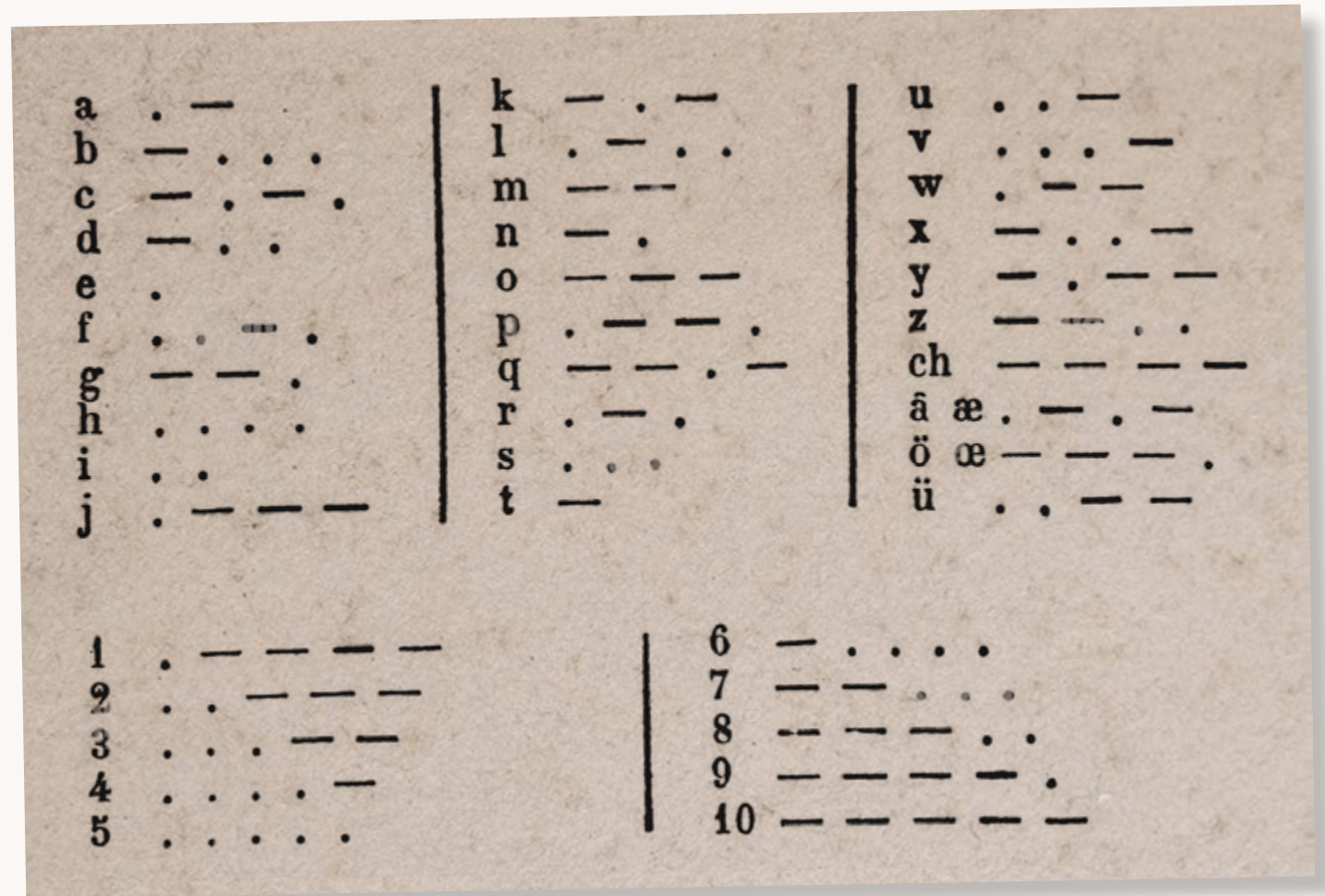
© IWM COM 229 stereo transmitter and receiver radio set, set within a miniature suitcase for use by British SOE and intelligence agents during the Second World War

Activity



International Morse Code

1. The length of a dot is one unit
2. A dash is three units
3. The space between parts of the same letter is one unit
4. The space between letters is three units
5. The space between words is seven units





Activity suggestion:

- Divide the class into pairs or groups of four. Two people could be on team Renard Rouge and two on team Chat Noir.
- Nominate or ask students to choose who will be CHAT NOIR and who will be RENARD ROUGE; or students can come up with their own code names in French if they prefer!
- Give CHAT NOIR the torch and ensure everyone has a copy of the printout of the Morse Code sheet.
- (Turn the lights out / close the blinds / or find somewhere dark for them to exchange the Morse code messages by torchlight. (Groups may need to take it in turns or find separate work-spaces to avoid confusion with other groups' flashes!)
- Once RENARD ROUGE has received and understood the message about the radio frequency, CHAT NOIR gives them the torch for them to send their reply.



Task 2 – Conversation and Caesar Cipher

You tune your radio to the correct frequency and have a brief conversation with CHAT NOIR. As you need to be very security-conscious, the most important part of your conversation has been encoded using a Caesar Cipher, which you exchanged previously.



RENARD ROUGE: Est-ce que vous aimez le poème? À vous.

CHAT NOIR: Oui, nous adorons le poème – merci. À vous.

RENARD ROUGE: Super. Alors, qu'est-ce que tu fais ce soir ? À vous.

CHAT NOIR: Nous allons sortir bientôt... Ma couleur préférée est BKXZ. À vous.

RENARD ROUGE: B... K... X... Z... Je comprends. À vous.

CHAT NOIR: Ne vous inquiétez pas – nous sommes prêts. À vous.

RENARD ROUGE: Merci. Bon courage ! Terminé.

English translation of dialogue:

RENARD ROUGE: Hi. Do you like the poem? Over.

CHAT NOIR: Yes, we love the poem – thank you. Over.

RENARD ROUGE: Great. So, what are you doing this evening? Over.

CHAT NOIR: We are going out soon... My favourite colour is BKXZ. Over.

RENARD ROUGE: B... K... X... Z... I understand. Over.

CHAT NOIR: Don't worry – we are ready. Over.

RENARD ROUGE: Thank you. Good luck! Over and out.



Background information

The Caesar Cipher



- The Caesar Cipher is named after the Roman emperor Julius Caesar, who used the method in his private correspondence around 58 BC, over 2000 years ago.
- It's what we call a substitution cipher: as you can see below, the alphabet is shifted several places to the left or right. And it makes the encoded words unreadable if intercepted. To decode it, we need to reverse the shift.

Activity

Ask your pupils to read aloud and then translate the message on the previous page into English and use the Caesar cipher key below to decipher the enciphered word BKXZ from the conversation.

As the words have already been enciphered, you will need to work backwards:

- Remember to look for the letters on the BOTTOM LINE (the output) to get to the original letter on the top line (input).
- For example, G on the bottom line gives A (the original letter) on the top line. Decode BKXZ using the key below.

Now let's interpret the meaning of the messages...

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F



Comprehension questions/ discussion points:

- Why does RENARD ROUGE ask CHAT NOIR if they like the poem? What do you think they are really asking?
- What do you think CHAT NOIR's response means?
- What does CHAT NOIR say their favourite colour is?
- What do you think this means CHAT NOIR is intending to do later that night?
- What does CHAT NOIR say to reassure RENARD ROUGE?
- What do the codenames RENARD ROUGE and CHAT NOIR mean in English?
- What would your French codename be?
- What is the equivalent of 'À vous' and 'Terminé' in English?

Extension activities

Many SoE operatives were parachuted into France with special tools hidden in their clothes and possessions. Maps were hidden in playing cards, radios in suitcases and compasses sewn into buttons on jackets. Ask your pupils to devise an ingenious way of hiding an important tool for their mission and draw plans to show how this could be hidden alongside a message written in their own secret code in either English or French.

Share your pupils' amazing secret inventions and messages with your partner school if you have one.

The role played by animals in D-Day and Operation Overlord

Curriculum links: History, English, Languages

Core and transferable skills: Creativity and imagination

Learning objectives: To find out about the role of animals during Operation Overlord and write an imaginative story describing the role played by one of these animals.



Emile and Glen – Airborne Assault Archive (ParaData)

Background Information 🏠

Did you know that animals also played a part in D-Day and the Battle of Normandy and that a dog and a pigeon were awarded special medals for their bravery during the conflict?

Along with the soldiers parachuted into France on D-Day were several dogs. Bing – an Alsatian and Collie cross – was one of these dogs, who had been trained to get used to loud noises, and to jump out of aircraft with his human handler wearing his own specially made parachute! On D-Day his landing did not quite go to plan as he landed in a tree before being rescued by his handler and carrying out his job to protect Allied soldiers.

After the war the four-legged hero received the Dickin Medal for bravery and a model of him can be seen in the Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces Museum in Duxford.

Sadly, one of the other dogs, called Glen, was killed on D-Day alongside his handler, 19 year old Emile Corteil. They were buried together in the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery at Ranville in France. Sometimes visitors place dog toys on the grave.

The role played by animals in D-Day and Operation Overlord

Another recipient of the Dickin medal for bravery was a pigeon called Gustav. As radio equipment was not always reliable when there was heavy fighting, pigeons were used to help deliver messages hidden in tiny scrolls attached to their legs. Gustav was awarded his medal for “delivering the first message from the Normandy Beaches from a ship off the beachhead while serving with the RAF on 6 June 1944.” He flew more than 150 miles from northern France whilst under fire to his loft near Portsmouth in just over 5 hours to deliver the message.

As the Allied troops fought their way through France, they often adopted dogs that they found on the way. In the photograph below you can see a British soldier giving a puppy something to drink. The puppy was named Tilly after the village where he was found. He went on to become the mascot of the 2nd Army HQ in Creully and can also be seen in the top photograph with Lord Ashley, who was General Dempsey’s assistant.

Major Lord Ashley, General Dempsey’s Military Assistant with Tilly © IWM B 6283



A British soldier giving a drink of water to an abandoned puppy dog in the devastated village of Tilly-sur-Seulles, 7 July 1944 © IWM B 6594

Activity

Ask your pupils to choose one of these brave animals and use their imagination to write a story describing what might have happened to them during the events of 6 June 1944. One of the most famous children's books about animals in wartime is *Warhorse* by Michael Morpurgo in which events in the First World War are told from Joey the horse's point of view. Perhaps share extracts from the book to inspire your pupils to write their stories using a first-person narrative. Alternatively, your pupils could create a comic strip or storyboard version of their animal story either in their home language or a language that they are learning at school.

Collect these animal tales into a class book of stories to share with others in your school or class library and exchange with a partner school if you have one.



© IWM A 24121 Eustace the mouse with members of the crew, on board LCT 947 during the landing operations, June 1944.



Bing receiving medal: Image credit: Airborne Assault Archive (ParaData)

Activity sheet

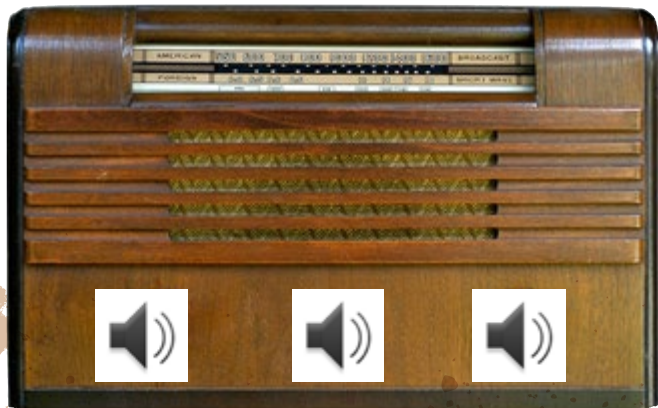


Listen to additional information about D-Day and the British Normandy Memorial.

Click 1 for BBC D-Day bulletin

Click 2 for History of British Normandy Memorial Site (by Lord Richard Dannatt)

Click 3 for late D-Day Veteran Harry Billinge MBE, Leg d'Hon.



1

2

3

Audio taken from British Normandy Memorial App



Man listening to radio

Research and remember

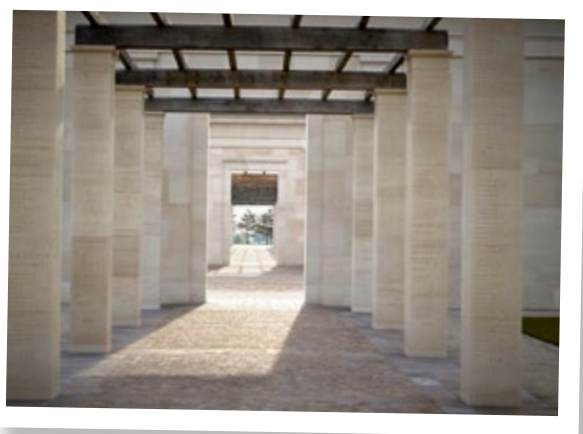
STURMEY F E	MNE	21	BICKNELL A	GNR	28	COATES H	PTE	25
STYLES S V	MNE	28	BILLINGTON T W	PTE	21	COBOLD P L	LCPL	39
SWEENEY E J	MNE	22	BIECLIFFER D L	SPR	29	COBURN J	CPL	17
SWINDALE H T W B	MNE		BIRCH I C	TBR		COCKERILL A	LSJT	25
TAIT J B	SLT	29	BIRD W R	PTE	19	COCKS A D B	LT COL	39
TAVOLIER J A	CPL	26	BRIBELL T	OVR	23	CODDINGTON J F	SSJT	25
TAYLOR E C	MNE	19	BISHOP M	PTE	30	COLLINS C W	PTE	20
TAYLOR G W	LS	24	BLACK W J	LSJT	28	COLLINS T	GNR	31
TAYLOR S N B	MNE	21	BLAKER F	SJT	25	COLLINS W J	PTE	18
TERRELL E	MNE	19	BLANCHARD K W	LBDR	25	COLQUHOUN D	SIG	2
THOMAS R	MNE	27	BLERKOM A	PTE	28	COMLEY W J	SSJT	7
THOMPSON A	AB	32	BLEWITT E C	PTE	26	CONGDON R H S	PTE	
THORNER R	SLT	26	BOARD D H V	LT COL	58	CONNOR E	PTE	
TIPPING P L	SLT	20	BOND A A	SPR	27	COOK G	LCPL	
TRENDELL E J	LWMN	20	BOOKER E D	CPL	25	COOK J B	RSM	
TROLLEY P J W	MNE	18	BOTTOMS N H	3DR	23	COOK R R		
TULLY J	MNE	22	BOUETARD S R A	CPL	28	COOKE V A		

Curriculum links: History

Core and transferable skills:

Collaboration and communication, Digital literacy, Student leadership and personal development.

Learning objectives: To discover ways to research and commemorate those who took part in D-Day and the Battle of Normandy.



Columns engraved with the names of fallen service personnel, British Normandy Memorial

Background Information

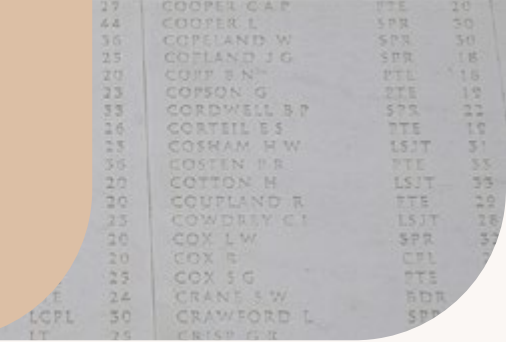
The British Normandy Memorial Roll of Honour records the names of 22,442 servicemen and women who served in British units and died while taking part in D-Day and the Battle of Normandy in the summer of 1944. It includes people from more than 30 different countries. Behind each name is a story and a family, and finding out about these brave people helps to keep their memory alive. The site also includes a French memorial, dedicated to the memory of French civilians who died during this time.

Activity

Encourage your students to carry out some research about those who contributed to D-Day and the Battle of Normandy then choose a way to commemorate them and their brave actions. You could make a display or a memorial in the school grounds, perhaps by tying small wooden circles to the branches of a tree with the names of the people they have researched. On a larger scale, your students could produce a modern memorial inspired by the performance 'We're here because we're here,' created by the artist Jeremy Deller and theatre director Rufus Norris, to mark the centenary of the Battle of the Somme in 2016. The organisers worked with volunteers dressed in period costume from the era to silently hand out cards with the names of people who died during the battle. Your students could similarly adopt costumes from the 1940s and give out cards they have made with the names of people they researched on the anniversary of D-Day.

Whatever type of commemoration you choose – share and compare images with your partner school if you have one.

How to Research a Name using the British Normandy Memorial Roll of Honour



Show your students how to use information from the British Normandy Memorial and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) to help them find out information about the people who lost their lives on D-Day and in the Battle of Normandy in 1944.

You can search the Roll of Honour on the British Normandy Memorial to find a name to research. Then look up the name on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Debt of Honour Register.

<https://www.britishnormandymemorial.org/roll-of-honour/>

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/>

Activity

Ask your pupils to work together and use this method to find out what they can about a soldier called William Gough, who died in the Battle of Normandy on 12 August 1944, and is buried in Tilly-sur-Seulles.

Can they find out the following information:

- William's rank, service number and regiment
- The name of his wife
- His age when he died
- Where he is commemorated
- The personal inscription on his memorial

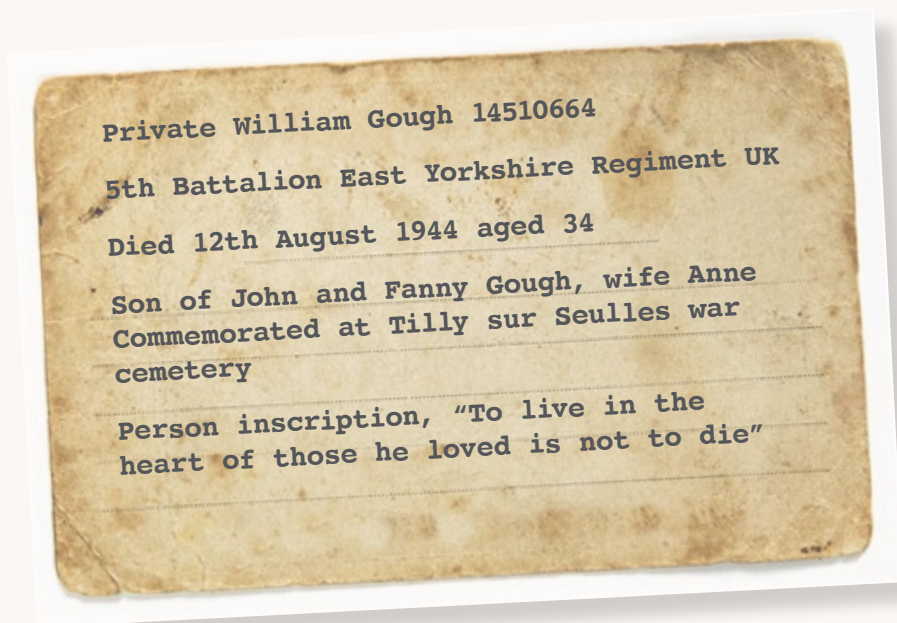


D-Day Sculpture, British Normandy Memorial



Gravestone to William Gough in Tilly-sur-Seulles cemetery

Research and remember



Your students could then go on to try and find out more about the lives of other people who died during this period such as those with the same surname as them, or soldiers who lived close to the school and appear on a local war memorial.

To do this you can use the following search fields in the CWGC Debt of Honour Register:

- Date of Death: Between 6 June 1944 and 31 August 1944
- Country Commemorated in: France.
- Any additional Information: [e.g., home place name such as Portsmouth]

Alternatively, they could search for names in photographs, newspaper cuttings or books for people who came to Normandy from other parts of the world.

Further sources of information about ways to search for people who lost their lives on D-Day and the Battle of Normandy can be found in the Find Out More section on the next page.

Create your own museum display 🖌️

In a museum every artefact and document tell a story. Why not create your own D-Day museum or display celebrating the work of your students to commemorate the anniversary of D-Day. Your pupils could write descriptions on cards and invite other pupils, parents, governors, and members of the local community to visit the display and act as museum guides to explain the exhibits and celebrate what they have learned from their study of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy.

Find out more

British Normandy Memorial

<https://www.britishnormandymemorial.org> (including Roll of Honour)

Download “British Normandy Memorial” app (on App Store and Google Play) as a virtual tour guide, to plan a visit or simply learn more about the Memorial and its story from wherever you are.

Books

Foster J (2014) Why Would a Dog need a parachute?

Stéphane JACQUET, Tilly sur Seullles, 1944, Heimdal, 2009 and 2019.

Fiction – Onjali Q Rauf (2021) The Lion Above the Door

Michael Morpurgo (1982) Warhorse



If you want to find out more information about D-Day and the Battle of Normandy the following resources may help:

<https://www.britishnormandymemorial.org/>

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/>

<https://www.nam.ac.uk/>

<https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/>

<https://www.nmrn.org.uk/>

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/national-maritime-museum>

<https://thedaystory.com/>

<https://bletchleypark.org.uk/>

Find out more about Enigma and code-breaking

Video: The Enigma Machine – Bletchley Park takes a closer look at how it works <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ux03qPgYVY>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/history-ks2-d-day/zf49rj6>



BRITISH
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MEMORIAL



Aerial view of the British Normandy Memorial