

## The D-Day Fellowship and The Stokes Bay Memorial

2024 marks the 80th Anniversary since British and Allied troops left Stokes Bay as part of Operation Overlord to take part in the D-Day landings in Normandy. Currently there is no local memorial to mark the memory of those people.

One of those who left that day was local resident Ron Cross, who sadly died in 2021 aged 100. He landed on Juno Beach as a corporal just 2 days before his 24th birthday. He was a demolition NCO assigned to an Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers Churchill Tank, his role was to clear the way for incoming tanks. He would go on to be part of further action in Holland and was Mentioned in Dispatches. Following the war he joined Royal Naval Hospital Haslar and went on to become an Occupational Therapist, remaining there for 37 years. He was awarded an MBE in 1980. Ron was a proud member of the D-Day Fellowship.

The Fellowship was formed by 2 local Gosport residents, the late Tony Belben and Malcolm Chapman, in 2011 after a successful D-Day Talk at Brodrick Hall. The Fellowship have been campaigning for many years for a memorial to be erected on the seafront at Stokes Bay.

The aims of the Fellowship are simple, to ensure the memory of events in Gosport and the people involved that led up to D-Day, 6 June 1944, are maintained.

Over the years the Fellowship have:

Given presentations to local schools, clubs and associations.

Collated and retained information that local residents, families and visitors remember of the events that unfolded during that time.

Visited the important and relevant sites that enable to people to connect with the events.

The Fellowship, with the help of Gosport Tourist Information Centre, welcomed group visits from home and abroad.

It also liaised with those responsible for ensuring that local memorials and information boards were maintained and, assisted and advised on any future additions appertaining to D-Day.

It was evident that Stokes Bay was very short on information that represented the D-Day Story from there. The two Memorial Stones that are in place at Stokes Bay, The Canadian Memorial and the Mulberry Harbour Memorial are representative of some of what happened at Stokes Bay, they do not represent all that took place or the many people and nations involved. They are also located in different sites that don't bring together the whole story.

The Fellowship, together with GBC, had Information boards erected around the Town at significant historical locations.

In March 2012 the Fellowship first started to campaign for a Memorial at Stokes Bay, designs were drawn up however at that time planning was refused. In August 2021 GBC commissioned HCC to design a New Memorial at Stokes Bay with appropriate funding allocated. Planning Permission was granted on 15 Nov 2021. Sadly this funding was withdrawn in 2022 due to budget cuts in local funding.

In May 2023 members of the Fellowship re-ignited the Memorial plans, and recommenced discussions with GBC; a new Planning Application was submitted on 29 Sep 2023 which was finally approved in January 2024.

Gosport played a central and crucial role in the WWII D-Day War preparations and embarkations.

The D-Day Memorial will serve as historical touchstone linking the past to the present and enabling the community to reflect, remember and respect the sacrifices of those who participated in WWII and other conflicts.

It is intended that the D-Day Memorial will represent a focal point for the community.

It is also intended that the D-Day Memorial will serve as an important source of historical information for the community in general and allow local schools to engage with the history on their doorstep.

The Memorial will be located near the Mulberry Harbour Memorial Stone alongside the Stokes Bay Sailing Club and the planning application includes the re-siting of the Canadian Memorial to the same location and the installation of a new memorial stone. The stones will then be encircled by a half moon shape of 5 benches which reflect the 5 beaches in Normandy, linking Gosport directly to where those who left arrived. Benches will provide the opportunity to sit and reflect quietly whilst looking out over the Solent where so many thousands departed from. The whole

arrangement will be encircled across the back with Red Robin bushes which will provide a windbreak as a native robust shrub hedge.

It is now up to the Fellowship to raise the funds needed to make this a reality after planning was now finally approved.

We have a local contractor Hellyers of Hampshire who are dedicated to support us in ensuring we have this memorial ready for an unveiling on 6th June 2024, the 80th Anniversary.

We have support from local residents, local businesses and councillors and now need your help to raise the funds we need.

Please see link here to donate:

[https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/DDayFellowship-StokesBayMemorial?utm\\_term=G8M8m28Be](https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/DDayFellowship-StokesBayMemorial?utm_term=G8M8m28Be)



Caption

Or use our QR code to link to our Crowdfunding page:

