



Embargoed until 00:01 Monday 28 January 2019

Mass flight display recreating D-Day mission to lead Imperial War Museums' unprecedented 75th anniversary programme

4 - 9 June 2019

#DaksOverDuxford

#DDay75

In June 2019, Imperial War Museums (IWM) will mark the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings on an unprecedented scale. IWM will retell the extraordinary land, air and sea story through its Second World War collection and its three historic sites: HMS Belfast, IWM Duxford and Churchill War Rooms.

Working in partnership with *Daks Over Normandy*, a Second World War mass flight display will lead IWM's anniversary plans. Staged from IWM Duxford, this ambitious display will culminate in a cross-channel flight and parachute landing in Normandy on 6 June, recreating the remarkable Second World War story.

Ahead of their mass flight, IWM Duxford will host the greatest number of Douglas C-47 Skytrain aircraft in one location since the Second World War, descending on 4 and 5 June for *Daks Over Duxford*. Over the two days, visitors will be able to see more than 30 Dakotas – aircraft synonymous with the D-Day Landings – as well as mass parachute jumps and flight displays taking place across the museum.

On 6 June 1944, the greatest seaborne invasion in history began with the mission to liberate Europe from Nazi occupation. Otherwise known as 'Operation Overlord', secrecy was vital to the success of this highly complex land, air and sea operation. By midnight on 6 June, 156,000 Allied troops had arrived in Normandy, despite challenging weather conditions and fierce German defences. The subsequent Normandy campaign saw British and American troops fighting through France for almost two months before reaching Germany itself. D-Day was one of the most significant victories by the Western Allies during the Second World War. The eventual collapse of German resistance in France convinced German High Command that defeat was inevitable and began the process by which Allied victory was achieved in 1945.

As part of its anniversary plans, IWM will highlight the roles that its historic sites and Churchill played in this pivotal moment in history and honour the men who sacrificed so much during this intrepid mission. HMS Belfast led the allied fleet, opening fire at 5.27am on 6 June 1944; American fighter aircraft flew from IWM Duxford in support of D-Day operations and Churchill War Rooms was the nerve centre of strategic decision-making during the Second World War.

Additional D-Day themed programming will take place on HMS Belfast on Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 June**. From interactive activities, where visitors will step into the shoes of the people who made D-Day happen, to bespoke D-Day group tours on board one of the largest warships present on D-Day.

Further announcements of IWM's full programme of D-Day related events, activities and publications will be released in due course.

For tickets to *Daks Over Duxford*: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/daks-over-duxford>

Ends

For further press information, images and interview requests please contact:
Esther Blaine, Communications Manager (Commercial) at 01223 499 320 / eblaine@iwm.org.uk
Rachel Powell, Communications Officer (Commercial) at 0207 416 5436 / rpowell@iwm.org.uk

Notes to Editors

**Daks Over Duxford*

All flying is subject to weather, serviceability and operational commitments.

Event admission prices apply as below:

Adults £25

Children under 16 free

Car parking £5 per car

Family activities

** Family activities at IWM Duxford and HMS Belfast are included in standard admission.

IWM

IWM (Imperial War Museums) tells the story of people who have lived, fought and died in conflicts involving Britain and the Commonwealth since the First World War.

Our unique collections, made up of the everyday and the exceptional, reveal stories of people, places, ideas and events. Using these, we tell vivid personal stories and create powerful physical experiences across our five museums that reflect the realities of war as both a destructive and creative force. We challenge people to look at conflict from different perspectives, enriching their understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and its impact on people's lives.

IWM's five branches which attract over 2.5 million visitors each year are IWM London, IWM's flagship branch that recently transformed with new, permanent and free First World War Galleries alongside new displays across the iconic Atrium to mark the Centenary of the First World War; IWM North, housed in an iconic award-winning building designed by Daniel Libeskind; IWM Duxford, a world renowned aviation museum and Britain's best preserved wartime airfield; Churchill War Rooms, housed in Churchill's secret headquarters below Whitehall; and the Second World War cruiser HMS Belfast.

Normandy Tourism

Normandy Tourism is the official tourist board for Normandy in France. In June 2019, the region will commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy with due splendour and emotion. A varied and unprecedented programme of events will bring the memory of this tragic period of world history to life, all while emphasising the spirit of hope and reconciliation. For more information on D-Day in Normandy, visit normandydday75.com

Official Partner for Imperial War Museums' D-Day 75 Anniversary Programme

Daks Over Normandy

The overall *Daks over Normandy* event is organised by *Daks over Normandy* Limited. Its mission is to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the 1944 D-Day landings in the widest and most respectful sense of the word, assembling a fleet of original DC-3 and C-47 aircraft and by flying these to the advantage of this commemoration. Daks over Normandy will be assembling 300 parachutists from around the globe to jump into the historic Normandy drop zones.

www.daksovernormandy.com #DaksOverNormandy

Official Partner for Imperial War Museums' D-Day 75 Anniversary Programme

HMS Belfast's role in D-Day:

HMS *Belfast* acted as the flagship of Bombardment Force E, part of the Eastern Naval Task Force, with responsibility for supporting the British and Canadian assaults on Gold and Juno beaches. HMS *Belfast* first opened fire at 5.27am on 6 June 1944, targeting and suppressing a German battery near the village of Ver-sur-Mer until the position was taken by the 7th Battalion, Green Howards. The ship came under occasional fire from German artillery and dive-bombers, but was unscathed as it continued to bombard German positions. HMS *Belfast* was targeted by German aircraft once, but the bombing run missed.

As one of the larger warships present on D-Day, HMS *Belfast* had a fully equipped sick bay staffed by surgeons and took onboard casualties on 6 June 1944.

Apart from periods replenishing ammunition, HMS *Belfast* was almost continuously in action over the five weeks after D-Day and fired thousands of rounds from her guns in support of Allied troops fighting their way inland.

IWM Duxford's role in D-Day:

From 1943, the United States Army Air Forces 78th Fighter Group was stationed at RAF Duxford, flying P-47 Thunderbolts and P-51 Mustangs.

For the next two years, the 78th Fighter Group played a crucial role in the air war over Europe, acting as escorts for bomber aircraft in the strategic bombing campaign and providing air support for D-Day operations.

All three squadrons of the 78th Fighter Group flew three missions each on D-Day itself, providing 'area support' by attacking railway and other transport targets inland of the invasion beaches in order to disrupt any German attempts at a counter-attack. These missions were in operation from 3.30am to 11.15pm on D-Day; ground staff at RAF Duxford worked a 24-hour shift providing operational support.

The Group suffered one of its darkest days on 10 June 1944, when ten pilots engaged in a bombing raid were killed after being 'bounced' by twenty German fighters.

Churchill War Rooms:

In the months leading up to D-Day, the date set for the landings was a fiercely guarded secret but it was necessarily known to many of the staff of the Cabinet War Rooms, from the officers planning the operations to stenographers and typists working on all of the associated reports and briefing minutes. *'Many of us knew the date of "D-Day" from the hour "Operation Overlord" was first mentioned'* said Joan Bright, who was personal assistant to General Ismay.

One especially well-kept secret was Churchill's desire to be present in person at the D-Day landings. Towards the end of May, the Prime Minister informed the Admiralty that he intended to witness the operation first hand from the decks of HMS *Belfast*. The idea of Britain's wartime leader placing himself in such danger was alarming but it wasn't until King George VI intervened in writing that Churchill agreed to back down. A facsimile of the letter from the King to Churchill, dated 31 May 1944, is on display in the Churchill Museum in the Churchill War Rooms.